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**REALIZED IDEALS: GRECIAN-STYLE BUILDINGS
AS METAPHORS FOR DEMOCRACY
ON THE TRANS-APPALACHIAN FRONTIER**

By

Patrick Lee Lucas

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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2002

ABSTRACT

REALIZED IDEALS: GRECIAN-STYLE BUILDINGS AS METAPHORS FOR DEMOCRACY ON THE TRANS-APPALACHIAN FRONTIER

By

Patrick Lee Lucas

This dissertation focuses on the architecture of the antebellum Frontier South and the Old Northwest to demonstrate the cultural similarity of these two regions. I analyze Grecian-style buildings within communities that share the common nickname of “Athens” to explore the ways in which people of the trans-Appalachian West defined themselves, their communities, and their place within the nation. The nineteenth-century buildings under scrutiny in this study offer new evidence about the nation-building process and the construction of a common culture and they present a significant opportunity to look at visual evidence in order to couple it with written records to explain the cultural claims of the trans-Appalachian West.

People constructed Grecian-style buildings throughout the trans-Appalachian West to emulate the temples of Ancient Greece and to deploy through those buildings social and political meanings tied to the ancient democracy. Both north and south, buildings provided a common architectural language that was adapted freely to all types of structures – government buildings, educational facilities, churches, commercial structures, and residences—through which people suggested inherent external meanings of stability, rationality, and balance in a world marked by impermanence and disorder.

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The embodiment of democracy in the Grecian style across the nation lasted through the mid-nineteenth century when Americans turned to non-classical architectural styles to express their cultural sophistication and political aspirations. This shift in design sensibilities provided opportunities to manipulate meanings for the Grecian style and establish a regional identity for the South. What was “democracy in built form,” a national style in the antebellum nation, became a regional variant by the twentieth century.

This dissertation, with its focus on eight similarly nicknamed communities, offers explanations of meanings encapsulated in the Grecian-style buildings of the trans-Appalachian West. Grecian-style buildings throughout the antebellum landscape west of the Appalachian Mountains indicate that similar cultural activity took place to shape the landscape and to erect upon it idealized structures that stood as evidence of clear desires by individuals, groups, and institutions to refashion the republic of the nation’s founders into a fully realized democratic nation ruled by common men rather than an educated elite.

Above all, the uniformity in the use of the Grecian style across the nineteenth-century trans-Appalachian West exposes a means for understanding this geographic space as a single region. Regionalism and sectionalism, as understood today, are concepts deeply challenged by the circumstances of antebellum middle America as indicated in this cross-sectional examination of communities. Like the buildings themselves, the eight communities under scrutiny encapsulated an evolving world order that began with revolution, continued with appropriation of land and commodities from Native Americans, and shifted toward nation-building.

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in honor of Grandmother's house and all who lived there

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Though this dissertation is the result of countless hours of my own time, it is more a reflection of the conversations with those whom I have had the privilege to work alongside these last six years of graduate study at both the University of Kentucky and Michigan State University, as well as those initial seeds planted during my undergraduate years as an architecture student at the University of Cincinnati. To those office mates, research partners, friends, and faculty in all institutions who have shaped my formation as a scholar, I express my simple thanks.

The kernel of the idea for this dissertation was generated in a particularly meaningful conversation during my master's work with Elizabeth A. Perkins who helped me to probe for explanations for Grecian community nicknames in the trans-Appalachian West. Though I am not sure either of us thought the idea would have the staying power for a book-length manuscript, the speculations generated in the following pages result directly from that conversation. Thanks are certainly in order for a research question that would lead back to my scholarly interest in architecture and thus unite all the seemingly disparate aspects of my education.

At Michigan State University, I have had the singular privilege and honor to be bolstered in support by a wonderful and talented advisor, Susan Sleeper-Smith. In this person, I found not only a model faculty member but also a spirited and enthusiastic colleague with whom I hope to continue important work in reading and interpreting visual evidence in historic contexts. In the incorporation of material culture theory, historical archeology methods, and

cultural geography paradigms, I owe a tremendous debt to dissertation committee members Kenneth Haltman, Sally Helvenston, and Kenneth E. Lewis. Not only did these three individuals provide encouragement and support during coursework, they willingly listened and actively participated in the interdisciplinary project contained within the following pages.

I gratefully acknowledge the financial support from both the Program in American Studies and the College of Arts and Letters in the form of dissertation fellowships to further my work. I also recognize the collective work of conference panel chairs, colleagues, and editors of several journals who helped me to shape early drafts of the materials encapsulated within this dissertation. Librarians and archivists in the eight communities within this study also deserve special recognition in the location of materials and support for my work.

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CHAPTER ONE

NOTIONS OF NATION AND REGION

An Architectural and Place Name Lexicon

In this dissertation, I focus on the architecture of the antebellum Frontier South and the Old Northwest in order to demonstrate the cultural similarity of these two regions. It is my contention that west of the Appalachian Mountains as Northerners and Southerners purchased newly available public lands and created new communities, they performed remarkably similar cultural work by relying on a common architectural style. It is my fundamental belief that in the construction of buildings designed to look like structures of Ancient Greece, nineteenth-century Americans manufactured and perpetuated connections to the past to claim cultural meanings associated with the world's first democracy and the glories of Athens.

I analyze communities that share the common nickname of "Athens." The utilization of this nickname and the Grecian building style allowed the people of the trans-Appalachian West to define themselves, their communities, and their place within the nation. People who did not leave written records to fully explain their design decisions made statements with their buildings – public and private – that enable us to better understand the mindsets of Americans as they grappled with settling a huge nation. Anything but mute, these nineteenth-century buildings offer new evidence about the nation-building process and the construction of a common culture. They present a significant opportunity to look at visual evidence and couple it with written records to engage the buildings themselves.

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The buildings provide a unique strategy to question the assumptions historians have made about the divided nature of antebellum society. Because much of the cultural activity that took place in middle America was quite similar, the reality of the antebellum trans-Appalachian West as a single region belies the differences inherent in a historical model that separates the Old Northwest from the Frontier South. Both North and South, the federal government formed territories and established the same rules for land division and sale and admission to the union. People established links to the East through trade and the consumer market as well as through cultural activity that fostered a series of urban outposts in a landscape perceived as a wilderness. Moreover, Americans who emigrated from the East and new European immigrants attempted to define who they were in the creation of western communities and disparate cultures acquired a similar cultural vocabulary in a distinctive landscape when concepts of the nation were in formation.¹

Buildings constructed in the trans-Appalachian West suggest that the cultural claims advanced by communities defined the landscape as one region. Material culture theory indicates that much can be learned from the study of artifacts – including the built environment – created by a society. Whether buildings are viewed as tools for social purpose, signs and symbols, encapsulated ideologies, “mirrors of ourselves,” or unwitting biographies, they aid in the comprehension of history and the thoughts and actions of people who created

¹ To distinguish between American and European groups who came to the trans-Appalachian West, “emigrant” identifies Americans who migrated from East to West while “immigrant” refers to a predominantly European population who moved directly to middle America.

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them.² Not only do buildings indicate times of economic prosperity in a community, for example, through them can be traced the ebb and flow of people, thoughts, and ideas across the landscape. Architecture provides a non-fleeting barometer to assess social change because it requires a substantial financial investment to construct a business building, a government structure, a church, or a private residence. Builders and owners of buildings in the nineteenth-century trans-Appalachian West, when faced with the many decisions of appearance and cost of the structures, both consciously or subconsciously selected design features and configurations for their structures that revealed insights into their understanding of themselves, their community, and their nation.

Nationalism, a necessary precondition for the development of a regional consciousness, took many forms in the trans-Appalachian West but is perhaps best understood in the construction of Grecian-style buildings for governmental, ecclesiastical, commercial, and residential purposes.³ People constructed Grecian-style buildings throughout the trans-Appalachian West, and in other parts of the nation and world, to emulate the temples of Ancient Greece and to deploy

²These views of material culture theory are espoused, in order, by Kenneth Ames, in Thomas J. Schlereth, ed. *Material Culture Studies in America* (Nashville: American Association of State and Local History, 1981); Jacques Maquet, in Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery, eds. *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993); Grant McCracken. *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Arthur A. Berger. *Reading Matter: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Material Culture* (New Brunswick: Transactions Publishers, 1988); Peirce Lewis. "Common Houses, Cultural Spore." *Landscape* 19.2 (1975): 1-22; and Barbara Carson. "Interpreting History Through Objects." *Journal of Museum Education* 10.3 (1985): 129-133.

³ Andrew Cayton suggests that the competition for the federal government resources of the United States was the foundation for divisions between North and South in the trans-Appalachian West. Andrew R. L. Cayton. "'Separate Interests' and the Nation-State: The Washington Administration and the Origins of Regionalism in the Trans-Appalachian West" *Journal of American History* 79.1 (June 1992) 39-67.

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through those buildings social and political meanings tied to the ancient democracy. Both north and south, white-columned porticos erected in front of plain, cube-like buildings stood as evidence to make public statements about the cultural sophistication and political aspirations of building occupants. Found throughout the landscape, buildings provided a common architectural language that was adapted freely to all types of structures. Through Grecian-style government buildings, educational facilities, churches, commercial structures, and residences, people suggested inherent external meanings of stability, rationality, and balance in a world marked by impermanence and disorder. The Grecian style, as an architectural language, was part of the rhetoric associated with nation building and the democratic experience in built form. Because of their popularity throughout the trans-Appalachian West, Grecian-style buildings documented the desire by individuals across socio-economic divisions to establish their claims of stability and rationality as citizens engaged within the American democracy.

The embodiment of democracy in the Grecian style across the nation lasted through the mid-nineteenth century when Americans turned to non-classical architectural styles to express their cultural sophistication and political aspirations. This shift in design sensibilities provided opportunities to manipulate meanings for the Grecian style and establish a regional identity for the South. Though the Grecian style had deep resonance in Jacksonian America, the tenets of the style survived the Civil War and after the war, the architecture of the old South was set apart from more progressive styles in other sections. Limited by the ability to invest additional money in other styles of buildings, people in the South retained and refashioned the Grecian style (with help from

those outside the South) to alter its meaning. Grecian-style buildings throughout the trans-Appalachian region represented the glories of the South caught in a time increasingly distant from the vantage of their observers. What was “democracy in built form,” a national style in the antebellum nation, became a regional variant by the twentieth century.

The cultural work that began with the construction of nineteenth-century Grecian-style buildings continued to influence architecture in the twentieth century with Grecian-style buildings reshaped as genteel Southern plantation houses. As expressed in popular culture with the debut of “Gone with the Wind” in 1939, the O’Hara plantation, Tara, stood as a central theme for the movie and became engrained in the hearts and minds of Americans everywhere as the quintessential Southern backdrop for the tragic and lengthy story of Scarlet O’Hara (fig. 1). By the end of the twentieth century, the movie and its associated visual images remained popular and even became the subject of increasingly specific scholarly interest. The novel is now folklore and the Grecian-style house, the solid rock in which Scarlet O’Hara found her anchor, stood for all that was glorious in the Old South and all that was problematic. The nostalgia associated with “Gone with the Wind” is similar to the rise of Grecian-style historic house sites throughout the South where many paid homage to the continued shaping of the South’s idealized regional image. In Nashville, The Hermitage draws tourists, as does Belle Meade Plantation and Belmont, to Grecian-style porticoes as important aspects of the tourist industry and as further evidence of the

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community's "Athens" cultural claim.⁴ Holly Springs, Mississippi trades on the Grecian style in its annual pilgrimage, a house tour sponsored by the Holly Springs Garden Club since 1936. A half dozen of the more than 60 Grecian-style residences are opened and special events offered for Mississippi's "second oldest pilgrimage (after Natchez)" where guests "are greeted by locals dressed in period costumes who provide detailed history" about "magnificent antebellum homes" and the many individuals who are part of the legacy of the town (fig. 4).⁵ As reported by Mrs. Vadah Cochran, the first pilgrimage was a tremendous success with Holly Springs "running Natchez a close second...once again 'the Athens of the South.'"⁶ In all these communities, the Grecian-style plantation house as an idealized image of a southern past divorced from its common ancestry with similar structures in the north.

Like Grecian-style buildings, Grecian nicknames first coined in the nineteenth century influenced community images by implying that a town was similar to Athens of Hellenistic Greece – a place of culture and refinement within a wilderness context. The "Athens" nickname, as a trope, associated community characterization with Hellenistic Greece and shaped new meanings for culture

⁴ In Nashville's history, however, tourist activities and other similar cultural work did not stop with house museums. Nashville's Centennial Exposition of 1876 resulted in the construction of a museum campus south and west of downtown complete with a scale model replica of the Parthenon as its centerpiece (fig 2). In the early twentieth century, Nashville residents undertook to preserve the Parthenon and, with this success, guaranteed that the building stood until the late 1980s when, again, the community renewed its commitment to preserve the building for the "Athens of the South." Even Nashville's newest civic building, the Nashville Public Library, completed in 2001, echoes the Grecian style, on axis with William Strickland's Tennessee State Capitol as well as the Grecian-style open air World War I Memorial between the two buildings (fig. 3). Here the Grecian style of the middle 1850s, the Grecian revival of the late 1920s and the post-modern Grecian style of the late twentieth century sit side by side, attesting to Nashville's love of its Hellenistic inspired roots. A detailed explanation of Nashville's "Athens" claims is contained within Christine Kreyling, Wesley Paine, Charles W. Waterfield, Jr., and Susan Ford Wiltshire. *Classical Nashville* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1996).

⁵ *Holly Springs Tourism and Recreation Bureau Brochure*, 2001.

and refinement in a wilderness context.⁷ In the nineteenth-century trans-Appalachian West, community nicknames were one means that people used to document the special character of a place. Coined by land speculator, publication, and politician, cities earned nicknames due to their geography, as places of industry, or as locations of outstanding events or people. Nicknames reflected the nationality of a community's inhabitants, their religion, and their zeal for success.⁸ Often in code, these community nicknames provided connections to political, social, and cultural aspirations and motivations.

This dissertation brings into focus one specific nickname in the trans-Appalachian region, "Athens of..." as in "Athens of the West" because its widespread use indicates the efforts by individuals and groups to idealize notions of order, gentility, nation, region, and democratic values on the nineteenth-century trans-Appalachian landscape. Found "cheek by jowl" with Indian, French, and English place names, the "Athens" nickname reshaped places and communicated cultural collateral and connections to predecessor communities

⁶ *Holly Springs South Reporter*. 22 October 1936, Pilgrimage Edition, p. 5.

⁷ The nicknaming practices of the nineteenth century trans-Appalachian West tied to a literary understanding of meanings for the nickname "Athens." In a poem by John Milton, Athens, "built nobly, pure of the air, and light the soil," was a place of great virtue and high standards. Milton wrote that the Aegean community was a leader among communities, a standard against which other communities are compared: "the eye of Greece, Mother of Arts and Eloquence." In deploying the term "august," Lord Byron proclaimed Athens a place of grandeur, majesty, and admiration. Percy Bysshe Shelley characterized the ascension of the first Athens to mythic proportions and its subsequent destruction. Perhaps most significantly, he wrote "another Athens shall arise," a community that in "the splendor of its prime" will leave "all earth can take or heaven give." John Milton, *Paradise Regain'd* (1671); Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto the Second (1812); Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Hellas* (1821).

⁸ Nicknames captured specific moments in which community character was modified at some time after community founding. The newer appellations shaped associations desired for the communities by its political and commercial leaders, as well as by travelers describing communities to readers of commercially-printed guide books or in newspaper accounts, often illustrating extreme competitiveness between communities. See Joseph Nathan Kane and Gerald L. Alexander, eds., *Nicknames and Sobriquets of U. S. Cities and States* (Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, 1970).

and places. The nickname held specific significance as a measure of cultural sophistication, deploying Old World ideas onto a New World landscape. The "Athens" appellation represented an atavistic yearning for the past while, at the same time, stood for individual and community desire for an economically prosperous and culturally rich future. Because of its positive associations both past and future, "Athens" was a nickname that continued in use with the development of nineteenth-century community histories and in twentieth-century history textbooks and tourist materials. More than any other name within the 2,400+ classical place names within the nation, Athens perhaps best represented the idea of culture, learning, and education and often was the nickname for a community that was the location of a college or university.⁹

Lexington, Kentucky received its "Athens" nickname when a nineteenth-century Presbyterian minister, Timothy Flint, declared the community as the "Athens of the West," and contrasted the sophistication of Lexington to the commercial strength of Cincinnati within a description of the physical and cultural environment of the more northern city and the broader region of southwestern Ohio:

⁹ In work on the popularity of classical names in Western and Southern states, Evan Sage suggests that classical names "represent phases of the multiform variety of our culture, and they may at times perpetuate the classical tradition to which we owe so much." George Stewart explains that "the naming of a town after some classical city was a well-established custom. Contrary to a common opinion, such names were not always the result of a naive desire to adorn an insignificant backwoods settlement with a grandiloquent name. The namers often knew their classics." Cultural geographer Wilbur Zelinsky further observes that: "The Classical Revival...is the latter-day embodiment of the virtues and ideals of ancient Greece and Rome [and] has been one of several pervasive elements in American mythology that have helped make our cultural history and geography distinctively American." Evan T. Sage, "Classical Place Names in America." *American Speech* 5 (1929): 271. George R. Stewart, *Names on the Land: A Historical Account of Place-Naming in the United States* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1945), 186. Wilbur Zelinsky, "Classical Town Names in the United States." *Exploring the Beloved Country* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994), 295.

Efforts to promote polite literature have already been made in this town [Cincinnati]. If its only rival, Lexington, be, as she contends, the Athens of the West, this place is struggling to become its Corinth.¹⁰

From a nineteenth-century perspective, the reader of Flint's travel account would more than likely have knowledge of ancient Greek history that might aid in clarification of Flint's metaphors.¹¹ With a flourishing artistic presence, immense financial resources, and a desire to become the central city-state of Ancient Greece, Athens was recognized by nineteenth-century citizens as a cultural leader in the alliance of ancient Greek city-states. Corinth, by contrast, was characterized as the commercial and transportation center for the empire. Strategically located along the Isthmus of Corinth, the community connected mainland Greece with the islands to the south and to trade routes both east and west. The inevitable rivalry bred by the differences of cultural and commercial assets in each community of ancient Greece, in part, led the Corinthians to join the Spartans in conflict with Athens during the Peloponnesian War. Flint's selection of a Cincinnati "Corinth" to a Lexington "Athens" was an overt reference to Greek history. In the deployment of these nicknames, Flint

¹⁰ Timothy Flint, *Recollections of the Last Ten Years, Passed in Occasional Residences and Journeys in the Valley of the Mississippi, from Pittsburgh to the Gulf of Mexico and from Florida to the Spanish Frontier; In a Series of Letters to the Rev. James Flint, of Salem, Massachusetts.....* (Boston: Cummings Hilliard & Company, 1826), 48.

¹¹ People throughout the forming United States were deeply influenced by knowledge of ancient Greece and Rome by various means: through the Greek war for independence from the Ottomans, coverage of which was extensive in American newspapers to the exclusion of local and national events; the display in London of the Elgin Marbles; the rise of historic archaeology and the late-eighteenth-century discoveries of Pompeii and Herculaneum; the publication and distribution of books such as *Antiquities of Athens* (James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, 1762-1816) to document this archaeology work; higher education curricula that featured predominantly Greek and Roman classical texts; the use of Greek mythology by playwrights such as Racine; political rhetoric based on the writings of Cato, Cicero, and other ancient orators; political practices by Washington, Jefferson and others, modeled on ancient modes and practices; and the overwhelming popularity of contemporary architectural treatises and building guides. As this evidence suggests, the employment of classical ideas was a highly complicated and extended process taking many forms.

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specifically characterized a growing rivalry between these two communities: Cincinnati was the commercial leader for the region; and while the community may have substantial social-cultural assets, it was eclipsed by Lexington, the “Athens of the West.”

With the “Athens” nickname, people throughout the trans-Appalachian West advertised the cultural assets of their communities as places of sophistication and economic prosperity (table 1, fig. 5).¹²

Table 1.

Eight Cities in the Trans-Appalachian West with “Athens” Nicknames

<u>State</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Nickname</u>
Alabama	Tuscaloosa	Tuscaloosa	Athens of Alabama
Illinois	Jacksonville	Morgan	Athens of the West
Indiana	Crawfordsville	Montgomery	Athens of the West
	New Harmony	Posey	Athens of America
Kentucky	Lexington	Fayette	Athens of the West
Mississippi	Holly Springs	Marshall	Athens of the South
Ohio	Cincinnati	Hamilton	Athens of the Midwest ¹³
Tennessee	Nashville	Davidson	Athens of the West
			Athens of the South

¹²The conversion of towns into cultural centers is a recurring theme of western urban boosterism where making the “Athens of the West” and other similarly-nicknamed communities was a prevalent feature of nineteenth-century Ohio Valley life. See Richard C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier: Pioneer Life in Early Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Lexington, Louisville, and St. Louis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959). The cultural work to nickname communities “Athens” was also part of a greater competition among towns in the United States and in Australia. David A. Hamer. *New Towns in the New World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

¹³ The “Corinth” nickname for Cincinnati used by Flint predates the “Athens” nickname of the latter nineteenth century. Kane and Alexander, *U. S. Nicknames*.

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Community leaders associated particular settlements with Hellenistic culture and Grecian civic institutions, especially those related to education and literature.¹⁴ Cincinnati's characterization by Mrs. Frances Trollope as a "Porkopolis" where pigs ran through the streets was counteracted by the community's own claims as both the "Athens of the Midwest" and "The Queen City."¹⁵ From a booster's perspective, the pigs in the streets of Cincinnati might be de-emphasized and the literary and cultural habits of the community emphasized. With an unqualified optimism for the future and a tendency toward exaggeration, boosters often made minimal the images and assets of others town in comparison to theirs. Boosters in Jacksonville, Illinois, known as "Athens of the West," not only wanted to manipulate the image of their town through association with classical

¹⁴The practice of using the "Athens" sobriquet extended across geographic and political boundaries and through time. In addition to the eight communities within this study, a wide range of communities shared the "Athens" nickname: Abilene, TX; Annapolis, MD; Benicia, CA; Berkeley, CA; Boston, MA; Cambridge, MA; Columbia, MO; Dallas, TX; De Land, FL; Faribault, MN; Fayetteville, AR; Iowa City, IA; Laramie, WY; Lexington, VA; Norwalk, CT; Philadelphia, PA; Roanoke, IN; Salem, IN; Waco, TX ; and West Chester, PA. Moreover, Aberdeen, Scotland; Cork, Ireland; Sheraz, Persia; and Cordova, Spain all shared the nickname. Kane and Alexander, *Nicknames and Sobriquets*; Kathleen D. McCarthy "Creating the American Athens: Cities, Cultural Institutions and the Arts, 1840-1930." *American Quarterly* 37.3 (1985): 426; and Don H. Doyle, *The Social Order of a Frontier Community: Jacksonville, Illinois 1825-1870* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 32-38. Because the nation was a series of multiple peripheries and cores, each "Athens" nicknamed community fit into local, regional, and national hierarchies. Where Lexington was "Athens of the West" in relation to a large region, Crawfordsville was the "Athens of Indiana" and the nickname described the community in relation to a geo-political division of statehood. Nashville transformed from the "Athens of the West" to the "Athens of the South" in the course of the nineteenth century and reflected a shift in regional affiliation for this city. It was equally important that the nickname for a community told what the community was as much as what it was NOT. There was not an "Athens of the East" but several communities shared the distinction of "Athens of the West." It meant more to be an "Athens of the West" than it did to be an "Athens of the East" because the assumption was that the East was entirely civilized and would not need an "Athens." Both Philadelphia and Boston were in fact nicknamed "Athens" but these were nicknames of the eighteenth century, comparing these American communities with Old World civilization.

¹⁵Frances Trollope. *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (London: Whittaker and Treacher, 1832). Louis Leonard Tucker, "Cincinnati: Athens of the West, 1830-1861." *Ohio History* 75:1 (Winter 1966): 10-25.

references, they wanted to ensure their town as "normal," not as "western" or "freakish" or "absurd."¹⁶

Both Grecian nicknames and the Grecian style created idealized notions of order, gentility, nation, region, and democratic values on the nineteenth-century trans-Appalachian landscape. Public buildings, churches, and business buildings, as well as private residences, communicated civility in the nineteenth-century trans-Appalachian West, particularly when those buildings took the form of Greek temples. As structures for government, education, commerce, worship, and residence, these buildings established the reputation of communities as civilized and successful places, locations with a promising future. These buildings described similar symbolic, cultural, and social meanings throughout the trans-Appalachian landscape.

This dissertation, with its focus on eight similarly nicknamed communities, offers explanations of meanings encapsulated in the Grecian-style buildings of the trans-Appalachian West. The information generated within these pages helps to address a gap in research that results in a fundamentally flawed conception of the trans-Appalachian West as a geographic space in discrete sections. Grecian-style buildings throughout the antebellum landscape west of the Appalachian Mountains indicate that similar cultural activity took place to shape the landscape and to erect upon it idealized structures that stood as evidence of clear desires by individuals, groups, and institutions to shape the

¹⁶Don Doyle suggests that boosterism was less about economic prosperity and more about the development of a community ideology, something to knit together communities and citizens within them of varying backgrounds and social conditions. The community under his scrutiny, Jacksonville, Illinois, also known as an "Athens of the West," experienced many of the same circumstances and challenges of other urban places in the Ohio Valley. Doyle, *Social Order of a Frontier Community*.

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landscape in the context of nineteenth-century nation building. Because of the paucity of written records available, the buildings themselves take on additional significance as primary evidence of the mindsets of nineteenth-century Americans in this geographic space. The buildings, with their fleeting meanings and particular circumstances of construction, show a nation in transition from a republic inherited from the nation's founders to a fully realized democratic nation ruled by common men rather than an educated elite.

The title, "Realized Ideals," was selected for this dissertation to encapsulate both the perceptions and realities of the landscape and of specific buildings in the trans-Appalachian West. In the construction of Grecian-style buildings, people attempted to capture an ideal building type with specific concrete meanings. As each specific building took form, however, the ideal type was modified to meet and mitigate the physical, social, and political realities of the builder, the owner, and the community in which the building was constructed. In the link of ideal types and their tangible creation in reality, the important cultural work captured in these buildings illustrates the very real tensions and pressures under which the landscape of the trans-Appalachian West took form. Moreover, as the buildings occupied the cultural landscape, people translated meanings for realized building forms and conceptualized ideal structures far from their Athenian models. Ubiquitous Grecian-style buildings in the trans-Appalachian West thus held a wide range of meanings from their conception through their use.

As an alternative to the development of case studies of the eight trans-Appalachian West communities under scrutiny, this dissertation has been organized by building type. This approach offers several advantages. First,

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individual community case studies would accentuate the peculiarities of each locality rather than the common threads shared among these localities across the trans-Appalachian landscape. Second, the cultural work encapsulated in each building type differs slightly from other building types. In the case of governmental structures, the Grecian style is tied most closely to political rhetoric and the establishment of the state in a position of power. Constructed for colleges and universities, Grecian-style educational buildings link to concepts of literary culture as well as mediate the classical culture of higher education in the nineteenth century. Democratization of Christianity is played out in the churches of the trans-Appalachian West in the combination of the Grecian-style with more traditional church architecture. In more pure form, Grecian-style bank buildings concretize a yearning for stability in commercial world marked by mercurial fluctuation. With great design variation, political and social aspirations provide dual motives in the construction of Grecian-style residences in the trans-Appalachian West. Far from the ideal, the organization of these buildings by type offers the challenge that the realization of the Grecian style in the American nation was both orderly and neatly compartmentalized, a far cry from the actual process of uneven community growth, erratic landscape settlement, and the peculiar and particular circumstances of the construction of individual buildings throughout the trans-Appalachian West.

Chapter Two of the dissertation focuses on the legacy of the American Revolution in the search for order as played out in the trans-Appalachian West. Immigrants from Europe joined people who traveled from the coastal settlements of the North American continent across the Appalachian Mountains and into a vast territory of native-occupied land. Grecian-style buildings, used to

establish a “new order for the ages,” provided a means to express American nationality in built form. In the landscape of the West, architecture remade people and fashioned them into democratic citizens. In the process, Grecian-style buildings helped to create an idealized wilderness landscape so that communities were viewed against this “wilderness” occupied by “primitive” people.

The third chapter traces the fabrication of idealized regional images for Americans through the introduction of gentility into the life of the nation. As buildings were constructed in the nation’s capital, the nation’s founders envisioned a great republic led by an educated gentry as a measure of protection against overt self-interest. This image of the great republic was realized in the initial construction of key governmental buildings in Washington, D. C. Even after the destruction of both the President’s House and the Capitol in the War of 1812, these two buildings were rebuilt and the leaders of the nation, in architectural form, expressed their desire to remain married to a republican vision rather than a more democratic form of government with rule by common men. In contrast to the work in the federal capital, politicians commissioned state capitols in the Old Northwest and the Frontier South of the 1820s through the 1840s with decidedly more Grecian-style form and ornament. Where Washington, D. C. was the physical center of the great republic, a different cultural language evolved as designers provided for and builders constructed the democracy through the erection of Grecian-style state capitols, county courthouses, and city halls in the trans-Appalachian West.

Chapter Four demonstrates how educational buildings helped create communities as American “Athens.” With strong links to established religious and cultural institutions of the East that implied both order and stability, western

colleges adopted the Grecian style to supply a new order for these communities based on balance, symmetry, proportion, scale, and finish materials. Academic buildings thus provided a measuring stick for communities to show their sophistication and advancement to other communities and to the “wilderness” landscape about them. The physical facilities of these institutions were sometimes the only evidence a community could offer to attract new settlers. Moreover, academic campuses provided a more stable economic base for communities in which they were located. Because the Grecian style provided a new order for these communities, buildings were transformative devices for communities in which they stood. Grecian-style educational buildings provided models for the construction of other community buildings in the same architectural tradition.

Grecian-style churches and bank buildings are placed in Chapter Five to demonstrate the wide range of building forms impacted by the Grecian style. Moreover, church buildings in the trans-Appalachian West linked the Grecian style with the democratization of Christianity. Across denominational lines, Grecian-style church architecture reflected the process of democratization and elements of the Grecian style, combined with other Gothic and English architectural traditions, helped legitimize evangelical religions and the Roman Catholic faith. By contrast, Grecian-style bank buildings erected most directly connected to Athenian models as evidence of bank stability and reliability in the complex economic relations entangled in the government-private sector responsibilities to establish reliable institutions to store and lend money. These temples of commerce provided further evidence to the wide variety of meanings associated with the Grecian style of the trans-Appalachian West.

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With perhaps the greatest design variation across region, Grecian-style residences demonstrated the social aspirations and the political dreams of citizens who built and occupied the buildings and the realization of these Grecian ideals in residential form is the subject of Chapter Six. Alongside countless other examples in the region, Andrew Jackson utilized the Grecian style to reconstruct The Hermitage in the 1830s to provide a political message on the exterior of the building separate from the activities of the building's interior. Jackson's message was one of fitting in with notions of democracy as understood throughout the nation. In the erection of a Grecian-style façade on his house, Jackson demonstrated his political promise as a man of the people. Like Jackson, people of the trans-Appalachian West erected residences to provide evidence of political aspiration and cultural sophistication. In this way, the Grecian style was idealized as a cultural language understood by many people across class lines. The Grecian style residence stood separate from other architectural styles developed to address the burgeoning population growth and the development of urban centers.

A seventh chapter is the location for speculations about the reasons for the disassociation of the Grecian style from its early nineteenth-century meanings in national and regional culture. In contrast to Andrew Jackson's use of the style, by the time of Abraham Lincoln's run for political office in the late 1850s, the Grecian style no longer equated with the "self made" man, instead replaced by "log cabin" culture and free soil ideology. Lincoln's campaign signaled the demise of the Grecian style and its positive democratic associations, also hastened by the rise of romantic architectural styles spurred on by mid-nineteenth-century domestic reform and beautification movements. Freed from

its political associations and less fashionable than later Gothic and Victorian styles, the Grecian style residence was then gradually manipulated as a regional image for the antebellum South.

Up to the mid-nineteenth century, Grecian-style buildings of all types demonstrated the desire and success of individuals, community groups, institutions, and local and state governments to clothe the nation in a democratic language. Based on the buildings of Ancient Greece, the Grecian style took on new meaning in the cultural landscape of the trans-Appalachian West. More so than in any other portion of the country, the communities of the Old Northwest and the Frontier South established the Grecian style as a common culture – one that cut across social, political, and economic distinctions among people and groups. The Grecian style and the subsequent revivals of the style throughout the nineteenth century, in the twentieth century, and in the present day still inform people that the timeless style of the buildings reinforce notions of people as democratic citizens of a democratic nation. These buildings do their cultural work openly through manipulation of the landscape as a symmetrical, harmonic, and rational entity

Above all, the uniformity in the use of the Grecian style across the nineteenth-century trans-Appalachian West exposes a means for understanding this geographic space as a single region. Regionalism and sectionalism, as understood today, are concepts deeply challenged by the circumstances of antebellum middle America as indicated in this cross-sectional examination of communities. Like the buildings themselves, the eight communities under scrutiny encapsulated an evolving world order that began with revolution, continued with appropriation of land and commodities from Native Americans,

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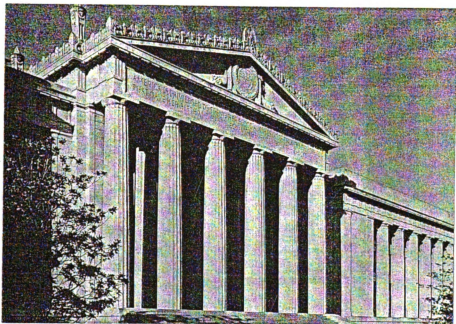
and shifted toward nation-building. The buildings in these eight communities revealed the ambition to create an architectural language appropriate for the United States as an emerging democratic nation.



1. Tara Plantation, from *Gone with the Wind*, 1939
Source: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios



2. Parthenon, Nashville, Tennessee
Source: Photograph by author, 4/2001



3. War Memorial, Nashville, Tennessee
Source: Kreyling, *Classical Nashville*, 67





4. Holly Springs Pilgrimage
Source: McAlexander, *A Southern Tapestry*, 105

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5. Map of Trans-Appalachian West from Morse's *Geography Made Easy*, 1819
Source: Carter, *Surveying the Record*, 32

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CHAPTER TWO

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A New Order for the Ages

The Legacy of the Revolution

The American Revolution created an ever-expanding circle of people who considered themselves capable of thinking for themselves about equality, freedom, government, and representation. Respect for authority and tradition eroded in the decades following the American Revolution and the "Revolution of 1800" established Thomas Jefferson as head of an agrarian republic that shifted the focus from the nation's founders to the "common man." Historian Nathan Hatch suggests that:

The vast transformation, this shift away from the Enlightenment and classical republicanism toward vulgar democracy and materialistic individualism in a matter of decades, was the real American Revolution.¹⁷

The first half of the nineteenth century was a centrifugal epoch in American history, a time when centralized authority was pushed toward the periphery, a time when citizens debated the constitution of the nation and its components. Many Americans had a terrible fear that the union would not work. Moreover, the population of the United States grew at an unprecedented rate due to immigration and migration. People, cut off from the roots of Eastern and European civilization, settled vast territories of the nation. Kin networks, churches, and community organizations remained important mechanisms to

¹⁷Nathan O. Hatch. *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 23. See also Gordon S. Wood. *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1992).

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harness order where people acted on their own and thought for themselves. But in a geographically dispersed nation there were divergent and dissenting perspectives: communication and understanding were complex and tangled. In the Early Republic, people generally sought to minimize chaos and uncertainty. By the time of the Jubilee in 1826, people were eager to espouse a more liberal, competitive, and market-driven nation where people looked to things like buildings and communities to provide order and to establish a common national identity.¹⁸

The Search for Order

Early American history is framed between the adoption of the Constitution in 1787 and the beginning of the Civil War. As the nation expanded westward, the citizenry of the Early Republic secured, structured, and ordered a landscape previously occupied by Native Americans. Many historians view the North and South as fundamentally different at the beginning of the nineteenth

¹⁸The historiography on the Early Republic is vast. However, some key works are useful to illuminate issues in the antebellum nation. Stephen Aron. *How the West Was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). John L. Brooke. *The Heart of the Commonwealth: Society and Political Culture in Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1713-1861* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Richard Bushman. *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992). Andrew R.L. Cayton and Frederika J. Teute, eds. *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). Elizabeth A. Perkins. *Border Life: Experience and Memory in the Revolutionary Ohio Valley* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988). Charles Sellers. *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). Carol Sheriff. *The Artificial River: The Erie Canal and the Paradox of Progress, 1817-1862* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996). Alan Taylor. *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement on the Maine Frontier, 1760-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990). Alan Taylor. *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995). Lisa C. Tolbert. *Constructing Townscapes: Space and Society in Antebellum Tennessee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). Kenneth J. Winkle. *The Politics of Community: Migration and Politics in Antebellum Ohio* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

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century and for these historians, as those differences intensified, the country erupted into Civil War.¹⁹ This dissertation complicates that interpretation. Both the vast geographic expanse and the rapidity of settlement west of the Appalachia Mountains led people to adopt the Grecian style for buildings, a style that stretched across class levels and political ideologies. This was an architectural expression that could be understood in the creation of shared meanings about the democratic promise of the new landscape. In the landscape of the trans-Appalachian West, important shared values were evident in the North and South.²⁰

The need both to order a community and to establish the character of the West was reflected in the built environment. Individuals, church groups, schools and universities, and the government constructed classically inspired buildings,

¹⁹Eric Foner. *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970). David Walker Howe. *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979). Lawrence Frederick Kohl. *The Politics of Individualism: Parties and the American Character in the Jacksonian Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). David M. Potter. *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976). In one dissenting opinion, Michael Holt suggests that political distrust escalated in the 1850s and the political machinery could no longer contain sectional ferment. Political blundering and dysfunctional political parties and players, not fundamental differences between regions, led to war. Michael F. Holt. *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York: Wiley, 1978). The states west of the Appalachian Mountains coalesced into a voting bloc effectively preventing sectional differences along a North-South split. See John Lauritz Larson. *Internal Improvement: National Public Works and the Promise of Popular Government in the Early United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 109-148.

²⁰ The Antebellum western frontier emerged as one region set apart from the rest of the nation. "Westerners, including settlers on both sides of the Ohio, and beyond, portrayed themselves as quintessential Americans, and their 'section' as a place where sectional distinctions were resolved and transcended. In this self-congratulatory rhetoric, sectional identity merged with a vaulting sense of the nation's glorious future and a patriotic devotion to the union." Peter S. Onuf. "The Origins of American Sectionalism." In Edward L. Ayers et al., eds. *All Over the Map: Rethinking American Regions* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1996), 27. See also Peter S. Onuf, *Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 146-152 and Andrew R. L. Cayton and Peter S. Onuf, *The Midwest and the Nation: Rethinking the History of an American Region* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 125-126.

structures, and landscapes. These balanced and harmonious edifices established order within fledgling communities and shared the same “dress code.” In these public statements, the Grecian style embodied the character of a democratic nation of the nineteenth century and resonated with the popularity of material culture inspired by Greek precedents. The Grecian style exemplified an architectural choice to clothe American buildings in a metaphorical language that molded images of individuals and communities as part of a democratic promise in the trans-Appalachian West.

The Trans-Appalachian West

Much of the work to establish a national identity was accomplished in the trans-Appalachian West, a geographic space that incorporated present-day Kentucky and Tennessee, the Northwest Territory states of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, and both Mississippi and Alabama, together sometimes referred to as the Frontier South (fig. 6). Social historians have analyzed the mixed nature of this trans-Appalachian region and described it as a place that diverse peoples who occupied and transformed the landscape. Susan Gray examines how “Yankees” moved west and reconstructed familiar communal institutions and thus transferred ethnic identity to shape a new regional identity.²¹ Nicole Etcheson, like Gray, evaluates the presence of both “Yankees” and “Southerners” who migrated to the trans-Appalachian West and whose ideas transformed the region and refashioned it as “Midwestern.” Despite their diverse geographic origins, settlers “transported a traditional social order to a new environment and ... progressively transformed the landscape in ways compatible with their own

priorities."²² Each of these historians suggests that community institutions were created by diverse populations through a common vision of community and a stronger sense of nationalism. The cultural work resulted in "new forms and new values to satisfy the deep and enduring need for community."²³

Many historians have written about social order and the struggle to establish new relations systems among people of different ethnicities and economic circumstances.²⁴ Malcolm Rohrbough speculates that the trans-Appalachian West was comprised of people, ideas, and institutions of great diversity that also retained "great unity."²⁵ Independent farmers operated in isolation from neighbors until harvest time. Merchants and professionals occupied a network of modestly scaled communities that dotted the land. Though improved transportation and communication came to these towns by the mid-nineteenth century, communities were secluded from one another and the market. At the time of exchange of goods, the rural world crossed with the semi-urban and urban. Without doubt, though, the prevailing conditions at a local or, at best, a regional level, influenced and engaged people. That is not to say there was not an impact from the national level on these localized communities. With integration into a national system over the course of the

²²Susan E. Gray. *The Yankee West: Community Life on the Michigan Frontier* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

²³Nicole Etcheson. *The Emerging Midwest: Upland Southerners and the Political Culture of the Old Northwest, 1787-1861*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

²⁴ Doyle, *Social Order of a Frontier Community*, 259.

²⁵ See Aron, *How the West Was Lost*; Bushman, *Refinement of America*; Cayton and Teute, *Contact Points*; Silver, *A New Face on the Countryside*; Taylor, *William Cooper's Town*; Taylor, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors*.

²⁶This is the theme of the essay by the same name: Malcolm J. Rohrbough. "Diversity and Unity in the Old Northwest, 1790-1850: Several Peoples Fashion a Single Region." In *Pathways to the Old Northwest: An Observance of the Bicentennial of the Northwest Ordinance* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1988): 71-87

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nineteenth century, these communities simply operated with an internal rather than an external focus.²⁶ Despite this relative isolation and provincial nature of the landscape in the trans-Appalachian West, communities there organized in remarkably similar fashion. People often moved in family units and organized the same kinds of cultural institutions (churches, organizations, clubs, etc.) as they had in the East or in Europe. They displaced the Native Americans who had previously occupied the landscape. Most significant to this study, they chose classical language and classically-inspired material culture as a common feature of their communities.

Grecian-style buildings gave a sense of unity that belies the diversity seen in historical accounts that characterize the antebellum North and South as fundamentally different places. Architecture illustrates that the built environment and the regional landscapes were more similar than different. The architecture of the trans-Appalachian West demonstrates that the early republic might be best conceptualized as a unified "West" rather than the conventional "North/South" regional division adopted by historians to explain the Civil War. Furthermore, architecture helps demonstrate the importance of order to the nineteenth-century Americans, especially in the trans-Appalachian West, a region rapidly in transformation from Native American occupation to an American "wilderness" ripe for exploitation and settlement.

²⁶For an elaboration of this idea, see William Cronon. *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: Norton, 1991).

Novo Ordo Seclorum

Not only was the search for national order taken up directly in the trans-Appalachian West, the issue was debated in federal congressional activity related to the settlement of the land. With the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, the Congress envisioned a number of states carved from land north of the Ohio River ordered by a land grid that divided the territory. With a minimum of additional administration, the division allowed for the orderly sale of land both in eastern land speculator offices and in the land offices in the West. Thomas Jefferson proposed that nearly a dozen small states be established in the Northwest Territory, each with a Roman-inspired name (fig. 7). In the orderly division of Jefferson's scheme, he envisioned no state larger in geographic area than any Eastern state. The division prevented any particular state any unfair advantage due to geographic or political proximity to transportation opportunities (rivers, lakes, trails, etc.).

In the embrace of native names, westerners sought a different order for the landscape than that found in the East.²⁷ Americans in the West sought to distinguish themselves from both the East and from Europe. Gone were connections to the British Empire and in their place stood American states with names fashioned from aboriginal inhabitants and traditions. Ironically, while Indians themselves were often displaced from the trans-Appalachian West, some semblance of their cultural collateral was retained in names for states. Rather than following Jefferson's proposal of Roman-inspired state names, five states were fashioned from the Northwest Territory and admitted to the union, first

²⁷ Virginia, Georgia, North and South Carolina, and Maryland, all were named for English royals. New York, New Hampshire, Rhode Island also contained English precedents. These names reflected the desire to shape the Eastern landscape in ways different than the West.

Ohio in 1803; then Indiana in 1816 and Illinois in 1818; and later, Michigan in 1837, and Wisconsin in 1848. Like Kentucky and Tennessee before them, each of these five states were established with Indian-inspired names rather than names of more classical origin. Similarly, the two states that comprise the Frontier South – Mississippi (admitted in 1817) and Alabama (admitted in 1819) carried Indian-inspired names.²⁸ Through the adoption of Indian names, Americans established a new order for the trans-Appalachian landscape, one different from Old World ideas and customs.

All this effort to alter the landscape of the trans-Appalachian West provided order for an "untamed" wilderness where Grecian style buildings stood in contrast to a western landscape characterized as increasingly "wild" and "foreign." Americans in the trans-Appalachian West co-opted Grecian-style building forms, language, and ideals to shape their image of themselves as Americans. People ordered the landscape with Grecian-style buildings so that the fledgling communities would be viewed as civilized places. This perspective was then reinforced in guide books and gazetteers, as well as other contemporary publications.

A desire for order was further apparent in the development of the Great Seal of the United States, adopted by Congress in the closing decade of the eighteenth century (fig. 8). Three mottoes took prominent locations on the seal: *E pluribus unum*, engraved on the obverse; *Annuit coeptis* and *Novo ordo seclorum*,

²⁸"Illinois" is the French corruption of Illini Indian word for "men" or "Indians"; "Indiana" was named for the land development company where lots of Indians were located; "Kentucky" is the Iroquois word for "plain" or "meadowland"; "Michigan" comes from the Chippewa word, *Majiga*, meaning "large clearing"; "Ohio" is the English spelling of the Iroquois word "Ohiiyo," meaning "beautiful" or "magnificent"; the Cherokee word "Tomasi" was corrupted to "Tennessee." "Mississippi" and "Alabama" are both names of native tribes who resided in these territories.

on the reverse. *E pluribus unum*, ("from many, one" or "one from many") reflected the intentions of the nation's founders who had in mind a union of several states where individuals acted independently yet worked simultaneously for the common good. *Annuit coeptis*, "He favors our undertaking" hinted at the providential spirit of God's blessing to the new nation. *Novo ordo seclorum* was, perhaps, the most instructive of the three mottoes. With the translation "A new order of the ages," *Novo ordo seclorum* foreshadowed the need for and indeed the desire of Americans to order their nation in a way unlike their British forebears. Taken together, these three mottoes reflected the desire to establish a model nation free from the tyranny and the influence of British control.²⁹

More than classical references casually made by and about the United States, these three mottoes represented the conscious decision of designer William Barton and the members of Congress to frame an ideology of a new order for the new nation on its seal. *E pluribus unum*, *Annuit coeptis*, and *Novo ordo seclorum* resonated with the cultural language of early nineteenth-century communities. Furthermore, the mottoes help illustrate just how pervasive a search was for a new order that would unite many people into one nation. The obverse of the Great Seal incorporated an eagle with the motto in its beak and a sheaf of arrows and an olive branch in its talons. On the reverse of the seal, an all-seeing eye with sunburst floated above an unfinished pyramid. The pyramid itself was engraved with Roman numerals (MCCCLXXVI) to mark the beginning of the American Revolution in 1776. The pyramid rested on a flat and relatively featureless landscape that stretched to a distant horizon. The

²⁹ The mottoes on the Great Seal of the United States are fully explained in Brian Burrell. *The Words We Live By: The Creeds, Mottoes, and Pledges that Have Shaped America* (New York: Free Press, 1997).

unfinished pyramid documented the foundation of a great nation yet to be completed. The eye, either a Masonic emblem or perhaps a signal for God, watched over a virtually undifferentiated landscape, an "empty slate" upon which the great national experiment took place. The unformed landscape, shaped by the common people of a new nation, was the uncharted wilderness from which emerged the United States.

For buildings, the "*Novo ordo seclorum*" of the United States was, at first, the Federal style, based on Roman building forms and materials, and a Renaissance-inspired view of the built world. The Federal style was noted for its symmetrical arrangement, its pure geometric forms, its planar surfaces, and its careful use of delicately-scaled decorative elements, particularly around door and window openings. (figs. 9 and 10). While the style was popular throughout the East, especially in Philadelphia and the new Capital City, Washington, D.C., the style had a broad range of regional variants and was less of a national architectural language than the style that succeeded it. The Grecian style, fully introduced throughout the nation (then East of the Mississippi River), became that national language of the built environment (figs. 11-17).

Novo ordo seclorum better characterized the first true national order of architecture – the Grecian style – an architectural tradition that retained Federal-style characteristics and included one notable addition in the use of large-scale porches and porticoes. These building elements stood out from planar walls and symmetrically spaced window and door openings as a significant departure from the more rational and less exuberant Federal-style structures. A Grecian-style porch was a focal characteristic for all types of residential, commercial, ecclesiastical, and government buildings at all social levels. Porches served not

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only as a hallmark of the Grecian style, they were signs and symbols to indicate the intellectual and social standing of a building's occupants. Further, they were instructive devices for the community at large and indicated the type of orderly and balanced life required of all citizens. Porches were also places of hospitality, where stranger and guest gathered, protected from the elements to access the building. Finally, porches stood as zones of transformation, as ways that people transformed nature into ordered space. By passing daily beneath a porch supported by solid and massive columns, life was figuratively transformed from disorder to order. Grecian columns provided scalar elements comparable to the human form. These symbols, because of their proximity to humans and their human-like scale, prescribed rules of behavior and transformed a life of frontier disorder for a life as an upright and contributing republican citizen in a new democracy. Moreover, through the extension of broad flights of stairs from primary entrances to the street, temples of democracy provided access to all who could muster their resources to ascend into the hallowed halls of these Grecian-style buildings.

Why the Grecian Style?

Rather than rely on Roman precedents for motifs, building forms, objects, and ideas, as Thomas Jefferson suggested, Americans co-opted Grecian models for building forms and design motifs. Thus surrounded by Grecian-style artifacts and ideas in everyday life, people came to associate ancient Greece and her democratic legacy – rather than the corrupt Roman Empire – with modern America. From the time of the United States Jubilee in 1826 until before the

Civil War, the Greek Revival – more popularly called the Grecian style – was universally found in all types of cultural expression.

Temple-like buildings, Greek-inspired place names, Hellenic-themed decorative arts objects, and classical references in rhetoric all helped set antiquity as a design context in early nineteenth-century America. Poetry and novels made reference to classical figures, allegories, and classical mythology.³⁰ Similarly, American music was influenced by the revival of classical names and themes within composed works.³¹ A number of American paintings featured classical buildings and ruins set in arcadian landscapes.³² Political figures and other prominent citizens were featured in sculptures draped in classical garb and situated in classical poses.³³ Classical place names dotted the landscape of New

³⁰Several poems deal with classical themes: Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto the Second (1812); Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Hellas* (1821); Keats, *Ode on A Grecian Urn* (1810).

³¹One example is Ludwig von Beethoven's "The Ruins of Athens," a work written for the opening of a German-language theatre in Pest (Hungary). The work recounts the story of the Greek city under Turkish rule and how Athena finds a home for the muses in the highly cultured city of Pest.

³²The most famous of these landscape scenes are the "Course of Empire" series by Thomas Cole. These paintings depict landscapes entitled "Savage," "Arcadian," "Consummation," "Destruction," and "Desolation." See Earl A. Powell. *Thomas Cole* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990), 62-71. William H. Truettner and Alan Wallach, eds. *Thomas Cole: Landscape into History*. Angela Miller's work on George Caleb Bingham is also useful. Angela Miller. "The Mechanisms of the Market and the Invention of Western Regionalism." In David C. Miller, ed. *American Iconology: New Approaches to Nineteenth Century Art and Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

³³Nineteenth-century sculptors Horatio Greenough, Joel T. Hart, and Hiram Powers exhibited classical themes in their work. See H. W. Jansen. *Nineteenth-Century Sculpture* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1985), 79-83. Richard H. Saunders; *Horatio Greenough: An American Sculptor's Drawings* (Middlebury College Museum of Art, 1999), 46-47; Nathalia Wright. *Horatio Greenough: The First American Sculptor* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963); Richard P. Wunder. *Hiram Powers: Vermont Sculptor, 1805-1873* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991), 119, 161, 201. Also see "Neo-Classical Sculpture in America: Greco-Roman Sources and Their Results." *The Magazine Antiques* 108 (Nov. 1975), 975. Thomas Jefferson collected classical sculpture for the interior of Monticello, including Venus, Diana, Appolo, and Hercules. Adams, William Howard. *Jefferson's Monticello* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1983), 197-201.

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York and the trans-Appalachian West.³⁴ Tombstones in the classical style stood in cemeteries across America.³⁵ Empire style furniture and decorations, those inspired by Greek history, were fabricated and used in parlors throughout the United States.³⁶ With draped tunics and graceful lines, women's clothing was fashioned with Grecian styles in mind.³⁷

In buildings, the Grecian style was spurred on by style books that standardized the classical language employed by builders, artisans, and architects throughout the nation.³⁸ Moreover, as the architectural design process stabilized and architecture was created as a separate profession, early practitioners (e.g. Benjamin Henry Latrobe, William Strickland, Gideon Shryock) advocated the use of the Grecian style for influential buildings.³⁹ These designers, as "master linguists," established and then sustained the popularity of the Grecian style in America well into the middle nineteenth century.⁴⁰

³⁴ Evan T. Sage. "Classical Place Names in America." *American Speech* 5 (1929): 271. George R. Stewart. *Names on the Land: A Historical Account of Place-Naming in the United States* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1945), 186. Wilbur Zelinsky, "Classical Town Names in the United States." *Exploring the Beloved Country* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994), 295-328.

³⁵James Deetz. *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Everyday Life* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1977). Stanley South. "Whither Pattern?" *Historical Archaeology* 2.1 (1988): 25-28.

³⁶Wendy A. Cooper. *Classical Taste in America, 1800-1840* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1993).

³⁷Diana De Marly. *Dress in North America: The New World, 1492-1800* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1990), 162-172.

³⁸*Ionian Antiquities* (1769); Asher Benjamin. *The Practical House Carpenter* (Boston: R. P. and C. Williams, 1830); Owen Biddle. *The Young Carpenter's Assistant* (Philadelphia: Benjamin Johnson, 1805); Minard Lafever. *Beauties of Modern Architecture* (New York: D. Appleton, 1835); James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *Antiquities of Athens* (London: J. Haberkorn, 1762). Edward Shaw. *Rural Architecture* (Boston: James B. Dow, 1843).

³⁹ As one example, from the 1820s until the 1850s, William Strickland linked the style center of Philadelphia to the frontier in his commission as architect for the Tennessee State Capitol. This architectural legacy was as important as the training of assistants Gideon Shryock and Thomas U. Walter who, in turn, created numerous Grecian style buildings in the trans-Appalachian West. See Mills Lane, *Architecture of the Old South* (Savannah: The Beehive Press, 1989).

⁴⁰The Grecian style was a national architectural style and order -- if not an international one -- as it arose almost simultaneously between 1770 and 1820 in localities throughout the world from

Not only did people learn about ancient civilization from material culture, they learned of Greece and ancient history through travel and through classical texts and studies in schools, academies and colleges throughout the United States. A proper gentleman's education was considered incomplete without a grand tour of Europe and the ancient ruins of Greece and Rome.⁴¹ A Nashville newspaper editorial suggested that:

Lovers of art flock from the most distant parts of the world to the Acropolis and dwell with rapture on its unrivaled beauties and seek to inhale, amid the ruins that surround them, a portion of the spirit by which they were conceived.⁴²

Greece was conceived as a model civilization not only to be visited but also emulated by democratic citizens across class lines. Upper class Americans were able to build houses and collect goods in the Grecian style. Due to inexpensive fabrication of goods and the simultaneous rise of guide books and taste manuals, the middle class was also able to purchase and use Grecian-style goods and build Grecian-style buildings. For the first time in the nation, a single stylistic movement aligned in these two social classes and extended the reach of the Grecian style beyond the walls of the mansions of the rich to the general population. Thus, the Grecian style came to represent a democratic style with widespread application throughout the nation.⁴³

St. Petersburg to the banks of the Danube, to structures in Australia, and to the wide variety of houses, business buildings, churches, and institutional structures throughout the United States.

⁴¹ Paul Andrew Manoguerra's work provides a solid explanation of the connection of grand tour activities and cultural works commissioned as a result of painters' studies abroad. *Classic Ground: American Painting and the Italian Encounter, 1848-1860*. Michigan State University (2000).

⁴²Nashville, *The Daily Orthopolitan* (January 8, 1846).

⁴³For an elaboration of the class argument, see Bushman, *Refinement of America*. For more information on democratization, see Wood, *Radicalism of the American Revolution* and Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity*.

The Greek wars for independence (1821-1828), because of their parallels to the American Revolution, sharpened the romantic and sympathetic identification with Greece. As Americans struggled with national, regional, and individual identities created in the decades after the American Revolution, they read with interest news of the Greek Wars featured in newspapers and periodicals throughout the nation, so much so that "from the earliest infancy the people of this country have been taught to regard the memory of the ancient Greeks with the highest veneration."⁴⁴

Citizens of the United States supported Grecian people in their quest for independence as much as they disparaged Rome and Roman influences. The Roman Empire, from American eyes, equated with chaos and dirt and stood opposite ideas of purity in the Grecian democracy.⁴⁵ Furthermore, English building designers and contractors favored Roman building forms and decorative systems. Although Americans emulated English ways, an independent American design consciousness was spurred on during and following the War of 1812. Because England co-opted Roman and Renaissance inspiration for Palladian structures, the citizens of the United States turned to a more "pure" source for their structures – the temples of the Grecian democracy. It was Greece that Americans identified with a great democracy – all free men shared in decision-making for their city-states. Men of Ancient Greece, perceived

⁴⁴Cited in Myrtle A Cline. *American Attitudes toward the Greek War for Independence. 1821-1828* (Atlanta: n. p., 1930), 28.

⁴⁵ Thomas Jefferson's architectural works, among many, followed Roman precedents. See Damie Stillman. "From the Ancient Roman Republic to the American One: Architecture for a New Nation," In Donald R. Kennon, ed. *A Republic for the Ages: The United States Capitol and the Political Culture of the Early Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999). The pervasive nature of classical influence on the nation's founders and the Revolutionary generation is explained in Carl J. Richard. *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

as patriots, were equated with nineteenth-century land-owning men in the United States who, with the American nation, attempted to establish a democracy modeled on that of ancient Greece.⁴⁶

The Fabrication of Wilderness and a Primitive People

Invented myths about the Indians and the nature of the geographic space help explain why the Grecian style stood for "democracy" in the trans-Appalachian West. The architectural emptiness of the landscape made Grecian style buildings within Western communities quite noticeable. Characterized as a wilderness by travel writers, the landscape of the trans-Appalachian West provided the context for Grecian-style buildings starkly contrasted to this perceived wilderness. Alexis de Tocqueville included an observation of these contrasts in his early nineteenth century travel account:

From time to time... the aspect of the country suddenly changes. On turning a wood one sights the elegant spire of a steeple, some houses shining white and some neat shops. Two paces further on, the forest, primitive and apparently impenetrable, resumes its sway and once more reflects its foliage in the waters of the lake...Those who have traveled the United States will find in this tableau a striking emblem of American society. Everything in its violent contrast, unforeseen. Everywhere extreme civilization and nature abandoned to herself find themselves together as it were face to face.

Without transition you pass from a wilderness into the streets of a city, from the wildest scenes to the most smiling pictures of civilized life. If, night coming on you unawares, you are not forced to take shelter at the foot of a tree, you have every prospect of arriving in a village where

⁴⁶ Americans emulated Greece and created distance from Rome in powerful history lessons within nineteenth-century American paintings. With depictions from Italian sources, these paintings featured ruins, peasants, and bucolic settings, to make "Roman" the American landscape. Manoguerra, *Classic Ground*. Far from the celebration classical antiquity, conversely, these views forecasted a collective warning of what might happen if disorder claimed the United States. Because Romans lost their virtue, the Roman civilization crumbled. In America, patriots must work against tyranny or, like the Romans before, the nation would be crushed. Thomas Cole's "Course of Empire" Series traces such a decline in the Roman civilization. See Powell, *Thomas Cole*, 62-71.

you will find everything, even to French fashions, the almanac of modes, and the caricatures of the boulevards.⁴⁷

de Tocqueville distinguished wilderness from civilization and, most importantly, links them as interconnected concepts for understanding the American citizen and nation.

Images of Indians were reworked in guidebooks of the early nineteenth century to look primitive so that, by contrast, communities of white-columned buildings would appear civilized. Traveler William Darby characterized frontier communities as "the point of contact between aboriginal inhabitants of the wilderness, and the civilized people, who are pressing these natives of North America backwards, by the double forces of physical and moral weight" so that in the streets of a frontier community could be seen "the extremes of human improvement, costume, and manners...[as in] New York, Philadelphia, London, or Paris" alongside the "bushy, bare-headed savage, almost in primeval nudity."⁴⁸

Amidst ancient forests of unfriendly and primitive Indians, Grecian style buildings stood as ~~imagined~~ symbols of progress in a landscape that yearned for order. The buildings were used to manipulate local and regional ideologies in order to "uncivilize" the Indians, appropriate their lands, and reorder the Frontier South and the Old Northwest. Nineteenth-century citizens turned to the democracy of Greece and the building forms of that culture to link to it and thus establish a legitimate connection to Hellenic civilization. Grecian-style architecture demonstrated to the world the legitimacy of America as a democratic nation and its prospects for a healthy future. The Grecian style

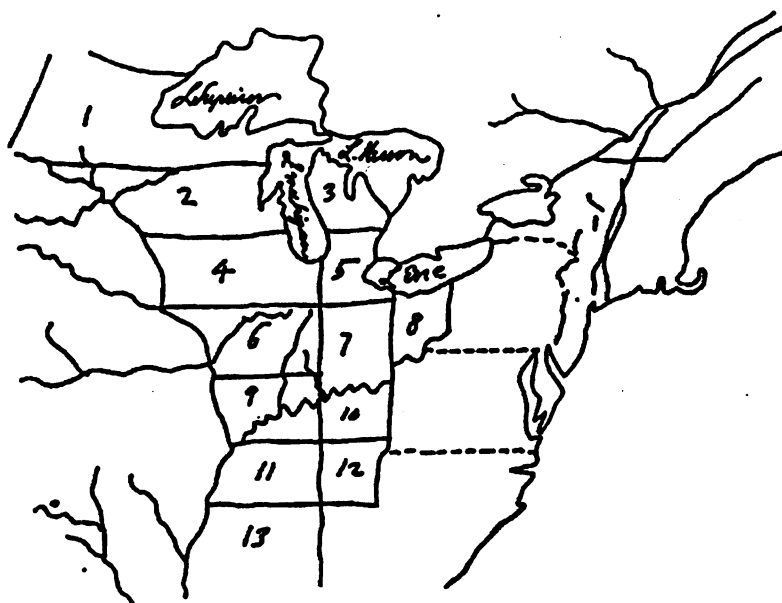
⁴⁷From *Quinze Jours au Desert*, eventually published with *Democracy in America*. George Wilson Pearson. *Tocqueville and Beaumont in America* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1936), 237-238.

became the common “language” of the nineteenth century and, like community nicknames, this language was deployed on the landscape to shape not only community but ideas about civilization in a constructed wilderness, about nation in the context of its regions, and about the work to shape a national image suitable to the political, economic, and social intentions of American citizens.

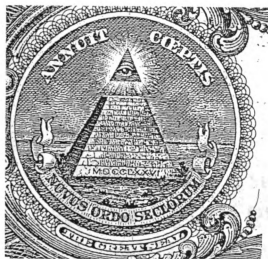
⁴⁸William Darby. *A Tour from the City of New York to Detroit* (New York: n. p., 1810), 190.



6. Map of Trans-Appalachian West from Morse's *Geography Made Easy*, 1819
Source: Carter, *Surveying the Record*, 32



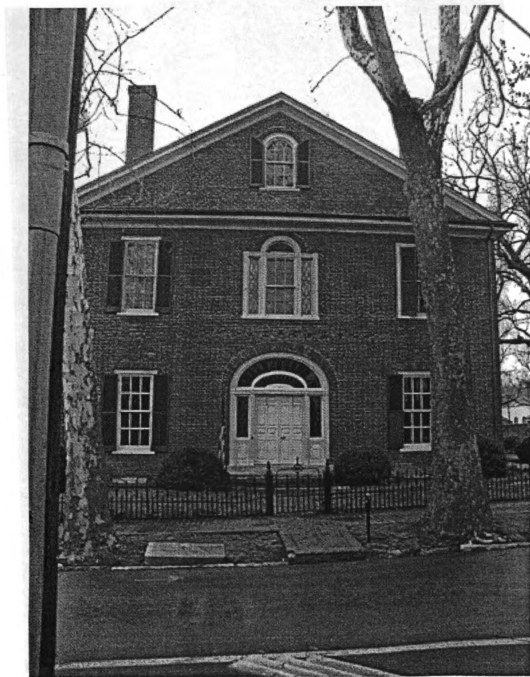
7. *Jefferson's Proposed Map of Northwest Territories*
Source: William Clements Library, University of Michigan



8. The Great Seal of the United States



9. Morgan County Courthous, ca. 1810, Jacksonville, Illinois
Source: Doyle, *Social Order*, 120



10. Hunt-Morgan House, ca. 1811, Lexington, Kentucky
Source: Photograph by author, 4/2002



11. Lane House, ca. 1845, Crawfordsville, Illinois
Source: Photograph by author, 3/2001



12. President's House, ca. 1835, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama
Source: Photograph by author, 4/2001



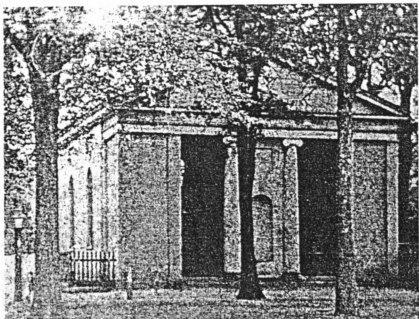
13. Medical Department Building, ca. 1850, University of Nashville,
Nashville, Tennessee
Source: Patrick, *Architecture in Tennessee*, 136



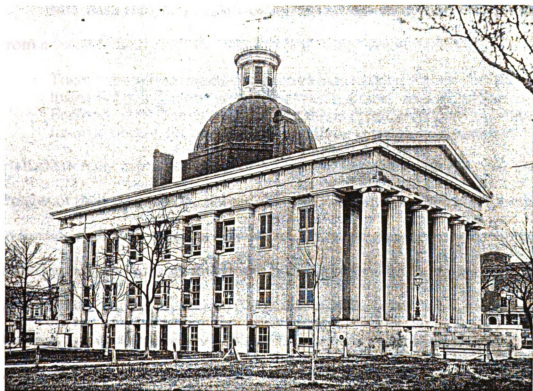
14. Third Street between Main and Vine, ca. 1842, Cincinnati, Ohio
View by engraver Otto Onken
Source: Glazer, *Cincinnati in 1840*, 78



15. Antioch Church, ca. 1850, Outside Lexington, Kentucky, ca. 1850
Source: Kerr and Wright, *Century in Photographs*, 144



16. Christ Church, ca. 1834-1835, Tuscaloosa, Alabama
Source: Lane. *AOS: Alabama and Mississippi*, 48



17. Madison County Courthouse, ca. 1836-1840, Huntsville, Alabama
Source: Lane. AOS: *Alabama and Mississippi*, 84

CHAPTER THREE

THE ARCHITECTURAL LANDSCAPE OF A GENTEEL REPUBLIC

Grecian-Style Government Buildings

The Genteel Republic

Mrs. Basil Hall, an Englishwoman, visited Boston in 1827 and, in moving from a social function at Mrs. Ticknor's to a "rout," recounted that:

There were refreshments of various kinds handed round, and the Ice instead of being in one great pillar was in glasses, as is in fashion in England. At Albany I was told that this is considered very ungenteel, their favorite phrase, for in America everything is genteel or ungenteel.⁴⁹

Hall's statement captures a sense of Americans' struggles with the rules and images of their new nation. Should they follow the rules of behavior established in Europe and, most especially, in England? Should Americans wear clothes, collect goods, and inhabit houses and buildings based on European fashions? Alternatively, should republican citizens dismiss European rules, modes, and fashions and establish others? Should they cast the rules aside altogether? Alexis de Tocqueville captured this same sense of America as a place where people reinvented themselves and where rules of etiquette and behavior were modified in a new landscape with the observation that "all privileges being abolished, ranks are intermingled, and men are for ever rising or sinking upon the ladder of society."⁵⁰

⁴⁹Cited in Hermann Warner Williams. *Mirror to the American Past: A Survey of American Genre Painting, 1750-1900* (Greenwich: New York Graphic Society, 1973), 46-47.

⁵⁰Alexis deTocqueville. *Democracy in America*, trans. by Henry Reeve (London: Saunders and Otley, 1835) 124.

Men and women re-styled themselves through the introduction of gentility into the life of the nation. In the eighteenth century, people were increasingly concerned for stylishness, taste, beauty, and politeness. As the century progressed, plain and utilitarian buildings and furnishings yielded to more decorative and opulent modes as power transferred from the colonial gentry. After the Revolution, gentility spread to a broad middle class with rules to dictate the conduct of these new democratized "aristocrats." Volumes on etiquette explained how people should hold their bodies, dress, eat, and converse in pleasing ways and guidebooks illustrated the types of buildings appropriate to such genteel people. This democratization of gentility impacted nearly every form of behavior and every aspect of the physical environment. People remodeled or constructed new houses and yards, public buildings, and churches with rules established in architectural guidebooks. Entrepreneurs constructed factories to supply vast new markets for household furnishings that reflected the knowledge and refined taste of genteel American citizens. Throughout the nation, city officials landscaped parks and greens and planted trees to demonstrate their refined nature, especially in contrast to rural landscapes outside of these communities. These efforts reflected the collective exertion of the American people to remold themselves into a new society on the world stage with buildings and landscapes transformed by gentility and democracy.⁵¹

⁵¹ Richard Bushman stresses that these visions of a more elegant life both complemented and competed with other American values associated with evangelical religion, republicanism, capitalism, and the work ethic. Bushman, *Refinement of America*.

The Establishment of Difference and Region

Mrs. Hall's observation, "in America everything is genteel or ungenteel," demonstrated not only the growing concern for gentility, she provided a way to conceive of different people and places in a diverse nineteenth-century nation. Her comment shed light on the struggles of people to come to terms with their images, the extrinsic images of the nation within an emerging world order, and the intrinsic images captured in the nation's regions. In the utilization of a dichotomy, Mrs. Hall revealed that people in the nineteenth century were concerned with gentility in the statement that Americans' favorite phrase was "ungenteel." She further illustrated that differences could be observed between places as distinctions made them either "genteel or ungenteel." An 1822 article in the *North American Review* amplified this view through the notation of regional differences among the nation's citizens – a "greater variety of specific character" than ever before:

...the highminded, vainglorious Virginian, living on his plantation in baronial state...the active, enterprizing money-getting merchant of the East...the Connecticut peddler...vending his 'notions' at the very ends of the earth...and the long shaggy boatmen 'clear from Kentuck.'⁵²

Through the revelation of some notions about nineteenth-century regional stereotypes about America, this *Review* article demonstrates a sense of difference in place and in people throughout the United States. The December 1824 view of the editor of the *Kaskasia Republican* noted a growing sense of regional identity:

The man of the east is but an inert biped -- a mere baby in comparison [with the westerner]. Yet strange as it may seem, these beings, whose senses are as obtuse as a pumpkin, whose dialecticks are of the dandy-

⁵² *North American Review* 15, Article XII, (July 1822): 252.

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obscure, and who have 'no more talents than a turnip,' are self-class'd as the first order of men! Let them enjoy the illusion.⁵³

Westerners held strong opinions about more established Easterners and sought to distinguish the West as a place of hard work where men could rise through their own efforts and become fully engaged citizens of the United States.

Traveler Morris Birkbeck amplified a dichotomy that emerged west and east when he wrote about the settlement of the West:

A parcel of land speculators in New York and Philadelphia, seeing that our settlement was attracting emigrants, when they wanted to settle their land, east of the mountains, set on foot every disparaging report, as to the health, success, provisions, morals, and religion, plying each individual on the point at which he was most sensitive. And this began almost as early as our first settlers arrived. Of all this we were for a time unconscious. It was not until after their attacks appeared in print, that we were all aware of the extent of these calumnies. And it took a long time for a book or pamphlet from the Eastern Cities, to reach us in those days.⁵⁴

But was the nation all that different along the Eastern seaboard and in the trans-Appalachian West? Though some regional characteristics could be identified, these two areas of the nation were quite similar. Both were the home to fledgling communities built on landscapes occupied by previous cultures and subsequently overtaken by a new order. In 1818, when Birkbeck ventured west of the Appalachian Mountains, he was surprised by the large number of emigrants there and wrote that "old America seems to be breaking up and moving westward." From West and East, and from North and South, people struggled to create themselves, and to identify one another, their communities, and the nation.

⁵³ *Kaskasia Republican*. Kaskasia, Illinois. (14 December 1824) Cited in Etcheson. *The Emerging Midwest*, 156.

⁵⁴ Morris Birkbeck. *Notes of a Journey in America from the Coast of Virginia to the Territory of Illinois in 1818* (Philadelphia: n.p., 1818), 168-169.

The Architectural Dimension of Region

The nation's physical environment was part of the early nineteenth-century processes of self-identification where fledgling communities were constructed within idealized frameworks of Hellenistic culture as places of commerce and centers of government. The buildings constructed held information about the aspirations and ideas of Americans who sought to overlay a web of gentility across the landscape. The tensions encapsulated within these buildings and communities shifted as conceptions of who was included and excluded became embedded in the larger notions of American nationhood. Temple-style civic structures found throughout the nation's regions stood as oppositional contentions and varied ideas about "democracy" within the nation.

Despite significant opportunities to change architectural styles in the reconstruction of the federal capital, Roman-style buildings dominated the city and stood for the lofty Republican ideals of the Revolution in a nation ruled by an educated elite to whom the common person was expected to defer. By contrast, in the state capitals, greater varieties of "democracy" were embodied within classical structures. Grecian-style buildings most especially resonated with the ideas of "democratized" Republican citizens who contributed to the wealth and health of the nation in its hinterlands. Greek-inspired buildings helped to define the means through which the land, the people, and the economy were democratized. As the early nineteenth-century Old Northwest and Frontier South were landscapes of inter-cultural interaction among Easterners moving west, immigrants from Europe, and Native Americans, the identities of place and people were in flux. The placement of classical buildings – "temples of democracy" – in these landscapes represented significant cultural work to shape

the character of both the land and the people. These buildings, based on Old World models, helped transform people into ideal republican citizens. They helped democratize communities as classical and ordered settings for the everyday work of a great nation. They helped construct the Old Northwest and the Frontier South as archetypal landscapes in fashioning a consolidated national identity. The buildings of the nation's capital and various state capitol structures throughout the Old Northwest and Frontier South were constructed for the same reasons – demonstrations of order on the landscape and manifestations of the democratic government in tangible form. The federal capital, Washington, and the capitals of trans-Appalachian states contained elements of “gentility” as they worked to emerge as refined places in the midst of poor funding, economic struggles, the War of 1812, and the competing political and social interests of its citizens.

A Capital Competition

Communities publicly vied for the honor and prosperity associated with the location as a seat of government. Along with government-funded universities, prisons, land offices, schools for the deaf and blind, and insane asylums, state capitals guaranteed a community's economic and political success. These institutions enabled a community to draw population, profit from business investment, and reap benefits brought by (often government-sponsored) support services and related service industries. As a state capital required a location that was symbolically representative as well as functional and convenient to the particular state it served, competition was often fierce among communities that sought designation as a seat of government.

By 1812, eight of the thirteen original colonies had established a new capital city that was different from its colonial capital. The 1787 Northwest Land Ordinance required territories to designate a capital as one condition of statehood and inadvertently initiated a series of power plays that resulted in a number of different capitals for Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio.⁵⁵ In Kentucky and Tennessee, settled before the Northwest Territory, the state capital was selected after protracted debate about its location.⁵⁶ In the Frontier South, a number of communities served as the headquarters for state government before the final selection was made.⁵⁷ This capital competition took place not only on the state level; the nation simultaneously struggled with a site for the federal capital. Like the various states, competitive economic, social, and cultural interests of people and political factions determined the eventual location of Washington D. C. amidst the swampy land in the Potomac River basin.

Washington D. C.: A New Rome?

After years of debate, Congress in 1790 passed an “Act for Establishing the Temporary and Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States,” and thus created the first presidential commission in United States history. The

⁵⁵ In Illinois, the state capital was first founded at Kaskasia, relocated to Vandalia, and permanently established in Springfield. Indiana’s single capital, Indianapolis, was fixed in that city after protracted debate about its most appropriate location. Four cities served as headquarters for state government in Ohio: Marietta, Cincinnati, Chillicothe, and Columbus, the latter remaining the capital today.

⁵⁶ In Kentucky, both Louisville and Lexington vied for the honor, but Frankfort was selected as the seat of state government. Nashville was selected as the capital of Tennessee in 1843, the legislature having met in various locations since declaring statehood in 1796.

⁵⁷ Tuscaloosa was named the capital of Alabama, a distinction it retained until the state government was removed in the 1840s to Montgomery, a more central location to the major plantations in the state. In Mississippi, several communities had been the location for the meeting of the legislature and Jackson was named the seat of government in 1822.

so-called Residence Act authorized President Washington to locate a new capital along the banks of the Potomac River and further authorized the Chief Executive to name three commissioners to determine the building needs for the Congress, the President, and other offices of government. The Act further specified that Philadelphia would remain the temporary seat of government until the construction of a Capitol Building and the President's House were completed and initial construction of streets and support buildings was accomplished within the district. This single Congressional act came near the end of acrimonious discussions within the first convened Congresses about the positive and negative aspects of more than a dozen proposed capital locations.⁵⁸ Discussions to relocate the capital would continue throughout the end of the eighteenth century and on into the nineteenth century, especially after the partial destruction of both the Capitol and the President's House during the War of 1812.⁵⁹

The Residence Act represented a compromise for the location of the nation's new capital city, an attempt to reconcile Northern and Southern interests through a capital location in a position advantageous to each section. The Potomac River location was selected on the "border" between north and south, but it also represented a significant transportation link to the East (and Europe beyond) as well as an opportunity to acknowledge the flow of goods from the new frontier in the interior of the American continent to the West. Thus situated,

⁵⁸ For a detailed analysis of this debate, see Kenneth R. Bowling. "A Capitol before a Capitol: Republican Visions," and "'The Year 1800 Will Soon Be Upon Us:' George Washington and the Capitol." Both in Donald R. Kennon, ed. *A Republic for the Ages: The United States Capitol and the Political Culture of the Early Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 36-63. See also Kenneth R. Bowling. *Creating the Federal City, 1774-1800: Potomac Fever* (Octagon Museum Exhibit Catalog, 1988).

⁵⁹ A discussion of the various sites for the capitol in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be found in Chapter Two and the Epilogue of Kenneth R. Bowling. *The Creation of Washington, D.C.* (Fairfax: George Mason University Press, 1991).

Washington D.C. was planned as a compromise of sectional political interests and economic concerns.⁶⁰

In the closing decade of the eighteenth century, much energy was expended in America to fashion a capital city to rival the various capitals of Europe. Major Pierre Charles L'Enfant and surveyor Andrew Ellicott made an initial survey of the city's site and, in 1791, L'Enfant prepared a plan for the Capital City that incorporated some key features proposed by Thomas Jefferson. Rather than the amalgamation of all prominent sites into one centralized district, L'Enfant proposed various sites – occupied by statues, obelisks, principal buildings, fountains, and open spaces – dispersed throughout the city connected by diagonal avenues overlaid on an orthogonal city grid. While other streets ranged from 90 to 130 feet in width, main avenues were 160 feet wide in the provision for a monumental scale to the city on paper. A “Grand Avenue, 400 feet in breadth, and about a mile in length, bordered in gardens” was provided as the central link within L'Enfant's elaborate composition. Now the Washington Mall, this open space linked the sites for the President's House and the Capitol.⁶¹ The Capital City, as envisioned by Washington, Jefferson, and as realized on paper by L'Enfant, was to be a fully planned, compact community that featured

⁶⁰ The new site, outside an established urban center, reflected the notion that cities were evil and corrupt while agriculture was virtuous. The objective for Washington D. C. was to disassociate government with other typical city functions. L'Enfant's baroque plan, reminiscent of European models, had the additional advantages of an orienting device, and a way to control crowds. See “Essay on the City of Washington” of 1796. Cited in Bowling, *Creating the Federal City*, 11.

⁶¹ Cited in John W. Reps. *Monumental Washington: The Planning and Development of the Capital Center* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 20. Only two colonial capitals exhibited some tendency toward Baroque plans such as L'Enfant's plan for Washington. John W. Reps. *The Making of Urban America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 103-114.

large-scaled structures, spaces, and monuments dispersed throughout a tightly organized and articulated series of transportation corridors (fig. 18).

On paper, Washington was to be a new Rome – a new capital city for an American empire. Moreover, the city was to capture in physical form the very republican values and institutions established in the United State Constitution. The tripartite division model of government found its way onto the landscape of Washington in the provision for decentralized spaces and locations for major governmental functions. The President's House was located on ground separate from the Capitol, each an equal branch of government. Office buildings and support structures that supported both the legislative and the executive were scattered throughout L'Enfant's plan with no one particular location with much emphasis over others. Links among these buildings were often tenuous at first as vast expanses of undeveloped land separated the various governmental buildings constructed in the capital city.

Not everyone thought Washington to be the "new Rome." Written on the occasion of his Washington visit in 1804, Irish poet Thomas Moore penned a verse satirize the young city:

In fancy now beneath the twilight gloom,
Come, let me lead thee o'er this "second Rome,"
Where tribunes rule, where dusky Davi bow,
And what was Goose Creek is Tiber now.
This embryo capital, where Fancy sees
Squares in morasses, obelisks in trees;
Which second sighted seers e'en now adorn
White shrines unbuilt and hereoes yet unborn,
Though now but woods – and Jefferson – they see
Where streets should run and sages *ought* to be.⁶²

⁶² The poem was written in 1804 upon the poet's visit to Washington. Thomas More. "To Thomas Hume, Esq., M.D. from the City of Washington," *Poetical Works* (New York: n. p., 1868) 178.

Though meant in jest, Moore's verse did contain a valid notion that the capital city did not quite measure up to its ancient classical model in the city of Rome or to the modern capitals of Europe. Instead, Washington, like many new cities of the early nineteenth century, stood as a place of contrasts. And like the wilderness and civilization intertwined and apparent in the trans-Appalachian West, Moore articulated a similar dichotomy for Washington. He stressed the newness of the United States, an "embryo capital" within "morasses" and "trees" – the wilderness.

The Realities of Washington's Development

The city on paper was not what was envisioned in reality. When the government records from Philadelphia reached the shores of the Potomac in the late eighteenth century, an underdeveloped landscape greeted President and Mrs. Madison and their entourage. The President's House was unfinished, the Capitol building was still under construction, and many of the streets were unpaved.

Traveler Thomas Twining offered his insights of the late 1790s:

After some time this indistinct way assumed more the appearance of a regular avenue, the tree here having been cut down in a straight line, Although no habitation of any kind was visible, I had no doubt but I was now riding along one of the streets of the metropolitan city. I continued in this spacious avenue for half a mile, and then came out upon a large spot, cleared of wood, in the center of which I saw two buildings on an extensive scale....⁶⁵

The two buildings Twining described were the United States Capitol and the President's House, both under construction. Though its cornerstone was laid on September 18, 1793, only the north wing of the Capitol was finished by 1800. Congress met in the building in November 1800 and members expressed

concern over the primitive state of the city and its improvements: "One wing of the Capitol only has been erected, which, with the President's house, a mile distant from it, both constructed with white sandstone, were shining objects in dismal contrast to the scene around them."⁶⁴

William Thornton, architect of the Capitol, selected a dome – a decidedly Roman building form with strong lineage through the Renaissance – at the center of the building's composition (fig. 19). Central authority was embodied within this central dome.⁶⁵ With its central, domed space and low exterior dome profile was a common feature among the various designs for the Capitol submitted over the course of two decades by architects Stephen Hallett, William Thornton, and Benjamin Henry Latrobe. Thomas Jefferson, heavily involved in provision for a Roman-style building, suggested several models for architects and designers to incorporate into their designs.⁶⁶

Funding for public buildings continued to be a problem for the infant capital. For a relatively small number of permanent-year residents, taxes alone

⁶³ Thomas Twining. *Travels in America 100 Years Ago* (New York: Ellicott, 1894) 100.

⁶⁴ Representative John Cotton Smith (Connecticut). Description quoted in John B. Ellis. *The Sights and Secrets of the National Capital* (New York: n. p., 1869), 42.

⁶⁵ Architectural historian Damie Stillman traces the influences of ancient Rome on the buildings of the early republic through direct reproduction of Roman precedents (e.g. Jefferson's reproduction of the Maison Carée for the Virginia State Capitol) and through the "intermediary of neoclassical architecture of later eighteenth-century England and, to a lesser degree, France." See Damie Stillman. "From the Ancient Roman Republic to the American One: Architecture for a New Nation," In Kennon, Donald R., ed. *A Republic for the Ages: The United States Capitol and the Political Culture of the Early Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 273.

⁶⁶ See Charles E. Brownell. "Thomas Jefferson's Architectural Models and the United States Capitol," In Donald R. Kennon, ed. *A Republic for the Ages: The United States Capitol and the Political Culture of the Early Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 316-401.

could not generate sufficient income for the improvements needed.⁶⁷ Though the value of federal lands and buildings grew, they were exempt from property tax. Little additional funding, outside of Congressional appropriations, could be levied to aid in further capital improvements and Congress was reticent to appropriate significant funding.

Not only was the public building program an arduous process, residents had difficulty in the erection of dwelling houses. Francis Bailly, while traveling through the capital city, commented on the disarray of the physical environment:

The private buildings go on but slowly. There are but twenty or thirty houses built near the Point, as well as a few in south Capitol Street and about a hundred others scattered over in other places: in all I suppose about two hundred: and these constitute the great city of Washington. The truth is, that not much more than one-half the city is *cleared* – the rest *in woods*.⁶⁸

Washington was in much the same state when, in August 1812, British troops invaded the fledgling community. Though most private residences were saved from conflagration, the Capitol and the President's House both sustained significant damage. Only the blackened walls of the President's House remained standing, and the dome and roofs of the wings of the Capitol lay in ruins. The Treasury and the War Department offices were also gutted, as well as other federal buildings within the capital. So extensive was the damage to the city that Margaret Bayard Smith observed: "I do not suppose the Government will ever

⁶⁷ The population in Washington in 1800 was just over 3,000. By 1840, the population of the City of Washington reached 23,364, more than half of the district's population of 43,712. See Constance McLaughlin Green. *Washington: Village and Capital, 1800-1878*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 21.

⁶⁸ Francis Bailly. *Journal of a Tour in Unsettled Parts of North America in 1796 & 1797* (London, 1856), 127-128. Emphasis in the original.

return to Washington. All those whose property was invested in that place, will be reduced to poverty.”⁶⁹

The capital did remain in Washington and, not surprisingly, both public and private building programs escalated after the War of 1812 and the Treaty of Ghent brought peace with England. After the fire, the Capitol was transformed under the watchful eye of architects Benjamin Henry Latrobe and Charles Bulfinch, who both modified the plan and appearance of the structure. Rather than the provision for Grecian-style porticos, these architects for the United States Capitol retained its Roman appearance and character. The central dome continued to dominate the design scheme; Corinthian columns supported two story porticos on the north and south facades of the building. The President's House also was reconstructed true to its Palladian (and Roman) roots, so much so that the 1816 observations of D. B. Warden held true after the fire: “the president's house...resembles Leinster-house, in Dublin, and is much admired. Even the poet Moore styles it a ‘grand edifice,’ a ‘noble structure’” (fig. 20).⁷⁰

Though several large-scale public buildings constructed in the 1830s showed promise for the growing capital city, Washington remained a place with many unfinished streets, mud tracks, swamps not drained, and the site of perpetual construction.⁷¹ (fig. 21). On a visit in 1840, the Chevalier de Bacourt noted that his “carriage sank up to the axle-tree in the snow and mud.” In addition, he wrote:

⁶⁹ Margaret Bayard Smith. *First Forty Years of Washington Society* (New York: Scribner, 1906), 98, 109-112.

⁷⁰ David B. Warden. *Statistical, Political, and Historical Account of the United States* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1919), 3:97-98.

⁷¹ Some buildings under construction include Washington City Hall, begun in 1820, designed by George Hadfield; the 1830 Post Office and the 1836 Treasury Building, both by architect Robert Mills; Robert Mills; the 1837 Patent Office, by architect William P. Elliott.

the nights are so noisy that one can scarcely sleep...[because]...the inhabitants all own cows and pigs, but no stables, and these animals wander about all day and night through the city, and go to their owners' houses only in the morning and evening to be fed; the women milk their cows on the sidewalk and sprinkle the passers-by. The nocturnal wanderings of these beasts create an infernal racket, in which they are joined by dogs and cats.⁷²

Despite the grandiose L'Enfant plan and the accomplishment of several major architectural commissions, the federal capital developed slowly over decades. Though the buildings and the city plan were rooted in republican values, there emerged a democratic restlessness in the new nation encapsulated in the built environment. The agonizing decision to locate Washington as the seat of government substantiated an uncertainty about emerging visions for the nation that diverged along political, sectional, and commercial lines. The slow development of the nation's capital also reflected the mounting indecision about the appropriate role of the federal government in relation to state and local governmental units.

The Development of a Political Economy

Eighteenth-century republicanism envisioned a people capable of self-government through deference to an educated elite of virtuous men, such as George Washington. In the years after the American Revolution as the Constitution was formulated and the Federal government established, the definition of republicanism shifted from virtue and self-sacrifice to self-interest. Drew McCoy suggests that the idea of republicanism was transformed from a narrow political and intellectual world during the Revolution to a more

⁷² Cited in Thomas Frowne. *An Illustrated History of the City of Washington* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1977), 176-177.

expansive world of political economy in the Early Republic.⁷³ Much to Jefferson's horror, commercialism was no longer considered antithetical to republicanism. The forming nation was thus "inextricably bound to a civilizing influence of commercial expansion" that elevated commerce and expanded the human mind.⁷⁴

Along waterways and overland routes, trans-Appalachian cities responded not only to the need for shelter and community, they provided a place for trade and business and represented the desire to order the natural landscape, but in ways different than the federal capital. But because the United States was, in the early nineteenth century, a polycentric country, there was no popular nor clear model to follow in the development new communities.⁷⁵ Not one of the new cities – even the various state capitals established in this time period – adopted L'Enfant's vision of distinct landmarks, wide boulevards, and grand vistas in a complex city grid. Instead, communities outside of Washington in the early nineteenth century used alternative methods of organization that resulted in different architectural and physical expressions. While the cities and

⁷³ The political economy evolved out of the struggle to unify agrarian and manufacturing visions for the nation. Drew McCoy. *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

⁷⁴ McCoy, *Elusive Republic*, 89. Americans deliberated the implications of commercialization and social progress, as well as the corrupting effects of economic growth. Thomas Jefferson and others stood against the development of a national agenda shaped and promoted by Federalist policies because of the "Anglicizing" influence on American government and society. Simply, Jefferson feared that the United States would become England. Given that he was elected in 1800, people in the nation must have shared, in part, his sentiment. Focusing inward to the North American continent, Jefferson saw to the expansion of the United States through the 1803 purchase of Louisiana from the French and the annexation of Florida in 1810. With an unobstructed access to open land, Jefferson suggested that Americans could supply agricultural commodities for the nation and much of Europe. Americans could be virtuous republicans if they remained agrarians while allowing European countries to develop commercial interests. America could depend on foreign commerce to maintain its moral and national character.

⁷⁵ The "political" capital was Washington, but the "economic" capitol was New York, while the "cultural" capital was Boston, the Athens of the New World.

the buildings of the trans-Appalachian West were often inspired by the same kinds of influences as Washington and other cities of the East, these new cities and their buildings took on different aspects and forms and celebrated the democratization of society. Where Rome and Palladian architecture of the Renaissance were models for much of Washington, the state capitals found inspiration in the temples of democratic Greece and in simpler grid-like city landscapes. The state capitol buildings also reflected some of the uncertainty about the political direction of the new nation, whether to remain a republic or to adopt a democracy of the people. Above all, the state capitol buildings indicated the tensions of antebellum society as expressed in the trans-Appalachian West. Here, public buildings captured in built form the conflicts about the direction of the new nation and the nature of the republican experiment.

Democratic Temples in the Wilderness

While the rebuilt Capitol and President's House demonstrated that the federal capital was closely aligned with Roman and Palladian precedents, state capitol buildings of the trans-Appalachian West by the late 1840s, by contrast, were constructed in the Grecian style. The state capitol buildings of the nineteenth-century trans-Appalachian West were far more diverse than the United States Capitol and the President's House in their design sources, materials, and construction and reflected the different skill levels and influences of the designers for these structures.

As one example, architect William Nichols, designer for the North Carolina State House, the Alabama State House, and the Mississippi State House, transformed buildings for these commissions from modestly scaled Roman-

inspired structures to massive Grecian-style edifices. Thus, his work embodies the experimentation of designers, builders, and architects in using Roman and Greek forms to determine the best architecture to represent "democracy" on the state and local level. He progressed from a pure Palladian style of the 1820-1824 North Carolina State House to a synthesis of Palladian and Grecian themes and motifs in the 1827-1831 Alabama State House (fig. 22). In the period between these two architectural extremes were a series of transitional buildings. Increased additional Grecian-style elements were introduced in the 1836-1839 Mississippi State House (figs. 23 and 24), followed by a final shift to a purer Grecian style for the 1846-1848 Lyceum at the University of Mississippi (fig. 25).⁷⁶

Alabama's First State Capitol

William Nichols, named Alabama's state architect in 1827, designed a Classical-style structure for the Alabama Capitol (fig 26). This building had a design vocabulary with distinctly Roman and Palladian roots.⁷⁷ However, Nichols also included Grecian-style "Doric porticoes, doorways copied from the Temple of Theseus at Athens, a Greek fret in the rotunda, and a screen of

⁷⁶The Lyceum was the gymnasium where Aristotle taught in ancient Athens. In the early nineteenth century, lyceums were institutions for popular education, providing discussions, public lectures, concerts, etc. This structure featured a massive porch as its main design feature and eliminated the domes contained in the previous schemes for the state houses. The Lyceum was designed as a relatively plain building -- all of the ornament was concentrated on the front facade. Nichols increased the scale of the columns on the Lyceum so that they were much larger in proportion than the same vertical elements in the state capitol commissions.

⁷⁷The building featured a scored stone foundation, rising the full height of the entire first floor, engaged brick pilasters at the buildings' four corners, projecting bays (in the form of a Greek cross) surmounted by gable-facing pediments supported by engaged Ionic columns. One story porches with Doric-style columns provided covered entrances to the building on the long sides of the cross-shaped plan. Topped by a roof balustrade on its main block, the entire mass supported a rotunda, itself capped by a plain lantern with its own domed roof. This was a building reminiscent of English country houses of the period and reflected Nichols' expertise with such designs. Nichols was also responsible for the design of the North Carolina State Capitol

columns in the Supreme Court copied from the Tower of the Winds."⁷⁸ The building, then, was a blend of two types of stylistic features and was constructed in the shape of a Greek cross at the center of which stood a ninety-foot-high rotunda. One contemporary observer suggested that this central, circular room was "one of the most beautiful, chaste, and delicate specimens of Grecian architecture to be found in our country."⁷⁹ Gabriel Holmes, Governor of Alabama, who spoke for the first time in the newly-constructed capitol in 1829, described that Alabama, only a few years prior, had been "a mere wilderness, the resort of savages only." Furthermore Holmes noted that the capitol was a symbol of civilization in that wilderness, a building "inferior to none in elegance, in Taste, or in usefulness."⁸⁰ Nichols designed and oversaw the construction of numerous additional public buildings in Tuscaloosa.⁸¹

Despite the presence of the University of Alabama and the various academies and the State Capitol Building and the various buildings and services that arose in support of the capitol in two decades, Tuscaloosa lost the bid to remain the capitol in the mid-1840s.⁸² Instead, Montgomery was selected by the

Building, a commission that brought him notoriety and likely provided the experience necessary for him to tackle the design and construction for the Alabama structure.

⁷⁸*Alabama Intelligencer and States Rights Expositor*, Tuscaloosa, November 12, 1831.

⁷⁹Cited in G. Ward Hubbs. *Tuscaloosa: Portrait of an Alabama County* (Windsor Publications : Tuscaloosa County Preservation Society, 1987), 24.

⁸⁰Cited in Hubbs. *Tuscaloosa*, 24.

⁸¹ Mills Lane, *Architecture of the Old South, Mississippi and Alabama* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1989). Nichols emigrated from England to North Carolina and then to the rapidly expanding southwest, bringing the Classical Revival to Alabama and the Frontier South and making possible the broad-spread Grecian style throughout the region by mid-century.

⁸²In 1831, Alva Woods resigned as president of Transylvania University (Lexington, Kentucky) and moved to Tuscaloosa, Alabama, where he served as president of the University of Alabama, chartered in 1821. Upon his move, he would have seen Tuscaloosa in the midst of a building frenzy following the 1825 vote by the state legislature to establish the permanent capital in this north-central Alabama community. The community was the home to the University of Alabama, The Sims Female Academy, the Alabama Female Academy, the Wesleyan Female Institute, and the Alabama Female Athenaeum.

state legislature as the new seat of government, both because of its more central location to the population in the state and its good connections to rail service. Tuscaloosa, isolated in north-central Alabama, simply did not have the political clout to remain the state capitol.

Alabama's Second State Capitol

The move of the state capitol to Montgomery signaled a shift in architectural sensibilities: the new capitol building was constructed in the Grecian style. Designed by Stephen D. Button of Philadelphia, the cornerstone was laid for the new capitol in July 1846 (fig. 27). The building itself was described in elaborate detail in a contemporary newspaper:

The main building is 160 feet front by 70 feet deep. The entablature over the Portico is supported by six columns of the Grecian composite style of architecture. The design is taken from Lafever's Beauties of Modern Architecture. Directly back of the portico rises the dome, 40 feet diameter at the base, rising 20 feet above the apex of the Portico, roof surmounted with a lantern, in imitation of the one at Athens called the Lantern of Demosthenes. At each end of the main building is a small Portico covering the main entrances to the basement story. These porticoes are supported by 4 columns each of the Grecian Doric order. The example is taken from the Temple of Minerva at Athens, called the Parthenon.

The floor over the rotunda is supported by 4 Ionic columns, also 2 in the Supreme Court room – the example is taken from the Temple on the Illisseus near Athens. From the hall the grand staircase commences and is continued to the third floor, around a 13-foot hole or cylinder. From the entrance you pass to the rotunda, in the walls of which are 4 openings, supported by two columns each, the example is from the Tower of the Winds at Athens. The Representatives Hall is semicircular, the gallery is supported by 10 Grecian columns. The ceiling of this room is domical, paneled with enriched mouldings and a splendid centre flower 10 feet in diameter.⁸³

This passage hints at the designer's ideology and the growing importance of copying elements and details from Greek architecture from style books and

⁸³*The Democrat*, Huntsville (24 November 1847).

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other printed sources. The publication and widespread dissemination of this passage also verifies that architectural information about the building was of interest to the public, for whom the description was prepared.

Both form and articulation shifted in the comparison of the design for Alabama's first state capitol with that of the second. Both buildings featured rotunda spaces as central points to gather and mark the importance of the central space to the interior of the building as well as to its exterior appearance. The dome, topped with a lantern supported by Composite-order columns, served as a focal point, a way to understand the importance of a centrally organized government within the state. The use of the decidedly Roman building form, the dome, to mark the scheme was balanced by the presence of a large-scaled porch, supported by Composite-style columns. This central porch dominated the design scheme for the building and served as the obvious access point for the structure. A wide flight of steps, almost the entire width of the porch, rose one full story to an over-scaled doorway in the center of the principal level. The contrast in images of an unreachable dome (Roman, centralized government) and the more human-scaled, open, and approachable porch (Greek) created structural contradictions about the role of government on the state level. Should the building be organized around a central dome and verify the notion of a centralized government? Or, should the building embody the democracy that places the power of the state as accessible to all that chose to climb the broad bank of stairs? ⁸⁴

⁸⁴ As the building burned only two years later in December 1849, the third architectural solution for the state capitol – with an even more largely-scaled rotunda – helped to resolve the tension. While still classical in ornament and detail, the pedimented porch was replaced by a colossal flat-topped porch surmounted by an enormous clock. The clock itself was topped by a small pediment, reducing the scale and impact of the pediment to the level of a decorative item.

William Nichols was not the only Eastern architect who emigrated westward and wrestled with questions of republicanism and democracy and how architecture might embody these contradictory political directions. Other architects emigrated to the trans-Appalachian West and found themselves in a struggle with similar queries. William Strickland emigrated from Philadelphia to Nashville, Tennessee to supervise the construction of his design for the Tennessee State Capitol Building.⁸⁵ He brought the Grecian style to Tennessee in this major governmental commission. Gideon Shryock had left central Kentucky to study under Strickland before his mentor departed for Tennessee. When Shryock returned to Kentucky, he designed the state capitol in Frankfort and firmly established the Grecian style in that state. These two state capitols, along with state capitols in Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio, confirmed the Grecian style as the preferred idiom for state governmental buildings in the trans-Appalachian West.⁸⁶ The state capitols provided the architectural rhetoric of a new nation's government – a government of balance, stability, rationality, and formal relations embedded in and in contrast to a rich and fertile landscape.

Tennessee's State Capitol

The Tennessee State Capitol embodied the notion of democracy idealized by the power of the state at the non-federal level, imposed order on a new landscape, and provided the architectural rhetoric of the new nation in a building

⁸⁵William Strickland (1788-1854) worked for Benjamin Henry Latrobe for three years before establishing his own architectural practice. He designed the United States Mint at New Orleans (1835-1838) and Christ Church in Baltimore (1835-1836) before emigration to Nashville in 1844 to supervise the construction of the capitol. Some additional Tennessee works are attributed to Strickland though documentation is sketchy. See Lane, *Architecture of the Old South*, 311.

with balance, stability, rationality, and accessibility to the common people. Architect William Strickland designed building in 1844 and combined the elements of several Greek buildings in one massive form to house the Supreme Court, a Federal Court and offices, the state archives, the House of Representatives, the Senate, committee rooms, and the state library (fig. 28). On the east and west ends of the building, a group of eight Ionic columns rose two stories from a raised foundation of heavily rusticated stone to the massive entablature, beneath the gable end. A group of six columns, centered over the two main entrances occupied the middle of the long north and south facades. This group of six columns projected forward from the basic building form and rested on a heavily rusticated stone foundation. Though they did not support a gable end above the entablature, the columns were copied from the *Erechtheum* on the Athens Acropolis (fig. 29). A tower, comprised of two parts, sat atop the simple roof. The center of Strickland's composition, this temple-like lantern, based on the *Choragic Monument of Lysicrates*, rose above a cubic base of scored stone blocks (fig. 30).

The Tennessee State Capitol contained one of the hallmarks of the Grecian style – a fastidiousness by designer and owner to reproduce correct building elements based on eighteenth and nineteenth-century Greek archaeological investigations. The Ionic columns of high Classical Athens of the post-Peloponnesian War provided the link between universal white male suffrage in Athens and universal white male suffrage in Tennessee. The building also contained an additional hallmark of the Grecian style in the trans-Appalachian West – a level of creativity in the combination of various “archaeologically

correct” features that contrasted from building to building.⁸⁷ Through these details, the building advanced the popularity of the style in Tennessee’s capital city and, simultaneously, projected mixed messages in its design details and use.

Strickland designed the Tennessee Capitol Building to sit on its own “acropolis” on the highest rise of land in the downtown so that the building could be seen from all places within the growing state capital (fig. 31).

Furthermore, its prominent location served as a landmark for the entire community and the state. A site high atop land emphasized the architect’s decision to have the building dominate the surrounding landscape. The structure sat atop a plinth, a smooth platform of stone approximately twenty feet larger in each direction than the building itself. The one story high foundation line further emphasized the importance of democratic government in the new western land. The rusticated stone basement set this portion of the building apart from the second (primary level) and third stories (fig. 32). Thus, just as the upper building was an outgrowth from the more massive stone base, the government was an outgrowth of the people. The building concretized the notion that the government had broad foundations in the people, set apart from but also part of the surrounding landscape. The physical realities of the building emphasized the importance of such a claim. Constructed of solid stone, the building was erected with walls between one-and-one-half feet thick to seven feet thick. Strickland’s decision to construct the building of solid stone was a source of some construction difficulties. However, the massive quality of the building’s foundation made possible the erection of a lofty governmental structure above.

⁸⁷These “correct” architectural details were based on printed materials available to Strickland. The architect said “No student of architecture need go no further than the *Antiquities of Athens* as a basis for design.” Cited in Lane, *Architecture of the Old South*, 311.

The exterior symmetrical scheme for the Capitol in no way reflected the complex and asymmetrical use of the building on the interior (fig. 33). Though a central east-west corridor provided access to rooms on both floors, the room arrangement was asymmetrical. The larger House chamber occupied about one-third of the primary level on the east end of the building at the end of the hallway. The Senate chamber, much smaller in scale, stood at the northern third of the building on the West end. The State Library constituted the southern third of the West end of the building on this primary level. All three of these chambers were nearly 30 feet in height and occupied the second and third stories of the building. The Supreme Court and other state offices were housed at the ground level. In much smaller quarters, these rooms were encapsulated within thick walls (a result of the solid stone construction). The design scheme, then, elevated the value of the legislative government. Greater emphasis was placed on the legislative branch in the scheme, while the Supreme Court, as the judicial branch, was tucked away in a corner. The State Library occupied a space of greater prominence than the Supreme Court.

Strickland's design for the Tennessee State Capitol, then, contained messages of physical and visual weight, perched atop its downtown Nashville Acropolis. One might expect that the building would thus be anchored by its weight. But because the building was separated from the land through its placement on a stone plinth, it seemed to float atop the hill rather than be attached to it. The symmetrical exterior of the building presented an exterior message of solidity, predictable politics, and a smooth-functioning government. The interior arrangement of rooms and spaces and, more specifically, the hierarchy of those rooms indicated that the symmetry and balance promised on

the outside of the building could not be found on the inside of the building. The emphasis in the design scheme seemed to weigh heavily in favor of the legislature, that body of people who were prominent in western politics.

Although combined in unprecedented ways, correct architectural details on the Tennessee Capitol created a symbolic and physical tie to the past in the hope that elected and appointed officials, selected by the *demos* (the people) could create a government that fully engaged all citizens of the nation. In the Tennessee State Capitol building, Strickland borrowed on the image of Greece to show that Tennessee was a democratic place. Rather than the creation of a direct copy of a temple in Greece for the Capitol, Strickland fashioned a unique building with component parts copied from other sources. Strickland was not interested necessarily in recreation of specific Grecian buildings but rather borrowed from the rich tradition of Greek democracy to mold a new style suitable for a maturing American civilization. In this way, Strickland echoed the actions of other designers to create a new order for the ages – a new style that provided three-dimensional images for a democratic nation.

Other State Capitols of the Trans-Appalachian West

Strickland was not the only designer who worked to create a new order for the age as architects in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Kentucky selected the Grecian style to shape government structures in these states (figs. 34, 35, and 36). In Kentucky, Strickland's student, Gideon Shryock, designed the state capitol to

reflect the democratic notions suggested by his mentor (fig. 37).⁸⁸ Constructed 1827-1830, this building was based on several documented design sources.

Shryock, while in Philadelphia training with William Strickland, obtained a copy of the American edition of Swan's British Architect and inscribed his name in it.

Architectural historian Mills Lane noted that :

Details for the portico, which was made of honey-colored limestone from local quarries, were drawn from illustrations in Ionian Antiquities (London, 1769), but Shryock may have taken the general idea of an Ionic temple surmounted by a lantern from Plate 16, Latrobe's Bank of the United States, in Owen Biddle's Young Carpenter's Assistant (Philadelphia, 1805).⁸⁹

Shortly after the building opened, Shryock described it in Atkinson's Casket and documented that the design for the building was also based on the Temple of Minerva Polias at Priene (figs. 38 and 39).⁹⁰ Architectural historian Clay Lancaster noted similarities between the Kentucky State House and Jefferson's collaborative design (with Charles-Louis Cl  risseau) for the Virginia State Capitol some forty years earlier (fig. 40):

The similarities include the hexastyle Ionic portico with plain pediment, the antepodia enframing the front steps, the cella behind having seven-bayed flanks including side entrances, the encircling full entablature, and rooms distributed around a square, domed rotunda. The chief differences are that the Richmond building has a Roman portico two bays

⁸⁸ Shryock studied in Strickland's Philadelphia studio in 1823-1824 before his return to Kentucky. Shryock would have observed designs underway for several commissions awarded to Strickland for Grecian-style structures throughout the United States. Moreover, Strickland was trained by Benjamin Henry Latrobe and that may partially explain Shryock's close adherence to Latrobe's Bank of the United States (Philadelphia) as a design inspiration for the Kentucky State Capitol building.

⁸⁹ Shryock's copy of Swan's book is housed within Special Collections at the University of Kentucky's Margaret I. King Library. For more information on the capitol, see Clay Lancaster. *Antebellum Architecture of Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 190-193. Biddle's book, issued in 1810, was "sold at bookstores in Philadelphia, Richmond, Virginia, and Lexington, Kentucky," putting this design source into the hands of Gideon Shryock. Mills Lane. *Architecture of the Old South: Kentucky and Tennessee* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1993) 107-112.

⁹⁰ "Atkinson's Casket." *Gems of Literature, Wit, and Sentiment* (Philadelphia), 12 (December 1833), 553.

deep, its front wall pierced by two ranges of windows, and there are pilasters along the flanks.⁹¹

Where Jefferson and Clérisseau relied on Roman rhetoric to embody the features of the Virginia capitol, Shryock employed a plain Grecian-style façade punctured only by a two-leaf center doorway behind the massive portico. Where the Virginia capitol embraced the archaic vision of the Roman republic, the Kentucky capitol embodied, in three dimensional form, the vision of democracy captured within the trans-Appalachian West. Like the Tennessee Capitol, the Kentucky edifice and its architect both influenced the architecture of that Commonwealth. As a result of the success of his state capitol commission in Kentucky, Shryock was selected when Transylvania University sought an architect to design the main building for its campus in the 1830s.⁹²

Order on the Landscape

Like Washington, D. C., the communities in which state capitols stood were places of contrasts: Grecian-style structures stood amidst disorganized and often chaotic landscapes. Like the designers for the federal Capitol, the designers of the state capitol buildings of the trans-Appalachian West sought order in a landscape of disorder. But unlike the Republican capitol in Washington, the Grecian style captured positive associations with the civilization of the ancient Greeks and, in the construction of these symmetrical buildings, the designers brought rationality and order to the trans-Appalachian West. Like the settlers who brought along silver teaspoons and china to demonstrate their gentility, the designers of trans-Appalachian West capitals deployed an architectural language

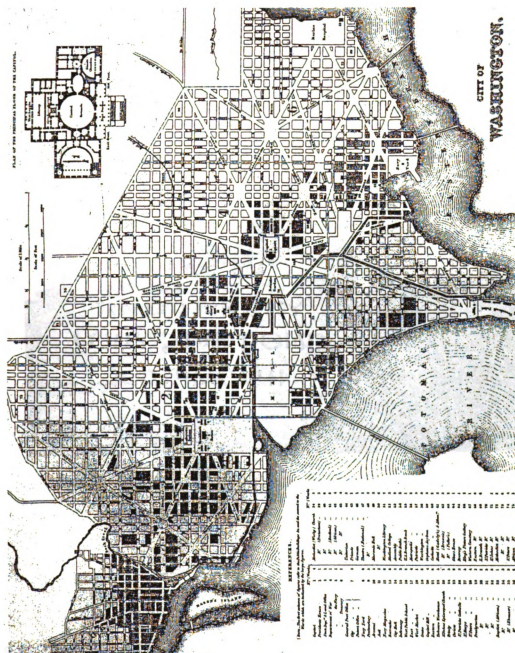
⁹¹ Lancaster. *Antebellum Architecture*.

⁹² See Lane. *Architecture of the Old South: Kentucky and Tennessee*, 107-112.

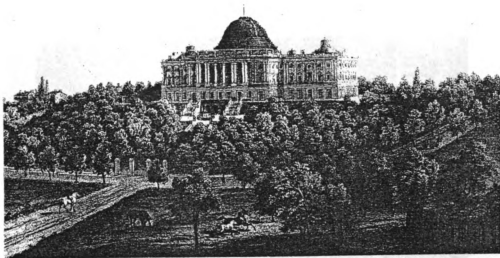
that secured legitimacy for the state capitals. The West shared the East's common desire to demonstrate gentility to the people and governments of Europe and the world. While the federal capital spoke the language of deference, the capitals of the interior states spoke in the language of what the *demos* might achieve. Both East and West relied on architecture to demonstrate that they were as sophisticated as other places in the world.

In reality, both the federal capital and the trans-Appalachian capitals were places that revealed the tensions that beset their claims as cultured environments. With a few key "genteel" buildings each, these communities – like most cities on the North American continent in the nineteenth century – struggled with issues of daily survival; how to establish schools, services, and mercantile systems with limited financial and physical resources, and the continued belief in economic and social prosperity while in fierce competition with neighboring localities. Cities of the trans-Appalachian West, especially those communities not selected as state capitals, faced a challenge to mold themselves and their citizens to attract commerce, settlers, and institutions that would help secure a prosperous future. One very concrete way that these communities attempted to attract others was through the manipulation of the built environment. Through the continuous construction of Grecian-style "temples in the wilderness," community leaders not only linked to a popular architectural style, they shaped a democratic nation and spread a rhetoric of classicism throughout the landscape, a language system recognized by many Americans as a legitimate and forthright means to become democratic citizens on a regional, national, and world stage. Colleges and universities, churches, businesses, and individual citizens followed this pattern of the erection of

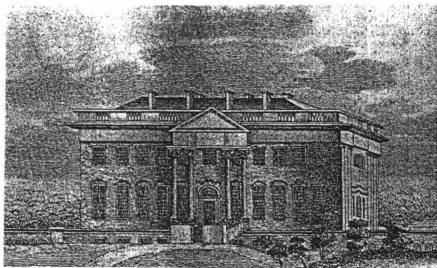
Grecian-style structures to continue this important cultural work of shaping a nation.



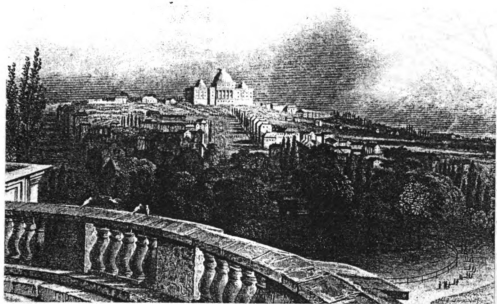
18. L'Enfant's Plan for the City of Washington
 Source: Repts, Monumental Washington, 79



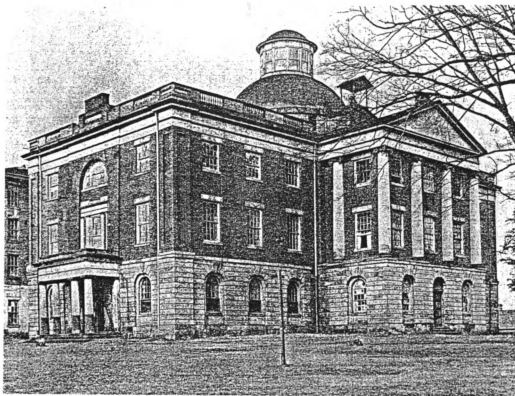
19. Capitol of the United States, ca. 1837, Washington, D. C.
Source: Reps, *Washington on View*, 75



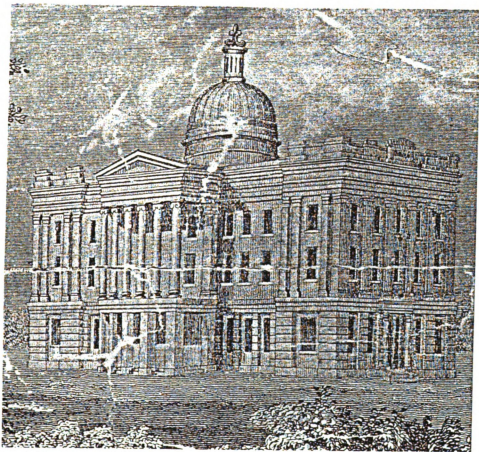
20. The President's House, ca. 1832, Washington, D. C.
Source: Reps, *Monumental Washington*, 80



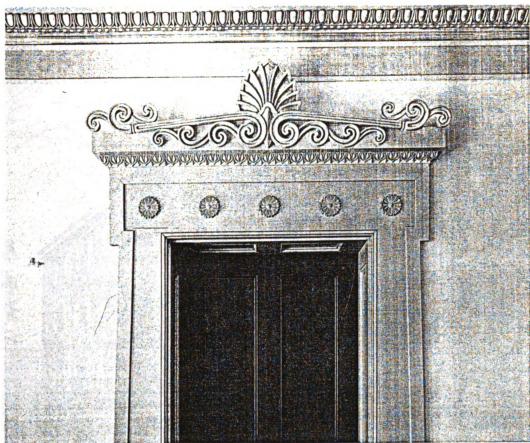
21. Washington, D. C., 1832
Source: Reps, *Washington on View*, 77



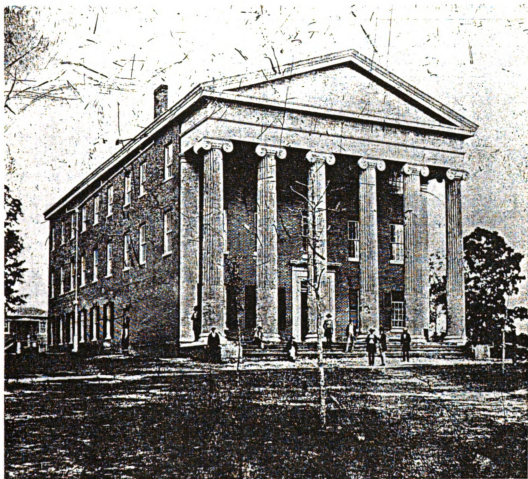
22. Alabama State Capitol, ca. 1827-1831, Tuscaloosa, Alabama
Source: Lane. *AOS: Alabama and Mississippi*, 47



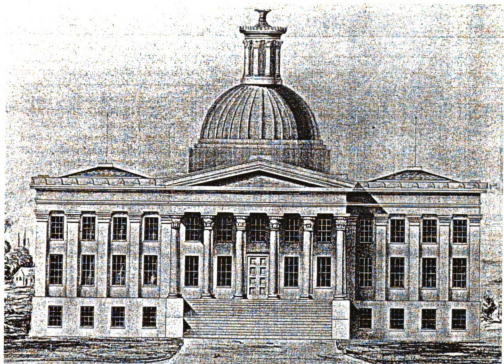
23. Mississippi State House, ca. 1836-1839, Jackson, Mississippi
Source: Lane. AOS: *Alabama and Mississippi*, 72



24. Interior Detail, Mississippi State House, Jackson, Mississippi
Source: Lane. AOS: *Alabama and Mississippi*, 73



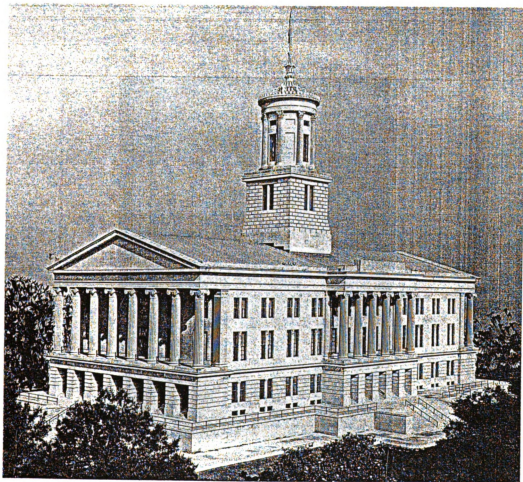
25. Lyceum, ca. 1846-1848, University of Mississippi. Oxford, Mississippi
Source: Lane. *AOS: Alabama and Mississippi*, 78



26. Alabama State Capitol, ca. 1846, Montgomery, Alabama
Source: Lane. *AOS: Alabama and Mississippi*, 89



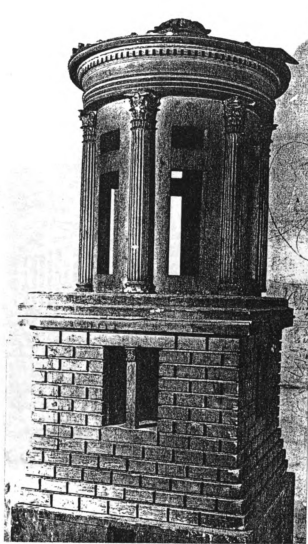
27. Alabama State Capitol, ca. 1850, Montgomery, Alabama
Source: Lane. *AOS: Alabama and Mississippi*, 91



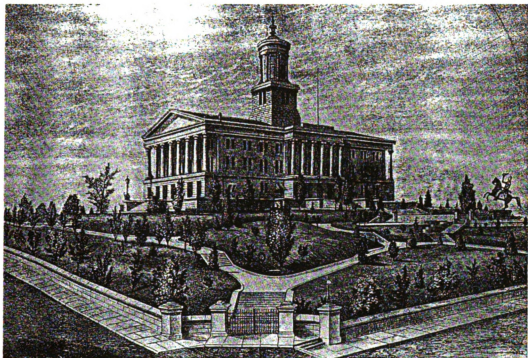
28. Tennessee State Capitol, ca. 1845-1859, Nashville, Tennessee
Source: Lane. *AOS: Kentucky and Tennessee*, 138



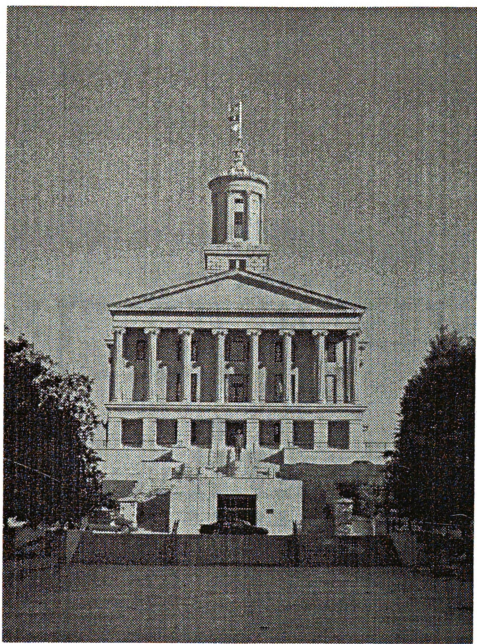
29. Column Detail, Tennessee State Capitol, Nashville, Tennessee
Source: Photograph by author, 4/2001



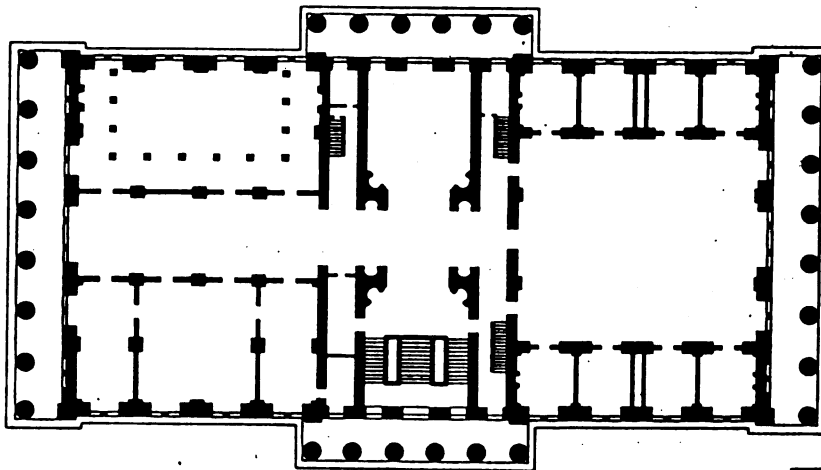
30. Model for Tennessee State Capitol Lantern, Nashville, Tennessee
Source: Lane, *AOS: Kentucky and Tennessee*, 155



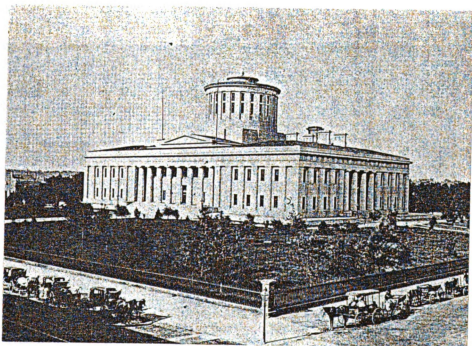
31. Tennessee State Capitol, 1845-1859, Nashville, Tennessee
Source: Davenport, *Cultural Life in Nashville*, frontispiece



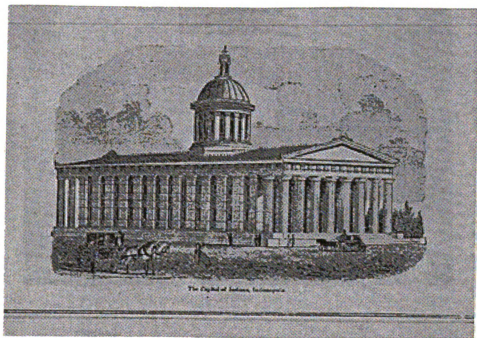
32. Tennessee State Capitol, 1845-1849, Nashville, Tennessee
Source: Photograph by author, 4/2001



33. Tennessee State Capitol Floor Plan, 1845-1849, Nashville, Tennessee
Source: Lane. *AOS: Kentucky and Tennessee*, 135



34. Ohio State Capitol, ca. 1821, Columbus, Ohio



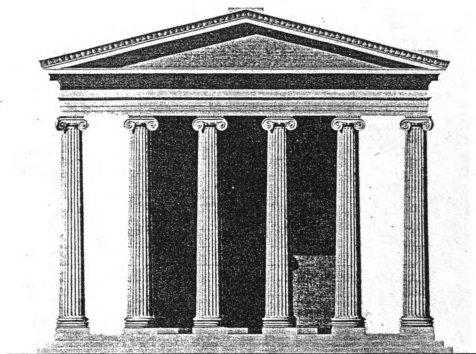
35. First Capitol in Indianapolis, ca. 1818, Indianapolis, Indiana



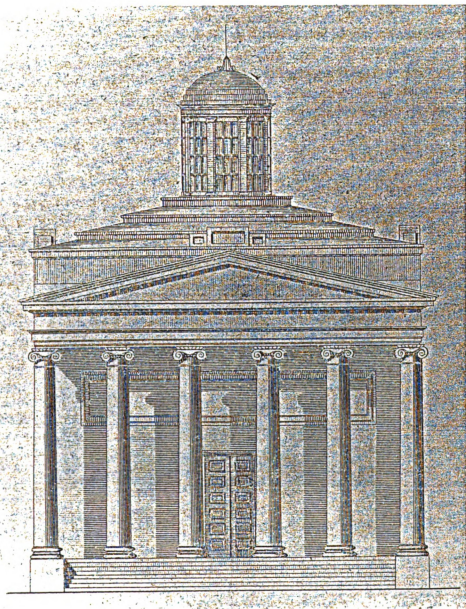
36. Illinois State Capitol , ca. 1819, Vandalia, Illinois
Source: *Fayette County Area Tourism Guide*, 2001



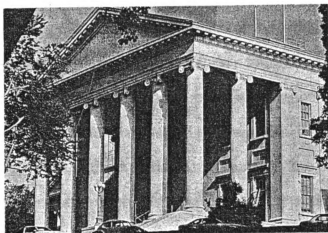
37. Kentucky State House, ca. 1827-1830, Frankfort, Kentucky
Source: Lane, AOS: *Kentucky and Tennessee*, 110



38. The Temple of Minerva Polias at Priene from *Ionian Antiquities*
Source: Lane, *AOS: Kentucky and Tennessee*, 108



39. Bank of the United States , ca. 1827, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
from Owen Biddle's *Young Carpenter's Assistant*
Source: Lane, AOS: *Kentucky and Tennessee*, 108



40. Virginia State Capitol, ca. 1789, Richmond, Virginia
Source: Kreyling, *Classical Nashville*, 34

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN AMERICAN “ATHENS”

Grecian-Style Educational Buildings

East and West

The architectural landscape of the new republic of the trans-Appalachian West – state capitol buildings, academic structures, churches, business buildings, and houses – revealed how the revolutionary rhetoric of eighteenth-century republican ideology evolved in both shared and competing notions of nineteenth-century democracy. The nation’s founders, particularly men like Washington, Adams, and Jefferson, supported a limited democracy that demanded deference and emphasized the importance of a government led by an educated elite. West of the Appalachian Mountains the populace promoted alternative visions of an open, democratized society and the buildings that were constructed by them bore remarkable similarity.

Though trans-Appalachian buildings shared some of the same language as their counterparts in the east, particularly in the nation’s capitol, the buildings helped to distance the people of the Appalachian West from those in the East. Where both western and eastern structures displayed order, balance, and symmetry, frontier structures were built in the open style of Athenian democracy with broad, accessible staircases and sheltering porticos that provided pathways that could be ascended by all people. Grecian-style architecture configured the frontier landscape, both North and South, as remarkably similar and in direct opposition to the landscape of the East, a landscape adorned with

Roman-style buildings and places. For its architecture and the ideologies these buildings stood for, the antebellum trans-Appalachian West frontier constituted a unique region and was not merely a westward expansion of the plantation South or colonial New England. In this landscape, people remade themselves as engaged democratic citizens in the construction of buildings based on the ideas of Hellenistic civilization and the transformation of communities into landscapes of order, symmetry, and hierarchy. The trans-Appalachian West, when viewed as a vacant “wilderness,” nurtured and encouraged the development of communities visually shaped by architectural styles of Athenian Greece and rhetorically manipulated nicknaming practices to literally and aurally reinforce associations with Athenian Greece.

The American “Wilderness”

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the “western country” of the North American continent was stereotypically viewed as an unrefined, backwards, and under-developed area in comparison to a more culturally and socially advanced northeast and southeast. Andrew Cayton and Frederika Teute define the “backcountry” or “western country” as the land west of English settlement, literally everything to the west of the colonies.⁹³ But, sometime in the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, this land began to be referred to as the “frontier.” By the middle of the nineteenth century, more distinct regional cultures had formed the Frontier South and the Northwest

⁹³ Cayton and Teute, *Contact Points*, 1.

Territory, both sometimes referred to together as the "Old West," as a replacement for earlier names for middle America.⁹⁴

A series of communities served as mercantile supply posts and centers of population and stood in contrast to the trans-Appalachian Western "wilderness" landscape. Travelers often characterized these satellite settlements as burgeoning communities with cultural opportunities that rivaled more established communities of the East – Philadelphia, Boston, Charleston, for example. These places were cultural centers in "wild" western country and contrasted to the stereotypical images of the early nineteenth-century West. Historian Elizabeth Perkins suggests that these communities were part of a trans-Appalachian society that struggled to organize itself.⁹⁵ For Perkins, the "consumption of manufactured goods and metropolitan styles ... transformed the ... backwoods into a consumer frontier: an economic border region situated between subsistence and capitalist modes of production, containing elements of both economic systems."⁹⁶

Gregory Nobles suggests that elites in the West "sought to create an independent "western country" in the integration with eastern social, economic,

⁹⁴ The terms "midwest" or "middle west" did not come into everyday usage to describe this area until the twentieth century. The earliest use of the term is from the writings of Timothy Flint. After decades of little or no use, the term next appeared in Kansas and Nebraska newspaper editorials in the 1880s, denoting the middle of the West or the high plains then being settled. The "midwest" migrated east, so that by World War I, it and the Old Northwest Territory, were one and indivisible. Timothy Flint. "Religious Character of the Western People," *Western Monthly Review* (1827) 207.

⁹⁵ Elizabeth A. Perkins. "Identity and Interaction in the Ohio Valley." In Cayton and Teute, *Contact Points*, 205-234. Also see D. W. Meinig, ed. *The Interpretation of Ordinary landscapes: Geographical Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Terry G. Jordan and Matti Kaups. *The American Backwoods Frontier* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

⁹⁶ Perkins. *Border Life*, 508.

and political systems to “fit their social vision and economic interests.”⁹⁷

Disparate people and places were viewed as part of a “united” nation and the trans-Appalachian West was the geographic space where this process of state invention happened, a place in which arose:

...a nation dedicated to the enlightened principles of reason, genteel manners, and complex economic development...a government and a society committed to national authority, to the rule of law and the protection of private property, to rationality and morality as they were understood in New York and Philadelphia, and to the values and structures of expanding capitalist markets of the North American world.⁹⁸

The trans-Appalachian West was a distinct and evolving region within the early nineteenth-century nation. Through architecture, people in the trans-Appalachian West democratized the region into a people’s landscape. Gone were the social and political restrictions and allegiances of the East. In their place, people of the trans-Appalachian West introduced more pure and simple Grecian-style structures, made reference to temples of ancient Greece, and thus associated these buildings with an open and democratic society.

As one of a number of interconnected towns that formed an “urban frontier,”⁹⁹ where elements of “civilization” stood in contrast to “wilderness,” the community of Lexington, Kentucky, serves as a case study to understand the cultural and political implications of nickname practices for the community and

⁹⁷Gregory H. Nobles. “Breaking into the Backcountry: New Approaches to the American Frontier.” *William and Mary Quarterly* 46:4 (1989): 652. Nobles suggests that: “Only when we understand how the movements for independence and integration intertwined can we begin to redefine the nature – and the true significance – of the frontier in American history” (654).

⁹⁸ Nobles, 668.

⁹⁹ Richard Wade suggests that a frontier community trade network – an “urban frontier” – uniquely characterized the trans-Appalachian West. Wade suggests that Louisville, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and Lexington were important market environments and locations of cultural institutions. These cities provided elementary trade linkages across the trans-Appalachian West, eventually connecting through the Ohio and Mississippi River system to New Orleans or across the National Road to points along the eastern seaboard. Wade, *The Urban Frontier*.

the introduction of the Grecian style to the community's cultural landscape and ideological environment.

Lexington as "Athens of the West"

In extant early nineteenth-century travel accounts, Lexington, Kentucky was noted for its physical beauty and refinement (fig. 41). This community was also acclaimed for its intellectual achievements that included the continued operation of Transylvania University, the first institution of higher education west of the Allegheny Mountains. The early nineteenth-century French traveler F. A. Michaux extensively described Lexington with 3,000 inhabitants, buildings mostly of brick, and merchants that offered "coarse and fine hardware, cutlery, tin-ware, drapery, mercery, drugs, china . . . muslins, nankeen, tea . . . taffetas, silk stockings, brandies, and millstones." Josiah Espy, an 1805 visitor to Lexington, declared that the town's main street had "all the appearance of Market Street in Philadelphia on a busy day." An 1806 visitor to Lexington yielded the opinion that houses of Lexington were "furnished with some pretensions to European elegance." In 1810, Traveler Fortesque Cuming listed principal businesses in the community at the time:

4 paper mills; 2 tobacco factories; 4 cabinet shops; 4 china factories; 7 brick yards; 10 blacksmith shops; 1 reed factory; 10 tailor shops; 2 white lead factories; 1 oil mill; 7 saddlery shops; 5 hat factories, 15 boot and shoe shops, 2 printing shops, 1 bindery, 1 venetian blind factory, and 5 paint shops.

Samuel Brown, in an 1817 edition of the *Western Gazetteer*, wrote of additional industries and the physical environment of the Central Kentucky community:

We have excellent white and black smiths, cabinet makers (our cherry furniture far surpasses in beauty the mahogany), fancy and Windsor chair makers, fancy chairs as high as seven dollars each, three carriage maker's

shops, with numerous others of the different employments. Our buildings are of good coloured brick, put up in good style; plenty of the most beautiful white and variegated marble; footways neatly paved with brick and middle of the street with solid stone, firmly bedded.

These chroniclers of Lexington impressions invariably described the community described as a place of great industry, culture, and refinement.¹⁰⁰

So refined was Lexington in the view of Timothy Flint, an itinerant Presbyterian minister who traveled in the Ohio Valley, that he used the nickname the "Athens of the West" to describe the community in the early decades of the nineteenth century.¹⁰¹ This nickname was Flint's shorthand description of Lexington, a metaphor that called forth specific images and associations to nineteenth-century readers of Flint's 1820 travel journal. In the writings of his first visit to Lexington, Flint recounted:

In circles where I visited, literature was most commonly the topic of conversation. The windowseats presented the blank covers of the new and most interesting publications. The best modern works have generally been read. The University, which has since become so famous, was even then, taking a higher standard than the other seminaries in the Western Country. There was generally an air of ease and politeness of this town, which evinced the cultivation of taste and good feeling. In effect, Lexington has taken the tone of a literary place, and may be called the Athens of the West.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ F. A. Michaux, *Travels to the West of the Alleghany [sic] Mountains, in the States of Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee [sic]...* (London: D. H. Shury, 1805), 57-59; Josiah Espy, "A Tour in Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana Territory in 1805." *Ohio Valley Historical Series*, 7:1 (1871) 8. Thomas Ashe, *Travels in America performed in 1806 for the Purpose of Exploring the Rivers Allegheny, Monongahela, Ohio, and Mississippi, and Ascertaining the Produce and Condition of Their Banks and Vicinity* (London: E. M. Blunt, 1808). R. G. Thwaites, *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846*. (New York: AMS Press, 1904), 185-186. Samuel Brown, *Western Gazetteer*. (New York: Auburn. 1817), 91.

¹⁰¹ Timothy Flint (1780-1840), a Protestant missionary and writer from Massachusetts, graduated in the class of 1800 from Harvard College. In addition to travel writings, Flint wrote *Shoshone Valley*, a novel that featured a romantic view of the trans-Mississippi frontier. Of Flint, Michael Kammen notes: "writers like Flint took extraordinary liberties with history yet insisted they were faithful chroniclers ...[of]... the local, regional, or national past." Michael Kammen. *Mystic Chords of Memory* (New York: Vintage, 1991), 80.

¹⁰² Timothy Flint, *Recollections*, 67.

A visitor to Lexington, Kentucky in May 1816 demonstrated the popularity of classical references in the characterization of the community. This traveler compared the town to its appearance on a previous visit twenty-one years earlier:

The beautiful vale of the town fork, which in 1797 I saw variegated with cornfields, meadows and trees, had in my absence been covered with stately and elegant buildings – in short, a large and beautiful town had arisen by the creative genius of the West. The log cabins had disappeared and in their place stood costly brick mansions, well painted and enclosed by fine yards bespeaking the taste and wealth of their possessors...The scenery around Lexington almost equals that of the Elysium of the ancients.¹⁰³ Philadelphia with all its surrounding beauties scarcely equals it.¹⁰⁴

This visitor's observations captured the contrast between wilderness and civilization so prevalent in travel accounts and depictions of the Ohio Valley. Moreover, the traveler compared a city of the West to a city of the East – through the use of the cultural collateral of the "Athens of America" – that is, Philadelphia – to boost the characteristics of the "Athens of the West" – that is, among other cities, Lexington, Kentucky.

Boosterism as a Factor in the Promotion of "Athens"

As centers of moral, intellectual, and religious influence, merchants, political leaders, land speculators, and others sold Lexington and other similar communities in order to attract new citizens. The conversion of towns into cultural centers recurred as one theme of western urban boosterism where many communities shared the nickname "Athens" by the mid-nineteenth century. Don Doyle suggests that boosterism was less about economic

¹⁰³In classical mythology, also called the Elysian fields: the abode of the blessed after death, a place or state of perfect happiness.

prosperity and more about the development of a community ideology, something to knit together communities populated by citizens of varied backgrounds and social conditions. The community under his scrutiny, Jacksonville, Illinois, also known as an "Athens of the West," experienced many of the same circumstances and challenges of other urban places in the Ohio Valley, where boosters wanted to represent their towns as "normal," not as "western" or "freakish" or "absurd." These places in contrast were nicknamed with Old World place names.¹⁰⁵

With the "Athens" name and nickname, business leaders and merchants, in effect, suggested that a given community was associated with great culture and civic institutions, particularly those related to education and literature. The deployment of the "Athens" nickname illustrated the cultural work borrowed from ancient history that swept the nation. "Athens" linked images and realities of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century agrarian and city life and aided in understanding the connectivity of place, name, and cultural commodities. "Athens" demonstrated some of the subtleties of national identity and the struggles within the trans-Appalachian West to provide a model for community formation and composition within the rest of the nation.

Like their nicknames, the Grecian-style architecture in the trans-Appalachian West provided a connection, a shorthand way to show nineteenth-century visitors and residents the high level of sophistication and connectedness of communities to the ancient civilization of Greece. Public buildings and business buildings, as well as private residences, were of special importance in

¹⁰⁴J. Winston Coleman, Jr., "Lexington as Seen by Travelers." *Filson Club Quarterly*, 29:2 (1955): 272.

¹⁰⁵ Doyle. *Social Order of a Frontier Community*.

the communication of civility, particularly when those buildings took the form of Greek temples. As temples of commerce and culture, these buildings helped establish the reputation of a community as a civilized and successful place, one with a promising future.¹⁰⁶ The architecture demonstrated that communities were not isolated places but rather connection points of civilization. With the “Athens” nickname, nineteenth-century Americans would likely imagine communities as places of flourishing culture and important events and people. In the use of the “Athens” nickname, most educated Americans would assume that the community lived up to the definition contained in *Lempriere’s Classical Dictionary* where “Athens” was described as a city that could boast of “such a number of truly illustrious citizens, equally celebrated for their humanity, their learning, and their military abilities.”¹⁰⁷

Americans in the trans-Appalachian West constructed Grecian-style structures as tangible, three-dimensional expressions of validation for their “Athens” claims. These Grecian-style buildings took their place within an American cosmology about self, community, and national identity that wove together and encapsulated French, English, and Native American customs, values, and belief systems. The nineteenth century trans-Appalachian West – with its “Athens” communities – was a place that contained, according to travel writer William Darby, “enough remains of rude nature to recall primitive simplicity, whilst enough is created by art to gratify the wants of civilized man.”¹⁰⁸ Grecian-style structures in the trans-Appalachian West, in their

¹⁰⁶This is a theme explored by Richard Wade, *Urban Frontier*. See also David A. Hamer. *New Towns in the New World*, 1990.

¹⁰⁷ John Lempriere. *Lempriere’s Classical Dictionary* (1788). This extremely popular reference ran through numerous editions in the nineteenth century.

¹⁰⁸ Darby, 23.

“primitive simplicity,” provided pure democratic building forms on an agricultural landscape of men engaged in agrarian pursuits – not Roman buildings situated in a tightly-ordered hierarchy of corrupt senators removed from the people.

Like the Grecian-style buildings, community nicknames – as part of a place-name narrative in the trans-Appalachian West – were used to associate communities with ancient Greece in order to sell them as appropriate locales for economic, political, and social activity in the nineteenth century. As part of the larger story forming nationhood, Americans attempted to imagine themselves and their landscape within their national identity. The American character was thus made not from casting away European tradition but in recasting the European classical tradition as an agrarian ideal in order to link optimism for the future nation with the glorious past of the Greeks. Though they attempted to divorce themselves from European tradition, the “Athens” communities within the trans-Appalachian West emulated continental conventions and modes. Grand names for towns were thus metaphors or tropes to associate particular characteristics of Old World civilization with rising New World communities. The names were as much to connect with Old World culture as they were to disassociate from the wilderness in which a community might find itself.

Academic Buildings as Measures of the “Athens” Nickname

Throughout the nineteenth-century trans-Appalachian West, academies and colleges were established as evidence of cultural sophistication and as a way to further mold communities into “Athens” on a “wilderness” landscape. Moreover, academies and colleges were founded to provide education to citizens

in the vast territory west of the Appalachian Mountains. A number of these institutions were affiliated with churches and provided a place and a means to train ministers for the evangelical churches that rapidly expanded throughout the United States. The institutions were also the training ground for the pursuit of medical and legal studies.

All of these institutions constructed buildings to house administrative, laboratory, and classroom spaces, as well as college chapels. Most of the trans-Appalachian West colleges turned away from Jefferson's Roman-inspired classical rhetoric and, instead, constructed buildings in the Grecian style.¹⁰⁹ Often the first substantial institutions in many frontier communities, these academic buildings set the architectural tone for the remainder of the community and these buildings had broader implications for the communities in which they were constructed.

When Morrison College – a large-scale Grecian-style structure – was erected in Lexington, Kentucky, it served both as a symbol for the optimistic future of Transylvania University and it became a model structure for the “Athens of the West” and literally provided a three-dimensional blueprint of a classical building in a frontier community (fig. 42). The inhabitants of Lexington responded favorably to the construction of the building in the emulation of this new model of architecture in their own houses and shops in the Grecian style.

¹⁰⁹ Institutions of higher education such as Wabash College (Crawfordsville, Indiana) and Illinois College (Jacksonville, Illinois) erected residential-scale brick academic structures as headquarters, but they were in the Federal style. It was in the later nineteenth century that each campus began to shape the architectural character of the surrounding community. Architect William Nichols was responsible for initial plans in 1828 for the University of Alabama campus. The architect was inspired by Jefferson's plan for the University of Virginia (Lane, *Architecture of the Old South: Mississippi and Alabama*, 48-49). Nichols thus concretized into built form the tenets of a classical education, a carefully balanced system based on a solid foundation of history and languages from ancient Greek and Roman precedents.

The built environment of Lexington, by the 1830s, was thus transformed from a few log cabins and Federal-style edifices to a community of brick buildings, most with Grecian-style details and porches. Many of these buildings were modeled upon Gideon Shryock's design for the Morrison College building.

The construction of Morrison College resulted in significant community change. Similar to state capitol buildings, Grecian-style academic buildings like Morrison College stimulated modification of the natural and built environments and the architectural perception of nineteenth-century Americans. Because of its design impact, Morrison transformed Lexington in the same way that the state capitol buildings transformed communities throughout the trans-Appalachian West. In the Grecian style, Morrison was a measuring stick for Lexington to corroborate its sophistication and advancement to other communities. The "wilderness" landscape around Lexington nurtured the perception of this building as a manifestation of the Athenian ideal within an arcadian American landscape.

Transylvania University

Transylvania University, located in Lexington, Kentucky, claimed distinction as the oldest institution of higher education west of the Allegheny Mountains. On May 9, 1829, when Transylvania's main building burned to the ground, the university was just five years old. The structure gutted by fire, designed by Lexington-born architect-builder Matthew Kennedy, was both a physical and symbolic loss for the university and the community (fig. 43). The building contained administrative offices, the library, classrooms and laboratory

facilities, as well as rooms for board for both faculty and students.¹¹⁰ A newspaper account related the observance of Lexington citizens who exclaimed “There goes the genius of Transylvania!” as the building continued to burn.¹¹¹ Alva Woods, president of Transylvania, remained optimistic about the prospects of the college. In his July 29, 1829 commencement address, he boasted that no classes had been missed due to the fire, further noted a substantial growth in enrollment and acknowledged the sympathies and efforts of the Lexington citizens in support for the college after the fire. In the deflection of attention from the tragic fire earlier that year and the significant loss to the university and community, Woods asked:

Do bricks and mortar compose a literary institution? Is this all that is ethereal or intellectual in its character? Was it brick and mortar which secured to Transylvania the affection of her alumni and the cordial support of its citizens? It is teachers, books, philosophers, apparatus, and not brick and mortar which make a University.¹¹²

In less than five years, the university’s Board of Trustees suggested otherwise, and approved the construction of a new symbol of higher learning in the community, and a building in a style more suitable to the democratic leanings of the Board of Trustees.¹¹³ Before departure in 1831 for Tuscaloosa to assume the presidency of the newly established University of Alabama, President Woods

¹¹⁰Designed by Lexington-born architect-builder Matthew Kennedy, the brick building was constructed in the Georgian style and followed the design principles of Palladian-style buildings in the Eastern United States and in Europe. *Kentucky Reporter* (13 May 1829).

¹¹¹A newspaper report related the observance of Lexington citizens on the night of the fire as they watched a pigeon hovering above the ruins of the structure, as if a phoenix rising from the fire – a hope for the future of the school. As the bird succumbed to the heat and fell into the charred remains of the building, some exclaimed: “There goes the genius of Transylvania!” *Kentucky Reporter* (12 August 1829).

¹¹²*Kentucky Reporter* (29 July 1829).

¹¹³John Wright discusses the actions of the Board and president Alva Woods to give the university a more democratic image, including authorization of two separate approaches to the college degree, adding a degree in English Literature for those who did not have solid grounding in Ancient Classics before enrollment. Furthermore the trustees sanctioned the

helped guide the Board of Trustees in initial plans for a new building and the purchase of land north of the lot upon which the earlier building had stood. In June 1831, the Board of Trustees amended the original \$12,500 contract for construction of a \$30,000 building to take advantage of the higher elevation and thus provide a more prominent location for the building north of downtown Lexington and Main Street.¹¹⁴

Morrison College was built to contain administrative offices, classrooms, and, central in the floor plan, a college chapel (fig. 44). Although utilitarian in purpose and function, architect Gideon Shryock¹¹⁵ introduced a new architectural order and hierarchy into a frontier community that was then comprised of log structures, frame buildings, and Federal-style brick edifices. Prior to the construction of Morrison College, church steeples and towers were the only vertical elements in a community characterized by relatively uniform two and three story brick, frame, and log structures. Shryock introduced a new vertical design element to the community in the inclusion of six massive, Doric-style

adoption of a standard college uniform to overcome the inequity in some of the more wealthy students when compared to their poorer peers. John D. Wright. *Transylvania: Tutor to the West*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1978), 122-123.

¹¹⁴The building that was constructed was made possible by the bequeath of Col. James Morrison, a prominent Lexington land-owner and president of the Lexington branch of the Second National Bank of the United States. Morrison served as chairman of the Transylvania Board of Trustees for several years. He died in April 1823 at the age of 68. With Henry Clay as his executor, Morrison left an outright gift of \$20,000 and a residual legacy of \$50,000 to the college in his will.

¹¹⁵Gideon Shryock was the son of Mathias Shryock, who emigrated with his family from Maryland to Lexington in 1800. The younger Shryock trained with Philadelphia architect William Strickland in 1823, supplementing Shryock's knowledge of the building trades learned as a youth in a family of builders, carpenters, and architects. Though he never attended college, Gideon Shryock managed to win the 1827 competition for the design for the new Kentucky State Capitol Building. Given his training under Strickland, in turn trained by Benjamin Henry Latrobe, it is not surprising to see the architectural legacy in these connections as Shryock's design for the new capitol was in the Grecian style. The capitol was completed in 1830 and without doubt influenced the Board of Trustees to employ the 29-year-old architect to create a new edifice and a symbol for Transylvania and the Lexington community.

columns on Morrison College. These vertical elements defined the most important facade of the building, the one that faced south toward the community and the main thoroughfare in town. Beneath the portico, a massive set of steps rose to the main floor of the building. The unprecedented street-facing gable roof unified the composition and indicated the symmetrical and rational nature of the building.

Over-scaled perhaps for the building, the massive porch presented a community face, a dramatic portico that could be seen from a great distance and served not only as a backdrop for community events but as some measure for the status of the community in the eyes of its residents and visitors. Through the inclusion of a large-scaled portico, Shryock demonstrated a shift in the paradigm for Lexington's built environment. Rather than the fulfillment of pure utilitarian requirements, this building was an instructive device for Lexington residents and visitors.

Shryock designed a large set of steps to provide access to the first floor of the building for those who approached from the south. The steps, flanked by over-scaled antipodia, were "book-ends" that compressed the steps visually and physically and narrowed the pathway into the structure. Though they provided access to the building, the steps in reality represented a substantial visual reminder to those who approached the building that anyone could climb the stairs, come into the building, and thus enter into the world of the educated and enlightened individual. In this way, the open nature of the stairs, the antipodia, and the collection of columns were all instructive devices fashioned by the architect and directed at the community. Through the inclusion of these elements, academic buildings became new temples of democracy to help shape

the minds of countless individuals as active citizens who engaged and contributed to the democratic nation. A primary goal for Shryock and for architects and designers introducing Grecian-style structures to communities was to set them apart from the surrounding community.

Shryock introduced stucco as the exterior finish for Morrison College. Never before had the material been used in the community to simulate a stone appearance for a building. Morrison College was painted white and had a relatively smooth finish in stark contrast to the unpainted and rough-hewn log buildings, the painted frame buildings, and the plain brick buildings elsewhere in the community. A finish material that obscured the structural system of the building achieved two things. First, stucco unified the design for the building and literally smoothed over rough surfaces which gave the structure a polished, stone-like appearance, unprecedented in the community. Second, in painting the building white, the designer (and the university) emphasized its high position in the hierarchy of other buildings in the community.

The building's site location and configuration also contributed to its elevation within the architectural hierarchy of the community. On a slight rise of open ground atop a gentle slope that rose from Main Street to the south, Morrison College occupied a prominent landscape position – and a symbolic location above the city at the base of its steps. Both open space and the geography indicated that this building was different than others already constructed in the community. It was a building that rose above and sat apart from the Lexington as a temple of democracy – a building that represented the Athenian democratic ideal and a building that stood as a symbol for citizens who

sought integration as active participants in a rising democratic nation.¹¹⁶ With the building, people identified an achievable goal of transformation into democratic citizens. The building provided documentation that anyone could rise above their station to a better (and more democratic) life.

Morrison College related many messages about the aspirations of its designer, the university, and the community. First, the building stood apart from the architectural context in the community. Numerous design decisions – color and materials, design elements (columns, gable facing south, steps, raised basement), frontal composition, and siting – indicated that the building rose above the land, rather than being tied to a level physical terrain. Because it was different than what had been constructed in the community before, Morrison College assumed a new architectural status. In dominating the landscape, the building symbolized progress at a time of growth for Transylvania University and captured some sense of the community's adoption of a new architectural style during a time of great transition and disorder. Morrison College embodied democratic promise for the nation.

Though the landscape of the trans-Appalachian West remained a “wilderness” in the eyes of travelers, buildings like Morrison College symbolized the order, balance, and stability that could arise, nurtured from this wilderness. The proportions and relationships contained within this building resonated with ideas of symmetry, logic, and rationality and erased the possibility of disorder in

¹¹⁶Morrison College figured prominently in the spatial arrangement and architectural hierarchy of the community. Land was divided in Lexington into a system of inlots and outlots. Located across an open expanse of space, Morrison faced south across the former college lot three blocks from Main Street and the county courthouse, slightly to the east. The town plan, adopted in 1781, provided for a public square on Main Street, but does not indicate any additional open space reserved for public or private use. Though land was quite valuable, the university reserved the old college lot as an open space surrounded by residences.

the “Athens of the West.” The balance, order, logic, and rationality of its buildings and the desire of the designer, university, and community demonstrated not only the Athenian potential of the American landscape but the ideals of the designer, university, and community as well. With Morrison College, travelers to and through the community witnessed tangible, three-dimensional evidence of the sophistication of Lexington as the “Athens of the West.” Morrison College stood as evidence to those within and from outside the community that Lexington was not behind the times with the presence of a fashionable building in the latest popular style.

A building of this magnitude and difference in a frontier community demonstrated to those interested who attended the University that the college was a viable and forward-thinking institution, one that appreciated and revered the classics. For a prospective student or faculty member, Morrison College stood for a reverence for the past and an unbridled optimism for the future. A business-owner saw cultural value in the building – and was reassured that a business venture in Lexington would be partially protected by the presence of such a major, stable cultural institution. A member of the clergy, understanding Morrison's use as a chapel, thought about the ecclesiastical implications of the structure – a university and a community organized by religion. In this way, Morrison College stood as a stable edifice in the time of great religious reform. Not only was the building viewed as a symbol on many different levels within the community, the building was itself a transformative device.

Morrison College was an educational tool that moved beyond an edifice as documentation of the community's stability, economic prospects, and sophistication. The building showed citizens of the community that passage

beneath the portico presented each individual the means to become a new person. Morrison College offered citizens -- with their own energy and resourcefulness -- the means to transform themselves into model citizens. Gone were the shackles of elite Eastern colleges and the distinctions that such social orders imposed.

The porch on Morrison welcomed and sheltered all people, stranger as well as friend. The porch provided a zone of transition for visitors to the building and protected people from wind and rain in inclement weather as they passed through the portals to the interior. Symbolically, the gesture of hospitality embodied in the portico suggested that the building, while it stood apart from the community in so many ways, actually embraced the citizens of Lexington and drew them to the interior of the structure and to the benefits of education available to enlightened individuals.

The porch itself might be thought of as the major transformative device within the design of Grecian-style buildings like Morrison College. Any building within the community -- whether it was a government structure, church, business, or house, pre-existing or new -- could be modified and a symbol-laden portico could be constructed. On the Morrison model, citizens of Lexington added Grecian-style porches onto their houses, places of business, churches, and governmental buildings. Certainly, the porches were costly. If a resident could not afford finely carved columns of stone or wood, square wooden columns were then constructed at a relatively low cost and stood in for the higher-style columns increasingly prominent throughout the rest of the community.

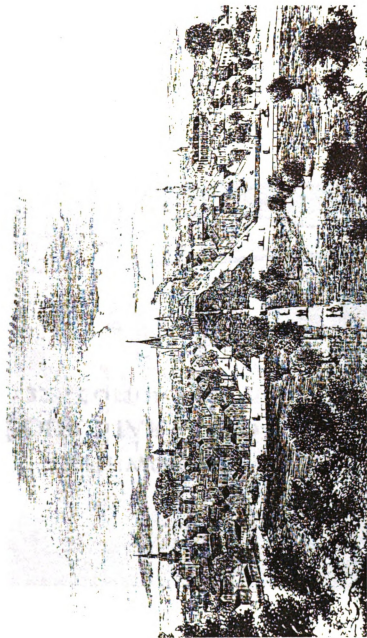
The Impact of Morrison on the Built Environment

In the case of Morrison College, architect Gideon Shryock introduced the Grecian style to a community where numerous Federal-style dwellings and business houses characterized the growth of the community in the first 40 years of its existence. With the introduction of the Grecian-style portico at Morrison College, Shryock set off a chain of emulation in university buildings and among the houses in the immediate vicinity of the campus as well as those further afield. Architect John McMurtry designed the Transylvania University Medical Hall in 1839-1840, built on Market Street south of the campus (figs 45 and 46). The Medical Hall featured a large-scale portico similar to the Morrison model facing the street. The McCauley House, constructed in the early 1850s, contained a two story portico facing the street with simple Doric columns (fig. 47). Francis Key Hunt constructed an unusual one-story cottage was constructed in 1843 on the north side of Barr Street by for his wife, Julia Warfield (figs. 48 and 49). The house and its outbuildings formed a self-contained town complex; the house had wings extending back on either side toward the rear, leaving an open courtyard in the middle. The house was designed with a recessed doorway edged by engaged Ionic-style columns, while flat pilasters divided the front facade. Msr. Giron's Confectionery's Grecian-style candy company building was the scene for many fashionable parties in the nineteenth century (fig. 50). The building featured shop space on the first floor and a ballroom on the second. Like the Hunt House, the Confectionery building featured engaged columns with square, Doric capitals that divided the facade. City School No. 1, also known as the Morton School (1849) was among the first non-log public schools erected in Lexington (fig. 51). With its gable end facing Walnut Street, the building

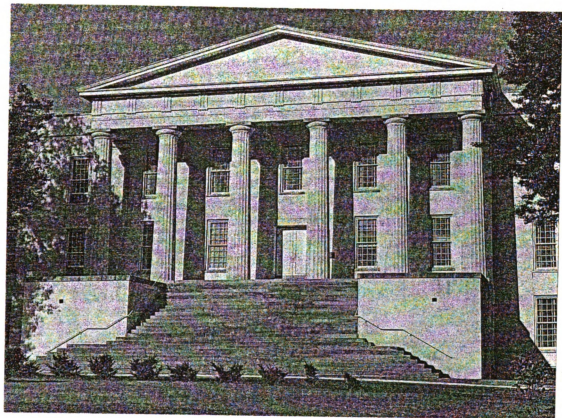
contained two simple Greek style entrances and large window openings. The Main Street Christian Church (1841) stood on Main Street where its Grecian-style portico surmounted by an octagonal bell tower served as a landmark on the main thoroughfare (fig. 52).¹¹⁷

In all of these building forms, people sought ways to connect to the past and to associate their residence, their church, and their business with the manifestation of their beliefs in the democratic experiment underway in America. And like Grecian-style government buildings, other buildings in the Grecian style served as a means to separate communities from their wilderness context. Social acceptability within a community provided yet another motive for constructing a building in the Grecian style.

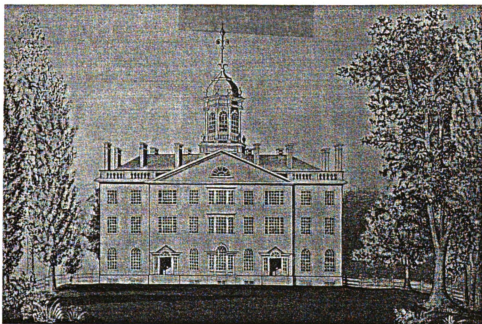
¹¹⁷ Additional residential structures from Lexington are discussed in Chapter Six.



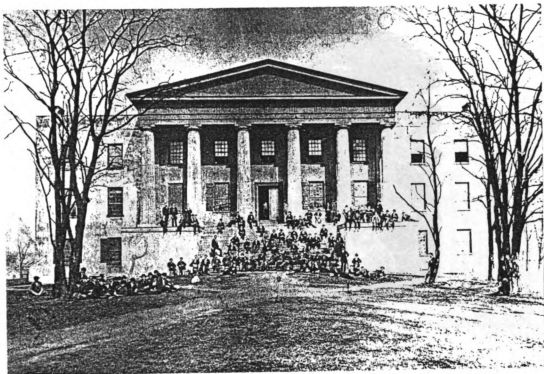
41. Lexington, as seen from Morrison Hall, ca. 1851, from
Ballou's *Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*
Source: Kerr and Wright, *Century in Photographs*, 20



42. Morrison College, ca. 1831-1833, Lexington, Kentucky
Source: Lancaster, *Antebellum Architecture*, 194



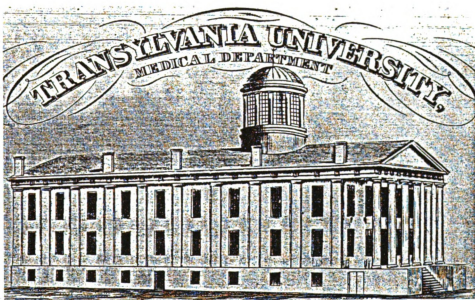
43. Campus Building, ca. 1816-1818, Transylvania University,
Lexington, Kentucky
Source: Kerr and Wright, *Century in Photographs*, 12



44. Morrison College, ca. 1831-1833, Transylvania University,
Lexington, Kentucky
Source: Kerr and Wright, *Century in Photographs*, 36



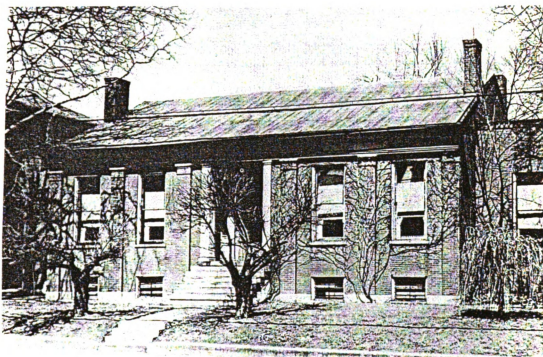
45. Medical Hall, ca. 1839-1840, Market Street, Lexington, Kentucky
Source: Lane, *AOS: Kentucky and Tennessee*, 150



46. Medical Hall, ca. 1839-1840, from the *Catalogue of the Students of the Medical Department of Transylvania University*, Lexington, Kentucky
Source: Lancaster, *Antebellum Architecture*, 204



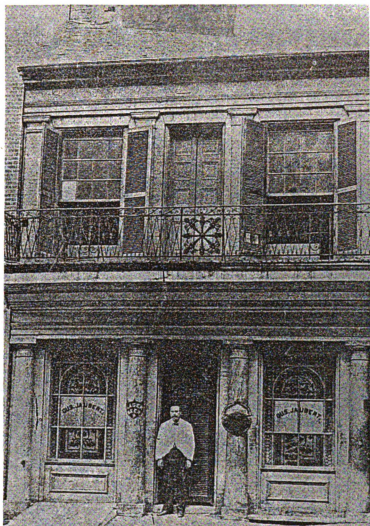
47. John McCauley House, ca. 1851, Maxwell Street, Lexington, Kentucky
Source: Lancaster, *Antebellum Architecture*, 232



48. Francis Key Hunt House, ca. 1843, Barr Street, Lexington, Kentucky
Source: Kerr and Wright, *Century in Photographs*, 131



49. Doorway Detail, Francis Key Hunt House, Lexington, Kentucky
Source: Lancaster, *Antebellum Architecture*, 215



50. Giron's Confectionery, ca. 1837, Short Street, Lexington, Kentucky
Source: Lancaster, *Antebellum Architecture*, 202



51. Morton School, ca. 1849, Walnut Street, Lexington, Kentucky
Source: Kerr and Wright, *Century in Photographs*, 48



52. Main Street Christian Church, ca. 1841, Main Street, Lexington, Kentucky
Source: Kerr and Wright, *Century in Photographs*, 34

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF THE TRANS-APPALACHIAN WEST

Grecian-Style Banks and Churches

A Hegemony of Democracy

Grecian-style architecture was a visual symbol of democracy that quickly took hold in the nineteenth-century trans-Appalachian West.¹¹⁸ This pervasive style extended beyond the more obvious application on government structures and academic buildings and was further employed on church buildings of varying denominations. Through the settlement of their trans-Appalachian landscape, Presbyterians and Congregationalists, among others, founded numerous church-affiliated colleges. Religious historian James Findlay suggests:

The Midwestern colleges possessed strong links to long-established religious institutions and cultural traditions that implied order and a degree of stability. Those same institutions and traditions when extended westward proved adaptable and resilient enough to survive and then to flourish in a turbulent and disordered frontier society. They shaped to a considerable degree the cultural context of the new communities springing up in the west.¹¹⁹

These new communities were comprised of a predominantly mercantile middle class who envisioned themselves as wresting the mantle of leadership from a landed gentry of eastern elites. Their growing cultural domination was made

¹¹⁸ The trans-Appalachian West was not so much a zone of interaction, but rather a place where European-inspired culture established a hegemony that, in part, persists today. This is an idea borrowed from David Hackett Fischer and James C. Kelly. *Bound Away: Virginia and the Westward Movement* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000).

¹¹⁹ James Findlay. "Agency, Denominations, and the Western Colleges, 1830-1860: Some Connections between Evangelicalism and American Higher Education." In Robert George, ed. *The American College in the Nineteenth Century* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2000) 126.

possible by the opening of the west to settlement and the land that became available as part of that process. Land offered for sale by the United States government provided individuals access to expanded sources of income and the opportunity to assume leadership roles in community issues and policies related to commerce, governance, and religious life.

Robert Wiebe suggests that land competed with Christianity as the pulse of a new democratic society: "Conceptually, Americans flattened the world that gentry leaders had tried to see whole into an indefinitely extending plane for movement and enterprise."¹²⁰ Because there was so much land available, traditional community hierarchies stretched and changed and new systems were developed to regularize and standardize communities and their components. Buildings were one such system. Designers, builders, and owners, through the built environment, introduced a regional and national architectural language that had and continues to have long-lasting impacts as buildings of order and rationality in an antebellum national landscape of perceived disorganization and chaos.

The Democratization of Christianity

The great camp meeting in August 1801 at Cane Ridge, Kentucky, began a period of religious revivalism in the Ohio Valley and in the nation. Nathan Hatch describes this revival as the rise of democratized Christianity, when new churches and religious movements were founded and operated in a climate of eastern ecclesiastical establishments that were less robust. Simply, elite religions lost resonance for the common man as popular religious movements denied

age-old distinctions that set clergy apart from ordinary people. Popular religions took deep spiritual impulses at face value rather than have fundamental beliefs subjected to the scrutiny of clergy and orthodox doctrine. Freed from the strictures of mainline religions, evangelical denominations embraced leaders without formal training who operated outside normal denominational frameworks. Leaders, in fact, were key to the popularity of religious movements. Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Congregationalist assemblies were increasingly challenged by Methodist, Baptist, and Christian denominations that had free rein to experiment.¹²¹

Democratic impulses were imbedded in popular religion because ordinary people were involved in leading religion and shaped their beliefs and practices to suit their particular emotional needs. With the explosion of popular print culture, lay people challenged ministers as sources of information and their authority was questioned within these evangelical religions. Individuals began to act on their own and spoke for themselves within the evangelical churches and this led to the increased importance of the individual. Like government and education leaders, many, though not all, churches turned to the Greek temple as an inspiration for housing their congregations. Democratic culture that stressed the importance of the individual took form, even in religious circles, through the adoption of the Grecian style. Popular religious movements were deeply rooted in democratic culture and the extension of the Grecian style to religious buildings

¹²⁰ Robert H. Wiebe. *The Opening of American Society* (New York: Knopf, 1984), 142.

¹²¹ Hatch. *Democratization of American Christianity*. Hatch notes that the theme of democratization is central to the understanding of American Christianity, and that the years of the Early Republic are the most crucial in revealing that process. Hatch further asserts that popular religious movements did more to Christianize American society than anything before or since.

seemed appropriate on one level because it helped to regularize the facets of religion into symbols and an architectural language understood by citizens in the Early Republic.

Across class and denominational lines, church architecture reflected the process of democratization in the trans-Appalachian West. Furthermore, as Grecian style buildings housed main line congregations in addition to more evangelical groups, the architecture of churches helped to shape images of democracy in the Old Northwest and the Frontier South. The Grecian-style buildings demonstrated the growth of a national consciousness about religion as a key ingredient in the development of cities and of western land: "In the long run, fault lines of class, education, and social status within a single denomination may have been more significant than sectional tensions, even between northern and southern churches." ¹²²

Grecian-style church buildings established mainstream evangelical religions in a community's social, cultural, and architectural hierarchies. As evangelical religions moved from the periphery to more central positions in community hierarchies, Grecian-style sanctuaries concretized legitimacy for these religious groups and reshaped "Christianity's solemn message in idioms that people cherished as their own."¹²³ By the middle of the nineteenth century, evangelical religious movements metamorphosed from positions of being outsiders to institutions of community influence: where these evangelical religions were once found outside the social norm in most communities, they became part of the central culture. Consequently, non-elite churches sought respectability within the community's religious and social hierarchy, achieved, in

part, through the erection of Grecian-style church buildings. Clergy from both ends of the social scale battled for cultural authority and church construction.

The Erection of Grecian-style Churches

With the unprecedented expansion of evangelical religion in the trans-Appalachian West (and throughout the United States), congregations of all sizes constructed churches to house rapidly growing numbers of church-goers. Evangelical denominations as well as more traditional churches adopted architectural forms based on the temples that housed Greek gods and goddesses. Center Presbyterian Church (ca. 1838) and St. John Episcopal Church (ca. 1837-1851), both in Crawfordsville, Indiana, contained elements of the Grecian style: broad gable ends facing the street, raised center entrances surmounted by steps, pilasters dividing street-facing facades, broad cornice bands where the roof meets the wall, and open steeples containing bells (figs 53 and 54). The Center Presbyterian Church included a two-leaf center door surrounded by extensive wood trim above below a large lunette window. Double-leaf doors contained within an arched opening filled the center of the street-facing façade on the St. John Episcopal Church. Flat, applied pilasters divided large sections of wood siding on all sides of the building. Pilasters also dominated the design for the Congregational Meeting House and a simple, one-leaf door served as the main entrance, accessed by a broad flight of steps.

These buildings achieved some separation from the surrounding community through the use of raised foundations and flights of exterior steps leading to primary worship spaces. Where porches were prominent for

¹²² Hatch, 205.

academic buildings, these church structures contained only the slightest recess on the front façade as a point of transition to the building interior. As a result, the Grecian-style church buildings of Crawfordsville and Jacksonville did not stand out in the community because of large-scaled porches. Rather, the design solutions for all three churches incorporated towers and symmetrical, simple facades to command attention within the community's architectural hierarchy. Like many of the academic buildings and the capitol buildings, these church buildings stood separate from the community because of their function and because of their vertical presence on the streetscape by virtue of their steeples. Nonetheless, the Grecian-style churches of Crawfordsville and Jacksonville indicated that, at least in the minds of its Protestant and Congregational Church-minded residents, the Grecian style was a legitimate form of cultural expression.

Churches could be Greek temples if transformed by adding bell towers and by reducing the large-scale porticos so prominent in other Grecian-style buildings throughout the trans-Appalachian West. In Nashville, Tennessee, amateur architect James M. Hughes placed a massive two-story porch supported by highly stylized Ionic columns on the street façade of the Second Presbyterian Church (ca. 1846) at College and Gay Streets (fig. 55). Rather than being surmounted by a flight of steps, people accessed this building through a large opening in the basement/ foundation level. On the roof of the structure sat a square bell tower surmounted by an octagonal lantern and topped by a small steeple. With the exception of the massive porch, this church building is similar to those in Crawfordsville and Jacksonville.

¹²³ Hatch, 209.

In some communities, churches rather than academic buildings, represented a new architectural order. Although both Wabash College (Crawfordsville, Indiana) and Illinois College (Jacksonville, Illinois) were both established by the second decade of the nineteenth century, neither of these institutions had by that time constructed a substantive building in the Grecian style for their campuses. Rather, the churches which established these institutions for higher education took the responsibility of introducing the Grecian style to the "Athens of Indiana" and the "Athens of the West." Church architecture, in these communities, concretized the claims made because of the educational facilities in each community. Thus, while the colleges likely contributed to the nicknaming process as "Athens" communities, the churches actually constructed the reality of that vision of a Hellenistic community on the frontier of the trans-Appalachian West.

In trying to shape an image of a democratized religion to others where every person was equal and no person more important than any other, these church congregations selected the Grecian style. It is significant that in the various religious groups – in this case the Presbyterians, the Episcopalians, and the Congregationalists – each selected the Grecian style.¹²⁴ The Grecian style, at least in Crawfordsville and Jacksonville, seemed to be the architectural idiom of choice in making a statement about democratized religion and, perhaps, a statement about American democracy. A church might appear open to all if its

¹²⁴ The Greek temple was, perhaps, a curious choice to house a monotheistic religion. Greek temples were sites of ritual sacrifice dedicated to one or more Gods. See George Hersey. *The Lost Meaning of Classical Architecture: Speculations on Ornament from Vitruvius to Venturi* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 1-10.

exterior expressed the democratic promise that was rapidly dawning – at least visually – in the trans-Appalachian West.

However, churches still needed to look like houses of worship rather than government or educational buildings. Designers responded to this challenge through the incorporation of elements such as steeples, spires, and pointed windows alongside elements of the Grecian style (e.g. columned porticos and street-facing pedimented gables). Design features remained fairly constant among these three churches. In each case, the gable end faced the street upon which the building was located. Not surprisingly, the builders of the churches concentrated ornament around and above the central openings on these symmetrical facades. Bell towers and lunette windows above these door openings further emphasized the symmetrical nature of the buildings and the centrality of the compositions. Steps provided access and reminded all who entered that religion was elevated from everyday life – something set apart from the rest of the city, at least on Sundays and other days of worship. Clapboard building materials, painted a light color if not white, set these structures in contrast to the unpainted or brick structures in the surrounding community.¹²⁵

Within their trans-Appalachian Western communities, church buildings provided rational three-dimensional “texts” for community members to “read” and buildings to occupy as engaged citizens in a democratic nation. Members of a congregation climbed steps together and passed through a single, central door

¹²⁵ These stylistic characteristics may be the result of New England influence, particularly with New England congregational connections through the colleges in the west. For example, Presbyterian schools (e.g. Wabash College) were founded and supported by the Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West. Headquartered in New York, this organization doubtlessly served as a conduit for ideas about building styles, means of administering colleges, etc. for the western frontier.

so that people of all backgrounds and walks of life were transformed into a community at two scales: the smaller gathering of the congregation and the more complex grouping of institutions and people that formed the locality itself. Community formed by people gathering in houses of worship and in other buildings throughout the town. Like academic and government structures, citizens of the trans-Appalachian West manipulated the built environment by “clothing” these church structures with democratic rhetoric. They did so and influenced the people who used and passed by these buildings and manifested, for their communities, their claims as American “Athens.”

Blended Church Traditions

The trans-Appalachian West had no central church authority; even more hierarchically Catholics had not formed much of a network across the trans-Appalachian West by the mid-nineteenth century. Church architecture echoed this lack of central force as individual church congregations spoke for themselves in architectural language. Across denominational lines, when people chose for themselves, they selected the Grecian style – democratic clothing for their own religion. Often the Grecian style was fused to another architectural idiom. It was rare that a single church building exhibited a single pure style or form. Designers and builders of churches combined the elements from numerous stylistic traditions. Elements of the Grecian style were often successfully fused with those of the Gothic. In Lexington, Kentucky, St. Peter Roman Catholic Church (1837), designed by John McMurtry, included a square bell tower, pointed arch window openings, and a Grecian-style front façade (fig. 56). Central steps led to the front doors, flanked on either side by a two-story

shallow porch supported by Doric columns. Large square Doric columns supplemented those at the center of the composition, while fully engaged pilasters anchored the corners of the front façade of the structure. The Grecian-style front façade of St. Peter's stood in contrast to the essentially Gothic-style church behind its front face.¹²⁶ In Holly Springs, Mississippi, The Holly Springs Methodist Church (1849) also combined elements of the Grecian and Gothic styles (fig. 57). The church featured a raised basement and front gable facing the street. Grecian-style pilasters divided all facades while Gothic-style window openings penetrated the walls of the structure.¹²⁷

St. Mary Catholic Church (1844), at Charlotte and Fifth streets in Nashville, Tennessee, not more than four blocks east of William Strickland's Grecian-style Capitol, incorporated a Grecian-style central portico, Gothic-style massing and fenestration patterns, and a Renaissance-inspired front façade (fig. 58). The building contained a raised foundation, central steps topped by a large-scale porch through which visitors accessed the central entrance to the structure. Ionic-style columns supported the porch, while Doric-style pilasters marked various components of the building, among them two slightly recessed niches on the left and right sides of the main porch entrance. Two additional Grecian-style Nashville churches showed other Grecian-style variants. David Morrison

¹²⁶ St. Peter Roman Catholic Church was not the only Grecian-style building in Lexington. The Main Street Christian Church (ca. 1841) was constructed in the more pure form of a Greek temple with a street-facing portico that occupied the entire width of the north façade. In 1843 it was the scene of a famous ten-day debate on Christian Baptism between Reverend Nathan Rice, a Presbyterian, and Alexander Campbell, of the Christian Church. Henry Clay, along with Judge George Robertson, and Col. Speed Smith were the moderators.

¹²⁷ The Holly Springs Presbyterian Church (ca. 1840), though more vernacular than the Holly Springs Methodist Church, exhibited characteristics of the Grecian style. See also Robert M. Winter. *Shadow of a Mighty Rock: A Social and Cultural History of Presbyterianism in Marshall County, Mississippi* (Franklin: Providence House Publishers, 1997).

designed the 1833 Methodist Church at Nashville, and combined a late-colonial cupola, a Palladian window, and a recessed Doric portico in the building composition (fig. 59). Builder Mason Vannoy constructed the 1832-1834 Presbyterian Church of Nashville and mixed elements of the Grecian style with English Palladian elements (fig. 60). The design for the Presbyterian Church incorporated a clock tower and spire above a substantial Grecian-style portico. The church closely followed the design of St. Peter's Church, Eaton Square, London.¹²⁸

The designers for Old St. Mary (Catholic) Church, located in the heart of the Over-the-Rhein neighborhood in downtown Cincinnati, Ohio, blended the Grecian, Gothic, and English styles (fig 61). Completed in 1842, Old St. Mary's featured Doric pilasters dividing all facades, rounded-arch stained glass windows, and a massive bell tower capped by a steeple. The front façade of this structure incorporated three entrances above which were placed circular stained glass windows. Gothic-arch vent coverings occupied each side of the bell tower. For St. Peter in Chains Cathedral (1841-1845) of Cincinnati, the substantially Grecian-style church was fused with a massive English-style spire (fig. 62). Architect Henry U. Walter faithfully reproduced the Corinthian order of the *Horologium* (Tower of the Winds) *Adronikos Cyrrhestes* (Athens, 35 B.C.) and the columns of the Athenian *Choragic Monument of Lysicrates*.¹²⁹

Whether in Cincinnati, Nashville, Holly Springs or Lexington, Grecian-style church buildings reflected the exuberance of religion in the trans-Appalachian West. Congregations sought legitimacy and directed designers and

¹²⁸ Lane, *Architecture of the Old South: Kentucky and Tennessee*, 123.

¹²⁹ Carol Lueberg, ed. *Cathedral of St. Peter in Chains* (Archdiocese of Cincinnati, 1988), 5.

builders to construct churches that fit in with the community's expectation of Grecian-style buildings and their efforts reflected the democratization of communities in the region. These church buildings, however, retained sufficient ecclesiastical characteristics in addition to Grecian-style elements so that congregations maintained their community identification as houses of worship. Designers and builders, in this instance, modified the Grecian style so that these buildings were identifiable as religious structures. They manipulated characteristics that resulted in the diffusion of the Grecian style across the ecclesiastical landscape of the nation.

The Embodiment of Democracy in the Trans-Appalachian West

The Grecian style, for church buildings at least, did not stand in its pure form. Instead, it was molded into a fused tradition of styles that reflected the varied nature of communities in expressing their ecclesiastical leanings in the Grecian style. The Grecian style was modified through other building traditions and styles to give the buildings a collective legitimacy within community hierarchies. At its most basic level, the Grecian style, even in its unlikely marriage to monotheistic religion, resulted from democratic impulses within the nation.

Like academic and government buildings, Grecian-style church architecture helped settle the West and make manifest the claims of communities that attempted to function as an American "Athens." These buildings influenced the people in the communities where they were erected and the construction of new buildings referred to the Grecian style predecessor buildings constructed within the community. Regardless of the level of their purity in the Grecian

style, differences in color, composition, and placement of church buildings communicated a new architectural order within communities. As was the case with government buildings and academic assemblages, there appears to be little difference in the North and South for these church structures.¹³⁰

The religious revival that began in 1801 at Cane Ridge in Kentucky spurred many changes to religion, particularly in the trans-Appalachian West where church membership increased and widespread support grew for Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and allied denominations. Less affected by these evangelical tendencies were the Lutherans and Episcopalians who retained strong identification with the past and with traditional liturgies. Similarly, Roman Catholics embraced tradition rather than innovation and new churches were constructed in the trans-Appalachian West. The Grecian style became the architectural language of church building. What did it mean, for example, for a certain church group to build in the Grecian style? For members of evangelical religions, the Grecian style was a means to secure legitimacy. For ostracized religious groups like the Roman Catholics, the Grecian style demonstrated the mainstream nature of a religion in the context of American society. As with ecclesiastical architecture, the designers and owners of commercial buildings also relied on the Grecian style to secure legitimacy and helped transform the Grecian style into a national architectural idiom.

¹³⁰ Where one might expect to see less democratic forms in the South overall, the most exuberant and pure Grecian-style church structures were located within more southern geography. Government Street Presbyterian Church (Mobile, AL) and Trinity Church (Natchez, MS) are but two of the numerous Grecian style churches in the south. See Lane, *The Architecture of the Old South: Mississippi and Alabama*, 50-65.

A National Economic Agenda

Fraught with indecision about a common vision of the United States, the Congress, in the opening decades of the nineteenth century, sought to bind the republic together through internal improvements and through establishment of banking systems that fostered economic development throughout the union. The rising Democrats hoped that the nation would function as a federation of states with much of the power centralized in the states rather than in their federal union. By contrast, the Whigs advocated economic growth through central government intervention and protection for struggling American industry through tariffs levied by Congress.

A rapidly expanding market economy and the rise of the middle class further complicated these competing notions about political culture. Increasingly larger numbers of people had access to the means to create and enjoy wealth. The middle class – rather than the elite – shaped nineteenth-century values and began to assume leadership roles in governance and in the creation of civic charitable and educational organizations. The members of the middle class attempted to make the economic system work to their advantage and many sought relief from perceived speculators and abusers of power.

In the Early Republic, an enduring fear of corruption united the agrarian sections of the nation and fed the sectional ferment that led to Civil War:

Unless they served immediate, measurable ends, all disciplinary frameworks – electoral procedures, courts, systems of money, cultural institutions, or public works of internal improvement – could be attacked as aristocratic, unrepublican, and contrary to the liberties of people.¹³¹

¹³¹ Larson, *Internal Improvements*, 40.

The demand for internal improvements accentuated the role of government in everyday life and established commercial and transportation that linked West and East, North and South.

Internal improvements were a means to create one nation. Congress recommended internal improvements in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, a time when the nation was threatened by growing sectional debate over the issue of slavery. Internal improvements were, in the view of some politicians, especially Whigs, the means for pulling the nation together and the method of support for successful commercial and transportation networks. To others, involvement in the market contrasted with notions of republican virtue, liberty, and equality that were understood as a legacy from the nation's founders.¹³² Political parties rose, in part, because of differences in philosophy about economic development and the emerging market revolution in the antebellum United States and because of the lack of effective political leadership.¹³³

Economic forces impacted politics as surely as politics influenced the market.¹³⁴ Technology, too, contributed to the expansion of the nation,

¹³² Jacksonians saw the union as a way to keep individuals from restricting one another while the Whigs saw the union as a way to bind together disparate people. The nineteenth century world was turned upside down with individuals trying to re-establish social order following the revolution. Kohl, *Politics of Individualism* and Wood, *Radicalism of the American Revolution*.

¹³³ In a fundamental reshaping of the nature of party competition, strong distrust of the party system and of politicians in general brought about a desire to reform the parties and return political power to the people. Sectional extremism resulting from regionally antagonistic relationships and the disappearance of the Whig party forced the realignment of voters and this, in turn, led to the Civil War. Holt, *Political Crisis*.

¹³⁴ In the Panic of 1819, the Bank of the United States called in specie notes from the various state and local banks. These smaller institutions did not have enough reserves to cover the notes and their inability to pay on the notes triggered a depression. When Andrew Jackson issued a similar species circular, he called for the payment in gold for public land purchased in the west. Many state banks had made substantial loans on much smaller cash reserves and could not cover the repayment to the Bank of the United States. Most of the state banks were

connecting hinterlands to their markets in a more direct manner and bringing sections of the nation into much closer temporal proximity. Railroads signaled the end of localities unconnected with one another and because the government did not sponsor a unified rail system, private business filled the gap.

Communities relied on technology to secure economic prosperity. Justified on the grounds that internal improvements should be stable enterprises in the greater interest of the nation, railroads, banks, and canal companies were chartered as corporations, often with the state governments buying shares in the corporations. In the trans-Appalachian West, the 1818 National Road and a series of canals (e.g. the 1825 Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company and the 1825 Louisville and Portland Canal) were funded through these means. These types of internal improvements were examples of the complex web of social and commercial relationships developing throughout the nation. With the improvements came a paradox of progress: good came from being connected to the rest of the world but corruption came as well. Many thought improved transportation and communication would aid in the flow of goods, increase geographic mobility, and bolster government influence in the market. Others simply lamented the loss of a simpler way of life.¹³⁵

Although a national bank was not contained within the United States Constitution, the First Bank of the United States was established in the 1790s but had closed its doors by 1811. During the War of 1812, the lack of manufacturing facilities was a serious detriment to the nation. Industries had sprung up under

forced to close their doors in the Panic of 1837. The rise of banks and a cycle of boom-and-bust economics "symbolized the dramatic changes that were rebuilding the American economy and altering the meaning of independence in the lives of ordinary citizens." Henry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America*. New York: The Noonday Press (1990) 40.

wartime pressure and, after the war, were threatened by British trade. Moreover, because there was no single standard currency, it was difficult to borrow and lend outside of a specific locality, making the financing of industrial concerns nearly impossible. Additionally, transportation of goods and commodities throughout the United States was difficult, particularly connections east and west over the Allegheny and Appalachian Mountains. Because of the lessons learned in the war, the Congress passed tariffs against imported goods (particularly those from the British Empire). Congress addressed transportation issues and approved a series of internal improvements to make the marketing of goods more efficient.

The effort to establish a national road demonstrated the importance of connecting west to east – periphery to center – and provided one means for the flow of goods, services, and ideas to the western frontier. The development of the National Road made less challenging the migration of people – building designers and tradespeople among them – and the communication of ideas and goods – including architectural styles and materials. In addition, Congress attempted to establish a stable and standard money supply throughout the nation and created a second national bank in 1816.¹³⁶ Not only was a federal bank created, states in the trans-Appalachian West, by the 1830s, established state banks with their own currency and methods of business. Because of its power and size, the national bank was able to guide business transactions in the state banks by the establishment of standards for the issue of sound notes. The

¹³⁵ Sheriff, *Artificial River*.

¹³⁶ The validity of the national bank was brought to the Supreme Court under the leadership of Chief Justice John Marshall. In the case *McCulloch v. Maryland*, the court ruled constitutional the Bank of the United States and then, in 1824, the court further strengthened the legal position of the bank in *Osburn v. Bank of the United States*.

expansion of this banking system brought buildings constructed in the Grecian style that lent an air of stability and solidity, important qualities in the shifting cultural and political landscape of the trans-Appalachian West.

The Links among Architecture, Nationhood, and Commerce

Owners of commercial buildings attempted to use the Grecian style to lend an air of stability to what were often fluid and mercurial enterprises. Founders of local and state banks in the trans-Appalachian West utilized the Grecian style to specific ends as they simultaneously altered the fabric of communities in the introduction of these buildings. Grecian-style structures were again manipulated and their meanings changed in ways distinct from governmental, educational, and ecclesiastical permutations of the style. With commercial buildings, architecture added to the growing rhetoric of nationhood and cemented a strong connection between the built environment and economic concerns.

The Port Folio published a series of essays on the development of a national style in architecture and in economic policies and linked Scottish Enlightenment thinking to the development of liberal economics. In addition to essays on the built environment entitled "On Style," "On Architecture," "On Beauty," and "On Simplicity in Ornament," the pages of the journal also contained articles "On the Future Destination of the United States," "On Banks of Circulation," and "On National Debts."¹³⁷ Benjamin Henry Latrobe's "Anniversary Oration to the Society of Artists in Philadelphia" was published as an addendum to the May 1811 edition of *The Port Folio*. In this address, Latrobe linked banking and

Grecian-style architecture and gave to America a clear vision for the Grecian style as a national ethic to be achieved. Comparing Hellenistic buildings to their Roman counterparts, Latrobe suggested that Americans should not aspire to recreate “the corrupt Age of Dioclesian, or the still more absurd and debased taste of Louis the XIV.” Rather, citizens of the United States should emulate the commercial successes of eastern merchants and reproduce buildings like the Bank of the United States, the “first building in which marble was employed as the principal material of its front.” In continuing the address, Latrobe reported that his first large commission, the Bank of Pennsylvania, was a “pure specimen of Greek simplicity in design.”¹³⁸ However, this architect and the editor of *The Port Folio*, architect Nicholas Biddle, sought not to mimic the ancients. Latrobe’s speech rejected the exact duplication or replication of ancient buildings, instead advocating a national style that borrowed on the past but was firmly rooted in the nineteenth-century present. Latrobe went so far as to suggest that “the days of Greece may be revived in the woods of America, and Philadelphia become the Athens of the Western World.”¹³⁹

Latrobe maintained that every Grecian citizen felt important in the eminent ancient democracy, noting “Greece was free when the arts flourished, and that freedom derived from them much of her support and permanence.” By contrast, the Roman republic reincarnate, Britain, was cast as a location where liberty was not manifest. Rome and Britain were analogous empires, places of corruption where free citizens were subjected to the vices and patterns of

¹³⁷ *The Port Folio*, 3rd Series, 1814-1815.

¹³⁸ Benjamin Henry Latrobe. *The Port Folio*, 3rd Series, vol. 78 (1812) 196.

¹³⁹ Benjamin Henry Latrobe. *Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers*. John C. Van Horne, et al, eds. (3 volumes). Published for the Maryland Historical Society (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984-1988) Vol. 3, 67-91.

imperial control. Latrobe posited that the subjection of Greece to Rome was a warning “to guard well the liberty that alone can produce such wonders.”¹⁴⁰ Given Latrobe’s negative attitude toward the British Empire, it seemed logical that there should be a revival of Greek rather than Roman forms in the new American nation.

Latrobe linked architecture and politics, establishing a reciprocal relationship between public sentiment and architecture. Untainted by the decayed fashions of Europe, the Grecian style provided a concrete structural example of American nationalist and republican ideologies. Moreover, the Grecian-style edifices demonstrated that architecture could connect to other times and places in order to continue to represent certain perceived qualities and characteristics of those places. To embellish in the Athenian taste meant constructing symbols to illustrate that the American nation would last as long as its Athenian predecessor, if not longer. Free from the corruption of liberty in Britain and European nations, the Grecian style emulated the best of the old world and distanced the American nation from the exploits of empire builders. On the wilderness American landscape of the western frontier, the Grecian style took on additional relief and stood as a manifestation of a new America based on the past but clearly pointed toward future glory. As banks were constructed in the Grecian style, they borrowed on the rhetoric established by Latrobe and others who linked the style to agelessness and, therefore, to stability and solidity. In the words of Edward Shaw:

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

In Philadelphia, we have the United States Bank, a faultless specimen of the pure Doric' classic, chaste, and simple in its proportions, it is a building of which we may well be proud.¹⁴¹

Temples of Commerce

The Second Bank of the United States, William Burch's Bank of Pennsylvania and Benjamin Henry Latrobe's Bank of Pennsylvania were all located in Philadelphia and were models for bank buildings throughout the trans-Appalachian West (figs. 63, 64 and 65).¹⁴² One such building influenced by its Philadelphia predecessors was David Morrison's design for the Union Bank of the State of Tennessee Building (1834) at the northeast corner of Cherry (Fourth) and Union streets in Nashville, Tennessee (fig. 66). A two-story porch dominated the design scheme and fully extended across the front facade of the building. The pediment was supported by Doric-style columns under which were located a short flight of steps, both stretching the full width of the façade. The Union Bank might have been modeled after Plate 52 from Minard Lafever's *The Young Builder's General Instructor* (fig. 67).¹⁴³

Other bank buildings followed more freely the tenets of the Grecian style. On the west end of Fourth Street in Cincinnati, Ohio, several buildings were constructed in the 1830s and 1840s to house banking and insurance concerns. These buildings represented perhaps some of the finest of Grecian-style business buildings constructed in the community. The National Lafayette Bank occupied a large Grecian-style building with a massive porch (fig. 68). Supported by eight

¹⁴¹ Edward Shaw. *Rural Architecture: Consisting of Classic Dwellings, Doric, Ionic, and Gothic, and the Details Connected with Each of the Orders* (Boston: James B. Dow, 1843).

¹⁴² These buildings were also the prototypes for countless other state government, residential, and church buildings. For example, Latrobe's Bank was illustrated in Owen Biddle's *Young Carpenter's Assistant* (Philadelphia, 1805) and served as inspiration for the Kentucky State Capitol (1827) designed by architect Gideon Shryock.

Doric-style columns, a street-facing gable stretched the entire width of the building's façade. Several entrance doors stood behind this massive porch surmounted by a wide set of steps, also stretching the entire width of the façade. The George W. Neff & Company Insurance Agency found their home in a Grecian-style structure also on Fourth Street (fig 69). This building, smaller than the National Lafayette Bank, included a pair of prominent two-story, Ionic-style columns and two plain pilasters that all divided the front façade. Full-width steps provided access to the first level of this building; a pediment capped the composition. John Casper Wild's mid-nineteenth century watercolor view of Fourth Street included the image of a third Grecian-style building similar in configuration to the Neff Building (fig. 68). Although the steps did not occupy the full width of the façade in this latter building, the paired Ionic columns and the plain pilasters divided the façade in similar fashion to the Neff Building.

Bank buildings North and South conformed to a Grecian ideal and communicated unity and stability for banks throughout the trans-Appalachian West.¹⁴³ Because the banking system was anything but secure, stable, or ordered, the Grecian style was embroiled in image-shaping and perception management in part forged by the government and in part informed by bankers and communities throughout the western frontier who shaped their financial concerns and community identities through erection of Grecian-style structures. The Grecian style was associated with concepts of gentility, acceptability, and

¹⁴³ Lane, *Architecture of the Old South: Kentucky and Tennessee*, 161.

¹⁴⁴ Like their northern counterparts, Grecian-style bank buildings in the south were centered in mercantile communities. Holly Springs and Tuscaloosa simply did not have an example within the limits of this study. Designers for several additional banks in the south, however, showed a strong affinity for the Grecian style: the 1838 Commercial Bank (Natchez, MI) and the 1837-1840 Alabama State Bank (Huntsville, AL), (figs. 69 and 70) See Lane, *Architecture of the Old South: Mississippi and Alabama*, 63, 83.

stability in a time of great change, social mobility, and economic volatility. A Grecian-style edifice represented the perception of a stable bank that would provide a safe shelter for money and would spur along economic growth in the West.

Fluid Meanings of the Grecian Style

Throughout the trans-Appalachian West, Grecian-style buildings were so prevalent a feature of the American landscape, James Fenimore Cooper satirized the whims of the fashion:

The public sentiment just now runs almost exclusively and popularly into the Grecian school. We build little else besides temples for our churches and banks, our taverns, our courthouses and our dwellings. A friend has just built a brewery on the model of the Temple of the Winds.¹⁴⁵

Grecian-style buildings cut across economic, political, social, and denominational lines and were found in cities both north and south in the trans-Appalachian West.¹⁴⁶ The structures stood as public expressions of belief in democracy, stability, and normative behavior by community residents, business owners, and religious groups. Grecian-style church and bank buildings, like their academic counterparts, influenced the physical characteristics of many communities. These buildings actually performed cultural work. Bank buildings constructed in the style demonstrated perceived unity and stability in a banking industry fraught by mercurial fluctuation and transformation. Grecian-style church buildings “mainstreamed” evangelical religions and brought even Roman Catholicism into

¹⁴⁵ James Fenimore Cooper. *Notions of the Americans Picked Up by a Travelling Bachelor* (London: H. Colburn, 1828) 107.

¹⁴⁶ Due to a lack of documentary resources and buildings available for study, lyceums, libraries, and industrial buildings are several categories of structures not in the purview of this study.

a level of political and social acceptability. Grecian-style buildings manipulated people's perceptions of institutional structures in both the sphere of religion and in the world of commerce.

Grecian-style bank buildings showed just how crucial the Grecian style was in constructing meaning on the western frontier. Provincial autonomy challenged central authority and was understood by comparing state capitol buildings to the more Roman-inspired national capitol. Access to knowledge and the ability to become fully engaged democratic citizens was linked to the erection of Grecian-style edifices on college campuses. Grecian-style churches lent legitimacy to both peripheral evangelical and to hierarchical "mainline" religions in various efforts to maintain or manipulate the architectural images of American church congregations. Bank buildings manifested the promise of a prosperous market economy and fostered independent and thriving communities populated by successful, middle-class merchants. Banks were temples of commerce in which were transacted the everyday business of the American nation. Alongside these commercial buildings, Grecian-style residences constructed throughout the trans-Appalachian West borrowed on some of the design features and the rhetoric of public buildings.

A person's home also promoted this dialogue about democracy that took form in large porticos that faced the street. Through the construction of a Grecian-style portico, house owners provided evidence for community residents and visitors that they were genteel and members of the democratic nation. The portico also served as a zone of transition and transformation in the public realm not dissimilar from governmental, educational, ecclesiastical, and commercial structures. Through Grecian-style porticos, the residences resonated with

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community standards and became architectural assemblages that performed additional cultural work. Houses also masked major changes in household composition and building use behind a democratic façade. The interior dimension of these structures, separated from the exterior, signaled the shift in the development of public to private worlds by mid-century. The Grecian style provided the visual cues for this transition in ideology and encapsulated shifts in societal values and composition across the trans-Appalachian region.



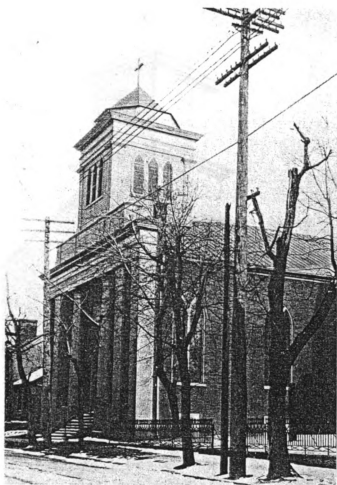
53. Center Presbyterian Church, ca. 1838, Crawfordsville, Indiana
Source: Cline, *Crawfordsville*, 52



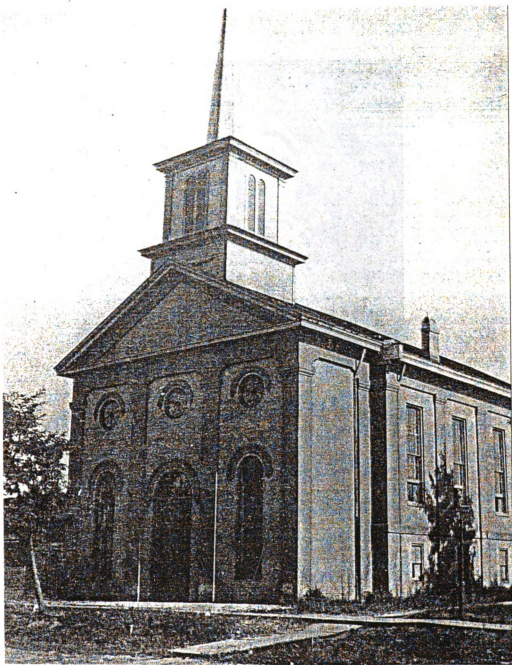
54. St. John Episcopal Church, ca. 1837-1851, Crawfordsville, Indiana
Source: Cline, *Crawfordsville*, 54



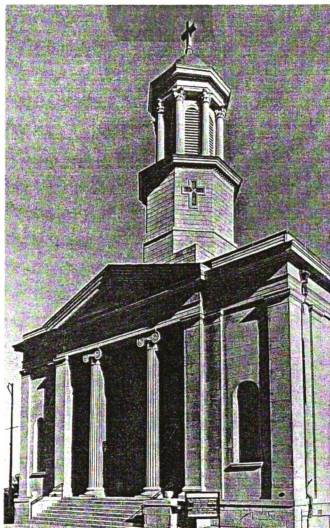
55. Second Presbyterian Church, ca. 1846, Nashville, Tennessee
Source: Patrick, *Architecture in Tennessee*, 134



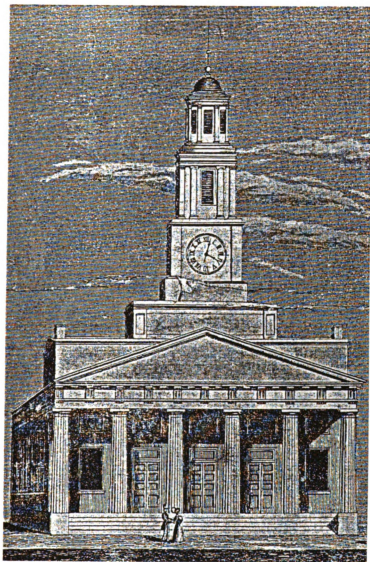
56. St. Peter Roman Catholic Church, ca. 1837, Lexington, Kentucky
Source: Kerr and Wright, *Century in Photographs*, 115



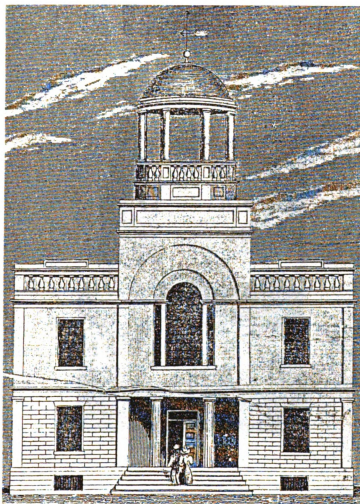
57. Holly Springs Methodist Church, ca. 1849, Holly Springs, Mississippi
Source: Miller, *Images of America: Marshall County*, 77



58. St. Mary Catholic Church, ca. 1844, Nashville, Tennessee
Source: Kreyling, *Classical Nashville*, 49



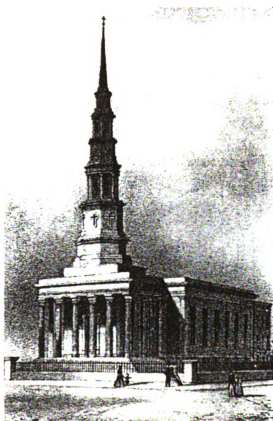
59. Methodist Church, ca. 1833, Nashville, Tennessee
Source: Lane, *AOS: Kentucky and Tennessee*, 122



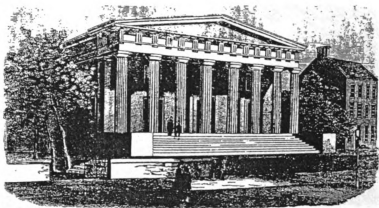
60. Presbyterian Church, ca. 1832-1834, Nashville, Tennessee
Source: Lane, *AOS: Kentucky and Tennessee*, 123



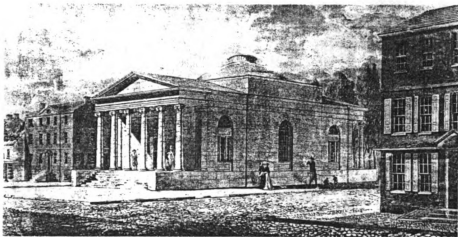
61. Old St. Mary Catholic Church, ca. 1842, Cincinnati, Ohio
Source: *Old St. Mary Church Pamphlet*



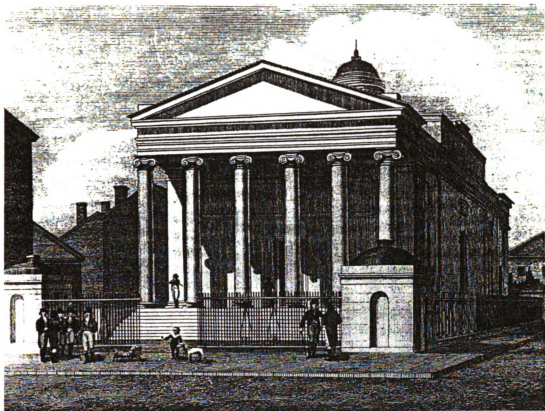
62. St. Peter-in-Chains Cathedral, ca. 1841-1845, Cincinnati, Ohio
Source: *Cathedral of St. Peter-in-Chains Pamphlet*



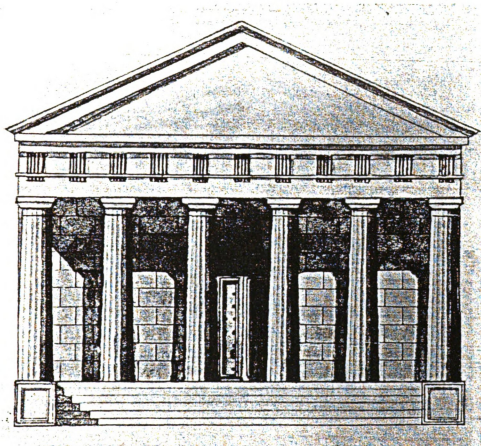
63. Second Bank of the United States, ca. 1797, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Source: Kennedy, *Greek Revival America*, 107



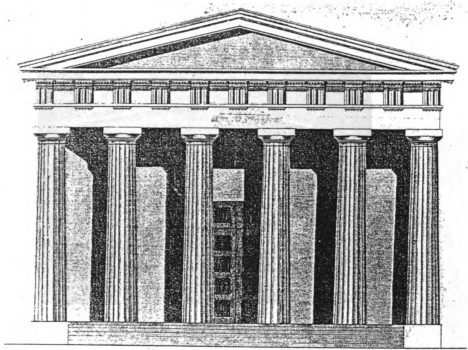
64. Bank of Pennsylvania (Latrobe), ca. 1798, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Source: Hafertepe, *Banking Houses*, 29



65. Bank of Pennsylvania (Birch), ca. 1800, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Source: Hafertepe, *Banking Houses*, 30



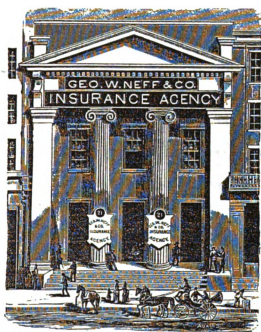
66. Union Bank of Tennessee, ca. 1835, Nashville, Tennessee
Source: Lane, *AOS: Kentucky and Tennessee*, 161



67. Plate 52 from Minard Lafever's *The Young Builder's General Instructor*
Source: Lane, AOS: *Kentucky and Tennessee*, 161



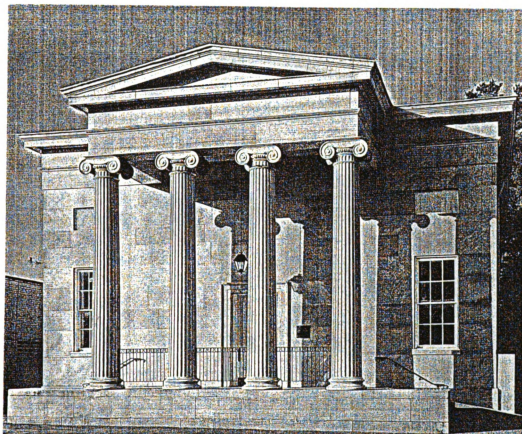
68. National Lafayette Bank, Cincinnati, Ohio
Source: Allyn, *Transformation of Fourth Street*, 4



69. George W. Neff & Co Building, Cincinnati, Ohio
 Source: Allyn, *Transformation of Fourth Street*, 1



70. View of Fourth Street East of Vine, Cincinnati, Ohio, John Caspar Wild
Source: Allyn, *Transformation of Fourth Street*, 2



71. Commercial Bank, ca. 1838, Main Street, Natchez, Mississippi
Source: Lane, *AOS: Alabama and Mississippi*, 63



72. Alabama State Bank, ca. 1837-1840, Huntsville, Alabama
Source: Lane, *AOS: Alabama and Mississippi*, 83

CHAPTER SIX

THE REALIZATION OF A GRECIAN IDEAL:

Grecian-Style Residential Structures

Private and Public Messages in Houses

In nineteenth-century America, with the evolution of a market-oriented culture, the domestic dwelling was both a means to convey social messages and a retreat, a place for rest from the commercial world. Marsha Bray indicates that a house, for its occupants, was more "than a public expression of their success." A person's dwelling was increasingly "a private refuge from the noise, dirt, and relentless change of the industrial city, as well as the hurly-burly competition of commercial life."¹⁴⁷ Amos Rapoport suggests that the built environment, particularly the single family home, describes the impact of a whole range of socio-cultural factors seen in their broadest terms: "religious beliefs, family and clan structure, social organization, way of gaining a livelihood, and social relations between individuals." ¹⁴⁸ In an amplification of this view, Peirce Lewis notes simply that "when men build houses – especially simple, unprepossessing 'folk' houses -- they say things unconsciously about themselves and their cultures which, simply because the statements are unconscious, are likely to be truthful." Because houses are the single most expensive investment an individual or family will make in a lifetime, they are one of the most useful cultural indicators. People pay great attention to the location, materials, architectural features, and organization of spaces and houses. Thus, the house is both a

¹⁴⁷ Marsha Bray. "The Power of Home." *Gateway Heritage* 12, (1992): 43.

¹⁴⁸ Amos Rapoport. *House Form and Culture* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1969): 47.

shelter and a personal social statement made by owners, builders, and designers responsible for their construction.¹⁴⁹

In the nineteenth century, domestic dwellings stood as proof of a “transition to new cultural, economic, and familial values [which] occurred as a result of changing market forces, technologies and ambitions.” As work separated from home, “class divisions between women became clearer” and “middle-class women, removed from work, pursued their families' interests through social and cultural activities unconnected with the marketplace.”¹⁵⁰ Though middle-class households differed in their degree of integration into the consumer economy, “both securely white-collar corporate managers and marginally white-collar workers aspired to a similar sort of home life.”¹⁵¹

The interior environment contained a mixture of rooms and spaces that separated public and private domains within the household, places of separation and togetherness.¹⁵² The parlor was the most formal domestic space in a nineteenth-century home and represented: “... the best a family could afford,” in the inclusion of: “...books, fancywork, pictures, musical instruments, small sculptures, and other 'objects of taste' [which] were arranged casually around the room's focus, the center table.”¹⁵³ As the single, central important space where

¹⁴⁹ One additional observation offered by Lewis in describing the house as a mirror of social change is the effort by individuals and families to build houses that fit with, rather than contrast with, the houses of neighbors. Lewis describes the opportunities of criticism and social ostracism as major factors that influence this effort to fit in. Peirce A. Lewis. “Common Houses, Cultural Spoor.” *Landscape*, 19(2) (1975): 2.

¹⁵⁰ Susan Bransom. “Women and the Family Economy in the Early Republic.” *Journal of the Early Republic*, 16 (1996): 71.

¹⁵¹ Joan Seidl. “Consumer's Choices: A Study of Household Furnishing, 1880-1920. *Minnesota History* 48 (1982-1983): 184.

¹⁵² Margaret Marsh. “From Separation to Togetherness: The Social Construction of Domestic Space in American Suburbs, 1840-1915.” *Journal of American History*, 76 (1986) 506.

¹⁵³ Sally McMurry. “City Parlor, Country Sitting Room: Rural Vernacular Design and the American Parlor, 1840-1900.” *Winterthur Portfolio* 20:4 (1985): 263.

the public face of the family is put on display for visitors, the parlor: " ...was the focal point of furnishing expenditures, and furnishing solutions depended upon the calculations of desire and necessity made by each family."¹⁵⁴

Americans made domestic interiors picturesque, genteel, and cosmopolitan to communicate these characteristics to other members of society through architectural form and the decorative arts.¹⁵⁵ The domestic interior, most particularly the parlor, was a place where cultural activity took place to represent "the world to oneself and ourselves to the world."¹⁵⁶ Through these parlors, homes were "separate from, and yet connected to that outer world" in the: "...landscape wallpapers that mimicked the woods and streams, furniture fashioned of twigs and decorated with tree bark, shells from the seashore adorning parlor tables in inland town houses, animal trophies, prints of hunting scenes, and other references to nature's bounty." The houses also were located in cultural space increasingly distant from the world of work. As women were associated with the private, domestic sphere, men were identified with the world of work.

Ideal versus Real

Grecian-style building forms, adapted throughout the trans-Appalachian landscape, became emblematic of American democracy but these idealized facades masked the realities of the building interiors in two ways. First, with rational and symmetrical exteriors, the façades obscured the actual working

¹⁵⁴ Katherine Grier. *Culture & Comfort: People, Parlors, and Upholstery, 1850-1930*, (Rochester: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 78.

¹⁵⁵ Cynthia Brandimarte. "Domesticating the World: Nature and Culture in the Victorian Home." *Center* 8 (1993): 44.

areas within buildings. Symmetrical, cubist buildings and formal receiving rooms stood in front of kitchens, laundries, as well as family, servant, and slave quarters. With clarity and simplicity and a respect for tradition, builders and owners hid the places where many hands helped make the houses function. Second, Grecian-style porticos on houses, while resonant with democratic impulses in the nation, stood at great contrast with emerging class differences and with effort of refinement that took place in parlors, dining rooms, and libraries. For middle class Americans, domestic refinement was:

a façade that gave to the family an appearance of ease, as if they were truly ladies and gentlemen who had no need to work, while the creation and maintenance of the house was known by all to be the result of intense labor.¹⁵⁷

These formal receiving rooms and their attendant trappings of the material world spoke to the cultural aspirations of all families to amass goods and establish social standing within community hierarchies.

The Grecian-style exterior of James Morrison's house in Lexington, Kentucky masked a parlor and a dining room filled with personal possessions that indicated Morrison's desire to demonstrate his wealth and worldly behavior for those visiting his residence. The 1823 estate inventory for the parlor of his residence included mahogany parlor sofas and chairs covered with silk damask; Brussels carpet; damask window curtains and brass cornices; mantle and pier glasses; large French vases; cut glass lamps; a clock and alabaster vases; as well as pictures in gilt frames. Morrison's dining room furniture inventory contained twelve fancy chairs; two settees and four recess chairs; dining tables; a painting of General Washington; floor matting; a side board; a mantle clock and

¹⁵⁶ Kirsten Belgum. "Representation and Respite: The Interior and Women's Domestic Work in the Nineteenth Century." *Center* 8 (1993): 42

ornaments; cut glassware; flat silverware; silver holloware with a value of \$1,135; Japan waiters; numerous other drinking and serving items; and window curtains. Consumer goods encapsulated Morrison's social aspirations, facilitated competitive display, social integration, and value systems, and illustrated the interconnectedness of market, households, and the world economy.¹⁵⁸ These goods were symbols of comfort, connectedness, worldliness, order, and gentility that showed Morrison's social standing within the Lexington community, all behind a Grecian-style façade that spoke to Morrison's acceptability within the political and social culture of the Lexington community (figs. 71 and 72).¹⁵⁹

Grecian-style buildings were also a means through which public identities were constructed. With links to social and political motivations of individuals throughout the region, the Grecian-style structures of antebellum middle America represented a landscape that, in its exterior view, resonated with the political rhetoric of the day. The interior "landscape" within Grecian-style structures revealed tensions of social acceptability that stood at odds with the political rhetoric represented by façades modeled after Greek antiquity.

Architecture and Politics: Not Such Strange Bedfellows

¹⁵⁷ Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 262-263.

¹⁵⁸ Seidl, *Consumer's Choices*; Perkins, *Identity and Interaction*, 1998.

¹⁵⁹ James Morrison was a Revolutionary War hero who received land in central Kentucky in payment for his service. After emigrating to Kentucky, he opened a mercantile business and served as chairman of the Board of the Lexington Market House from the mid 1790s to the mid 1810s. A political leader in the community, Morrison served various appointed and elected offices for the local government. He died in August 1823 and his estate inventory was completed late in that year. *Fayette County Court Records*, Lexington, Kentucky, 1823. As part of his bequests, Morrison left a large legacy to Transylvania University that the university employed in the construction of Morrison College in 1833.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, politicians struggled to develop political and economic systems that would unite the expanding nation. Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson, both residents of the trans-Appalachian West, were key politicians who advocated differing policies of economic development in the United States. Although never elected president, Henry Clay, as a United States Senator and as Secretary of State, advocated the development of an American System, an intricate set of measures to encourage economic development fostered by the federal government: high tariffs to protect fledgling American industries and steep prices for federal lands to fund internal improvements. Andrew Jackson, a key political figure in the creation of a democratic government, was against the development of an economic system that depended so heavily on the power of the federal government. As the seventh president of the United States, Jackson rejected commercial industrialization and turned toward the farmer and agrarian orientation of the Jefferson administration. Jackson saw himself as the revolutionary successor to Jefferson, opposed to commercial development, intent on asserting the autonomy of individual farmers who created democratic communities by carving farms from the wilderness.

Although their personal lives and personal livelihoods were much the same, Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson personified polar opposites on the spectrum of political leanings. Clay married into an aristocratic Central Kentucky family with deep Virginia roots. An attorney and life-long politician, he exemplified tendencies toward the establishment of a large and centralized government that encouraged industrial development. By contrast, Jackson was cast as a national hero who sought to return the nation to its Jefferson-inspired

vision of agrarian farmers. Commander in the Battle of New Orleans, Jackson also secured large portions of Alabama and Mississippi from the Indians and fought to annex Florida, eventually being named governor there as a result of his efforts. Like Clay, Jackson married into a well-to-do Tennessee family and established a large plantation outside of Nashville as his home. Of Jackson, early supporters stated:

We wou'd choose our presidents not for the splendour of their manners, but their simplicity and plainness – not for the elegance of their haranguing ...[nor] their pliancy and amiable accommodation of the ten thousand particular wills and wishes that assail them on every side, but a firm, dignified and commanding resistance of every thing not founded in right, and plain republican utility.¹⁶⁰

While Henry Clay fashioned himself as a member of the landed gentry, a direct heir of the nation's founders and a Federalist politician, Jackson was characterized as the people's choice, a candidate and then a president that espoused the importance of state and local, rather than federal government authority. Jackson supporters turned to newspapers and public meetings as the means to elect Jackson president. With Clay and Adams cast as undemocratic aristocrats, Jackson was shaped as "Old Hickory," a toughened frontiersman who was a man of the people. Supporters in the South and West stood behind republican virtue and characterized Adams, from New England, as a corrupt Federalist. This political activity pitted the common man against an entrenched commercial elite and shaped the rhetoric of political parties as well as the images of Jackson. Jackson viewed himself as "of the people" and he viewed as corrupt those politicians who sought to frustrate his rise to power and the rise of a democratic West.

¹⁶⁰ Cited in Watson, *Liberty and Power*, 78-79.

The Architectural Dimension

The residences of both Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson embodied their disparate political images. Clay was an old-fashioned Whig – his house reflected the Palladian splendor of a country estate. Situated on the edge of the Lexington community, Clay's Ashland symbolized his connection to the nation's founders and the legacy of Whig political ties to England. His Federal-style residence reflected the influence of Virginia country houses, in turn owing allegiance to Renaissance-inspired English country houses (fig. 75).¹⁶¹ Clay's Ashland remained firmly connected to an architectural tradition that linked the "aristocracy" of Virginia to their forebears in England.

Though Andrew Jackson initially resided in a house similar to Henry Clay's Ashland, Jackson twice remodeled The Hermitage to transform the Federal-style exterior to its present Grecian style. The changes in the house encapsulated key changes in Jackson's political strategies that shaped the politician as a man of the people. At the beginning of his political career, the ca. 1819-1820 Federal-style house of Jackson's house was described by Julianna Conner on her 1827 visit:

You enter a large and spacious hall or vestibule, the walls covered with a very splendid French paper – beautiful scenery, figures, &c. – the floor an oil cloth...To the right are two large, handsome drawing rooms furnished in fashionable and genteel style...To the left is the dining room and

¹⁶¹ A central doorway was set in a projecting diagonal vestibule with tall sash windows on the sides. A Palladian window was centered above this bay, providing access to a balcony with an encircling guardrail. To the north and south, one-story wings complemented the two-story main mass of the building. The design of Ashland, at least of its wings, may be attributed to architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe, documented by an August 1814 letter and sketch. See Lancaster, *Antebellum Architecture*, 126-127.

General and Mrs. Jackson's chamber. There was no splendour to dazzle the eye but everything elegant and neat.¹⁶²

As described by this visitor, Jackson's house was a plain two-story brick dwelling with four rooms and a passage on each floor. A contemporary sketch of the exterior of the structure indicated that paired chimneys at both gable ends framed a symmetrical five bay house further distinguished by a fan shape window over the center doorway (fig. 76). In April 1831, President Andrew Jackson retained the services of builder David Morrison to transform the Federal-style house through the addition of a two-tiered portico and flanking one-story wings connected by a colonnade (fig. 77). Morrison wrote to Jackson:

The colonnade consists of 10 lofty columns of the Doric order. The entablature is carried through the whole line of the front, and wreaths of laurel leaves in the frieze...The upper story consists of a portico surmounted by a pediment which breaks the monotony of the composition in a very satisfactory manner...The wing at the East end contains a library, a large and commodious room.¹⁶³

Paired with the dining room at the opposite side of the structure, the addition of the library demonstrated Jackson's desire to legitimize cultural claims as a learned man. Jackson followed similar house expansion projects of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson who also added libraries and dining rooms as indicators of his increased cultural standing while President. Jackson, like Washington and Jefferson before him, sought legitimacy through fashionability and his occupation with fitting in with cultural expectations occupied this remodeling of his house.

The enlarged and improved Hermitage, in the more fashionable Grecian style, burned in October 1834. The walls and foundation survived the fire.

¹⁶² Julianna Conner. *Diary*, 1827, 49-53. Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

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Rather than rebuilding the house to its former appearance, Jackson's nephew and adopted son, Andrew Jackson Donelson, supervised the reconstruction process and modified the house with a number of interior changes. Most significant was the addition of a Grecian-style monumental porch that spanned nearly the entire width of the house. Supported by six Corinthian-style columns, the portico provided the house a more imposing appearance upon approach. The slightly sloping roof on the two-story portion of the house was masked by a substantial entablature, a false front that resulted in a grandiose exterior elevation that did not match the building behind it (figs. 78, 79, and 80).¹⁶⁴

In the construction of The Hermitage, Jackson was caught between competing notions of himself as a man of the people and as a member of Nashville society. In order to establish claims to family gentility, Jackson added a dining room and a library in the second renovation of the house. In order to satisfy the competing claims as "common man," Jackson constructed a Grecian-style portico and marked the landscape with an outward demonstration of his democratic tendencies. The manifestation of Jackson's political beliefs, The Hermitage's configuration manifested Jackson's political beliefs in that the porch, while grandly over-scaled for the residence behind it, was quite accessible as it was low to the ground. The first floor of the structure was elevated no more than eight inches from ground level. The large-scale columns accentuated the impact of the reduction of the floor level to the ground – thus while the façade was grand, it still welcomed and sheltered people with ease of access. This slight

¹⁶³ David Morrison to Andrew Jackson, December 1831, copy from research files at The Hermitage.

¹⁶⁴ According to Mills Lane, builders William Hume and Joseph Reiff copied the frontispiece for The Hermitage from an illustration in Asher Benjamin's *Practical House Carpenter*. Lane, *Architecture of the Old South: Kentucky and Tennessee*, 128.

elevation of the building's first level was also underscored by the near road-level approach of The Hermitage. Not high atop a hill, Jackson's residence tied to the land. Though the vertical columns rose in contrast to the horizontal sweep of the land, the building remained close to the land through its flanker wing configuration and its reduced second floor elevation height. The false front entablature, more than eight feet in depth, capped the series of six columns and again emphasized the horizontal nature of the landscape and thus the horizontal character that the Democrat from Nashville hoped to project as an indication of his political leanings.

With its symmetrical facade, the substantial wood portico masked the asymmetrical uses of a drawing room and parlor, a center hall, and two bed chambers. Left of the front entrance, public rooms provided spaces at Jackson's disposal to entertain guests. A large dining room was provided in the west wing of the first floor supported by a kitchen to the rear of the structure. Separated on the right of the center hall, private quarters provided spaces for General and Mrs. Jackson's personal rooms and support spaces. An office, from which the plantation activities were monitored, occupied the east wing of the structure with an adjoining door to General Jackson's chamber. . The portico masked both public and private portions of the dwelling and equalized diverse activities on either side of a central hall. The Hermitage allowed Jackson to position himself in a public and a private world – the public world of democratic politics and the private world tinged by aristocratic standards and habits.

Jackson constructed a colossal scaled portico not in keeping with the smaller-scale house behind, not for the community or the region, but rather for the nation. Jackson's public face was a specifically engineered image suitable for

the politician who asserted that the primacy of the West over the East. would be The Grecian style, overscaled portico was to be read at the local level by passersby. At the national level, it provided a script, a lexicon for understanding this politician as a man of the people.

The Hermitage, with its Grecian style portico, masked Jackson's aspirations to and membership in Nashville polite society while, at the same time, it resonated with the growing democratic impulses of the new nation. The Grecian style symbolized prosperity, order, stability, and longevity in a nation still evolving its political, economic, and social structures. Behind the façade, however, The Hermitage retained its traditional organization and rooms of gentility that belied the rational and orderly exterior. In fashionable Grecian-style clothing, "Old Hickory" remained a man of the common people, though, with specific well-appointed rooms and furnishings, he still aspired to genteel status in Nashville society.

High Style to Vernacular

In the context of their personal backgrounds and political careers, the residential dwellings of Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson suggest how the exterior and interior architecture of their homes reflected the differing images these politicians wished to project. Through his house, Clay remained linked with the revolutionary generation and the rhetoric associated with the Federalists and their Whig successors. Jackson resided in a building that rejected associations with or deference to an elite. The Hermitage idealized the movement toward democracy and simultaneously marked Jackson as a person at odds with his political persona. Jackson was viewed as a man of the people

while Clay was cast as an aristocrat, a member of the elite from whom democrats sought to wrestle political control.

In similar ways, Grecian-style structures throughout the trans-Appalachian landscape reflected people's public and private perceptions of themselves. The highly individualized nature of residential buildings suggests different ways that people manipulated architecture to convey information about themselves to their communities. A national culture arose from the building activity that took place both on a residential scale and on a community scale. Buildings throughout the Old Northwest and Frontier South demonstrated the social aspirations and the political dreams of the citizens who built and occupied them. Not only was this true for politicians like Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson, but for even the most common people, buildings often citizen encapsulated cultural, social, and political aspirations.

A common national culture arose out of extended debates about the nature of government and the agrarian and commercial aspirations of this government elected by a democratic citizenry. The trans-Appalachian West, where a new architectural language reflected a growing belief in democracy, provided the cement that made possible the construction of individual and community perceptions to engage in nation-building. As people constructed their own Grecian-style residences, they bought into the formation of the national character the rise of regional variations. People realized ideal building forms in response to local building traditions, economic limitations, and the availability of design resources and builders. Buildings were thus constructed, given a wide range of choices, within the fairly narrow vocabulary of the Grecian

style and this collective decision indicated the very rise of the nation in the trans-Appalachian West.

Equipped with ideas about the Grecian style and the capability of adapting the style freely to residential use, builders throughout the trans-Appalachian West further shaped communities as collections of temple-like buildings, a classical America to rival a Hellenistic original. Many houses throughout the trans-Appalachian West built without the assistance of an architect represented a more “vernacular” building form. These structures illustrated that the Grecian style crossed economic divisions within society and provided a design style that suited small-scale dwellings as well as the finest of antebellum mansions. Even when a property owner could not afford pre-manufactured columns for residential use, builders framed square columns with simple trims, adapting the Grecian-style for even the most humble of dwellings. Builders consulted architectural guides in selecting appropriate Grecian-style details for structures. Grecian-style public buildings provided three-dimensional models as buildings to emulate, sometimes within the community itself. Yet even in the absence of large-scale buildings, residences told about the political and social life of the community.

The Grecian style carried a whole series of meanings – political, social, and ideological – all with social and artistic implications. Because of its fluidity in ornamentation within tightly prescribed rules, the Grecian style was a language of expression easily adapted to local circumstances. As Michael Greenhalgh suggests, the Grecian style was: “not merely a range of styles, but rather a way of perceiving the world and using the parts to persuade others to see it in a

similar fashion.”¹⁶⁵ In the construction of temple fronts onto residential structures throughout the trans-Appalachian landscape, families appropriated public forms replete with political and social rhetoric and applied these forms, and their attendant associations, to private residences. As Grecian culture remained in the prime consciousness of man’s search for perfection, “the sculptors of ancient Greece alone attained the knowledge of this form in its perfection, and the power to represent it,” so that Americans “have no standard of beauty, but that which is derived from the country of Homer and Phidias.”¹⁶⁶

The Grecian style, like the classical styles of the eighteenth century and, before that, the fifteenth century, was centered on the notion of orders. Proportioned columns with prescribed elements – bases, shafts, capitals – served as the main system for articulating buildings. While some buildings of the early nineteenth century were exact copies from one or more of the architectural treatises and style books available, most buildings were a combination of individual elements borrowed from these works and first-hand observation. The result of the use of these consistent orders and their derivative building elements tied together the character of these structures throughout the United States and abroad. With endless variations on general themes, because all parts related to a system of understanding buildings, everyone could build their own temple in their own town and generally people understood what the building meant.

¹⁶⁵ Michael Greenhalgh, *What is Classicism?* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990), 8.

¹⁶⁶ William Dunlap. *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* (1834, revised edition, ed. Alexander Wyckoff, 3 vols, New York: Benjamin Blom, 1965) Vol. 1, 1-2.

A Similar “Kit of Parts”

Greek culture offered a unified set of model building blocks that could be constantly manipulated to create houses, business buildings, churches, and institutional structures throughout the trans-Appalachian West. In New Harmony, Indiana and Holly Springs, Mississippi, the Grecian style was realized in its simplest form – cottage-like structures with simple details and large porches supported by square columns. Along the Wabash River in New Harmony, residents lived in a small community of structures dating from the mid-eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century.¹⁶⁷ In 1844, a fire swept through the community and destroyed the 1817 Rapp mansion. William Maclure, an Owenite, had purchased the structure from Father Rapp, leader of the Harmonist settlers, in the 1820s. When Maclure rebuilt the house, rather than construct a replica of the home of this prominent religious leader, he constructed a one-story Grecian-style cottage fronted by a large one-story porch (fig. 81). Doric-style columns supported the massive entablature of the porch and an off-center doorway provided access to the structure under cover of the porch.

For residential structures, the Grecian style took hold both North and South in the trans-Appalachian West. Holly Springs, Mississippi, more than 400 miles south of New Harmony, contained a large number of Grecian style structures proportionate to buildings in other styles. Like the Maclure house of New Harmony, the McCorkle residence of Holly Springs was constructed in

¹⁶⁷ These early structures were remnants of a society of Harmonists led by George Rapp, who founded the community and settled the landscape. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, the original utopian community envisioned at New Harmony had faded and in its place, Robert Owen conceived another ideal settlement centered on his Owenite followers. This second utopian experiment failed to gel so that by mid-century, New Harmony was transformed into a small mercantile settlement fed by commercial traffic along the Wabash River.

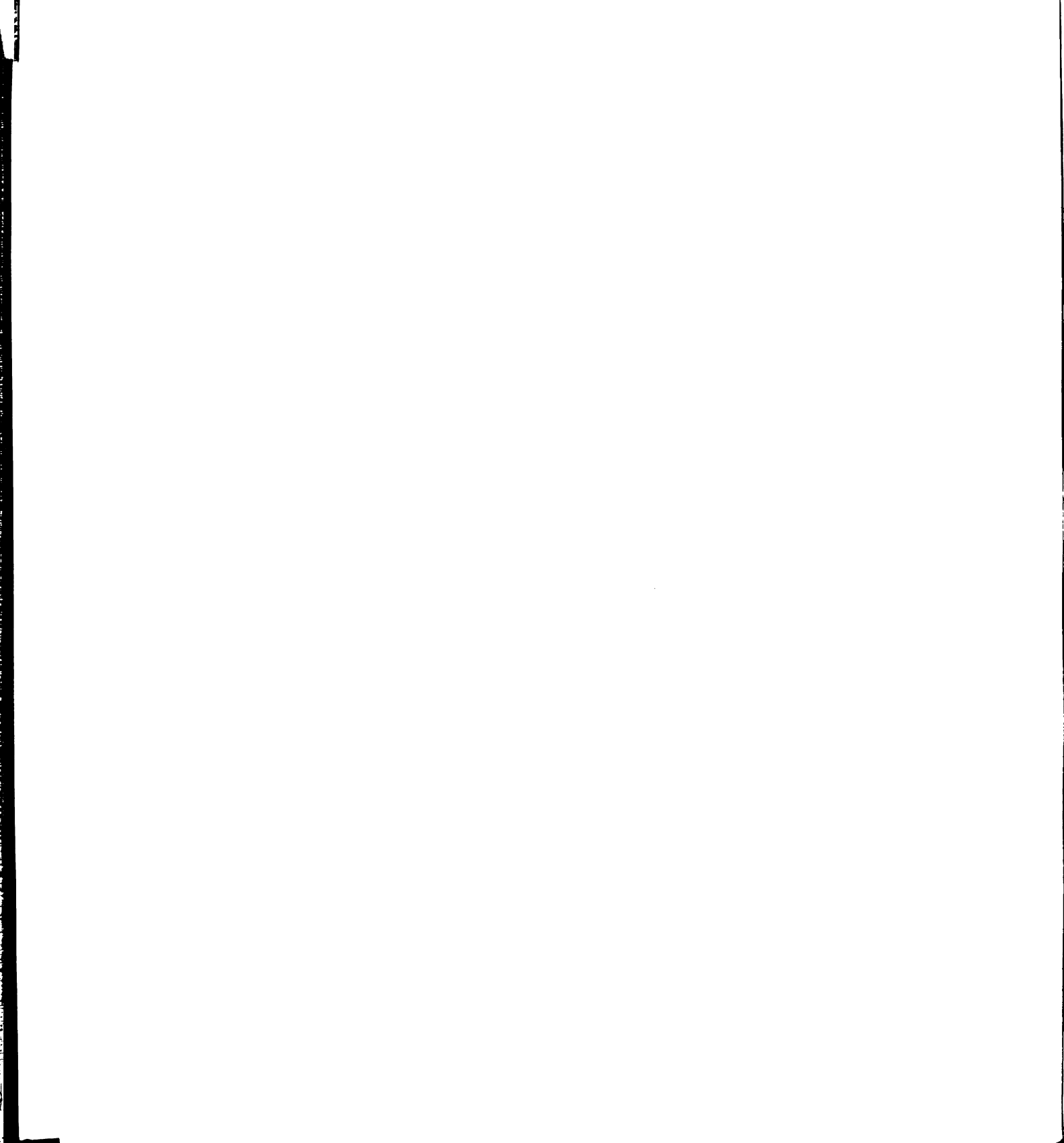
1837 as a one-story Grecian-style structure dominated by a central front porch filling the entire width of the front façade and a six-room-deep ell attached to the main mass of the house on the south side (fig. 82). One block west and one block south of the courthouse square, the central mass and flanking wings of this Grecian-style residence provided the home to the Samuel McCorkle family. McCorkle, a banker, was the first land commissioner to the Indian tribes that occupied northern Mississippi. The Maclure house and the McCorkle residence were buildings constructed without architects, where builders relied on sources such as style books to guide their design and construction.

Grecian-style residences were not only inspired directly by the works of antiquity but also by predecessor structures in communities of the trans-Appalachian West. In the year after the completion of the Grecian-style Morrison College, one block south from the school, Daniel Vertner purchased the ca. 1814 Federal style Bodley House. Late in the 1830s, Vertner removed the original Federal-style fanlight above the entrance and added a one-story Grecian-style entrance porch that featured fluted Doric columns similar in design to those at Morrison College (fig. 83). Then, Vertner further transformed his Federal-style residence with the addition of a two-story, colossal-scaled Grecian-style garden portico (compare figs. 10 and 83). Nearby, the Wickliffe family constructed a house in 1845 with a nearly identical front porch to the Bodley House, save for its fabrication in wood rather than stone (fig. 84). The Wickliffe House stood as an example of many Grecian-style residential structures in the community. Both the Bodley and Wickliffe houses, in close proximity to Morrison College, offered a public facade to the street that included a porch as a zone of transition. These porches, both in the Doric style, closely resembled the

profiles of the more massively scaled Doric columns on the Morrison College building. Through the use of the Grecian style, even these private residences made public statements about the gentility and enlightenment of their owners.

The construction of a Grecian-style porch on the front of a residential structure had clear implications: one believed in the bright future of the community and the nation and sought to express that optimism in a form resonant with democratic rhetoric. Furthermore, the “learning” and “philosophy” of the university – and all its classical ideals – were reproduced on individual residences to demonstrate that inhabitants were engaged citizens of American democracy, fully indoctrinated in the classical mode. In the remodeling of his Federal style residence, Daniel Vertner turned away from tradition, from the tradition-bound world of the nation’s founders to a new world and a new expanding social order for that world. Through the construction of their new home, the Wickliffe family advocated the movement toward democracy. In both instances, the Vertner and Wickliffe families shared a language being voiced throughout the trans-Appalachian West. These families concretized democracy in built form at the residential level and simultaneously asserted claims of cultural sophistication.

Residential structures, like government, academic, church, and bank buildings, were not mimetic of Grecian models. These nineteenth century residential structures were realized as adaptations, with owners and builders who translated and transformed the tenets of Hellenistic buildings and applied them in various of ways to particular structures throughout the trans-Appalachian West. Residences throughout the landscape were constructed from the same kit of classical parts – classical columns and porches, simple massing,



symmetrically arranged multi-paned windows, square door openings, sidelights and transoms – they formed an architectural language that could be understood throughout the nation. The Grecian style was a language comprehended in many communities by countless individuals who built, lived in, worked in, or simply passed by Grecian style structures in their everyday lives. Architectural critic Michael Greenhalgh explains:

One useful property classicism was believed to possess was its rationality, in that its main precepts can be expressed as a series of easily explained rules and models. If it could be understood by the mind, extrapolated into a system, subjected to rules and measurements, then it could be taught, and passed from generation to generation.¹⁶⁸

Because of the ease of transferring information from generation to generation of building owners and contractors, builders' guides played a significant part in this transformation of classical ornament, form, and detail to buildings in the trans-Appalachian West. Builders mimicked Grecian-style details, adapted Grecian-style forms, and created unique compositions with information from books by Minard Lafever, Asher Benjamin, Peter Nicholson, and Edward Shaw. Evidence of adaption to the Grecian style dotted the trans-Appalachian landscape. Minard Lafever's "Design for a Country Villa" was adapted for the construction of the Cochran House in Lexington, Kentucky (figs. 85 and 86). Asher Benjamin noted in his 1830 *Practical House Carpenter*: "Since my last publication, the Roman

School of architecture has been entirely changed for the Grecian."¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Greenhalgh. *What is Classicism?*, 11.

¹⁶⁹ Most builders relied on books published in the early nineteenth century and, in this way Southern architecture was influenced by the North. Some examples include Asher Benjamin's *American Builder's Companion* (1827) and Benjamin's *Practical House Carpenter* (1830) in which he remarked: "Since my last publication, the Roman School of architecture has been entirely changed for the Grecian." Other style books available included *The Practice of Architecture* (1833, Boston) and the *Builder's Guide* (1839), both sold in Nashville by 1852.

Helm Place, originally called Cedar Hall, south of Lexington, Kentucky, was one example of this shift in design sensibilities and was directly borrowed from Benjamin's source book. The structure was built in 1853 for Capt. George H. Bowman on land inherited from his father, Col. Abraham Bowman. A massive two-story portico with gable end, supported by Ionic-style columns, sat in front of a plain brick house (fig. 87). The front entranceway to the structure featured dual-leaf doors and sidelights on either side of Ionic-style columns. The Grecian-style entranceway to Helm Place, as well as the interior doors between the two parlors on the east side of the house, was copied from Plate 28 of Asher Benjamin's *The Practical House Carpenter* (fig. 88).¹⁷⁰ Not only did Helm Place take its design cues from a specific builder's guide, George Bowman directed the selection of a colossal portico for the front of the seat of his country estate. This porch gave Helm Place its key, identifiable design feature and, even from a great distance, explained to others that George Bowman and his family understood the classics and placed the portico on the front of the house for all passers by to view to prove their democratic ethos. At Helm Place, the porch was thus scaled for community viewing and did not necessarily stand in good proportion to the house behind. Bowman family members were prominent in Central Kentucky politics. George Bowman was a descendant and inheritor from the revolutionary generation, but his home expressed the political and social aspirations of the new democratic order.¹⁷¹

After the 1834 fire, much of *The Hermitage* was copied from Benjamin's Plate 28 from *Practical House Carpenter*. See Lane, *Architecture of the Old South: Kentucky and Tennessee*, 124-130.

¹⁷⁰ Lane, *Architecture of the Old South: Kentucky and Tennessee*, 163-164.

¹⁷¹ This is a theme taken up by Alan Taylor who postulates that the revolutionary generation, with the same end goal of political acceptability, shaped notions of themselves different than the generation that followed. By the early nineteenth century, according to Taylor, the younger generation attempted to reclaim the revolution and reshape the American experience

As symbols and signs of socially and politically acceptable behavior in the trans-Appalachian landscape, houses conveyed dual social meanings. Like the Maclures and McCorkles, the Bowmans erected a Grecian-style structure to serve as evidence of their democratic ideals. But their home was a “stage set” as grand as The Hermitage, Helm Place, and countless other houses constructed for the more prosperous families throughout the trans-Appalachian West. In each of these large residences, the orderly Grecian-style façade stood at odds with the house behind. The façade negotiated the confluence of public and private spaces while the house behind the democratic façade spoke to the social aspirations of its owners. In their struggle to display appropriate behavior, families like the Maclures, the McCorkles and the Bowmans obscured the working realities of houses – the kitchens, the family sitting rooms, the laundries – behind genteel and impeccably appointed receiving rooms masked in turn by symmetrical Grecian-style façades.

Throughout the trans-Appalachian West, Americans transformed their political and social images with the construction of rational and symmetrical buildings. In 1844, United States House of Representative member Henry S. Lane purchased four acres of land in the heart of Crawfordsville, Indiana, from his future father-in-law, Isaac Elston, upon the prospect of Lane’s marriage to Elston’s daughter, Joanna. A three-room brick cottage stood near the center of the tract. By the fall of 1845, the Lanes had enlarged the cottage by constructing a two-story new front to the house (fig. 89). With a central hall and rooms left and right on two floors, the front of the building provided a reshaped image for

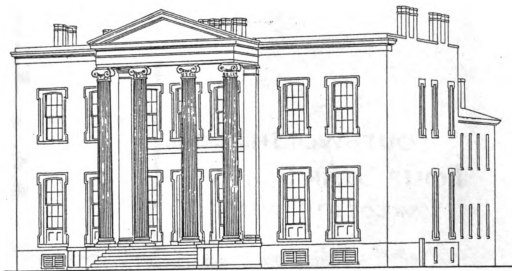
based on familial ties to and experiences in the eighteenth century. Alan Taylor. *William Cooper’s Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).

the politician who would be elected to be governor of Indiana and served as United States Senator. Henry and Joanna Lane built the additional portion of their house in the Grecian style and incorporated a two-story portico supported by Doric-style columns.

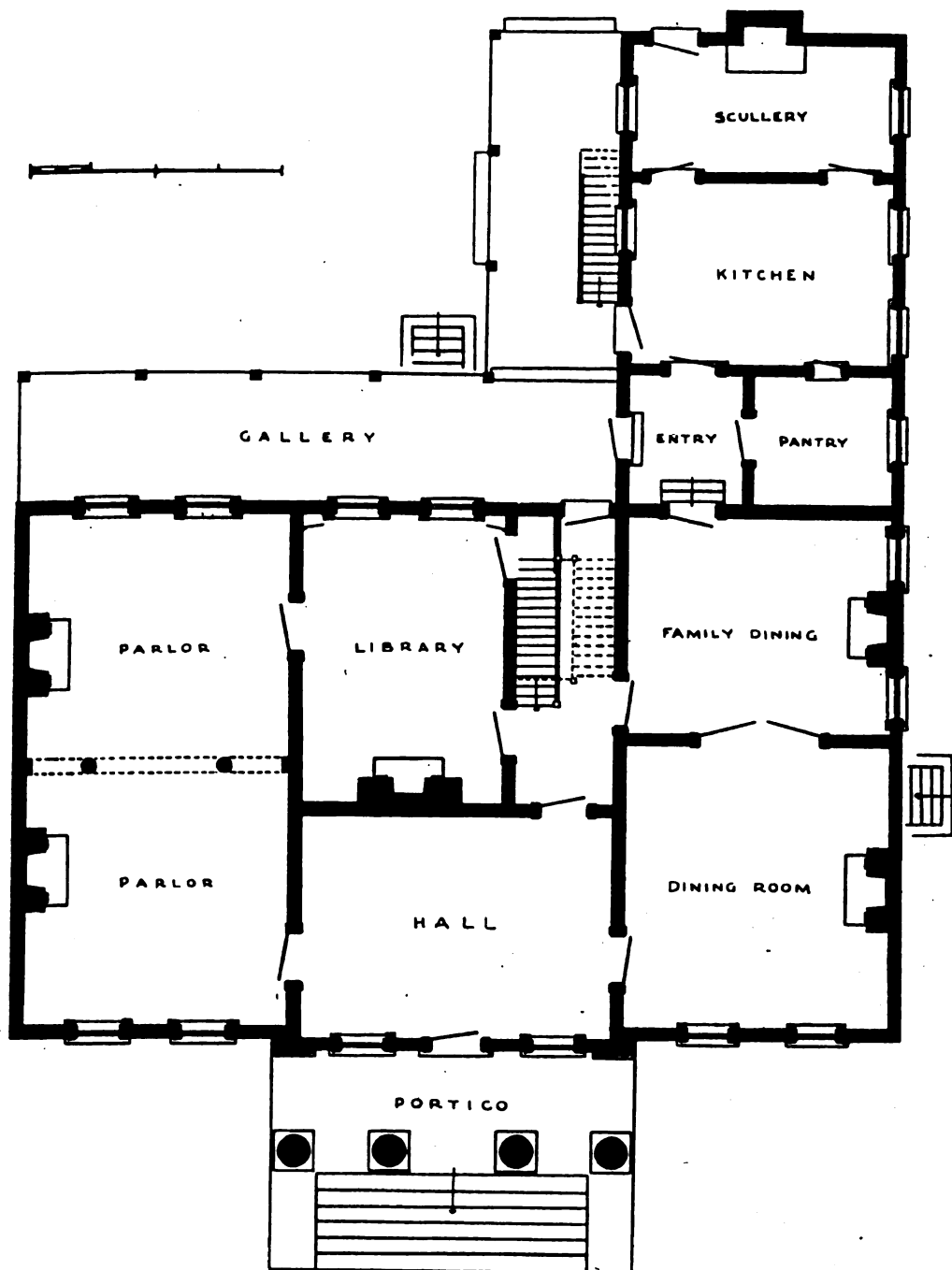
In a similar manner, William Giles Harding enlarged Belle Meade, added a classical portico, and reshaped the Harding family image within the community. The Nashville residence had been home to the Harding family since the early nineteenth century. After a fire in 1853, the Harding family erected square pillars topped by plain capitals beneath an Ionic entablature and formed the new front façade for the 1840s residential structure (fig. 90). A flattened pediment crowned the assembly with anthemia at the center and corners of its top edge. The new addition and the entire house were resurfaced with stucco to resemble the appearance of stone. Like the Lane house of Crawfordsville, Harding – a prominent local politician – sought to reshape his family’s image by restyling the front of his house with a Grecian portico. Through application of the principles of the Grecian style, owners and builders modified existing building forms and derived design solutions that met additional needs in a new age. This activity to fit in by standing out from one’s neighbors and the landscape through the use of Grecian design elements is not unlike the cultural activity undertaken by William Strickland to adapt elements of the Grecian acropolis for the Tennessee State House. Strickland’s efforts – like the experiments of those who constructed Grecian-style houses – were not intended to reproduce exact replicas of Grecian buildings. Rather, these individuals shaped their own specific adaptation of the Grecian style to fit their own notions of nationhood and individuality within a democratic context.

Orderly Lives and Landscapes

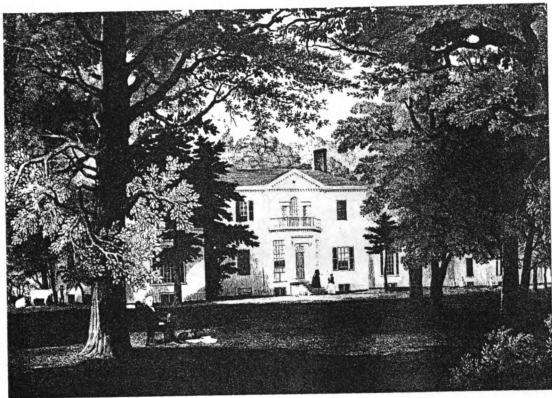
The Grecian style imposed rational rules in a society swirling with change as people moved rapidly across the western landscape in search of economic prosperity and a place in a changing social order. Americans erected Grecian-style buildings as a reference to Grecian democracy but also because this building style imposed order on a landscape of perceived disorder. The Grecian style had an implicit ideology, a reliance on symmetry and hierarchy. Through the construction of residences into communities and landscapes of the trans-Appalachian West, building owners and designers ordered the wilderness landscape. With clarity and simplicity, the Grecian style imposed order on a disordered collection of landscapes and settlements and enunciated a faith in Americans as the rightful inheritors of the first democracy in ancient Greece. Residential structures, alongside Grecian-style government and education buildings, churches, and bank buildings, created a nation that relied on antiquity to provide an appropriate and lasting expression for democracy. Just as political rhetoric was dependant on verbal metaphors and the heroes of the Greek democracies, the Grecian style provided a way to construct a common language, a fitting visual metaphor for the new country as realized in residences across the trans-Appalachian West. As the century progressed, meanings for the common language became tangled and this is reflected in the plethora of stylistic choices for residences in romantic and emotional, rather than rational and symmetrical, modes.



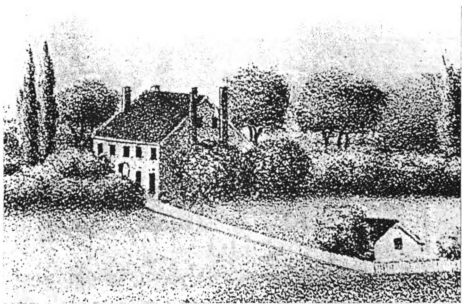
73. Morrison House, Lexington, Kentucky
Source: Lancaster, *Antebellum Architecture*, 210



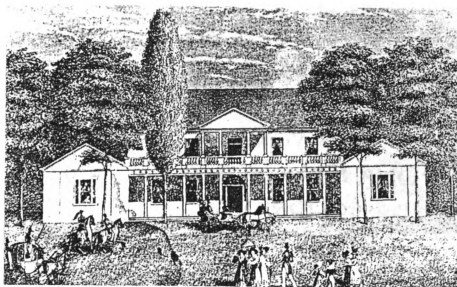
74. Morrison House Floor Plan, Lexington, Kentucky
 Source: Lancaster, *Antebellum Architecture*, 211



75. Ashland, the Henry Clay Estate, Lexington, Kentucky
Source: Holzer, *Lincoln Image*, 186



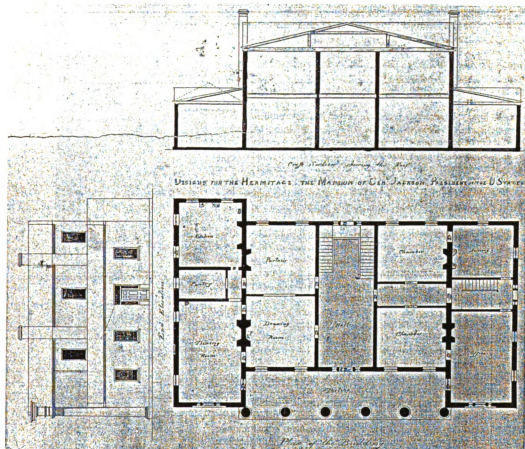
76. The Hermitage, ca. 1819-1829, Nashville, Tennessee
Source: Kreyling, *Classical Nashville*, 99



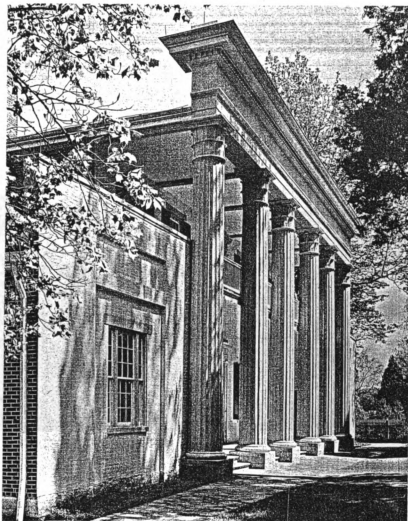
77. The Hermitage, ca. 1831, Nashville, Tennessee
Source: Kreyling, *Classical Nashville*, 100



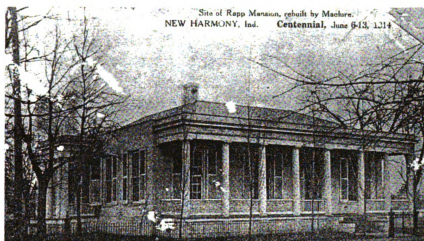
78. The Hermitage, ca. 1835-1836, Nashville, Tennessee
Source: Lane, *AOS: Kentucky and Tennessee*, 125



79. The Hermitage Floor Plan, Nashville, Tennessee
Source: Lane, AOS: Kentucky and Tennessee, 124



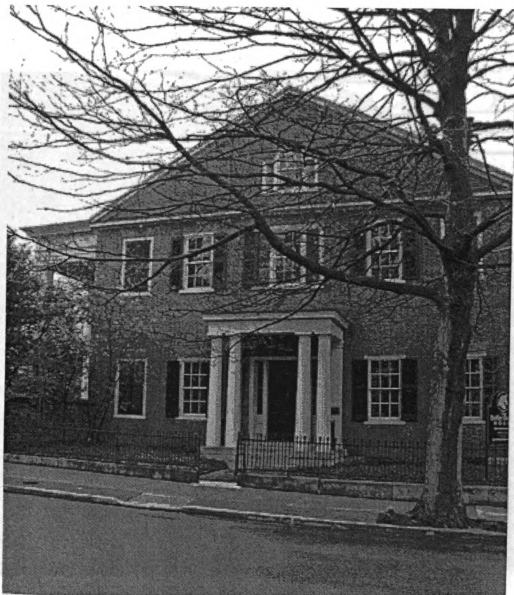
80. The Hermitage Front Façade Detail, Nashville, Tennessee
Source: Lane, *AOS: Kentucky and Tennessee*, 126



81. Maclure House, ca. 1844, New Harmony, Indiana
Source: *Walker's Guide*, 17



82. McCorkle Residence, ca. 1837, Holly Springs, Mississippi
Source: McAlexander, *Southern Tapestry*, 20



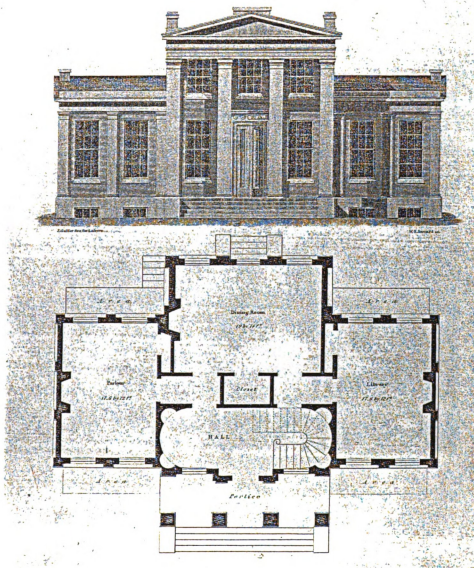
83. Bodley House, ca. 1815, Lexington, Kentucky
Source: Photograph by author, 4/2002



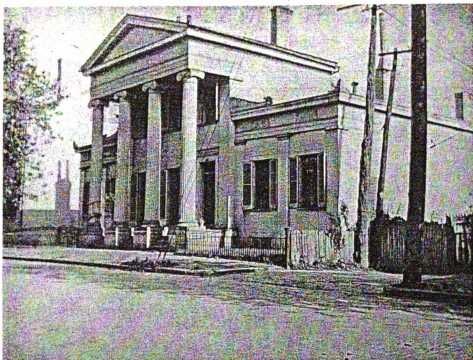
84. Wickliffe House, ca. 1845, Lexington, Kentucky
Source: Photograph by author, 4/2002

THE MODERN BUILDERS GUIDE.

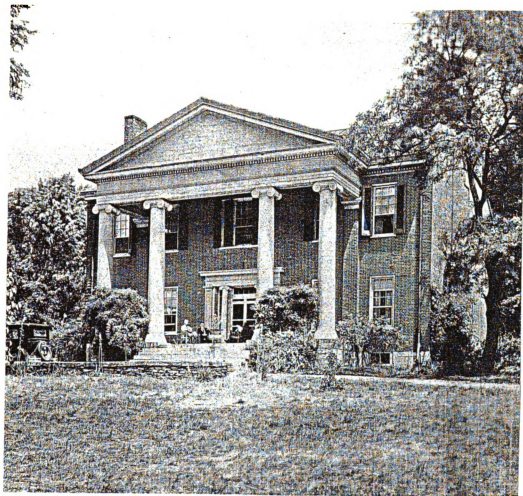
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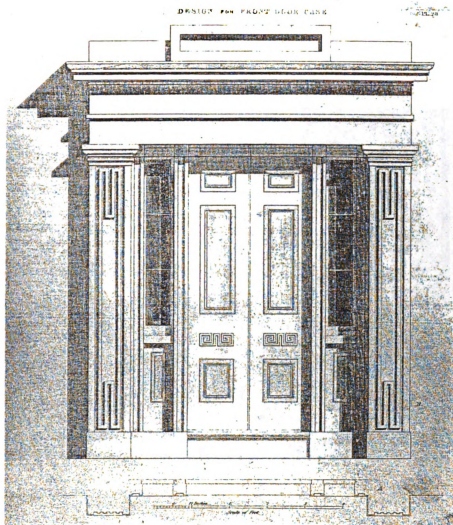
85. "Design for a County Villa", ca. 1833, from
 Minard Lafever, *Modern Builder's Guide*
Source: Lane, AOS: *Kentucky and Tennessee*, 122



86. James W. Cochran House, ca. 1841, Lexington, Kentucky
Source: Kerr and Wright, *Century in Photographs*, 128



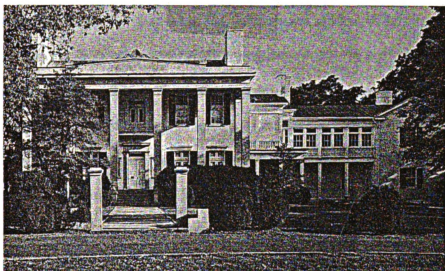
87. Cedar Hall (Helm Place), ca. 1853, Lexington, Kentucky
Source: Lane, *AOS: Kentucky and Tennessee*, 163



88. Plate 28, Asher Benjamin. *The Practical House Carpenter*
Source: Lane, AOS: *Kentucky and Tennessee*, 162



89. Lane House, ca. 1845, Crawfordsville, Indiana
Source: Photograph by author, 4/2001



90. Belle Meade, ca. 1853, Nashville, Tennessee
Source: McAlester and McAlester, *Field Guide*, 191

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE METAMORPHOSIS OF THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

The Reformation of Architectural Syntax

The Popularity of Grecian Style

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the nation developed an architectural style that masked the diversity of population, its varied and growing landscape, and its myriad of experiments with economic and political systems. Substantially shaped in the trans-Appalachian West, the dominance of the Grecian style reached its zenith by mid-century. In a plethora of nineteenth-century sources, architecture critics responded to the waning popularity of the Greek in more broad-ranging choices to clothe the nation. Gothic-style suburban dwellings, a result of architectural reform movements away from classical inspiration, replaced the Grecian style alongside structures of all types in Victorian styles based on Renaissance prototypes with Oriental and other exotic influences. As the popularity of the Grecian style faded, its impact as a national style shifted and characteristics of the style were again manipulated for social and political means.

Architectural historian Talbot Hamlin suggests that the Grecian style flourished in America because of the general culture and character of the antebellum period and the economic state of the country. He notes that the chief difference in a comparison of American culture from 1815 and 1845-1850 was a shift from "rationalist and theocratic" to "aesthetic and libertarian" sensibilities. American landscape and genre painting, Gothic novels, political and economic

structures, and the transformation of organized religion through the great revivals all reflect this shift in ideology.

Such was the culture, such the conditions, in which the Greek Revival flowered and of which it was the perfect expression. A culture learned, founded on classical myth, classical literature, classical art. A culture flowering lustily in hundreds of local centers and not yet centralized in the big cities. A culture radical, libertarian, experimental, eagerly searching for American expression.¹⁷²

Architecture, too, reflected this shift in ideologies, and the popularity of architectural magazines, builder's companions, and guide books all helped create an environment where the common educated man would be exposed to structures of many styles. In 1815, the *Analectic Magazine of Philadelphia* contained an unsigned November article, "Remarks on the Progress and Present State of Fine Arts in the United States" in which the author cautions against copying English handbooks, "the Louis XIV style" which can "rise to nothing nobler than ponderous stateliness and cumbrous magnificence" because these styles are "poor and contemptible when compared with the grandeur and the beauty of Grecian simplicity."¹⁷³

By mid-century, the Grecian style slowly ebbed in popularity as reflected in an 1844 article by Arthur Gilman who criticized both the "Greek and Gothic forms in America," and suggested that "the Renaissance sources were the most fruitful source of architectural influence."¹⁷⁴ The eclecticism of the architectural firm of Town and Davis was addressed in the April 1835 issue of *The American Monthly Magazine*. Town and Davis were critiqued heavily for the inclusion of domes on two Grecian-style buildings, the New York Customs House and the

¹⁷² Talbot Hamlin. *Greek Revival Architecture in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944), 329.

¹⁷³ Hamlin, *Greek Revival Architecture*, 318-321

¹⁷⁴ *North American Review* 1844

Indiana State Capitol. The domes were “utterly monstrous and barbarous when added to a model of the present Grecian architecture, such as the Parthenon.”¹⁷⁵

Horatio Greenough espoused the development of architectural idioms to overcome the sudden growth in the country and suggested that no great architecture could come from the past as “the commonwealth” was unsuccessful in its call “from the vasty deep the spirits of the Greek.” He instead advocated the development of Gothic-style architecture, designed from the inside out, to reflect the spirit of the nation.¹⁷⁶ The Gothic style, too, was challenged as a popular choice:

There can be nothing more grotesque, more absurd, or more affected, than for a quiet gentleman, who has made his fortune in the peaceful occupation of selling calicos, and who knows no more of the middle ages than they do of him, to erect for his family a residence a gimcrack of a Gothic castle...as though he anticipated an attack upon his roost from some *Front de Bouef* in the neighborhood.¹⁷⁷

The decline in popularity of the Grecian style, while explained in part by the rise of other architectural choices, is tied more closely with social and economic transformation within the nation. The shift in design sensibilities away from the Grecian style represents more than a change in fashion. With a desire to exhibit their individuality in the context of a tightly defined model of appropriate taste, people seek fashionability and hope to remain definable within the taste of mainstream culture.¹⁷⁸ Because the social, political, and economic dynamics of the American nation continued in a state of instability, people constructed buildings with more free-ranging options than before possible. Elements of the market

¹⁷⁵ Cited in Hamlin, *Greek Revival Architecture*, 324.

¹⁷⁶ *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, Volume 13 (August 1843) 206.

¹⁷⁷ William H. Ranlett. *The American Architect*. New York: Desitt and Davenport (1849) 263.

¹⁷⁸ Sociologist Jukka Gronow (1993) contrasts taste as slowly-evolving, conservative choices in styles and fashion representing cutting-edge, liberal choices. Jukka Gronow. “Taste and Fashion: The Social Function of Fashion and Style.” *Acta Sociologica*, 36:2 (1993) 89-100.

revolution, the struggle for political control, and the vast expansion of the nation all had architectural implications. As sectional tensions increased North and South, Grecian style buildings took on new meanings that were concretized in the later nineteenth and predominantly the twentieth century.

Social and Economic Visions for the Nation

Fed by religion's reduction of deference and a new form of government, promotion of economic growth became the central dynamic of American politics. Earlier in the century, Democrat-Republicans argued for agrarian practices to form the backbone of enterprise in the United States while Federalists envisioned an industrialized nation. Though trans-Appalachian region was the first westward expansion of a growing nation and Thomas Jefferson increased the amount of available land, through the Louisiana Purchase, to ensure healthy prospects for his agricultural vision of the nation.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the market revolution – aided by the construction of an elaborate network of roads, canals, and rail lines – made large areas of land available for settlement and trade. As manufacturing grew, British imports resulted in a wider range of consumer goods at a higher quality than ever before available. As goods were absorbed into households, a “cult of domesticity” emerged in the private sphere and left the production of goods in the male public sphere.¹⁷⁹ Though the market revolution was a national process, the rise of “King cotton” and the presence of slavery resulted in a different market revolution for the South. The promise of new land for agricultural use further stimulated the market revolution. Political parties

emerged over different philosophies of land use and distribution and thus informed the competing visions of an American economic system, that was based on competing orientation – an agrarian vision for the nation and one firmly committed to commercial enterprise to secure a prosperous future.

Between the Revolution and the mid-nineteenth century, Americans developed a genuine interest in the formation of a national character that people believed would replace the European aristocracy of the Old World. Although the American social order was turned upside down as individuals established social order following the revolution, the republican ideology espoused by most Americans was never as coherent or dominant as scholars represented, a politics of individualism better characterized the nineteenth-century nation.¹⁸⁰

Jacksonian Democrats and Whigs (and later Republicans) stood on opposite sides of an ideological framework where Democrats often feared change and Whigs looked forward to and welcomed change. Jacksonians saw the union as a way to keep individuals from restricting one another while the Whigs saw the union as a way to bind together disparate people.¹⁸¹

On the eve of the Civil War, most Americans conceived of the nation in two parts – a Northern democratic and commercial civilization and a Southern aristocratic and largely agrarian landscape. In this conception, the Yankee was a descendant of the puritan roundhead and the Southern gentleman a descendant of the English cavalier. According to William Taylor, a psychological line developed between North and the South. The Southern cavalier was the solution to the question of new aristocracy to replace European predecessors:

¹⁷⁹ Sean Willentz. "The Market Revolution, 1815-1848." In Sean Willentz, ed. *Major Problems in the Early Republic* (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1992).

¹⁸⁰ Kohl, *The Politics of Individualism*.

“by 1850, the Cavalier and the Yankee expressed in popular imagination the basic cultural conflict people felt between the decorous, agrarian south and the rootless, shifting, money-minded north.” Though in reality, no clean division existed between North and South, the South grew increasingly provincial in the first decades of the nineteenth century and the southern planter was cast a direct descendant of the revolutionary generation. Southerners felt that the republican civic values and ideals of the nation’s fathers had been eroded by fifty years of territorial expansion and democratic change.¹⁸² Romantic literature of the 1830s to 1850s solidified the idea of a fictional plantation in an idyllic setting.

As land in the southwest was admitted from the nation’s victory over Mexico, Representative David Wilmot of Pennsylvania introduced an amendment to an appropriation bill that would have prohibited slavery in any Mexican territory.¹⁸³ The Congressional debate on the issue expanded and included a proposal to extend the Missouri Compromise line west to the Pacific coast. Attitudes about land formed the basis for a North-South sectional rift along cultural, economic, and ideological lines. Although slavery and sectionalism became conflated in later years, slavery was not the only disagreement between North and South. These regions differed over taxes on imports and exports, navigation rights to the Mississippi, the taxation of slaves and slave property, the assumption of state debts, and the establishment of a national bank.

Nationalism grew at different rates and in different ways in North and South, and by 1860, the sections found themselves separated by a

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Taylor, William. *Cavalier and Yankee; The Old South and American National Character* (New York: Braziller, 1961), 335.

¹⁸³ In addition to Mexican lands, territories in California and Oregon raised questions about the admission of new states related to the issue of slavery.

common nationalism. Each was devoted to its own image of the Union, and each section was indistinctly aware that its image was not shared by the other.¹⁸⁴

Though each section had different ideas about the role of land ownership and use within the nation, the South failed to pull together a unified voting bloc. The emergence of the Free-Soil Party in the late 1840s signaled the inability of existing parties to cope with these issues. The electoral and popular votes for president reflected the indecisive nature of the country in its political leadership. This indecision culminated in the 1860 election of Abraham Lincoln, an election that crystallized the difference between the North and the South and ultimately led to secession.

A Shift in Political Ideology

Daniel Walker Howe suggests that widespread Whig culture was more powerful than the Whig party. The political ideas of the Whigs were shaped by social attitudes. Both Henry Clay and Abraham Lincoln contributed significantly to the shaping of Whig political philosophy in the nineteenth century. Clay and Lincoln both identified with a world-view associated with industrialization where improved technology held out hope for the betterment of humanity. The Second Great Awakening influenced both men and shaped their belief in the power of reform: temperance, missions, benevolent societies, and an anti-slavery stance would transform the moral tenor of the United States – “cleansed of its sins, society would become more prosperous.”¹⁸⁵

Although the Whig party spanned a brief twenty-year period, 1834-1854, the Whigs advanced a program of economic development that would

¹⁸⁴ Potter, *Impending Crisis*, 484.

underscore the move towards industrial capitalism. They advocated intervention by the federal government in the form of tariffs to protect domestic industry, subsidies for internal improvements, and a national bank to establish a uniform currency and to regulate credit.

Whigs believed that commerce and industry should take their place alongside agriculture as appropriate means of work. The Democrats clung to a vision of a society of small farmers and artisans. The Democrats fought for reapportionment of the state legislatures and popular election of judges and presidential electors. They fought against the national bank monopoly and they favored the autonomy of states and local government over that of the federal government.

Whigs perceived economic and political threats to the republic where excessive “luxury” resulted in the erosion of moral standards, the decay of institutional arrangements, and the rise of anarchy and tyranny. When Jackson became president, he caused economic chaos by vetoing the national bank and by refusing to sponsor internal improvements. Jackson even disregarded Supreme Court decisions. Politics under the Jackson administration gave rise to the Whig party as the “country party” against the passions of “King Andrew.”¹⁸⁶ Thus, Whigs remained connected to political systems created in England to protest the arbitrary rule of a king while the Democrats reshaped their ideas about politics and themselves by looking to the common man. Andrew Jackson became the electrifying personality that separated the nation into two parties. The first two party system, of Federalists and Democrat-Republicans, ended with the election of Thomas Jefferson and was followed by an Era of Good Feelings,

¹⁸⁵ Howe, *Political Culture of the American Whigs*, 5-9.

when political parties did not exist. Jackson's two terms in the White House caused the reemergence of political parties and the reemergence of the Democrat-Republicans and the birth of the Whigs.

By mid-century, the Whig party lost its political effectiveness and the demise of the Whigs gave rise to the Republican Party. The Republicans consciously revived memories of the American Revolution and they used republican rhetoric to "camouflage a host of divergent connotations and emphases."¹⁸⁷ Republicans became associated with "free labor, free soil" ideology. They viewed land as key to America's classless society. Free soil enabled men to work the land and become engaged citizens in a bountiful landscape. Free labor was economically and socially superior to slave labor and provided access to the economic system and allowed wage earners to rise through the ranks.¹⁸⁸ In the Republican view, because the territories of the west remained in a perceived state of nature, civilization, as it reached them, should take the form of equality and freedom the framers intended. Southerners recognized that the land of the west provided an outlet for the development of additional plantations: without the land of the west, the plantation economy would perish.

As western lands were settled, a distrust of politicians developed among Americans. Sectional wrangling over slavery between 1856 and 1861 snapped the ties of mutual allegiance to national parties that had linked north and south since the 1830s. Republicans wanted to save the republic from a southern conspiracy and to protect themselves from enslavement. Certain southerners

¹⁸⁶ Howe, *Political Culture of American Whigs*, 88.

¹⁸⁷ Holt, *Political Crisis*, x.

refused to accept Lincoln and other actions by northerners. The Civil War was thus caused by one section of the country refusing to accept the decision of the presidential election. The ensuing war became the great exception to the American political tradition of compromise.¹⁸⁹

The Whigs had previously advocated the importance of orderly settlement of western lands. Henry Clay, as a key spokesperson for the Whigs, advocated the sale of public lands as a means to raise revenue. His American System, intended to foster national integration and inhibit sectionalism and resulted in the centralization of land in the hands of a capitalist elite. Clay was a member of the “agrarian bourgeois” his American System envisioned.¹⁹⁰ His 600-acre Lexington estate, Ashland, was both a showplace and a working farm, symbolic of the American system that favored the deliberate settlement of land among elite property owners as a means to centralize the white population and facilitate industrialization.¹⁹¹

Republicans, by the 1850s, realized a new ideal that clearly separated them from their Whig predecessors. The Republicans pressed for passage of the Homestead Act that located free western soil not in the hands of Clay’s “agrarian bourgeois” but in the hands of common men. As the Republican presidential candidate for president, Abraham Lincoln advocated this “free labor, free soil”

¹⁸⁸ Eric Foner. *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

¹⁸⁹ Holt, *Political Crisis*. See also Edward Pessen. “How Different From Each Other were the Antebellum North and South?” *American Historical Review* 85 (1980) 1119-1149.

¹⁹⁰ This term is borrowed from E. P. Thompson. “Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture.” *Journal of Social History* 7 (1974): 390.

¹⁹¹ To balance the admission of slave and free states in the west, Clay’s Compromise of 1850 also provided tangible evidence of the nation’s growing concern over the settlement of western lands and the vision of the citizens, governmental structure, and economic system that would shape the landscape. Howe, *Political Culture*, 42.

ideology and thus posed a threat to southern political interests.¹⁹² As an ex-Whig, southerners perceived that Lincoln could garner support in the south among fellow ex-Whigs and destroy the plantation system. Concerned like all Republicans with order in the world, Lincoln's second American revolution attempted to unite the nation. His vision of "free soil, free labor" eventually unleashed forces with unintended consequences: the Civil War and the rise of capitalism.¹⁹³

America: Garden to the World

Regardless of the political structures throughout the nation, agriculture dominated nineteenth-century conceptions of America. People viewed land resources as a garden that would lead to the rebirth and regeneration of American culture. Within this geographic space, two competing agrarianisms were in place by the 1830s: a Southern landscape dominated by plantation culture and a landscape of the Old Northwest populated by the image of the yeoman farmer backwoodsman. With the passage of time, the image of a free man working free soil in the West took on antislavery overtones and formed the basis of an evolving political philosophy by the 1850s.

¹⁹² As historians attempt to understand the nineteenth century, they all struggle with why society became so willing to promote commercial development and endure tremendous inequality. This is where the idea of the frontier as a safety valve came from. Some historians believed that with access to free land that people could be like Lincoln and work their way to success through farming. Had Lincoln not united commercial and agrarian interests this type of economic change would have been delayed and the high tariffs necessary to industry would have been vetoed by the South.

¹⁹³ President Lincoln's election to public office and the Civil War viewed as the second American revolution is most closely identified with historian Charles Beard. Sectional conflict arose from the contending economic interests of plantation agriculture and industrializing capitalism and the contestation of a view for the nation and a class war between Yankee capitalist bourgeoisie and Southern planter aristocracy. Viewed as a conservative, Lincoln wanted to preserve the union as envisioned by the nation's founders. See

When the new economic and technological forces, especially the power of steam working through river boats and locomotives, had done their work, the garden was no longer a garden. But the image of an agricultural paradise in the west, embodying group memories of an earlier, a simpler and, it was believed, a happier state of society, long survived as a force in American thought and politics.¹⁹⁴

The log cabin, rather than the Grecian-style residence, stood at the center of this emerging agricultural paradise. The log cabin, in this instance, rose as a political image of the common man, was consciously used as a political symbol by the Whig party and eventually helped undermine ideas about Grecian-style buildings. The Republican party platform of the late 1850s, crafted around a “free soil, free labor” ideology and represented by a log cabin image created a vision of the nation that doomed plantation agriculture. During the 1860s, the use of the log cabin image triumphed over the Grecian-style edifice as a symbol of democracy.

Architecture as a Mirror of Political Ideology

The shift in political ideology undermined the common architectural language of the nation. That shift became pronounced when Abraham Lincoln sought to refashion his identity. The man who became the legendary sixteenth president of the United States modeled his early political career after Henry Clay. He was connected to Clay through his wife’s family, the Todds of Central Kentucky. Despite his connection to the Kentucky gentry, Lincoln created an image of himself as a “self-made” man. Born in a log cabin, Lincoln came to symbolize the unlimited political opportunities the republic offered its citizens.

James M. McPherson. *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 24.

¹⁹⁴ Smith, Henry Nash. *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 124.

Lincoln had “come far from his father’s frontier origins. A successful corporate lawyer, the younger Lincoln had entered the highest political and social circles. His native Middle West had become the most solidly middle-class section of the country.”¹⁹⁵

Though he lived in a Grecian-style house in Springfield, Lincoln purposefully nurtured his political image as a self-made man by using “log cabin” culture to increase his appeal as a presidential candidate. Lincoln’s log cabin appealed to the men of Jackson’s democratic world (figs. 91 and 92). Lincoln’s rise to power signaled a shift in ideology towards rhetoric of the self-made man who farmed the land, lived in a log cabin, split rails for fences, and for whom the soil and hard work became the means of social mobility. Lincoln’s success as a lawyer became visible proof of the relationship between upward mobility and access to land. The perception of Lincoln as a man of the land made him politically acceptable, even desirable, in his run for the presidency and led northern Democrats to cross over and vote for a Republican.

Lincoln was not the first to adopt this strategy of a “log cabin” image to shape political rhetoric. The Whigs, a party that emerged largely due to opposition to Andrew Jackson and his reliance on the common man, in reality represented elite landowners who had little resonance with democratic principles. In order to win the presidency in 1840, Whigs reinvented planter William Henry Harrison as a common man who lived in a log cabin and drank hard cider. As the embodiment of the “common man” Harrison beat Democratic hopeful Martin Van Buren whom the Whigs cast as an aloof

¹⁹⁵ Etcheson, Nicole. “‘As My Father’s Child Has’: The Political Culture of the Ohio Valley in the Nineteenth Century.” *Ohio Valley History* 1.1 (Winter 2001): 33.

aristocrat. Harrison won both the popular election and the electoral college count but died shortly after being elected, leaving the government to be run by another southern planter, John Tyler.

Lincoln relied on the rhetoric developed by the Whigs in the 1840s to fashion himself as a man of the people. Though Lincoln had moved to Springfield, Illinois as a young attorney where he practiced law and held public office, Lincoln truly did come from rural roots. Born in a log cabin outside of Springfield, Kentucky, the Lincolns migrated to Illinois in the early nineteenth century and farmed land there as well. Moreover, Lincoln's "log cabin" campaign took on additional resonance in the context of the "free soil, free labor" ideology of his Republican party. Log cabins were the first structures created by pioneers who moved west and settled the landscape. In the association of a log cabin with his image as a common man, Lincoln also showed that his story of success came through hard work on western land. Abraham Lincoln symbolized the promise of similar success to all who elected to labor in order to rise above their station in life.

Lincoln's actual house in Springfield reflected his aspirations to upper class gentility while his political image was shaped by the symbolism of the log cabin (fig. 93). Like Andrew Jackson before him, the reality of Lincoln's house differed from the idealized image of the domestic dwelling associated with his campaign. Where Jackson used the Grecian-style façade of The Hermitage to emphasize his belief in democracy, Lincoln occupied a Grecian-style house with no connection to his political image. Over the course of a decade from 1846-1856, the Lincolns significantly enlarged a circa 1839 Grecian style cottage through the addition of a second story and several room additions on the rear of the structure. Lincoln

succeeded in the separation of his ideal “log cabin” political image from the reality of his Grecian-style house. The political image was firmly tied to the world of Lincoln’s work and stood separate from his residential retreat from this world of work.¹⁹⁶

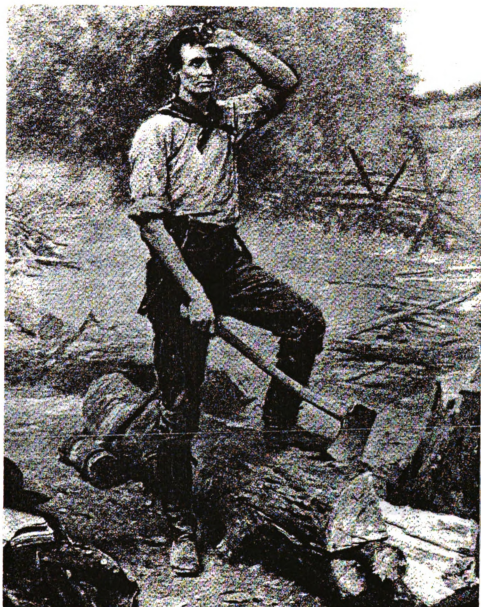
Viewed against the progression of Grecian-style, Gothic-style, and Victorian buildings, the log cabin was an interruption, a break in the cultural language of the nineteenth century. The log cabin was part of an idealized image of a rural America where abundant free land allowed access for men to economic prosperity and political power. Just as the Grecian style signaled stability, rationality, and balance in a world marked by impermanence and disorder, the shift to a “log cabin” political image marked a decided ideological shift that temporarily accepted impermanence as a means to become upwardly mobile. The log cabin was symbolic of the underlying disorder that characterized settling the trans-Appalachian lands in so brief a time.

Ironically, the log cabin symbolized a cultural shift from a purely agrarian view of the nation to a view that combined agrarian and commercial interests. The rural image of the simple domestic dwelling provided the key visual rhetoric for people to understand the necessity of free land in the economic success of the nation. Lincoln was elected as president because he successfully united agrarian and commercial interests and his policies ultimately paved way for commercial domination of the economic system. Lincoln was victorious because he brought the democratic farmer into the Republican Party. Because he manipulated the

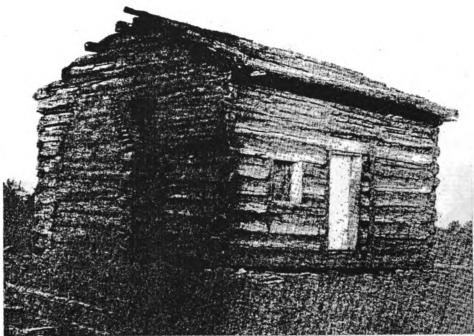
¹⁹⁶ “In addition to a different understanding of sectional equity, southerners were slower than antebellum northerners to relinquish the eighteenth century – and earlier – tradition of status as a major function of personal identity.” Bertram Wyatt-Brown. *Yankee Saints and Southern Sinners* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 8-9.

log cabin image and equated it with free soil, farmers saw an opportunity to embrace an economic system that looked more promising than the provincial proto-commercial economic development of the first part of the nineteenth century. With different fundamental responses to this vision of land ownership and use, Northerners and Southerners developed sectional views of nationalism and laid the foundations for the Civil War. Northerners discarded the images projected by “democratic” Grecian-style buildings while at the same time they seized upon the log cabin image and manipulated the idealized image of the log cabin as the new democratic clothing for the Valley of Democracy,¹⁹⁷ the Old Northwest, the “Land of Lincoln,” and, later, the entire Far West. Southerners rejected the log cabin of Lincoln and stood behind their Grecian-style façades as representations of the republican promise made at the founding of the nation. Grecian-style buildings for Southerners represented an idealized past that they sought to maintain.

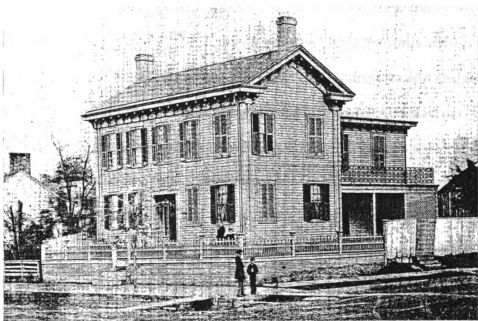
¹⁹⁷ A term applied by John Barnhart in a book by the same name. *Valley of Democracy: The Frontier versus the Plantation in the Ohio Valley, 1775-1818* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1953).



91. *Lincoln, the Rail Splitter*, Painting by J. L. G. Ferris
Source: Freedman, *Lincoln: A Photobiography*, 23



92. Lincoln Log Cabin, Springfield, Kentucky
Source: Freedman, *Lincoln: A Photobiography*, 23



93. Lincoln Residence, Springfield, Illinois
Source: Holzer, *Lincoln Image*, 185

CONCLUSION

The Realization of the Democratic Nation

Within the geographic space of the Old Northwest and the Frontier South, Americans believed they could create a true democracy based on an idealized version of Hellenistic culture. Because the people in both the Old Northwest and the Frontier South attempted cultural work that introduced and replicated Grecian-style architecture throughout the geographic area, the notion that the North and South of the antebellum West were fundamentally different can be questioned. The material culture approach of this dissertation suggests that the Grecian-style buildings of the nineteenth century trans-Appalachian West tell a different story than the historians writing about this geographic space. Where historians have tended to isolate differences in the North and South, the buildings show commonalities in the process of community formation.

In the nineteenth century, communities imagined themselves as places of commerce and civility to attract people and bring economic prosperity. These towns used classical nicknames as one way to transform communities and establish a "genius loci" for the place that could be understood by citizens in all walks of life. Cities thus invented themselves as "Athens" and Grecian-style buildings appropriately clothed these settlements in visual rhetoric, supplying them with a democratic backdrop for their stage upon which the actions of a fully functioning ideal community were played out. Just as the Hellenistic Athens was associated with worldly, well read, appreciators of art, nineteenth-century communities sought to become "well-dressed" by association with the name.

Not only did residents of the trans-Appalachian West co-opt the Grecian style to “materialize” the Athens nickname, Grecian-style buildings constructed in all eight communities scrutinized in this study represented efforts by individuals – designers and owners alike – to engage in the development of a national vocabulary for design. The Grecian style provided a common language many understood because it was so prevalent in the nation and because of nineteenth century citizens’ familiarity with the Grecian style through style books, archaeological records, newspaper stories, and other sources. As abstract signs, the Grecian-style buildings encapsulated elaborate messages and the mindsets of the people who designed, built, lived, and worked within them. These buildings transformed the democratic experiment into physical form.

In the democratization of a republican state, people of the trans-Appalachian West selected the Grecian style rather than the Roman style buildings of the nation’s capital. The West claimed the mantle of political authority and created an architecture that spoke in the language of democracy. As political commentary in built form, the Grecian style simultaneously established an architectural order that was copied across a diverse landscape.

Public and private buildings utilized the same architectural language. This was a language that spoke in direct competition with the East and with Europe. And yet, in shaping communities in the nineteenth century, settlers were carrying the cultural baggage of Europe along with ideas of democracy. Their sense of themselves was tied into European standards and opinions.¹⁹⁸ People sought to validate the democratic experience of the New World by Old World

¹⁹⁸ Americans looked to France rather than to England for a model and for cues. Napoleonic buildings and empire style furniture held greater resonance in the nation than their English counterparts. Cooper, *Classical Taste in America*.

measures. Rather than replicate the Old World precisely, however, American citizens transformed the classical building styles of the Ancient world into something different.

Because of the popularity and pervasiveness of the Grecian-style, individual buildings could be easily dismissed as a part of the larger design movement without considering the particular circumstances of their local stories. Grecian-style buildings established classical rhetoric that had resonance in the worlds of politics, education, religion, and commerce. People chose classical garb as much to disassociate from the surrounding wilderness as they did to ensure economic prosperity in the future. In displaying “mainstream” behavior, owners of both public and private Grecian-style buildings “fit in” with their neighbors and with the vision of the nation as a great democracy, something of a model for the world.

Idealized Landscapes

Because Athens was a didactic tool in the nineteenth-century landscape, instructive in its associations and physical appearance, people came to expect certain attributes of similarly nicknamed communities: thriving arts and culture, a university and other institutions of learning, commerce to support these activities, and a social structure into which common men and women could be incorporated and become part of the Athenian ideal. For communities claiming to be American “Athens,” people constructed buildings and embraced classicism as a means to stand apart from the perceived “wilderness” of the landscape. The fabrication of an American “Athens” was about the construction of an ideal history for a landscape that had little to do with its nineteenth-century reality.

Native Americans were swept to the periphery or erased completely from memory while their landscape was reshaped as the place for the seeds of democracy to take root and prosper.

In a landscape perceived as a primeval forest populated by hostile Indians, Grecian-style buildings stood as symbols of progress and power. The structures provided a means to manipulate local, regional, and national images to "uncivilize" the Indians and remake the Frontier South and the Old Northwest a wilderness. Travel writers and community boosters both had a stake in representing communities in a positive light, cultural activity often done at the expense of making the land around the communities a tangled wilderness to elevate the level of sophistication and civility of the community itself. The trans-Appalachian West, a vast territory, represented an opportunity to construct a new nation on "unsettled" land. In a time when the nation struggled to come to terms with the democratic experiment proposed by the revolutionary generation, people looked for a national vocabulary that would define who they were as individuals and as American citizens. People were interested in creating order from disorder, classifying and compartmentalizing the landscape and reducing wilderness. Americans established in the landscape of the trans-Appalachian West a tightly prescribed set of values that swept aside previous notions of the nation, its landscape, its regions, and its people.

Regions Remade

People turned to the Grecian style as one means to stabilize the mobility and fluidity of the nation where people were cut off from the roots of family and community in their effort to settle the land. In the trans-Appalachian West, the

place where the American nation of the nineteenth century took shape, design features and notions people had of themselves and their nation were largely imported from the East and Europe. Rather than the replication of these ideas verbatim, the residents of the trans-Appalachian West manipulated their understanding of community and of Grecian-style architecture as an embodiment of a model civilization of the Ancient past. As the nation's political agenda became increasingly regionalized after the Civil War, the South stood in sharp contrast to the other regions in politics, social structures, and its physical environment. The legacy of Grecian-style buildings helped to make this "reconstruction" of the South possible. In the late nineteenth century, Grecian style buildings remained and reminded people of the Civil War and the great society that occupied these buildings before sectional conflict. In the twentieth century, the Grecian style was again manipulated first in popular film and then again as house museums opened and tourist activities expanded to revel in, first, the glories and, then later, the tragedies of the Old South.

In today's American nation, identity is still shaped with the Grecian style, in a way not much different than the nineteenth-century citizens who recalled a glorified past in order to ease tension about the present and as a way to shape self-identity. The decision to construct in the Grecian style represented a nexus of relations and negotiations: the buildings were both conscious and unconscious decisions to concretize and clothe the American nation in the rhetoric of an ancient civilization in hopes that the new democracy would serve as a model for others. Because the nation and its citizens still grapple with the same issues as their nineteenth-century forebears, Grecian-style architecture continues to embody cultural values connecting to the Ancient world of the Hellenistic Greeks

and to the countless institutions and individuals who constructed Grecian-style buildings as a way to establish identities, form communities, and constitute the American nation.

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