

The Eagle's Eye:  
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## Welcome to *The Eagle's Eye*

This edition of *The Eagle's Eye* is unique. These six essays reflect the distinctive diversity embedded in studying American culture and character. The essays cover topics from ethnicity and gender in literature, the political culture of the 60s, the history of an American symbol, a figure who connects law and sport, and a study of the human body. The topics may be diverse, but the methodologies share an important commonality. These papers represent how attentive investigation of something specific can lead to a better understanding of a broader picture of American life in the past and the present.

Sarah Bischoff's essay "Uncle Sam: The Man behind the Myth" begins our examination of American character by exploring the symbol of that familiar icon of Uncle Sam. Her extensive research roots this symbol in history and culture, exposing the myth as well as the fact, and she resolves these issues in a conclusion that connects to contemporary American ideals. Joseph Baker's essay continues the methodology of focusing on a specific figure in American history. His essay "Of Commissioners and Kings" introduces readers to a unique personality in American sports. Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, baseball's first commissioner, was instrumental in stabilizing a disintegrating national sport. Baker credits Judge Landis's ability to do this through toughness, idealism, and Midwestern values, all unique American traits. While Judge Landis was laying down the law in baseball in the 1920s, writer Susan Glaspell was dramatically portraying the role of women at virtually the same time. Natalie Cory's essay "A Woman's Choice: Power and Individuality, or Marriage?" compares Glaspell's play *Trifles* with Wendy Wasserstein's play *The Heidi Chronicles* in order to demonstrate how the role of American women has changed, or not changed, in 74 years. Cory concludes that even only 20 years ago, women were unable to attain both power and independence. Andrew Wagoner's essay carries this idea of power and independence into the realm of politics of the 1960s. In his essay, "Seeking the Unattainable, Avoiding the Unimaginable," he grounds the development of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in the historical and cultural context of political movements, presidential administrations, poetry, revolutions, and the radicalism found on American college campuses. Like Cory, Wagoner carries his discussion into the present and suggests that the idealism and pragmatism of SDS "still ring true in a society that is battling the same fears and ills which have the nation clamoring for a new dawn in American policy." Eric Donovan also approaches American policy, but from an immigrant's perspective. In his essay "Americanization Frustration," Donovan analyzes two contemporary short stories, one by Sandra Cisneros, a Mexican-American writer and one by Ha Jin, a recent Chinese immigrant. Wagoner's essay revealed the overt political atmosphere of the 1960s; Donovan's paper demonstrates that America's political issues cross local and distant boundaries. His methodology is rooted in a belief that an examination of America needs to include looking at America from the outside. By examining the language and style of two fictional ethnic representations, Donovan demonstrates that the ideals and character of America have far-reaching effects. The final essay completely reverses Donovan's method of looking outside the borders of America. Mary Conrad's essay "What Attracts Americans to the Abnormalities of the Human Form" goes deep, literally. Conrad plunges into the depths of psychology and anatomy to better understand the American

character. Her essay reveals the human interest in the mechanics of the human body, particularly the abnormal human body, and relates this fascination to the psychology of America.

Thank you to all of these writers for their innovative and stimulating papers on American culture and identity. Special thanks also to Dr. Francis Ryan, director of American Studies, and to the American Studies advisory board in helping to create this fifth issue of *The Eagle's Eye*.

Dr. Kevin Grauke & Dr. Judith Musser  
Faculty Advisors  
*The Eagle's Eye*.

## **Uncle Sam: The Man Behind the Myth** Sarah Bischoff

In 1961 Congress approved a Resolution declaring “Uncle Sam” of poster and cartoon fame as the descendant of the historical person Samuel Wilson, who lived and died in Troy, NY in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. My purpose is to discover the history of this man and to determine if the Resolution bears validity. There is very little evidence of Samuel Wilson that survives from his time period. Nevertheless, it is possible to form a general idea of the man and how his personage evolved into a symbol that gained national status. Over time, “Uncle Sam” literally came to represent the United States and the personality, goals, and circumstances of that nation. Thus, the various representations of Uncle Sam have continued to change as the nation has evolved. First used in a cartoon depicting the divisive currents aroused by the Jackson administration<sup>1</sup>, the symbol grew more popular as it portrayed the country’s strife throughout the Civil War<sup>2</sup> and immediately after. Advertisements continue to use the Uncle Sam image today as a marketing tool, and cartoonists still utilize him to fit a political agenda. However, the most remembered representation remains embodied in the “I Want You” World War One poster. Therefore, I will also focus on how the representation of Uncle Sam changed as a result of social and political changes in America, through the post-Civil War era of political cartoonist Thomas Nast.

Before exploring these issues one must inevitably ask the question, “Why is any of this important?” Supposedly, a man named Samuel Wilson lived in Troy, NY during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Eventually, his personality and character became the basis upon which an icon, representing the United States, was formed. Samuel Wilson is no outstanding candidate for the Great Man Theory. He did not consciously take monumental actions or make decisions that directly led to changes within the young United States. In fact, therein lies the problem. If more evidence of his existence had survived, tracing his development from a mere mortal to an everlasting, iconographic image would be a much easier task. There may in fact be a much simpler answer to the questions of how and why his image developed as it did. In this case, however, one can only make reasonable assessments based on the limited amount of information available. Therefore, why is it important to understand the historical character and personality of Samuel Wilson? The answer lies in the very process of the making of a symbol. Legends and symbols are formed due to the ideals and aspirations held by people who take a reality and make it into something so much greater than it actually is. Uncle Sam is one such symbol. The symbol is significant because it has come to signify the United States as a nation and has even contributed to the early unification of the states under one national title. Samuel Wilson is important because he provided the real material upon which the mythological figure was based. While the various appearances and attitudes given to Uncle Sam may differ quite substantially from the actual qualities of the historical Wilson, nevertheless Wilson inspired the very idea of Uncle Sam and thus provided the greatest contribution to his creation.

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<sup>1</sup> Alton Ketchum, *Uncle Sam: The Man The Legend* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1959), 37.

<sup>2</sup> During the Civil War such magazines as *Punch*, *Fun*, and *Harper's Weekly* were known for publishing political cartoons. John Tenniel, Matt Morgan, and Thomas Nast, respectively, all used Uncle Sam in various portrayals of the United States government. Nast, however, must be given the most credit for popularizing the now-familiar image for many years after the war had ended. Thus, Uncle Sam served as a usable icon for political cartoonists, in a variety of situations faced by the U.S. government. Stephen Hess and Sandy Northrop, *Drawn & Quartered: The History of American Political Cartoons* (Montgomery: Elliot & Clark Publishing, 1996), 30.

First and foremost in tackling this project, research must be undertaken of all that can be known about Samuel Wilson. Only then will it be possible to prove that he was, indeed, the man from whom the legend sprang. *The Arlington Vital Records* records his birth date as September 13, 1766 in what was formerly Menotomy, a town made famous by its participation in the Revolutionary War. While records vary, this date must be given precedence because of its source in Arlington's records.<sup>3</sup> The son of Edward and Lucy Wilson, Samuel was the seventh of thirteen children<sup>4</sup>, two of whom died soon after childbirth. Living on a farm owned by his father, he was approaching adolescence as the Revolutionary War broke out. Living in Menotomy, located near the tumultuous city of Boston, brought him very close to the turmoil of that war. When the battle of Menotomy took place on April 19, 1775, Samuel was a boy of nine years and several men from his town were killed in the conflict. While he probably never took an active role in the war, its close proximity certainly must have affected him.

In 1780 Ed Wilson decided to move with his family to Mason, New Hampshire, most likely because he realized an opportunity to buy land for a cheap price.<sup>5</sup> At this time Samuel Wilson was an adolescent of fourteen years, living on a farm amidst the turmoil of the Revolutionary War. There have been more specific claims that Samuel Wilson personally participated in the War around this time, but these cannot be accepted as reliable. While his two older brothers did fight against the British, Samuel was still quite young to be involved. "Service boys" were often needed and employed by the Americans to fulfill the more mundane tasks required of an army. However, no evidence survives to indicate that Samuel ever acted as a service boy or held any other position in the Army.<sup>6</sup>

During his adolescence in Mason, New Hampshire Samuel also met Betsy Mann. The daughter of Colonel Benjamin Mann, who was made famous through his service in the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War, she accepted Wilson's marriage proposal. In 1797 the two adults were married after Samuel returned from his Troy home for the ceremony, and Betsy returned with him to Troy to spend the remainder of their lives. She had probably agreed to wait for Samuel to return from Troy after a number of years. He had decided to first establish himself in the town, with the intent of building a foundation upon which he could then support his own family.<sup>7</sup>

The decision Samuel Wilson made to settle in Troy in February of 1789 is the cause of much speculation. There are, however, some facts about the rising city that we can be certain of and that lead us closer to an understanding of Samuel's translocation. Approximately one month previous to the arrival of Samuel and his brother, Ebenezer, the city had been renamed from its earlier title of Vanderheyden.<sup>8</sup> This new designation is not merely a superficial changing of titles,

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<sup>3</sup> There is an alternate date scrawled into the margin of Ed Wilson's family Bible that contests this exact date.

However, Ed Wilson wrote this brief note as an elderly man, and most likely had forgotten the actual birth date of his son. Alton Ketchum, *Uncle Sam: The Man The Legend*, 130.

<sup>4</sup> Records vary slightly on the order of birth. The *Stage II Archaeological Investigations at the Samuel "Uncle Sam" Wilson House*, not published until 1990, claims Samuel was the 6<sup>th</sup> of the 13 children, while a few sources concur that he was 7<sup>th</sup> in line.

<sup>5</sup> The Wilsons received very little money for selling their Massachusetts farm, since the payment was given to them in the almost-worthless currency of Continental dollars. Alton Ketchum, *Uncle Sam: The Man The Legend*, 48.

<sup>6</sup> *IBID.*, 130.

<sup>7</sup> Samuel briefly returned to Mason for the marriage ceremony on January 3. Samuel was 31 and Betsey 24 at the time, and the couple remained in Troy until the deaths in 1854 and 1863, respectively. They are buried beside each other in Oakwood Cemetery. Alton Ketchum, *Uncle Sam: The Man The Legend* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1959), 58.

<sup>8</sup> The name of Troy was at this time chosen, to replace the longer name of Vanderheyden. "In January, 1789,

but a much more significant alteration. It signifies the growth of the city as a new center of commerce and trade. As industry grew in the United States, the potential of Troy's location became more evident. Farmers could produce a variety of crops, as well as raise cattle for slaughter, and these and other goods were easily shipped up and down the Hudson River.

Certainly, Samuel and Ebenezer must have been aware of these circumstances. Located about 150 miles from their Mason home, Troy was not far and the brothers most likely traversed on foot. Considering the Wilsons later became so successful in the meatpacking profession, they may have realized the potential of Troy in that business. In addition to the area's suitability for raising cattle, the city was quite accessible to the Hudson River as an avenue of commerce. Provisions, therefore, could easily be shipped to other locations. By 1773 Samuel had become a "meat provisioner in Troy. He built a slaughterhouse and packing house on the north bank of the Poestenkill, west of River Street."<sup>9</sup> Thus, the Wilsons must have recognized the potential rewards to be found in the business. However, Samuel and Ebenezer Wilson did not become meatpackers until four years after they had first settled in Troy, in 1789. A more likely reason for the resettlement of the Wilson brothers from Mason, NH was the potential that lay in the bricklaying profession. Upon their arrival, there had as yet been very few houses, if any, built of brick in the Troy area. Thus, in establishing their own bricklaying business the two opportunists were taking advantage of an infantile enterprise.<sup>10</sup>

To understand the reputation Samuel garnered in Troy over the course of his lifetime, one must first attempt to define the character of the man. This character was shaped, in part, by the period in which Samuel lived – more specifically, by his upbringing in Revolutionary America. One can surmise that he was influenced by events from his childhood in a number of ways, which ultimately affected his character and shaped him into the individual that he became as an adult. Unfortunately, there is very little about Samuel's personality, character, or even his physical characteristics, that can be known with certainty. Yet these are key aspects that a historian must face when confronting the legend of Uncle Sam. The key is to ascertain how and why the physical and personality attributes of that person evolved into an emblem of the entire nation. My argument rests on the reasonable assertion that there must have been something, however slight, about the very personage of Samuel Wilson that caused him to be respected and admired as "Uncle Sam," and which ultimately encouraged the development of a larger-than-life national symbol.

Turning to the few sources of information that are available, it is possible to develop a sketch of Samuel Wilson that may suffice. Librarian Jessie F. Wheeler's efforts to discover the historical Wilson in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were vital in keeping the few records of him alive.<sup>11</sup> In her own account of her findings, Wheeler included an interview with Wilson's great grand-nephew, Lucius E. Wilson. Commenting on Samuel Wilson, Lucius noted "In form and carriage

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freeholders decided that the town needed a new name, shorter and easier to remember. Accordingly, they chose Troy, which was in keeping with the classical tradition that was spawning such upstate New York names as Rome, Utica, Syracuse, Ithaca, and Delphi." *IBID.*, 50.

<sup>9</sup> "Wilson's Business Was Top Industry", Troy Room Wilson Vol. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Samuel actually built three houses in Troy for his family to live in. The first was on a plot of land he rented in 1793. "On March 8 of that year, for an annual ground rent of thirty shillings, Jacob D. Van der Heyden leased to Samuel Wilson the west half of the lot on the northwest corner of Second and Ferry streets, where Samuel proceeded to erect a small frame dwelling, and there he lived for many years." The third and last of the homes is located at 144 Ferry Street, where Samuel resided until his death on July 31, 1854. Alton Ketchum, *Uncle Sam: The Man The Legend*, 50.

<sup>11</sup> "Uncle Sam" By Jessie F. Wheeler, Troy Room Wilson Vol. 1.

he greatly resembled Abraham Lincoln. He was tall, well proportioned, well preserved and the type of the well-to-do gentleman of his day, had high cheek bones, was clean shaven and wore his grey hair rather long.”<sup>12</sup> This verbal portrait of Wilson must be given ample consideration, because Lucius had firsthand knowledge of his great granduncle and was approximately eighteen years old when Samuel died.<sup>13</sup>

Lucius denied that the popular representations of Uncle Sam found in numerous newspapers and magazines were accurate, in regard to their physical descriptions of the man. However, Lucius’ memory seemed to have been somewhat influenced by these very same images. His verbal testimony of Samuel’s description, given as an elderly man, is based on the likeness of Wilson to Abraham Lincoln. While Wilson and Lincoln certainly may have resembled each other, in all likelihood Lucius had recalled various iconic representations he had seen of Samuel, and had confused these pictures with his own mental portrait of the man he remembered. As the United States drew closer to civil war and eventually became embroiled in the struggle during the 1860s, images of Uncle Sam evolved into a composite figure that drew from characteristics of both Samuel Wilson and Abraham Lincoln. Thus, over time Lucius’ viewing of these various icons probably altered the mental image he held of his great granduncle.

Lucius, also, would most likely have been raised to respect and admire Samuel, both because of his great granduncle’s status as a head of the family and because of his popularity and renown in the city of Troy. Therefore, his remembrance of Wilson’s physical characteristics would have been affected by his feelings of admiration and respect for the man. His depiction of Samuel as a “well-to-do gentleman of his day” most likely describes the way that Wilson carried himself and was respected at an old age, rather than referring to any outward appearances of Wilson as an actual gentleman. Raised on a farm, Wilson became successful only after working hard at his trades of brick making and meatpacking. He did not fit the description of a gentleman in the sense of social status or class and did not dress or attempt to act like a wealthy or “well-to-do gentleman.” Instead, while he did gain success through enterprise, Wilson never rose above his social class nor appeared to have any real desire to do so. His ambition and opportunism reached only insofar as it would allow him to obtain a comfortable living situation and to provide for his family.

Examining Samuel Wilson’s personality and character, little evidence may be ascertained from a combination of newspaper accounts and Lucius’ testimony. While it is difficult to separate the man’s actual characteristics from those that may have been granted him after his development into an icon, we can assume that statements referring to Samuel as “one of the most active business men of the community”<sup>14</sup> and “an early pioneer in the settlement of this place”<sup>15</sup> are fairly accurate. Wilson’s view of Troy as a new city full of business opportunities led him to assume an active engagement in the area upon his arrival. As a young man, he had a desire to establish himself and to become successful within his own social class. Other depictions of Wilson as a man “known for his honesty and common sense, wielding great influence for good”<sup>16</sup> are deductions most likely drawn from the overall impression that Wilson was well-liked, (he was, after all, referred to by many as “Uncle” Sam), as well as evidence that he was engaged in volunteer firefighting, held official city posts, and contributed money towards the

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<sup>12</sup> “Uncle Sam”.

<sup>13</sup> IBID.

<sup>14</sup> Samuel Wilson Obituary, *Troy Daily Times* July 31, 1854, Troy Room Wilson Vol. 1.

<sup>15</sup> “Death of the late Samuel Wilson”, *The Northern Budget* Troy, NY August 2, 1854, Troy Room Wilson Vol. 1.

<sup>16</sup> “History Of Uncle Sam: The American Dream” By Thomas I. Gerson, Troy Room Wilson Vol. 1.

construction of a church.

The philanthropic side of Samuel Wilson certainly holds merit, though it almost certainly has been exaggerated and generalized in order to form a more solid and ideal image of the man. Despite this, some documentation remains that gives credence to the image of Wilson as a man who cared about the Troy community not merely in regard to his own benefit, but for the sake of the community itself. The records of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, located at Congress and Third streets, contain the details of a contract with E. & S. Wilson, which "provided the brick at a cost of \$457.31"<sup>17</sup> More significantly, however, "the Wilson brothers were contributors to the funds for the erection of the building and bought sittings, although they were not members of the parish. Their contribution was \$55.50; and the pew, which they shared with four other men, cost \$86, their share being less than a quarter of the sum."<sup>18</sup> This account proves that the Wilson brothers were not merely men eager to profit from the new, up-and-coming city, but were also interested in and dedicated to the life of that community. They personally contributed a substantial amount of money to the building of the Episcopal Church, of which they were not members. After its completion, the two brothers did not even attend a service at the Church.

The upheaval of the War of 1812 evoked another example of Wilson's volunteer efforts in the community. In the November 8, 1814 issue of the *Troy Post* an announcement was posted for "A meeting of Citizens of the Village of Troy...to relieve the destitute families of such of our citizens as are on military duty for the defence of NY."<sup>19</sup> The list of names mentioned, which reveals the identities of those who had formed the committee to assist Troy residents, includes that of Samuel Wilson. Thus, his participation in Troy affairs appears to be based in an overall concern for the well being of his community, as well as the opportunity for self-establishment and self-improvement.

Also indicating that Wilson had an interest in the community of Troy is an 1808 copy of two oaths that Samuel took for the positions of path master and assessor.<sup>20</sup> Taking the oaths in April of 1808, Wilson certainly must have been aware of the responsibilities that accompanied the acceptance of these positions. While the two posts may have coincided with his business interests, they must have demanded much more of his time and energy, thus diverting his attention away from his own meatpacking business.

In regard to the role of Samuel Wilson as a volunteer firefighter, the City of Troy Fire Dept. contains records that prove Samuel Wilson served from 1800-1819 as a volunteer member of Fire Engines 1 and 2, and his brother Ebenezer served the same companies from 1796-1816.<sup>21</sup> In the article, Capt. John G. Waite claims that Samuel further contributed to the cause of firefighters by going into the brick making profession, and building homes and stores that were less susceptible to fire. While Samuel and Ebenezer's use of brick rather than wood to construct houses certainly would have lessened the hazard of fire, it is doubtful that the Wilsons became involved in the brick making business simply for that reason. Ebenezer did not join the volunteer company until 1796, and Samuel not until 1800-years after they had begun their own brick

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<sup>17</sup> "Brick In Troy Church Sold By Uncle Sam" Troy, NY May 23, 1931, Troy Room Wilson Vol. 1.

<sup>18</sup> IBID.

<sup>19</sup> *Troy Post* Nov. 8, 1814, Troy Room Wilson Vol. 8.

<sup>20</sup> In holding these two positions, Wilson must have been a trusted member of the Troy community. The path master was also known as a road commissioner, and was in charge of facilitating any improvements or changes that needed to be completed on the roads of the city. As assessor, he most likely estimated the value of goods or estates, particularly when a person was deceased and their property was to be sold. "Even in 1808 City Officials Held Two Jobs" *The Times Record* Troy, NY February 5, 1935, Troy Room Wilson Vol. 1.

<sup>21</sup> "Firemen Lay Claim to Wilson", Troy Room Wilson Vol. 1.

making business. The two brothers may have seen the benefits of using brick as an alternative, but they equally recognized the opportunity for personal success that lay in establishing their own business.

As significant as brick making may have been in giving the Wilson brothers a start, it was the meatpacking industry that brought them the most success, and this was ultimately the avenue through which Samuel evolved into a living legend.<sup>22</sup> References occasionally made to Ebenezer and Samuel regarding their prosperous start in Troy, have probably been based on the success of their meatpacking business. A *Trojan Sketch Book* (1846) article states that "Among the first settlers who subsequently distinguished themselves by their enterprise, may be mentioned Messrs.... Ebenezer Wilson and Samuel Wilson. These pioneers and their early associates, were compelled to embark on a struggle with the then formidable "New City".<sup>23</sup> This being one of several references to the success of the Wilsons as businessmen, and written years before Samuel's own death, it is safe to assume that the Wilsons had indeed made a profit as businessmen. Because of the marked conversion from brick making to meatpacking by 1794 one can also conclude that meatpacking, which sustained the brothers at least until the end of the War of 1812, was the primary stimulus for this and other claims of success.

Considering the inquiry of why the Wilson brothers decided to become meatpackers after working as brick makers for a period of about 4-5 years, one must inevitably conclude that meatpacking offered a greater chance of profit or success. A statement provided by historian Thomas I. Gerson, claims "Wilson, realizing that meat was essential to the westbound pioneer, became meat provisioner in Troy. He built a slaughterhouse and packing house on the north bank of the Poestenkill, west of River street."<sup>24</sup> Most likely, Wilson realized the profit that could be made from raising and slaughtering cattle, and then shipping the meat via the Hudson River.

The most compelling evidence supporting the view of the Wilsons as avid businessmen is an 1805 advertisement placed by the two brothers in local newspaper the *Northern Budget*. This article states:

"The undersigned, having two large and convenient slaughterhouses, beg leave to acquaint their customers and others, that they will be enabled to kill, cut and pack 150 head of cattle per day; and from their local situation, pledge themselves to accommodate those who may favour them with a call, on terms as low as can be obtained in the state. They have on hand a large supply of barrels and salt which will be disposed of on the lowest terms. All those who

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<sup>22</sup> While the Wilsons engaged first in brickmaking and later in meatpacking, it appears as though Samuel retained his brickmaking business, or re-established it later in life. A June 18, 1833 statement in the *Troy Budget* explains "Mr. Wilson returns his thanks to those of his friends and fellow citizens who have subscribed so liberally to make up his loss at his Bricking establishment during the recent freshet. They are informed that the subscription paper is left with Mr. E. L. Boynton, number 18 Ferry Street who will receive all that may be left and forward it to Mr. Wilson." Apparently, Samuel's brickmaking business had suffered a financial blow and members of the Troy community had contributed to a fund raised in his benefit. Therefore, while Samuel may have been successful at periods with his brickmaking and meatpacking establishments, he did not retain that success throughout his entire life. Never did he reach a much higher social or financial status from that which he was born into. "A Card" *Troy Budget* June 18, 1833, Troy Room Wilson Vol. 8.

<sup>23</sup> *Trojan Sketch Book* 1846. This article also refers in particular to "New City", the former name of the village of Lansingburgh. In 1791 Lansingburgh was included as part of the city of Troy, and today it continues to be called such, as well as it is considered to be North Troy. Tice, Joyce M., 1999, "Tri-Counties Genealogy & History by Joyce M. Tice".

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~nyrensse/lansing.htm>, (Accessed April 10, 2007).

<sup>24</sup> "Wilson's Business Was Top Industry"; *Stage II Archaeological Investigations*.

shall be under the necessity of waiting 24 hours for their cattle to be slaughtered shall have them pastured free of expense. E. & S. Wilson Troy, September 17, 1805"<sup>25</sup>

This advertisement leads us to several significant conclusions. First, it proves that the Wilsons had established their own slaughterhouses to fulfill the responsibilities required of them. They also owned a fairly large tract of land, enabling their customers to pasture their cattle for a brief period without charge. Finally, the assertion that the business of E & S Wilson had the ability to "kill, cut and pack 150 head of cattle per day" implies the two men were in charge of at least a handful of workers.<sup>26</sup> Their business had apparently grown to an extent that made it necessary to employ a group of men to work for them. These deductions, when considered together, inevitably lead to the conclusion that Samuel and Ebenezer had established a prosperous partnership. Additionally, Troy citizens recognized Samuel's ascent in business, due to hard work and active involvement.

With this background knowledge of Samuel Wilson concerning his upbringing, personality, character, and involvement in Troy, it is now time to examine how the legend of Uncle Sam was born. Keeping all of the abovementioned facts and ideas well within reach is of extreme importance, in order to more fully understand how and why Samuel Wilson became the basis for a national symbol. The man had moved to Troy as an adolescent, establishing himself as an eager young businessman. Through hard work and a certain amount of tact, Samuel gained success through the enterprise of his and his brother's efforts. More importantly, however, Samuel participated in the Troy community not only as a businessman, but as a philanthropist and city official as well. He held official city posts, donated money to a Church of which he was not a member, and volunteered to aid citizens in their defense from uncontrolled fires. By the time the War of 1812 erupted, Samuel Wilson had been actively engaged as a citizen of Troy for over 20 years. The simple fact that he was called, not Samuel, but "Uncle Sam" by most, if not all, Troy residents is indication enough that he was affectionately respected within the community.

The success of the Wilson's meatpacking business is directly related to the transition that was made from the historical Samuel Wilson to the legendary Uncle Sam. On October 1, 1812 Elbert Anderson placed an advertisement in Troy newspapers announcing that he was gathering proposals "for 2000 barrels PRIME PORK and 3000 barrels PRIME BEEF, to be delivered in the months of January, February, March and April, at Waterford, Troy, Albany and New-York...The preference will be given to those whose reputation and security will insure the faithful compliance of the terms of the contract."<sup>27</sup> This request for proposals must be viewed within the context of the new war with Great Britain. The United States had formed companies of troops to engage in the War of 1812, and it was necessary to supply these troops with adequate provisions. Elbert Anderson was employed by the United States army, as he stated under the advertisement as "Army-Contractor," to provide these items to the soldiers. Being such a large request, he had placed this advertisement evidently with the hopes of selecting from a variety of candidates. The idea that the Wilsons would have been chosen to fulfill the contract is not a dubious assumption.

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<sup>25</sup> *Northern Budget* Sept. 17, 1805, Troy Room Wilson Vol. 8.

<sup>26</sup> From the available sources one can reasonably conclude that the Wilsons had a successful enterprise, which required them to employ a few dozen workers. Thomas I. Gerson, often referred to as the "official 'Uncle Sam' historian", claims Samuel "employed several hundred men, and eventually processed 1,000 cattle a week." His evaluations of Wilson, however, appear to be respected by Uncle Sam admirers because they fit nicely into the ideal, rather than having a solid base in fact or truth. "Wilson's Business Was Top Industry".

<sup>27</sup> Elbert Anderson "Proposals for Beef and Pork", October 1, 1812, Troy Room Wilson Vol. 1.

The advertisement placed by E & S Wilson in 1805 attests to the fact that Ebenezer and Samuel had formed a successful business, and would have been capable of supplying a large amount of beef and pork to the army.<sup>28</sup> Also, included in earlier contracts with Anderson are statements of shipments from Samuel Wilson, indicating that his business had already proven itself worthy of such a task as supplying the army.<sup>29</sup> Thus, Samuel would have previously fulfilled Anderson's requirement that "reputation and security will insure the faithful compliance of the terms of the contract." Having already worked with Anderson successfully, the army contractor was well aware of Wilson's reliability as a business partner.

In late 1812, then, E & S Wilson began supplying the United States army with provisions through their meatpacking business. The story of how the symbol "U.S." was mistaken by several men to mean "Uncle Sam," rather than "United States," is one found in numerous newspaper articles, books, and statements. While the exact circumstances of the event cannot be certain, one can draw valid conclusions from a very basic understanding of the episode. The use of the phrase "Uncle Sam" must first be clarified, however.

The first use of the term "Uncle Sam" in newspapers did not explain the origin of the nickname, and therefore it is necessary to look further down the chronological timeline to determine the events that actually produced the appellation. The very first copy of the story connecting Samuel Wilson with Uncle Sam is found in a story run by the *New York Gazette and General Advertiser* on May 12, 1830.<sup>30</sup>

This story was reprinted several times and in various collections concerned with tracing the origins of anecdotes, symbols, and sayings. Of the many versions of the Uncle Sam story that exist in newspapers, articles, and references within books, this 1830 account should, first and foremost, be given the utmost consideration in terms of validity. Besides its obvious distinction as the earliest available version of the event in print, it also provides the most detailed and logical explanation as to how and why Samuel Wilson's reputation as "Uncle Sam" was translated into a national icon representing the young country.

Lucius Wilson does provide an account of the Uncle Sam story, and this should also be given due consideration. However, Wilson's tone has the familiar resonance of an individual raised on family truths that have faded slightly into the realm of myth over the years. He was still only a young man when Samuel died, and thus has probably encountered his own great-granduncle's story more often in the presence of strangers or family members farther removed from Samuel, not from direct relatives or friends who held close connections to Samuel throughout his lifetime. Therefore, one must conclude that Lucius' story, while certainly based in fact, had absorbed at least the very beginnings of a myth, and has inevitably been affected thus.

First turning to the account printed by the *NY Gazette and General Advertiser* from May 12, 1830, then, a clear picture can be constructed of the circumstances under which Uncle Sam became a renowned figure outside of the Troy community. The first significant piece of evidence provided by the article pertains to the idea that "Immediately after the declaration of the last war with England, Elbert Anderson, of New York, then Contractor, visited Troy, on the Hudson, where was concentrated and where he purchased, a large quantity of provisions-beef, pork, etc."<sup>31</sup> Apparently, then, Elbert Anderson was working as a contractor of provisions for the U.S. Army during the War of 1812, had established connections in Troy related to his business, and

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<sup>28</sup> *Northern Budget* Sept. 17, 1805

<sup>29</sup> Alton Ketchum, *Uncle Sam: The Man The Legend*, 129.

<sup>30</sup> " 'Uncle Sam' " Mentioned In 1813 Broadside", Troy Room Wilson Vol. 1.

<sup>31</sup> "Origin of Uncle Sam" *NY Gazette* May 12, 1830, Troy Room Wilson Vol. 8.

was shipping provisions from that city along the Hudson River. The statement is further reinforced by numerous other articles and references, printed after 1830 but all in agreement as to the station of Anderson in Troy in 1812.

Next the article claims “The inspectors of these articles, (the “beef, pork, etc.”), at that place were Messrs. Ebenezer and Samuel Wilson. The latter gentleman, (invariably known as “Uncle Sam”) generally superintended in person a large number of workmen, who, on this occasion were employed in overhauling the provisions purchased by the contract or for the army.” This claim demands further analysis and cannot simply be taken at face value. First of all, there are no written records of Samuel Wilson inquiring after or accepting a position as inspector of articles. Furthermore, the role of inspector would appear to conflict with his personal interests as a businessman heavily involved in the meatpacking industry. Essentially, he would be inspecting the provisions of his competitors.

This is all determined, however, under the assumption that by “inspectors of these articles,” the author was claiming that Samuel held a specific position that entailed the close examination of provisions being shipped down the Hudson River. Perhaps the author meant only that the Wilsons, successful businessmen as they had become, fulfilled the role of superintending their workers by “inspecting” their products before being shipped out. The term “inspector,” it is quite likely, means nothing more than that the Wilson brothers had built up their own business to such a level that they had to administer numerous workers under them to slaughter livestock, cure meat, pack it, etc. Samuel’s role was that of a supervisor, and as such he would have inspected the final products to be sure his men had completed their task.

This concept of Samuel and Ebenezer’s role coincides with the explanation that they “generally superintended in person a large number of workmen.” If the two brothers had been employed as inspectors, they probably would not have been in charge of a large consignment of workers. It would have been the responsibility of the head of the respective meatpacking business to make sure his products were shipped out to their destination successfully. Also mentioned previously was the contract detailing the shipment of provisions from Samuel Wilson to Elbert Anderson.<sup>32</sup> It is logical to conclude that Anderson, after dealing with Wilson on at least one prior occasion, had found him to be a reliable businessman. He then hired him to provide shipments for the U.S. Army during the War with Great Britain. To assume that Wilson was hired as an inspector of meat, when he himself was an able meatpacker in the same area is much more of a stretch.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, Lucius’ testimony supports the conclusion that Samuel Wilson was hired as a supplier of provisions to the U.S. Army. He explicitly states that “Uncle Sam was given a contract by him (Elbert Anderson) to supply the beef and pork he required and he would pack all such in casks and packages, marking each “E.A.”-“U.S.” and ship from the Troy wharf on sailing vessels to destination.”<sup>34</sup> Therefore, the conclusion that Wilson supplied the U.S. Army with provisions during the War of 1812 is supported by both the first written mention of Samuel Wilson as the origin of the national symbol of Uncle Sam in 1830 and the testimony of Samuel’s great grandnephew.

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<sup>32</sup> Alton Ketchum, *Uncle Sam: The Man The Legend*, 129.

<sup>33</sup> There is an alternate claim by Gerson, and is found in a few other documents, that Samuel “was made inspector of provisions for the Army of New York and New Jersey. He was under contract to Col. Elbert Anderson Jr.” However, there is not enough valid evidence to give this more unlikely view prevalence over the one accepted here. “History Of Uncle Sam: The American Dream”.

<sup>34</sup> “Uncle Sam” By Jessie F. Wheeler, Troy Room Wilson Vol. 1.

There is one more piece of evidence which, when analyzed in conjunction with other accounts of the story, can be granted as being fairly certain. The 1830 further states, as the other sources agree, that "The casks (of beef, pork, etc.) were marked E.A.-U.S." They were marked in this manner because Elbert Anderson, as the official supplier for the United States Army during the war, was under contract by the U.S. government. Thus, the casks of meat shipped out by companies that Anderson had hired to supply the army were most likely required to have those markings. To today's reader, nothing may appear to be significant or out of the ordinary concerning this detail. However, one must be attentive when reading the next few sentences.

The account continues,

"This work fell to the lot of a facetious fellow in the employ of the Messrs. Wilson, who, on being asked by some of his fellow-workmen the meaning of the mark (for the letters U.S., for United States, were almost entirely new to them) said that he did not know unless it meant Elbert Anderson and Uncle Sam—alluding exclusively then, to the said "Uncle Sam" Wilson. The joke took among the workmen, passed currently and, "Uncle Sam" himself being present, was occasionally rallied by them on the increasing extent of his possessions."

Here, then, begins the myth of Uncle Sam. The exact circumstances of how the cask markings "E.A.-U.S." were questioned, and by what observers, varies at least slightly in every written account of the story. The 1830 article gives the role of questioner to "fellow workmen" and of the responder to "a facetious fellow in the employ of the Messrs. Wilson." In various other accounts, however, the questioner is a visitor to the Wilson plant or a group of visitors at the dock, and the responder "a workman"<sup>35</sup> or "the waterman in charge."<sup>36</sup> Some of the stories do not attempt such detailed description, and instead substitute certain explanations as "The transition from the United States to Uncle Sam was so easy, that it was at once made, and the name of the packer of the United States provisions was immediately transferred to the government, and became familiar, not only throughout the Army, but the whole country."<sup>37</sup>

For the purpose of understanding the Uncle Sam myth and the swift transition from a historical personality to mythological symbol, the statement offered by the last account suits us well enough. While intriguing to ponder the intricate details of how and why Samuel Wilson's cask markings were questioned by surrounding observers, it is not vital to gaining a comprehensive understanding of the event. One must accept that the details vary and simply cannot be pinned down with certainty. Conclusions can be drawn and suppositions made, but a historian must remain as close as possible to the facts.

An understanding of historiography, and the need to consider the time and place in which the event occurred, can also bring us closer to the truth. The United States of America, declared as such in the Declaration of Independence of 1776, had just won its independence as Samuel reached adolescence. At the outbreak of the War of 1812, the nation was still very young and the sense of unity among the states did not exist nearly to the same extent as it does today. The abbreviation "U.S." was not yet familiar to the people, especially those not directly involved in the early United States government. Therefore, both the visitors to the docks and the workmen hauling the provisions to be shipped down the Hudson River would have had only a faint

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<sup>35</sup> "History Of Uncle Sam: The American Dream".

<sup>36</sup> "Uncle Sam" By Jessie F. Wheeler.

<sup>37</sup> *New York Historical and Genealogical Register* Vol. 8 p.377, "Uncle Sam" *Public Hearing by the United States Senate Committee* (July 11,1961).

familiarity with the term. This is especially true when considering that "U.S." was combined with Anderson's initials to produce "E.A.-U.S." Thus, it is quite feasible for that very question of what "E.A.-U.S." stood for to have been raised.

The given answer to the question, that "U.S." stood for "Uncle Sam," is hardly more difficult to explain, considering the influence that Samuel Wilson most likely had on the relatively small Troy community. As a well-known citizen warmly referred to as "Uncle Sam," the little that we have been able to learn about his personality and character leads us to conclude that the man had gained quite a good reputation for himself in Troy. Apparently he was well known, well liked, and respected as a businessman, philanthropist, and diligent worker. The imagination does not find it difficult to picture, then, his workers jokingly referring to the markings for the meat, which Samuel's own business had produced, as standing for "Uncle Sam."

The joke would have spread among the workmen then currently employed by Samuel, so the men shipping provisions along the Hudson would have all shared it. The more difficult task is determining how the reference spread beyond the Troy community. This determination relies heavily on who was present at the time. As has already been mentioned, details concerning the very identities of the questioner and responder, let alone anyone else who may have overheard the conversation, cannot be known with any degree of certainty. At least some of the men employed by Samuel would have heard the discussion. Beyond this, however, there are again only minimal records and well reasoned speculation upon which one can rely.

The one possible explanation that holds a certain amount of validity above and beyond all others pertains to the actual location of the U.S. troops. After declaring war with Great Britain in June of 1812, the U.S. Army had to quickly organize then mobilize a large military force. The very reason for Elbert Anderson's employment by the Army was to supply the vast number of troops who served in the war. Thus, his involvement in Troy leads to several conclusions concerning the choice of that particular city. Evidently, Troy must have been close to a military base where the troops were stationed. Also, the meatpacking businesses in that area must have earned a certain reputation that led Anderson to search for potential suppliers. From what has been previously discussed, it can be ascertained that Troy was indeed a growing city with a solid basis in business and enterprise. Its location by the Hudson River was essential and contributed to its rapid growth and expansion during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In regard to the nearby location of the troops, there is evidence that such a base existed in the area. According to records found in the *Annals of Albany*, "General Dearborn had been assigned to command of Northern frontier with some undigested designs upon Canada. He established his headquarters at Greenbush, as being on the open and natural military route to the enemy's territory by way of Lake Champlain."<sup>38</sup> Greenbush is a town located very close to Troy, and the shipment of provisions from that place would have been easily and efficiently attained. Therefore, there is good reason why Elbert Anderson chose to recruit meatpackers in Troy, within close proximity to Greenbush.

The location of a contingent of troops in an area close to Troy is significant because Uncle Sam would have been a name or face easily recognizable to many of the soldiers. It is likely that a good number of the men stationed in Greenbush were originally from Troy or other surrounding areas, and that they had heard of Uncle Sam or even known him on a more personal level. Thus, when the story of Uncle Sam spread and the men saw the "E.A.-U.S." markings on

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<sup>38</sup> *Annals of Albany* Vol. 3 of 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition "Life and Services of Stephen Van Rensselaer" p.225, Troy Room Wilson Vol. 7.

the casks of provisions that were sent to them, they revitalized the spirit of the joke and contributed to its dispersion to other areas of the country. Soldiers with homes in or near Troy may have related the tale to fellow volunteers from other areas of the state or of the nation, and the association of Uncle Sam with the provisioning of the United States Army would have become commonplace.

In spite of these speculations, I will not attempt to draw conclusions that cannot be based on a reasonable amount of evidence. Because Samuel was a well-known citizen of Troy, the joke or anecdote connecting Uncle Sam to the U.S. Army is feasible and would have had the means to quickly spread throughout that immediate area. The relatives of Troy citizens may have spread the story beyond this growing city by word of mouth or through letters. Soldiers could have carried it throughout their travels across the United States. The precise details may never be known. Therefore we will assume that the anecdote spread in some manner across the nation and eventually gained such popularity and renown that it was frequently referenced in newspapers across the country.

The very first use of the term “Uncle Sam” in public written form is in a March 1813 broadside published in Troy.<sup>39</sup> This publication depicts several iconographic leaders of the American cause united against “John Bull,” a fictional character commonly used in political cartoons to represent Great Britain and the Crown. Here Uncle Sam is referred to twice. The first reference is spoken by the cartoon depiction of Bonapart, who says “If Uncle Sam needs, I’ll be glad to assist him.” The second, a remark by the cartoon of John Rogers, claims “But if Uncle Sam lives, they will all be Burgoyne’d.”<sup>40</sup> In both lines, Uncle Sam appears to be equated with the United States Army. Many Americans felt a particular affinity with the French because of shared liberal ideals, which had contributed to the inspiration of the French Revolution just a few years after the American Revolution.<sup>41</sup> Thus, the support of Napoleon to the U.S. Army would have been considered an honor and great asset by many U.S. citizens. The remark made by Rogers that “they will all be Burgoyne’d” refers to the Revolutionary battle at Saratoga, where the Americans defeated British General Burgoyne and his troops. This broadside’s defaming attitude toward the British obviously indicates the prevailing American sentiments during the War of 1812.

The next Uncle Sam reference, found in the September 7, 1813 issue of the *Troy Post*, states “‘Loss upon loss, and no ill luck stirring but what lights upon Uncle Sam’s\* shoulders’ exclaim the Government editors in every part of the country.” The article goes on to explain the dissatisfaction felt by the editors, regarding the U.S. government’s handling of the war with Great Britain. Below the article, there lies the following note: “\*This cant name for our government has got almost as current as “John Bull.” The letters U.S. on the government wagons, &c. are supposed to have given rise to it.”<sup>42</sup>

Here again, there is no direct connection explicitly made between Samuel Wilson the resident of Troy and Uncle Sam, who in this particular case appears to be synonymous with the United States Army. The Army is the entity that must bear the weight of the war, as acting under

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<sup>39</sup> This particular broadside was reprinted in Ketchum’s book. The original is located in the Rare Book Division of the Library of Congress. “ ‘Uncle Sam’ ” Mentioned In 1813 Broadside”.

<sup>40</sup> Alton Ketchum, *Uncle Sam: The Man The Legend*, 41.

<sup>41</sup> This is not to imply that the American Revolution caused the French Revolution. The two nations did fight for similar ideals, and in each this brought about a revolution. The French, however, certainly did not revolt primarily because their American brethren did so, and their revolution was of a much different strain than the American one. The United States was able to form a stable Republic, while France fell into disarray.

<sup>42</sup> *Troy Post* September 7, 1813, Troy Room Wilson Vol. 8.

the supervision of the U.S. government. While there is no specific mention of Samuel Wilson, it is necessary to conclude that Wilson is likely to be the source of the Uncle Sam referred to here. As was previously shown, he was viewed as a man who, through his business as well as his personal patriotism, was supporting the U.S. Army throughout the War of 1812. The reference at the end of the article even alludes to the significance of the letters "U.S.", though it attributes this marking to wagons instead of barrels.

Due consideration must also be placed to the context of the scene from Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, which was obviously used by the *Troy Post* writer to more clearly illustrate his point. The line from that particular play follows a brief discussion in which Shylock, speaking to Tubal, laments the loss of his precious jewels. He cries "Why thou—loss upon loss! the thief gone with so much, and so much to find the thief; and no satisfaction, no revenge: nor no ill luck stirring but what lights on my shoulders; no sighs but of my breathing; no tears but of my shedding."<sup>43</sup> Taken in this context, the article written in the *Post* draws a comparison between the loss of Shylock's jewels to a thief, and the losses of the U.S. Army to Great Britain. The blame is not placed solely on Great Britain, however, but on the U.S. government as well. The War of 1812, while significant for resulting in the formation of a more cohesive union between the states, was not necessarily a popular war. As with nearly any war, there were complaints that the U.S. government did not support the U.S. Army in a way that showed due concern for the American soldiers.

Thus, this particular article displays the association between the United States Army and Uncle Sam, which had already begun to develop into a symbol, though as yet one without a picture or representation. It is in these first stages of the icon's development that the initial purpose behind Uncle Sam, as a figure greater than the average citizen, can most clearly be defined. Over time, different associations and comparisons were made, and the symbol was altered to fit specific political or social aims. It must be clearly and definitely asserted, however, that initially Uncle Sam was chosen to represent the soldiers of the United States Army, and the rights and privileges they deserved as such.

This conclusion is not based merely on the single article in the *Troy Post* but is also supported by various other references made during or immediately after the war. Another article, found in the *New York Herald's* November 16, 1814 edition, once again confronts the issues faced by soldiers during the War of 1812. It explains that the soldiers of New Hampshire had not yet been paid, although the governor of that state and the general of the army had both attempted to work out an agreement. As the editorial describes, "The names of those poor fellows are on Uncle Sam's pay roll; but not a cent of money have any of them received. This will come when the government loan is filled, and this loan will be filled when public credit is restored, either before, or after 'the troubled right of this administration departs.'"<sup>44</sup> While the plight of the soldiers is given serious consideration as a concern of American citizens, the final conclusion remains that the government will resolve the issue in due time. At the present time, the circumstances of war prevent the U.S. from fulfilling its promises of financial payment to the soldiers. If they are patient, however, the men will wait to receive their dues in the near future.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Jalic Inc. 2000-2007. "Merchant of Venice". <http://www.online-literature.com/shakespeare/merchant/>, (Accessed April 12, 2007).

<sup>44</sup> *NY Herald* Nov. 16, 1814, Troy Room Wilson Vol. 8.

<sup>45</sup> It is interesting to note that, this early in the history of the United States, it appears that the people had great faith in the system of the government. They held to the realization that the "troubled" administration could be protested against, but it would not be in power for very long, and a more competent one would take its place.

The second mention of Uncle Sam is found in a later issue of the *NY Herald*, and the focus of the writer is primarily that of defending the actions of the United States government. The article states as follows:

"U. Sam pays his soldier servants in Paper Money ('Chequer Bills) which the poor fellows carry to the brokers, and sell at a loss from 20 to 30 dollars in a hundred, and which Uncle Sam thinks is so much saved. But John Bull, an old fool, carries his Paper Money to market himself, gets as much gold and silver for it as he can-and pays off his soldier-servants in Ready Rhino, thereby losing all the discount himself. Who then shall say, that Uncle Sam is not a prudent, calculating fellow-and John Bull a fool and a spendthrift?"<sup>46</sup>

In this instance, Uncle Sam is once again used as a synonym for the United States government and John Bull, a well-known figure of the period, represents Great Britain. It appears the author is defending the U.S. government from criticisms, perhaps by American citizens, relating to the payment given to American soldiers. The U.S. government, therefore, is exalted for its opportunism and is commended for being "prudent" and "calculating." England, on the other hand, is acting unwisely and causing their country to suffer in the long run for being a "fool and a spendthrift," by not taking advantage of the opportunity presented to him. While it appears as though England is giving due credit and concern to its soldiers, in actuality John Bull is hurting his own government and thus hurting the nation and its people. The United States, by ensuring that the government saves some revenue, is thinking wisely of the future financial status of the nation.<sup>47</sup>

This particular article's intent is more direct than those previously mentioned, and Uncle Sam is again used in support of the U.S. cause. While here he does not support the troops but rather chooses against their personal benefit, he is nevertheless acting in what he believes to be the best interest of the nation. Thus Uncle Sam is depicted as wise, opportunistic, and enterprising. This description falls not far from the one given of the historical figure of Samuel Wilson, popularly known as "Uncle" Sam and considered to be an "enterprising citizen of Troy."<sup>48</sup>

Chronologically, the next article mentioning Uncle Sam that survives from the time period was originally published in the *Plattsburgh Herald*, and reprinted in the December 21, 1814 edition of the *New York Herald*. This particular statement reinforces the position taken by the author of the previous article. Here, the soldiers are again described as being shortchanged by the United States government. A specific group of militia stationed in upstate New York for a period of three months was discharged by the government, and "permitted to leave this, and get to their homes as they can, without (as they inform us) a cent of their pay, or even so much as the offer of a single Treasury Note, some of them the distance of 200 miles."<sup>49</sup> Painting quite a

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This recognition most likely was influential in preventing the people from staging another rebellion, this time against an unpopular administration.

<sup>46</sup> *NY Herald* December 7, 1814, Troy Room Wilson Vol. 8.

<sup>47</sup> To understand this mentality, it is necessary to recognize the growing force of the Industrial Revolution. Begun in England, this Revolution of technology brought about significant change in the United States as well. As new inventions and methods emerged, the mentality of the people changed. They became less concerned with land and property, and more concerned with owning liquid assets. The successful, forward-looking businessman was esteemed over those who preferred to retain their current social status and amount of wealth.

<sup>48</sup> *Troy Daily Whig* August 3, 1854, Troy Room Wilson Vol. 8.

<sup>49</sup> *NY Herald* Dec. 21, 1814, Troy Room Wilson Vol. 8.

negative picture of the U.S. government, the author seems to be deriding the nation's policy. However, he goes on to write "Who will not unite in this righteous war, and support the just and wise administration who declared it?—Union! Union!"<sup>50</sup> This statement clearly supports the policies of the government, recognizing that there are certain necessary evils that must inevitably result from those policies.

At this point in the history of the still-young nation of America, the stirrings of nationalism and unity among the United States people were increasing in intensity, and the War of 1812 aided greatly in bringing the American people together under one cause. This author is clearly making the point that the negative aspects of governmental policies must be accepted in order to receive the full benefit of the positive aspects. The actual reference to Uncle Sam is found in the very beginning of the article. "'Uncle Sam's Pay'—again" it states, before detailing the lack of pay received by the U.S. soldiers. As in the second editorial reference, Uncle Sam is once again used as a synonym for the United States government. Here the tone is slightly more nationalistic and the government is depicted as a nearly infallible entity, whose decisions should be accepted without question by the American people. Uncle Sam has taken on the role of a unifying force whose efforts bring about a cohesive union between the states. The end product will be the formation of one consolidated nation, rather than a series of separate states.

It is totally unrealistic to claim that Uncle Sam was responsible for bringing the United States together as a union. Evidently, however, he did play a significant role in the process. Several other factors, including the War of 1812, ideals of nationalism and progress, the expansion and growth of the nation, etc., all contributed to the unification of the country in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, the use of Uncle Sam cartoons and icons throughout this period and especially through the Civil War, is evidence enough that he was particularly effective in consolidating the states. To examine the actual effects of Uncle Sam imagery, one must first turn to the initial stages of the Uncle Sam icon. Not until a visual image of the figure was finally presented in the 1830s was it able to gain such soaring recognition as it still enjoys today.

Mentions of Uncle Sam in newspapers before the end of the War of 1812 remained only written allusions until at least the 1830s. It was not until 1832 that the first political cartoon featuring Uncle Sam was printed.<sup>51</sup> The emergence of this national character in picture form completely transformed the appellation into an actual physical icon. This transition is so significant because Uncle Sam was now recognizable to anyone living within the nation's boundaries. Before, one had to be a fairly avid, literate newspaper reader in order to catch citations of him. After 1832, however, the popularity and recognition of Uncle Sam was able to soar to great heights with the establishment of a visual representation. All Americans, whether literate, illiterate, or indifferent, could recognize Uncle Sam as a national symbol after just a single glance at one of his political cartoons.

The depictions of the United States through political cartoons is a subject of great importance to this specific project. Political cartoons had long been in existence, but became immeasurably more popular and widely used in the early-mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. Yankee Doodle, Brother Jonathan, and Columbia were all frequently used as icons representing the nation or its people during the mid-late 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Interestingly, the images of both Brother Jonathan and Yankee Doodle were not created by American artists searching for an accurate pictorial description for their country. Instead they were drawn by British cartoonists attempting to deride the Americans. The British first used these characters in political cartoons in

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<sup>50</sup> *NY Herald* Dec. 21, 1814

<sup>51</sup> Hess Kaplan, *The Ungentlemanly Art* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), 35.

1755 in an effort to demoralize “the rebels as country bumpkins”.<sup>52</sup> Yankee Doodle was usually depicted as a rural, characteristically “hick” colonist. Brother Jonathan, on the other hand, was more of a firebrand revolutionary. He had youth and a rebellious spirit, but was lacking in wisdom and long-lasting fortitude.

The first figure used by Americans to characterize their own nation was that of Columbia. She, “garbed in classical robes, was first used by American cartoonists to represent the values and standards of the colonies and later the United States.”<sup>53</sup> Often pictured in cartoons as defending the American people or striving to prevent any ill from becoming the nation, her tone was often pleading and gentle. Columbia’s role is like that of Mother Earth, chiding wasteful nations on the dangers of pollution and the efficiency of environment-friendly alternatives. She represents the underlying values and ideals of the United States, but does not serve as a symbol of the nation as a whole. Only in Uncle Sam does the United States find, on its own, a self-serving depiction of the entire nation.

Bearing this in mind, there are several reasons why Uncle Sam emerged as such a popular image of the United States. First of all, this symbolic change to Uncle Sam from a variety of alternate characters was both a cause and a result of an evolving national self-perception. Columbia could never evade a strong enough sense of national identity. Brother Jonathan no longer sufficed as a symbol because the nation had already grown incredibly, both literally and figuratively, since its initial founding. Uncle Sam provided a much more accurate or popular view of the Americans, as they tended to think of themselves. He was shown as wise, strong, and fair. As much as he may have fit the need of the American people for a definitive symbol, Uncle Sam also furthered that evolution that had already begun to take place before his instatement. He inspired many Americans to perceive their nation as a power in the league of Great Britain, as well as other European entities. Those who had never given much thought to the growth of their country, or had never been able to find a representation that fit their personal image of the U.S., found solidarity in Uncle Sam. Without this icon, The United States’ self-image would not have developed as rapidly or definitively as it did in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

With this very basic understanding of the circumstances under which the symbol of Uncle Sam emerged, it is now possible to trace the actual development of his figure from his first appearance to the final, lasting image created by Thomas Nast in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. The first political cartoon in which Uncle Sam appears as more than just a name of passing allusion is an 1832 drawing entitled “Uncle Sam in Danger.”<sup>54</sup> Depicting a sick Uncle Sam surrounded by members of the Jackson administration, the cartoonist was apparently denouncing the Presidential cabinet for its detrimental actions that provoked agitation among U.S. citizens. Dressed in a red-and-white striped robe and bearing an expression of reserve, he indicates that the United States is an entity greater than, and separate from, any particular cabinet. While a certain administration may be deemed unworthy, or even detrimental in its actions, the United States as a nation would always remain above and beyond any President of four- or eight- year term.

This first Uncle Sam cartoon is indicative of great change within the United States and the need for a symbol to illustrate that change to a wide base of people. While Uncle Sam soon became the dominant character representing the nation, and the ideals he espoused were quite

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<sup>52</sup> Stephen Hess and Sandy Northrop, *Drawn and Quartered: The History of American Political Cartoons*, (Montgomery: Elliot & Clark Publishing, 1996), 28.

<sup>53</sup> Stephen Hess and Sandy Northrop, 28.

<sup>54</sup> Hess Kaplan, 35.

different from those of Brother Jonathan, he had not yet gained quite the look he needed in order to sustain himself for a number of years. The picture was a major shift from Brother Jonathan, who was indicative of the rebellious spirit of the American people against England. Significantly, Brother Jonathan was used primarily in opposition to Great Britain and did not criticize the contemporary United States government. Uncle Sam fulfilled a unique role in that he not only acted as antagonist to Britain, but also was the supporter of the American people as a whole, in certain cases against the administration of its very own government. When a particular President or political party made unpopular decisions that wrought negative effects on much of the populace, the American citizen could turn to Uncle Sam as a symbol of unity and forbearance. This 1832 cartoon subtly encouraged people to recognize that the government's actions, while significant, did not gain complete support from all those serving the U.S. in various administrative positions. The President had special powers but he was far from a monarch and could only serve a four-year term before facing a national vote again.

This realization that the United States was a supreme entity greater than any single ruler gave people great confidence in the republican government upon which the nation had been founded. Uncle Sam's influence was far-reaching as a national symbol and may have aided greatly in repulsing the urge of the American people to rebel against particular leaders simply because of unpopular policies. Long before the Civil War broke out in 1861, tensions had reached a dangerous height over the issues of slavery, taxation, the institution of a national bank, etc. Uncle Sam made the people realize that there was an ideal of national unity to be reached for and one which was much greater than any single man or administration.

After the 1832 political cartoon, there are few Uncle Sam drawings published until the 1860s and the beginning of the Civil War. "Uncle Sam Sick with La Grippe" is quite similar to "Uncle Sam in Danger," and uses the same theme, characters, and circumstances as the first, yet it was not drawn until 1837.<sup>55</sup> Another pre-Civil War drawing entitled "Uncle Sam's Pet Pups" depicts Jackson and Van Buren as puppies that are directed into a barrel, labeled as the Bank, by Uncle Sam.<sup>56</sup> Drawn by an anonymous artist, it was published by Elton in 1840 and again illustrates the use to which the symbol of Uncle Sam had already been put by representing the nation against an unpopular presidential administration.<sup>57</sup>

Before the Civil War, the London magazine *Punch* printed many political cartoons featuring Brother Jonathan and Uncle Sam. Years after the United States had begun using Uncle Sam as a national icon, the British refused to submit to such a pro-American version of their former territories. Their own creation of Brother Jonathan was acceptable because that character gave the impression of a young and reckless revolutionary colonist rebelling against the laws of his mother country. Uncle Sam, however, "stood for the complete and successful defiance of authority in the name of freedom from the paternal guiding strings."<sup>58</sup> Representing the United States with the image of Uncle Sam would have been detrimental to the British purpose of demeaning the rebellious nation. It would have exalted the Americans as a wise and successful people, admitting that they had been right to rebel against British rule.

Over time, however, it is evident that the Brother Jonathan cartoons in *Punch* came to resemble the figure of Uncle Sam more and more. Eventually, actual Uncle Sam images did gain a place in the magazine's political cartoons. By the 1850s and 1860s, he had become so

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<sup>55</sup> Stephen Hess and Sandy Northrop, 29.

<sup>56</sup> Hess Kaplan, 35.

<sup>57</sup> Alton Ketchum, *Uncle Sam: The Man The Legend*, 64.

<sup>58</sup> IBID., 70.

recognizable that previous icons representing the U.S. no longer sufficed and even Brother Jonathan was used less frequently. This period of transition was by no means a smooth one, however, and both Uncle Sam and Brother Jonathan were used at various intervals to depict the nation formerly under British rule. In this exchange, Brother Jonathan adopted certain characteristics from American Uncle Sam drawings. He now had an older bearing and wiser looking face. He was shown as longer and leaner, often with the characteristically red-and-white-striped pants. It is a British cartoonist, however, who bears the responsibility for Uncle Sam's acquirement of facial hair. In 1856 *Punch* cartoonist John Leech published a drawing entitled "The Spoilt Child," which portrayed Brother Jonathan with whiskers.<sup>59</sup>

As chief cartoonist of the magazine during the 1860s, Sir John Tenniel is another figure who bears at least some responsibility for adapting the image of Uncle Sam. Specifically, he attributed characteristics of President Abraham Lincoln to Uncle Sam. He and other British cartoonists "drew Lincoln as a sinister and saturnine character throughout the war, and as they did so, they helped fix the bearded image in the United States, since Lincoln was usually drawn in the tail coat and striped trousers of Uncle Sam."<sup>60</sup> Depicted in an 1862 drawing entitled "Lincoln's Two Difficulties," Uncle Sam is shown with traits remarkably similar to that of Abraham Lincoln. He has retained the facial hair, and his countenance is nearly identical to that of the elongated, large-nosed features of the President.<sup>61</sup>

While the *Punch* cartoons are significant for several reasons, an analysis of the international renown of Uncle Sam would require a much greater amount of attention than can be given here. Besides, it was from America whence the image emerged. While many Americans were certainly exposed to the works of the British, many had still never seen those depictions of Brother Jonathan, Abraham Lincoln, or Uncle Sam. The utmost consideration must be given, therefore, to the political cartoons of the United States that gave rise to him and shaped him into the figure that is so easily recognizable today. One man above all others, even including the British men who affected certain changes on the image, can alone be credited with the icon that ultimately emerged and is so recognizable to Americans. The cartoonist most responsible for the image of Uncle Sam that exists today, both domestically and internationally, is Thomas Nast.

Nast first began drawing political cartoons for *Harper's Weekly* in 1862 and enjoyed a successful career at the magazine until the 1890s. His most famous depiction was that of the Tammany Tiger, which he utilized for the purpose of condemning bosses such as Tweed for their corrupt politics. Throughout his career, he also contrived the most commonly accepted portrayal of Santa Claus and molded the image of Uncle Sam into the form that it retains today. Altogether it was he who, "more than any other artist, was responsible for the Uncle Sam who appears daily in the editorial pages of the nation's press, and indeed, the publication of the whole world."<sup>62</sup>

The skill used by Thomas Nast in recreating and utilizing the Uncle Sam icon was invaluable in adapting the perception that the American people had of their own nation. "Just as Harriet Beecher Stowe with her *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was considered by Lincoln to have been one of those largely responsible for bringing on the Civil War, so Thomas Nast was credited by him with having helped mightily to win it."<sup>63</sup> The war divided families, friends, and neighbors in a way that made unity seem impossible. Through Nast, Uncle Sam symbolized the unity and

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<sup>59</sup> Alton Ketchum. "The Search for Uncle Sam". *History Today* Volume 40 (April 1990): 25.

<sup>60</sup> *IBID.*, 25.

<sup>61</sup> Hess Kaplan, 36.

<sup>62</sup> Alton Ketchum, *Uncle Sam: The Man The Legend*, 94.

<sup>63</sup> Alton Ketchum, *Uncle Sam: The Man The Legend*, 87.

cohesiveness that could eventually be attained, especially through the leadership of President Lincoln and the success of the Union against the Confederates.

Through various portrayals of the icon in the 1860s and 1870s, Thomas Nast modified the Uncle Sam image to produce one common depiction that he used over and over again. It is imperative to understand that Nast had a specific political agenda in mind when drawing each of his cartoons. As a radical republican, he supported the Union in the Civil War, though he did not always back the efforts of President Lincoln.<sup>64</sup> Thus, the ways in which he altered Uncle Sam were directly connected to the intent of supporting his own political views. Drawing an Uncle Sam with whiskers, red-and-white-striped pants, top hat and tail coat, Nast adopted several of the attributes that *Punch* had given to Brother Jonathan. In addition, he adapted the face to appear somewhat older, and bearing a greater resemblance to President Lincoln. This modification significantly heightened the popularity of the figure in the United States and made him more easily recognizable to the people.

The frequency with which Thomas Nast drew cartoons of Uncle Sam only added to the advancement of the icon. Between 1862 and 1880, he published over a dozen Uncle Sam cartoons, all of which depicted the character with the same clothes, visage, and bearing. Finally, the symbol had evolved to a point at which it no longer needed further alterations. Nast had established a definitive pictorial representation of Uncle Sam.

It is not necessary to examine each and every Uncle Sam political cartoon drawn by Nast over the course of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. A few examples of Nast's utilization of the image, however, would be beneficial to understanding the evolution of the purpose of Uncle Sam, as well as the alteration of his physical attributes. One of the first drawings is a haunting portrayal published in *Harper's Weekly* on July 7, 1866. Named "Why He Cannot Sleep,"<sup>65</sup> Uncle Sam lies fitfully awake in bed as a ghostly skeleton poses beside him and watches him attempt to sleep. At first glance one might easily mistake Uncle Sam for President Lincoln, considering the similarities in features and his portrayal in normal bedclothes instead of the traditional striped pants and top hat. Since the cartoon's date is after the assassination of Lincoln, however, Uncle Sam is logically the only figure that could be represented.

The intent of Nast in this particular depiction is quite direct and clear. After the terrible events of the Civil War had come to an end, "The memory of so much death and suffering needed the balm of a substantial assurance that the cost had been worthwhile, that the ideals fought for would be translated into reality."<sup>66</sup> Here Uncle Sam is plagued by the ghosts of soldiers who had fought and died in the conflict, and he lies awake wondering if any good was produced by the outcome of the war. While typically used to support Union troops and never to advocate the Confederacy in any way, this particular Uncle Sam looks beyond the two opposing sides. He instead focuses on the common distress wrought on both sides by the Civil War and the effects that it had on the nation.

Another quite famous Nast drawing was "Uncle Sam's Thanksgiving Dinner,"<sup>67</sup> published on November 20, 1869. As a radical republican Nast believed that all Americans, no matter the ethnicity, race or color, should enjoy the same rights and privileges. This cartoon displays a Thanksgiving feast of a variety of food lying upon a table. Crowded around the large table are people of all races, ethnicities, and cultures. Uncle Sam is not actually depicted,

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<sup>64</sup> Morton Keller, *The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), ix.

<sup>65</sup> Morton Keller, [21].

<sup>66</sup> IBID.

<sup>67</sup> Morton Keller, [64].

suggesting that he represents each and everyone one of the people present, despite his characteristically Caucasian appearance in other cartoons. At the center of the picture there is a table piece advocating "self-government and universal suffrage."<sup>68</sup> Nast has thus used the image of Uncle Sam to portray the unity of different American people under one government.

These are just two examples of Uncle Sam cartoons published by Thomas Nast during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Additional representations were included as indictments against Boss Tweed, and cartoons critical of various governmental policies. Essentially, however, while the specific aim of each political cartoon varied, Uncle Sam did not. The symbol had changed significantly from the one first pictured in 1832. Finally, it had reached its climax in the production put forth by Thomas Nast, and has remained consistent even to this day.

Over the course of this paper, I have traced the development of the symbol of Uncle Sam from his meager historical beginnings in Troy up to the national icon popularized by Thomas Nast in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Based on the evidence that is available it appears extremely likely that Samuel Wilson, the long-revered and appreciated resident of Troy, NY was indeed the historical basis upon which the appellation "Uncle Sam" and eventually the cartoon, was formed. While this conclusion cannot be stated with absolute certainty, there have been no substantial claims otherwise. Thus, the Congressional Resolution of 1961 must stand as a valid statement of Troy's legacy as "The Home of Uncle Sam."

More importantly, however, is the alternate purpose of this project to gain an understanding of how and why the image of Uncle Sam developed as it did. As a steadily growing nation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the United States needed a physical representation of itself that could portray the hopes, dreams, and ideals of the people. Uncle Sam provided that new image, which could be traded for the younger and more rebellious Brother Jonathan. He did not merely suffice as a figure that satisfactorily fulfilled that role, however. The unique image of Uncle Sam went above and beyond that role, especially after undergoing final alterations by Thomas Nast's pen, to emerge as a triumphant and endearing symbol of the American people. He has re-emerged with new strength each time the nation needs his guidance most, and has enjoyed a certain prevalence, both domestically and internationally, up to the present day. While Uncle Sam represents the ideal to be achieved, the significance of Samuel Wilson must not be forgotten. Recognizing Samuel Wilson means acknowledging the reality that ideals exist within each individual, and are not merely unrealistic goals that can only be wished for. The importance of the Uncle Sam symbol is not found in its ability to display the emotions of the American people. Its significance lies in the fact that this symbol developed from an average citizen of the United States. The very attributes that are held up in an idealized form, which are hoped and wished for the future, are already contained within us.

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<sup>68</sup> IBID.

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## **Of Commissioners and Kings: The Legacy of Kenesaw Mountain Landis**

Joseph Baker

The thundering crack of a slugger's wooden bat. The deliberative wrap of a judge's gavel. One would struggle to find any two sounds more American than those. Indeed, baseball and the law, two pre-eminent staples of American history and culture, hold a deep and uniquely American relationship. From “Sultan of Swat” Babe Ruth to Chief Justice John Marshall, both American institutions have yielded certain larger than life figures that have come to define their permanent places in our national character. However, there is only one man who has come to define their distinct intersection - a man they simply called the Judge.

Baseball's first commissioner, Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis was elected to fill the newly created post at a time of great upheaval in the life of the national game, and was forced to incorporate his law and order mindset - crafted by years as a federal judge - into a game that was anything but orderly in the wake of the Black Sox Scandal of 1919. Many students of the game cite Landis' half-century as commissioner as one of the principle reasons behind baseball's dramatic return from the brink of disaster, instilling a sense of justice and fairness to the game he loved, and giving fellow fans of the game a reason to believe in its purity once again. Yet, in stark contrast to this view of Landis as a savior of baseball, other students of the game's history mark the Judge as an arbitrary tyrant and one of the principle forces in preventing the eventual racial integration of the sport.

To understand these diverging portraits of baseball's first commissioners is to understand the enigma of a man who filled that role and the series of events that ultimately led to his anointing as “baseball's high potentate.”<sup>69</sup> This essay aims to do just that, by exploring the collision of forces that resulted in one of baseball's most enduring legends – a strong-willed federal judge with a knack for testing the bounds of his authority, given free reign over a sport in desperate straits that was searching for any semblance of a stabilizing force. This marriage freed Kenesaw Landis from the limits that characterized his time on the bench, leaving the national game, and his legacy as commissioner, at the mercy of the passions and flaws that ultimately defined him.

### **I. The Making of the Judge**

In order to understand Landis the commissioner, who would rule baseball for almost a quarter of a century, it is necessary to first understand Kenesaw Mountain Landis the man. Three aspects of his life before 1920 – his family, federal judgeship, and fanatic admiration of baseball – offer valuable insight into the oftentimes confusing actions that defined his commissionership. These forces shaped the unique and restricted character of Landis that would unleash itself fully during his twenty-five controversial years at the helm of Organized Baseball, cementing the powerful traits that would constitute this distinctly American persona

It is fitting that a man who would go on to embody two of America's most beloved institutions – baseball and the law – was bestowed with a name that provided a direct link to the nation's most defining time. The Battle of Kennesaw Mountain in 1864 was a critical component of General William Tecumseh Sherman's “Atlanta Campaign” during the Civil War. For the purposes of our endeavor, it also the place where a Union surgeon by the name of Abraham Landis nearly lost a leg. That moment in the life of the Union surgeon was passed on through his

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69 Abrams. *Legal Bases: Baseball and the Law*, 95.

son, whom he named after the bloody Georgia mountain.<sup>70</sup>

Yet besides his unique name, Kenesaw Mountain Landis drew many other traits from his Midwest family. As biographer David Pietrusza notes, “to understand Landis, one must comprehend his family – and how highly visible, idea-oriented, and flamboyant it was.”<sup>71</sup> For the physically diminutive Kenesaw, the ideological ferocity and writing talents of his father, coupled with the strong tradition of evangelism on his mother's side, gave Landis “the presence to deal with people in... a strong manner.”<sup>72</sup> This strength of character coupled with an influential current of “staunch Republicanism”<sup>73</sup> throughout the Landis household, led Kenesaw on a path towards developing a strong progressive Republican mindset by the turn of the century. According to Pietrusza, like all progressives, Landis “believed in a cult of great men and strong leaders... [who would serve as] benevolent guardians.”<sup>74</sup> This progressive streak and sense of strength imparted on Kenesaw Landis by his family crafted several of the leadership characteristics evident throughout his commissionership.

These were not the only fruits borne from this progressive mindset, however. This ideology also led Kenesaw Landis to the most formative phase of his pre-baseball life. In 1905, during Theodore Roosevelt's first full term, an opening on the federal bench in Illinois gave the pre-eminent progressive a prime opportunity to leave his stamp on the federal judiciary. According to famed *Sporting News* publisher J.G. Taylor Spink, Roosevelt had been searching for “a tough judge and a man sympathetic to his [progressive] viewpoint.”<sup>75</sup> It was this search that led Roosevelt to a tough-minded progressive Midwestern lawyer by the name of Kenesaw Landis. From then on he would be most commonly known as the Judge.

While on the bench, Landis continued developing the traits that would later define his controversial commissionership. Principle among these was an intense fearlessness of any authority aside from his own, which manifested itself in a highly confrontational nature and a strong penchant for self-promotion. No case is more illustrative of this aspect of the Judge than *United States v. Standard Oil of Indiana*, a 1907 suit brought against “the nation's most hated trust,”<sup>76</sup> which at the time owned upwards of 85 percent of the nation's refined oil.<sup>77</sup> For Landis, it was the first of many times that he would be in the national spotlight. From the way he handled the case, it was obviously a position he adored.

The first indication of Landis' commitment to making an example of this case was his subpoenaing of Standard Oil's president, and magnate of American business, John D. Rockefeller. As one Landis' biographer notes, “bringing [Rockefeller] to the bar of justice would serve notice that no one was bigger than the law, no one was bigger than Kenesaw Mountain Landis.”<sup>78</sup> Up until this case, despite the many times monopolistic companies had been convicted by juries, the judges tasked with doling out the penalties were all too often intimidated into issuing weak fines, let alone calling to task their chief operator. In a sign of later things to come, Landis broke strongly with this tradition of acquiescence to the status quo, humiliating

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70 Watson. “The Judge Who Ruled Baseball”. *Smithsonian*. 122

71 Pietrusza. *Judge and Jury*. 3

72 Ibid. 2

73 Ibid. (Note: This Republican dominance of the Landis household was not only ideological. Two of Kenesaw's brothers, Frederick and Charles, won seats in the U.S. House of Representatives in the early 1900's.)

74 Ibid. 35

75 Spink. *Judge Landis and Twenty-Five Years of Baseball*. 16

76 Watson. “The Judge Who Ruled Baseball”. *Smithsonian*. 125

77 Ibid.

78 Pietrusza. *Judge and Jury*. 53

Rockefeller and fining Standard Oil an astronomical sum of 29.2 million dollars, equivalent to six times the national budget of Venezuela and over half of the money coined annually by the U.S. mint.<sup>79</sup>

Despite being overturned on appeal, a fate all too common to many Landis verdicts, the Standard Oil case serves to reveal the roots of many of Landis' rulings as commissioner. It undeniably showcases the fearlessness and confrontational nature of the Judge, yet it also reveals his flamboyance, a trait which made the press and the general public come to adore him.<sup>80</sup> Coupling this strong-willed severity with several decisions seen by many as surprisingly lenient, Landis' tenure on the federal bench cultivated a distinct, yet somewhat ambivalent, sense of justice that stayed with him for the rest of his life. Back in Washington, Roosevelt called the *Standard* ruling "the reason I appointed Landis,"<sup>81</sup> and newspapers glowingly editorialized about "Landis, the fearless judge, the incorruptible man encircled by a halo."<sup>82</sup> It was a public persona that would come in handy years later.

Aside from humiliating titans of American capitalism and taking a stand against the status quo, the federal judgeship of Kenesaw Landis also served as a medium through which his passionate admiration of baseball revealed itself for the first time. In a case that would have profound implications for Landis' eventual rise to baseball's highest office, in 1914 the Federal League had begun to challenge the hegemony of the American and National Leagues, placing teams in major league towns and challenging Organized Baseball in federal court. Unfortunately for the insurgent league, they made the fateful decision of choosing the courtroom of supposed trust-buster Kenesaw Landis as the venue for their legal attack on the game. As David Pietrusza put it, "the Federal League had not counted on how much Landis feared doing harm to the game he loved."<sup>83</sup>

An avid baseball fan nearly all of his life, the Judge nevertheless realized that Organized Baseball's legal standing was weak. Torn between the knowledge of an almost certain overturn if he ruled in favor of the baseball establishment and his knowledge that ruling in favor of the insurgent league "could have thrown the whole game into chaos,"<sup>84</sup> the Judge was powerless for one of the only times in his life. In what has been lauded as "strategic inaction,"<sup>85</sup> Landis held out as long as possible in issuing a decision, miraculously being saved by an out-of-court agreement between the parties to drop all litigation. In immediately dismissing the case, the Judge issued a statement that would underscore his love of the game and foreshadow the not-too-distant future: "a blow to the game of baseball...will be regarded as a blow to one of our national institutions."<sup>86</sup>

By the time the Federal League litigation had reached its end in 1915, the defining traits of baseball's first commissioner had been firmly established. From his highly-developmental years in the household of Abraham Landis, on through to his years on the federal bench, Kenesaw Landis by the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had proven to be a fearless advocate of a somewhat ambivalent sense of justice, unphased by the political and financial establishments that stood in his way. He had an air of leadership, tempered by flamboyancy that endeared him to

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79 Ibid., 63

80 Spink. *Judge Landis and Twenty-Five Years of Baseball*. 17

81 Pietrusza. *Judge and Jury*. 67

82 Ibid., 93

83 Ibid., 153

84 Spink. *Judge Landis and Twenty-Five Years of Baseball*. 39

85 Moffi *The Conscience of the Game*. 33

86 Pietrusza. *Judge and Jury*. 156

the media and the general public, and an unyielding love of the national pastime. Yet, despite the strength of his character and the imposing nature of his authoritative demeanor, Kenesaw Landis was ultimately restricted. As the Standard Oil and Federal League cases had shown, on the federal bench, Landisian justice was not absolute. Fortunately for the Judge, the fall of baseball's National Commission in 1920 would change all that.

## **II. The Implosion of the National Commission**

Despite the agreement reached in 1915 ending the Federal League threat to organized baseball, the National Commission which had presided over the game since the landmark National Agreement of 1903 had begun its slow decline. A series of events, culminating in the Black Sox scandal of 1919, would lead to its implosion at the end of the decade, leaving a leadership vacuum that threatened to destroy the game. "Ban" Johnson's decade-long grip on the national game was slowly loosening, and the path towards the Landis commissionership was gradually beginning to form.

The key to understanding the collapse of the National Commission is understanding the importance of its structure. Consisting of three men – the respective presidents of the National and American Leagues and a third man, Reds owner Garry Herrman, agreed upon by each – the Commission had proved fairly competent in presiding over the national game for over a decade, with AL president Ban Johnson imposing his will over the other members. Yet after a series of legal troubles over player contracts led to political infighting in the latter part of the 1910's, a rift developed within the Commission, severely threatening Johnson's authority and culminating in Herrman's resignation. The importance of this change to baseball's governing structure cannot be understated, as it left the two league presidents at odds over leadership at a time when they needed it most. As J.G Taylor Spink noted, this failure to agree on a third member to stabilize the Commission, "stood out like a bibulous noses when the worst scandal that ever rocked baseball broke."<sup>87</sup>

Indeed, the allegations that members of the Chicago White Sox purposely threw games during the 1919 World Series shattered the baseball world when the story surfaced in 1920. As Spink, who was publisher of the influential *Sporting News* at the time, remembered, the feelings among the media and general public were "especially bitter"<sup>88</sup> that the scandal had broken "at a time when the game had no real government or executive head."<sup>89</sup> If the National Commission's decline was fixable before 1919, it certainly was irreversible now. Owners began realizing that this jolt to baseball's character meant that their profits were no longer safe and were committed to do whatever was necessary to "keep their turnstiles turning."<sup>90</sup> As National League attorney George Wharton Pepper observed, "the situation called for a sporting dictatorship."<sup>91</sup> In Kenesaw Mountain Landis, a federal judge whose form of justice was forever limited by higher courts, the game found the perfect man for the job.

After much debate over the future of the game's governance, the owners unanimously agreed to offer the job of saving the game to the man who had been instrumental in doing just that in 1915. With the future of baseball as the national game on life support, the ownership had no leverage with which to negotiate when they handed the reins of baseball over to the Judge in

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87 Spink. *Judge Landis and Twenty Five Years of Baseball*. 57

88 Ibid. 78

89 Ibid.

90 Moffi. *The Conscience of the Game*. 5

91 Pietrusza. *Judge and Jury*. 161

November of 1920. Underscoring their desperation, the new National Agreement amounted to “a grant of unprecedented power over the game,”<sup>92</sup> with ownership waving its right to protest any of Landis' decisions, even in court. Sparking the commissionership that would cause much controversy, the agreement furthermore granted Landis the power to “investigate [and take action], either upon complaint or his own initiative any act, transaction, or practice...suspected to be detrimental to the best interests of the national game of baseball.”<sup>93</sup> For the judge whose time on the federal bench was characterized by his limits, Landisian justice, in all its ambivalent glory, was finally absolute.

### **III. Untangling Landis' Legacy**

This freeing of Landis from the limits to his authority imposed by the federal bench is the key to understanding the dueling legacies of his commissionership. As we have seen, the Standard Oil and Federal League decisions were ultimately indications of his character not any real exercise of power. His opinions were just that, opinions. There were never any ramifications involved, no consequences felt. While he may have endeared himself to the general public and the media while on the bench, the truth is, many of his decisions were arbitrary or lacking sound legal reasoning, as evidenced by the many that were overturned by higher courts. Yet once the National Agreement of 1921 took full effect, there were no checks on his power. The full, uninhibited character of Kenesaw Landis ruled the game and his passions and flaws became his legacy.

Throughout the quarter of a century in which the Judge held court over the national game, the characteristics that he had developed during his youth and exhibited forcefully during his federal judgeship became the guiding forces behind some of his most vital decisions. In no case was this more evident than regarding the fate of the eight accused Black Sox players. Despite being acquitted by a jury, Landis, drawing upon his progressive beliefs in the need for strong leadership and his penchant for standing up to entrenched interests, realized that an example had to be made in order to salvage the reputation of the national game and destroy the influence of gambling. For the first time, the Judge would have the final say.

In a decision that would come to have “a great chilling effect on dishonest play,”<sup>94</sup> Landis immediately banned all eight accused players for life. Most importantly, among those banned was third baseman Buck Weaver, who, while not going in on the fix, knew about it and kept quiet. The reasoning behind Landis' ban of Weaver was simple and its impact profound. As David Pietrusza recounted, it placed “guilty knowledge of crooked play on the same level as the deed itself...once prospective crooked player knew that honest players would no longer shield them, the scandals stopped.”<sup>95</sup> While the eight Black Sox players would not be the last to feel the wrath of the Judge, their banning would provide closure to the festering wound of illegitimacy that had threatened the game. Landisian justice had claimed its first victory.

Yet the Black Sox banishments were not the only legacy-crafting actions that bore the markings of Landis' judicial traits. While the humiliation of John D. Rockefeller was a long time past, the confrontational fearlessness that stoked Landis' actions then, still guided his actions while commissioner. Babe Ruth, who smacked 59 home runs in 1921 while leading his Yankees to a pennant-winning season, was no different than any other ballplayer in the eyes of Judge

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92 Ibid., 178

93 Ibid.

94 Ibid. 188

95 Ibid., 194

Landis. So after Ruth booked a post-season exhibition tour in direct violation of league rules and several warnings from the commissioner himself, Landis was forced to act, fining and suspending the Bambino through May 22<sup>nd</sup> of the 1922 season. In an action eerily reminiscent of his days as a trust-busting judge, “Landis felt at the time that he had to be severe.”<sup>96</sup> It would prove to be, in the words of one baseball historian, “a major step in achieving autocratic control over the game.”<sup>97</sup> For a judge who had never taken lightly to a direct challenge of his authority, it was business as usual.

Unfortunately for baseball and the legacy of the game's first commissionership, the Judge's admirable traits were not the only ones crafting his rule. For as much as the authoritative, fearless demeanor of Kenesaw Landis was necessary in restoring the game to its pre-war glory, Landis' complete control over the game also meant occasional doses of arbitrariness. The irrationality of the Judge's actions most often related to gambling, with his adamant opposition to anything that could even potentially pose a threat to baseball's good name. As *Sporting News* publisher Spink humorously put it, the judge kept people like Bing Crosby from buying teams, and forced owners into divesting themselves of anything potentially illicit, at the slightest “odor of a racing stable on their well-groomed clothes.”<sup>98</sup> This arbitrariness reached such an extent that Landis even took such draconian measures as banning all conversation between players and fans before the start of a game.

Yet, while arbitrariness was a minor blotch on the commissionership of Judge Landis, another one of his less-favorable characteristics posed a much greater threat to his legacy. While the Judge held a deep love for the national game, it was a love for a game that remained true to its traditions. In other words, it was a game with no farm system, no night games, and most unfortunate for the sport, no integration. During Landis quarter of a century of absolute power, the game remained “substantially static.”<sup>99</sup>

In regards to the Branch Rickey-inspired farm system, or as the Judge lovingly termed it, “baseball's chain gang,”<sup>100</sup> Landis drew three chief complaints. Principle among these was that farms inhibited the free movement of players by tying them up in the minors rather than allowing them an opportunity at the major league level. Aside from the impact upon players, however, Landis also showed concern for the impact of Rickey's system on the minor leagues themselves. The Judge believed that any minor league teams not affiliated with major league clubs would be destroyed by the wholesale adoption of the farm system, as would the local minor league towns and cities that housed them. While well-intentioned, Landis refusal to accept Rickey's system held back the evolution of the game during his term.

Landis' traditional view of baseball also had a less well-intentioned component, in the form of an implicit acceptance of baseball's segregated status. While he was hardly the “George Wallace of baseball”<sup>101</sup> or “staunch defender of separate and unequal baseball”<sup>102</sup> that some have tried to make him out to be, his inaction in regards to making baseball a truly national game cannot go unmentioned. While his GOP was “by the standards of the day relatively tolerant on matters of race,”<sup>103</sup> and while he had garnered much support in the black communities while on

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96 Spink. *Judge Landis and Twenty Five Years of Baseball*. 104

97 Pietrusza. *Judge and Jury*. 234

98 Spink *Judge Landis and Twenty Five Years of Baseball*. 107

99 Ibid. 431

100 Abrams. *Legal Bases: Baseball and the Law*. 100

101 Pietrusza. *Judge and Jury*. xv

102 Abrams. *Legal Bases: Baseball and the Law*. 105

103 Pietrusza. *Judge and Jury*. 432

the federal bench, he nevertheless did nothing to hasten the process of integration. The best explanation is most likely fear, which can be seen as legitimate in the sense that many saw rioting at the ballparks as the potential fallout from any proactive steps toward integration. Either way, Landis proved to be a scapegoat for the entire baseball establishment once Branch Rickey and Jackie Robinson combined to break baseball's color barrier following the Judge's death, an unfitting label for a man who, at the most, deserves only partial blame for baseball's continued segregation. Yet, such is the price for a quarter century of absolute rule.

### **Conclusion**

For nearly 25 years, Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, baseball's first commissioner and only king, ruled with an iron fist forged by the idealism and personal strength of his Midwestern family and the progressive Republican values he honed on the federal bench. To understand his commissionership and the dueling legacies that it has left behind is to understand the forces that shaped his hard-willed character and the events that vaulted him to a throne atop our national game. This essay has aimed at achieving such an end, through examining the life, career, and evolution of one of the most memorable figure in baseball history.

Through an analysis of his progressive Republican roots and his belief in strong leadership, through his fearless, yet arbitrary brand of justice on the federal bench, it has been shown how Kenesaw Landis reached the peak of the baseball world at its darkest hour. Desperate and searching for stability, the national game turned to a Midwestern judge with a love of the game and a sense of justice that endeared him to the public and restored their trust. Free from the limits that had characterized his judgeship, the complete character of Judge Landis descended in absolute power upon the game, leaving behind a legacy that has remained debated ever since. While he may have been arbitrary, draconian, and fearful of change, he was loved by the media and the fans, who put their full trust in him as the guardian of the national game. He accomplished what the game he loved needed him to do. That achievement is his lasting legacy.

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## **A Woman's Choice: Power and Individuality, or Marriage?**

Natalie Corey

In Susan Glaspell's *Trifles*, which was written in 1916, and in Wendy Wasserstein's *The Heidi Chronicles*, which was written in 1990, these female playwrights reflect the experience of women in relation to marriage in these different time periods. Glaspell's *Trifles* reflects women's surrender of personal power and individuality to their husbands through marriage. Wasserstein's *The Heidi Chronicles*, however, reflects a woman's ability to maintain this personal power and individuality if she surrenders her hope of marriage. These two plays suggest that the feminist ideal of being able to experience all three of these things is unrealistic. Instead, the women in these plays must choose between the maintenance of a sense of personal power and individuality and a marriage.

In *Trifles*, Glaspell portrays marriage as women's surrender of their personal power and their sense of individuality to their husbands. She creates this image of marriage as a loss of personal power for women through her description of characters' body positioning in her stage directions, as well as through her choice of characters' names in the play. As Glaspell describes the characters' entrance to the play's set of a kitchen, her stage directions indicate, "*At the rear the outer door opens and the SHERIFF comes in followed by the COUNTY ATTORNEY and HALE... They are followed by the two women – the SHERIFF's wife first...*" (36). These stage directions reveal the higher status and greater degree of power of the male characters, for the men enter the kitchen before the female characters. This status and power is also indicated by Glaspell's use of the phrase "*the SHERIFF's wife first*" to refer to Mrs. Peters (36). Because Mrs. Peters is identified as "*the SHERIFF's wife*," this phrase suggests that Mrs. Peters' character is defined by her husband (36).

Throughout the play, the characters' names reinforce this idea of women's definition of their characters through their husbands. Both Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale are only identified by their husbands' names; neither their first names nor their maiden names are revealed in the play. Likewise, Mrs. Wright is only referred to by her first name and maiden name in discussions about her character before her marriage to Mr. Wright. For example, in a conversation about Mrs. Wright, Mrs. Hale says, "She used to wear pretty clothes and be lively, when she was Minnie Foster, one of the town girls singing in the choir. But that – oh, that was thirty years ago" (40). The past tense of the phrase "when she was Minnie Foster" emphasizes the idea that after her marriage to Mr. Wright, Minnie Foster is no longer the same person (40). She assumes the identity of Mrs. Wright, and all of her power as an individual is surrendered to her husband.

In addition to this surrender of personal power, this quotation demonstrates women's surrender of individuality through marriage as well, for the women in the play know that "their identities, their lives, and their futures have been determined totally by the men they have married" (Alkalay-Gut 73). Through the character of Mrs. Wright, Glaspell depicts a woman's changed identity after marriage. Glaspell employs the symbolic prop of a canary to represent Minnie Foster, the person Mrs. Wright is before her marriage to Mr. Wright. Mrs. Hale reveals, "She [Minnie Foster] – come to think of it, she was kind of like a bird herself – real sweet and pretty, but kind of timid and – fluttery. How – she – did – change" (43). As Glaspell suggests, this changed personality is the result of Minnie Foster's marriage to Mr. Wright. After she assumes the identity of Mrs. Wright, Mr. Wright usurps her individuality. Mr. Wright's killing of the canary, the symbol of Minnie Foster, represents his killing of her sense of self as well.

The character of Mrs. Hale discloses this connection between Mr. Wright's killing of the canary and his killing of Minnie Foster's spirit, for she states, "No, Wright wouldn't like the bird – a thing that sang. She used to sing. He killed that, too" (44). After marriage, Mr. Wright kills the identity of Minnie Foster, and from then on, her only identity is as Mrs. Wright, or as Mr. Wright's wife.

The contrast between the character of Minnie Foster and the character of Mr. Wright suggests a reason for Mr. Wright's intolerance of his wife's personality. While Mrs. Hale's descriptions of Minnie Foster's character and the comparison of her character to a canary suggest that she is a cheerful person, Mr. Wright's contrary character is portrayed as being the opposite of cheerful. Mrs. Hale recalls, "It [the Wright house] never seemed a very cheerful place...But I don't think a place'd be any cheerfuller for John Wright's being in it" (39). The weather conditions in *Trifles* also emphasize Mr. Wright's lack of cheerfulness, for it is cold both outside and inside the Wright house. Glaspell's stage directions, "...all are much bundled up and go right to the stove," and Mrs. Peter's statement, "My, it's cold in there," reveal these cold conditions (36, 40). These indications of the cold weather suggest that Mr. Wright is a cold person as well; Mrs. Hale highlights this relation when she says, "But he was a hard man, Mrs. Peters. Just to pass the time of day with him – (*shivers*) like a raw wind that gets to the bone" (42). The word "*shivers*," as well as the comparison of Mr. Wright to "a raw wind," emphasizes the connection between the cold weather and Mr. Wright's cold character (42).

Glaspell also reveals this difference between Minnie Foster's character and Mr. Wright's character through the character of Mr. Hale. Mr. Hale states, "I spoke to Wright about it [a party telephone] once before and he put me off, saying folks talked too much anyway, and all he asked was peace and quiet – I guess you know about how much he talked himself..." (36). While Minnie Foster, like a canary, enjoys singing, Mr. Wright only desires "peace and quiet" (36). This character trait of Mr. Wright discloses a motive for his killing of both the canary and Minnie Foster's personality. Through marriage, as he kills the canary, Mr. Wright kills Minnie Foster's soul, her sense of individuality, and as he squelches the voice of the canary, he squelches Minnie Foster's voice as an individual.

Like this use of a canary prop to reflect the demise of Minnie Foster's character as a result of her marriage to Mr. Wright, the canary's birdcage is also an integral prop in Glaspell's portrayal of marriage in *Trifles*. The image of a birdcage represents men's power over women in marriage in the play. In a description of oppression, Marilyn Frye writes, "The experience of oppressed people is that the living of one's life is confined...It is the experience of being caged in: All avenues, in every direction, are blocked or booby trapped. Cages. Consider a bird cage" (12). The birdcage in *Trifles* discloses Glaspell's depiction of the oppressive nature of marriage. When Minnie Foster assumes the role of Mrs. Wright, she is oppressed by her husband; she is "caged in" (Frye 12). Glaspell's communication of this idea of oppression through the image of a birdcage reveals women's surrender of personal power as a consequence of marriage.

This oppression of women and the power possessed by men in Glaspell's play is also demonstrated by her use of empty chairs as props to depict women as unimportant. For example, as Mr. Hale describes his encounter with Mrs. Wright to the sheriff and the county attorney, he says, "...I opened the door...and there in that rocker – (*pointing to it*) sat Mrs. Wright"; he also states, "She moved from that chair to this one over here (*pointing to a small chair in the corner*) and just sat there with her hands held together and looking down" (37, 38). These references to unoccupied chairs in the Wright kitchen highlight the absence of the main character of the play, Mrs. Wright. Mrs. Wright's absence communicates the idea that women are viewed as

unimportant, for although she is the play's main character, her presence is not necessary.

This view of women as unimportant is emphasized by the male characters' dismissal of the female characters' concerns as insignificant. For example, Mr. Hale says, "...but I thought maybe if I went to the house and talked about it [a party telephone] before his wife, though I said to Harry that I didn't know as what his wife wanted made much difference to John –" (36). Mr. Hale's suggestion that Mrs. Wright's view is unimportant to Mr. Wright highlights women's lack of power in marriage and men's possession of this power. The male characters' view of the women's domain, the kitchen, as unimportant also demonstrates the men's view of women's concerns as insignificant. This view is revealed through an exchange between the county attorney and the sheriff; Glaspell writes, "COUNTY ATTORNEY: ...I guess we'll go upstairs first – and then out to the barn and around there (*to the SHERIFF*) You're convinced that there was nothing important here...SHERIFF: Nothing here but kitchen things" (38). In addition, the title of the play, *Trifles*, as well as Mr. Hale's statement, "Well, women are used to worrying over trifles," reveals the male characters' belief that women's concerns are trivial and that women do not deserve to possess power in their marriages (38).

Through *Trifles*, Glaspell reflects this lack of power for women and the loss of women's individuality as characteristics of the relationship between men and women in marriage. The suggestion that these characteristics can be commonly applied to marriages in 1916, the year Glaspell wrote the play, is revealed by the character of Mrs. Hale. Mrs. Hale says, "I know how things can be – for women...We all go through the same things – it's all just a different kind of the same thing" (44). In this statement, Mrs. Hale suggests that although women may experience these characteristics in different ways or in different degrees, all women experience the repression of men in their marriages. This quotation indicates that all married women in this time period can relate to the surrender of personal power and the loss of individuality portrayed by the characters in *Trifles*.

Wendy Wasserstein's *The Heidi Chronicles*, however, depicts women's struggle to overcome this repression. This play, which was written in 1990, portrays the objectives of feminism and the evolution of the feminist movement. Kathie Sarachild describes one goal of feminism; she states, "It's a question of going after what we really want in our work lives and in our love lives-and, as women really know, the two are very related-and only having power will get us what we really want in both. It will get us the kind of jobs *and* the kind of love relationships" (158). While *The Heidi Chronicles* incorporates this goal of the feminist movement, the play also demonstrates the disappointment of women, such as Heidi, who are unable to achieve this desire to "have it all" (45). As Jan Balakian writes, "This was the first Broadway play to grapple with the collapse of the feminist movement during the two decades of change..." (93-94). Unlike the female characters in *Trifles*, Heidi maintains her sense of personal power and individuality; however, in order to maintain these things, she sacrifices marriage.

Wasserstein's play discloses feminist women's desire for a change in the type of marriage relationships between men and women presented by Glaspell's *Trifles*. These women aim to overcome the conception that women must sacrifice their personal power and their individuality to men. As the character of Fran explains, "Heidi, every woman in this room has been taught that the desires of her husband, her son, or her boss are much more important than her own. Now the only way to turn that around, is for us, right here, to try to make what *we* want, what we desire, to be as vital to us as it would undoubtedly be to any man" (23). In this quotation, Fran reveals the feminist movement's objection to the idea portrayed in *Trifles* that women's sense of

self should be sacrificed in marriage and that women's concerns are insignificant.

However, despite these feminists' hopes for change, Wasserstein reveals Heidi's disappointment with the realization that it is not possible to "have it all," personal power, individuality, and a marriage (45). Heidi realizes that the goals of the early feminists are unrealistic. Her disappointment is conveyed in her speech at the Miss Crain's School East Coast Alumnae Association luncheon in which she "addresses the collapse of feminist idealism" (Balakian 99). In this speech, Heidi characterizes the stereotypical image of the ideal woman, one who juggles a career at Colombia University, "aerobics class[es]," the care of her children, domestic duties, such as cooking "grilled mesquite free-range chicken," the writing of a book, the reading of "*Inferno* in Italian," and a marriage in which she advises "her investment banker/well-rounded husband on the future finances for the City Ballet" (59). Heidi presents this idealized image of the modern woman in order to highlight the impossibility of achieving this model. Later in her speech, Heidi reveals her disappointment with the inability to attain this lofty goal for the ideal woman in her recollection of a conversation in which Heidi confesses, "... 'No, Jeanette, I'm just not happy. I'm afraid I haven't been happy for some time'" (62).

Wasserstein also communicates Heidi's disappointment through her question, "Susie, do you ever think that what makes you a person is also what keeps you from being a person?" (55). In this question, Heidi suggests that her struggle to achieve the goals of feminism, such as advocating her sense of self, has actually prevented her from achieving her own personal aspirations. For example, Heidi appears to have maintained her personal power and her sense of individuality through her career, yet she has consequently surrendered her hope of marriage.

In addition to Heidi's character, the characters of Denise and Scoop convey this disappointment as well. The character of Denise highlights this disappointment when she asks, "I mean, isn't that what you guys fought for? So we could 'have it all.' I mean, don't you want to have a family, Heidi?" (45). Denise also states, "Well, like, a lot of women your age are very unhappy. Unfulfilled, frightened of growing old alone... My friends want to get married in their twenties, have their first baby by thirty, and make a pot of money. It's just much more together than your generation" (57). Furthermore, Scoop refers to the disappointment of the feminists of Heidi's generation in his assertion, "But if you aim for ten in all things and get six, you're going to be very disappointed. And unfortunately, that's why you 'quality time' girls are going to be one generation of disappointed women. Interesting, exemplary, even sexy, but basically unhappy. The ones who open doors usually are" (39). In this quotation, "ten" refers to the feminist ideal of maintaining personal power and individuality, as well as having a marriage; "six," however, represents Heidi's preservation of this power and individuality, but also her resulting sacrifice of marriage (39). The phrase "open doors" is related to women's reliance on men, for it is a chivalrous gesture for a man to open a door for a woman (39). Scoop suggests that women, like Heidi, who refuse to rely on men and covet their independence cannot simultaneously have a marriage.

In the play, Heidi recognizes that she cannot have both a career as an art historian and a marriage; *The Heidi Chronicles* "...exposes...the difficulty that women face in negotiating between fulfilling professional and personal lives—in short, the lost idealism of early feminism" (Balakian 94). Heidi abandons her hope for marriage and chooses to cultivate her power as an individual and her sense of self through a career. Heidi is forced to make this choice because her romantic interest, Scoop, is unwilling to compromise his own sense of power in marriage. This unwillingness is revealed when Scoop says as follows:

...Let's say we married and I asked you to devote the, say, next ten years of your life to me. To making me a home and a family and a life so secure that I could with some confidence go out into the world each day and attempt to get an "A." You'd say "No." You'd say "Why can't we be partners? Why can't we both go out in the world and get an 'A'?" And you'd be absolutely valid and correct. (38)

Scoop recognizes the legitimacy of the feminist's desire to maintain their personal power and individuality in marriage. However, he is still intimidated by the conception of a woman's sense of power competing with his own sense of power, for Scoop asserts that because he and Heidi both want "self-fulfillment," "self-determination," and "self-exaggeration," Heidi would be "competing" with him (38; Balakian 97). As Michael Kaufman confirms, "An analysis of men's contradictory experiences of power gives us useful insights into the potential relation of men to feminism. The power side of the equation is not anything new and, indeed, men's power and privileges form a very good reason for men to individually and collectively oppose feminism" (27).

Like the male characters in *Trifles*, Scoop believes relationships in marriage should be dominated by men's power, and he rejects the idea of a man and woman "pool[ing] not only their well-being but also their autonomy...[and consequently] limit[ing his]...own decision-making power and rights" (Nozick 177). However, unlike the female characters in *Trifles*, Heidi refuses to sacrifice her personal power and her sense of individuality to a husband; instead, Heidi chooses to sacrifice marriage. Like Glaspell's play, *The Heidi Chronicles* reveals Wasserstein's suggestion that feminist women's aspiration for marriages in which men and women view each other as equal partners has not yet been achieved.

However, despite Heidi's disappointment with her inability to "have it all," the conclusion of the play suggests that future generations of women may be capable of achieving this aspiration (45; Balakian 100-101). At the conclusion of the play, Heidi adopts a daughter, Judy. Judy provides hope for Heidi that her disappointment with the inability to achieve the ideal of feminism will not have been for nothing; she hopes that future generations of women will have the chance to achieve this ideal (Balakian 100-101). In the final scene of the play, Scoop asks Heidi, "Are you happy?" (73). Heidi replies as follows:

Scoop, there's a chance. Just a milli-notion. That Pierre Rosenbaum and Judy Holland will meet on a plane over Chicago...And he'll never tell her that it's either/or baby. And she'll never think she's worthless unless he lets her have it all. And maybe, just maybe, things will be a little better. And yes, that does make me happy. (74; Balakian 99)

As this quotation demonstrates, Heidi is hopeful that in future generations, women will not be forced to make the choice between their personal power and individuality and their hopes for marriage (Balakian 100-101).

Wasserstein also reveals this optimism for Judy's generation through Scoop's and Heidi's suggestion that Judy is a "hero" or "heroine" (75). For example, Scoop asks, "What do you think, Judy? A mother for the nineties and a hero for the nineties" (101). Wasserstein also writes, "(Heidi takes Judy out of the stroller and lifts her up.)...HEIDI. A heroine for the twenty-first!" (75; Balakian 100-101). In this scene, Scoop's use of the word "hero," which refers to a male, and Heidi's use of the word "heroine," which refers to a female, suggests that although the

statuses of men and women are not yet compatible, they may be interchangeable, like the meanings of these words, in future generations. This idea of accomplishing feminist goals in the future is also conveyed through the image of Heidi lifting Judy up, for this action indicates a sense of victory or success for Judy's generation (Balakian 100-101).

Presently, *The Heidi Chronicles*' character of Judy would be about seventeen years old, for the play was written in 1990. I believe the present generation of young women, which is represented by her character, has come closer to achieving the feminist aspiration to "have it all," personal power and individuality, as well as a marriage (94). I do not feel as though I will need to make the choice that the women in *Trifles* and Heidi in *The Heidi Chronicles* make, for I believe I will be able to maintain my sense of personal power and individuality in my future marriage. My marriage will not depend on the condition that I sacrifice the things that are important to me, such as my ability to be self-sufficient or my career plans. The present generation of young women represents the progression toward feminists' ideal situation for women, and this generation may have the chance to prove that perhaps women can "have it all," personal power, individuality, and marriage (94).

However, the women in Glaspell's *Trifles* and Heidi in Wasserstein's *The Heidi Chronicles* have not yet achieved this ideal situation, and the women in these plays choose between their sense of personal power and individuality and their desire for marriage. The women in *Trifles* sacrifice their personal power and their individuality to their husbands through marriage, and Heidi sacrifices marriage in order to maintain this power and individuality. These women are forced to make this choice because the men in *Trifles* and Scoop in *The Heidi Chronicles* expect their wives to sacrifice this personal power and individuality for marriage. These male characters do not accept the idea of married women who preserve this power and individuality. Consequently, unlike the women of the present generation, the female characters in Glaspell's and Wasserstein's plays do not have the opportunity to possibly "have it all" (94).

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## **Seeking the Unattainable, Avoiding the Unimaginable: Students for a Democratic Society and its Permanence in the American Psyche**

Andrew Wagoner

The Sixties was a decade rife with rebellion and a yearning for a reconstruction of society. In the post-World War II world, nations were struggling to gain identity and construct a new world, hoping to erase the indelible marks left by the Holocaust and the advent of the most devastating weapon known to mankind. Unrest was lurking latently beneath the calm immediately after the war. Throughout Africa and Latin America many nations began to plead for freedom from the colonial system which had confined them for so long. Never truly breaking free from the bonds of slavery, African-Americans became restless with their position as second-class citizens in the society. Soon America was divided over race, and numerous organizations had been formed to spearhead the movement for equality and civil rights. The push for civil rights and the formation of groups such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) were harbingers for the widespread calls for reform that were to follow in the coming tumultuous years.

Seeing the ills of the oppression of African-Americans in the South, and also becoming aware of the ills within the government and the society at large, a group of socially-minded students formed a committee that would completely revolutionize the reform movements of the Sixties. The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was arguably the foremost organization of radical reform within the United States in the 1960s. Armed with the idealism of youth and faith in the potential of man, SDS attempted to alert the nation to the malady which was plaguing American society and slowly eating away at it. However, this idealism was slowly smothered by the pressures of the age and the lack of response from the government. Unwilling to die quietly, the SDS turned to diametrically different and radically opposed methods to get the attention of the government. While the movement and its leaders may have moved on, the issues they brought to the forefront of the American conscience are still relevant today and can inspire many to take hold of the idealism which initially kindled the movement. With the knowledge that one has of the Movement today, perhaps alternative routes can be explored in hopes of eventually reaching that point where a civil discussion and reform can take place.

To grasp an understanding of the SDS, one must look into the historical background and particularly the previous decade and Eisenhower administration to see what fueled the formation of the group and ideals which drove the Movement.

Post-World War II America was the epitome of prosperity. Families hoping to escape the constraints of city living, moved to the suburbs. There was little interest in the political atmosphere, and many people contentedly lived out their lives in hopes of fulfilling the American Dream. Indulging in the contentment of the age, Americans in large records seemed to ignore the civil rights abuses in the South and expressed only a mild interest in the inquisition conducted by Sen. Joseph McCarthy. McCarthy's inquiries and accusations led many to view the Soviet Union as the major threat to American contentment and security. This attitude united the country and kept many critics from indicting the government about the many abuses that were taking place.

Edward J. Bacciocco, Jr. notes that the Left was not able to stir much change in the 1950s because of the death of the Socialist Party and the prosperity which seemed to sap the vigor out of many ardent critics (3-4). The focus on material abundance and the seeming necessity to move to the suburbs and conform to society drove people to take their eyes off of political reform and

concentrate wholly on discarding previous ways of living in hopes of attaining social acceptance. Out of this complacency and contentment quietly rose the first waves of a youth movement rebelling against the values of society and expressing an alternative way of life.

Allen Ginsberg's poem *Howl* was the clarion call for the Beat Generation. Penned in 1955, this poem signified what the Beats were rebelling against and the ills that they saw germinating within society. The poem indicted society for its materialism, conformity, and the mechanization which pointed the way only towards war. Hoping to break free from the conformity of the age, the Beats looked to the percussive aspect of jazz to cleanse them, the creative arts for self-expression, and at times turned to drugs to form a community. The Beats scorned all that Middle America strove for in the 1950s. They rejected the machine age and the advancements made while also expressing a disinterest in money, promotions, and status. Other poets such as Gregory Corso and Lawrence Ferlinghetti emphasized this rejection of common societal values and yearned for freedom from the constraints impressed upon them. Bacciocco sees the Beats as an integral part in contributing to the New Left in America because of their alternative lifestyle and disregard for tradition. He comments,

The Beats were the first group after World War II to exemplify their repudiation of social and political practices by embracing a way of life that flouted the customs, values, and myths by which others lived. That this could be done, that a life completely out of step with the rest of America could be lived, was of enormous import to the New Left and to anyone else whose manner of living differed from that of the Majority of Americans (14).

James Putnam O'Brien concurs that the Beats were an integral part to the formation and motivation of the New Left. He saw the New Left based on political moralism and cultural alienation, with roots in radical pacifism. O'Brien notes, "The strength of this 'nonconformist subculture' [beat poetry and folk music] determined the power of the nascent New Left at any one campus" (417). Thus, the Beat Generation laid the foundation and established a framework for the emergence of the New Left within American society. Examining this emergence in great detail, Bacciocco argues that five events between January 1959 and November 1960 truly launched the rebirth of the New Left.

The election of John F. Kennedy as president was one of the events which figured prominently in the rise of the New Left. While it was not a specific action or speech made by Kennedy, it was the atmosphere surrounding his election which stirred political feelings within the nation and particularly within the youth. Kennedy seemed to assure the citizenry that his presidency would bring new vigor to commandeer the complacency which was driving the nation, and he would fight to restore civil rights and undo the social wrongs that were plaguing the nation. Kennedy was an exemplification of the public virtue that people were hoping existed within the nation (Bacciocco 22).

The Cuban revolution and the overthrow of Fulgencio Batista and the rise to power of Fidel Castro was another event which spurred on the optimism of the New Left. Castro's revolution signaled to hopeful youths and revolutionaries in America that a socialist force could topple the capitalist system. Young radicals in the United States looked to Castro and his fellow revolutionaries as an ideal towards which to strive. Regardless of the criticism that Castro soon came under after he curtailed civil liberties and would not hold national elections, young radicals looked at Cuba and saw that revolutionary action leading to institutional change was indeed possible (Bacciocco 24).

The execution of Caryl Chessman and the events surrounding his execution were also significant in fostering the growth of the New Left in 1960. Chessman, who was convicted for seventeen felonies in California over a twenty day period in 1948, was a young man who came from the margins of society. In prison he studied law and worked on becoming an “intellectual.” He wrote an autobiography and successfully appealed for a stay of execution on eight separate occasions. This prowess and the refusal of Chessman to accept the verdict of the judge impressed many observers and students. The entire ordeal caused many to question the validity of laws and wonder whether they favored just the wealthy.

The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) disruption in San Francisco and the sit-ins against segregated facilities in the South were two final events which sparked the rise of radicalism and the birth of the New Left within America. Shortly after the execution of Chessman, HUAC met in San Francisco to interrogate witnesses about Communist party activities. Many university professors and students revolted against this, citing the personal and professional damages that were incurred by being subpoenaed. On May 13, students assembled in City Hall, disrupted the interrogations, and employed direct action to achieve their aims. The formation of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee was the first student organized group which rebelled against what it saw unfit within the society. Shortly thereafter it was accompanied by the SDS in the North. Both organizations were led by the youth and employed direct action in achieving their aims. The culmination of the maelstrom of events from 1959 to 1960 aroused citizens out of their lethargy and called them to direct action so that change could occur.

The SDS developed out of the Student League for Industrial Democracy (SLID), which itself was a branch of the socialist educational organization known as the League for Industrial Democracy (LID). Wanting to recruit a broad base of supporters, particularly students, and thinking that the term “industrial democracy” focused solely on labor issues and alienated students, members of SLID decided to change the name to the SDS. Allen Smith comments on the departure the SDS made from LID. Hoping to empower African-Americans facing racism and students under the specter of the bureaucratic university rather than industrial workers in a capitalist workplace, the SDS had many aspirations as it first began. Smith notes the diversity of these goals and the many areas that the SDS looked to change in American domestic and foreign policy. These goals included opposition to US nuclear policy, demands for a more relevant educational curriculum, an end to the war in Vietnam, and civil rights for African Americans and women. Along with these goals were also aspirations for community, sexual liberation, and creativity—a veritable utopia and a true democratic society in the eyes of the founders of the movement (5).

The manifesto which laid out the groundwork of belief for the SDS was the Port Huron Statement (PHS) which was penned in 1962 by one of the founders, Tom Hayden. The ultimate aim of the PHS was to provide the students and radicals with a moral vision to generate political activism that would not only spur change in current policies, but would also effectively realign the Democratic Party. Smith notes this aim in his study of the origins of the New Left. When commenting on the manifesto’s attitude and the response the leaders of the movement hoped to evoke, he writes “[the PHS was to] ‘awaken its allies.’ The first generation of SDS leaders hoped the student movement would be the spark that created the conditions for a realignment of the Democratic Party” (12). Kirkpatrick Sale examines the significance that the PHS had to the society searching for answers and for a plan for actually reconstructing society. In his work, *SDS*, a history of the organization he writes, “it [PHS] gave to those dissatisfied with their nation an

analysis by which to dissect it, to those pressing instinctively for change a vision of what to work for, to those feeling within themselves the need to act a strategy by which to become effective. No ideology can do more" (53-54).

J. Justin Gustainis argues that the PHS was most effective in rallying students because of its rootedness in paradox that were endemic in American culture. Hayden emphasizes paradoxes within society early in the manifesto. He notes,

We began to see complicated and disturbing paradoxes in our surrounding America. The declaration "all men are created equal..." rang hollow before the facts of Negro life in the South and the big cities of the North. The proclaimed peaceful intentions of the United States contradicted its economic and military investments in the Cold War status quo....

With nuclear energy whole cities can easily be powered, yet the dominant nation-states seem more likely to unleash destruction greater than that incurred in all wars of human history. Although our own technology is destroying old and creating new forms of social organization, men still tolerate meaningless work and idleness. While two-thirds of mankind suffers undernourishment, our own upper classes revel amidst superfluous abundance (Port Huron Statement).

The Statement continues apart from these paradoxes to point out those philosophies which are destroying American society and contributing to the deterioration of the nation. The calm and complacency of the 1950s is shattered through the revelations of the PHS. The death of an optimistic outlook and the contentment of the preceding era is described in the statement. It follows:

Theoretic chaos has replaced the idealistic thinking of old—and, unable to reconstitute theoretical order, men have condemned idealism itself. Doubt has replaced hopefulness—and men act out a defeatism that is labeled realistic. The decline of utopia and hope is in fact one of the defining features of social life today. The reasons are various: the dreams of the older left were perverted by Stalinism and never recreated; the congressional stalemate makes men narrow their view of the possible; the specialization of human activity leaves little room for sweeping thought; the horrors of the twentieth century, symbolized in the gas ovens and concentration camps and atom bombs, have blasted hopefulness. To be idealistic is to be considered apocalyptic, deluded. To have no serious aspirations, on the contrary, is to be 'toughminded' (Port Huron Statement).

A perusal of the Statement reveals the influences of socialist, communist, and traditional leftist thought amalgamated into what is considered the philosophy of the New Left. Addressing topics ranging from economics, education, warfare, and race to name just a few, the statement accurately encapsulates the ideas which were swirling about at the outset of what would prove to be arguably the most tumultuous decade in American history.

When addressing the reforms sought after in the workplace, the PHS seems to be echoing the thought of Karl Marx and his argument against the alienating labor which is inhibiting the growth of man. In the Statement it is noted,

Work should involve incentives worthier than money or survival. It should be educative, not stultifying; creative, not mechanical; self direct, not manipulated, encouraging independence;

a respect for others; a sense of dignity and a willingness to accept social responsibility, since it is this experience that has crucial influence on habits, perceptions, and individual ethics (Port Huron Statement).

One of the most significant critiques leveled by the leaders of the SDS in the Statement is that towards the state of education and the way that social institutions have stupefied the citizenry. An extended polemic against the way that education has been adulterated appears in the Statement and functions as a call to wake the students out of their stupor and to encourage them join the struggle in the reconstruction of society rather than continuing on merely as an insignificant cog in the machinery of the government. It is a call out of the conformity of the 1950s and the bureaucratic university system towards a humanistic approach to learning. This argument is laid out in the following:

But apathy is not simply an attitude; it is a product of social institutions, and of the structure and organization of higher education itself. . . . Further, academia includes a radical separation of student from the material of study. That which is studied, the social reality, is 'objectified' to sterility, dividing the student from life—just as he is restrained in active involvement by the deans controlling student government. The specialization of function and knowledge, admittedly necessary to our complex technological and social structure, has produced and exaggerated compartmentalization of study and understanding. This has contributed to: an overly parochial view, by faculty, of the role of its research and scholarship; a discontinuous and truncated understanding, by students, of the surrounding social order; a loss of personal attachment, by nearly all, to the worth of study as a humanistic enterprise. . . .

Tragically, the university could serve as a significant source of social criticism and an initiator of new modes and molders of attitudes. . . . With administrators ordering the institutions, and faculty the curriculum, the student learns by his isolation to accept elite rule within the university, which prepares him to accept later forms of minority control. The real function of the educational system—as opposed to its more rhetorical function of 'searching for truth'—is to impart the key information and styles that will help the student get by, modestly but comfortably, in the big society beyond (Port Huron Statement).

Stanley Arnowitz comments on the time period and events which were swirling about when the Port Huron Statement was released. He argues that the Statement was so significant because of the radical break that it suggested. It was not only a break from other social movements and from the Old Left, but it was also an affirmation of the unity that they proposed. Arnowitz argues, "It was not the Cold War alone which had brought this about. It was the passion to make a fundamental break with the sectarian debates, 'foreign' subcultures and sterile programs. The communist and socialist past was not repugnant, it was just irrelevant for contemporary purposes. A new language to forge the group solidarity was therefore necessary" (30).

Committed to non-violence, vehemently opposed to the war in Vietnam, and hoping to recruit the youth to lead the charge in rebuilding American society, the SDS launched its campaign for change after the release of the Port Huron Statement in 1962. Acknowledging the fact that change could not be brought about with just the SDS in the North and SNCC in the South, the SDS reached out to have interpersonal relations with many other student groups such as the National Student Association, the Young Democrats, the Young People's Socialist League, the Student Peace Union, the Young Christian Students and the Student Religious Liberals, the

Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and Campus NAACP.

Moving forward, Al Haber, who was elected president of the movement initially, Tom Hayden, and others spoke out against bureaucracy and equated the government-military-industrial complex governing the United States to the tyrannical bureaucracy of the Soviet Union. By distrusting governmental bureaucracies, the SDS began to run afoul of certain elements of liberalism and social-democratic reformism. Condemning those who believed in the "magic mechanism of History and Progress," Hayden and Haber were wary of liberal optimism which celebrated the advances made in technology, which included the Bomb. Like their Beat predecessors, Hayden and others were fearful of the cataclysmic damage which could be inflicted with the touch of a button.

Initial attempts to kick start the New Left Movement were not very successful. The original SDS leaders realized that they did not have enough political power by themselves to begin anything significant, so they needed the assistance of adult laborers and academic and political communities. Ironically enough, they were relying on the aid of groups that they had condemned in the Port Huron Statement. This tension was only an inkling of the uneasiness and unrest within the Movement itself that was to come.

While university and peace reforms did not generate the type of response and enthusiasm that the leaders were hoping for, the SDS, under the guidance of SNCC, began the Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP) in 1963 with a grant from the United Auto Workers. Hoping to stir more support within impoverished communities, the SDS turned its attention to ERAP. By organizing the poor and unemployed, the SDS was not only appealing to the idealism of some to bring the poor out of the depths of poverty, but they were also hoping to begin an insurgency within these communities. The ultimate aim was to stir prominent liberals and labor union leaders to support the SDS goal of redirecting government funds away from military advances to domestic concerns. SDS member Richard Flacks captured the tension when reflecting on what was eating away at the concerns of the SDS and other student groups. Flacks stated, "The future choice was clear, the nation had to choose between devoting its resources and energies to maintaining military superiority and international hegemony or rechanneling those resources and energies to meeting the desperate needs of its people" (Qtd. in Anderson 146). As debates over how to reconstruct American domestic policy raged within the SDS, the problem of Vietnam came to the forefront of the American conscience. With the passage of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in August 1964, people began to worry about the authorization granted to the president and the rapid escalation that was occurring in the war.

On the left there was division as to how the students should express their outrage at the government, and debates raged over the impetus which drove American intervention in Vietnam. In June 1965, SANE and SDS participated in an antiwar rally at Madison Square Garden. SANE stood behind the liberal speakers such as Wayne Morse, Benjamin Spock, and Norman Thomas who advocated negotiations and regretted what they referred to as LBJ's "mistaken policy of escalation." Terry H. Anderson notes the split that this created within the Left. He comments that Clark Kissinger, SDS spokesman, overtly opposed the statements which referred to Johnson's policy as mistaken. Kissinger and many of the first generation leaders of the SDS saw something far worse in the policy. Anderson comments, "the president's actions were not mistaken, but were part of a pattern of interventionism that demonstrated that the nation needed a 'radical reconstruction' of foreign policy. . . Kissinger declared, 'Our problem is in America, not in Vietnam'" (147). Paul Potter was another activist who advocated the SDS concerning itself with domestic change and avoiding "foreign entanglements." Potter could be viewed as a purist in the

SDS movement as he tried to steer the ship of change along the route originally outlined in the Port Huron Statement. Potter wrote,

I am worried about the situation in which we begin to make critical and difficult judgments about groups that are thousands of miles away operating in environments and under conditions that we have never perceived or witnessed. I am also worried about a situation in which the involvement of people in SDS depends on their identification with movements outside of the country which they cannot participate in or develop through (Qtd. in Gitlin 189).

However, this view was not shared by all members of SDS. An increasing number of university students across the nation viewed Vietnam as the most immediate problem. The SDS wanted to avoid being a one-issue organization and struggled to garner further support for projects such as ERAP.

In 1965, when the antiwar movement was truly coming to prominence, the SDS began to split as some joined in the general antiwar movement and others went on to pursue constructing community organizations to aid the impoverished. Many of these people felt that putting an end to the ills on the American domestic scene would eventually lead to cessation of hostilities worldwide. Staughton Lynd was in favor of community building and social organizing. He was in favor of pursuing an “interracial organization of the poor directed toward basic social change. It is a long term commitment that would end causes for conflict so they could prevent the fifth and sixth and seventh war from now” (Qtd. in Anderson 148).

Throughout the middle years of the 1960s, the SDS began to grow in numbers as more and more students joined the cause to end the war in Vietnam. However, the growth caused many factions to form with their own individual aims. Unable to assimilate the influx of new members into a coherent organization, the SDS began to be overrun by the massive hordes clamoring for change. All attention was turned towards Vietnam as more and more information was revealed which portrayed the futility of the effort. As more and more members committed themselves to ending the war, the more anger boiled within the Movement as they failed to do so. This anger and paranoia culminated in 1968 at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

By 1968 the SDS had split into numerous factions as there were many disagreements over what the primary concern of the movement should be and how the change should be made. Members of the Old Guard of the New Left continued to advocate non-violence as a means of achieving change within society. However, a great majority of the students realized that direct action and non-violence were achieving no ends. The government was not listening to the cries of the students, and thousands of young men continued to be slaughtered in Vietnam, especially during the Tet Offensive which was raging from January 1968 to September. By 1968 the emergence of the Youth International Party (Yippie), headed by Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, as well as the Student Mobilization Committee had taken the spotlight away from the SDS as they clamored for a stop to the war. Also at war with the SDS was the Progressive Labor faction which was looking to participate in the “Ten Days to Shake an Empire,” an event planned to draw the attention of the warmongers in Washington. While the SDS was losing control and splitting, their counterparts in the South—SNCC—who were the early proponents of non-violence joined ranks with the Black Panthers in February 1968.

The penchant for violent response to both the government and totalitarian rule pervaded the thought of those groups in Chicago for the National Convention. The young students who

could no longer stand by and let the warmongers sacrifice members of their generation sparked violent protests that raged throughout the entire convention week. There were numerous instances of police brutality as Mayor Daley of Chicago and his men brutally beat down those showing opposition to his views. This violent episode signified the final chapter of the SDS and other groups as they truly splintered in the aftermath of the convention. The controversy over pertinent issues and the methods by which to achieve change were far too difficult to be contained by the idealism which characterized the rise of the New Left at the start of the decade. With the influx of new members it was difficult to organize, but even organization was looked down upon. Terry Anderson notes this paradoxical turn. He comments, "They were building a community of equality, of participatory democracy, and there was a growing hostility to elitism. 'Leaders mean organization,' one member said, 'organization means hierarchy, and hierarchy is undemocratic'" (148).

But, while the Movement may have dissipated, its ideas live on. Not just a history of the rise and fall of the SDS, this discussion examines the ideals which drove the Movement forward and to apply their struggle to that which is facing America today. In the introduction to the Port Huron Statement, Tom Hayden noted that the document is not just something with which the SDS officially identifies, but it is also a "*living* document open to change with our times and experiences." An examination of American society today will reveal those same disturbing paradoxes which perplexed Hayden and the Old Guard of the New Left. There is still a racial divide within the nation. Money is concentrated in a few hands as the nation faces a possible recession. The United States exalts itself as the moral beacon towards which all should strive, yet it turns its head the other way to violate the human rights of suspected terrorists and tortures combatants in a war which seems to have no end.

It is frightening to read what the SDS saw as toxic to the operation of a truly democratic society, and see the same ills germinating within the nation. A simple history of the SDS would go against what Hayden and the Old Guard hoped education would be. Bemoaning the separation of the work of the student from reality, the SDS hoped that they could reform education so that it could humanize students and erase the loss of personal attachment. Thus, this study of the SDS is integral to reconnecting education with social reality.

One may wonder what can be taken away from a study of the SDS besides from the ideals for which they strove and a perspective of radicalism within America. Can any of the philosophies of the SDS and New Left contribute to the public discourse today? Stanley Aronowitz saw the New Left as a form of idealism which could wipe away the troubles plaguing a nation. He remarks:

The New Left was thus American in a double sense: it tried to invent a new past that served the present rather than the 'truth' of the past, and, in a sort of Nietzschean way, it proclaimed the triumph of the will, its limitless capacity to shape the future in its own images. This magical quality marked the cultural politics of the 60s and distinguishes it from virtually every European counterpart except the French, where the slogans 'Be Realistic, Demand the Impossible' and 'All Power to the Imagination' replaced, for a brief instant, every traditional concern (37).

Thus, one need not pursue a detached study of the New Left and the issues that they tried to bring to light in American society. The idealism and pragmatic notions espoused by the SDS and the New Left still ring true in a society that is battling the same fears and ills which have the

nation clamoring for a new dawn in American policy.

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## Americanization Frustration

Eric Donovan

Ethnic American literature often encompasses a variety of themes, each differing based on each varying ethnicity. However, one unifying theme seemingly found throughout many ethnic American stories is the idea of a cultural imposition. Often, stories relay the hardships of characters as they experienced a decline of their culture in favor of the American way of life as it was being introduced. Either way, the stories show readers that many ethnicities' cultures suffered as they became Americanized. Two such works, Sandra Cisneros' "Mericans" and Ha Jin's "After Cowboy Chicken Came To Town," go about explaining this theme in very different manners, yet ultimately relay a similar message of on cultural imposition's negative effects. While "Mericans" shows the dynamics of a very culture-oriented Mexican grandmother and her American grandchildren, "Cowboy Chicken" shows how Americanization can occur without even leaving one's homeland and how its popularity is not necessarily a testament to its durability. Nevertheless, each story shows how the American culture has penetrated each ethnicity's respective society and how it is slowly taking over as the generations pass.

In "Mericans," Micaela, her brother, cousin and grandmother have gone on a trip to church, where the children are restless and anxious as the grandmother patiently kneels down and begins praying. Throughout the length of the story, the child relates how her "awful grandmother" prays for everyone in her family, as no one really goes to church. In the meantime, the children play outside and take on various roles during their games. The following passage describes the games that the children are playing and what happens after Micaela goes back in to see her grandmother. In these passages, Cisneros uses the dynamic between Micaela and her grandmother to assert that the Mexican culture is slowly losing way to the American culture, generation by generation:

I've already made up my mind to be a German when Keeks swoops past again yelling, "I'm Flash Gordon. You're Ming the Merciless and the Mud People...I leave Keeks running around in circles-"I'm the Lone Ranger, you're Tonto." I leave Junior squatting on his ankles and look for the awful grandmother....The awful grandmother makes me kneel and fold my hands...I put weight on my one knee, then the other, and when they both grow fat as a mattress of pins, I slap them each awake. *Micaela, you may wait outside with Alfredito and Enrique.* The awful grandmother says it all in Spanish, which I understand when I'm paying attention. "What?" I say, though it's neither proper nor polite. "What?" which the awful grandmother hears as "*?Guat?*" But she only gives me a look and shoves me toward the door.

[Later, when Micaela has joined the boys outside and are offered gum]

"Hey, Michele, Keeks. You guys want gum?"

"But you speak English!"

"Yeah," my brother says, "we're Mericans."

We're Mericans, we're Mericans and inside the awful grandmother prays.

(Cisneros 19-20)

Cisneros does a wonderful job of asserting the idea of a lost culture through the

mentioned excerpt. In particular, she uses referencing, repetition, mockery of the Spanish language, and naming to explain that the Mexican culture has been Americanized. First using referencing, Cisneros cites two different sets of American popular culture figures, Flash Gordon and the Lone Ranger and their respective enemy or sidekick. Each of these characters, at the time, was the epitome of heroism and bravery in the eyes of the American child. Cisneros purposefully has the children insist on portraying these characters to assert that although from a Mexican heritage, they would much rather look up to American icons as their idols. In addition, Cisneros writes, "I'm Flash Gordon" then right after that exchange "I'm the Lone Ranger" to assert that these two characters are clearly trying to make sure that he or she comes out on top as the lead American hero.

However, what is most interesting about the exchange is how each of the children follows this "I am" statement by telling the other person who they will be and each time, it is an ethnic sidekick type character. Cisneros makes it clear that these children would much rather play as the American hero than as an ethnic side character, whom they each regard as someone the other can be just so he or she can look better and take the limelight as the American hero. Regardless, what is most important about this idea is that both of these children willingly oppose the ethnic aspects and clearly show an affinity for American ways.

Cisneros supports this idea that there is this sense of cultural identity loss through the use of repetition. In particular, Cisneros uses the word "awful" several times throughout the passage to describe the grandmother. In using the word "awful" so many times, it is clear that Cisneros is implying that there is something specifically unappealing about the grandmother. In the context of the story, the term "awful" is often associated with the grandmother while she is praying. However, there is one line in particular that makes the readers assume that the adjective is describing a different aspect of the grandmother. When Cisneros writes, "The awful grandmother says it all in Spanish, which I understand when I'm paying attention," it is almost written in a tone of complaint as if this woman is awful for making the girl speak in Spanish. If this is indeed the case, it can be deduced that the girl does not care to use the Spanish language, reaffirming the idea that this younger generation is slowly rejecting the Spanish culture. With the addition of the phrase "when I'm paying attention," Cisneros only bolsters this idea by ascribing that the girl does not even want to invest her time and attention to the Spanish language and culture.

Cisneros then follows this idea up with mockery. When Micaela says that her grandmother responded with the phrase, "Guat," Cisneros is once again alluding to the idea that this child does not really appreciate the language of her people but rather finds it silly. This is interesting because throughout the length of Cisneros' other stories, the language is used to enhance the cultural backdrop of the story; however, in this instance, Cisneros uses the language to point out how it is not being regarded as important by many of its own people. By having the child mock the language, Cisneros shows how little respect the younger generation has for their culture.

This idea resonates throughout the piece and translates into the next method Cisneros uses to assert that the Mexican culture is being lost to American ways. The only time the audience learns of the main characters' *real* names is when the grandmother uses them: Micaela, Alfreto, and Enrique. Without the grandmother in the story, it would have been impossible to know their real names because the kids reject these names for more Americanized versions. The biggest offender, it seems, is Micaela, whom the author makes a point to call "Michele" when she is asked if she wants gum. This is extremely interesting and eye-opening because it further supports this idea that the Mexican culture is being all but wiped out.

However, at the end of the story, there is a sense that maybe these children do not want to lose all of their identity, or at least the part that gets them what they want. In the exchange where the children are trying to get gum, they are almost hindered from getting it because the woman recognizes them as Americans, and therefore does not want to give them gum. Up until this point, the children have clearly had no problem rejecting their Mexican identities and embracing the American inside of them.

However, when it comes to convenience, the children seem to blur the lines and use their heritage only when it works to their advantage. When Cisneros ends the story with, "We're Mericans, we're Mericans, and inside the awful grandmother prays," she is alluding to this idea that the children only use their heritage when it is good for them. What is most interesting about all of this is how she adds the phrase, "inside the awful grandmother prays" almost to assert that the grandmother is now praying for these children also, in the she hopes they will find their identities in their Mexican heritage. This idea can be supported by the fact that Cisneros establishes the Mexican community as a very religious one. Since none of the grandmother's family go to church anymore, it can be concluded that she feels they, too, have abandoned their Mexican roots. In having the reader's last glimpse of the awful grandmother praying, it seems that Cisneros is suggesting that the Mexican heritage will continue to crumble and the grandmother will always be needed to pray for its survival.

This theme of cultural imposition and deterioration also runs rampant in Ha Jin's short story, "After Cowboy Chicken Came To Town," the story of an American fast-food chain moving into China. In the story, several Chinese workers begin their employment for this American business and soon learn that its capitalist ways and customs are not all they are cracked up to be when in comparison to the traditional Chinese way. Even though they get paid triple the amount of money that their parents make, they still do not get the same shares as the manager Peter Jiao or the American owner, Mr. Shapiro. In this case, as opposed to in Cisneros' story, Jin creates a world where Americanization is seen as bad. While the characters try hard to embrace the American ways, they find fault with it in many areas, which hits a breaking point with Peter Jiao's discarding of extra foods at the end of the night. By the end of the story, they try to do what they believe is right and American-like, and so they strike against the company for better pay, believing that Cowboy Chicken will come to its American senses and compensate them. However, as the workers unfortunately learn, the American ways are not always so clear cut and fair and it costs them their jobs.

Ultimately, this is a story about the rejection of a new culture, as opposed to the embracing of a new culture found in Cisneros' story. In the context of the story, the first excerpt occurs just as the workers are starting their jobs at Cowboy Chicken, when they are readying the buffet for its first day of service. The second occurs later on at the end of the story, just before the strike, when the workers have discovered that Peter burns the leftovers every night despite the fact that there are thousands of starving individuals in China. In each of these passages, the audience gets a sense that although Americanization is taking place and the people are trying hard to conform to it, they ultimately see that American traditions and values are completely unappealing when in juxtaposition with their own Chinese culture. Through the use of cultural references, monotonous imagery, negative imagery, listing, and comparison, Jin is able to convey to his audience that the imposition of American ideas and customs only hinders the progress and tradition of Chinese culture.

We all knew that the buffet was headed for disaster, but we didn't care very much

and just continued deep-frying chicken and refilling the salad and mashed potato bowls. Once in a while we also went over to the buffet stand and picked a piece of chicken for ourselves, because today nobody could keep a record. At last we too could eat our fill. I liked the chicken better with soy sauce and slapped plenty on. The employees shared a bottle of soy sauce, which we kept under the counter. (Jin 195)

[after discovering Manager Peter Jiao burns all of the leftovers of the day]

The next day we told all the other workers about our discovery. Everyone was infuriated, and even the two part-timers couldn't stop cursing capitalism. There were children begging on the streets, there were homeless people at the train station and the ferry house, there were hungry cats and dogs everywhere, why did Mr. Shapiro want Peter to burn good meat like garbage? Manyou said he had read in a restricted journal several years ago that some American capitalists would dump milk into a river instead of giving it to the poor. But that was in the U.S.; here in China, this kind of wasteful practice had to be condemned. I told my fellow workers that I was going to write an article to expose Ken Shapiro and Peter Jiao. (Jin 216)

The passage above is very interesting on many levels. Jin uses several different literary techniques, including cultural references, monotonous imagery, negative imagery, listing, and comparison to better emphasize that Americanization is not necessarily a good thing.

First, using cultural references, Jin helps to relay how the characters find their own culture to be more suitable for them. Using the lines, "I liked the chicken better with soy sauce and slapped plenty on. The employees shared a bottle of soy sauce, which we kept under the counter," Jin is referencing Chinese culture by alluding to the fact that these workers would rather eat their own cultural food than the new American food being imposed upon them. In using the soy sauce to cover over the American food, Jin is implying that these workers wanted to cover up the Americanization that was taking place and instead put back or at least try to substitute in their Chinese heritage through soy sauce. With the addition of "slapped on" and "I liked...better," Jin is only further supporting this notion by seemingly rubbing it in that these Chinese workers prefer their old ways over the flashy, trendy new American dishes. This implies that clearly these Chinese people, as opposed to the children in "Mericans," did not see Americanization as beneficial to their culture.

To support the point Jin is trying to make even further, he follows this idea up with the use of imagery that provokes the idea of monotony. Using words like "continued," "refilling," and "once again" in the excerpt regarding the workers doing their American-style job, Jin is asserting that the workers find their American-like duties to be quite uneventful and unexciting, once again alluding to the idea that they really do not like the American culture. In doing so, he is also playing upon irony because typically, the lives of Americans were often supposed to be the lives for which to aspire. They were typically seen as exciting and interesting lives by foreigners. However, since Jin uses imagery that evokes a boring and repetitive nature, the audience sees that this idea of an exciting American life is actually a common misconception and Jin teaches a lesson that what one wants is not necessarily what one needs.

This anti-Americanization is further supported through negative words and phrases such as "disaster," "didn't care very much," "cursing" and "garbage" to emphasize the workers feelings on American capitalism and American culture and tradition. Using such negative words

and phrases helps to bolster this idea that the Chinese workers did not really support American ideas. It is extremely interesting that Jin uses such words because it ascribes that the Chinese are better off without the negative influence of the United States. The word "garbage" in the excerpt is particularly interesting because it asserts that the Chinese have begun to feel as though the new culture they are experiencing is just that; garbage.

Next, Jin uses a very interesting literary technique in the form of listing. In the second part of the excerpts, he lists the various places that the food could have gone instead of being burned by Peter Jiao: "There were children begging on the streets, there were homeless people at the train station and the ferry house, there were hungry cats and dogs everywhere." In using listing to describe the various places the food could have went, Jin is emphasizing how backwards the American way seems to be and just how many alternatives there were to burning the food. In doing this, he is showing that it is absurd when there are so many different people that could use the food. Because he is accentuating the fact that there are others in need while Jiao does his job, Jin is reaffirming the idea that the American ways and customs cannot translate into China because China is a different world unto itself, with different rules and ways that must be kept in accordance with for the good of the people.

Finally, Jin uses the technique of comparison to really set off his argument that China's customs are completely suitable for the workers and that the implementation of American ways is unnecessary. He writes, "...some American capitalists would dump milk into a river instead of giving it to the poor. But that was in the U.S.; here in China, this kind of wasteful practice had to be condemned." When he says that America carelessly wastes its leftover foods instead of feeding the poor, he is trying to garner anger or outrage against them. This, in juxtaposition with the comparison of China as being a place where such wasteful practice would be condemned, shows China in a more positive light. This once again helps to prove that China's ways are certainly acceptable for the workers. Clearly, there is no need for any American involvement when American action is only viewed as wrong and unjust.

Each of the stories presents a different take on the Americanization of the culture. In Cisneros' account, the audience sees an acceptance of the culture and a rejection of the ethnic heritage. As a result, there is a rift between generations, creating a negative atmosphere. In Jin's story, the readers experience a defiant Chinese group who reject the Americanization only to embrace their own original culture. Once again, however, there is a tension and negative atmosphere created between those who accepted it, like Peter Jiao, and those who rejected it, like the workers. While it is interesting that both stories create the same unifying theme that cultural imposition causes negative effects, that can pretty much be assumed in any occurrence of cultural imposition. The most fascinating idea about these two stories lies within their greater differences of setting. One story takes place in America, where an ethnic group is slowly changing to become more like the rest of the country. The other story takes place in China, where America is coming into its homeland to impose change. Even though both stories differ so much in their setting, they still have the same result. Because of their difference in setting, this shows the readers that regardless of the situation, place, or circumstances, the melding of cultures always turns out bad. One could be in China, in America, in the Antarctic for that matter, and regardless of the differences in their cultures, each of those people would still face serious problems if another culture tried to take over and press their views. Before a culture decides that it needs to spread its views and ways to others, maybe it should take a look at this old axiom: "If it ain't broke, don't try to fix it."

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## **What Attracts Americans to the Abnormalities of the Human Form?**

Mary Conrad

The human body is an awful thing. It has such ability and dexterity; it can do many wonderful and different acts that other creatures in this world cannot. We frequently take this remarkable gift for granted. Rarely do we take a serious look at the human form and set aside the time to ponder it and all its glory. Unfortunately, we have no problem with gawking at the flawed body. We seem to thrive on the seemingly ugly and twisted deformities that nature has been known to curse us with. The Elephant Man, sideshow freaks like the Hairy Man and The World's Only Living Half Girl, touring art exhibits like *Body Worlds: The Anatomical Exhibition of Real Human Bodies*, and museums like the Mütter Museum in Philadelphia all serve as attractions to whet the appetite and satiate our need for the eternally strange and different. Today, museums and exhibits which display the preternatural are argued that they function as educational and/or artistic tools, serving a greater good. Regardless of the intentions behind these displays, they are ultimately reduced to the need for shock value by patrons. This begs the question, what about abnormalities attracts the attention and interests of Americans? While it is the differences of people which make us inherently fascinating to each other, it is our need to know ourselves that drives our obsession.

Joseph Merrick, more commonly known as the Elephant Man, was a normal man who was born on August 5, 1862 (Graham and Oehlschlaeger 157), lived with Proteus Syndrome (Graham and Oeschlaeger 2) and died from "trying to be like other people" in 1890 (Graham and Oeschlaeger 163). Proteus Syndrome is a condition which affects multiple bodily systems. It causes growths which resemble gigantism in different parts of the body (Pletcher) (see Figs. 1 & 2). In the book, *Articulating the Elephant Man*, by Peter W. Graham and Fritz H. Oehlschlaeger, Merrick's life and experiences are discussed and chronicled, using first hand accounts from various resources, including his autobiography entitled, *The Autobiography of Joseph Carey Merrick*, (9) the Broadway play (119), and the film (135) about his life. Joseph Merrick was a man who was normal in every regard except in his physical appearance (5). This difference made him a thing of great interest to the world, evident by his fame and the existence and popularity of the movie and books about him. A recurring theme in Merrick's life was how he just wanted to be normal. Ultimately, this desire is what lead to his demise. After years of being forced to sleep in an upright position because of the weight of the growths on his body, Merrick decided to "experiment" with laying down; the weight and pressure of the growths suffocated him (163; 184).

Other people embrace their abnormalities. Jeanie Tomaini, The World's Only Living Half-Girl (Lamb), and Andrian Jeftichjew, the Hairy Man ("The Hairy Man"), used their physical differences to make a life for themselves. According to the *New York Times* article on Andrian Jeftichjew, his face was covered in what appeared to be hair, but in actuality these were abnormally long growths of the fine hairs which cover the human body. In actuality, Jeftichjew could not grow any real hair as these growths prevented it. During his life, Jeftichjew put himself on display with a boy afflicted by the same condition. Being a deeply religious man, he donated his earnings to monks in exchange for prayers that his soul be delivered to heaven in the afterlife. He didn't appear to feel shame for his appearance and used what God gave him to live his life.

*The Los Angeles Times* published an article by David Lamb which included an interview

with Jeanie Tomaini. In the account, Tomaini describes what it was like to be a woman with no legs in the freak show world. She lovingly recalled the life she had where she was able to earn a living on her appearance and live in a community of acceptance. She claimed, "The word 'freak' was never offensive to me, if you used it in the right tone of voice." This optimistic 2'6" woman married an 8'4" giant to become "The World's Strangest Married Couple" (see Fig. 3). She loved her life as a performer and being in a community of 'freaks,' she "never felt handicapped."

People are enthralled by abnormalities. In the world of those who suffer from being different, there are two kinds of people. The first kind are the Joseph Merrick's, people who struggle with their own reality and want nothing more than to be normal, to be more like everyone they see around them. Then there are the second kind, those like Andrian Jeftichjew and Jeanie Tomaini who embrace their differences and use what they have to their advantage. This is where the fascination with human form begins, with the recognition of the differences between people. I would argue that we would have no interest in the human form at all if we were all the same and if there were no diseases and illnesses. Logically speaking, the need to fix problems like diseases and the shock of seeing something that delineates from the norm is what draws attention. When walking down the street, a person will not remark on the sameness of everyone they see but they will stare at the man in a wheel chair, the girl with fingers fused together, and those who tower like mythical giants above the crowd. Doctors would not exist and would not need to study the human condition in its many forms if it weren't for disease and the need to fix and cure. The root of our fascination lies in our ability to note differences.

One of the more controversial aspects of the display of human bodies relates to *Body Worlds*, a traveling exhibit, which deals in displaying plastinated remains for primarily artistic purposes (Byassee; Gowen; Lewis 29). The creator of *Body Worlds*, Gunther von Hagen, a German doctor, developed a technique called plastination which is a method for the preservation of bodies for medical study (Lewis 29). Von Hagen transferred his method from science to art and developed a show using bodies mostly procured from China (Lewis 32). He took these bodies and posed them in different types of daily activity, to show the intricacies and reveal the wonders of how the human body works (Lewis 29-30). The idea behind the act of creating these forms and putting them on display was to educate and enthrall the masses. Von Hagen wanted to allow people to truly see, for the first time, the human body in its natural form, sometimes doing unnatural things. For example, one display is of a skinless rider on a skinless horse, holding his own brain in an outstretched hand (Byassee)(see Fig. 4). It may be a natural thing to ride a horse, but not to show off one's brain. According to Michael Lewis, this is done to help the viewer "overcome squeamishness" by creating a "sense of play" (30).

One of the great controversies over *Body Worlds* relates to the will of the subjects being put on display. *Body Worlds* was banned from Western Europe when an exposé was written in Germany, claiming that the bodies used were those of executed prisoners (Lewis 32). If the claim is true, then free will was taken from these people; they did not have the option to be a part of the show, they were sold into it. When looking deeper into the issue, it becomes apparent that these people had no say even if the claim is false. According to Gowen, the bodies used were, "obtained legally from China. The people died of natural causes and didn't have a family member to claim them." So either way, whether they were executed prisoners or died naturally, they signed no waiver and gave no approval to have their worldly remains subjected to plastination and manipulation for all the world to look at.

This matter of free will has been an issue throughout history. According to Y. Michael Barilan's article which discusses the ethics behind the display of human bodies, "American

physicians bought slaves with rare malformations or medical conditions in order to benefit from observation, demonstration, and experimentation... whether they were alive or dead had little consequences... not considered persons... not considered human,"(194). Medical professionals were so fascinated by the human form and so desperate in their quest for knowledge, that they subjected people to the basest form of existence. Enslaved subjects were stripped of their humanity to be the subject of study and experimentation; they were dehumanized for the sake of medicine and personal interest. It is remarkable that in this day and age, bodies may still be obtained and used with disregard to the persons' wishes and desires. Admittedly, it is difficult to decide what the desires of a person are when they are dead and have no family or friends to speak for them, but I find it unsettling that no traditional method of disposal would be used. It is an interesting thing that the automatic conclusion would be to make the body property and use it as art.

While the *Body Worlds* exhibit deals in the artistic nature of human bodies, the Mütter Medical Museum in Philadelphia commonly deals in medical oddities, artifacts, and the remains of those afflicted with various conditions and disease for the purpose of education (Shulman; Barilan 193; Stone 14). In 1858, the founder of the Mütter Museum, Dr. Thomas Dent Mütter "presented his collection of anatomical and pathological specimens to the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, so that students could look and learn," (Stone 14). Among the items of his collection, Mütter possessed medical tools like a tonsil guillotine, used to slice a tonsil out of the throat quickly and with minimal pain, an early stethoscope, skulls, a collection of items inhaled and swallowed and the tools used for their extraction, and the most popular part of his collection, deformed human remains (Stone 14- 15). Among these remains are a cast of Cheng and Eng, the famous Siamese Twins (Shulman), a pregnant hunchback with stomach splayed to show the fetus (Barilan 193), the skeleton of a dwarf and her baby next to a giant (Barilan 193; Shulman; Stone 15) and a collection of preserved fetuses (Stone 15). While it may sound like an interesting place to go see some freaks and fascinating remains, the museum director, Gretchen Worden "doesn't want anyone to confuse the mutter with nineteenth century traveling sideshows" (Stone 16). This implies a contrast in feelings about the sideshow. While Jeanie Tomaini viewed her career as a way to make a living and live in a community of people afflicted with one condition or another, Worden seems to put it down. It all depends on perspective. Worden looks at the display of the human form in a medical manner, which would not include those who are looked at for the sole purpose of being 'freaks.' Tomaini, on the other hand looks at being shown as a means to an end, a way of living and being accepted. Looking back at von Hagen's *Body World* exhibit, the artistic show of the body is what is valued. None of these people are wrong, they just have different perspectives.

Ultimately, why are these shows so interesting? Why do Americans go watch freak shows, go to museums of medical oddities, attend exhibits of art created from human bodies? The answer is that they are interested in learning more about themselves and the human condition. When the idea is boiled down, people are not going to see art, they are not interested in the moral issues or the medical field, they want to know about themselves. People want to know what makes humans human, they want to dissect the being and see what it is, inside and out. What makes someone different? What makes them the same? From the beginning, humans have tried to uncover the meaning of our existence, the mystery of ourselves. It is that Hofstede character trait of strong uncertainty avoidance that drives us in our quest to learn about the body and makes seeing the body in abnormal ways so fascinating. Over at least the past five hundred years, anatomists and artists have worked in collaboration to study the body and record the

findings in drawings and books (Macaulay 109). These books and images can be used to help large numbers of people see what cannot be seen in everyday life, the inside of the body. Leonardo da Vinci is the only man whose work was the product of one person (Macaulay 109). The *Vitruvian Man* (see Fig. 5) is one of the most celebrated images of the human form, as he studied humans from a mechanical perspective and illustrated them as such (Lewis 31).

It has been argued that the body is a fascinating thing which captivates and engages. The root of this fascination lies in the desire to know oneself and uncover the mystery of who we are. It is plain that we are made of flesh and bone; that we function in certain ways, we get sick, we get better, we reproduce, and then we die, but that is not enough. As need to know Americans, we look to uncover the real reason and meaning behind what we are. We try to understand ourselves by looking at others. We look at those who are different from us and revel in the viewing of the gross and seemingly unnatural. We are awful of the unexplained but we desire the answers. Through looking at everything that is different from us, we hope to understand why we are the same and why some are so abnormal. It is a journey towards understanding that brings us to watch freaks and look at bodies. Humans are curious and the greatest curiosity is humanity.

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Appendix

**Figure 1**

“Joseph Merrick.” Photo. *Answers.com* 01 Dec. 2007 [www.answers.com/topic/joesph-merrick](http://www.answers.com/topic/joesph-merrick)



**Figure 2**

“Joseph Merrick’s Skeleton.” Photo. *Health.discovery.com* 01 Dec. 2007  
<http://health.discovery.com>



**Figure 3**

“Aurellio and Jeanie Tomaini.” Photo. *Tomaini.com* 01 Dec. 2007  
<http://www.tomaini.com/pic8.htm>



**Figure 4**

“Rearing Horse with Rider.” Photo. *Philadelphia.about.com* 01 Dec. 2007  
[http://philadelphia.about.com/library/gallery/blbody\\_worlds\\_02.htm](http://philadelphia.about.com/library/gallery/blbody_worlds_02.htm)



**Figure 5**

“Leonardo’s Virtruvian Man.” Drawing. *Leonardodavinci.stanford.edu* 01 Dec. 2007  
<http://leonardodavinci.stanford.edu/submissions/clabaugh/history/leonardo.html>



