Green River Steamboating a Cultural History, 1828-1931

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GREEN RIVER STEAMBOATING
A CULTURAL HISTORY, 1828-1931

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of History
Western Kentucky University
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Helen Bartter Crocker
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GREEN RIVER STEAMBOATING
A CULTURAL HISTORY, 1828-1931

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PREFACE

In recent years historians have displayed a growing interest in the cultural developments of certain well-defined regions. Often a river valley inspired such a study, for example R. E. Banta's *The Ohio*, Thomas Clark's *The Kentucky* and Harriette Arnow's *Seedtime on the Cumberland*. These and many other river histories dealt less with the river itself than with its tendency to define and alter an area's culture.

This thesis, dealing with the culture of Green River's steamboat era, is less about the steamboat or Green River than it is about their effect on river people. It searches the area's homes, schools, business establishments, churches, military and recreational activities from 1828 to 1931. This century is viewed through the records of four generations who knew the steamboat intimately. It examines birth and death in Green River country and the songs that were sung in between.

The writer is indebted to many area residents who enriched this study with their river memories and collections. Those who made special contributions were Agnes Harralson, James R. Hines, Joe Hines, Jesse Duer, Charles Young, May Young, Charles Vinson, C. W. Stoll, Roscoe Ellis, Silas Massey, Kirby Flener, Bewley Neel, Mrs. Tom Tichenor, Jane Hines Morningstar, Landon Wills and Elizabeth Kerr.
The librarians at the Kentucky Library of Western Kentucky University were endlessly patient and ingeneous in locating materials. A special thanks is extended to Julia Neal, Penny Harrison, Pat Hodges, Catherine Shutt, Karen Van Dyke, Mary Lou Harris, Jeanette Farley, Mary Emma Harris and Sallie Ann Koenig. Gayle R. Carver, librarian of the Kentucky Building Museum, also assisted in special areas of research.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of the members of the thesis committee--Dr. J. Crawford Crowe, Dr. Lowell Harrison and Dr. Carlton Jackson--in reading the text and offering constructive criticism.
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CHAPTER I

GREEN RIVER COUNTRY

It was the year 2000 B.C. or thereabouts when an artist of Babylon sat down on his knees and carved a "map of the world." Across the very middle of the map he cut a great river. To him it was the center of the universe.¹

It was the year 1800 A.D. or thereabouts in west-central Kentucky and a river was still the center of a "universe." This was Green River country, and a map of that valley, like its earlier counterpart, was distorted by the river's dominance.²

In 1931 Green River could scarcely be seen on local maps. The last steamboat to ply its waters burned that year, 104 years after the first one had arrived on a flood of high water, ending Green River country's distinctly river-oriented culture. Though it was often wild, illiterate, emotional and volatile, this steamboat culture unified the area drained by Green River.

Kentucky's rivers played a prominent role in her early history. No other state except Alaska has as many miles of navigable streams. Over half her boundaries are river ones—the Sandy River in the northeast, the Mississippi on the west and countless miles of the Ohio to the north and west. In addition, Kentucky's rivers are part of the larger Mississippi River system.

¹Willard Price, Rivers I Have Known (New York, 1965), 11.
²See maps on page two.
From Harry Toulmin, *A Description of Kentucky* (London, 1792). Map No. 18976, Kentucky Library, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

A portion of John Filson's Map of Kentucky drawn in 1784. Map No. 19081, Kentucky Library.
Mark Twain observed that the Mississippi "receives and carries to the Gulf water from fifty-four subordinate rivers that are navigable by steamboats." Because Green River is one of those "subordinates," it had impressive trade connections, even with the great port of New Orleans.  

Beginning in the Appalachian foothills of Lincoln County, Green River never leaves Kentucky and is the longest river entirely within the state. Though comparatively unknown outside its valley, Green River's kaleidoscopic scenery has been compared to that of the Rhine or Hudson and its resources in land and minerals to those of the Ruhr valley.  

The origin of Green River's name is uncertain. Janice Holt Giles, Kentucky author, was perhaps correct when she surmised that the first man who saw it, an Indian likely, must have identified it to another as the river whose water was green. And the first white man to see it must have identified it to another as "the green river." And so it came to be named.  

It was a satisfactory name for the early settlers who cleared the land, erected shelters and protected their families from Indian attack. Green River country's resources and its availability to markets were far more important considerations than the name of their river.

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3 Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* (New York, 1874), 1.


5 Janice Holt Giles, notes for *Run Me a River* (Boston, 1965), Janice Holt Giles Collection (Kentucky Library).
Only later did early Green River settlers discover what kind of valley they had chosen. They found a climate of the humid temperate type, ample rain and a growing season of about 210 days. The Navigator, printed as a guide for river pilots in 1814, reported that Green River wound through a most fertile valley and had a "better range for cattle and hogs than any other part of Kentucky." An early map referred to western Green River country as "sow country."6

The settlers found, however, that the topography of the land presented a mysterious obstacle to raising cattle and hogs. Strange holes, seeming to end nowhere, sometimes "swallowed" the unwary animals. Green River country was later designated by geologists as having karst topography. "Karst" is a Yugoslavian word for stone, and refers to areas underlain with erodable limestone that have surface features of sink holes and disappearing streams. These underground streams gradually formed caves, including famous Mammoth Cave. It is believed that Green River itself was once a subterranean stream. If so, the limestone ceiling above it wore away until it caved in, bringing the water to the surface. Thus the Green River became a surface outlet for other underground streams. The Green and its tributaries—especially the Nolin—provided the outlet necessary for keeping Mammoth Cave’s erosive system active.7

6 The Navigator: Containing Directions for Navigating the Monongohela, Allegheny, Ohio and Mississippi Rivers (Pittsburg, 1814), 269. See map on page five.

'A General Map of the New Settlement Called Transylvania.' Map No. 19022, Kentucky Library.
The early settlers learned, probably when failing to recover a lost article, that Green River was unusually deep. Some superstitious rivermen believed it was bottomless, while authorities concluded it was one of the deepest rivers on the continent. The Department of Resources called it "the deepest little river in North America," measured in places at 200 feet deep. Because of its underground feeder streams, the Green River was abundantly supplied with water even in dry seasons. Pioneer James Weir believed in 1798 that because Green River was navigable at all seasons it would be "a place of great trade in time to come."8

When the early pioneer explored Green River he discovered a number of important tributaries, most of them in the western region near the lower reaches of the river. The largest was Barren River, 160 miles from Green River's mouth and generally considered to be the dividing line between upper and lower Green River. Continuing downstream, the settler left the "barrens," (so named because the Indians burned the timber to provide grazing for game) and entered the great forests and coal fields of lower Green River country. Turning sharply to the north, to follow the river, the traveller passed other large tributaries--the Mud River, the Rough River and the Pond River. Often he reached small rocky "falls," and by the

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8Greene, Green River Country, 23; "Is Green River Deepest?" The Greenville Leader, Aug. 5, 1965; Otto A. Rother, A History of Muhlenburg County (Louisville, 1913), 58; The Rivers of Kentucky, Document 20, Kentucky Legislative Documents (1889), 149.
time he reached the Ohio River he had descended 100 feet from Green River's source. 9

Any description of frontier rivers would be incomplete without mention of ice and floods. In Green River country floods caused far more excitement because, due to the river's high mineral content and great depth, its waters rarely froze. In fact, Green River was a well-known winter harbor for Ohio River boats. For example, a river merchant wrote that the winter of 1911 was most severe and all rivers above Memphis were closed with ice. As was customary at Evansville, all river crafts would seek winter quarters in Green River due to ice and I followed suit with my wharfboat—I took precaution to anchor to large trees and a good distance from other vessels due to fire hazard. After placing two men in charge and making arrangements for their food and clothing, I returned to Evansville, nine miles distance. 10

The Ohio River was notorious for ice damage. The U.S. Weather Bureau reported that of ninety winters only twenty-eight were without ice and thirteen had heavy or "gorged" ice. One disastrous day in 1918 ice gorges wrecked steamboats all the way to Cairo, Illinois, at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. The real danger came when the ice gorge broke up, devasting everything in its path. James R. Hines, third generation riverman from Bowling Green, recalled that his father, Captain Jett Hines, nearly lost the lives of fifty passengers about 1900 as he tried to land at Owensboro. Because the ice was thicker on the Kentucky side, he took his boat to the Indiana shore. Then Hines and a friend

9Greene, Green River Country, 12.
10Billy Lepper, "Down Memory Lane," 36, Courtney Ellis Collection (Kentucky Library).
started to Owensboro in a small boat to report his passengers' safety. The ice formed so rapidly, however, that even the small boat could not dodge it. Finally firemen threw them a line which they tied to their boat. Within a few hours the gorge broke loose with such force that large trees on a wooded island nearby were cut "just like you'd sawed them."\(^{11}\)

This was Ohio River ice. On Green River it was far less significant, though a South Carrollton resident wrote that the river was frozen solid in 1874. A bootmaker "puts on his skates and wraps his long muffler around his neck and puts on his mittens with the trigger finger on them and off he starts" for Evansville. He successfully returned on those skates with "a whole side of sow-leather on his back."\(^{12}\)

A medical doctor living beside Green River at Rochester kept a diary and regularly recorded weather and river news. It was extremely rare, according to his records, that ice stopped Green River traffic. For example, on January 3, 1910, he wrote that "ice is pretty thick but the mailboat got through." On January 7, despite a temperature of five degrees below zero, the "Steamer Evansville went up breaking the ice this evening."\(^{13}\)

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\(^{11}\)Benjamin F. Klein, ed., The Ohio River Handbook (Cincinnati, 1964), 350; interview with James R. Hines, July 1, 1969. This interview is on tape at the Kentucky Library.

\(^{12}\)Sargeant George York, "Sweet Memories of Long Ago," 49, typescript (Kentucky Library).

\(^{13}\)W. P. Westerfield Diary, Jan. 3, 10, 1910, Jesse Westerfield Duer Collection (Auburn, Kentucky).
Though ice was rare, flooding to some degree was a yearly experience. In 1913 it was so extensive that Congress initiated flood control study. The River and Harbor Act of 1927 authorized surveys of the Ohio and its tributaries. Work was not completed before the flood of 1937, however, and on January 12 of that year Evansville, terminus of Green River navigation, was threatened. A contemporary recalled that

as the week wore on, more rain fell. The Green River was pouring its own overflow into the Ohio faster than the beautiful river could take it. By January 22, people were pulling out...January, 23, downtown Evansville was under water...The crest, 53.7 feet.14

Just as 1937 was known as "the year of the flood" on the Ohio, so it was remembered on the Green. The McLean County News reported that the river crested at 54.4 feet. Rumsey, a McLean County town situated on low land, had water over the house tops. Ferries brought its people across the river to Calhoun, but they lost everything but what was on their backs. Mrs. Thomas Tichenor recalled that the ladies came wearing "twelve or thirteen dresses, one on top of the other."15

Thus the Green River inhabitant discovered that the very river that brought him to his new home and served him as a running road could also be his worst enemy. Kentucky author Jesse Stuart expressed the Kentuckians' distrust of flooding rivers when he wrote "Winter River's Mood."

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Give me a summer river, not this one
That gathers water from high hills of snow;
Give me smooth waters rippling in the sun
Where bankside sycamores and willows grow
A summer river has a mood of peace.

The early settler learned to respect his river's moods.

"Cap" Fuller, an old-timer who rented johnboats and sold bait at Louisville, boasted that "If I git to Heaven, I'm goin' to have a yarn-spinnin' bout with ole Noah, 'cause here in Kentucky our rivers don't do things by halves."16

Early settlers also found wildlife and forests that were worth a "yarn-spinnin'." Many men survived for a time solely by hunting, exploring the "solitary retreats of the wild bear and buffalo." Such a hunter, named Houchins, may have been the first white man to enter Mammoth Cave. As late as 1824 a traveller reported "plenty of deer and wild turkeys in the woods." Kentucky's disappearing buffalo was last found in great numbers on the upper Green River.17

The first white man to enter Green River country saw many exotic creatures. The Carolina parroquets found their breeding place in the hollow sycamores. They liked the water of the salt licks and came in such droves that ornithologist Alexander Wilson wrote that it "appeared from a distance as if covered with a carpet of the richest green, red and yellow." Passenger pigeons were so numerous that John J. Audubon wrote that he saw a flock containing possibly

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16 Jesse Stuart, Kentucky is My Land (New York, 1952), 70; Clark McMeekin, Old Kentucky Country (New York, 1957), 90-91.

17 James Weir, quoted in Rothert, Muhlenburg County, 57; Clark B. Firestone, Sycamore Shores (New York, 1936), 48.
a billion birds. An early Daviess County settlement was known as "Buzzard's Roost" because of the peculiar birds that infested the region. The New England Magazine concluded in 1832 that Kentucky was "a lonely paradise of woods, waters and flowers, to which every animal that was in Eden seemed gathered." 18

Green River forests were, like local wildlife, highly varied. A surveyor for the Richard Henderson Company inadvertently described the trees on Green River's west bank when he made his report.

Beginning at the most southwardly of said grant a black oak and double dogwood, running from them with a line of the Grant N 61 W 500 po. to two black gums and a dogwood where there is a large white oak marked (1) thence N 29 E 300 po. to a stake also 300 po. more to an ash and two small hickories, thence 40 E 500 po. to a post oak and shell bark hickory. 19

Green River country's trees were remarkable not only in variety but also in size. W. P. Greene, in his 1898 study of Green River country, wrote that "along that stream the oak seems to thrive as nowhere else." The famous outlaw "Big Harpe" was killed under an oak tree reportedly four feet in diameter. At Rockport a sycamore tree was said to have a hollow in it twelve feet across--large enough that several individuals lived in it at different times. An Edmondson County poet wrote of the huge trees near Mammoth Cave.

I sit beneath great branching trees...
The friendly stems--so huge are these


19 "Field Notes of the survey of Green River, Apr. 7-May 30, 1797," Towles Collection (Filson Club Library, Louisville, Kentucky).
They are like anchors to a world
That swims in darkness all unfurled.20

In a world of Indians, floods, wild animals and loneliness
the first settlers failed to view their fantastic Green River country
forests so poetically. Their need was to survive, and consequently
they cleared the timber for crop-farming. A local editor described
the destruction.

First, the timber was cut, and shoved into the river
during the spring rises, so it would float down, somewhere,
out of the way. There was no thought of saving or using
the timber. W. T. Hull, who owns a farm at Dam No. 2 on
Green River says that his grandfather thus floated away
timber from his farm that would be worth a million dollars
today.21

Thus Green River country in the year 1800 or thereabouts
was a forest solitude awaiting the vanguards of a new era. Its
outward symbol--the steamboat--linked it and all past river cultures
to the mechanized age that destroyed them.

20 Henry Harvey Fuson, Just From Kentucky: A Second Volume
of Verse (Louisville, 1925), 37; Greene, Green River Country, 78;
Calhoun Green River Courirer, July 23, 1885.

21 Landon Wells, "The Civilizatious Always on a River,"
Calhoun McLean County News, July 8, 1954.
CHAPTER II

AN EARLY STEAMBOAT CULTURE

We are a hardy freeborn race,
Each man to fear a stranger,
Whate'er the game we join in chase
Despising toil and danger;
And if a daring foe annoys,
Whate'er his strength and forces
We'll show him that Kentucky boys
Are "alligator horses."\(^1\)

Noah Ludlow, the first travelling actor west of the Alleghenies, sang this song in 1822 for a wildly enthusiastic New Orleans audience. The Mississippi River inhabitants had been the first to call the Kentuckian "half-man, half-horse and half-alligator." The caricature stuck, becoming so commonplace that the English traveller, Mrs. Frances Trollope, found the expression synonymous with "Kentuckian."\(^2\)

This "alligator-horse" was unquestionably a river type, for that was the only way the Mississippi Valley people knew him. The Kentuckians first appeared on simple flatboats, then they helped develop the keelboat and broad horn, and finally the early steamboat. The Civil War by no means annihilated him—it only disciplined him.

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and made him a business man. If he could not change he moved farther west. But he left behind a lasting legend, a unique culture that considerably changed the map of Green River country.

The first white men to become acquainted with the Green River country were not rivermen, but hunters. John Knox and his forty "stout" long hunters explored the area in 1770. Then in March, 1775, the Transylvania Company, under Richard Henderson's leadership, secured from the Cherokee Indians questionable rights to settle Green River country. The Cherokee chief, Dragging Canoe, warned Henderson that he was getting a "dark and bloody ground." And so it was, for whether the settlers came by water or land, they encountered violence.

Perhaps the first permanent Green River settlers were the Montgomerys, relatives of the frontier hero, Benjamin Logan. About 1780 they left the security of Logan's St. Asaph's station and went "over the knobs" to start their own station on Green River's "headwaters." The Indians lost little time attacking the unprotected log cabins. It was February 27, 1781, and early in the morning when the elder William Montgomery stepped to the door of his cabin, a Negro boy by his side, when both were fired upon and instantly killed. Jane Montgomery, the daughter of the aged victim, sprang to the door...called for her

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4 William P. Palmer, ed., Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts (Richmond, 1875), 291-292; R. S. Cotterill, History of Pioneer Kentucky (Cincinnati, 1889), 133.

5 Thomas Marshall Green, Historic Families of Kentucky (Baltimore, 1964; originally published 1889), 133.
St. Asaph's Station when the land belonged to Virginia, from a portion of a map published by John Stockdale (London, 1792), compiled from late surveys and observations by Joseph Purcell. Map No. 19001, Kentucky Library.
brother's rifle, and with it in her steady hand, bravely defied the foe, who feared to approach the cabin.  

This was upper Green River, but the lower river settlers met similar resistance. A Pennsylvania group set out for the "long falls" of Green River, later called Vienna and then Calhoun. They discovered that the Chickasaws jealously guarded the Ohio River entrance to Green River, for one of their largest encampments was nearby. John Rowan, later master of "My Old Kentucky Home," described an incident that badly frightened the group as they passed Yellow Banks, later Owensboro.

The boats were floating silently along the middle of the river about nine or ten o'clock in the evening. The light of a fire was discovered on the Indian shore. Suddenly the war whoop was raised and the most hideous yells were uttered and answered from fires along their range of camps. They rushed towards us, and the noise of their paddles seemed, as they approached us, to increase the horrors of their shouts.

The Rowans escaped unhurt, but the Indians continued harassing their camp. One writer saw the Indian menace as a "fitting antecedent to the reign of terror the white man was to bring." Though it attracted cultured families like the Rowans, Green River country received also many tough Revolutionary War veterans. John Breckinridge, a Bluegrass planter, advised his brother-in-law not to settle in Green River country for it had nothing but "horse

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6 Ibid., 133.


8 John Rowan, "Unfinished Autobiography," typescript (Kentucky Library).

9 Snively and Furbee, Satan's Ferryman, 29.
thieves and savages."\(^{10}\) Surely this was an exaggeration, but the freedom found in this wilderness outpost was more than many settlers could handle. Frontier lawlessness soon confirmed Edmund Burke's belief that "liberty without wisdom and virtue was folly, vice and madness."\(^{11}\)

If only half the record were believed, Green River country was certainly full of "folly, vice and madness." Audubon, the ornithologist who lived for a time at Red Banks (later Henderson), explained that "the most depraved immigrants are forced farther and farther from the society of the virtuous."\(^{12}\)

Two Green River outlaws, the Harpe brothers, had a career seldom equalled in the history of crime. Their atrocities made them anti-heroes in Tennessee, Kentucky and southern Illinois. Judge James L. Hall, the first to publish their story, wrote that the principal scene of their activity was

in that part of Kentucky which lies south of Green River, a vast wilderness, then known by the general name of Green River country, and containing a few small and thinly scattered settlements...too widely spread to be able to create or enforce wholesale restraints.\(^{13}\)

Otto Rothert described their impact: "To this day the story of 'The Harpes' and 'Harpe's Head' is told about firesides


\(^{13}\)Quoted in Rothert, *Muhlenburg County*, 471.
It has been perpetuated in folk ballads and written by scores of pens.\textsuperscript{14}

In 1798 Micajah ("Big") Harpe and Wiley ("Little") Harpe entered Kentucky. After serving a jail term in Danville, they moved over to upper Green River country. Near the east fork of Barren River the Harpes killed a young boy and cut his body into pieces which they threw into a sinkhole. Later, on Big Barren River, about eight miles from Bowling Green, a man named Stump noticed smoke rising across the river. Presuming he had new neighbors, he entered the Harpes' camp "with a turkey over his shoulder, a string of fish in one hand and his fiddle under his arm." The Harpes repaid his neighborliness by stabbing Stump, cutting his body open and filling it with stones before throwing it into Barren River.\textsuperscript{15}

When the news spread, Green River country was terrified. Governor James L. Garrard offered $300 for the Harpes' capture and their description was printed in the Frankfort Palladium.

Micajah Harp alias Roberts is about six feet high---of a robust make... He is built very straight and is full flesht in the face.... Wiley Harp alias Roberts is very meagre in his face, has short black hair but not quite so curly as his brother's.\textsuperscript{16}

Masquerading as itinerant preachers, the Harpes stopped one night at Moses Stegal's cabin. Stegal was away, but his wife offered them lodging. Before morning she and her baby had been

\textsuperscript{14}Otto A. Rothert, The Outlaws of Cave-in-Rock (Cleveland, 1924), 56.

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., 88-89; Joseph R. Underwood, "The Harpes, Outlaws: A Thrilling Tragedy," typescript (Kentucky Library).

\textsuperscript{16}Quoted in Rothert, Outlaws, 88-89.
tomahawked and the cabin burned. Mrs. Stegal lived long enough to report the Harpes responsible, and a posse started out in hot pursuit. Little Harpe escaped, but Big Harpe was killed near Pond River, a tributary of the Green.\textsuperscript{17} His head was hung on a tree, and the road past it became Harpshead Road. The town of Harpshead, Kentucky, became one of the first on early Kentucky maps.\textsuperscript{18}

Other outlaws, less senseless and also less renowned, infested the Green River area. "Colonel Plug" was a famous pirate who operated between the Green and Tennessee rivers. His party was a small one—a younger partner called "Nine-eyes" and a couple of Negroes, one of whom was his mistress. He usually began his work upstream, hailing boatmen and pretending he was in distress. Once on board the boat, Plug floated downstream until he neared his home. Then, picking out the boat's calking, he easily confiscated the sinking goods. He was actually admired by rivermen, who enjoyed swapping stories of his exploits.\textsuperscript{19}

Green River country, Indian and outlaw infested, was an isolated, lonely wilderness. As Kentucky author Jesse Stuart observed in \textit{Kentucky is My Land}, "there was only one way to get out. This way is to follow the stream."\textsuperscript{20} It was often the only way.

\textsuperscript{17} Judge James Hall, "The Harpes," in \textit{Rothert, Muhlenburg County}, 438-440.

\textsuperscript{18} S. L. Gridley's map of Kentucky (No. 19005, Kentucky Library) lists only seven towns in the Green River country in 1814—Greenville, Harpshead, Henderson, Yellow Bank, Vienna, Russellville and Hartford.

\textsuperscript{19} R. E. Banta, \textit{The Ohio} (New York, 1949), 249.

\textsuperscript{20} Stuart, \textit{Kentucky is My Land}, 11.
way to get in, too, and certainly the easiest way to obtain "storebought" products. Competition for this market was keen, as two 1827 newspaper advertisers revealed. John Boon boasted that he freighted tobacco on flatboats "of the best materials," using only experienced "steersmen." His competitor countered: "All those that may ship their tobacco with us, shall not be charged any storage at Double Springs warehouse."21 First these flatboats, then the steam packets plied the Green, bringing the "drummers" and everything they sold to supply the valley's needs.

The first Green and Barren River steamboat, the United States, reached Bowling Green on January 26, 1828. It was a great attraction, and fifteen-year-old Henry Fox jumped at the chance when Captain James G. Pitts invited everybody to take a ride. "It could not carry many...about thirty of us. The river was very high....He landed us at Morgantown, just at night, and there we had to stay." Pitts never offered to return them, so his passengers "fooled it" back to Bowling Green.22

Despite this inconvenience, Bowling Green citizens were smitten with the steamboat. A newspaper editor extolled its economic advantages, writing that Bowling Green farmers should not have to wait for "suitable seasons in our rivers....The market must be created; otherwise we can never be independent or prosperous." He concluded with the assurance that "the people of

22"Recollections of Henry Fox," typescript, John Rodes Collection (Kentucky Library).
Warren can bring steamboats to our door." A state legislator from Bowling Green, Joseph R. Underwood, wrote to this editor:

I drafted a Bill providing for the appointment of Engineers to survey our navigable streams....As to the practicality of rendering Green and Barren rivers navigable at all seasons, by Locks and Dams, I have never entertained a doubt....There is a dam already across James River [Virginia].

Though no immediate action was taken, Bowling Green business and political leaders agitated untiringly for river improvements and succeeded in making Green and Barren the first Kentucky rivers to get state attention. The locks and dams were begun in 1834 and completed in 1842 at a total cost of nearly $900,000. The projects were numbered consecutively, beginning at the Ohio River. The first work "let" was Lock and Dam No. 2 near Calhoun. No. 1 at Spottsville was delayed because the native rock proved too soft. No. 3 was built near the confluence of the Mud and Green Rivers at Rochester, and No. 4 at Woodbury, within sight of Barren River. Completing the project was a lock on Barren River, "let" in 1836. The governor of Kentucky, Robert Letcher, exulted that "Green River works."

Steamboats now came to Bowling Green regularly, for they no longer needed high water to get them past natural obstructions. The

23 Bowling Green Spirit of the Times, Feb. 17, 1827.

24 Ibid., Feb. 27, 1827; Ralph Ward Brashear, "Joseph Rogers Underwood--A Representative Nineteenth Century American" (MA thesis, Western Kentucky University, 1968), 93.


26 Greene, Green River Country, 14.

27 Bowling Green Green River Gazette, Jan. 7, 1843.
General Warren, for example, with Captain Combs as commander, arrived from Louisville on December 21, 1842 with salt, flour and general merchandise. Twenty passengers accompanied the tobacco and other freight on the return trip. On December 29 the Governor Breathitt arrived "with full freight of Groceries." On New Year's Day, 1843, she departed for New Orleans "with 150 hhds. of tobacco, 400 blls. of beef and pork, 400 sacks of corn and oats, 16 tierces of flaxseed, and divers cattle, horses, etc." 28

Even intellectual life was given a boost, for the captain of the Lucy Wing, a local steamboat built at Rumsey, distributed his favorite poetry, Amelia Welby's Poems by Amelia. 29 But intellectual affairs did not seriously occupy the frontier mind. 30 Beneath its romantic facade steamboating was primarily a business venture, and an uncertain one at that. Owners accepted the fact that their steamboats' average life expectancy was only three years, due largely to explosions and to hitting snags. Green River's Captain Combs, who ran steamboats between 1842 and 1871, succeeded despite the hazards. Henry Fox took a trip with him and concluded that one reason for this success was that Combs was "never in a hurry." The following story proved his point.

I was on the Harrison Bridges going to Evansville and a big buck deer was swimming in Green River.... Captain Combs ordered the mate and roustabout to take a skiff and capture the deer while in the river....

28 Ibid.
29 Rothert, Muhlenburg County, 225.
30 Moore, Frontier Mind, 242-243.
The steamboat ran slow until they brought the deer on board and we had plenty of venison.  

Patience was apparently a valuable asset on these early Green River steamers. United States Senator Warner L. Underwood wrote a discouraged account of the improvements he helped achieve.

Friday, June 14, 1850. Left Bowling Green on the now crazy and worn out steamboat General Worth.....We have had difficulty in passing every lock, and I have experienced a sense of mortification and disappointment in observing the condition of our Green and Barren River line of navigation, upon which the prosperity of Warren County and the personal fortunes of myself as identified with the general prosperity of the County so much depends.  

Despite the difficulties in this "slackwater" navigation, steamboats made money for their owners. For example, when the uninsured Sophia "struck cribbing below the dam, careened half over and immediately caught fire" in 1854, her owner lost no time in building a new boat.  

There were several ways to make a living in this early steamboat culture. Many settlers in Green River country farmed, mined, or sawed lumber. A few preached, practiced medicine, taught school or "kept" store. Often they tried several occupations, for there were no rigid occupational boundaries. However, these versatile frontiersmen knew little outside their immediate domain. For example, when a traveller near Mammoth Cave asked directions to its entrance, he found the local inhabitants had never heard of it.

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31 Fox, "Recollections"; Bowling Green Democrat, Oct. 21, 1871.
32 W. L. Underwood, "Diary," typescript (Kentucky Library).
33 Bowling Green Kentucky Standard, Feb. 18, 1854.
A local historian wrote that "beyond visits to their especial friends, a ride to town on occasion, they were little abroad." \(^{34}\)

Perhaps no Kentucky town worked harder to overcome its isolation than Bowling Green. As soon as boats began plying Green and Barren rivers regularly, the townspeople built a six-story warehouse and constructed a mule-drawn railroad connecting that warehouse with downtown Bowling Green. In 1841 the Green River Gazette enumerated proofs of Bowling Green's progress.

Between the last four or five years...there have been erected between fifty and sixty buildings...several steam saw mills have likewise gone into operation. A railroad from the town to the river has also been nearly completed....The turnpike from Nashville to Louisville, passing through this place, is also in a considerable state of forwardness. \(^{35}\)

Meanwhile, lower Green River inhabitants were discovering its potential mineral wealth. In the 1820's Aylette H. Buckner (General Simon B. Buckner's father) constructed an iron furnace in Hart County. Seeking a better timber supply, he moved to Muhlenburg County in 1837. The mining company he helped to organize failed because it was eighteen miles from the Green River barges that hauled the pig iron to market. Besides the frequent impassibility of the roads, the overland freight costs were prohibitive.

Word of Green River iron ore reached Scotland, and in 1855 a Scotsman, Robert S. C. A. Alexander, built the famous Airdrie furnace near Paradise, Kentucky. He avoided Buckner's mistake and

\(^{34}\) Gideon Burton, Reminiscences of Gideon Burton (Cincinnati, 1895), 30; J. H. Battle, County of Todd, Kentucky (Chicago, 1884), 60.

built his furnace only fifty yards from Green River. But, despite investing over $350,000 and importing experienced Scotch iron-workers, Alexander also failed. After three or four unsuccessful attempts to produce Green River iron by Scotch methods, he closed the mine.36

Coal, too, was mined as early as 1830 at a Mud River mine in Muhlenburg County. Like the iron mines, however, the first coal mines opened and closed a number of times without making a profit.37

No frontier occupation was so wide-spread in Green River country as farming. The first settlers preferred the hilly or "knobby" regions "where timber and water united to furnish the simple demands of pioneer existence." The "Barrens," with scarcely a tree, was passed by until the 1800 Kentucky legislature granted 400 acres of it to every actual settler. A traveller, impressed with the "healthiness of the climate, the fine range for cattle, the facilities for raising swine, the culture of tobacco, and the growth and preservation of timber," thought the area was misnamed "barren."38

Heavily wooded areas in lower Green River country were slower to develop. A pessimistic observer wrote in 1824 that "most of the villages throughout...Green River country are very much upon the decline, and will no doubt cease to exist." Rochester, for example, was founded in 1820 at a natural rock dam that the Indians called

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36 Arndt M. Stickles, Simon Bolivar Buckner (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1940), 7; Rothert, Muhlenburg County, 178, 185, 227.

37 Rothert, Muhlenburg County, 291-293.

38 Battle, Todd County, 25; Robert Davidson, An Excursion to the Mammoth Cave and the Barrens of Kentucky (Philadelphia, 1840), 33.
"Big Falls." It was here, near the confluence of the Mud and Green rivers, that Kentucky built Green River Lock and Dam No. 3. But by 1870 Rochester's population had only grown to 228.\(^{39}\)

Bowling Green during the same time attracted 4,574 inhabitants. Clearly, it was the "metropolis" of Green River country, the largest town in the area. Consequently it was chosen as "head" of Green and Barren River navigation, for "you couldn't have head of navigation off in the wilderness."\(^{40}\)

Evansville, Indiana, was Green River's natural terminus, for it was the nearest Ohio River city downstream from its mouth. The first Evansville settler was a Kentuckian, Colonel Hugh McGary, who built there in 1812. Soon the log rafts floating out of Green River helped make the city a world-renowned hardwood center. Evansville citizens might deride Green River country as a "land of saw-logs, hoop-poles and uncultured wood cutters," but they jealously guarded their economic ties with the area.\(^{41}\) In 1858 the Evansville Journal insisted that the local board of trade establish a mail route between Evansville and Bowling Green. The newspaper was anxious that Bowling Green look to Evansville rather than Louisville for its commercial connections, and it worried that a

\(^{39}\) W. N. Blaney, Excursion Thru the United States and Canada (London, 1824), 128; Central City Messenger, Mar. 15, 1962; Lewis Collins and Richard H. Collins, History of Kentucky (Frankfort, 1966; originally published 1874), II, 265.

\(^{40}\) Collins and Collins, History of Kentucky, II, 265; Giles, Run Me a River, 32.

\(^{41}\) Greene, Green River Country, 128.
large portion of Green River goods were carted across land rather than down Green River to Evansville. 

One deterrent to economic development in frontier Green River country was the prevalence of typhoid and cholera. A study of Henderson, Kentucky, showed that "industrial activity went on at a rapid pace until October, 1832, when Asiatic cholera first visited.... So serious was the epidemic that it produced a complete business stagnation." Cholera hit Russellville in 1835, killing over one hundred. In 1852, twenty years after the first outbreak, Elizabeth Underwood wrote that cholera was still present in Bowling Green, and she was trying to prevent the children's eating green apples and mulberries. Having no faith in the medical profession, she wrote her husband that

I have not had a doctor in the house since you left; and as I "hate" the sight of the fraternity so much, I will not send for one unless it is very necessary....had much rather use herb teas and such simples, than resort to their quinine. 

If this was the attitude of the enlightened class, it is obvious that doctors were not readily accepted. Undoubtedly their reputation was hampered by the "quacks" who reportedly outnumbered the physicians a hundred to one. Typical "medication" used by these quacks was wild ipecac tea or may-apple pills. One from

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43Writers' Program of the Works Project Administration, Henderson (Northport, Long Island, 1941), 54; Joseph R. Underwood, Diary, Sept. 6, 1835; Elizabeth Underwood to Joseph R. Underwood, Nov. 22, 1849, June 8, 1852, Joseph R. Underwood Collection.
Bowling Green advertised that he could "cure epileptic fits effectively and almost positively" for fifty dollars.\textsuperscript{44}

Educators were hardly more successful than the medical profession. Like Jesse Stuart's "figures of the earth," Green River folks

raised their own tobacco and they used it; they made their own whiskey and they drank it. They carried firearms and used them in times of danger, while they helped build America. What did they know about the letters of the alphabet?

But though these pioneers were often illiterate, an observer noted that "their true love for their offspring made them wish that their children might be better able to meet the requirements of a civilized community." Neither state nor local funds, however, consistently supported the schools. In Daviess County the pay for teachers was so low that only those "too infirm for active business" could be hired.\textsuperscript{45} Apparently this type was hard to find locally, for a Butler countian advertised in 1820 in a Nashville newspaper: "I wish to employ a teacher for twelve months, one that comes well recommended for his ability and sobriety." In 1831 Spottsville finally succeeded in organizing a school and Major Spotts, for whom the town was named, convinced his niece to teach. The

\textsuperscript{44}Harrison D. Taylor, Ohio County in the Olden Days (Louisville, 1926), 50; Frances Garvin Davenport, Ante-Bellum Kentucky (New York, 1943), 82; Bowling Green Green River Gazette, Aug. 24, 1842.

\textsuperscript{45}Mary Washington Clarke, Jesse Stuart's Kentucky (New York, 1968), 125; Battle, Todd County (Louisville, 1884), 150; /Anonymous/, History of Daviess County (Chicago, 1883), 780.
record stated that "cupid's work broke up the school" for she soon married and the school was closed.\(^{46}\)

Obviously, it was not formal schooling that taught most Green River folks. One alternative was the frontier newspaper, which bombarded Kentucky from 1797 to 1860--full of "politics, statecraft, religious philosophies and dogmas, slavery, art and poetry." These newspapers were, according to historian Richard Wade, the most important unifying element of frontier culture, "a plumb line which touched all levels of society." Many Green River towns, however, could not support one. For example, it was not until 1851 that Todd County had its own newspaper, though its people read Russellville and Hopkinsville papers whenever possible.\(^{47}\)

It appears that those who could read avidly devoured newspapers, even when the news was stale. In 1824, for example, a traveller was delighted to find some Eastern newspapers in the Bowling Green tavern where he spent the night.\(^{48}\) Green River country had several newspapers before the first steamboat arrived in 1828, though most were short-lived. The Mirror, published in Russellville in 1806, was probably the first. Glasgow had three early ones--the Patriot, the Chronicle and the Green River Telegraph.

\(^{46}\) Bennett F. Bratcher, History of Butler County, pamphlet printed for Butler County Sesqui-Centennial, 1960; McDaniel, "Spottsville."

\(^{47}\) Davenport, Ante-Bellum Kentucky, xvi; Battle, Todd County, 86; Blaney, Excursion, 262; Richard C. Wade, The Urban Frontier (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1959), 130.

\(^{48}\) Blaney, Excursion, 262.
Henderson published the *Columbia*. Bowling Green's first newspaper was the *Backwoodsman*, begun in 1818. Another early one was the *Spirit of the Times*, published in 1827. After the steamboat era began, the newspapers, like towns, became more numerous and stable.

Kentucky literature mirrored the extreme individualism of the frontier. Consequently the "alligator-horse," the outlaw and Daniel Boone appealed to writers. Though no Mark Twain captured frontier Green River country, James Weir of Greenville and Owensboro was the first Kentuckian to write historical novels set in Kentucky. His father, also James Weir, was a South Carolinian who entered Green River country as a young surveyor and became Greenville's first merchant and banker. Rothert, in his well-documented *History of Muhlenburg County*, wrote that "in the course of time he conducted mercantile houses in Henderson, Hopkinsville, Morganfield, Madisonville and Russellville." Clearly business came first with the elder James Weir, but his affluence made it possible for his son to obtain degrees from Centre College and Transylvania University. Then the younger James Weir settled in Owensboro and became a prominent member of the bar. In 1850 he published his first novel, *Lonz Powers: or The Regulators*, based on the operations of a western Kentucky group banded together to stop outlawry.

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Another informal method of education was travel, at least for those who could afford it. Mark Twain called his river trips a "brief, sharp schooling," and believed that the average shore employment required forty years "to equip a man with this sort of an education."52

Many Kentuckians travelled by stagecoach, and an Emigrants and Travellers Guide to the West stated that "there is scarcely any important place in the state which cannot be reached by stage."53 But stagecoaches, like early steamboats, left much to be desired. For example, the best drivers could travel only eight miles per hour, and it was necessary to make frequent rest stops. A favorite resting place was Bell's Tavern, at the "Three Forks," later called Glasgow Junction and then Park City. It was advantageously located where the Louisville, Lexington and Nashville roads met. Old Jimmy Bell, keeper of the tavern, was "always in a good humor and ready to take a drink with any of his guests." A travelling salesman called his establishment the best "eating house" on the road between Louisville and Nashville, especially noted for its "venison, short biscuit, coffee and such luxuries." Bell's guests undoubtedly appreciated his hospitality, for many had left Louisville at five in the morning, travelled ninety miles, and arrived at Bell's at nine that night.54

52Twain, Life on the Mississippi, 163.
54Coleman, Stagecoach Days, 190; Burton, Reminiscences, 31.
Not all Green River taverns could match Jimmy Bell's, however. One traveller near Madisonville reported that he spent a night "wishing that I had such a redoubtable cat as Whittington's, for these troublesome rats, by scampering about the cabin and jumping upon the bed, kept me awake several hours." Still, the record suggests that frontier travel was an aesthetically satisfying experience, whether by stagecoach, steamboat or canal boat. Lewis Mumford called this the "wood-and-water" stage in American history. Writing of the "brown decades" that followed, he said: "Compare the actual physical landscape that surrounded the canal and the railroad: one is an elysium and the other is an inferno."55

After the railroads had all but destroyed this "wood-and-water" stage, an old timer reminisced: "There was a pleasure about a steamboat trip that can never be gotten out of a journey by rail....There is no monotony on a steamboat. There is always diversion."56 A Warren countian's diary glowingly described a steamboat trip from Bowling Green to New Orleans. Not only had the round trip been shortened from six months to twenty days, but he found it offered "all the comforts of a tavern." Audubon failed to share the diarist's enthusiasm. In 1842 he described the steamer

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56 Will T. Carpenter, "Old Steamboat Reminiscences," Waterways Journal, XV (July 5, 1902), in William Tippitt Collection (Hernando, Mississippi). A microfilm copy of the collection is available in the Kentucky Library.
Gallant, which he took at Louisville, as "the filthiest of all rat-traps I ever travelled in." 57

Although uncertain transportation facilities made social contacts difficult, the frontier displayed a natural sociability. Mrs. Trollope, accustomed to formal modes of entertainment, wrote: "I never saw any people who appeared to live so much without amusement....They have no concerts. They have no dinner parties." Though she failed to recognize the simpler amusements as such, she was perceptive enough to realize that the church was more a social event than the theater. 58

Protestant ministers were suspicious of many ordinary amusements, and athletic contests, horse-racing, gambling and the theater were the "targets of anguished jeremiads." But, just as the fun-loving Benjamin Franklin predicted in 1763, Americans thought of the "embellishments" of life as soon as "the first cares of the necessaries are over." 59

The Short brothers illustrated this propensity about 1850 in Green River country. Their story began with a piano, one of the first in Muhlenburg County. Its owner was a New York woman who married a wealthy Greenville "tobaccoinist," Ty Mathis. The new Mrs. Mathis brought her piano to Greenville and offered to

58 Trollope, Domestic Manners, 74.
teach her new friends to dance the cotillion. George and Jonathon Short shocked the Methodist Church when they agreed to try it. Jonathon's daughter recalled the repercussions.

The next day this was told all over the town, and it started a great scandal... At that time the Methodists disapproved of dancing. These two gentlemen were brought up before the Board of Stewards. They were asked all about the dance, and to demonstrate how it was done. They were asked if they crossed their feet. Mr. George Short said he didn't, but Mr. Jonathon Short said he did. The board decided that the dance wasn't a sin if they didn't cross their feet, so Mr. Jonathon Short was turned out of the church, and later joined the Presbyterian Church.60

Both Mrs. Trollope and Mark Twain observed that frontiersmen consumed large quantities of whiskey. A local tavern's price list in 1813 indicated the price was high compared to food and lodging.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wines, ½ pint</td>
<td>$25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiskey, ½ pint</td>
<td>$12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodging per night</td>
<td>$8 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>$25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Amos Kendall, who became Andrew Jackson's Postmaster General, wrote in 1822 that "the way to be popular in Kentucky...was to drink whiskey and talk loud with the fullest confidence and you will hardly fail of being called a clever fellow." A riverman who was very clever by this criterion was Red Kenniston, who frequented Evansville's "rum holes."

On Water Street where they sold what they called "squirrel" or fighting whiskey, brawls were numerous.... Red Kenniston was a white Irishman as big as John L. 61

60 Martha Beth Shelton, "Old Buildings of Greenville, Kentucky," typescript of an interview with Mrs. Samuel Short Landes in 1932, Gayle Carver Collection (Bowling Green). Mr. Carver noted that George Short was very wealthy and the Methodists were not anxious to lose him.

61 Maurice Gordon, "History of Hopkins County," typescript, 329 (Kentucky Library).
Sullivan...and always with a chip on his shoulder after he had imbibed enough squirrel whiskey to stir his blood. He was the only man of his time that required a dray to carry him to the lock-up.62

A lower Green River historian observed that "in those days of general indulgence in alcoholic liquors it was a rare community that took its stand for temperance." Spottsville did so, however, on May 12, 1848, when the Sons of Temperance organized a local unit there. A contemporary reported that the whole town joined except for three drunks.63

A Todd countian recalled whiskey's effect at County Court days.

County Court days were the frequent occasions for fatal shooting matches....Here the combination of pseudo-chivalry, intolerance and popular ignorance, like powder, with the ingredients brought together in proper proportions, it needed but the spark which whiskey supplied to bring about a fatal explosion.64

This came to be known as settling differences "Kentucky style"--that is, "shoot your insulter at first sight." Audubon described a favorite Green River sport that sharpened local shooting skills.

The snuffing of a candle with a ball, I first had an opportunity of seeing near the banks of Green River, not far from a large pigeon-roost, to which I had previously made a visit. I heard many reports of guns during the early part of a dark night, and knowing them to be those of rifles, I went towards the spot to ascertain the cause. On reaching the place, I was welcomed by a dozen of tall, stout men, who told me they were exercising for the purpose of enabling them to shoot under night at the reflected light from the eyes of a deer or wolf or torch-light....At

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63 McDaniel, "Spottsville."

64 Battle, Todd County, 60.
a distance which rendered it scarcely distinguishable, stood a burning candle, as if intended for an offering to the goddess of night, but which in reality was only fifty yards from the spot on which we all stood. One man was within a few yards of it, to watch the effects of the shots, as well as to light the candle should it chance to go out, or to replace it should the shot cut it across. Each marksman shot in his turn. Some never hit either the snuff or the candle, and were congratulated with a loud laugh; while others actually snuffed the candle without putting it out and were recompensed for their dexterity by numerous hurrahs.  

Another frontier amusement was wearing fine clothes. Mrs. Trollope noticed a "disproportionate expense of their dress to all other expenses," though she saw little reason for it. She wrote, "Were it not for the churches, indeed, I think there would be a general bonfire of best bonnets, for I never could discover any other use for them." Some Green River folks spent much time putting together a wardrobe, but, as in other remote sections, their clothing was often confined to homespun garments. A traveller between Greenville and Morgantown marvelled at the work involved.

I stopped at a large farm-house belonging to a Mr. Rhoades. Mrs. Rhoades was a perfect model of a farmer's wife. Besides the labour of cooking, cleaning the house, &c. the American farmer's wife makes every article of clothing for her whole family. The men wear a sort of coarse cloth made of cotton and wool. The cotton is grown upon the farm, is picked, spun, weaved, dyed with the indigo that is also grown on the farm, cut up, and made into clothes by the female part of the family. The wool of their own sheep furnishes materials for the mixed cloth, stockings, &c. All the linen for shirts, sheets, and towels, is also made at home from their own flax.

I was quite surprised to see the activity and industry of my hostess. Directly after breakfast, which was on the table every morning at sunrise, she and her two daughters commenced their daily occupations of spinning, &c. One of

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65 Calhoon Democrat, May 24, 1888; Audubon, Delineations, 62.

66 Trollope, Domestic Manners, 74.
the girls was engaged in making an entirely new suit of clothes for her father and eldest brother, from some of the cloth that had been just finished. The other, with her mother, was busily employed in spinning, as a black servant girl was in weaving. At the close of the day, after supper, the whole party sat round the fire employed in picking the seeds from the raw cotton.67

The river itself provided entertainment, though sometimes it was a tragic variety. Boat stores blew their bugles, announcing a chance to secure spices, shoes, cutlery, or medicine. Farmers socialized as they awaited boats to haul their market-ready livestock; young boys dreamed about becoming rivermen. All who were able thought it "worth a rush down the hills for a nearer view" whenever mail boats, log rafts or steam packets floated by. The steamboat also brought the first large-scale destruction of human life, for "there had been nothing so dangerous before in American history." A Spottsville family, which included eight children, went down with the Buck Snatcher when it overturned. Only three children escaped drowning.68

Religion played a vital role in this early steamboat culture, though it was as disorganized and scattered as the circuit rider's trips. The pioneers, however, desperately sought a religious outlet, a comfort for their loneliness, frustrations, and sorrows. The Great Revival movement was perhaps the most original and influential cultural aspect to come out of Green River country. Its influence continued throughout the entire steamboat era.

67 Blaney, Excursion, 258-259.

68 Twain, Life on the Mississippi, 36; Virginia S. Eifert, Of Men and Rivers (New York, 1966), 174; McDaniel, "Spottsville."
A Bowling Green Episcopalian called revivalism nothing but
"animal excitement," and scoffed at the new way of "getting
religion." But the frontier was generally anxious to "get" it any
way it could. Often several denominations called their scattered
congregations together at joint camp meetings. Gaspar River, a
Barren River tributary, was the scene of the camp meeting that
introduced revivalism in the area. A Presbyterian, James McGready,
was the immediate instigator, but Green River inhabitants—regardless
of denomination, age, or color—came prepared to spend a week
worshipping and socializing.

Probably no one expected that this meeting would "set the
whole land in a flame of religious ardour." An eye witness
described the day the "spirit came forth" in 1800.

On Friday morning, at an early hour, the people began to
assemble in large numbers from every quarter.... The rising
ground to the west and south of the meetinghouse was
literally lined with covered wagons and other appendages—
each one furnished with provisions and accomodations
suitable to make them comfortable on the ground during the
solemnity.... On Monday, the last and great day of the
feast, the public cry and proclamation of the spirit came
forth... inquirers began to fall prostate on all sides and
their cries became piercing and incessant—Heavy groans
were heard, and trembling throughout the House. And again,
in a little time, cries of penitence and confessedual
prayer sounded through the assembly—Toward the approach
of night the floor of the meetinghouse was literally
covered with prostate bodies of penitents.

This took place at "Rogue's Harbor" in Logan County, a haven for
counterfeiterers, robbers and murderers. Religious fervor swept over

69 Elizabeth Underwood to Joseph R. Underwood, Aug. 19, 1850, 
Joseph R. Underwood Collection.

70 Battle, Todd County, 86.

71 Shaker Record Book, "Book A" (Kentucky Library).
this unlikely field, spreading so rapidly that the movement has been called the Second Awakening. This "muscular religion" prepared the way for political as well as social democracy. Missionaries in frontier areas found "strongly democratic" trends in evangelical congregations. 72

Though the Presbyterians initiated the movement, the Baptists and Methodists were the real beneficiaries. The Baptists' democratic doctrine appealed to those seeking emotional experience for all, not just the Calvinist "elect." The Methodists' popular hymnody was lively and simple enough to be "lined out" by the preacher. Two new denominations were organized in the Kentucky-Tennessee area--the Christians and the Cumberland Presbyterians--as a result of the religious upheavals.

Five years later the communal-minded Shakers introduced their faith within a few miles of the Logan County revivals. This pious, celibate group, dancing in their distinctive shaking movements as they sang, saw no reason for avoiding the gay and lively camp meeting tunes. One of their early hymns warned the entrenched denominations that the Shakers

\[
\text{Will take the choicest of their songs,} \\
\text{Which to the Church of God belongs} \\
\text{And recompense them for their wrongs} \\
\text{In singing their destruction.} 73
\]

Using Gaspar River as a base, the Shakers in 1809 introduced a missionary program along Green River. They were

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especially well received in Madisonville, where they accepted an
invitation to preach in the Hopkins County courthouse. A traveller
passed "Shakertown," as their South Union home was dubbed, and
observed:

Like all their establishments it was neat, orderly, and
quiet....The Shaker community keeps up its number by
reinforcements of adults disgusted with the world, or
driven by poverty to seek a friendly asylum; and by poor
children and orphans.\textsuperscript{74}

Despite all this religious interest, Green River preachers
encountered at least a measure of lukewarm response. A Presbyterian
minister, Isaac Bard, wrote in his diary:

I preached on Passover and Lord's Supper....Some young men staid /sic/ out in the church yard and talked. I had to
reproach and talk plainly of such bad conduct. Brother
Baxter talked of cutting the tree down they sat under.

When Bard rode forty miles to "preach" a funeral, he received a
"present" of ten dollars. Overjoyed, he wrote that "my expenses,
though we live frugal and economical, have increased my debt for
several years." Another minister, a Muhlenburg Presbyterian, was
promised a yearly salary of thirty-nine dollars, a promise "which fell short for several years."\textsuperscript{75}

Though Negroes sat in separate sections of the church
buildings, church membership was not racially segregated in this
erly culture. In 1831, for example, the Bowling Green Methodist
Church had ninety-six white members and thirty-three Negroes. As

\textsuperscript{74}Julia Neal, By Their Fruits (Chapel Hill, 1947), 37;
Davidson, Excursion, 27.

\textsuperscript{75}Rothert, Muhlenburg County, 199-200; "Mt. Zion Presbyterian Church Observes 150th Anniversary," Central City Times-Argus-
late as 1850 a Presbyterian church reported that they "received into the church... the servants of John Baxter." 76

The Shakers began freeing their slaves in 1819 and by 1830 a somewhat skeptical journalist wrote that "all have been freed. So we may look for a stampede." It was also reported that one former slave named Sampson was so thrilled by his first steamboat ride that he left the Shakers to take a river job. When asked about leaving his religion, Sampson reportedly answered, "Talk to me about Eternal Life! Why Jesus Christ never saw a steamboat." 77

The 1850 census showed that the percentage of Negroes in Green River country ranged from nearly forty per cent in Henderson County to only ten per cent in Butler County. Warren County, approximately thirty per cent Negro, 78 had a problem in preventing the slaves from testing freedom's possibilities. Local newspapers abounded with pictures of a runaway Negro's silhouette beside a generous reward for his capture. One such notice in 1854 carefully described an elusive slave named "Harry."

Runaway from the subscriber on Monday night the 23rd a Negro man named Harry, about 23 years old, dark complexion, near six feet high, weighs 185 pounds, bashful when talking; had on when he left a suit of brown jeans and carried off extra clothing... he has heretofore attempted to escape from servitude. He is well acquainted about Bowling Green, and it is probable he may be lurking thereabouts--A liberal reward will be given for his apprehension and delivery to me. 79


77 Shaker Record Book, "Record A."

78 Seventh Census of the United States: 1850 (Washington, 1853), 611-612.

79 Bowling Green Kentucky Standard, Feb. 18, 1854.
Few slaves actually became rivermen because their masters feared they would escape "up the river." Instead, they helped produce the bulk goods that made river trade profitable. And conversely, the steamboats, carrying tobacco, corn and hogs to the South were slavery's "lifeline." Without this market it could not exist profitably. It was confined to the larger, more productive farms, for in poorer sections the slaveholders had "the alternative of starvation of the master or the removal of the slave."

The Negro unconsciously influenced all slaveholding cultures, including Green River country's. Scattered throughout the area, the black man knew no separate cultural heritage. His civilization was necessarily that of the white man. He displayed a creative talent, however, especially in music, which strangely altered the white man's culture. In *Tambo and Bones*, Carl Wittke wrote:

Without Negro slavery, the United States would have been deprived of perhaps the only, and certainly the most considerable body of song sprung from the soil, which properly can be called American folksong. And without the large Negro population of the southern states, the only distinctively American contribution to the theatre--the Negro minstrel show--would have been equally impossible.

Green River country, following the national craze, found the minstrel highly entertaining. For decades its citizens clamored for this humorous exaggeration of the Negro they knew intimately.

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80 Thomas D. Clark, *The Kentucky* (New York, 1942), 63.
81 Battle, Todd County, 58.
In 1828 Thomas Dartmouth Rice copied Jim Crow, an old Louisville Negro, when he sang and danced his "Jump Jim Crow." Dan Emmett, famous for his song, "Dixie," borrowed portions of Negro songs for this chorus of "De Boatman's Dance," published in 1842:

De boatman is a thrifty man,
Dars none can do as de boatman can;
I neber see a putty gal in my life
But dat she was a boatman's wife.

Finally, in 1843, the minstrel show was born when four grotesque figures in blackface appeared at the Bowery Amphitheater in New York City. The audience loved the Negro dialect, songs and dances, though little of it was actually Negro-inspired. Green River showboats rarely missed an opportunity to use at least one act borrowed from a travelling minstrel show.

Stephen Collins Foster, one of America's greatest popular song writers, was determined to use the minstrel stage to forward his career. He wrote to the famous Christy Minstrels' leader, "I wish to unite with you in every effort to encourage a taste for this style of music so cried down by operamongers." His relationship to minstrelsy remained marginal, but his contribution to Kentucky's musical tradition was tremendous. A Pennsylvanian, Foster knew little of the South except for a steamboat trip to New Orleans and a Kentucky visit with his relative, John Rowan.

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84 Quoted in Chase, America's Music, 292.
near Bardstown, on the edge of Green River country. Both trips were in 1852, and that summer he wrote "My Old Kentucky Home."

The first draft was called "Poor Uncle Tom, Good Night," apparently echoing Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin, published earlier that year. Later, Foster dropped the dialect, changed its name, and undoubtedly gave his song wider appeal. Kentucky adopted it as its state song, and Rowan's home, built as "Federal Hill," eventually became "My Old Kentucky Home."\(^85\)

Thomas Clark concluded in his *Pills, Petticoats and Plows* that much of the southern musical taste was "robust." The boatmen, like the pioneers generally, were very fond of music and the dance, particularly when accompanied by the fiddle. An observer wrote:

> The boatmen, as a class were masters of the fiddle, and the music heard through the distance was more sweet and animating than any I have heard since. When the boats stopped for the night at or near a settlement, a dance was got up, if possible, which all the boatmen would attend, leaving the cook to watch the boat.\(^86\)

Though informal music was the favorite in this "robust" culture, the travelling professional also caused quite a stir. Jenny Lind, touring the United States, arrived in Nashville, Tennessee in 1851. The Nashville Gazette reported: "We learn by telegraph that Jenny Lind and suite passed by Eddyville yesterday in the steamer West Newton." After two concerts she left by overland stage for Mammoth Cave, giving Green River country an

\(^85\)Frances Richards, "John Rowan" (MA thesis, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, 1930), 116-117; Chase, America's Music, 294.

\(^86\)Thomas D. Clark, *Pills, Petticoats and Plows* (Indianapolis, 1944), 298; Clark, *The Kentucky*, 65-66.
unforgettable thrill. John Buntin, according to local tradition, did not know Jenny when her stagecoach stopped at his farm in southern Simpson County. But after the party enjoyed his spring water, Jenny Lind repaid Buntin with a song. 87

At Bowling Green, Elizabeth Underwood planned a trip to Mammoth Cave to hear Miss Lind. She changed her mind, however, after reading the "ballyhoo" put forth by Miss Lind's promoter, Phineas T. Barnum. "I have very much lost the disposition I had at first to attend her concerts," she wrote. "I have become sickened and disgusted with so much overdone puffing in the newspapers." 88 Her husband, Senator Joseph Underwood, was in Washington, D.C., when he wrote Elizabeth that he did not want his daughters to idolize a "mere singing girl." Instead, he thought they should visit Mammoth Cave later, when they could "meet the refined and intelligent of the country." 89

Frontier audiences saw a surprising amount of Shakespeare. For some reason the Immortal Bard helped compensate for the stage's supposed immorality. Where there was a vocal church element, showboats could secure a license only if they promised to play Catherine and Petruccio, a calm Taming of the Shrew, or a frontier adaptation of Hamlet with Ophelia as the principal character. 90

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87 Louise Davis, "When Jenny Lind Sang," Nashville Tennessean, Mar. 25, 1951. The Simpson County incident has been related by local residents to the author.


89 Underwood to Elizabeth Underwood, Feb. 22, 1851, Joseph R. Underwood Collection.

90 Frank Donovan, River Boats of America (New York, 1966), 246.
Green River country inhabitants along the Ohio River could see the great Floating Palace and its "magnificent" circus. Henderson, Kentucky, citizens attended this 3400-seat extravaganza on July 6, 1855. Three years later, the Unicorn introduced the steam calliope, pronounced "cal-lee-ope" in Green River country. Smaller showboats, like William Chapman's, occasionally "bushwhacked and cordelled their way up the narrow and picturesque Green River."91

Just prior to the Civil War, however, the showboat suffered serious deterioration, and "putting on a show" became the last resort of the river's incompetents. Surely Green River country, thought to be inhabited by gullible backwoodsmen, received this type. The medicine boats were especially pernicious. Such a boat gave a play featuring a woman in search of health.

The villain led her obviously away from the real cure, until at last the hero rescued her and gave her the magic dose—and then the lecturer offered the same concoction at fifty cents the bottle....Another boat sold a lotion guaranteed to turn colored people white.92

The 1850's also produced one of the first American dramas accepted by showboat audiences—a dramatic version of Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. The frontier, like the French art critic Diderot, demanded "not art for art's sake but for morality's sake." And slavery had become a moral issue. The New York Herald warned that the play was calculated, more than any other expedient of agitation to poison the minds of our youth with the pestilent

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91 Edmond L. Starling, History of Henderson County, Kentucky (Henderson, Kentucky, 1887), 306; Phillip Graham, Showboats: The History of an American Institution (Austin, Texas, 1952), 197.

92 Graham, Showboats, 26-27.
principles of abolition... The thing is in bad taste... and is calculated, if persisted in, to become a firebrand of the most dangerous character to the peace of the whole country.

This prophecy was realized in 1861 when the Civil War shattered Green River peace. Its early steamboat culture fell victim to this war, and its uninhibited, enthusiastic naivete faded. Physically, the "wood-and-water" stage passed, and Green River country's natural beauty suffered. But, on the positive side, the war's technology helped destroy the area's isolation and the outlawry that accompanied it.

This early culture had only one criterion for success—survival. Thus, as long as a man survived, he could try anything, and often did. Because Green River country produced this self-reliant type, the foundations were laid for a diversified economy. The farmer, log-cutter and steamboatman established a profitable river market. Crude foundations were laid for banking, storekeeping, public health, schools and churches. Four years of war failed to obliterate these beginnings.

Gradually a new culture grew, still river-oriented, but no longer suitable for "alligator-horses." However, Green River country remembered its traditions and made them a usable past. They remembered whenever they talked of "long hunters" or "old-time religion." They remembered when they read about the Harpes or Lonz Powers, when they saw a homespun dress or a minstrel

show. And they could not forget as long as emotion entered voices that sang, "Then my old Kentucky home, good night."
CHAPTER III

A WAR DIVIDES GREEN RIVER COUNTRY

Kentucky was not east, west, south or north
But it was the heart of America
Pulsing with a little bit of everything.

A Kentucky-born author, Robert Penn Warren, called the Civil War America's only "felt" history. But he wisely cautioned that "this is not to say that the war is always, and by all men, felt in the same way." How, then, was it felt in Green River country?

Green River itself was a natural divider of warring sections. Western Kentucky, from Owensboro south and west to the Mississippi River, was strongly secessionist. But the area to the north and east of Green River, excluding much of the Bluegrass, was generally Unionist. This middle position nurtured a strangely hybrid culture, a miniature "house divided." A potent dualism developed, characterized by a passion for both individuality and political action; a loyalty to states' rights and the national flag; and a belief that slavery, though unprofitable, was preferable to freeing the Negro. This confusion, reinforced by war's uncertainties, bred a conservatism that idealized the antebellum past. Throwing off the frontier's creative adaptability, Green River country inhabitants

1Stuart, Kentucky Is My Land, 16.
withdrew from the ideological mainstream, cutting off the flow of new ideas. This withdrawal preserved the "alligator-horse's" individuality and fun-loving personality but not his versatility. The war's cultural impact, in the form of static conservatism, was "felt" throughout the latter steamboat era.

Significantly, Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis were born within thirty miles of Green River--Lincoln to the northeast at Hodgenville, and Davis to the southwest at Fairview. Their loyalties were determined largely by the section to which they moved--Lincoln to Indiana and Illinois, and Davis to Mississippi. The loyalties of those who remained in Green River country were not so easily explained. Individual temperaments, life styles and cultural patterns influenced individuals as much as their birthplaces. An intellectual historian, searching for the source of a people's inner life, wrote that

the political life of a nation is only a superficial part of its being; and in order to learn its inner life--the source of its actions--we must penetrate to its very soul by way of its literature, its philosophy, and its art, where the ideas, the passions and the dreams of its people are reflected.  

Local historians preserved more of their "dreams and passions" during the Civil War than in any other period of comparative length. Although the war stifled formal cultural pursuits, Green River folks told stories, wrote letters and poetry and sang war songs. The materials which survive communicate sensitivity, yet retain a sensibility that war did not destroy. It only frayed this

steamboat culture, this "long rope of the river," as Janice Holt Giles called it. 4

Local feelings toward the Negro were equally ambivalent. Kentuckians heard Henry Clay espouse gradual emancipation and colonization, but their constitution in 1850 protected slavery as property. A Todd County Unionist observed that the popular sympathy was strongly with the radical measures adopted in certain communities to drive out the friends of emancipation from the State, and with the legislative efforts to intrench "the "domestic institution." But coexisting was an overwhelming loyalty to the Union. 5

A result of the ruinous internal division was the contemporary Kentucky writers' sentiments. Twenty novels written during the war were pro-Confederate, twenty were Unionist and eight were neutral. Wherever slavery flourished in Green River country, it was dependent on the Southern market. Evansville, Indiana, though not a slaveholding city, shared this dependence and consequently felt a measure of the conflict. On the eve of war Evansville's wharf was lined with hundreds of hogsheads of tobacco brought in from various points in Kentucky, and from some of the counties above Evansville, hundreds of coops of live poultry waiting to be shipped south, and flour, furniture and thousands of parcels of groceries and dry goods. 6

Evansville was also one of the nation's leading corn markets. An observer recalled in 1867 that "the bulk of the corn from the

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4 W. J. Cash, The Mind of the South (Garden City, New York, 1941), 57; Giles, Run Me a River, 210.

5 Thompson and Thompson, The Kentucky Novel, 6.

6 Frank M. Gilbert, History of the City of Evansville and Vanderburg County, Indiana (Chicago, 1910), 180.
valleys of White, lower Wabash, and Green rivers was shipped...to the southern markets." The southern states' secession threatened this trade. Evansville's Daily Journal published an editorial entitled "The Mississippi Cannot Be Closed." It promised there would be "thunder of indignation" and "lightning of wrath" if any interruption of Evansville's river commerce occurred. It also warned that

if an attempt be made to interfere with the free navigation of the Mississippi, the boatmen, merchants, mechanics, miners, manufacturers, farmers, everybody interested in the navigation of the great river, without distinction of party, will aid in removing the obstruction.

Kentuckians, too, were cognizant of the economic advantages of uninterrupted river trade. Governor Beriah Magoffin, primarily concerned with Southern markets (despite his avowed neutrality), suggested a constitutional amendment "to guarantee free navigation of the Mississippi River forever." The Unionist Louisville Journal expressed a concern for Northern river markets:

If we want to pay an export duty on everything we send across the Ohio and upon everything we bring across it, we have only to precipitate ourselves into the Cotton States Confederacy.

Though economics played a leading role in Civil War loyalties, the slavery question persistently complicated them. Lincoln called it the "root of the rebellion, or at least its sine qua non." But

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8 E. Merton Coulter, The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1926), 10, 85.

even the slaveholders were far from unanimous in their wartime sympathies. They did agree on one thing, however—that emancipation was not the answer to the Negro question. A Kentucky poet in 1861 justified slavery on traditional and religious grounds.

The spirits of our gallant sires would rise could they but think One of their brave descendants would from his duty shrink... No—we'll protect our negroes! 'twould be a deep disgrace To offer as a sacrifice this faithful, helpless race. The God of freedom would refuse the offering were it made; He gives responsibilities which we cannot evade.10

Slavery's moral implications, as interpreted by the abolitionists, did not worry many Green River inhabitants. Those who supported the Union generally did so for economic and patriotic reasons.

Patriotism was a potent force in antebellum Green River country and military heroes were highly esteemed. A favorite was Charles Fox Wing, a well-known Greenville court clerk. Local folklorists preserved the legend of Wing's heroism during the War of 1812 and he was consistently given the seat of honor at soldiers' reunions. His Fourth of July celebration made a lasting impression on the young writer, James Weir.

Regularly did this old patriot, from my earliest recollection (and it was a great and bright epoch in my boyish days), rear his liberty pole and cap of freedom on every coming Fourth. On the third, let it be sunshine or storm, he would repair to the woods, and there felling the loftiest pole he could find, always eschewing hickory,—for he was a most inveterate Whig,—he would remove it to the public square, and on the morning of the Fourth, bright and early, before the rising of the sun, would he bring out his old banner, with its stripes and stars, and proudly send it up into the heavens....He would again take down his worn and sometimes tattered banner, and folding it up, sacredly lay it away, to do the same honour the coming year.... That old man's gray hairs, and his glad shout, and his deep

10. *War Lyrics and Songs of the South* (London, 1866), 118-119. The poet assumed the pen name "Alethia."
emotion when his banner would sweep out from the flag-staff, and his old eagle unfold her broad wings and flap them joyfully in the wind, will never be forgotten.11

At the time of Wing's death, Confederate troops occupied Bowling Green. The Unionist Louisville Daily Journal eulogized the old patriot.

He had been born under the American flag; he had lived under it and fought under it; and now that he was dying under it, he asked, as his last request on earth, that ere he should be consigned to the grave he might be wrapped in the folds of that worshipped banner—that it might be his shroud in death as it had been his canopy through life.12

Here was romantic reporting, bound to inspire Union sentiment. But the Daily Journal did not report the story's sequel. On the day following Wing's death, Confederate troops passed through Greenville. At their head was Wing's old friend and former Sunday School pupil, General Simon Bolivar Buckner. Otto Rother interviewed Buckner concerning the drama that followed.

The General viewed the remains of his old and fatherly friend, commented on the befitting manner in which his body was wrapped in the Stars and Stripes, and then returned to the troops under his command.13

Other versions of the story indicate its inherent folkloric possibilities. One report stated that Buckner offered to bury Wing with military honors, but was refused, and another had it that Buckner removed the American flag and buried Wing in the Confederate flag.14

12Quoted in Rother, Muhlenburg County, 78.
13Ibid., 78-79.
14Ibid., 79.
Buckner's Chivalry" had Buckner rescuing a pleading Southern
woman, romantic symbol of Confederate purity.

A Southern woman bowed in weeping stood
Amid a crowd, unfeeling, selfish, rude;
The crown of sacred womanhood was gone--
She had been ruined while she stood forlorn,
Crushed is she! Sad to see!....
Then up rose one of noble form and mien
A braver champion is seldom seen--
How true! Hearts he drew!....
With a wave of his hand he hushed the scorn
That cowards dared to point at one forlorn;
So loving was his smile, so brave his eye,
There was not one who would his word defy.
He is strong! woe to wrong!
"Buckner!" Was whispered by the silenced crowd
And many learned their petty scorn to shroud
Before his truth! With thrilling voice he cried--
"This woman is my mother! I'm her pride!
For I'm true! What are you?"15

A contemporary critic credited Kentucky's churches with
winning her Union support.16 It is doubtful whether Green River
country's ministers swayed much opinion, but the Presbyterian
Isaac Bard courageously proposed emancipation. He recorded in
his diary the resistance he met.

They say if Kentucky should emancipate her slaves we
would be ruined. Bob Wickliffe said: "The Darkies are
the best shade I have ever seen." Perhaps some think they
will be ruined if they can not sit in the shade quite so
much. Indeed I think some more sunshine would be better
for health and as a cure for empty corn-cribs and barns as
well as a good cure to ignorant, idle and dissipated youth.17

15 War Lyrics, 195-196.
16 R. L. Stanton, The Church and the Rebellion (New York,
1864), 201.
17 Quoted in Rothert, Muhlenburg County, 199. Robert
Wickliffe was a Muhlenburg County slaveholder who became an
abolitionist just prior to war.
But neither the church, patriotic fervor, nor economic considerations convinced many Green River folks that the Negro should be freed or that the South should not secede. It is paradoxical, then, that when the Confederates occupied Bowling Green, General Albert Sidney Johnston reported "hundreds of ardent friends of the South" but no "concert of action" in southern Green River country. He concluded that Warren was "a Union County."\(^{18}\)

Just as southern Green River country had its Union supporters, the northern portion had its Rebels. In July, 1862, for example, Henderson was controlled by rebel guerrillas. When Union gunboats entered the area one of the captains warned Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Wells: "I regret to state that I find but little Union feeling on the Kentucky shore." He advised Wells that "the interests of government and the safety of steamers...require that light-draft gunboats should be kept moving up and down the river."\(^{19}\)

Because of this dualism, Green River country presented no united front, no disciplined authority. The disillusioned youth were faced with a difficult decision when rival factions sought recruits. A contemporary observed that

\[\text{the chivalrous blood of the Kentuckian bounded through his veins at quicker speed, to think of the promise of}\]


the heroic action on one side or the other. Too hot-blooded to be a cynic, he must act the partisan.\textsuperscript{20}

Many were unwilling to fight, however, and recruiting officers occasionally took drastic measures to obtain recruits. A Kentucky minister reported that he was called to carry a death sentence to three young men condemned to be shot for resisting enlistment. One of them calmly described the Confederates' attempt to kidnap him.

I was living at home with my parents and was at church on the Sabbath when a squad of soldiers surrounded the church and took me, with other boys, by force and put us into the army. I lived in a State which had not seceded from the Union, and therefore I felt I had a right to go back to my home. I made the effort and was captured, and now I am to die.\textsuperscript{21}

A songwriter, employing more subtle tactics to rally Kentucky Confederates, called forth memories of Kentucky's heroic past.

Old Kentuck, whose sons have bled
Where the bravest men have led,
Never known what 'twas to fear
Foemen's threat or gun;
Rally now at Morgan's call;
Nobly live, or if we fall,
Consecrated are we all!
Heroes every one.

Chorus:
Now's the day, and now's the hour
See the cloud of battle lower;
See approach false Lincoln's power
Death, or slavery!\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{20}Battle, Todd County, 79.


\textsuperscript{22}War Lyrics, 199.
Many important families were split—-the Crittendens of Russellville, the Buckners of Greenville, and the Starlings of Hopkinsville, to mention a few. Consequently, the war's cultural climate was an emotionally charged one, typical of romantic eras. Mark Twain concluded that "the tinsel grandeurs of Sir Walter Scott had infested the whole South with romance and so brought on the war." Poets and writers sentimentalized the South. Walt Whitman wrote:

O magnet-South! O glistening perfumed South! my South!
O quick mettle, rich blood impulse and love! good and evil!
O all dear to me!....
A Kentucky corn-field, the tall, graceful long leav'd corn,
flapping bright green, with tassels, with beautiful
ears each well-sheath'd in its husk;....
O longing irrepressible! O I will go back to old Tennessee
and never wander more.23

Undoubtedly, this romantic idealization aided the southern cause, but it fought a battle with reason, which generally meant Union support. The Union victory in 1865 dealt Romanticism a temporary blow, but it was far from fatal. Romanticism glorified Kentucky individualism, and was fed by war's poignant memories. An intellectual historian compared various romantic ages and found that

Each of these ages was the aftermath of a great upheaval of the human mind, a period of acute mental disturbance when the security of an old faith had been broken, a whole hitherto unquestionably accepted way of life rejected.24

23 Bernard DeVoto, Mark Twain's America (Cambridge, 1932), 223; Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass (New York, 1940; originally published 1855), 394-395.

Although Green River country's "security of an old faith" was broken, its people avoided the melancholy emotional state so typical of romantic ages. They continued to enjoy life during the war. For example, they were profuse letter writers, and showed a remarkable propensity for communicating their uninhibited thoughts. They played cards, danced, and read newspapers and magazines. The young and adventurous enjoyed the war itself, and often admitted it. Agatha Strange, a Confederate woman living in Bowling Green, wrote that the winter the Confederates held the city was "one of the happiest of my life, for the intellect and beauty of the South clustered here during their stay." She described a Confederate soldier who apparently enjoyed army life in Bowling Green.

He was 50 years old when here in the army and altho a soldier, was comfortable. I may say moved in splendor. He had 2 tents and they were carpeted and well-furnished with bed, camp chairs, chest, cooking stove, etc.--A Black man to cook and 1 to wait upon him. We would sometimes dine with him whilst his wife was here. When on the march a large covered wagon moved his wardrobe and furniture.... The Major dressed superbly and enjoyed it.25

When Samuel Starling was stationed in Bowling Green in 1862, he wrote that though "the people here have been terribly scourged," they still gave "a good many little dances and frolics." Lewis Buckner was asked how he spent his time in the Union army while stationed in southern Green River country. He answered, "I go to prayer meetings, singing school and to the 'hops.' We have one every week."26


26 Samuel Starling to daughter, Dec. 26, 1862, Nov. 19, 1863, Feb. 26, 1864, Lewis Starling Collection (Kentucky Library).
Another young letterwriter, Tom Speed, was stationed at Russellville. He described a party that interrupted one of his letters.

I can't write a letter for listening to those numskulls /sic/ downstairs. Colonel Hoskins is trying himself singing as loud as he can and picking a banjo almost to pieces....Captain Arthur is now singing "here's your mule! here's your mule!"--to the tune of Maryland. I must go down and join, as I can't stand it any longer.27

James Holloway enjoyed the Russellville rebel girls.

I have discovered I was mistaken in supposing all the rebs of this burg being a mean selfish set. In fact am agreeably disappointed--have made some very nice acquaintances among the she rebs, and find most of them tho differing in sentiment with me, can and do act the lady.28

The war failed to dampen the young ladies' enthusiasm for pretty clothes. Anna Starling asked her sister in Louisville for assistance, since Hopkinsville shops were not receiving new clothes.

I must write you about my bonnet-trimming. I would like black ribbon with an orange edge and orange and black flowers outside and inside both....They have not brought on any of the new cloaks here.29

In another letter, Anna wrote about the excitement of having Union headquarters nearby.

Father has just returned from there where he took supper and says that he is tired nearly to death--that the band after playing 5 or 6 hymns /sic/ were called in the house and they all danced--walse/sic/ and polkaed

27 Tom Speed to Mary Starling Payne, July 28, 1863, Lewis Starling Collection.

28 James Holloway to Anna Starling, Mar. 19, 1863, Lewis Starling Collection.

29 Anna Starling to Mary Starling Payne, Oct. 18, 1865, Lewis Starling Collection.
around until they were perfectly exhausted....We had a most delightful serenade last night--the last tune was "Home Sweet Home!"  

Starling commented that the "bottle was pretty freely circulated among the officers." He advised his daughters to "Keep your spirits up by pouring spirits down," and kept them supplied with the necessary "spirits."  

Many found pleasure in a good horse, but worried when they could not find competent veterinary service. Starling wrote that he would not give "Old Black Horse" for "any horse I have ever seen in the service, even as a riding horse." When Old Black Horse became ill, Starling planned to send him "by steamer" to Henderson for expert attention.  

As the war progressed, it became difficult to find amusement in reading the latest newspapers or magazines. On January 10, 1862 Starling could still get a good supply in Bowling Green and wrote his daughters that "I sent you a Harper Monthly and Leslie yesterday--I send a Journal and Gazette today." But later he "offered a quarter for yesterday's paper" but could not get one.  

Thus, although Green River folks found numerous recreational outlets, they could not escape war's realities. The river unified the area economically and socially, but it carried warring cultural

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30 Anna Starling to Mary Starling Payne, [n.d.], Lewis Starling Collection.  
31 Starling to daughter, Nov. 16, 1862, Mar. 28, 1863, Lewis Starling Collection.  
32 Starling to Anna Starling, Aug. 25, 1863, Lewis Starling Collection.  
33 Starling to Mary Starling Payne, Jan. 10, 1862, Mar. 1863, Lewis Starling Collection.
patterns. Its navigable waters, flowing north and south and through disputed territory, connected the peripheries of dissent. Because it was intermediary, Green River country was shaken badly, not so much by battle as by emotion. A Russellville editor recalled that many believed "the judgment day was at hand." Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, a young Frankfort scholar, felt that the war "set people on a moral and intellectual plane lower than they occupied when they were warring with the savages." 34

The war began formally April 12, 1861 when the Southern forces under General P. G. T. Beauregard attacked Fort Sumter. Though Kentucky was not a Confederate state, Lincoln expressed concern for her loyalty to retiring United States Congressman Warner Underwood of Bowling Green. Lincoln hoped Kentucky would stand by the Union, but "if she would not do that, let her stand still and take no hostile part against it." 35 On May 21 Kentucky officials adopted a neutrality policy designed to keep both Federal and Confederate troops out of the state. 36

Six months later, however, Green River divided the armies of North and South. The first move was made May 28, 1861, when the Federal Government created the Military Department of Kentucky.

34 M. B. Morton, Kentuckians Are Different (Louisville, 1938), 3; Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, The Autobiography of Nathaniel Southgate Shaler (Boston, 1909), 76.


Realizing that it was inconsistent with Kentucky's neutrality, the Federal Government placed native Kentuckians in command.

A group of Owensboro Confederates fired what were probably Green River country's first Civil War shots on June 15, 1861 when they attacked the steamer Sam Orr in dock there. Normal river trade ended in July when the Surveyor of Evansville's port ordered:

Goods or other property attempted to be shipped from this port without a permit will be detained until they can be examined...Permits are required for the shipment of all kinds of property intended for places in Kentucky, on the Ohio River, above this place or all places on Green River.37

The Confederates capitalized on the propaganda potential of this Federal activity. Albert Sidney Johnston, appointed Confederate Commander of Kentucky on September 10, issued a statement explaining that the South invaded Kentucky only in self-defense and to preserve the state's neutrality. This was also Buckner's policy when he led most of the Confederate State Guards to Nashville's Confederate headquarters. On September 12 he issued an inflammatory proclamation calling Kentuckians to rise up and expel the invaders. "We have been lulled," he said, "with the siren song of peace into a lethargy from which it was hoped we would not awake."38

Buckner's troops provided the Confederates an opportunity to make their first offensive move and on September 18, 1861 Johnston sent them to southern Green River country. Buckner reported that he


occupied Bowling Green with 4500 men. It was the center of their defense, stretching from Columbus, Kentucky, on the Mississippi River, to the Cumberland Gap. Basil Duke, second in command in John Hunt Morgan's cavalry, witnessed the opposing armies' positioning.

General Johnston advanced as far as Green river, making it his line of defense for his center, while his right rested on the Cumberland and the rugged ranges of its hills. His line might be said to extend from Columbus through Hopkinsville, Munfordsville (sic) and Somerset to the Virginia border somewhere in the vicinity of Pound Gap. The Federal forces were pushed down, almost simultaneously with General Johnston's advance to Green river, to Elizabethtown, and in a few days afterward to Nolin Creek. Their line may be described as running almost directly from Paducah in the West, to Prestonburg in the East.

One of Buckner's first assignments was to destroy Green River's lock system. In a report to the War Department, he claimed that he destroyed the lock at Rochester. Actually, he only damaged it by boring holes for dynamite in the concrete. Local residents convinced him to fill the lock with logs instead of blowing it up. Lock and Dam No. 1 on Barren River was also blocked with huge boulders. Not until the Confederates evacuated Bowling Green in February of 1862 could Evansville steamboats reach that city.

Bolstered by the Confederate presence, Kentucky's southern advocates made one last concerted effort to prevent the state's Union support. A "Sovereignty Convention" was held October 29, 1861

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39 Buckner to General S. Cooper, OR, Ser. I, Vol. IV, 413.

40 Collins and Collins, History of Kentucky, I, 94; Connelly, Heartland, 65; Basil W. Duke, A History of Morgan's Cavalry (Bloomington, Indiana, 1960; originally published 1867), 64.

at Russellville. Here, in southern Green River country, delegates from sixty-eight Kentucky counties convened and organized a provisional Confederate government.

The session, lasting three days, established Bowling Green as the Confederate capital and drew up a Declaration of Independence. Like Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, it propagandaized local emotions, justified revolutionary action and condemned the existing authorities. Kentucky's traditional states' rights philosophy was upheld in the following condemnation.

Because we now seek to hold our liberties, our property, our homes, and our families, under the protection of the reserved powers of the States, the Federal Government blocked our ports, invaded our soil, and waged war upon our people for the purpose of subjugating us to their will.

Because the Kentucky legislature had "abandoned the position of neutrality...and invited into the State the organized armies of Lincoln" the Confederates felt justified in declaring Kentucky "a free and independent State." The provisional government elected George W. Johnson governor, a legislative council of ten and several minor officers. The seat of government was established at Bowling Green. This government, despite a rather shadowy existence, was recognized by the Confederate States of America. 42

Meanwhile, rebel guerillas openly attacked Federal shipping on Green River. This prompted the Evansville authorities to send the W. V. Gillum and the Lou Eaves with 200 troops aboard to keep order on the river. The Hettie Gilmore transported Union men to

42 Declaration of Independence and Constitution of the Provisional Government of the State of Kentucky (Bowling Green, 1861), 5; Coulter, Civil War, 138.
Spottsville to guard Lock and Dam No. 1, and the Owensboro Home
Guards were dispatched to watch her when she docked there October 2,
1861. The next week Owensboro received two "six-pounders" earmarked
for Green River's Calhoun headquarters established by General Thomas
Crittenden. 43

Meanwhile the Kentucky legislature passed acts suppressing
Confederate activity. 44 Duke believed the real threat to the
Confederate cause, however, was the "unsettled, bewildered
condition of the Kentucky mind." He abhorred Southern Kentucky's
refusal to fight, declaring it a basic cause of Confederate defeat. 45
But J. R. Barbick, a contemporary Kentucky poet, believed it was
a conspiracy, and that Kentucky had been "sold."

A tear for "the dark and bloody ground,"
For the land of hills and caves;
Her Kentons, Boones, and her Shelbys sleep
Where the vandals tread their graves,
A sigh for the loss of her honored fame,
Dear won in the days of old;
Her ship is manned by a foreign crew,
For Kentucky, she is sold. 46

The entrenched Confederates waited for Union attack.
Johnston, as the Federal authorities hoped he would, expected the
main attack at Bowling Green. Union General Don Carlos Buell,
who figured in Green River's history for the next thirty years,

45 Duke, Morgan's Cavalry, 71-75.
46 William Gilmore Sims, ed., War Poetry of the South (New York, 1866), 98.
was ordered to press the Confederate line at Bowling Green. As early as December 20, 1861, Johnston felt his position was threatened. He wrote: "The enemy are crossing Green River at many points in increasing numbers. Their bridges are laid. I cannot meet them with more than 10,000 men between Green River and Nashville."\(^\text{47}\)

Meanwhile, General Ulysses S. Grant planned a surprise attack further west at the twin river forts--Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River and Fort Henry on the Tennessee River.

Buell prophesied correctly that once these river forts were taken and Nashville was in danger, "the resistance of Bowling Green will give way: otherwise the struggle at that point will be protracted and difficult....Besides being strongly fortified, the river in front is a formidable barrier."\(^\text{48}\) But Buell's men, like Johnston, looked for a Bowling Green battle. An officer wrote in his diary on February 12, 1862, that the Union would "overtake the rebels and before the next evening will doubtless fight a battle." Unknown to him, Fort Henry had already fallen on February 6 and the battle for Fort Donelson had begun. When Buell's army finally reached Barren River on February 14 they discovered the Confederates had departed, burning the bridges and much of Bowling Green before they left.\(^\text{49}\) The Confederate line, just as Buell predicted it would, collapsed when Donelson fell February 15. Not only Bowling Green,


\(^{49}\) John Beatty, Memoirs of a Volunteer, 1861-1863 (New York, 1946), 83-84; Collins and Collins, History of Kentucky, I, 100; Stickles, Buckner, 120.
but Nashville, too, soon fell. The battle virtually cleared Kentucky soil of Confederate forces and was of tremendous strategic value for the Union cause.  

Green River, however, was not secure from Confederate attack. A U.S. naval commander wrote the following dispatch from the mouth of Green River:

I have stopped all steamers not in the Government employ from passing up Green River. My reason for doing this was, first, to prevent the possibility of guerrillas getting supplies in that direction; and second, because unless I have a boat there to watch the river all the time surveyors of ports will pass contraband of war. They do not seem to discriminate between articles contraband and other merchandise. The mail I have also stopped, as I find that our own people need watching as well as guerrillas.  

Little formal warfare excited Green River country after Bowling Green's evacuation. In September, 1862, just one year after Buckner's entry, General Braxton Bragg led his well-equipped Confederate troops toward Bowling Green. He did not stop there, however, for his destination was Louisville. A South Union Shaker journalist wrote on September 15, 1862:

We learn that General Bragg with 30 or 40,000 Rebels have entered this State, made their way to Cave City, cut off mail communications North—they will doubtless destroy the Railroad bridge again over Green River near Munfordsville /sic/.

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50 H. Allen Gosnell, Guns on the Western Waters (Baton Rouge, 1949), 69.

By mid-September Bragg was "thundering at the gates of Munfordville," and after a battle at Green River, his army burned the L & N Railroad bridge.

Moving on to Frankfort, the Confederates gave the Kentucky rebels a thrill when they flew the Southern flag from the State House dome. A songwriter commemorated the occasion.

Joy, my Kentucky! thy night turns to morning,
Eager thou risest at Liberty's dawning;...
We thought that the South had deserted our State,
So callous she seemed to our desolate fate;
But since she has sent us such heroes as these
To give her free flag to Kentucky's fond breeze
Those banished by tyrants no longer need roam,
The flag of the South is on our State House dome.

Beating Bragg to Louisville, Buell finally engaged him at the bloody battle of Perryville on October 8, 1962. It was the South's last major invasion of Kentucky. From late 1862 to the end of the war, Green River country "felt" the war as an extended occupation. Starling, a Union officer stationed at Bowling Green in 1862, typified the area's disillusionment and sheer boredom. He worried about his sons, each fighting in a different army. He also had a family, slaves, and a farm needing his attention in Hopkinsville. As the war dragged on, he wrote that "everything here is dull to the last degree....I wish the war was over." He also worried about his garden.


53 War Lyrics, 212.
I think very frequently about the garden. The crocus, the daffodils...hyacinths &c. are doubtless very pretty--I wish I could see them--Have you sown lettuce, Radishes, planted Potatoes, silver skinned onions, beets, &c. They all ought to be planted; sweet potatoes ought to be bedded.

Starling's young nephew enlisted in the Union army for twelve months. After only five days at Russellville he was so bored he felt he had been there five weeks. He saw little hope for social life, for he believed the people there "would infinitely prefer to see our bodies disposed of in coffins."  

Local men who had joined the Confederate army also tired of the extended war. Starling, as "trier and decider of all cases where fellows desert the rebels" at Bowling Green headquarters, reported a constant stream of applicants. A copy of a parole issued November 22 to J. A. Nash, a Warren countian, stated that he was weary and sick of war and "having seen the error of his conduct--he trusts a 'repentent rebel' may be forgiven and allowed to live at home in peace." Bowling Green was also the scene of many Union deserters--"maurauding rascals who...for a little more pay would take away on the other side."  

Only the raiders kept the war alive in Green River country. John Hunt Morgan was the most outstanding, and he completely captured the area's imagination. He was the reincarnation of their frontier heroes--a combination of noble savage, outlaw and

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54 Starling to Anna Starling, Mar. 7, 1863; Starling to daughters, Mar. 18, 1863, Lewis Starling Collection.

55 James H. Holloway to Anna Starling, Feb. 19, 1863, Lewis Starling Collection.

56 Starling to Anna Starling, Dec. 12, 1862, Mar. 7, 1863; MS parole, Nov. 22, 1861, Lewis Starling Collection.
sharpshooter. When the Civil War began, he organized the Lexington Confederates and joined Buckner at Bowling Green. Later, Morgan led five Kentucky raids, which were "the stuff of genuine romance." Kentucky's writers saw him as a "Wallenstein, a Charles XII, and a Ney rolled into one."57 A Kentucky songwriter expressed a common hero-worship.

Gallant Morgan comes to free
Those who'll strike for liberty.
We are tired of slavery
Let us share his fame....
Hear the noble Morgan cry
"Armed are we to fight or die;
Let true patriots reply
Soon to our appeal!"58

Morgan and his men had a special attachment for Green River country, perhaps because it was here they began their active operations. Duke explained their emotions when they left Bowling Green in 1862.

We left the scenes and the region with which we had become so familiar with sad hearts....Men are apt to become attached to the localities where they have led free and active lives, and to connect with them agreeable associations. This country had many such for us, and that part especially between Bull's tavern on the one side of Green River, and Nolin on the other. For many miles to the right and left there was scarcely a foot of the ground which we had not ridden; from almost every hill we had watched the enemy, and at almost every turn in the road shot at him. These are not precisely the kind of reminiscences that the poetical romantic sigh over, but every man has a right to be sentimental after his own fashion, and Morgan's men were mightily so about the Green River country.59

57Thompson and Thompson, The Kentucky Novel, 8.

58War Lyrics, 199.

And the feeling was mutual. Morgan understood Green River country's yen for a hero, and lived the part. A typical expedition was undertaken soon after Morgan and his men arrived in Bowling Green in 1861. They were sent "on the north side of Green river to collect and bring to Bowlinggreen [sic] a large drove of cattle which...could not be brought out without a guard." Reaching a river ferry, the squadron found the enemy had bored holes in the ferryboats. Undaunted, Morgan's men raised the boats and spent the next day crossing the cattle. 60

Later, they operated farther up Green River, near South Carrollton and Paradise. John Porter, a cavalryman from Bowling Green, recalled that their object was "to intercept and capture a steamer, as a number were employed in transporting army supplies to Bowling Green, then by Railroad to Nashville for benefit of the Federal Army." They soon discovered, however, that a large number of Federal cavalrymen were stationed on the opposite side of the river "and accordingly...withdrew." 61

Morgan's hero-image grew in Butler County when he helped a lady in distress. Matter-of-factly, he described the circumstances.

I crossed Green river, with about 80 men, and proceeded into the interior of Butler county about 12 miles, found nearly all of the men absent from home;...I stopped at a house where there was a sick Lincoln soldier, who died that night. No men being in the neighborhood, his wife having no men

60 Ibid., 102.
61 John M. Porter, "A Brief Account," typescript, "57 (Kentucky Library).
to make a coffin or bury him, I detached some men who made a coffin.62

A young Confederate woman, while expressing her hero-worship, left an excellent description of Morgan's appearance.

At last I saw John Morgan! and was not disappointed! He was exactly my ideal of a dashing cavalryman. Tall and well formed with a very handsome face, shaded by light hair and adorned by mustache and beard of the same color ....His manner struck me as elegant, but was very far from having in it that free and easy dash I had expected. On the contrary there was a dignified reserve which amounted almost to shyness.

Because Morgan destroyed Bowling Green's railroad bridge Lizzie Hardin found herself stranded in that Union-held city. She wrote that since "it was so uncertain where Morgan was" no one would brave the turnpike to Nashville.63

Green River country had reason enough to fear the ubiquitous Morgan. Although Duke believed Morgan's Green River raids inferior "in dash and execution" to his later ones, they were certainly the area's most spectacular destructions. Starling reported a mixture of fear and respect at Bowling Green.

There is considerable excitement at headquarters this morning about Morgan's movements....He is so well mounted that he will probably do some injury and escape--almost unpunished--but the whole road is swarming with troops.64


64 Duke, Morgan's Cavalry, 108; Coulter, Civil War, 63; Starling to daughter, Dec. 20, 1862, Lewis Starling Collection.
Morgan, however, bypassed the area and burned the railroad bridge at Munfordville, on upper Green River. Starling estimated that it would require two months to get the cars running again.\(^6^5\)

A few months later, Morgan destroyed a fifty-car train at Cave City. He temporarily occupied Calhoun, Rumsey, and Russellville. Often his men posed as Federal cavalrymen, enhancing their dramatic image. Near Paradise, some Green River folks swallowed the bait, according to Porter's account.

We met some Federal Soldiers who were at home on Furlough....After passing ourselves as Federal Cavalry, we asked them to go to their homes and prepare supper for us, promising to be back after dark. They willingly agreed to do so and we doubt not that they had a fine and elegant supper for us, but we had gone in another direction.\(^6^6\)

On February 21, 1863, two Bowling Green men, Porter and Captain Thomas H. Hines, led thirteen men to destroy the railroad depot near the South Union Shaker settlement. The commanding officers stationed at Russellville and Bowling Green found it embarrassing that so small a force accomplished this coup. Apparently each tried to shift the blame to the other, for Colonel Maxwell at Russellville sent the Bowling Green commander a telling dispatch.

I understand that you said yesterday to Captain Ernest "that it was a d___d shame that Maxwell should sit still at Russellville with a regiment and two battalions of cavalry and suffer the depot at South Union to be destroyed." Now, I wish to say that I understand South Union is nearer, if any difference, to Bowling Green than


\(^6^6\)Collins and Collins, History of Kentucky, I, 102, 113; Porter, "Brief Account," 57.
to this place....As soon as I had any intimation that there were guerrillas at South Union, I sent a force there. 67

Four days later, Morgan's men boarded and burned the Federal supply steamboat Hettie Gilmore on Barren River. The next day they captured an L & N locomotive and twenty-one cars at Woodbury, junction of the Green and Barren rivers. The total five-day destruction in Green River country was $500,000. 68

Morgan, along with the guerrilla leaders, extended and prolonged the frontier traditions of courage, bravado and justifiable violence. The guerrillas found the river towns especially vulnerable, and successfully held Henderson several days in July, 1862. The United States Navy took action when Indiana's governor wired:

"Henderson, Kentucky, taken by the rebels. Evansville and Newburg also threatened. Can you send a gunboat to Evansville? Lose no time. It is a matter of first importance." It took six days to recover Henderson for the Union and, typically, the guerrillas by then had "prudently slipped away." 69 A Union officer at Russellville was so angered by the guerrillas' slipperiness that he adopted a tougher policy.

I have given orders to our men to take no more prisoners unless they surrender to them in open, manly fight. Our motto now is if a fellow isn't worth shooting he isn't worth taking prisoner--and we make

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67 Colonel Maxwell to General M. D. Manson, Feb. 22, 1863, Lewis Starling Collection.

68 Agatha Rochester Strange, "House of Rochester," typescript in J. Porter Hines Collection (Kentucky Library); Collins and Collins, History of Kentucky, I, 120.

no more arrests of individuals who stroll about the country stirring up seditions, stealing private property, bridges and such like amiable amusements. 70

Apparently the guerrillas' numbers had grown to tremendous proportions at the war's mid-point. Starling wrote that there were so many in 1863 "that I feel as though the labor of the Army is no purpose. There ought to be a standing gallows and a rebel hung every county court day." 71

"Sue Mundy" typified these guerrillas and was a victim of that gallows. Born Jerome Clarke in Franklin, he later moved to McLean County and lived with his aunt. When he was barely sixteen he enlisted in the Confederate army at Camp Cheatham in Robertson County, Tennessee, and later became scout for General Morgan's cavalry. Champ Clark explained how Mundy got his feminine alias.

The sobriquet of "Sue Mundy" was given to him in fun by his comrades at a May Day festival they were holding while in camp. On account of his smooth, girlish-looking face and long, black, wavy hair, which he permitted to grow down on his shoulders, they crowned him Queen of the May and gave him the name of "Sue Mundy," so he adopted this name through the remainder of his life. 72

During Morgan's last raid into Kentucky, Mundy was so badly wounded that it was necessary to leave him behind. Perhaps this explained why he turned to guerrilla tactics. Like Morgan, he had a dramatic aura, and the confusion regarding his sex made him

70 B. H. Bristow to Mary Starling Payne, Mar. 25, 1863, Lewis Starling Collection.

71 Starling to Mary Starling Payne, Oct. 1, 1863, Lewis Starling Collection.

particularly colorful. Even when he was captured, in early 1865, there was a doubt on this matter.

Was it a woman or a man, was a question that required three years to answer... The Louisville Journal's account of his execution impartially spoke of the prisoner as "he" in some paragraphs and "she" in others. 73

On March 15, 1865, an immense crowd gathered in Louisville to view the hanging of "this handsome boy whom they half believed was a woman." It was a dramatic ending, for "the gallows was set up, and escorted to the instrument by a cordon of troops with the Post band playing the Dead March... Sue Mundy, the picturesque monster, was hanged." 74

The Negro's uncertain status also precipitated guerrilla activity. On January 1, 1863, President Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation, causing John Bibb, a slaveholder in the Union army, to write a typical Green River country reaction.

I think M. Lincoln is about to commit a great blunder--I do not think the proclamation will have the happy effect he anticipates, probably the contrary....I would give up mine willingly if it would put down this rebellion. 75

Starling commented on a political cartoon which he thought a "philosophical view" of emancipation.

There is an amusing picture in one of Frank Leslie's papers. I tried to get it for you but could not. A Negro...is dreaming. He dreams that he is exercising the right of suffrage, and the picture makes him elbow his way among a crowd of white men--He dreams that he is admitted into society--and the picture represents him at a party with

74 Ibid.
75 John B. Bibb to Mary Starling Payne, Dec. 26, 1862, Lewis Starling Collection.
white ladies--in various other situations he is ludicrously represented--Finally he wakens and finds himself in his old position tied to a post and a fellow whipping him. The whole thing is illustrated by very good pictures and is really a very philosophical view of the case. 76

Kentucky, not a "rebellious" state, was exempt from the Proclamation, and prices for Negroes were "never higher" than at Owensboro in 1863. A Union soldier, worried about keeping his slaves profitably employed during the war, heard that Henderson paid high prices for slave labor. He wrote a kinswoman to hire a two horse wagon and send them to Henderson if there were any difficulty in hiring his three oldest slaves at Hopkinsville. 77

When the U.S. War Department ordered the enrollment of free Negroes in the army, Kentuckians remonstrated against it until the order was practically suspended. But Northern troops at Bowling Green proceeded to "steal" local Negroes. A Union officer warned that Russellville and the surrounding area would not tolerate any "negro-stealing troops."

The suggestion made in your letter to move the objectionable regiments to this place....would only aggravate the evil--If they cannot be controlled at Bowling Green...what would be their action at a post remote from Headquarters?...If this post were commanded by an abolition officer with negro stealing troops the counties of Todd, Christian, and Muhlenberg would probably suffer much. 78

76 Starling to daughter, Apr. 1, 1863, Lewis Starling Collection.


78 B. H. Bristow to Captain Shocking, Mar. 21, 1863, Lewis Starling Collection.
A Union Provost-Marshall, echoing Green River country's belief in individual slaveholder's rights, expressed his disgust with emancipation.

I suppose the Negroes will all run off. Well, "let 'em rip!" say I. I don't care if they do. I think the quicker they are all gone the better....I think the loyal slaveholders the only people with the right to say one word about the matter.79

The next year the Provost-Marshals were ordered to issue passes to all unemployed Negroes, "authorizing them to pass at will in search of employment, upon any railroad, steamboat, ferry-boat, or other means of travel in the State of Kentucky." Any railroad or steamboat conductor who refused to comply was ordered arrested.80

Union General Stephen Burbridge ordered in July, 1864 that four guerrillas be killed for every Union soldier murdered. On November 13, 1864, three brothers were killed near Henderson by Negro soldiers because they killed some Union men. The next day Governor Thomas Bramlette wrote Lincoln that Burbridge's course was "calculated to inaugurate revolt and produce collisions."81 It was a year, however, before the Thirteenth Amendment settled the slavery question. Kentucky voted against its ratification, but was forced to free her slaves without compensation. This economic loss turned many loyal slaveholders to the Southern camp.

79 Lewis Buckner to Mary Starling Payne, Feb. 26, 1864, Lewis Starling Collection.
80 Collins and Collins, History of Kentucky, I, 162.
Green River country suffered not only economically, but also ideologically because of her middle position. For example, the United States Post Office Department banned the Louisville Courier from the mails on September 18, 1861. This was typical of Union censorship. The South, however, generally employed more subtle techniques. When a Louisville edition of Will S. Hayes' song, The Drummer Boy of Shiloh, showed a Union soldier holding the dead drummer boy, the South realized its propaganda value. A year later the song was republished in Augusta, Georgia and the soldier had a Confederate uniform. Dixie, a minstrel song written by Ohican Dan Emmett, became the chanson de guerre of their armies.

When Green River Captain Penuel Jones attempted to renew his license at Evansville, his southern sympathies nearly cost him his job. The local inspector fined him $1,500 (approximately a year's salary), and forced him to sign a "revocation and a renunciation of rebel sympathies."

Buckner himself suffered from wartime restrictions. While his family was with him at Bowling Green, his infant son died. Mrs. Buckner was refused permission to bury her child in Louisville, in the family's burial plot. Though she secretly accomplished her goal, a poem entitled "Afraid of a Dead Baby," shamed the Union authorities.

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82 Stickles, Buckner, 104, 148. The Courier's editor, W. N. Haldeman, continued to publish the newspaper for a few months under Buckner's protection at Bowling Green.


84 Copy of legal document, Harralson Collection.
Keep here, my little baby; rest alone.
Not in thy father's tomb can'st thou be laid;
And a brave warrior's wife must give no groan,
Nor mother's grief the father's cause upbraid;
For, thinks a savage enemy, my babe,
A parent's heart breaking o'er youngest dead,
Is a fit object to make men afraid;
A weeping mother a fit spy to dread!
Surely, my boy, that naught but fear most rare
Could make inhuman monsters of armed men,
That they'd refuse to let a mother bear
A lifeless body to its home again.85

The Union army's restrictions were generally unpopular with
Green River country's individual-oriented society. As early as
October, 1862, Starling expressed "grave objections to the cursed
Yankees who compose our army." A few months later he wrote that
he wished the

Yankees were out of the country, no good feeling has
grown out of their occupancy of our State, but a dis-
similarity—the most striking is manifest, in the way
they feel and think about everything, and I must say
I greatly prefer our own way.86

After his discharge from the Union army Starling complained
when he returned to Hopkinsville that "none of us feels at home
....I think I can see a manifest falling off in the zeal and
earnestness of the unionism of the people here."87 When Porter
was mustered out of Morgan's army he returned to Bowling Green,
and, like Starling, found his home town so changed that he
claimed not to recognize a "single person" as he passed through
the town. Yet, this defeated Confederate expressed a "proud

85[War Lyrics, 148.]
86Starling to Mary Starling Payne, Oct. 30, 1862, Lewis
Starling Collection.
87Starling to Anna Starling, Mar. 3, 1863; Starling to Mary
Starling Payne, Oct. 1, 1863, Lewis Starling Collection.
satisfaction that I had discharged my duty to the Cause which I heartily espoused at the beginning." 88

A comparison of these two veterans' attitudes adds credulity to E. Merton Coulter's thesis that Kentucky "waited until after the war was over to secede from the Union." 89 Culturally, the South and Romanticism had won Green River country's affections, suggesting that Southern propaganda succeeded where Northern restrictions failed. Local heroes, politics and racial attitudes affirmed this cultural secession. The war's bitter legacy colored the remainder of Green River's steamboat culture and the "long rope of the river" entered its maturity frayed and uncertain.

88 Porter, "Brief Account," 83.

89 Coulter, Civil War, 91.
CHAPTER IV

COMPETING FOR GREEN RIVER BUSINESS

Young man! Would you to Art devote your life!
Would you be minus babies and a wife,
Resign cash, sympathy, position too,
Have every dunce turn up his nose at you?\(^1\)

This warning written in 1870 was typical of Green River philosophy. Consequently, the post-war era was increasingly business-oriented. Though lacking the obvious cultural influences of the frontier, the quarter century following the Civil War was highly significant. It straddled the frontier and modern age, taking some giant steps in the process. In many ways it was Green River country’s most picturesque generation, full of childlike abandon and blind faith in prosperity. Its history is both painful and humorous.

A growing awareness of group society—a democratic rather than an individualistic approach—characterized this generation. Democracy, agrarianism and industrialism were at work undermining Green River country’s traditional individualism. The individual increasingly wondered how much unrestrained individuality he could afford. He discovered that the gospel of wealth was often a gospel of greed, and what was called laissez faire actually benefited a group that needed no help. The average man’s sense of helplessness

\(^1\)John Frankenstein, quoted in Oliver Larkin, *Art and Life in America* (New York, 1960), 236.
prompted him, even more than previously, to transfer his individual power to the lawyer, the politician and the business man.

Railroads, the steamboat's nemesis, dominated contemporary records. Paradoxically, the first locomotive operating out of Bowling Green arrived on a steamboat. Will S. Hayes, marine editor for the Louisville Courier-Journal, blamed rivermen "for the way they have been imposed upon, and like railroad men, they should have a 'concert of action.'" This never happened in Green River country. First, no railroad paralleled Green River. Second, public opinion favored any transportation system that alleviated the area's crushing isolation.

In June, 1858, the Louisville Courier observed that "step by step our Iron Horse enters the valley of Green River." That Iron Horse was the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, known locally as the "L & N." Many Green River inhabitants saw their first train in 1859, and a barbecue was held August 10 when the first run was made between Bowling Green and Nashville. Newspapers boasted that the entire distance between Louisville and Nashville could be made with "only thirty miles staging." The toughest obstacle was the Green River gorge at Munfordville. When the railroad bridge was finally completed, Harper's Weekly called it "one of those great works which...are looked upon in every country as fit subjects of national pride and eulogy."
Green River inhabitants enthusiastically welcomed the 200 dignitaries who made the first complete trip between Louisville and Nashville on October 27, 1859. Within a few months another line, from Bowling Green southwest to Clarksville, Tennessee, was completed.

Green River country's many miles of operating railroads increased its strategic importance in the Civil War.

Just as Bowling Green businessmen agitated for Green and Barren river improvements in the 1830's, their sons manipulated the L & N Railroad Company to include Bowling Green on their main line. When the L & N first obtained its charter in 1850, the planned route did not include Bowling Green. However, a Bowling Green and Tennessee Railroad Company, chartered to run competitively, had a "nuisance" value and precipitated the L & N's purchase of that company's charter rights. This put Bowling Green safely on the L & N's main line.4

Louisville's success in tapping the southern market inspired Evansville to follow suit. In 1867 Col. E. G. Sebree of Todd County purchased several local railroads and resold them to the Evansville, Henderson and Nashville Railroad Company. When the Kentucky legislature chartered the company's bridge across the Ohio River, the Louisville Journal complained:

Already Evansville, a small but thriving city in a foreign State, is preparing to grasp the prize which will cut short all intercourse between us and our imploring friends in Hardin, Grayson, Muhlenburg, Caldwell and other intervening and adjoining counties. The only effectual

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check that can be put upon the Evansville scheme is to build the road from Elizabethtown to Paducah.5

The Elizabethtown and Paducah Railroad, later part of the Illinois Central, was begun in 1869 and completed in 1872. Another railroad built in response to the Louisville and Evansville competition was the Louisville, Henderson and Paducah line, including a branch line to Madisonville and Hopkinsville. Though Green Rivermen rarely admitted it, this web of railroads hurt their business by catching such moving objects as marketable goods and human passengers.6

The railroad's effect on steamboat business cannot be accurately determined, for it attracted many business and agricultural enterprises not served by the river. By 1870, however, some steamboats had become mere feeders for the railroads. The Henderson Weekly Journal advertised that the Belmont-Ironcliffe "made close connections with all trains." Conversely, railroad freight often used the river for long haul purposes. The L & N's change from wood burning engines to coal in 1873 opened a new business for Green River steamboats. L. W. Kincheloe supplied Bowling Green locomotives with coal until his boat, the B. F. Duvall, exploded. Later the Evansville, Green and Barren River Navigation Company carried on this trade.7

The river passenger business was least equipped to meet the railroads' competition. The following time tables, printed in an 1888 Bowling Green newspaper, told the story of daily versus bi-weekly schedules.

L & N RAILROAD:

- **South Bound:** Express daily, depart at 11:40 a.m.
- Mail daily, depart at 9:10
- **North Bound:** Express daily, depart at 4:20
- Mail daily, depart at 5:00 p.m.

GREEN AND BARREN RIVER NAVIGATION COMPANY:

- **Leave Bowling Green:** Wed. 9:00 a.m.
  Sat. 10:00 a.m.
- **Leave Evansville:** Mon. 4:00 p.m.
  Thurs. 4:00 p.m.

The railroads caused few disgruntlements in Green River country. An exception was the Green River Courier's report in 1885 of "a great complaint at Rockport, Ohio County, on account of so many cattle being killed and maimed by railroad trains." The Kentucky Legislature was generally sympathetic to the railroads' requests and in 1882 legalized the construction of bridges "so as not unreasonably to obstruct the navigation of any navigable stream." When the Chesapeake, Ohio and Southwestern bridge over Green River needed replacing, river trade was closed for forty days. The railroads' popularity left the steamboatmen defenseless.  

General Don Carlos Buell, who moved to Green River country following the war, complained in 1880 that local railroads "have been known to avail themselves of peculiar corporate privileges, and of

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8 Bowling Green Daily Democrat, Oct. 2, 1887.

9 Calhoun Green River Courier, June 18, 1885; MS court case, McElroy Collection.
their facilities of transportation, to monopolize the resources of the lands bordering them." Morgantown, however, was not cooperative when a line was proposed in 1888. The Calhoon Democrat reported that the road, running from Bowling Green through Morgantown, Hartford and Calhoun, more nearly paralleled Green River than any existing railroad. Judge B. Guffy believed the mining interests needed such a railroad, for it was "the greatest developer of modern times."

The anti-railroad editor retorted that Warren and Grayson counties are not as well off as we and they have the railroad. Our river transportation is enough. The railroad tax is too much of a burden on the county. Public interest would not be served, but only those of private individuals.10

This attitude was not a prevailing one, for several Green River counties worked diligently to attract railroads. Todd County citizens, for example, subscribed thousands of dollars for one and felt bitter disappointment when their efforts failed. A Daviess County writer expressed his concern about 1880.

In the present age railroads are the main factors of cities and towns, and a general prosperity itself. Woe unto that town or community that is left out in the cold by the contests of money kings and railroad giants! In this respect Daviess County has been rather unfortunate, not having a railroad until 1870, and but a small piece of one at that. It seems, however, not to be the fault of the people here, but the natural result of stock manipulations.11

Some Green River towns owed their life to the railroad. When the Elizabethtown and Paducah line was built it established a station

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10 D. C. Buell, Memorial of D. C. Buell and Others Concerning the Green and Barren River Navigation Company (Airdrie, Kentucky, 1880), 4; Calhoon Democrat, Aug. 30, 1888; Bratcher, Butler County.

11 Battle, Todd County, 63; Daviess County, 189.
on Beaver Dam Creek. The town of Beaver Dam sprang up there and
became a major trading center for Green River country. Sebree City
was established when the railroad passed through Webster County and
Central City began as a "turn around" railroad station.12

The emotional impact on isolated areas was suggested by an
eye-witness account.

When the Railroad came through here /Bowling Green/ there
was a man over in the Green River country and his wife that
came to Bristow, and they was coming along, standing on the
platform, to see the railroad, you know. And she came on
up and when she got right up to them, she blew off steam.
The woman was holding a child, and she just let the child
drop, and she says, "There, by God," she says, "they have
shot my child." The old man picked her up, "Yes, she's
dead as hell," he says.13

J. Porter Hines lived in lower Green River country in the
1880's when he contacted railroad "fever."

/We/ lived on the Morgantown Pike at the edge of Bowling
Green. The L & N passed just in front of the Rochester's
house. We boys had wonderful times. We knew the time
and whistle of every train....I knew all the firemen and
engineers and would wave to them. I loved to see the
firemen put the coal in the furnace and watch the black
smoke roll out of the smoke stacks.14

Another development that influenced the river's business was
the Green and Barren River Navigation Company, organized in 1868.
Its initial business was "immense, and in the hands of men that
knew how to run it."15 But despite this early prosperity, the

12 Greene, Green River Country, 94, 117; Central City Times-
Argus, Mar. 18, 1937.

13 Fox, "Recollections."

14 J. Porter Hines, "Reminiscences of Green River," typescript,
Hines Collection (Kentucky Library).

15 J. Crittenden Alexander, "Our River Interests," Bowling
Green Park City Daily Times, July 17, 1896.
company had a stormy existence. Local reaction to this "monopoly" revealed a growing disillusionment with the traditional laissez faire attitude.

The state, justifying the rivers' lease in 1868, claimed that the rivers had always cost the state more money than their tolls brought in. However, in 1854 the Board of Internal Improvements reported that Green and Barren Rivers paid a "handsome profit" to the state's sinking fund. In 1883 a local historian contended that although the rivers "always yielded a net revenue to the State,...there was an apparent loss during the war, owing to an unrewarded claim." Making the most of this temporary loss, the Navigation Company convinced the legislature that the river should be leased. The Calhoun Democrat charged that members of the legislature "sold their vote and influence for stock in the company." Buell called it an "adroitly worded franchise" and added that it "was pressed through the Legislature at the closing hours of the session, without due consideration."\(^\text{16}\)

Buell's own plans to use Green River were foiled by the river's lease. While he was pursuing Confederates he realized the area's tremendous mining potential and in 1866 moved to Airdrie. Eventually Buell purchased 1000 acres of Alexander's land and began a coal-mining operation, but the Navigation Company's freight rates prevented him from meeting his competitor's prices. He fought the corporation for fifteen years and Rothert credited his "long, hard and time-sacrificing work" for the Federal government's purchase of

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\(^{16}\)Bowling Green Standard, Feb. 18, 1854; Daviess County, 187; Calhoun Democrat, July 26, 1888.
the unexpired lease in 1888. But Buell was seventy years old in 1888 and never realized the economic advantages of a "free" river.\textsuperscript{17}

W. P. Greene, who made a rather thorough study of Green River economics in the 1890's, wrote that the Navigation Company was composed of the "most substantial and enterprising men in Green River country." He especially admired C. G. Smallhouse, later president of the Warren Deposit Bank, for his "clear perception of the means to success and his energy in adapting the means to the desired end."

Another charter member, John Robinson, was a successful boatman. He built, clerked, piloted, commanded and owned numerous steamboats before he joined the Navigation Company. The following legal document indicates all the charter members had a degree of financial security.\textsuperscript{18}

The undersigned including such of the persons as are named as incorporators in the Green and Barren River Navigation Company charter and including those who have associated with the state that the amount attached opposite to each of their names is the amount property owned by them in the State of Kentucky....

\begin{itemize}
  \item W. S. Vanmeter \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots $35,000
  \item John V. Sproule \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots $30,000
  \item John A. Robinson \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots $20,000
  \item E. B. Seeley \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots $10,000
  \item William Brown \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots $60,000
  \item C. J. Vanmeter \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots $25,000
  \item W. H. Payne \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots $20,000
  \item C. G. Smallhouse \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots $10,000
  \item D. R. Haggard \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots $15,000
  \item H. L. Murrell \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots $50,000
\end{itemize}

The charter itself, signed by Governor J. W. Stephenson on March 9, 1868, thoroughly covered the company's legal rights and later stood up in court. The following excerpts indicate its scope.

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} Rothert, Muhlenburg County, 233-234.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 17, 37; MS, McElroy Collection.
\end{itemize}
Whereas the Green and Barren river line of navigation has always been a charge upon the State and is now largely in debt—and without prospect of any better condition and whereas it is of great importance to the country to keep said line in working order if possible; and believing that object can be accomplished by letting it to an incorporated company therefore.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:

1. That J. H. Robinson, J. V. Sproule, W. S. Vanmeter, C. J. Vanmeter, E. B. Seeley, H. C. Murrell, William Brown, D. C. Turner, C. G. Smallhouse and their associates and successors, be and they are hereby created a body corporate with the name and style of the Green and Barren River Navigation Company and shall have perpetual succession during the term of thirty years.

2. That the said Green and Barren river line of navigation and their tributaries together with the grounds, houses, water works, and rents, profits, tools, machinery, implements and appurtenances and all the franchises thereunto belonging or appertaining be and the same are loaned and conveyed unto the corporation....

4. It shall the business and duty of said company to use due diligence in keeping up said line of navigation in good repair and to return it and all its appurtenances at the expiration of the lease in as good condition as at present or unless prevented from doing so by unavoidable cause...and to pass and permit all boats, crafts and other things to navigate said rivers according to certain specified rates herein prescribed as tolls, which shall insure the said Company.

5. ...the rate of tolls on passengers and freight other than coal or stone shall be regulated by their full hull and deck tonnage, according to Custom House rules as to the management of tonnage. Provided. that the rate of toll shall not exceed per ton measured as aforesaid, fifty cents at the third, and ten cents each at the two upper locks and same for returning and for each passenger, and for all other boats—barges, skiffs and other water crafts—loaded and empty—including rafts and other things passing said river they may establish tolls from time to time, not exceeding the present rates established by the Board of Internal Improvements as applicable to the Kentucky, Green and Barren River line of navigation at this time.19

19 MS copy of charter, McElroy Collection.
Exactly one month later, on April 9, 1868, the change was made. Governor Stephenson sent a notice to all state officers and officials on the Green and Barren rivers, confirming that the Navigation Company now controlled the rivers.  

The Navigation Company made little from the tolls, but their company boats profitted handsomely, enjoying a virtual monopoly of river business. This domination brought immediate repercussions among Green River business interests. Perhaps the bitterest charge leveled at the company was that it manipulated the court by getting its own attorney placed "upon the judicial bench."  

In the 1879-1880 Legislature the Navigation Company's charter was revoked. The company, however, refused to give possession of the rivers and the state retaliated by bringing suit in the Franklin Court. This court upheld the state's act, but when the case was referred to the Court of Appeals, the decision was reversed. This latter judgment, given April 5, 1880, was based on the company's "valid" charter. The state's attorney argued that "a navigable stream is that character of public property in which every citizen has a private interest or right of property, of which he cannot be deprived by any legislative action." The court argued, however, that "both the State and Federal constitutions present insuperable barriers to the recovery in this case."  

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20 MS governor's order, McElroy Collection.  
21 Daviess County, 188.  
22 Frankfort Tri-Weekly Yeoman, Oct. 29, 1880.
Buell continued the fight. He charged that "no competition of the company's steamers has for years presumed to appear upon our waters." Buell was upset by the Navigation Company's undisputed possession of Bowling Green's coal market. He published a pamphlet in which he claimed that no coal shipper could compete because the company's mines paid no tolls.

Not a bushel of coal is now shipped out of Green River, while the Monongahela sends down the Ohio, annually, not less than sixty millions of bushels, of which probably thirty millions will this year pass the mouth of Green River. 23

These attacks so angered Captain Robinson that he accused Buell, in the Bowling Green Intelligencer, of merely seeking personal gain. Buell was indignant and claimed on February 14, 1880 that his "mode of life, to which the response alludes, is of no consequence to the public, and had nothing to do with the question." He answered Robinson on many questions, and his retorts were well-stated—brief but convincing. His attack on the Navigation Company's charter illustrated his persuasive powers.

In the preparation of the Company's charter there was, to be sure, a total disregard of the public interest; but the fatal error consisted, not in putting into private hands the management of a navigable river which belongs inalienably to the community, and must be equally free to all men, but in giving with it the privilege of navigating, mining, manufacturing and trading in all manner of things. The one is a function which pertains properly to the government; the other is of a purely private nature. They cannot be combined either in the State or in the individual. 24

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23 Buell, Memorial, 3.

The Navigation Company consistently refused Buell's demands, but its business was deteriorating. Besides railroad competition, other legal battles plagued the company. In 1880, for example, there was a court battle with J. T. Palmer, who floated timber over the dam in high water and refused to pay company tolls. Another offender was H. H. Herr, charged by the Daviess Circuit Court to pay tolls, though he used only that portion of Green River between Lock No. 2 and Lock No. 3. Then, in 1887 Lock No. 3—the one Buckner's troops weakened in 1861—collapsed. Their contract stated they must return the property in good repair at the end of their thirty year lease, unless unavoidably prevented from doing so.

The Navigation Company's shrewd owners got the opportunity in 1888, and sold their unexpired lease without repairing the dam. The Calhoon Democrat printed the following explanation.

"The company is not, in my opinion," said Mr. Miller, "making any money, and has not been doing so for several years. It doesn't wear a prosperous air. The members say conditions have changed and that they are not making the money they once made. They want to sell their franchise to the U.S. government."

Another newspaper article charged that the "practical steamboatmen among them having died off from high living, the affairs of the company have fallen into incompetent hands of late years."

Congressman Polk Laffoon wrote from Washington that he was petitioned from the Green River section to urge the United States government to purchase the navigation system. Fearing that federal controls infringed upon local and individual rights, he justified

25 MS court cases, McElroy Collection.
26 Calhoon Democrat, July 26, Aug. 2, 1888.
the purchase by asking: "Why should the people of the Green River section be excluded from the munificence of the Government?"27

Green River inhabitants, despite their traditional states' rights philosophy, were convinced that federal control was the answer. On March 1, 1887 the Rivers and Harbors Bill specified a maximum of $150,000 for the purchase of the Green and Barren rivers franchise. An Owensboro newspaper called it "worth more to western Kentucky than anything that has happened in the last twenty-five years."28

The local reaction was one of relief. There was also bitterness that this company, after sucking the life-blood of the people for twenty years, having grown enormously rich off of their ill-gotten charter, having allowed the improvements on the rivers to go to wreck and ruin, are now to be paid $135,000 for a franchise which they could be forced to forfeit if the official screws were put upon them as they should be.29

Unfortunately neither the Navigation Company nor the railroads altered the depressing fact that Green River was a "long neglected stream traversing...long neglected mineral resources of great value." Both corporations exploited the people and resources without taking responsibility for their acts. A Bowling Green writer warned that the L & N railroad was trying to control the area's business and therefore "there should be a jealous eye kept upon the river."30

27Quoted in Bowling Green Times-Gazette, Feb. 17, 1886.
29Calhoon Democrat, July 26, 1888.
30Greene, Green River Country, 21; Bowling Green Park City Daily Times, July 17, 1896.
Competition was so keen that the only profitable employment the steamer Crescent City found on Green River was carrying cross-ties for the railroads. Other freight brought only five cents per hundred pounds while passengers were carried for nothing. The little Rosa Belle, according to the Hartford Herald, stopped running in 1885 "for want of sufficient patronage." In 1888 when the United States government took over the river, the Rosa Belle's owners re-entered the trade. The Calhoun Democrat reported in November, 1888 that it would make daily trips "between this point and Rochester," but within two months, the Rosa Belle was again in trouble. The Calhoun editor blamed her schedule, but his demand for a "system of navigation to open up new competition" suggested that the area was simply not willing to pay the prices necessary to keep the Rosa Belle operating. 31

The ferry operators, too, were hurt by this competition, for railroad bridges absorbed most of their business. An Evansville writer wrote in 1874 that "railroads have, in a measure, destroyed the passenger trade." 32

Mark Twain observed the railroad's encroachments and declared that the steamboat's funeral was in 1872. But in Green River country, as in many isolated river valleys, steamboating remained lively for another fifty years. Actually, railroad competition inspired the steamboat owner's best efforts in providing comfort, convenience

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31 Agatha Strange, House of Rochester, 2; Hartford Herald, quoted in Calhoun Green River Courier, May 21, 1885; Calhoun Democrat, Nov. 8, 1888; Calhoun Constitution, Jan. 10, 1889.

32 Charles E. Robert, Evansville: Her Commerce and Manufactures (Evansville, 1874), 454.
and economy. The second Evansville, built in 1880, was perhaps the best packet ever constructed for the Green River trade. Costing $22,000, it boasted twenty-two staterooms, with accommodations for seventy-five passengers. Its interior was "neatly furnished, the fore and aft panels of the cabin being decorated with beautiful rural landscapes by Mr. Corydon Blentinger, a promising artist."33

The railroad's comparative safety was an important factor in the river-rail passenger competition. Though Evansville's Chief of Steamboat Inspection reported in 1878 that steamboating safety was increasing, the Bowling Green caught fire in 1889, completely destroying her cargo in less than twenty minutes. She was the only steamboat serving the upper Green River after Rochester's Lock No. 3 collapsed. Because no boat could get over the crippled dam, the people were temporarily without river transportation and much Bowling Green river business went to the railroads. 34

Post-war industrialization encouraged many unusual river occupations. George Ankerman, an ingenious German immigrant, settled at Evansville about 1880. Purchasing a floating repair shop to serve the Green River area, Ankerman specialized in putting up tin roofs and repairing gutters. He also serviced steamboats, repairing speaking tubes, gutters and pipes. Ankerman's barge was tied to the steamboat and carried along the river until the

33 E. P. Ashultz Scrapbook (Cincinnati Public Library).
34 John M. Moore Scrapbook (Cincinnati Public Library); Central City Times-Argus, Aug. 8, 1966; Calhoun Constitution, Feb. 7, 1889.
job was finished. This procedure was followed for many years, but finally a flood landed the barge in Calhoun and Ankerman set up his business there.  

Another unusual river business was the floating photographic studio. H. O. Schroeter was known throughout Green River country as "the Artist of the Emerald Wave." Greene, who printed much of Schroeter's work in his Green River Country, wrote that

He has a floating studio, with which he visits the towns and hamlets on the rivers, executing work in every branch of the art of photography....He has every appliance necessary to the business, favorably with that of the most distinguished professors of the art.

Schroeter and his sons left a rich legacy of photographic art in the Green River valley. They took thousands of pictures and almost every family album contained Schroeter photos. The McClean County News commented on their lasting quality.

As anyone familiar with photography knows, the permanence and freedom from fading in photography depends on how well the "hypo" or fixer is washed out of the photographic paper. The Schroeders, we are told, washed their prints by placing them in a fish box in the river beside the barge-studio. Thus they got an almost perfect wash in good old Green River. And so the Schroeter pictures that are still around are remarkably free from the fading that many old pictures show.

Schroeter and his sons had other talents. The father jokingly called himself "the thirty-second best banjo picker in the United States" and if in the right "notion" played for river customers. He also practiced spiritualism, claiming he talked to

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36 Greene, Green River Country, 114.

his wife after her death. Unfortunately, his sons used their photographic talent in counterfeiting United States currency.38

Another business development in this period was the increasing interest in Green River country's coal deposits, which Buell called "among the most remarkable in this country for extent and variety."39 On October 20, 1887, the Green River Republican reported that "a party of Louisville arrived in town [Morgantown] Saturday, took dinner at the Farmer's House and left for Mining City. We learn that they were coal prospectors."40 The Navigation Company found a vein of coal where the Mud River empties into the Green River. Smallhouse recalled a company trip:

Mr. Vanmeter, Mr. Hughes, Mr. Allen and myself went down to inspect this property, and also the Stanley mine above Livermore and a mine up Green River several miles above the mouth of Barren River. Mr. Allen thinks the entire land is underlaid with coal and I do not doubt it.41

When the Navigation Company representatives opened the Mining City mine halfway between Rochester and Morgantown, they built their tipple directly on Green River's bank. Mining City grew into a fair-sized town with regular packet service and its own post office. The coal business and the town were killed when Lock No. 3 collapsed. Agnes Harralson wrote that "like Airdrie forty years before, Mining City was soon taken over by nature,

38 Ibid., June 19, July 16, 1969.
39 Buell, Memorial, 3.
40 Quoted in Bratcher, Butler County.
and little was left to remind one that it was a bustling, busy river town."  

Another river-related industry was lumbering. As long as the Navigation Company charged tolls, little logging was done in upper Green River country. But when the Federal Government took over the rivers, the vast forests in Butler, Warren and Edmonson Counties began floating down the river. A contemporary observed that "nobody on the upper end of Green River thinks of farming—all labor is directed toward the decimation of the forest."  

The Hayes Brothers Company, operating a logging camp at Rochester, began the season's cutting early in the spring. A contemporary described setting up camp.

Teams are driven up to the supply-house; the tents, axes, cant-hooks, chains, provisions and cooking outfits are loaded on to one enormous wagon, drawn by eight oxes, or as they say here, "four yoke!" A Procession of wagons made the trip to camp. One contained the food for the fifty or sixty brawny men.

At the rear of the procession came the "brawny" men in five mule-drawn wagons. When they arrived at camp--known as the "boundary"—tents were spread and the kitchen was erected. After breakfast the men were divided into squads of two to six men, each armed with a cross-cut saw and ax. They remained until November when the rains "set in" and it was time for the "fitting out and up for Evansville."  

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43 Bowling Green Park City Daily Times, July 17, 1896.

44 Ibid.
Another lumber business was that of R. E. Hackett, who specialized in hickory buggy spokes and oak rims for wagon wheels.

At Livermore Greene wrote that

a great portion of the products of the Hackett mills is transported by steamboat and barges owned by the proprietor, to Evansville and thence distributed by rail to markets in the north.\textsuperscript{45}

One problem Hackett and other saw mill operators faced was low water on Green River. The Evansville \textit{Tribune News} described the enormous quantity of logs awaiting rain in May, 1885.

The low stage of water in Green and Barren rivers is causing considerable uneasiness among the saw mill men of this city, a number of whom will be compelled to close down shortly unless there is a rise in the above rivers to allow the immense rafts of logs to be brought out. It is estimated that there is fully half a million dollars worth of logs between Rumsey and Bowling Green.

In February, 1888, the rivers were low again. The Calhoun \textit{Democrat} feared that logmen would not get their logs marketed. Finally in April the rains came and the newspaper reported raft after raft passing down the river.\textsuperscript{46}

Floating saw mills were quite common in Green River country's post-war culture. Captain M. L. Sauerheber began custom log sawing about 1876 on the Ohio, Salt, and Green Rivers. About 1886 he devoted his time exclusively to the lucrative Green River trade.

Despite the business activity, Green River country's economic conditions were unstable in the post-war era. Depressions, monopolies, cut-throat competition, a collapsed lock, floods and droughts led to local frustration. Vernon L. Parrington described

\textsuperscript{45}Greene, \textit{Green River Country}, 113.

\textsuperscript{46}Evansville \textit{Tribune News}, quoted in Calhoun \textit{Green River Courier}, May 28, 1885; \textit{Calhoun Democrat}, Feb. 23, April 6, 1888.
the quarter century between the Panic of 1873 and the campaign of 1896 as a fierce agrarian attempt to nullify the law of concentration. In Green River country, this was most obvious in the political battles concerning the Navigation Company. Otherwise there were few organized efforts. The financial recessions of 1873-1879 and 1887-1896 brought falling prices and the common phrase "ten-cent corn and ten per cent interest." The farmer was exploited unmercifully and his transportation costs were especially abusive. Buell noted in 1880 that

Freight which is within three or four miles of a railroad crossing the river, and which naturally seeks that channel to reach Louisville, or some other point on the Ohio, is forced to go to Evansville, at a cost of fifty cents per one hundred pounds, or pay some charges for landing at the railroad crossing....Tobacco, at Rockport and South Carrollton, is carried by the company to Louisville by the way of Evansville, for three dollars a hogshead, because at those points it can take a railroad to Owensboro or Louisville, while tobacco on the river a few miles distant from the first named points is charged five dollars a hogshead because it has no such advantage, and the transportation of it in small flats to the railroad lines having been interdicted, and pursued with litigation by the Navigation Company.47

Many counties voted a local tax in order to help finance a railroad. This decreased the farmer's annual profits and his farm's resale value. Robinson priced some land at Calhoun for the Navigation Company and wrote that it had little value because

there is and has been for several years a very heavy railroad tax on it and all other real estate lying in said conditions. ....I think seven or eight dollars an acre is as much as any man can afford to pay for it.48

48J. M. Robinson to unknown receiver, July 25, 1880, McElroy Collection.
Small businessmen also suffered during this period. For example, the Fatman Ranger Company built tobacco factories at Curdsville, Delaware and Ranger's Landing on Green River. A Henderson County historian observed that the company went bankrupt and business prospects were so poor that the Mason's Landing building was sold for only forty dollars.49

Steamboat owners initiated the river excursion to stimulate their sagging business. On August 7, 1869 there was a total eclipse of the sun and both railroad and steamboat excursions carried visitors to "favorable points of total obscuration." Other favorite trips were those to Evansville or New Orleans. A Calhoun paper announced that the steamer Evansville would carry local residents to Rochester in 1889 for a barbecue and fish fry. Later, there would be "a grand Sunday School Union picnic." 50

Steamboat operators believed that courtesy, good food and prompt service would stimulate the river's faltering passenger trade. A young Evansville girl wrote a poetic tribute to the Bowling Green's crew in 1886 and sent it to the Bowling Green Democrat.

The morn was balmy, the breezes fair,
Playing tricks with my curly hair,
And all was bright and debonair,
On the boat.

49 "Mason's Landing," typescript (Henderson Public Library).

50 Interview with Roscoe Ellis, July 16, 1969; W. P. Westerfield Diary, May 28, 1902, Jesse Westerfield Duer Collection; Calhoun Constitution, July 26, 1889.
That boat moved from the pebbly shore,
We waved adieu to one or more
Our hearts with gladness brimming o'er
To get afloat.

Who helped us up those tiny stairs,
Where none can ever go in pairs,
Like Noah's doves or polar bears?
Capt. Robinson.

Who oft at times grew quite sedate,
Discoursed sublimely of life and fate,
And never thought the hour too late?
Capt. Robinson.

Who with fresh humor every day,
Was ever the gayest of the gay,
As we went gliding on our way?
Mr. Morris.

Who was ever at his post so neat,
The pink of courtesy complete,
Ne'er from his duty beat retreat?
Capt. Durrenberger.

Who kept the table all so neat,
With such nice desserts, such tender meat,
None could resist the wish to eat?
Mr. Berry.

Who held the fort with faith sublime,
And steered us on through rain and shine,
And talked of Christian love divine?
Pilot Dolly.

Who finally gave to me a ride
Gently down the stream to glide,
With mamma and papa by my side?
Capt. Smallhouse.

And ever in my heart shall stay,
And many a time for them I'll pray,
In grateful memory of that day,
We went afloat.

To one and all good-bye, I say
Yet hoping to meet another day,
And many blessings on your way,
Is the wish of your little friend.

Lucy H. Row, "A Little Poem," Agatha Strange Scrapbook
(Kentucky Library).
The distillery business had some unusual problems in the post-war era. James Lane Allen observed a decrease in the use of the "pioneer beverage" in Kentucky. On County Court day, for example, "merchants do not now set it out for their customers.... The decanter is no longer found on the sideboard in the home; the barrel is not stored in the cellar."52

The temperance movement convinced many Kentuckians to give up their whiskey at least temporarily. In the 1870's Will S. Hayes composed "Goodbye to Drink" and "Don't Drink Any More" and the churches sponsored emotional temperance speakers. John Hickman, a popular temperance speaker, expressed a reluctance to accept a Spottsville invitation to speak because the whiskey men threatened to evict him. He need not have worried. The church was filled to capacity and his eloquence inspired sixty listeners to form the Good Templers Lodge. The interest continued until Spottsville and Henderson County had the second largest lodge of the order.53

A character nicknamed "Peg Leg" set up a saloon at Spottsville, but wisely called his establishment a "drugstore." Unfortunately it was on the edge of a hill and elevated at the back by tall props. "Peg Leg" left town rather suddenly when, after repeated warnings to stop his illicit business or leave town....a band of determined men, mostly Irish and English miners...went with battering rams and knocked the back props from under his house.54


54 Ibid.
Reverend J. T. Cherry was a great prohibitionist who "put saloons out" wherever he preached. Born in 1852, Cherry preached at Methodist churches in Madisonville, Franklin, Elkton, Russellville, Canmer, Loretta, Elizabethtown, Brandenburg and Calhoun. His approach was an economic one—he tried to convince business men that saloons hurt their business "because men spent money on drink, not stores." His success was temporary, for many towns recalled him "to put the saloons out again." 55

The steamboat captains were inconsistent in selling liquor. In 1886 Capt. Lee Howell, an agent for the L & N Railroad, operated several boats and kept a saloon on each. When he attempted to merge with the William brothers, he was rejected until his saloon lease expired. It was not that the Williams men opposed drinking, but rather that they felt a "public" saloon undesirable—and probably unprofitable, considering public opinion. 56

Green River loggers were not so restricted by public opinion. A Daviess County historian wrote that "in pioneer days a quart of whiskey would roll logs for a man all day, but now /about 1880/ it takes two gallons." Another indication that the "pioneer beverage" was still consumed in large quantities was a traveller's report that Hartford's 400 inhabitants supported a number of saloons, "all in full blast." 57

55 Interview with Mrs. Thomas Tichener, August 22, 1969. She is Rev. Cherry's daughter and the niece of Henry Hardin Cherry.

56 Interview with James Hines, July 1, 1969.

57 Daviess County, 557; R. S. Thompson, Sucker's Visit to Mammoth Cave, 1879 (Springfield, Ohio, 1879), 30.
Owensboro had six of the state's largest distilleries and produced 383,572 "proof gallons of spirits" between December 1871 and June 1872. John W. McCulloch advertised his product as "The Whiskey Without a Headache" and placed gilt-framed advertisements in barns and cafes.58

More typical of the Green River Valley's backcountry distilleries were the Butler County operations. Because bulk corn was expensive to transport, many "private persons" obtained licenses to produce whiskey. A local historian, Bennett Bratcher, reported that some family formulas were passed down for a hundred years. The whiskey and the sugar needed to distill it were the largest items carried on Morgantown's ferry over Green River.59

The most culturally-oriented Green River business in the post-war generation was the showboat. There was little showboating early in this period because the Civil War temporarily destroyed the business. Captain A. B. French and his wife Callie launched their New Sensation about 1877 at Cincinnati and revived the institution. During their early years of showboating, the French's discovered a fundamental principle—that the business was best adapted to the outlying regions. Consequently by 1889 they included Green River on their itinerary.60

Before the war, French worked on the Spaulding and Rogers Floating Circus as a magician, and he never forgot the river's

58 Collins and Collins, History of Kentucky, I, 152; Urey Woodson, The Good Old Days (Paducah, 1931). This pamphlet was printed for the 62nd annual meeting of the Kentucky Press Association.

59 Bratcher, Butler County.

60 Graham, Showboats, 40; Calhoon Constitution, Nov. 7, 1889.
excitement. At forty-five he married sixteen-year old Callie and they embarked upon their showboat career. He built five boats and named them all The New Sensation.\(^{61}\) It was the second one that reached Calhoun. The innovation of which all were proudest was the calliope, the second ever installed on a showboat. Callie had very positive ideas about decorating showboats, and this one looked like no other Green River boat. The outside was white with red trim and Callie wanted the inside "the color of shoal water." Between the windows were circus scenes interspersed with Shakespearean characters. Above the windows, painted in dark red letters three feet high, was printed The New Sensation.\(^{62}\)

French was a good business man and sent an advance man to announce his arrival by pasting up dated posters and distributing hand bills. He also mailed post cards to rural box holders. The people in isolated areas demanded a "clean" show, and French took great pains to keep it a family show, even refusing to perform for an all-male audience. At Calhoun, however, he had some family trouble with his cast as evidenced by the local press:

On the down trip of "French's New Sensation" on Green river recently, when the boat arrived at this point, Will Conkling, the "limber man" performer with the show, applied for license to wed Miss Grace Gee, one of the actresses. Her father locked her up, but Conkling vows he will get his wife if he must kidnap her.\(^{63}\)

Possibly the entertainers' personal lives were more entertaining than the show itself.

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\(^{61}\) Graham, Showboats, 65-66.

\(^{62}\) Calhoun Constitution, Nov. 7, 1889; Graham, Showboats, 61.

\(^{63}\) Calhoun Constitution, Nov. 7, 1889.
The post-war quarter century was obviously not without recreational and artistic outlets, even if they were subsidiary to business affairs. Green River country's traditional hedonism found expression in county fairs, Civil War reunions, County Court day frolics, steamboat and horse racing and singing schools. Generally, though, there was little originality in the arts, music, drama or literature. The average citizen apparently enjoyed photographic landscapes, minstrel shows, melodrama and sentimental novels, while the finest intellects were concerned with business or politics.

Louisville's Courier-Journal, under dynamic Henry Watterson's leadership, campaigned actively for Kentucky industry, especially the railroads. The L & N became a potent force in state politics. Louisville, for example, replaced the steamboat on its city seal with the locomotive in 1875. Green River country, stubbornly independent, never agreed on politics. The bankers and industrialists favored what they called a sound money system based on the gold standard while debtors and farmers wanted money "cheap" and believed a silver standard would let them pay their debts with fewer bushels of wheat or hogsheads of tobacco. The authors of Kentucky's 1891 Constitution were representative of these financial conflicts. The framers regulated business, but distrusted the legislature to enforce this regulation.

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Jett Hines was a young Butler countian who reflected a changing political pattern. His grandfather was a wealthy landowner, a Democratic member of the Kentucky Legislature, but Jett believed the Democratic party held no future for him. As a very young man he bought a tract of timber on credit. Using an ox team, he dragged the logs to the river and hired a professional raftsman to take them to Evansville. He told the raftsman to bring his parents a bag of rice and one of sugar--luxuries they rarely enjoyed. But when the raftsman came back up on the packet he had no rice or sugar. The check Jett received was so small that it failed to pay the raftsman's fee. This was Hines' introduction to the "Cleveland Panic" and the experience made him a Republican. His son recalled an incident that followed.

They were going to have a speaking at the schoolhouse and everybody went...His grandfather was the speaker, and after he made a rip-roaring speech for Grover Cleveland, he said, "I have a grandson here who disagrees with me, and I think it's good for people to hear both sides of a question. Now, Jett, you come up here and tell them your side."

This embarrassed him--nineteen years old, hadn't been out of the third reader, and of course he sat there. But the younger fellows that were sitting there with him pushed him out in the aisle and by that time he was getting mad, so he opened up. He told them the story about the logs. "You know, while I was working in the snow and making those logs, you boys were out rabbit-hunting, and I'd like to have been rabbit-hunting!"...and then he tells them what happened. "I just think that a man that would let the country get into this condition is not big enough to be President of the United States." So when they counted the votes on election day...Grover Cleveland got one vote. That was his grandfather's.

In Green River counties where the Negro population was larger than Butler's, the race issue continued to strengthen the Democratic party. It was the traditional white man's party and the Bowling Green Weekly Times-Gazette reminded its readers:

66Interview with James R. Hines, July 1, 1969.
Democrat, be on your guard....R. H. Porter, colored, is a candidate for coroner of the county while J. W. Buck is the Democratic nominee. Every Democrat in the county should go to the polls on election day and work for J. W. Buck.

The black man in Green River country could not be counted on to vote Republican, thus adding to the confused political scene. Negro preacher J. Allen Ross of Calhoun "excoriated the Republican party and showed how groundless was its protestation for his race."

A document from "The Colored Citizens of Frankfort, Kentucky and Vicinity, Praying the Enactment of laws for the better protection of life" was presented in 1871 to the United States Senate. It claimed that the Regulators and Ku Klux Klan took the law into their own hands and "their deeds are perpetrated only upon colored men and white republicans." 67

The presidential election in 1896 revealed that there were three political groups in Kentucky--the free-silverites endorsing William Jennings Bryan, the Gold Democrats supporting John M. Palmer and Republicans favoring William McKinley. Despite the fact that the aging Buckner represented Kentucky as vice-presidential candidate for the Gold Democrats, McKinley carried the state by a slim 281 vote margin. Typically, Green River country was split, though many staunch Democrats voted Republican for the first time. 68

67 Bowling Green Weekly Times-Gazette, July 13, 1886; "Memorial of a Committee Appointed at a Meeting of Colored Citizens, of Frankfort, Ky., and Vicinity, Praying the Enactment of laws for the better protection of life," April 11, 1871, in Thorp, Southern Reader, 411-413.

Economics, then, gradually transformed Green River country into a two-party area and business developments taught its inhabitants the role politics could play. The railroad and Navigation Company extended local markets and brought the realization that there was power in cooperative effort. Meanwhile increased transportation facilities made Green River inhabitants cognizant of other cultures and the part their educational facilities and tax-supported highways played in their development.

This post-war generation failed to realize, however, that their steamboat culture was incompatible with the emerging world. They were too busy competing for Green River business.
CHAPTER V

THE FINAL YEARS

Where shall I find it--that strange music gone,
Of steamboat whistles blowing in the dawn?¹

All eras fostered by a particular technological development are necessarily temporary, and Green River steamboating was no exception. In the early twentieth century the river lost the central position it had held since frontier days, and, except for occasional steam-towed barges, its steamboat culture was gone. Because no large cities lined its shores, Green River largely escaped the pollution that defiled other rivers. Spindletop Research recommended in 1968 that Green River be studied for possible designation as a scenic stream. A Glasgow editor approved, calling Green River the only unspoiled stream in our area linking population and trading centers as diverse as they were 175 years ago. It is the big thread which stitches our communities together in an age assaulted by pollution of air and water...If this section is finally designated a Wild River by the U.S. Department of the Interior, perhaps it will remain the last great symbol of Kentucky's Western Frontier.²

The desire to preserve Green River as a "symbol of Kentucky's Western Frontier" illustrated the river's changing role. It is unlikely, however, that any future river age will have a

¹Garnett L. Eskew, The Pageant of the Packets (New York, 1929), xiii.
symbol as historically significant as the steamboat was for Green River's frontier.

Steamboating's effect on Green River culture was seen more clearly after it was gone. When packets stopped plying its waters many small Green River towns lost their reason for existence. An example was Woodbury, near the confluence of Green and Barren rivers. In the first decade of the century this thriving river town had a United States Corps of Engineers' headquarters, a bank, a drugstore and several retail stores. When packet service ended in 1931 the bank failed, much of the government building was torn down and no adequate highway supplied local stores. When part of the dam washed away in 1965, it was not repaired, though river travel became physically impossible. The ancient remains of the lock and dam, the empty houses and the deserted government building bore silent testimony that an era was gone--an era defined by Green River steamboats.3

The last steam packets to ply the rivers were appropriately named the Bowling Green and the Evansville. The Bowling Green sank at South Carrollton March 31, 1920 and the Evansville was completely destroyed by fire on July 24, 1931 at Bowling Green's boatlanding. No serious effort was made to replace them, for steamboating was then unprofitable. This was true to a large extent throughout the Mississippi River valley. A Louisville man wrote a depressing evaluation of Ohio River packets in 1930 that could well have applied to Green River.

Half the money in the steamboat business is made by not spending it. This is true. While it may hurt some for the old steamboat people it is absolutely so. I was in Cincinnati Friday and Saturday of last week. I did everything I could to stir them up to get you all the business possible. I find the situation there regarding our boats just as it is here.\textsuperscript{4}

The gradual realization that the steamboat was a dying institution made the last generation of rivermen honor it, much as they would an old man with a useful and romantic past. Thus packets, so incongruous in the automotive age, attracted an impressive tourist trade. Until the 1920's, especially in isolated areas, Green River steamboating remained an important mode of transportation.

How did the slow, labor-consuming steamboat compete despite the encroachments of twentieth century technology? Before the fatal decline set in there was, in fact, a revival of packet business. One important reason for this was that the United States government repaired the locks, built new ones, and kept the rivers in excellent condition. By the turn of the century the rivers were economically vital once more, with eleven steamers, fifteen tow boats and seven tugs plying the Green and Barren rivers.\textsuperscript{5}

Another important reason for Green River steamboating's second wind was the leadership of Captain Richard T. Williams, an Ohio River man living in Evansville. Williams was born in Franklin County, Indiana, on April 26, 1833, and died at Evansville

\textsuperscript{4}John W. Hubbard to Frederick Way, Jr., Nov. 17, 1930, Way Scrapbook, 1920-1940 (Cincinnati Public Library); The Waterways Journal, LXXII (Aug. 1, 1959), 13; (Aug. 8, 1959), 13.

\textsuperscript{5}Greene, Green River Country, 16; Calhoun Constitution, July 25, 1889.
May 6, 1912. He had little formal education, but knew the carpentry and milling trades. In 1880 he began steamboating on the Ohio River. When the Federal government purchased the Green and Barron River Navigation Company franchise in 1888, Williams realized the potential wealth in Green River steamboating. He and his five sons built a miniature river empire that lasted forty-three years. A contemporary riverman explained their success.

All them Williams' was well-liked, the best mixers that ever was on the river. Once they were flagged and asked to bring a Blue-Back speller back from Evansville. They brought it too. It cost seventeen cents and it cost them more than that to land. They made a lot of money for a long time, and then it was those trucks that put them out of business.

When Williams decided to establish a new business on Green River he built the little steamer Maggie Bell. It was winter and very cold when he left Evansville. His grandson, who lived with Captain Williams as a boy, related a family story that other sources verify in its essentials.

He loaded his family of ten children and his wife /appropriately named Patience/ and started for Green River....

When they got above the locks, they stopped at a farm home to see if they could buy some produce--eggs, butter, milk, bacon, country ham, chickens, etc. In the meantime, it had rained /and/ inundated so much of the land that this farm was marooned....He said that if the farmer had grain he can rig up a mill here on the boat, so he ground out this farmer's corn and wheat and made flour, and meal and feed stuff for his livestock.... The farmer gave him in turn a portion as toll for grinding it.


7 Interview with Roscoe Ellis, July 16, 1969; interview with James R. Hines, July 1, 1969.
He got on the river, and there was a little coal community, and they too were marooned...My grandfather found out they were almost to the point of starvation, because they didn't have any supplies except what came by boat, and they hadn't anticipated the ice condition on the Ohio River....So he let them have some of the meal and flour he had ground, and some of the farm produce....

So he played between these two locks and kept those people from starving. As a result they got up a petition and asked him to come into Green River and navigate.8

The Calhoon Constitution announced on May 23, 1889 that the owners of the Maggie Belle had set up tri-weekly trips between Evansville and Calhoun. Soon competitors of the Williams family cut freight rates to "freeze out" the popular Maggie Belle. Williams had enough people in his family, however, that he did not have to pay regular salaries and consequently he usually won this "game." The competitive Blue Wing, for example, was bought out by the Williams' in 1892.9

When the Maggie Belle and Blue Wing proved too small, Williams bought the J. C. Kerr to replace them. It made two round trips each week between Evansville and Bowling Green.10 Carrying general merchandise and passengers from the Evansville wholesale houses on the "up" trip, the J. C. Kerr returned bearing livestock, poultry and passengers. One day J. Porter Hines, working on the competing Evansville, observed that the J. C. Kerr "came up the river with her stacks painted black and

8 Interview with James R. Hines, July 1, 1969.

9 Bowling Green Park City Weekly Times-Gazette, Aug. 23, 1891; MS receipt for supplies for Blue Wing, Dec. 8, 1892, Joe Hines Collection (Baton Rouge, Louisiana); Calhoon Constitution, May 23, 1889.

10 Interview with James R. Hines, July 1, 1969.
we knew the deal had gone through." This "deal" was a consolidation with the Evansville, Ohio and Green River Transportation Company effective January 1, 1898. The Evansville Courier reported that the two lines "that had driven so many boats out of the river" formed a stock company with their boats— the Evansville, the Gayoso and J. C. Kerr—as capital stock.11

Lee Howell, one of the incorporates, attended the same Evansville Presbyterian Church as the Williams family. One Sunday he made arrangements to meet Edgar Williams at his office. Howell convinced him that a merger would be advantageous to the Williams' because Howell, as general manager of the L & N Railroad Company, could get its business. The new company was formed and named the Evansville and Bowling Green Packet Company.12

Though the company was often criticized for its L & N connections, Evansville's business community viewed it favorably. The ruinous rate-cutting which prevented reliable river service had led Green River country's retail buyers to patronize Louisville, Cincinnati and Nashville instead of Evansville. A year later the Evansville Courier reported that "permanent and reliable service" had been established on Green River.13


12 Interview with James R. Hines, July 1, 1969.

Despite the merger, the Williams family continued their traditional river service. At least one member of the family stayed on each boat "to keep their contacts." They ran a "tight" boat and maintained careful business records. One for the Gayoso for the week ending February 2, 1900, revealed a weekly profit of more than $600.

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The Williams men continued the accommodating practices that had been their trademark. Captain Richard Williams, in care of the J. C. Kerr, asked that "You will please pass Miss Ollie Wilson in safety from Evansville to Calhoun, and charge same to yours very respectfully." A young lady passenger on a Williams boat wrote in 1909 that she and her friend "have just come from the pantry where the Captain entertained us at coffee....Mag seems to be enjoying herself and it goes without saying that I am."15

The galleys were always open for coffee, and the meals were frequent and filling. A passenger on Jeff Williams' Hazel Rice wrote that "the beating of a tin pan" summoned him to the seven

14 MS record, Joe Hines Collection; interview with James R. Hines, July 1, 1969; interview with Silas Massey, Aug. 6, 1969.

15 Clara Calvert to Mrs. T. C. Calvert, Sept. 4, 1909, Calvert Collection (Kentucky Library); R. M. Clark to R. T. Williams, May 2, 1895, Joe Hines Collection.
o'clock breakfast. He called it a "good farmer's meal--rice fixed
with tomatoes, and onions and very tasty; bacon, sausage, hot biscuit,
fried apples, coffee." The noon meal consisted of "roast beef,
mashed potatoes, lettuce, corn bread, white bread, pickles,
quartered onions, wild mustard greens, coffee, and pumpkin pie."
A woman passenger recalled that at dinner country ham and chicken
were both served, along with three desserts--watermelon,
blackberry cobbler and ice cream.16

Richard Williams provided his passengers with ice, which
was a rare luxury then. He "rigged up" an ice-maker on his boat,
and enjoyed providing "some farmer's wife or daughter or child,
or some member of the family who was sick" with a gift block of
ice. About 1897 his oldest son, Joe Williams, slipped on some
melting ice while he was engineer on the Park City and drowned in
Green River.17

The ambitious and adaptable Williams family often uncovered
new business opportunities. In early 1906 when the completion of
Lock and Dam No. 6 made Green River navigable to Mammoth Cave, the
J. C. Kerr, then renamed the Chaperone, made the first trip to
the cave. One of the "masters" of the boat, J. Porter Hines,
described the cave trips.

16 Firestone, Sycamore Shores, 45; interview with Silas
Massey, Aug. 8, 1969; Interview with Charles Vinson, April 25,
1969; Janice Holt Giles interview with Mrs. J. F. Thomas,
Sept. 10, 1962, Giles Collection.

17 Typed copy of newspaper article in John H. Moore Scrapbook,
(Cincinnati Public Library); interview with James R. Hines, July 1,
In the early spring of 1906, I went aboard the steamer Chaperone... I was on this boat six years. During this time I served in the capacity of both pilot and engineer. The Chaperone made two trips a week from the Bowling Green wharf to the Mammoth Cave, often carrying excursions at night. The crew consisted of eight men and eight deckhands. They were all congenial, sociable, likable men...

It was about a mile from the boat landing at the Mammoth Cave to the hotel. There were no roads then... only a wagon road, and a rough foot-path. We spent most of the evenings that the boat laid there, up at the hotel. Often times they would ask us to go with parties, as trailers, through the cave.18

The four-day trip from Evansville to Mammoth Cave was a bargain for vacationers, with meals, lodging, boat and cave trip costing from eight to ten dollars, depending upon the number making the trip. The boats also furnished entertainment en route to the cave. An orchestra—consisting of a piano, cornet and "trap" drums—played as the passengers "two-stepped and waltzed." An advertisement in 1921 showed the price for the all-boat trip was then fifteen dollars. For an additional eighty-three cents passengers could take the boat to Bowling Green and there catch the L & N for the cave.19

Often clubs, church groups and schools hired the packets for special excursions. One autumn, probably in 1908, a group of Bowling Green businessmen chartered the Chaperone to make a ten-day hunting and fishing trip to Lock No. 3 at Rochester. The Western Kentucky State Normal School at Bowling Green advertised that "once in the term the entire school will go on an excursion

19 Advertisement, effective May 2, 1921 to Sept. 3, 1921, Wm. Tippitt Collection; interview with James R. Hines, Nov. 7, 1969; S & D Reflector, II (March 1965), 12.
to Brown's Lock and mouth of Gaspar. One or more parties will go
to Mammoth Cave, 28 miles away." A Methodist Church group from
South Carrollton took a boat picnic to Paradise each summer.
J. Porter Hines, owner of the mail carrier Kalista, used his boat
on Sundays for such excursions. He reported that Airdrie was a
favorite destination. "We always took our picnic lunch and in the
dusk of the evening we would return down the beautiful Green
river."[20]

Barren River excursion guides pointed out an unusual
river pilot's guide at the confluence of Gaspar and Barren rivers.
It was named "Sally's Rock" in honor of young Sally Rock, who
first began waving to passing steamboats from it in 1886. Actually,
her "rock" was two huge pieces of sandstone jutting out from a
bluff overlooking Barren River. Sally was later post-mistress for
Rockland, Kentucky, and regularly received and delivered mail for
the steamboats. When a telephone was installed in her father's
general store at the top of the hill, rivermen bought her a
megaphone so that she could shout messages to them. A contemporary
recalled that Sally gathered news "like a sheep gathering burrs."
Boats were slowed down or stopped for exchanging news and questions.
For example, a farmer asked Sally to "Tell Jett Hines to find out
what feathers are bringing in Bowling Green." A river passenger

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[20] Hines, "Reminiscences," 2; Catalogue of Western Kentucky
State Normal School, 1915 (Feb., 1915).
shouted that "Aunt Trudy Jones is sick and wants somebody to tell her folks in Calhoun." 21

The steamboat pilots and crews made Sally a living legend. Reportedly the rivermen's wives were jealous of her, though Sally was not especially attractive. In 1918, when she was forty-six years old, she was still unmarried. One of her friends believed Sally answered a newspaper advertisement placed by a Canadian farmer seeking a bride. The resulting marriage ended Sally's unusual river career, but her story became a legend on Green River. 22

One reason steamboating continued to succeed in Green River country was because of the area's still isolated culture. Radios, telephones and automobiles were rare. The severe winter of 1917-1918 proved that the steamboat was perhaps too important to many Green River towns. When ice prevented boats from using Green River for two months, stranded Morgantown residents finally built sleds to bring necessities from Bowling Green. 23

Calhoun, too, was a river-dependent town until the 1920's. Tom Tichener brought the first automobile to town by steamboat in 1912, but it was only a curiosity until a road was built in 1918. Unfortunately this road was nothing but mud most of the year. Sometimes planks (often railroad cross-ties) were laid across it so that cars could pass without sinking deep into that mud. In


22 Ibid.

23 Bratcher, Butler County.
1923 the first gravel road was built, and local citizens agitated for others.

When the girls' basketball team could not reach their Owensboro rivals in 1924 because of bad roads, they finally took a steamboat to Livermore and there caught the train for Owensboro. Later that year, however, a gravel road connected the towns. These highways largely liberated Calhoun and other Green River towns from their dependence upon the steamboat. 24

Another isolated river town was Rochester. It was the home of Dr. W. P. Westerfield, a medical man who travelled a great deal by boat. In 1908, for example, he went to Bowling Green on the Evansville to attend a political convention. Earlier, in 1902, his river travels included Louisville, Bowling Green, Evansville, Rockport, Sebree and Henderson. When his daughter Annie married, the doctor and his wife accompanied the newlyweds to Bowling Green by steamer. 25

Another example of the area's continued river dependence was Westerfield's mention that "Len Gibbs wife's corpse shipped to Rochester this day on Crescent City." The steamboats were prepared for this service, for they carried a "body-shipping case" equipped with a metal tray which was ice-filled and laid over the body. A


hole at one end of the case permitted an attendant to watch the body in transit for signs of life.

While the river was vitally important to the local white population, it had a special attraction for Green River country Negroes. The steamboat captain hired a large number of stevedores on each river trip and these "roustabouts," were usually black men. In addition to the Negro's difficulty in finding other employment, the job held a special appeal.

The work of the rooster particularly suits a negro. On a steamboat there is a chance to move from place to place, to see the country....You might search the world over and never find a job that entailed less responsibility than that of the roostabout....Although the work, while it lasted, was hard and wearing upon even the toughest muscles, there were always long periods of inactivity--hours of sleeping contentedly in the sunlight on the deck....and of swaggering ashore at the end of the run to cut a swath among one's less fortunate neighbors who had not the broadening advantages of travel.27

A favorite pastime of the "rousters," as Green River inhabitants called them, was singing. Their songs, known as "coonjine," were a rhythmical chanting in time with the swaying gangplank as freight was loaded. An often-quoted coonjine, heard while the rooster on shore lifted sacks to his co-workers' shoulders, employed the distinctive call and response technique.

First, the on-shore Negro sang

Come hyuh, you ole rooster!
Poke out yo' neck ve'y long!
Tell me which shoulder you wants it on.

26Westerfield Diary, June 21, 1904, Jesse Westerfield Duer Collection. The Evansville Steamboat Museum has a body-shipping case and description.

27Eskew, Pageant, 257-258.
The carrier replied:

Ole roustabout ain' got no home,
Makes his livin' by his shoulder bone.\(^{28}\)

Some of the most vital roustabout songs consisted of only a few words or a couplet, repeated as a phrase in a blues song. One song heard on Green River had an unmistakable blues quality.

\[\text{\textbf{\begin{verbatim}
\begin{music}
\begin{lyric}
Oh tell me how long... tell me how long...
\end{lyric}
\end{music}
\end{verbatim}}\]

Green River rousters sang while they loaded cross-ties—a back-breaking job for which they were paid one and a half cents a tie. In Muhlenburg County, they coordinated their efforts with the chant "Ain't no bullfrogs in this pond. Dive, dive, dive." The "dives" got progressively louder and finally as they literally shouted the last one the log was loaded. When the day's work was finished, they sang "I Hate to See that Evening Sun Go Down." A contemporary recalled vividly the excellent bass voices and the accompanying banjo and guitar. Another spoke of the unforgettable beauty of these songs echoing across Green River. \(^{30}\)

\(^{28}\)Mary Wheeler, Steamboatin' Days: Folk Songs of the River Packet Era (Baton Rouge, 1944), 92; Donovan, River Boats, 225; Eskew, Pageant, 235.

\(^{29}\)Interview with James R. Hines, July 1, 1969; Wheeler, Steamboatin' Days, 6.

\(^{30}\)Interview with Roscoe Ellis, July 16, 1969; interview with Agnes Harralson, Apr. 25, 1969; interview with Charles Vinson, Apr. 25, 1969.
Several accounts of Green River steamboating mentioned that the boat's mate often mistreated the rousters. One especially irate boss threw lumps of coal at them if they did not move fast enough. On the larger Green River packets there were about twenty-two rousters and it was necessary that the mate be a "despot" in this little realm, and "possessed of a sense of humor (though of a dignified sort) to match that peculiar to the Negro character."  

The rousters were on duty twenty-four hours a day, but they slept a great deal between jobs on bales of hay or fertilizer bags. Many had no regular home and one former captain estimated that half of them never married. Often the rousters never went home as long as a job was available on a departing boat. Their pay was low, but comparable to unskilled farm labor.  

Many contemporary accounts recalled the rousters "shooting craps" on board the steamboats. Sometimes Green River passengers, watching the rousters from the upper deck, faded (placed secondary bets) on the game and tossed coins down to the winning rouster. At Evansville an old rouster named "Uncle Thomas" took advantage of his friends' love of gambling. He bragged about how he "cleaned up on some little green niggers" with dice that always fell at seven or eleven. Uncle Thomas lamented that some rousters preferred spending their time and money "foolin' with women."  

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32 Interview with James R. Hines, July 1, 1969; interview with Charles Young, Apr. 17, 1969; interview with Charles Vinson, Apr. 25, 1969.  
33 Wheeler, Steamboatin' Days, 95; interview with James R. Hines, July 1, 1969.
The lighter aspects of Green River's final steamboat culture would be incomplete without a description of its showboats. The area became a showboat favorite, probably because the towns and landings were close together and there was little competition from road shows and movies. An old-timer recalled that "everybody in Butler County joined the showboat when it came to Morgantown." Young Agnes Harralson was highly excited when one tied up at Rockport. Her description, given forty years later, confirmed the showboat's lasting cultural impact.

We walked over there every night for about a week to see a different show. "East Lynne" was one of them and I remember the heart-rending scenes in the shows... We really took it to heart....When the curtain was finally pulled, the scenes were just beautiful....Some would-be artists had painted sunsets in the background and different ones rolled up and down.

In between acts of the play itself there was usually a curtain rolled down with a scene on it and two would come out and dance or they would crack jokes...we would tell them after we got home for weeks. It was our amusement for the season. The songs were usually old tear-jerkers, ballads of some kind, and we would cry along with them. 34

The showboat Enterprise included Green River on its itinerary about 1900. A skit that was a favorite with Kentucky audiences was entitled "The Dancing Deacon." A member of the cast recalled that

part of the troupe in blackface pretended they were a Negro father, mother and their four children. While the family was dancing a fast buck and wing, a church elder also in blackface but with a white wig, walked out from the wings, leaning heavily upon a cane. He viewed the rapid-fire footwork around him with disfavor.

34 Interview with Agnes Harralson, Apr. 25, 1969; interview with Kirby Flener, July 16, 1969; William H. Tippitt to author, July 1, 1969.
"Listen, heah, chillun," he said. "You can't do that. We all is got religion." But the children danced even faster and clapped their hands rhythmically. "Don't you temptation me. I'm an ole man," the elder said, but, in spite of himself, his feet began to tap in unison with the dancing.

Soon he was dancing faster than anyone else. Apparently the exertion of dancing overheated him. He took off two coats, three vests and a few shirts. Finally the audience could see that he was wearing a woman's corset. The sight...was irresistibly funny.35

Tom Reynolds' Majestic probably entertained more Green River country audiences than any other showboat. Reynolds found that showboat profits were greater in isolated areas and Green River was his favorite. Like French he guarded his reputation for giving a "clean" show. His son claimed that Reynolds told his producer that he "didn't give a damn how rotten the show was just so it was clean."36

Reynolds boasted that he kept Green River navigable.

"People at Evansville begged my Dad to make a trip up the Green River to keep the government from closing off the locks," said his son. Once Reynolds went far up Green River to Mammoth Cave. After tying up the Majestic he saw people wading out in the middle of the river in water that failed to reach their knees. This threatened even the Majestic's twelve-inch draft and Reynolds left before showtime.37


36"Talk with Tommy Reynolds," typescript, 3 (Cincinnati Public Library); Graham, Showboats, 126.

37"Talk with Tommy Reynolds," 2; Graham, Showboats, 126.
Because his audiences preferred melodrama, Reynolds usually presented plays like "Ten Nights in a Bar Room" and "Saintly Hypocrites and Honest Sinners." In 1925 he substituted an entire musical program, but it was not popular. The following year Reynolds returned to the melodrama that Green River country and other isolated areas preferred. 38

On good nights Reynolds' gross receipts were from $110 to $150, but during the depression Green River audiences could no longer afford the price of admission. A Morgantown man recalled that because he lacked the forty cents needed for a ticket, he convinced Reynolds that delivering handbills was worth free admission to the show. 39

Sometimes Green River audiences were admitted to Doc Bart's Fun Boat if they brought the cook some blackberries or fresh fish. Once at Mill Landing, a poverty-stricken village of 600 far up Green River, Bart showed "Uncle Tom's Cabin" to a capacity crowd of 300. Asked the next morning if he were not ashamed to take their money, Bart reportedly replied, "No, we gave them the only pleasure they have had for years, and that for fifty cents or a gallon or two of berries." 40

By the 1930's the isolation that made Green River country a showboat favorite was no longer prevalent. There was no serious

38Graham, Showboats, 125.

39Interview with Bewley Neel, July 16, 1969; Graham, Showboats, 125.

40Graham, Showboats, 138. Other showboats reported on Green River were the New Era, the Floating Theatre, the Water Queen, the Columbia, Robertson's Floating Palace, the Princess and the Cotton Blossom.
attempt to replace the Evansville when she burned at the Bowling Green wharf in 1931. Though steam-towed barges of asphalt and coal continued to use it, Green River ceased carrying life's necessities. Later, when gasoline-powered boats replaced steam altogether, the river's tonnage surpassed that of any earlier period, but the effects of this river traffic were largely economic. The technology that destroyed its isolation blurred the well-defined river culture.

This culture lasted 104 years. Andrew Jackson was elected president of the United States the year the steamboat first reached Green River country and the last one arrived when Herbert Hoover held that office. That century brought many changes—in government, communications, economic patterns, social institutions and recreational opportunities—but some things held constant. Regardless of circumstances Green River inhabitants retained their humor and adaptability; and a river remained the center of their universe. These constants gave Green River country's steamboat culture an irresistible charm. It was clearly a popular culture, uninhibited and expressive of a whole era.

The automobile—along with the railroad, telephone, radio and other agencies of communication—replaced the steamboat and its way of life. A comparison of the river-dominated map of the nineteenth century and the highway-dominated map of the twentieth gave visual proof of the change. The "long rope of the river" that represented a century of steamboat culture was gone.
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