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"Making Middle-Class Marriage Modern in Kentucky, 1830 to 1900"

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by

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Abstract

This study examines changes that Kentucky's white middle class made to marital ideals in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. It demonstrates that this developing class refined an earlier ideal of companionate marriage to better suit their economic, social, and cultural circumstances in an urban environment.

This reevaluation of companionate marriage corresponded with Kentucky's escalating entry into a national market economy and the state's most rapid period of urbanization. As it became increasingly unlikely that young men born to Kentucky's white landed settler families would inherit either land or enslaved labor, they began to rely on advanced education in order to earn a livelihood in towns and cities. Because lack of land and labor caused a delay in their ability to marry, the members of Kentucky's middle class focused attention on romantic passion rather a balance of reasoned affection and wealth in land when they formulated their urban marital ideal.

They encountered several obstacles in the process of redefining marriage. Kentucky's middle class was a small urban ship on a vast rural sea. A majority of Kentucky's population, both white and black, continued to define marriage in a way that suited life in a family farm economy. In addition, white middle-class men faced challenges to their ownership of enslaved people, property and wealth because educated white women in urban centers began to demand more control of family finances and people in Kentucky, bolstered by an increased agitation for abolition, challenged the institution of slavery.

In response, the members of Kentucky's middle class attempted to establish cultural hegemony over the marital ideals and practices of Kentucky's large rural

population. They also began to culturally buttress marriage as an institution in which white men acted as legal, social and economic heads of households.

Although this dissertation is a study of the contesting marriage beliefs and practices between urban and rural people of Kentucky, it raises questions for further research about heightened romantic ideals of marriage that historians have found among an urbanizing, northern white middle class in the middle decades of the nineteenth century.

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I am indebted to my advisor, Wayne Durrill, for his timely suggestions as I wrote my dissertation, for graciously reading and editing *many* versions of this work, and his suggestion that I look at Civil War Pension files for Kentucky Union veterans and their wives to discover the marital beliefs and practices of rural people in Kentucky. Most of these people left no written records but stories they told pension officers bear witness to their extraordinary lives. I thank Maura O'Connor whose enthusiastic approach to history made graduate school worthy of very hard work that brought great joy. Barbara Ramusack was responsible for my entry into the Women's Studies Program at the University of Cincinnati and for my original interest in comparative women's history. Both Maura O'Connor and Barbara Ramusack have followed my progress through two graduate degrees and a doctorate with unwavering encouragement and support. Nancy Theriot, Chairperson of Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Louisville, graciously agreed to be an outside reader and to serve on my dissertation committee. The process of writing was rather prolonged and I thank her for her patience.

My family, Peter and Matthew, have lived with and shared the pleasure (and the pain) of dissertating. Thank you both! When the writing bogged down you kept me going. This work is because of and in honor of my grandmother, Belle, and my mother, Anne.

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Introduction

In her portrayal of courtship and marriage in the late eighteenth century, the English novelist, Jane Austen, observed how an English gentry and developing middle class began to eschew earlier aristocratic notions of what ought to motivate a good marriage. While Austen's most admirable characters continued to evaluate a man's marital worth on the basis of his annual income, respectable marriages, she determined, ought to be undertaken for "high wrought love" rather than forged as "preservatives from want." [1] It is Austen's high wrought notion that we imagine when we think about marriage as a private contract made between two individuals on the basis of subjective feelings of love. In the 1970s and 1980s scholars researching the history of western marriage and family found evidence suggesting that ideals for the basis of marriage had indeed changed, and that a romantic vision of marriage had a determinate history. Looking at marriage and family formation in Western Europe, scholars noted that sometime between the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries the notion of what ought to motivate marriage began to shift as capitalism and market relations replaced agricultural economies. At the same time, they argue, marriage shifted from a traditional union based on economic and political alliances between families for livelihood and labor to modern and companionate unions based on individual choice for love. [2] As one historian writes,

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[1] Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (New York: Modern Library, 2000, originally published 1813), 91; Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (New York: Signet Classic, 1989, originally published 1818), 220.

[2] For a discussion of the research and findings of historians of European family and marriage that includes some work by historians on the American family see Tamara K. Hareven, "Family History at the Crossroads," *Journal of Family History* Volume 12,

"a climate of opinion in which marriage was assumed to result from social and material considerations changed to one in which subjective and emotional considerations were, if not central, at least acknowledged to play a role."[3]

Changes in nuptial laws or sexuality rather than shifts in the meaning of marriage have generated attention among historians examining cultural changes in the United States. What history is available for American marital beliefs suggests that white, English speaking Americans also embraced a companionate marriage model. Several scholars argue that Europeans brought these ideals with them when they landed on America's Atlantic shores in the seventeenth century. Richard Godbeer suggests, for example, that the Puritans celebrated sexual passion and ardent love between marital partners, providing these intimacies remained within the confines of religiously sanctioned marriage.[4] John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman similarly argue that men and women migrating from Europe to the English Atlantic colonies brought ideals of marital love and celebrated its sexual expression. By the end of the eighteenth century, they suggest, Americans had accepted Enlightenment ideals, and expressed their expectations for individual choice, more equality or companionship between husbands and wives, and

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Numbers 1-3 (1987): ix-xxiii. For a more recent discussion of the historiography generated by historians of Western Europe about the rise of sentiment in family and marriage see Jeffrey R. Watt, *The Making of Modern Marriage: Matrimonial Control and the Rise of Settlement in Neuchatel, 1550-1800* (Ithica: Cornell University Press), 1992.

[3] Margaret Darrow, "Popular Concepts of Marital Choice in Eighteenth-Century France," *Journal of Social History* (Winter 1985): 261-272.

[4] Richard Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution in Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 2002.

mutual romantic attraction as precursors for marriage.[5] Herman Lantz found ideas of love in companionate marriage prevalent in colonial newspapers, magazines, novels and marriage manuals as early as 1741.[6] Nancy Cott has argued that, since the Revolutionary Era, Americans have viewed marriage as "a voluntary union based on consent" and that "Americans were very much committed to marriage founded on love."[7] Anya Jabour has convincingly demonstrated that one young, white, well-educated, and middle-class couple living in a southern city at the end of the eighteenth century wrote to each other in a language of romantic love and mutual esteem, and in a way that demonstrated their expectations (despite their separate spheres) for some equality in marriage.[8] In other words, historical literature on American marital ideals suggests that by the beginning of the nineteenth century, a developing middle class in America, like an English bourgeoisie, accepted the idea that "love was becoming a respectable basis for marriage choice, encouraging a new view of marriage in which the affections of husband and wife were as important as their economic and reproductive obligations."[9]

We know, however, very little about the marital beliefs and practices of illiterate Americans between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries because they left no

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[5] John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 4, 39- 42.

[6] Lantz, Romantic Love, 349-370.

[7] Cott, *Public Vows*, 10, 150.

[8] Anya Jabour, *Marriage in the Early Republic: Elizabeth and William Wirt and the Companionate Ideal* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 1998.

[9] John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 4, 39- 42.

written accounts of their thoughts about marriage in general or their own marriages in particular. Lamenting the dearth of records that make an examination of illiterate people very difficult, scholars tend to generalize from the records left by the "reporter" classes, allowing them to speak for their silent, less educated and less publicly prominent cohorts.[10] Consequently, although there is a debate over the structure of American slave families in the antebellum period, most historians argue that enslaved African Americans, like whites, chose their own marital partners (when they were able) and bound their marriages with ties of affection or romantic love.[11] In her comparison of white and black families in Loudon County, Virginia, one historian argues that an ideal of compatibility existed homogeneously across classes of whites and probably for free blacks who "hoped that marriage would produce a relationship filled with love, loyalty, respect, honor, and honesty, in other words, a companionate marriage." [12] This historian argues, however, that the presence of such factors is less clear among slaves. While some monogamous enslaved couples "may have been devoted to one another and able to sustain feelings of

[10] Herman Lantz, "Romantic Love in the Pre Modern Period: A Sociological Commentary," *Journal of Social History* 15, (Fall 1982): 349-370. Sarah Maza also argues that there is a tendency to assume "that a widespread, dominant narrative is shared by all groups." Sarah Maza, "Stories in History: Cultural Narratives in Recent Works in European History," *American Historical Review* Volume 101, Number 5 (December 1996): 1493-1515.

[11] For an example of the debates generated over the structure of black families in slavery in the antebellum south see Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Pantheon Books), 1976; Nancy D. Bercaw, *Gendered Freedoms: Race, Rights, and the Politics of Household in the Delta, 1861-1875* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida), 2004. These historians do not query the nature of the sentiment in black families, but assume that this vision of marriage was based on romantic love. See also Emily West, *Chains of Love: Slave Couples in Antebellum South Carolina* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press,) 2004.

love and respect over time," they were often not able to do so because they lived in fear of separation. However, she too proposes, "love and romance were as important reasons as any that slaves insisted on choosing their spouses." [13] Similarly, in their studies of illiterate whites in North Carolina and Kentucky in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Bill Cecil-Fronsman and Robert Weise note that young people appear to have had a choice in whom to marry. Despite a continued emphasis on the use of marriage as a strategy to ensure community of kin, extended family and labor, Robert Weise proposes, Appalachian couples expected "to construct loving and fulfilling personal relationships" when they married.[14] However, as Tamara Hareven argues, the problem of generalizing "to the entire society on the basis of the middle class" is "a common problem especially in American family history."[15]

In fact, all Americans had not adopted notions of companionate marriage by the beginning of the nineteenth century. In her study of Appalachian feuds at the end of the century, Altina Waller found that eastern mountain couples did not use a language of sentiment or romantic love. Although couples chose to marry (either formally or informally) on the basis of attraction, marriage appeared to be "almost as a business partnership tempered by affection." White mountain folk, she argues, viewed marriage as

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[12] Brenda E. Stephenson, *Life In Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 7, 155, xii, 161.

[13] Ibid. 231.

[14] Bill Cecil-Fronsman, *Common Whites: Class and Culture in Antebellum North Carolina* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992); Robert S. Weise, *Grasping at Independence: Debt, Male Authority, and Mineral Rights in Appalachian Kentucky, 1850-1915* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 62.

[15] Tamara Hareven, "Family History at the Crossroads," *Journal of Family History* Volume 12, Numbers 1-3 (1987): ix-xxiii.

a "domestic partnership in which a husband and wife were responsible for well-defined and separate, yet equally important tasks in farming and raising a family" and "fundamentally this partnership had little to do with intangible feelings of love and romance but was based in duty and responsibility."[16]

Moreover, there are intriguing hints in the extant literature on American marriage that even a white middle-class continued to revise eighteenth-century notions of companionate marriage. In the middle of the century, America's white middle class began to base their marriages more on romantic love and less on material considerations. Mary Ryan notes that struggling artisan families in the early nineteenth century may have intermarried to "further cement" a family economy, but by 1830, young middle-class white men wrote romantic missives full of beating hearts.[17] Suzanne Lebsock also found that in both private correspondence and in newspapers free blacks and whites in antebellum Petersburg, Virginia, overtly discussed marrying for love or marrying for money. Didactic tales in newspapers, she concluded, indicated that "marriage was as much a matter of financial calculation as of romance" and "behind every heart throb lay a commercial transaction." Lebsock argues, however, "the romantic love ideal would eventually prevail," and the role of money would consequently become "obscured and reclassified as vulgar."[18] Nancy Cott determined that Americans widely accepted a

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[16] Altina L. Waller, *Feud: Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Change in Appalachia, 1860- 1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 57, 58,

[17] Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 48, 180.

[18] Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1985), 15, 16.

companionate vision of marriage after the Revolutionary War, however, she too briefly and intriguingly observes that sometime during the nineteenth century, there was a "willful mystification" in "American rhetoric and popular culture" that "for some time put love and money on opposite sides of the street" and separated "mercenary matters from 'true love.'" [19]

Indeed, when I began research on marriage beliefs in nineteenth-century Kentucky, I found that marital expectations differed widely between white, urban and well-educated people and their illiterate rural neighbors, both white and black. In addition, by 1830, it was clear that a younger generation of educated whites in Kentucky was engaged in the project of eliminating material considerations from their companionate marital ideal. By 1840, a discourse proclaiming that marriage must never be made for money was pervasive in both private correspondence and in the public forum of Kentucky's urban newspapers. Intrigued by these contesting rural and urban visions, and the middle-class attempt to make marriage all about romantic love, I set out to compare changes in marital expectations occurring across Kentucky's social hierarchy in the middle of the nineteenth century.

I relied on a variety of sources because how and where Kentucky people expressed their expectations of marriage varied. Well-educated, socially and politically prominent families put their very private and sentimental thoughts on paper and purposefully saved their written correspondence. Less wealthy youngsters, who had a rudimentary education in the public school system in Kentucky, may have written

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[19] Cott, *Public Vows, 150.*

copious correspondence but they did not often save their family papers for celebration of their accomplishments in perpetuity. Nevertheless, those few youngsters from modest farming families who did save their papers left an important record of their expectations for love and marriage.[20] There are, however, few sources available to shed light on the thoughts and feelings surrounding courtship and marriage for the vast majority of people in Kentucky's past. Many whites in Kentucky in the nineteenth century had only a very rudimentary elementary education. They could write well enough to sign their names to business documents and to keep important dates of birth, deaths and marriages in family bibles. But, when they wrote, it was with considerable labor. For example, in 1917 when Martha Sorrell enlisted the aid of a local notary public in Bath County to help her with her paperwork, even the notary public struggled to compose his letter. "John Sorrell died on the 27 day of February 1916," he wrote, and "Jeff (*?*) and Sara Wiley maid the err in the dates of John Sorrell death and amed to crect it."[21] Often husbands wrote but their wives did not. George Freeman, a farmer in Jackson County, signed his own paperwork but his wife, Martha, who could not write, had others write letters for her. The levels of literacy for George Freeman, his wife Emily, and many of their rural neighbors living near Owsley in Boone County, Kentucky, in 1891 are typical. Bowman signed in his own hand, while Emily made her mark. Most of his neighbors were farmers; three signed their names in their own hand and the four signed by mark. Their average age was 63.5

[20] I have relied particularly on letters written by youngsters in the Adams family of Tennessee and of Clarke County, Kentucky saved by Martha Adams. These young correspondents had gone to school long enough to achieve an education that might be roughly equivalent today to four or five years of elementary education.

[21] Notary Public to Acting Commissioner of Pensions, circa June 19, 1916, John Sorrell, claim, Certificate 702170.

years in 1891. It would be reasonable to think then, that these young men had received their schooling in Boone County in the 1830s and that girls in the same community were less likely to be sent for formal schooling. [22] The literacy level among freed African Americans in Kentucky was also very low. After the Civil War, people began to attend school held in local churches to learn to read and write, but most women and men signed their official documents by making their mark. Consequently, while literate and educated women and men left their expectations for marriage in their own words, most Kentucky women and men simply did not put their experience of courtship and marriage on paper.

In order to understand expectations of marriage among an illiterate people this study relies primarily on what people told local pension officials in the process of applying for a Federal Civil War pension between 1862 and the end of the nineteenth century. Pension file narratives embody the marital histories of roughly two generations of women and men who married for the first time between 1855 and 1870.[23] The applicants were either veterans who had fought for the Union Army during the war or, more often, their widows. Applicants represented a wide range of people in Kentucky. Generals and colonels in the Union Army, including professional men, some who were publicly prominent citizens before the war, or their widows, applied for veterans' pension money. Some applicants came from modest white farming families. Many applicants were African American. Some, both white and black, lived in urban centers in Kentucky, or in surrounding states at time they filed for a pension, while most lived in rural areas.

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[22] Pension file, George Freeman claim, Certificate 392369.

[23] Civil War veterans were born in the 1830s and 1840s and their wives in the 1840s and 1850s.

Although these sources provide some insight into marital expectations for a variety of people, they provide more knowledge for some than others. Specifically, there are limits to using pension files to discern ideas about marriage for all who applied for a pension. Federal special examiners asked questions about the legality of applicants' marriages and usually didn't query the sentiments that might underlie their unions. Consequently, widows attempted to prove as quickly and as efficiently as possible that they had married according to law. As a result, the most literate applicants, those living in urban areas with ready access to public records, volunteered very little information about their expectations and beliefs about marriage. Pension files tell us much more about the marriages of people who had difficulty proving their marriages were legal. They tell us more about the marital histories and expectations of a people who married under slavery, then in freedom. They tell us about Kentucky whites living in rural and isolated areas who tended to marry and divorce informally. In their attempts to prove that their marital unions met the standards of the pension office, both of these groups offered detailed marital histories, and more about their marital practices and expectations. Consequently, while letters and diaries provide us with expectations for the most literate and educated of Kentucky's white families, and pension records divulge information about the marriages of once enslaved and physically isolated, rural whites there is a gap for a large group of free blacks and modest white families living in Kentucky in the nineteenth century.

This study demonstrates that in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, Kentucky's white, middle class reshaped a vision of companionate marriage that had operated in the eighteenth century that had comfortably balanced love and considerations

of material worth. This middle class insisted that love be the only requirement for marrying, and it turned the kind of marital love required from affection to romantic passion. Young men used poetic language to promise passionate love instead of wealth in land and enslaved labor when they courted, while young women capitalized on suitors' promises of passion to ensure a less authoritarian union.

This study also demonstrates that a companionate marital ideal was not culturally homogeneous in Kentucky in the nineteenth century. Historical records left by semi-literate, and non-literate people in Kentucky suggests that most rural whites and enslaved and freed blacks held onto traditional notions of marriage that suited their lives in farming families well into the twentieth century in a state that remained predominantly agricultural. While an urban middle class used a discourse of romantic love to obfuscate material considerations when they courted and married, people in rural Kentucky continued to focus on the necessity of men's and women's labor using a religious language of duty and obligation.

By considering marital beliefs over time and across Kentucky's social hierarchy, it became clear that differing constructions of marriage did not merely exist side-by-side in static parallel. Rather, Kentucky's middle class used these contesting visions of marriage to forge a class identity. Members of Kentucky's white middle class defined themselves as educated and sophisticated and modern by distancing their marital beliefs from those held by a landed settler elite. They also situated themselves as urban cultural leaders in a still predominantly rural state by denigrating the marital values of most of their rural neighbors. At the same time, they held onto some aspects of companionate marriage ideals inherited from their white, landed ancestors. In light of the challenges

facing Kentucky's white middle class by the middle of the nineteenth century from advocates of women's rights and abolitionists, Kentucky's white middle class also culturally reinforced the institution of marriage to maintain white men's control over urban property and liquid capital.

Although this study is about the people of Kentucky, Kentucky's middle class drew significantly on changing ideas of marriage occurring among a northern, American middle class. Kentucky editors regularly reproduced articles urging readers to marry for love not money from northern urban newspapers. Studies of love letters between middle class couples also convincingly demonstrate that by the middle of the nineteenth century America's white, northern middle class was insisting on romantic and passionate love in place of rational affection.[24] Consequently, this study of marital ideals in Kentucky raises questions about how and why America's northern middle class also exaggerated high wrought love to the detriment of material matters in their construction of companionate marriage.

[24] Karen Lystra, *Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press,1989); Ellen K. Rothman, *Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America* (New York: Basic Books,1984); Hendrik Hartog, *Man and Wife in America: A History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 96.

Chapter 1

Postponing Marriage to Accumulate Wealth: A Dilemma for Kentucky's Emerging White Middle Class, 1800 to 1860

In 1845, young John Bullitt wrote to Mary Boswell in the hopes that she would agree to marry him. John realized that possessing wealth would bode well for men in the marriage market, but at the moment he proposed to Mary, he had no promise of a great inheritance in his future and, as yet, no profession with which to earn an income. At the age of twenty-one, John was a law student at Transylvania University in Lexington and still economically dependent on his father. John regretted that he couldn't offer Mary anything "more worthy of your acceptance than a mere hand & heart." "Years may roll around," he admitted, " before I can acquire that character & that independence, which for your sake I desire so much now . . . for a briefless lawyer can not live upon expectant fees." It would take him some more time "to prepare myself entering upon my professional career & four for five months would not be misspent in elementary study."[1] Despite the offer of his love and his promise as an up and coming attorney, John felt rather pessimistic that Mary would wait for him until he had risen to success in a law practice. In his estimation, Mary Boswell was one of the most marriageable young women in Lexington. Mary had beauty, charm, intelligence, a soul, a wonderful singing voice, and "money enough to live on." Mary also had an abundance of older suitors in

[1] John Bullitt to Mary Boswell, March 1845, Folder 149, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

better financial situations. Moreover, Mary entertained such suitors often. Accordingly, John confessed to his brother that Mary had good reason to rebuff his attentions and to consider his suit "odd" because of "his present circumstances." [2]

John Bullitt shared the dilemma of being a student and a penniless professional with other white, well educated young men in Kentucky in the middle of the nineteenth century when it came time to marry. John Bullitt was the first generation in his socially prominent, land-owning, slaveholding family expected to earn his living as a professional in an urban setting. John's education and family background placed him amongst the upper echelons of a developing, urban middle class in Kentucky but, when he came of marriageable age, John owned no land, had no access to enslaved labor, and had little prospect of inheriting either while he was still a young man. As a student, moreover, he had no income. If Mary Boswell accepted John's proposal she too would have encountered an economic and social dilemma. As a fashionable, well educated, southern woman Mary expected to fulfill her own economic and social future by marrying an already socially and economically established man.

John and Mary belonged to an indigenous middle class developing in Kentucky prior to the Civil War. They were the offspring of a wealthy landed elite that had been part of a great migration into Kentucky in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[3] Their elite ancestors had wealth that had been acquired in the east through

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[2] John Bullitt to Joshua Bullitt, February 11, 1845, Folder 148, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[3] White, elite settlers would have been part of what Thomas D. Clark described as a great influx of migrants into Kentucky between the years of 1787 and 1830. Thomas D. Clark, *Agrarian Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1977), 11.

land ownership, slave holding, commercial farming, and mercantile trades. Most came from the ranks of the landed gentry in Virginia and Maryland. John Bullitt's paternal great grandfather, for example, owned 27,716 acres of land in Fauquier County, Virginia, and John's paternal grandfather came to Kentucky from Virginia in 1783 expecting to build his own fortune in land. Others were members of an incipient American bourgeoisie. John and Susan Russell Corlis' family emigrated from Rhode Island to Kentucky in 1816. The Corlis family had amassed its wealth from mercantile trading along the Atlantic seaboard. [4]

This early settler elite imported wealth into Kentucky gained from a mixture of old agricultural and new commercial economies. When they came to Kentucky, however, they tied their wealth to ownership of the most fertile tracts of land, and investments in slave labor. Once settled, they began large-scale agricultural production and entered into the nation's booming commercial markets. John's great grandfather sold land in Virginia in order to purchase larger tracts near present day Louisville. He also bought slaves who grew and harvested crops of corn and hemp for market. In Rhode Island, John Corlis had owned several sailing ships as well as an interest in a gin distillery. After the Spanish government twice accused him of illegal exportation and smuggling between 1803 and 1807, it confiscated two of his shipping vessels. Several years later, Corlis moved his family to Kentucky in an attempt to salvage what remained of his assets. Although John Corlis maintained some of his business interests in his

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[4] The majority of white, elite settlers who migrated into Kentucky in the last decade of the eighteenth century and first decades of the nineteenth, came from Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and the Carolinas. Ibid. 9.

Rhode Island distillery, he also purchased land in Bourbon County outside of Lexington, bought slaves to employ as field hands, and began to supervise the growth of tobacco to sell in the markets of New Orleans.[5]

Although elite migrants earned their wealth from the land, they tended to settle near growing commercial centers. Historian Thomas Clark has imaginatively evoked the importance of riverside warehouses and small businesses already in place in Kentucky's urban centers by the end of the eighteenth century. Several centers along Kentucky's major rivers served as depots from which planters shipped their cash crops to market. As early as 1792, increasing numbers of boats headed out of Kentucky's river ports laden with "corn in the shuck and in barrels, tobacco packed in 100 pound hogs heads, whisky, brandy, and cider royal, hempen rope and bagging, salt pork, tubs of lard, piggins of butter, hides, barrels of soap, and tons of flour."[6]

The privilege of a formal education, wealth in Kentucky lands, and the use of enslaved labor to grow crops for cash created financial independence for some of the men of Kentucky's early settler elite.[7] These men took advantage of their financial independence to pursue unpaid public service. Biographers describe prominent men of this early settler generation variously as wealthy landowners, well-to-do farmers, farmers

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[5] The Spanish Government confiscated one of John Corlis' vessels about 1803 accusing him of illegally taking seal hides from the coast of South America. Spanish authorities later accused Corlis' crew of smuggling and confiscated a second vessel about 1807 off the coast of South America. Scope and Content Folder, Corlis Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[6] Clark, *Agrarian Kentucky*, 6.

[7] *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Kentucky of the Dead and Living Men of the Nineteenth Century* (Cincinnati: J. M. Armstrong & Company), 1878, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

and teachers, farmers and attorneys or farmers and ministers of the gospel. So many of Kentucky's early political leaders in Frankfort were farmer-lawyers from the fertile central counties, including Bourbon County, that Kentuckians referred to them as "Bourbon" planters.[8] Before coming to Kentucky, many had served as county judges or in state government. John Bullitt's paternal great grandfather, for example, was a lawyer of some renown. He served as a member of Virginia's House of Burgesses, and as a judge of the General Court of Virginia. John's grandfather, Alexander Scott Bullitt, had some college education and legal training. Before Alexander Bullitt left Virginia he had, at his father's insistence, attended school into his adult years in preparation for a degree in law that would lead to a prominent public life in Virginia politics. Although John's grandfather headed west to Kentucky instead of completing his degree, he fulfilled at least part of his father's grand expectations. His own contemporaries and later generations of Kentucky biographers lauded him for his large plantation, and his military exploits against "troubling" bands of "marauding" Indians.[9] He was also Kentucky's first Lieutenant Governor.[10] John's maternal grandfather had also been able to parlay his wealth in land and slaves into public service. Already possessed of a considerable fortune when he emigrated from Virginia, Joshua Fry purchased land in Garrard, Lincoln, Boyle, and Jefferson counties. He settled his family on an estate near Louisville and

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[8] Thomas Clark explains that a great number of elite settlers were "farmer-lawyers" who came to Kentucky to settle entangled and disputed Virginia land grants. Land grants were so confusing that they drew lawyers, in Clark's own words, "like a mighty magnet draws filings." Clark, *Agrarian Kentucky*, 11, 76.

[9] Thomas W. Bullitt, *My Life At Oxmoor: Life on a Farm in Kentucky Before the War* (Privately Printed 1911, Updated 1995), 17.

[10] Ibid. 14.

employed slave labor to grow commercial crops. As a result, Fry devoted his days in Kentucky to teaching his own and other elite, white children "without compensation." [11]

Along with their mixture of old and new economies, early white elite settlers brought with them a mixture of traditional and modern culture. Life in Kentucky's nascent commercial centers soon mirrored the economic, social, and cultural life of towns and cities on the American eastern seaboard. By 1806, Lexington showed the unmistakable signs of social stratification and increasing evidence of "eastern urbanity" alongside "backwoods raucousness." [12] The citizens of Lexington proclaimed their expanding town to be Kentucky's cultural Athens. After young Mary Ann Corlis moved from Baltimore to Lexington in 1816, she expressed surprise and pleasure when she discovered that the ladies of Lexington "receive continually the fashions from Baltimore or Philadelphia" and "consequently dress a great deal."[13]

This mixture of old and new culture imported from the east coast also contained beliefs about marriage. Kentucky settlers' "hybrid of traditional and modern culture" included modern notions of companionate marriage.[14] Consequently, young people expected to choose their own marital partners. In 1816, for example, Mary Ann

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[11] See biographical sketch for General Speed S. Fry in J. H. Battle et al., ed., *Kentucky: A History of the State* (Louisville: F.A. Battey Publishing Company, 1885), 759.

[12] Allen J. Share, *Cities in the Commonwealth: Two Centuries of Urban Life in Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1982), 12.

[13] Mary Ann Corlis to her parents, August 1816, Folder 1, Corlis Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[14] Anya Jabour, *Marriage In The Early Republic: Elizabeth and William Wirt and the Companionate Ideal* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 3.

Corlis exercised her right to court and marry whom she pleased. While en route from Lexington to Providence, Mary Ann's parents heard a rumor of their daughter's close association with "H." Mary Ann was just seventeen-years old, and living at a boarding school in Lexington. Once her parents heard of her secret engagement, Mary Ann was obliged to deny or confirm the truth of the rumor. Mary Ann immediately wrote them, confirming that she and "H." had agreed to marry but she also assured them that her marriage plans would depend on their "approbation."[15] The secrecy of her courtship and the circumstances of its revelation, however, indicate that Mary Ann expected her parents to have little to say in the matter. Whether or not her parents approved, Mary Ann married "H." shortly thereafter. Mary Ann's self-assurance might have come from an abundance of self-confidence and independence she discovered at boarding school. It is more likely that Mary Ann was astutely applying her knowledge of an individual's right to marry whom one chose. As one young man living near Louisville in 1823 explained, it would be a "cruel father" who would "sever hearts that were truly united," and any father who would intervene to break the bonds of true love was a "tyrant." While a good father might advise his daughter, she was, in Johnstone's opinion, "the mistress of her own choice." [16]

At the same time, however, early generations of elite, white women and men in Kentucky continued to apply an older, more traditional understanding of what constituted

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[15] Mary Ann Corlis to parents, August 1816, Folder 1, Corlis Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[16] Johnstone to Mary Ann Bullitt, September 7, 1823, Folder 249, Mary Ann Bullitt Papers, Manuscript Collections, The Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky. It is not clear whether Johnstone is this young man's first name or last. As a jilted suitor the tone of his letter to Mary Ann Bullit is quite crisp and formal and simply signed "Johnstone."

a good marriage. Like Mary Ann, Kentucky's early elite settlers expected to marry for love, but they envisioned marital love as a rather rational sentiment. Mary Ann assured her parents that she and "H." had affectionate feelings for one another, but these feelings were measured and carefully considered. "I feel so differently toward him from what I felt for two other gentleman," she wrote, "that I am aware I never knew true affection till since I became acquainted with H."[17] Employing a similar understanding of marital love, newspaper poets warned against employing too much passion when it came time to marry. Although bliss might accompany great ardor, they warned, passion could be detrimental to marriage. Early sages suggested that marriage could be based on two kinds of love. One kind brought conjugal bliss and "perpetual anastomosis" but this kind of love often brought jealousy and despair. The other love did not involve "rapture," but being more temperate, it would bring "contentment."[18] This "duller sense" of love, like friendship, was much more moderate in its measure and lasted beyond the intense light of spring into darker winter.[19]

This idealization of love as tempered, considered and rational quite comfortably accompanied considerations of unions based on family wealth and social or political prestige. Early prescriptive literature in Kentucky newspapers suggested that marriage could be based on affection and wealth in a way that made it both materially and

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[17] Mary Ann Corlis to parents, August 1816, Folder 1, Corlis Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[18] "Love," *Independent Gazeteer*, October 26, 1804.

[19] "The Wife," *The Kentuckian*, February 5, 1830; "Truth and Young Romance," *Louisville Public Advertiser*, March 31, 1824.

emotionally advantageous. In 1825, the editor of the *Argus of Western America* published an essay by the "Incubus de Votagine" in which the writer elucidated twelve reasons young men ought to marry. Marrying for material gain was his top priority. The writer advised that one marry above all to keep or increase means, to get means, to double means or to have help to accumulate means. Marrying to forge social and family connections followed these four monetary motives. Marrying to "form bonds of conjugal love" appeared eighth on the Incubus' list of twelve priorities. [20]

Accordingly, early elite white families in Kentucky considered the lineage and reputation attached to a family name in order to ensure auspicious marital connections between economically, politically, and socially powerful families. Men who possessed landed estates large enough to allow them time to pursue political or military careers presided over the best families. Families attempted to claim aristocratic status by tracing their roots through Virginia to Europe. The Bullitt family and subsequent genealogists, for example, tracked the Bullitt lineage back to Joseph Bullitt, a young Huguenot from France.[21] They mapped out their American roots back to a Colonel William Christian, a man with great wealth in land and slave labor who had served as a captain in the French and Indian war and, later, as a distinguished soldier in the Revolutionary War. He had once been a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses, a member of the State Convention, a Colonel of the first Virginia Regiment, and a commander of expeditions

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[20] "Marriage," *The Argus of Western America*, July 13, 1825. For other examples advising readers to balance material pragmatism with affection in marriage see "Love," *Independent Gazeteer*, October 26, 1804; "Married Life," *Louisville Daily Courier*, February 11, 1839.

[21] Bullitt, *My Life at Oxmoor*, 119.

against the Cherokee Indians. Kentucky's early setter elite emphasized marrying into public prominence through their female ancestors. Because families valued a woman's connections to publicly prominent men they reached as far back as possible to find distant paternal connections that bolstered her public respectability. Accordingly, throughout the nineteenth century, the Bullitt family continued to praise Colonel Christian's wife for being Patrick Henry's sister.[22]

In addition, early elite white families candidly evaluated a good marital match for its material potential. If they hailed from the South, their wealth came from ownership of land and slaves, and they added to their wealth and social prominence by marrying into families with similar assets. The families of young women certainly looked for marriageable young men poised to inherit land and labor. In 1816, Mary Ann Corlis quite comfortably considered both affection and material needs when she wrote to her parents about "H." Mary Ann assured her parents that while she had affection for her fiancé, there would be no marriage until "H." had acquired property.[23] Similarly, elite men gained wealth by marrying women from wealthy and prominent families. John Bullitt's grandfather, Alexander Scott Bullitt, married Priscilla Christian, daughter of Colonel Christian. As a wedding gift, his father-in-law gave Alexander a plantation of 1,000 acres near Louisville. John Corlis, while a struggling merchant in Providence

[22] Patrick Henry was a Virginia lawyer and politician and leading proponent of American independence and States' Rights during the Revolutionary War era. Bullitt family ancestry is included in many Kentucky histories published in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For example see Charles Kerr, *History of Kentucky* (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1922), 26.

[23] Mary Ann Corlis to her parents in August 1816, Folder 1, Corlis Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

Rhode Island aided his success in eastern commercial markets when he married Susan Russell. Susan Russell's father and uncle were already well established in the Atlantic mercantile trade.[24] At the turn of the nineteenth century, although Lewis Sanders expected to achieve economic success as a merchant in Lexington, he also bolstered his economic and social success by making a prudent marriage. To start his children off in life, Sanders' father gave each one two hundred acres, two slaves, two horses, two cows, and household furniture. Since Lewis hoped to make his way in commerce, his father gave him the equivalent in cash. [25] Lewis purchased a store and some property in the city and subsequently built a textile mill. In 1807, Sanders further advanced his fortune and social prospects when he made an auspicious marriage to Ann Nicholas. Ann's maternal grandfather had been a wealthy merchant in Maryland and her father, Colonel George Nicholas, was an attorney from Virginia. Ann's father became a politically prominent man in Kentucky, noted particularly for his involvement in the development of Kentucky's first constitution, and in the establishment of the first law school in Kentucky at Transylvania University. He also owned large tracts of land adjacent to the Ohio River in northern Kentucky. Between 1807 and 1819, Sanders' cash inheritance, financial help from his father-in-law, and the social prestige of marrying into the Nicholas family made it possible for Sanders to parlay his small fortune into a large one. He purchased property

[24] The extent of this family's wealth is evident in later descriptions of the house that Susan Condy Russell's father and uncle built in Providence in 1733. The house had "one of the most astonishing parlors in the country," decorated "in keeping with the tastes of the wealthy." This evaluation of the Russell home is taken from the *Providence Sunday Journal Magazine*, February 16, 1930, Scope and Content Folder, Corlis-Respess Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[25] Anna Virginia Parker, *The Sanders Family of Grass Hills* (Wisconsin: Coleman Printing Company, 1966), 7.

near Lexington on which he planned to build a majestic home, and take his place amongst Lexington's socially prominent elite.

The generations in Kentucky that followed found their prospects for benefiting from wealth based on the ownership of land significantly diminished. Many more young white men born in the 1820s and 1830s found it necessary to leave the land in order to work full-time in urban settings to earn a livelihood. We can examine this significant difference between generations by tracing how the Bullitt men of Oxmoor earned their living in Kentucky between 1786 and 1860. The two earliest generations were gentlemen commercial farmers. Alexander Scott Bullitt managed his plantation from 1786 until his death in 1816. When Alexander Bullitt died, he left his estate to his son, William, who farmed much as his father had done before him. William Bullitt studied law, and had been admitted to the bar in Louisville, but about 1820 he chose to give up his law practice to make his living as a commercial planter. In spite of William Bullitt's inheritance of 1,000 acres, a work force of about 100 enslaved laborers, and the seasonal sale of crops, he rarely had extra cash.[26] In her mid-century correspondence with her son, Mildred Bullitt often mentioned the fact that she was not able to buy all the things she would like because "according to custom [my] pockets are drained" or "according to custom [your father] has not a dollar in the wide world."[27] William Bullitt made an adequate living but

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[26] Thomas Bullitt noted in his memoirs that his father had about 100 slaves just prior to the outbreak of the Civil War.

[27] Mildred Bullitt to John Bullitt, December 19, 1846, Folder 155, and Mildred Bullitt to John Bullitt, May 5, 1846, Folder 153, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

couldn't set aside enough cash from his farming income to add to the fortune he had inherited. By the time William chose to give up his law practice for commercial farming the most fertile lands in Kentucky had become so scarce and expensive that immigrants from the east bypassed Kentucky to seek affordable lands elsewhere.[28] Since William Bullitt would not borrow money or go into debt, he could not provide sufficient land for all of his sons to engage in commercial farming.[29] As a consequence, William Bullitt's eldest sons were the first generation of the American Bullitt male dynasty that would not make its living by managing agricultural production. Instead, William Bullitt ensured that his three sons could attend local private schools and academies where they received the necessary training in the classics that would gain them entrance into one of the nation's best universities. He also encouraged each of his sons to pursue a career in the law. By 1850, William's two eldest sons, Joshua and John, had completed their legal studies, and had established careers as attorneys, the former in Louisville and the latter in Philadelphia. At the same time, their younger brother, Thomas, studied law in Philadelphia with the intention of eventually working full-time in a legal practice.

Because the third generation of Oxmoor men had to labor full-time in order to earn a livelihood, formal education replaced inheritance of land as their startup capital toward a career in the professions or in business. Young men expected that their completed degrees would bear fruit with value "in proportion to the reputation of the

[28] Lowell H. Harrison and James C. Klotter, *A New History of Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 98.

[29] Bullitt, *My Life at Oxmoor*, 59.

college from which they are taken."[30] Thomas Bullitt understood well that his entire future rested on finishing his legal education. For Thomas, his education in a profession buttressed no less than "the whole development of my character – my position in society" and "my happiness in the present and future life." [31]

Having the privilege of some formal education also provided a route for young white men from less wealthy or publicly prominent farming families in Kentucky to rise into the professions. These young men came from rural Kentucky into urban centers armed with a plain rather than a classical education. Instead of studying Latin or Greek they read English, arithmetic, geography and history.[32] Some worked their way into a profession by teaching in common schools or working in a trade until they could afford to attend college. Flavinius Taylor, for example, received a common school education followed by several courses at Columbia College, after which, he taught in the common schools in Kentucky until he could apprentice to his physician uncle. Taylor then attended "two courses of lectures at the Kentucky School of Medicine" before he began to practice. [33] John R. Timberlake, who went to high school in Louisville, earned his way to medical college by first working in the printing trades.[34]

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[30] E. Pratt to Emily Chenault, September 1, 1880, Chenault Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[31] William and Thomas Bullitt, September 1858, Folder 305, Thomas Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[32] Ellis Ford Hartford, *The Little White Schoolhouse* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1977), 38.

[33] Dr. Flavius J. Taylor in J. H. Battle and W. H. Perrin, (eds.), *Kentucky. A History of the State Embracing a Concise Account of the Origin and Development of the Virginia Colony Expansion Westward, and the Settlement of the Frontier Beyond the*

Other young men from less wealthy families used their common school education to pursue a career in business. Walter N. Haldeman, for instance, came from modest urban roots. Before Haldeman's father moved the family from Maysville to Louisville in 1837, Walter had already completed a high school education. He began his working life in Louisville as a clerk but in time he amassed enough capital to purchase a bookstore, and eventually to own and operate Louisville's largest circulation newspaper. Hector Green of Henderson, Kentucky had similar roots, education and aspirations. Green sold several of his father's slaves to get the capital he needed to move from his hometown of Henderson to Louisville in order to get a start in business. Between 1832 and 1834, Hector worked as an accounting clerk for several merchants in Louisville, complaining to his fiancée on occasion that he couldn't devote any of his working hours to reading the novels she recommended to him because his employer did not like to see him "thus engaged."[35] Hector's irritation suggests that he did not like working as a salaried employee, nor did he expect to do so forever. As his father and brother had done before him, he struggled for and aspired to "a better business than salary" and the independence that came with owning his own store.[36]

Alleghenies; the Erection of Kentucky as an Independent State, and It's Subsequent Development. (Louisville: F. A. Battey Publishing Company, 1885),1030.

[34] Ibid. 863.

[35] Hector Green to Ellen Green, August 1834, Folder 13, Green Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[36] Hector Green to Ellen Green, December 1, 1833, Folder 10, Green Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

The opportunities available to most white women to procure their economic and social security changed little in Kentucky over the nineteenth century. White women had little opportunity to earn an income, and because white men had legal ownership and control of a family's resources until the final decade of the nineteenth century, marriage remained their most viable option for gaining social respectability and material support. [37] Even young white women privileged to a college education had few avenues of paid employment. Moreover, if young white women were forced or chose to labor for their own support, they suffered a loss of social caste followed by banishment from respectable society. In turn, banishment from society further damaged their prospects for marriage.[38] Martha Bullitt demonstrated these overwhelming economic and social pressures on young women to marry at mid-century. Martha could entertain the possibility of not marrying for only a wistful and fleeting moment. She confided to her brother that "mother professes almost every day that I will be an old maid; if so, I will most assuredly have a house and live by myself . . . ." Martha understood that if she were to remain

[37] Early in the nineteenth century, there were some wealthy women in Kentucky, some of whom owned property in their own right. However, prior to passage of the Married Women's Property Act in 1894, wealthy women remained legally vulnerable to the incursions, claims and contestations of male relatives. This vulnerability may explain why Helen Bullitt later Helen Massie, Helen Martin, and Helen Key, one of the wealthiest women in Kentucky, married three times between 1808 and 1857, each marriage occurring relatively soon after the death of a husband. Jane Turner Censer notes that with increasing research into southern women's property rights, historians are revising the assumption that almost all southern women, particularly those from wealthy families, were barred from owning property. What was theoretically the case according to the laws of couverture, she notes, was neither as complete nor as permanent as historians once thought. Nevertheless, this historian notes that even when women had money or owned property their wealth was always vulnerable to the interference or control of male relatives. Jane Turner Censer, *The Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood, 1865–1895* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 99.

[38] Bullitt, *My Life at Oxmoor*, 71.

single she would have to rely on her father for her little house, and would, therefore, have to persuade him to give her a piece of land at Oxmoor. Perhaps overwhelmed with the enormity of such a task, Martha quickly amended her intentions. "I have no intention of verifying her prophecy," she added, "for I think I will marry as soon as I am old enough."[39]

Prior to the Civil War, elite white parents continued to provide their daughters with an education in the social graces thus producing accomplished, refined, and therefore marriageable young women. Parents expected that a young woman would use her training and accomplishments to make an advantageous marital match for herself and for her family. Although "academic training taxed the financial and emotional reserves of the family," it also provided the family an opportunity of "enhancing its gentility and extending its honor and status through marriage." [40] In the 1820s, Francis Garrard scolded her daughter Sophia, then at a boarding school in Louisville, for not paying sufficient attention to her studies. She admonished Sophia for ignoring her music, for dereliction of her duty to improve her mind, and for not making the most of the bounty her family offered for her future opportunity. In "melancholy truth," Francis scolded, "you are . . . too ignorant of books."[41] In her mother's mind, Sophia needed an

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[39] Martha Bullitt to John Bullitt, April 25, 1846, Folder 152, John Bullitt Private Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[40] Giselle Roberts, *The Confederate Belle* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 24.

[41] Francis Garrard to her daughter, Sophia, between 1825 and 1829, Folder 3, Bullitt-Chenowith Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

education in music in order to becoming an enlightened, virtuous, knowledgeable, refined, and accomplished young woman. In Francis Garrard's estimation, her daughter must meet all of the requirements in this lengthy list of accomplishments in order for Sophia to fulfill her one and only "end and aim." Sophia's ultimate goal in life, her mother reminded her, should be to attain a "happy and respectable union for life."[42]

At mid-century, elite Kentucky mothers continued to advise their daughters that a woman's sole opportunity for achieving social and economic success meant forging a good marriage in a respectable family. While William Bullitt used his cash income to pay for his son's education at college, he was generous in enabling Mildred Bullitt "to extend the most generous hospitality" in her task of "giving to the girls an advent into society."[43] Consequently, thirty years after Mildred's Aunt Francis scolded her daughter for lack of attention to her primary aim in life, Mildred repeated her aunt's exact sentiments to her young daughters. In the 1850s, she admonished one daughter to attend to her studies and to appreciate that her education afforded her "the very best opportunities of improvement."[44] Mildred often, and in a variety of ways, relayed what this opportunity entailed to her children. Mildred Bullitt's quest to assure a respectable marriage for her daughters appeared in her lamentation that her three eldest children

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[42] Francis Garrard to her niece, circa 1825, Folder 3, Bullitt-Chenowith Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[43] Bullitt, *My Life at Oxmoor*, 59.

[44] Mildred Bullitt to Helen, 1851, Bullitt-Chenowith Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

might never marry.[45] Susan Bullitt expressed irritation at her mother's constant exhortations to find a suitable beau. Susan once complained that her mother worried her and her cousin to go in to see a particular gentleman named Theodore. "Now Sue," Susan mocked her mother, "make him like you – be polite to him; Ellen, dress yourself and go in to see him!" On this occasion, Mildred's insistence aggravated Susan enough that she vowed that she and Ellen would do so "after a while" but they both wished "Theodore was dead."[46]

At mid-century, most elite white women continued to rely on their training in some combination of the classics and the ornamentals in hopes of marrying into socially prestigious or politically elite families. The Bullitt girls and boys attended elementary school together in an old Baptist Church near Oxmoor where they read Greek mythology, Latin texts including the *Viri Romae*, *Caesar's Commentaries*, Virgil's *Aenid*, Horace, Cicero's *Oratories*, Livy, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. They studied arithmetic, geography, grammar and history.[47] Susan Bullitt took pride in her knowledge of languages, in her social skills, and in the fact that the Bullitt family excelled in the art of good conversation. While their brothers went off to college, however, the Bullitt girls remained at Oxmoor where Mildred completed their education by instructing them in

[45] Lou Gwathmey to John Bullitt, April 28, 1846, Folder 152, and Susan Bullitt to John Bullitt, April 7, 1846, Folder 152, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[46] Susan Bullitt to Helen Bullitt, 1854, Bullitt-Chenowith Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[47] Susan Bullitt Dixon to a niece, May 15, 1903, Folder 450, Susan Bullitt Dixon Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

fashion and the social graces. Only Helen, the youngest daughter, received a more extended formal education. After John Bullitt moved to Philadelphia the Bullitt parents sent Helen to live with him in order that she might further her study of music.[48] As a result of their formal education in the liberal arts, and their training in the ornamentals and social skills, the Bullitt girls became competent, confident, and well suited to mix in elite social circles inside and outside of the state of Kentucky. Susan Bullitt, accompanied by her father, attended several sessions of the state legislature in Frankfort where she became acquainted with and socialized with all of the members of the Convention.[49] In 1848, on a trip to the east coast with her brother, Susan had no difficulty mixing in Washington, D.C.'s, elite social circles. Escorted by a senator from Illinois, she attended an elegant soiree in Washington where she met, chatted with and made a favorable impression, she thought, upon the President and his wife. [50]

After being "turned out," young women devoted their energies to finding husbands. [51] These young women were supposed to be sexually chaste. Consequently, they socialized in mixed but closely supervised settings because elite families kept (or attempted to keep) young women chaperoned, in sexual innocence, and enclosed within

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[48] Bullitt, *My Life at Oxmoor*, 71.

[49] Susan Bullitt to John C. Bullitt, October 30, 1849, Folder 162, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[50] Susan Bullitt to her niece Julia, June, 1903, Folder 450, Susan Bullitt Dixon Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[51] For descriptions of the lives of southern belles prior to and immediately after the Civil War see Roberts, *The Confederate Belle.*

the confines of the best of white society. A rumor that her daughter had visited a man in Louisville without an escort sparked Francis Garrard's irritated lecture to daughter Sophia. Francis berated her daughter for visiting the home of an "Irish sheep in tincil fleece" without a suitable escort. Her behavior had allowed the "wretch," totally "divest of honor," to speak freely of her "innocent child." In order to prevent such an occurrence from taking place again, Francis implored Sophia's protector and guardian to watch over Sophia while she attended school in Louisville because "every step of green trodden by a young girl is a dangerous one." [52] At mid-century, elite young women were still idealized as virtuous, pure, and protected. Consequently, in 1850, the Bullitt daughters led a life much like that of their Aunt Sophia. The girls did not venture from Oxmoor unaccompanied by a male escort. Although the Bullitt sisters entertained a regular stream of vetted and respectable male acquaintances, their mother or other family members remained close by.

Despite her irritation at always having to be on her best behavior in the company of potential husbands, Susan Bullitt wanted and expected to marry. Accordingly, the Bullitt sisters' correspondence is full of news and gossip of potential beaux or the "dearth of agreeable beaux," and of the social events coming up where they expected to meet new men. Mildred Bullitt, her daughters, her nieces, and a constant flow of visiting female relations and friends carried on an incessant exchange centered on fashion, social events, and evaluations of each new male acquaintance as a prospective husband. Their letters also often noted the great number of weddings they had attended or heard about, and

[52] From Francis Garrard to her niece, circa 1825, Folder 3, Bullitt-Chenowith Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

inferences to their own eventual marriages.[53] One young woman wrote that there would be no less than twenty-five weddings taking place that winter. "Nothing," she wrote "is talked about but weddings and wedding parties" although she did not contemplate such a move for herself "at least for some time to come." [54]

Like their elite counterparts, young and well educated white women from more modest economic backgrounds also expected to marry as a way of procuring respectable social status and a competent living. Ellen Ruggles came from Roxbury, Massachusetts, to Henderson, Kentucky, in 1830 in order to marry John Green, but John Green died within a year of their marriage. Widowed at such a young age, Ellen appeared to be at a loss about where she would live or how she would find material support. She initially contemplated returning to her home in Roxbury, but her family complained often of having little money. This may have been the reason that her mother advised Ellen to remain in Kentucky with her husband's relatives. However, Ellen's position with her in-laws must also have been tenuous because Ellen considered several alternatives. Likely influenced by the story of Heloise and Abelard, Ellen thought she might follow in Heloise's footsteps and contemplated entering a convent. [55] Instead, Ellen remarried.

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[53] Susan Bullitt to John Bullitt, January 24, 1845, Folder 148, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[54] Lou Gwathmey to John Bullitt, April 28, 1846 Folder 152, and Mary Robertson to John Bullitt, December 2, 1845, Folder 150, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[55] Ellen Ruggles may have been inspired by the story of Heloise and Abelard, told in the letters between two lovers, published originally in France in the twelfth century. When their marriage ended, Heloise entered a convent. Ellen appears to have read an original version of the story. In the original publication of the letters between Heloise

Within a year of John's death, whether serendipitously or spawned by the necessity of her social and economic circumstances, Ellen fell in love with John's younger brother, Hector, to whom she became engaged in 1832.[56]

Young men also expected and wanted to marry. However, young men leaving home at mid-century expressed wishes to marry for reasons that differed somewhat from those of their female cohorts. As Bullitt family life at Oxmoor suggests, social life and social networks in the nineteenth century in Kentucky revolved almost exclusively around family social circles. However, although young women returned home after their formal schooling, men left home to continue their education and work toward a professional or business career. Several men wrote that they wanted to marry because they missed family life with its social and domestic pleasures. The young men in the Bullitt family circle clearly borrowed imagery from the descriptions of "old bachelors" that appeared in newspapers prior to the Civil War with which to phrase their desire for blissful domesticity. Poems and fictional anecdotes described bachelors as wealthy but old, selfish, lonely, socially awkward men living in the filthy chaos of boarding houses

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and Abelard the two lovers offer intimate details of their sexual relationship. In 1833, when writing to Hector, Ellen compared her love for Hector to that which "Eloisa" had for "Abelarde." Ellen thought that although their love was as strong, it was more chaste and pure. A serialized version of the story of the two French lovers, entitled "Heloise and Abelarde," did appear in a Louisville paper in 1839, minus any overt references to sexual behavior. See "Heloise and Abelarde," *Louisville Daily Journal*, February 23, 1839 and February 27, 1839. Ellen Ruggles Green to Hector Green, September 29, 1833, Folder 10, Green Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky. For a recent treatment of the letters see James Burge, *Heloise & Abelard: A New Biography* (San Francisco: Harper, 2003).

[56] Green Family Papers between 1830 and 1832, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

and suffering the miseries of celibacy. [57] When young men complained to each other about living amongst strangers and of being lonely, they expressed their desire for family connections by echoing this public imagery. Ed Munford, a struggling lawyer living on his own in Clarksville, Tennessee, confessed that he pined for domestic society. Alone in his room in a thunderstorm, he wrote that a "sense of a bachelor's loneliness" overcame him. He imagined married life snuggling with a "gentle and sweet dove" by the hearth as a "paradise on earth." [58] Cary Fry determined that he would someday marry because he could not bear "the thought of living the life of an Old Bachelor." He was "chilled," he confided to John, when he visited a local hotel where several single male friends made their home. He imagined his friends sitting around the fire at night and wondered, "What enjoyment can they have?" Disgusted by the prospects of perpetual bachelorhood, Cary declared that he would never be satisfied until he escaped "all danger of being numbered amongst them." [59] Joshua Bullitt chose to highlight his escape from bachelorhood by comparing his recently won and comfortable marital domesticity with his life as a

[57] See "Miseries of Celibacy," *The Argus of Western America*, March 26, 1828; "The Old Bachelor," *The Commonwealth*, February 28, 1838; "Bachelors' Hall," *Louisville Daily Focus*, Louisville, February 8, 1831. According to the editor of the *Commonwealth* in Frankfort, bachelorhood was not only socially undesirable, but bachelorhood could be costly. The paper reported in "Taxing Bachelors" on February 24, 1827, that the New York Legislature was proposing to tax bachelors.

[58] Ed W. Munford to John Bullitt, May 8 and May 18, 1848, Folder 159, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[59] Cary H. Fry to John Bullitt, April 15, 1846, Folder 152, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

bachelor in a "confounded" room 'with half an inch of dust as a carpet and cobwebs its only ornament.[60]

Unlike their sisters, female cousins and acquaintances, single men did not risk their future livelihoods if they satisfied their sexual appetites and curiosity outside of the bonds of matrimony. At the same time that these young men complained of enduring bachelorhood they looked for opportunities to engage in covert sexual activity and delighted in comparing stories of their successes. One of Joshua Bullitt's many recommendations to his brother included flirtations with willing widows or with any number of the "damned, deceitful, delightful, women" to be found in Louisville.[61] It is difficult to know with whom another of John's male friends broke loose on a trip to Louisville that ended with a severe case of the "clap."[62] In spite of their prescribed sexual chastity, some of the young women in the prominent Bullitt family social circle also apparently escaped the clutches of chaperones long enough to engage in sexual experimentation. Joshua Bullitt recommended a flirtation with one of these

[60] Joshua Bullitt to John Bullitt, December 7, 1846, Folder 155, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[61] Joshua Bullitt to John Bullitt, February 2, 1845, Folder, 148 and February 19, 1846, Folder 151, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[62] J. S. Jackson to John Bullitt, January 25, 1846, Folder 151, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

experimenting young women from Louisville's social elite promising his brother that she guaranteed to "meet you half way, and, if you are at all tardy, pull you the other half."[63]

Whatever the actual extent of these young people's clandestine premarital sexual activities, young men determined to behave respectably in the public eye and marry acceptably. Ed Munford dreamed of legal domestic bliss. "I'm going to marry – if I can – I'm bound to try – and the first girl too who so fascinates me that I shall feel miserably without her" he declared, and "henceforth" determined to marry "according to law." [64] Young Pindell thought that the only reasonable solution to his inability to settle down to his legal studies was to marry. "I am daily becoming more and more aware of the necessity of marrying," he admitted, and "I will never be worth anything until I do." [65]

It could also be economically prudent for young men to marry while they worked toward a professional or business career. For young men the two milestones of business and marriage were intimately bound. Lack of progress in their professional success slowed their ability to marry and their lack of wives, in turn, slowed their professional progress. Being a settled married man conferred an extra element of respectability, sobriety, and steadfastness to men in their business or professional dealings. Newspaper articles encouraged young men to work hard for success and to get a wife because "she

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[63] Joshua Bullitt to John Bullitt, February 2, 1845 and February 19, 1846, Folders 148 and 152, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[64] Ed Munford to John Bullitt May 18, 1848 and February 25, 1848, Folder 159, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[65] H. Pindell to John Bullitt, April 13, 1845 and May 18, 1845, Folder 148, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

will assist you."[66] Men relied on wives to manage social duties related to home and work. Malvina Harlan recalled that when she married John Marshall Harlan he earned so little as a Frankfort attorney that he had to borrow $500 from his father to pay for the wedding. Although they had little money, the couple had been able to marry because they lived with Harlan's extended family in Frankfort. Relieved of domestic duties by the Harlan household's enslaved domestic servants, Malvina helped her husband in his budding career. For example, Malvina served as her husband's secretary by transcribing his legal notes.[67] The musings of another young man offer a glimpse into the importance of having a wife to a struggling professional man. Just after he had formed a partnership with Joshua Bullitt in his new law practice in Louisville in 1845, Martha Bullitt thought it remarkable that all of a sudden, his thoughts "run entirely" on "getting married, housekeeping, servants' hire, boarding etc." "He says he is tired of writing letters," she added, and "therefore he thinks he will get married in the spring."[68]

In Kentucky's cities and towns in the nineteenth century, a wife could also bolster her family's reputation in a way that served a husband's developing business. Although Malvina Harlan recalled that at mid-century, the husband was the "*name*-maker" for the family, she demonstrates with great clarity how important a wife's public image might be to her husband's rising practice. Malvina sometimes represented her attorney husband at

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[66] "Bill Nye Talks to Young Men," *Leitchfield Sunbeam*, January 11, 1884.

[67] Malvina Shanklin Harlan, *Some Memories of a Long Life, 1854-1911* (New York: The Modern Library, 2002).

[68] Martha Bullitt to John Bullitt, February 3, 1847, Folder 156, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

social functions in his absence. On another occasion, irritated by a neighbor's comment that Malvina's clothing appeared worn and in need of replacement, John Harlan insisted on purchasing material for her to have several new dresses sewn. The "splendor" of her new apparel, she joked, raised her husband's reputation by "leaps and bounds" making him "at once . . . one of the leading young lawyers of his state." [69]

Like John Marshall Harlan, most of the eligible elite white men who came of marriageable age prior to the Civil War in Kentucky complained of being short of cash. But unlike Harlan they did not live at home and therefore could not rely on financial support from their families. They had little wealth, owned no land, and had access to no slave labor with which to generate an independent income. They had only the potential earning power that their own enterprise and energy would buy them. Consequently, as John Bullitt's proposal to Mary suggests, they found themselves in the uncomfortable position of wanting to marry while they were young, yet obligated to wait a number of years in which they educated themselves and established professional reputations or acquired success in business that would make them good marital prospects.[70] Young men frequently lamented in their private correspondence that they would have to

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[69] Malvina Shanklin Harlan, *Some Memories of a Long Life, 1854-1911* (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), 7, 34, 35, 37.

[70] Several historians have noted that men in the developing and urbanizing middle class in the northern states in the nineteenth century also complained about having to delay marriage while they developed their professions or careers in business. Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1780 to 1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Ellen Rothman, *Hearts and Hands: A History of Courtship in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1984); Karen Lystra, *Searching the Heart: Women, Men and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

postpone marriage until they could establish their reputations in a profession or had earned enough in business. During the time he worked in Louisville, for example, Hector Green apologized to Ellen Ruggles about having to postpone their marriage while he amassed sufficient capital. Young men also complained to each other about the length of time it took to earn an adequate living, and that their poverty made the prospects of marrying at a young age rather poor. Cary Fry lamented that he had not yet achieved much success in his profession and found his future prospects rather gloomy. For this budding attorney the prospect of his own marriage was the "chief object I have in view so far as worldly matters are concerned." Although he supposed that he would be able to make a living after a while he did not think he would "ever be able to marry" unless he could combine his practice with some other business.[71] One conversation between two struggling yet hopeful young men, an attorney and a physician, demonstrates the distress caused by financial worries when they contemplated marriage. Their "fraternal confabs" were a "mixture" of medicine, law, and the prospects of getting married so they might live as they would like "– by & by."[72]

At mid-century, although elite white women in Kentucky may have still expected to marry into socially respectable and economically established families, the opportunity of doing so had diminished significantly. The young men who visited the Bullitt sisters at Oxmoor as potential husbands, like their own brothers, came with little wealth in hand.

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[71] Cary Fry to John Bullitt, April 15, 1846, Folder 152, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[72] E. McGinty to John Bullitt, February 2, 1847, Folder 156, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

A Lexington college student tellingly grumbled that he did not know what all of the young ladies who wanted to marry would do because "I have heard it again and again that there are but very few young men in our city or vicinity that are worth having, who are in a situation to marry."[73] This was so because, by the middle decades of the nineteenth century, young and elite white women and men in Kentucky faced an economic situation that differed significantly from that of their ancestors. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the most privileged of Kentucky's early settlers owned or expected to inherit large tracts of land and the enslaved labor force necessary to earn a handsome living in Kentucky's growing market economy. This provided a young man with the promise of the wealth and social prestige he would need when it came time to court and marry. This early elite, most coming from settled areas on the Atlantic seaboard, brought with them some version of an enlightened and companionate view of marriage. They thought that marriage was an individual choice, rather than a parental prerogative, and that individuals must marry for love. However, their marital vision also sanctioned the balance of a reasoned affection with considerations of a family's landed wealth and social and political status. While it was preferable to marry for love, it must be the kind of love that comfortably allowed room to weigh family wealth and reputation.

Even in the early decades of the nineteenth century, however, it was becoming increasingly unlikely that all of the young men born to elite white settlers would inherit either land or enslaved labor. As Kentucky's population increased, the cost of fertile farmland became prohibitive. From early in the century, Kentucky planters had also been

[73] R. Hughes to John Bullitt, January 4, 1847, Folder 156, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

strengthening their ties to national commercial markets, and actively promoting the growth of the local market economy. As a consequence, many young men with decreasing chances of inheriting or purchasing land and labor began to rely on a formal education in order to earn a living working full-time in a business or professional career in Kentucky's expanding urban centers. This resulted in a delay in young men's ability to achieve the financial independence deemed necessary for them to marry, and couples found they had to wait to marry until young men accumulated sufficient education, then sufficient capital in their professions or in business. At the same time, pressed by their own desires and by others' expectations, they sought to marry while they were young and thereby become part of a domestic family social circle. Young men also hoped to benefit from the respectability that marriage would confer on their personal and business reputations.

Privileged young white women meanwhile expected to marry for financial and social security. Moreover, they were still being educated and trained to marry into established land and wealth, and parents exhorted them to concentrate their energies on finding a husband. In addition, young people had to marry publicly and acceptably in order to engage in socially sanctioned sexual activity. Consequently by mid-century, the socially privileged young members of an incipient white middle class in Kentucky faced a dilemma. The traditional ideas that their white ancestors had once thought ought to motivate a good marriage - based on a carefully considered affection combined with knowledge of a family's reputation for established wealth and social prestige - presented a conceptual roadblock to Kentucky's white, emerging middle class when it came time for them to court to marry.

Chapter 2

"Never marry for money!" From Reasoned Affection to Romantic Passion, 1830 to 1900

In 1845, when John Bullitt asked Mary Boswell for her hand in marriage, he was aware that his lack of wealth and established career put him at a disadvantage. However, John did what he could to make up for this perceived failing. John offered Mary what he had already at hand. John began his proposal letter by assuring Mary that she had captured his heart. "Your mind has called forth my admiration," he wrote, "your soul has commanded my esteem & your heart has won my affections." [1] John not only offered Mary love in great abundance, he offered Mary a certain kind of love. His love was so passionate that it evoked his poetic sensibilities. John confided to a friend that during his last visit with Mary that his feelings were "akin to the brilliant but fading beauties that gilded the western sky." [2] John's passion was so intense it could also plunge him into the depths of despair. On this last visit John had done something to ignite a quarrel. What John said or did to instigate the falling out is a mystery. He admitted only that when Mary sang it was "too much for my brain - I was mad – I know not what I said or did." When John departed he had a "sinking heart and heated brow" and he suffered

[1] John Bullitt to Joshua Bullitt, February 11, 1845, Folder 148, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[2] John Bullitt to Logan McKnight, October 29, 1845, Folder 149, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

from "pangs that were torturing my soul." "Oh, Logan," John confided to his friend, "I was wounded to the core." [3] However passionately John loved Mary, he also took great pains to assure Mary that despite his passionate traits he was also a kindly and sensitive man. When John proposed, he offered to protect Mary with sensitive and tender hands.[4] Mary could be assured that despite John's passionate nature, he would make a sympathetic and forgiving husband "as gentle in feeling as a mother."[5]

John Bullitt's letter to Mary Boswell at mid-century illustrates some of the ways that Kentucky's urbanizing white middle class, in both private and public forums, reshaped some of the parameters of their elite, landed ancestors' marital ideals in order to marry while they were young. As John Bullitt's passionate expression of his feelings for Mary Boswell suggests, the youthful members of Kentucky's white middle class began to construct and rely on a discourse of marriage that elevated the kind of love required for marriage from reasoned affection to romantic passion. Young men employed a passionate language of love in order to downplay their immediate lack of wealth in land or accumulated capital. White women also engaged in this passionate, romantic language of marital love. Such passion, tempered with sensitivity, held the hope that a suitor's gentle

[3] John Bullitt to Logan McKnight, October 29, 1845, Folder 149, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[4] John Bullitt to Mary Boswell, March 1845, Folder 148, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[5] Logan McKnight to John Bullitt, March 6, 1847, Folder 157, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

nature might assuage the total economic and social control husbands held over wives and families.

Land in Kentucky had become scarce and expensive by mid-century, making it increasingly unlikely that young whites, even from wealthy planter families, would engage in agriculture production. At the same time, Kentucky's growing market economy created opportunities for employment in the state's commercial centers. Louisville, in particular, experienced a rapid period of commercial and demographic growth between 1830 and 1860. Louisville benefited from steam navigation that "transformed the Ohio Valley into a settled and cultivated region in a single generation."[6] In the 1830s, for example, the shipping news in Louisville newspapers indicates that a vast array of products entered Kentucky from America's port cities on the east coast and from Europe while Kentucky's agricultural products left Louisville headed down the Mississippi to New Orleans to be shipped abroad. In the 1840s, manufacturing increased in importance, adding to the city's already vital trade in goods. The state legislature in Frankfort issued the first charter to build a railroad in 1830, and by 1860 the constant search for markets resulted in a transportation infrastructure consisting of turnpikes, canals, and railroads connecting a network of urban centers in Kentucky, Ohio and Tennessee.[7] When the Louisville and Nashville Railroad was completed from Louisville to Memphis in 1859, Louisville could brag of being the largest industrial center in the American South and nearly the largest urban center on the Ohio River, second only to Cincinnati. Now

[6] Allan J. Share, *Cities of the Commonwealth: Two Centuries of Urban Live in Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1982), 31.

[7] Ibid. 44.

Louisville boosters boldly advertised their city as "the Gateway to the South."[8] Louisville's population also expanded almost six fold from 10, 341 in 1830 to 68,033 by 1860.[9] Lexington also had grown into a city of nearly 10,000 people, and it claimed Transylvania University, which was the core of Kentucky culture. Smaller towns like Newport and Covington also experienced an explosive growth in population between 1830 and 1860, from 715 and 743 to 10,046 and 16,471 respectively. [10] As a result, whether pushed out of commercial farming or beckoned by opportunities for advanced education and a career, young white men and women leaving Kentucky's farms added to the ranks of the state's expanding urban population.

The Civil War exacerbated this movement into Kentucky's towns and cities because it caused a precipitous decline in the economic importance of Kentucky's commercial agricultural economy. Large-scale commercial planters lost both capital investments and their major source of labor as black people left white plantations during the conflict. The demise of Oxmoor farm as a viable commercial operation is illustrative. In 1859, William Bullitt continued to hope that his two youngest sons might follow in his footsteps and become commercial farmers using slave labor. With this in mind, Bullitt purchased a second farm near Henderson because he thought "Jim and Henry must have farms."[11] But Bullitt's plans for his youngest sons to make their living as gentlemen

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[8] Ibid. 37.

[9] Ibid. 38-39.

[10] Ibid. 29.

[11] William Bullitt to John Bullitt, June 21, 1859, Folder 359, William Bullitt Private Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

planters never materialized. Even prior to the outbreak of war, Bullitt began to express concerns about losing his increasingly unruly labor force.[12] As soon as the war began, the Union Army occupied the area around Bullitt's farm, and he grew increasingly alarmed over "the influences that were constantly at work among the Negroes." [13] By 1862, all of the black families had left Oxmoor and William and Mildred Bullitt reluctantly abandoned the family homestead for the relative safety of Louisville. William Bullitt, like most white slave-holding planters in Kentucky, never received compensation for his investment in slave labor. In 1862, Bullitt calculated that he had most of his capital invested in his labor force, and therefore determined that Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation "carried out with its unavoidable consequences, would take off four fifths of my Estate."[14] When the Civil War ended, by his own estimation, his estate had been whittled away to "Oxmoor farm, two ponies, a brace of pistols and a gold watch."[15]

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[12] Although William Bullitt expressed confidence in his wife's ability to manage the agricultural labor force in his absence, he also instructed her by way of his letters in how to handle slaves who misbehaved, and he included names of white men living close by from whom she might seek help. Thomas W. Bullitt *My Life At Oxmoor: Life on a Farm in Kentucky Before the War* (Privately Printed 1911, Updated 1995), 74; William Bullitt to Mildred Bullitt, May 12, 1859 and William Bullitt to John Bullitt, June 21, 1859, Folder 359, William Bullitt Private Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[13] William Bullitt to John Bullitt, March 7, 1862, Folder 359, William Bullitt Private Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky; Bullitt, *My Life at Oxmoor*, 74.

[14] William Bullitt to Thomas Bullitt March 7, 1862 and William Bullitt to John Bullitt, March 7, 1862, Folder 359, William Bullitt Private Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[15] Thomas Bullitt estimated that when his father died in Louisville in 1877, he did so "practically without personal estate or value." Bullitt, *My Life at Oxmoor*, 59, 109.

William and Mildred Bullitt never returned to live at Oxmoor or to farm the place. William and Mildred Bullitt's grandchildren grew up, were educated and worked as professionals in urban areas. Consequently, the emancipation of enslaved labor after the Civil War finally completed the entire Bullitt family's movement into urban centers. [16] In addition, the war caused a further drop in land values, destruction of livestock, and a rise in prices that contributed to the movement of young men and women from more modest farming families into urban centers. For example, both John Smith and John Montgomery left their relatively small family farms after the war to work in urban centers, making their livings after 1865 as merchants in trade or in some small-scale production.[17]

On the other hand, the Civil War boosted Kentucky's commercial markets. During the Civil War, commercial activity in Louisville and surrounding urban areas remained relatively unscathed. Railroad companies and businesses in Louisville profited from wartime sales and transportation of whiskey, tobacco and flour to both Confederate and Union forces. At the end of the Civil War, Louisville quickly resumed business as "New Departure Democrats" based Kentucky's future progress on advances in industry, transportation, and manufacturing, as well as immigration, acceptance of black citizenship and public education.[18] As a result, Louisville experienced another

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[16] Only one of William Bullitt's surviving sons returned to farm the land at Oxmoor after the Civil War. William Bullitt's grandson refurbished the house for occupation in 1909. Ibid. 10.

[17] *Kentucky: A History of the State* (Louisville: F.A. Battey Publishing Company, 1885), 999, 1038.

[18] Hambleton Tapp and James C. Klotter, *Kentucky: Decades of Discord, 1865 to 1900* (Frankfort: Kentucky Historical Society, c 1977), 33.

significant growth in population after 1870. [19] By 1880, Louisville businessmen began to look beyond the South as industrial production and resource extraction from Kentucky's eastern mountains came to outrank trade in Louisville's economy.[20]

Accordingly, even before Civil War, Kentucky's urban, white middle class had begun to portray town and city as the new centers of Kentucky's progressive economic and cultural life. In 1852, for example, when the editor of the *Democratic Banner* of Hendersonville celebrated his town and its inhabitants, his vision for Henderson, and for Kentucky's future rested upon commercial trade and industry. The editor explained that Henderson was a growing center for trade and for production with eleven large dry goods stores, five produce stores, and seven tobacco "stemmeries." He promoted his town's inhabitants as hard-working businessmen and professional people, describing the people of Henderson as educated, professional, enterprising, and intelligent. And he added, they aspired to the finest literary character. Henderson's ministers of the gospel, for example, were highly cultured men with superior attainments. Henderson was also home to several fine physicians, he asserted, and to some of the cleverest heads in the legal profession. Moreover, the ladies possessed "great intelligence," modesty, virtue, and gentleness. Because Henderson was located on the Ohio River it was "well located for commerce and trade." [21]

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[19] The population growth in Louisville doubled between 1870 and 1900 from 100,000 to 200,000. Lowell H. Harrison and James C. Klotter, eds., *A New History of Kentucky*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 209.

[20] Share, *Cities of the Commonwealth*, 77, 83.

[21] "Henderson," *Democratic Banner*, July 15, 1852.

It was during this period of rapid urbanization that marriage became an important topic of discussion in the pages of Kentucky's urban newspapers. Marriage and what ought to motivate marriage had been a relatively settled topic for Kentucky's early elite settlers. Early in the nineteenth century, editors reprinted poems and anecdotes about love and marriage from newspapers in the northeast but the subject appeared infrequently. The vast preponderance of articles related to state and federal economic and political events. Moreover, editors placed items about love and marriage on the last page of four-page papers under headings such as "Poetical Asylum" or "The Dessert." In contrast, by the 1830s, urban editors began to ply their readers with a veritable deluge of fiction, poetry and essays dedicated to the topic of marriage. Editors also began to change where they published pieces about marriage. Instead of putting them on the last page of their newspapers under the heading of "Dessert," they began to place them on their front pages, directly adjacent to columns of important political and economic news.

The heroes in this marital fiction also reflected the social and economic circumstances of people making their way into Kentucky's new urban middle class. Some of this fiction could have been modeled on and would have appealed to readers like the younger generation of the Bullitt family. In their correspondence, the young Bullitt men identified themselves as college educated, professional men. The Bullitt brothers and sisters demonstrated their pride in their refinement and their superior education. Their letters were peppered with foreign language phrases, one letter ending, for example, "je suis a toi jusqu'a la mort."[22] As single young women the Bullitt sisters

[22] Logan McKnight to John C. Bullitt, January 11 or 16, 1846, Folder 151, John Bullitt Private Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

spent time in leisure activities as they went about the task of finding a beau to marry. The Bullitt siblings would have found common ground, therefore, with the story of a "belle" named Kate, who frequented a social circle made up of the well educated, fashionable, and socially skilled. While engaged in the pursuit of a husband, Kate dressed well, frequented the opera and read novels delivered to her by family servants. The male characters in Kate's life were young, college-educated, professional men also engaged in the pursuit of an industrious wife. These young men were sophisticated and urbane, one having just returned from Europe. [23]

Editors also chose articles that catered to and represented more modest members of an urbanizing middle class. They published articles featuring courting men who worked as wage-earning clerks, struggling merchants, mechanics, teachers and even the occasional newspaper editor. [24] These modest heroes courted the industrious daughters of merchants, grocers, mechanics and hard-working businessmen. The portrayal of Annie, the sewing girl, was typical. Annie came from a modestly wealthy family and had attended some school. However, Annie had always preferred her needlework and had been a skilled and industrious sewing girl even from a young age despite her limited ability to read and spell with ease. [25]

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[23] "Cousin Ben or the Good Deed Rewarded," *Louisville Daily Courier,* August 29, 1856.

[24] "The Bachelor's Only Love: Or the Improvistrice," *Louisville Courier*, July 5, 1851.

[25] "The Sewing Girl," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, March 27, 1855; "Fatal Betrothal," *Louisville Weekly Courier,* March 10, 1849.

Whether modest mechanics, courting industrious sewing girls or struggling professional men wooing refined, educated women, fictional heroes always lived in the city. These illustrious new heroes possessed neither magnificent country estates nor rural "rustic" cabins. [26] Some lived in luxurious homes furnished with genteel fittings on the best city streets. Others lived in boarding houses, in neat modest homes or in modest cottages situated in less fashionable urban areas.[27] One writer determined that a newly married couple, the husband a bookkeeper, "made a little earthly paradise of his cottage home in the suburbs in the city."[28]

The members of Kentucky's developing, urban middle class began to reformulate their elite ancestors' assumptions about what made a good marital match in their mid-century conversation about marriage. Newspaper fiction now routinely and aggressively contested the role that wealth once played in marriages. [29] Much of this material took the

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[26] "The Bachelor's Only Love: Or the Improvistrice," *Louisville Courier*, July 5, 1851.

[27] "Worth and Wealth or The Choice of A Wife," *Louisville Weekly Courier,* January 16, 1847*;* "Fanny Day's Decision," *Louisville Weekly Courier,* October 2, 1847*;* "Homes and Husbands: A Tale for Young Wives," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, July 1851

[28] "The Sacrifice," *Kentucky Yeoman*, August 27, 1859; "Love in a Cottage," *Georgetown Herald,* September 1855.

[29] For a sampling of some of this literature see: "Courtship and Marriage of Lucalette," *Louisville Daily Focus*, November 1831; "Moliere and His Wife, *Louisville Daily Journal*," January 16, 1839; "The Triumph," *Louisville Daily Journal*, January 1839; "The Poisoned Bridal Wreath," *Louisville Daily Journal*, January 29, 1839; "Heloise and Abelard," *Louisville Daily Journal*, February 25, 1839; "The Miser and the Cantatrice," *Louisville Daily Journal*, September 17, 1839; "The Ghostly Bridegroom: An Incident in the Life of Turrene," *Louisville Daily Democrat*, January 3, 1852; "A Romance of Paris, the Amputated Hand," *American Democrat and Weekly Courier,* June 6, 1846*;* "The Sculptor's First Love," *American Democrat and Weekly Courier,* May 9, 1846; "Is She Happy, A Story of the Heart," *Louisville Weekly Courier,* February 13, 1847; "Worth and Wealth or the Choice of a Wife," January 16, 1847, *Louisville Weekly*

form of stories about the immoral and greedy marriages of villainous aristocrats who inevitably arranged marriages between families. This fiction, however, permitted the descendants of Kentucky's early settler elite to safely deflect criticism away from their own landed ancestors. The Bullitt siblings, for example, belonged to a family that continued to take great pride in their European and American aristocratic lineages. In 1847, Mildred Bullitt fancied herself an acquaintance of British royalty, although her familiarity was, at best, widely once removed. Mildred Bullitt knew a Matilda W. who told her of a Miss Watson who had been introduced into the "intimate" circle of the Queen and Prince. Mildred thought this connection sufficient to consider sending some of her country hams to "Victoria."[30]

Kentucky's urban editors chose fiction that situated greedy aristocratic protagonists in the grand cities of Europe. When local writers contributed to the debate,

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Courier; "Extraordinary Attempt at Assassination – Love – The Villain's Flight," *Kentucky Yeoman*, July 14, 1859*;* "The Betrothed: A Tale of the Santee," *American Democrat and Weekly Courier*, May 20, 1846; "The Widow of Five Husbands," *American Democrat and Weekly Courier*, October 10, 1846; "The Lesson: A Tale of Domestic Life," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, March 7, 1847; "The Broken Heart: A Tale of Truth," March 27, 1846; "Marrying a Mechanic: A Tale of Olden Time," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, May 16, 1847; "Love at First Sight," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, July 10, 1847; "Love Tales of the Peerage: The Flirt and the Curate," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, May 27, 1848. As an indication of the volume of this literature, particularly in the late 1840s and early 1850s, between January 22, and September 9, 1848 the editor of the *Louisville Weekly Courier* published seven serialized stories that continued over a period of five or six weeks that were related to marrying for love not money. For later pieces see "Love in the Dark," *Lexington National Unionist*, April 26, 1864; "An Ardent Lover: A Young Man Binds Himself to Work Three Years for the Father to Win the Hand of the Bride," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, June 26, 1867; "A Love Story," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, September 25, 1867,

[30] Mildred Bullitt to John Bullitt, January 10, 1847, Folder 156, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

they followed suit. In 1851, one Louisville writer penned a story for the *Louisville Weekly Courier* safely setting his tale in the chivalric age in feudal times and his greedy aristocratic protagonists within the courtly circle of Philip of France.[31] Having established that greedy aristocratic parents lived in Europe, one educated but impoverished fictional hero could confidently challenge a noble rival in his bid to marry the woman he loved by asking "how can people, who scarcely know their own ancestors beyond one or two generations, and whose blood has been derived from every nation and occupation on the globe, talk with any propriety of birth? Why, there is scarcely a man or woman of our acquaintance, who is not an example of this piebald ancestry." Then he added his opinion that considering a man's worth according to rank by birth threatened republican institutions.[32]

In order to obfuscate the need for young men to have established wealth before they married, Kentucky's middle class revamped an earlier meaning of companionate marriage. When early writers premised marriage on a balance of affection and wealth they accepted, if not preferred, for beautiful young women to marry older, but economically established men, providing the couple shared affection and similar interests or traits. Stressing aspects already present in an ideal of companionate marriage the members of Kentucky's rising middle class determined that marriage was only suitably

[31] "Blanche of Artois: A Romance of History," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, January 11, 1851.

[32] "Worth and Wealth or The Choice of a Wife," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, January 16, 1847.

compatible when it occurred between a young woman and a young man. [33] One Louisville attorney, for example, described a marriage in which "the flowers of spring are blended with the suns of autumn and the frosts of winter" as "unseemly." An unseemly union was one in which "mammon rules and touches the darts of cupid with the love of worldly gear" by permitting "love of gold" to rule over "that flowering feeling of the heart and the affections." Moreover, he argued, "nature [was] outraged" when gold cemented marriages between age and the bloom of youth.[34] A newspaper poet suggested that if old people fell in love, Cupid and death had mischievously exchanged arrows.[35] Any educated young man, even the most impoverished, would have compared favorably with stereotypes of established but older suitors that newspaper readers would have encountered with some frequency. Writers described courting old men variously as old, gray or white haired, toothless, red faced and bent over or "rich but ugly old Squires." [36]

In their private correspondence, young people borrowed these uncomplimentary images of old people to insist on marrying a partner close to their own age. While Martha Bullitt allowed a widower to court her, she vowed that she would never marry

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[33] Ellen Rothman used the term companionate to describe a mid-nineteenth-century marriage ideal among a northern middle class. Ellen Rothman, *Hearts and Hands: A History of Courtship in America*, (New York: Basic Books), 1984. Other historians describe ideals of companionate marriage as they appeared in correspondence in the eighteenth century. Anya Jabour, *Marriage In the Early Republic: Elizabeth and William Wirt and the Companionate Ideal* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 4.

[34] "The Breach of Promise Case," *American Democrat and Weekly Courier*, November 28, 1846.

[35] "Death and Cupid: An Allegory," *Kentucky Yeoman*, August 20, 1859.

[36] "Poetical Department," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, March 9, 1850.

him because he was too old. She had no intention of "gaining another father." The widower's courtship also elicited the opinion of a Louisville woman who wrote that "nothing would induce her to marry so old a man with four children." [37] Ed Munford, a struggling attorney in Tennessee, belittled a martial match between two town elders as an event worthy of humorous gossip. In his estimation, the marriage between "old" Joseph Chilton and widow Dinson "could be accounted for in only one way - 'always in the spring, the sap would rise in the oldest of roots.'"[38] Similarly, in 1872, Pattie Kennedy of Louisville borrowed almost verbatim from newspaper stereotypes to describe an older man she suspected of trying to court the young women in her Louisville social circle. She teased a friend about her secret affair with "Mr. Munford of Munfordville" whom the girls described as a desperate, ugly, lame old bachelor with a double row of false teeth and a red face.[39]

Young men hoped to benefit from this new vision of marriage because they considered older, financially independent suitors to be rivals in their quests for wives. As John Bullitt courted Mary Boswell, he became quite disaffected because he felt that Mary kept his company only to make the acquaintance of his more financially secure and economically established older brother. R.A. Hughes expressed disgust for similar

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[37] Martha Bullitt to John Bullitt, June 11, 1846, Folder 153, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[38] Ed Munford to John Bullitt, April 30, 1850, Folder 163, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[39] Pattie Kennedy diary, Buckner Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

reasons with a recently widowed man. In Hughes' opinion this man had ventured out into society far too soon. Hughes thought the widower was despicable because he too briefly mourned his beautiful, good wife before setting out once again into the marriage market. It is also likely that this struggling young attorney complained because the economically established widower posed unfair competition. "I do tell you," he confided to a friend, "that old young men are cutting some rare antics that make them the envy of such as are modest and cannot venture so bold a game; our really young men will be obliged to get them out of the way as soon as possible or they will monopolize all that is valuable – this thing of having an elegant establishment in these calculating days, has great influence."[40]

At mid-century Kentucky's urban middle class, in both private and public, also made marrying for considerations of wealth or social prestige morally unacceptable. One newspaper columnist advised that "so long as match mothers make the marriage of their daughters a matter in which money is the prime consideration, so long as fathers bargain off their children's happiness against income instead of affection" marriages will be unhappy. [41] One young hero complained about her old-fashioned parents because they thought her desire to marry her true love to be nothing but childish fancy. They advised that such romantic notions would be fleeting. When poverty came in the door, they told

[40] R. Hughes to John Bullitt, May 22, 1846, Folder 153, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[41] "Unhappy Marriages," *Tri Weekly Yeoman*, March 22, 1859.

her, love would fly out the window.[42] Similarly, a local contributor to the Flemingsburg newspaper wrote that he had recently heard of a marriage in which cruel parents had forced their young daughter to give up her handsome young lover. Instead her "cruel" father had forced her to marry a stern, dark, awful man of rank and wealth. The contributor assured his readers that the "sorrowful" bride would soon die of unhappiness.[43] This message appeared again in the tale of "Irene Livingston or the Forced Marriage." A local Louisville writer penned this story about another cruel patriarch who made an ill-fated marriage match for his young daughter. Irene's chances of marrying for love ended when her "inhuman father" forced her "to take an awful oath upon her bible, the gift of her sainted mother, binding her under the most fearful penalty to wed the man, not man, *the demon* whom she loathed."[44] The critical message here was not that the father's choice was a demon but that Irene's lover was poor while the demon had money.

Fate most often punished the fictional protagonists who decided to marry for money by making them endure endless, irrevocable and loveless marriages. The plot of "True Love or False" was typical, predictable and incessantly recurrent. A spendthrift

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[42] "Marrying for Money: A Few Brief Pages from Woman's Life," *Kentucky Yeoman*, August 28, 1858.

[43] "The Village Bridal," *Flemingsburg Kentuckian*, January 26, 1838.

[44] Walter Haldeman, editor of the *Louisville Weekly Courier*, sponsored a contest in the early 1850s inviting local talent to submit stories for which he paid up to one hundred dollars. As well as "Irene Livingston or the Force Marriage" *Louisville Weekly Courier*, August 16, 1851, Haldeman received and published "Blanche of Artois: A Romance of History," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, February 15, 1851, "The Bachelor's only Love or the Improvisitrice," *Louisville Weekly Courier,* July 5, 1851: all written by local contributors.

young lawyer had to decide whether he would marry the poor girl he really loved or marry a rich heiress, and he made the wrong choice. He married the rich heiress. Fate duly responded. The writer described his rich wife as "plain, weak-minded and ill-tempered." Consequently, the protagonist lived a miserable life in a loveless marriage in a cheerless home. Despite his wealth, he lived without "all that gives life real value."[45] Similarly, a young female protagonist gave up her true love to marry a rich older man. In doing so, she bartered herself for gold and trampled on her holiest affections sacrificing her morals to the "Moloch of Wealth." Repentant at the end of her horrible marriage and miserable life, she warned her own daughter "*never marry for money*."[46]

The polarization in newspaper fiction of love and money in marriage also appeared in private deliberations among young people of marriageable age. Mary Jane, a young woman from Louisville, for example, sent a letter to the editor of the *Louisville Weekly Courier* taking umbrage with a recently published warning to young women (just out of school) to beware the dangers of marrying for love. Mary Jane had been so well immersed in the terms of the rhetorical debate that one had to marry either for love or for money that she presumed since the editor thought young women must not marry for love, "we must marry for money." Mary Jane objected to the editor's presumed conclusion and asserted her authority to do so on the grounds that she spoke from experience. Some years earlier, Mary Jane confessed, her friends had solicited her "to marry a rich old man, that I could not love" but she had acted wisely she thought "in refusing to barter my hand,

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[45] "True Love and False," *Kentucky Yeoman*, September 13, 1849.

[46] "Marrying for Money, A Few Brief Pages from a Woman's Life," *The Kentucky Yeoman*, 1849.

my peace, my happiness, for all his silver and gold." To add punch to her opinion Mary Jane sent along a poem entitled "Love Cannot Be Bought."[47]

Most of the Bullitt family circle would have lauded Mary Jane's resolute decision not to marry for money. Although Martha Bullitt used her courting beaux to her material and social advantage, she would not settle in a marriage made for wealth. While courting Martha, one older widower promised to take her to Europe, to buy her a pretty riding horse, and a diamond ring. However, the widower's promises could not sway Martha into matrimony. She admitted to finding this suitor's attentions to be "very great attractions" but she entertained no thoughts of marrying him because "affections cannot be bought."[48] Martha's mother held a similar opinion. Mildred Bullitt determined that the happiness of a young couple planning to marry for money would end before the honeymoon did. Mildred thought that the young woman did not love her wealthy suitor and that his money would not make her happy because "she loathes him . . . ." [49] As Thomas Bullitt explained, his family leaned toward the opinion that "marriage must be for love or it must be rejected."[50] Ed Munford also took the position that one absolutely must marry for love not money. While "a certain amount of needful can't be dispensed

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[47] "Poetical Department," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, March 9, 1850. Editor Walter N. Haldeman published Mary Jane's poem urging that one marry for love not money along with her letter.

[48] Martha Bullitt to John Bullitt, May 18,1846, Folder 153, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[49] Mildred Bullitt to John Bullitt, April 18,1846, Folder 152, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[50] Bullitt, *My Life At Oxmoor,* 72.

with by genteel people," he admitted, having to marry for money or for position was slavery.[51] He, on the contrary, would enter into a marriage only if it was "formed for love – deep, passionate, devoted – all adoring Love." [52]

The Louisville community at large also critically judged those it accused of marrying for money. The wealthy and socially prominent Ward family of Louisville became the object of local rumors and disdain because people assumed that the Wards had married their daughter, Sallie, to "a Bostonian of immense wealth & high standing in the fashionable Circles." "Poor child," one young man wrote, "I am told she is very unhappy but tries to make the best of a bad bargain."[53] One Louisville congregation determined that their pastor had married a widow too soon after the death of his first wife. His congregation suspected that the preacher had been involved in an adulterous affair before the death of his wife or that the widow had duped the man "like a child" in order "to keep the money in the family." This man might have had some difficulty

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[51] Ed Munford to John Bullitt, September 4, 1848, Folder 160, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[52] Ed Munford to John Bullitt, August 30, 1848, Folder 160, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[53] R. Hughes to John Bullitt, January 4, 1847, Folder 156, Personal Correspondence of John Bullitt, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

maintaining his reputation and respectability even within his own congregation because they had determined that "the mighty have fallen." [54]

At mid-century, the increased number of references to youthful elopements also reflects conflict between older and younger generations over what must motivate a good marriage. In 1831, for example, Thomas Respess of Lexington accused his intended's father of "mercenary avariciousness for Lucre" when the father refused him his daughter's hand in marriage. Thomas was frustrated and disappointed, prompting the father to elicit from Thomas the promise that he would not elope with his daughter. [55] Other couples did elope. In 1846, Mal Ward, another youthful member of the wealthy and prominent Ward family of Louisville eloped with Colin S. Throckmorton. The couple met with great compassion in both public and private forums. Editors in Philadelphia and Louisville sympathized with the young lovers one headlining his item "Love Laughs at Locksmiths" and the other "Faint Heart ne'er won Fair Lady. [56] The elopement of Mal Ward also generated rumor and sympathetic gossip among the Bullitt family social circle for several weeks. Although they had little regard for the

[54] Rose Hughes to John Bullitt, April 15, 1847, Folder 157, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[55] Thomas Respess to mother, March 8, 1831, Corlis-Respess Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[56] The item first appeared in *the Philadelphia North American* in 1846 and subsequently in the *American Democrat and Weekly Courier* of Louisville, May 16, 1846.

bridegroom, they criticized the Ward parents for attempting to keep Mal and young Throckmorton apart. [57]

Kentucky newspapers also contributed to the project of separating matters of money from marriage by framing their elopement stories in a manner that made money incidental and love essential to marital happiness. Items inevitably described eloping couples as poverty stricken youth who ran away from cruel parents to marry for love. In 1866, the editor of the Louisville *Weekly Courier* published two items in the same edition portraying this moral in the headlines. One he entitled "Elopement in Tennessee A 'Miss' and then a 'Hit' The Cruel Parents Distanced, The Lovers United and Happy." He headlined the other with "Romance: a young lady flies from cruel parents with her lover and is married to the husband with pistols presented to his breast and is forced immediately afterwards to sign a divorce. The young lady is carried off by relatives and the husband left to mourn."[58] Unfailingly, writers sympathized with the runaways. One article featured an eloping couple "poor in everything but love." They had traveled one hundred and eighteen miles only to find that the "doting groom . . . didn't have the dime to pay the piper." According to the reporter, several bystanders pulled change from their pockets to contribute to the cost of the wedding. The "knot was tied, the parson paid, and the happy pair, with joy and gladness radiating their countenances, commenced afoot their return journey." "Surely," the editor commented,"this was marrying for love." [59]

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[57] R. Hughes to John Bullitt, January 4, 1847, Folder 156, Personal Correspondence of John Bullitt, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[58] *Louisville Weekly Courier*, November 7, 1866.

[59] "Marrying for Love," *The Kentucky Yeoman*, July 18, 1854.

Any parent who read an urban newspaper at mid-century would have hesitated to intervene in their offspring's decision about whom to marry (as young Johnstone had suggested was still possible for a parent in 1823) fearing accusations of bargaining away their children's present and future happiness for monetary gain. In contrast to the publicly disgraced Wards, Mildred Bullitt took great pains to emphasize that matters of love presided over material concerns when her children made their marital choices. Mildred willingly accepted her son John's marriage to "Miss B." sight unseen. If, she told him, the lady "had flicked a wound" on your heart … then she will "receive her as a daughter from your account of her," and was willing "to close the contract without delay."[60] Mildred also decided not to intervene in her daughter's decision to marry despite her worry that a "strange infatuation" had taken hold of Martha. Mildred neither raised the issue of the young man's fortune nor prohibited the marriage, praying instead "for strength to bear it with resignation."[61]

In addition, Kentucky's urban middle class increased the intensity necessary for marital love from reasoned affection to ardent passion. Just as elite, white settlers had done earlier in the century, in 1836, young Will Coburn continued to imagine two kinds of marital love. One kind of love, perhaps like Mary Ann Corlis' attachment and affection for "H.," was a rather duller emotion that he considered in tandem with material

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[60] Mildred Bullitt to John Bullitt, dated 1845, Folder 148, Personal Correspondence of John Bullitt, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[61] Mildred Bullitt to John Bullitt, June 1846, and February 18, 1847, Folders 153 and 156, Personal Correspondence of John Bullitt, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

considerations. His love for Sue, Will explained, while ardent was also cool and reflective. Will employed this idea of love when he made up his mind to ask Sue to marry him. "Her condition in life," he explained was "on a par with my own viz. as respects family, fortune and character." Moreover, their disposition was similar and he had loved Sue from childhood. On the other hand, Will had also experienced a burning and impetuous love. He had loved other girls "desperately," he wrote, but "then again when I would compare dispositions & fortunes, there always appeared some insurmountable obstacle in the way." Although Will weighed each kind of love when he thought about marriage, he leaned toward a balance of love and material matters when he proposed. He based his offer to Sue, he thought, on "the best of motives."[62]

Although Will Coburn finally settled on a reasonable balance of wealth and affection, it was becoming much more common for young women and men to focus exclusively on passionate love.[63] In the same year that Will Coburn proposed to Sue, young George Sanders impetuously applied his own notions of love and marriage to the task of finding a wife. Sanders became enamored of Anna Reid just by reading her work

[62] Will S. Coburn to Phoebe M. Coburn, August 4, 1836, Folder 1, Phoebe Wood Coburn Daugherty papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[63] Although ideals of companionate marriage appear to have been present from the eighteenth century, Ellen Rothman has also noted changes between the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries in the way Americans in the north thought about the kind of love that ought to inform marriage. Rothman suggests that about 1830 people transformed ideas of marital love from ideas of "friendship" to a more romantic notion of love but it was still a love that was suspicious of too much passion. However by the middle of the nineteenth century the hesitancy that was propelled by a fear of "wildness" gave way to passion and to "true love" in northern books, novels and magazines. Ellen Rothman, *Hearts and Hands: A History of Courtship in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 38, 103 – 105.

in a magazine appropriately entitled *The Passion Flower*.[64] George wrote to Anna praising her work but George's initial interest in Anna's writing quickly developed into a romantic interest in Anna. Soon after initiating their correspondence George suddenly proposed marriage and Anna accepted. Although George and Anna had committed to marry, they had never met.[65] Earlier in the century, one essayist had determined that Lord Byron's passionate escapades were too fleeting, fraught with intrigue, subject to jealousy and too likely to bring despair.[66] By 1848, however, John Bullitt's friend had taken to quoting the passionate Lord Byron as his model for romantic love, agreeing with the poet that men experienced "'a strong necessity for loving.'"[67] In 1858, a young man named Henry employed a language of religious ecstasy to express his profound rapture in his proposal to Hettie. "I can say with the greatest joy of my life," he declared, "that in the name of the adorable Redeemer: I love you with a full undoubting trust; that I love you with all my soul, with all my whole heart; that I love you more now than ever, and

[64] Anna Virginia Parker, *The Sanders Family of Grass Hills* (Wisconsin: Coleman Printing Company), 1966.

[65] Lewis Sanders to Margaretta Sanders, December 10, 1836, Folder 7, Sanders Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[66] "Lord Byron," *Louisville Daily Journal*, January 16, 1839.

[67] John's friend in Clarksville Tennessee wrote in a similar vein to John in Louisville. Ed W. Munford to John Bullitt, May 8, 1848 and May 18, 1848, Folder 160, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

that to my purer and holier influence I henceforth and forever claim you to be my partner on earth, my companion in eternity."[68]

It is understandable how offering romantic passion might benefit young male suitors forced to propose with little wealth already in hand. But it would seem that young women raised in the tradition of the Kentucky belle would have had little to gain by marrying for love over family fame and fortune. Some young women knew that marrying impecunious young men, no matter how passionate their professions of love, brought them less in terms of financial security. One fashionable young woman from Louisville, for example, determined that she would not allow "Poverty Row fellows to be hanging around her any more . . . ."[69] Ann Nicholas' financial situation after she married also demonstrates the predicament that young, white women might experience should they marry a man struggling in business. Ann Nicholas had been raised as a southern belle in a landed, wealthy and politically prominent family "with all the flattering prospects of happiness, comfort and distinction in the world." Her childhood had "glided on as smooth as a placid stream, without a ripple . . . ." [70] Ann Nicholas and Lewis Sanders began their married life in Lexington in 1807, and initially her marriage promised to secure Ann the wealth, luxury, and social prominence into which she had been born, and to which she had been accustomed as the daughter of a landed, wealthy,

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[68] Henry to Hettie, 1858, Henry, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky. This collection contains only a few letters written by a young man named Henry to a love interest named Hettie with no other identifiers.

[69] Martha Bullitt to John Bullitt, June 11, 1846, Folder 153, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[70] Parker, *The Sanders Family,* 30.

and politically prominent father. Although Sanders had been born into a landed and slave holding family, his roots were much more humble than those of his wife. Nevertheless, within ten years of their marriage, Sanders owned several prospering businesses. [71] By 1815, he had become a nouveau wealthy landowner, and a member of a prominent social circle in Lexington. However, in order to finance his various businesses Sanders had borrowed a great deal of money on credit. The drop in prices of American manufactured goods after the war of 1812 probably lowered Sanders' income and led to increasing difficulty in paying down his debts. Consequently, when the economy entered a national downturn in 1819, he fell more heavily into debt. Sanders had to sell his Lexington properties, including five hundred acres of land, a stylish house, a cotton factory, and several related buildings. The Lewis family left Lexington in 1823 and moved to a farm in Carroll County where Ann Nicholas lived out her life in the backwoods reduced to living in a humble log cabin and to traveling in a common wagon. [72]

Although declarations of heightened passion may have been to a young woman's economic disadvantage they did gain her some hope of exercising personal power once she married. Because Kentucky's state Legislature did not pass a Married Woman's Property Act until 1894, white husbands continued to exert legal, social, and economic control over families. White men expected to make all family decisions as head of their

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[71] Between 1807 and 1819, Sanders did financially well in the management of a textile mill he had built near Lexington.

[72] Parker, *The Sanders Family,* 30.

households throughout most of the nineteenth century.[73] Social convention also bolstered a husband's legal authority. Newspaper advice, for example, extolled women to defer to their husbands' will because men had more important knowledge of the outside world.[74] In addition, religious leaders preached that in all matters men made decisions in the household. Sermons related to marriage in the pre-Civil War South almost always maintained the sanctity of a husband's control over the whole of his household.[75] Between 1832 and 1861, for example, in a series of sermons delivered in several southern states, Reverend Basil Manly, Senior, adamantly asserted that a husband ought to be priest in his earthly home, king in his private dominion, and magistrate in his secular dealings. He had an absolute and unquestionable right to control because his duty to family rested in Godly, sovereign and republican authority.[76] Preaching in the American South at mid-century, Alexander Campbell also cast a husband's authority as absolute. Even if a wife was more intelligent and morally superior to her husband, and even if her husband neglected support of the family, gambled away money, drank or had

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[73] Helen Deiss Irvin, *Women in Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1979), 99.

[74] The editors of *The Argus of Western America*, Frankfort, published both pieces on the same page on February 13, 1828.

[75] Alexander Campbell deviated from the clergy's usual emphasis in 1854 when he wrote briefly about marrying for love not money. This deviation was unusual. Most extant sermons on marriage dealt with labor and money management in marriage both firmly in the control of the husband as "head." Alexander Campbell, "The Marriage Relation," January 1854, *Millenial Harbinger*, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

[76] Basil Manly Sr., "Sermons on Duty," "Domestic Constitution," and "The Duties of the Conjugal Relation," delivered between 1832 and 1861, Basil Manly Sr. Collection, Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky. Manly began these lectures in 1832 and continued to deliver them, with minor modifications, right up to the Civil War preaching several times in Kentucky.

fits of temper, Campbell adamantly maintained that a husband must be obeyed. Such a downtrodden woman could look forward to relief and reward only in another world.[77]

Both religious and secular sources took great pains to temper the exertion of a husband's complete authority with admonitions that he must govern with affection and sensitivity rather than brute force and tyranny. Urban newspaper editors published odes to masculine sensibility. In "Code of Instructions," for example, the writer admonished prospective husbands to govern the family with good temper, patience, affection and love. [78] The clergy also preached that a husband must govern the family with reason and affection rather than arrogance and unkindness.[79] One preacher, for example, admonished husbands of their duty to respond to a wife's meek obedience by nurturing, cherishing and loving them. A husband must speak without bitterness, he preached, and keep both his anger and his temper in check. In other words, husbands must command with benevolence.[80]

Once married, however, women had little legal or social recourse with which to ensure that a husband exerted his authority over family affairs either with affection or

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[77] Alexander Campbell, "The Marriage Relation," January 1854, *Millenial Harbinger*, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

[78] "Code of Instructions for Husbands," *The Argus of Western America*, February 13, 1828; "Thy Wife," *The American Democrat and Weekly Courier* August 29, 1846; "Matrimonial Philosophics," *Georgetown Herald*, June 8, 1854.

[79] Basil Manly Senior, "The Duties of the Conjugal Relation," delivered 1832 to 1861, Basil Manly Sr. Collection, Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.

[80] Walter Scott, "Formation of the Christian Character," Nov 1832, "Perfection No. XIX, To Husbands," October 1840, "Perfection No. XX," January 1841; "Perfection No. 23," February 1841, *The Evangelist*, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee.

sensitivity. Advice from secular sources or from the pulpits of Kentucky churches could only be moral suggestion. Malvina Harlan's mother made a young married woman's lack of power in marriage quite clear in the advice she delivered to her daughter before Malvina married in 1856. Malvina would have to leave her home in Indiana to live with her husband's parents in Frankfort, Kentucky. Far removed from her home and family, Malvina's mother made it abundantly clear that her daughter would be not only legally but also personally powerless once she married. Malvina recalled her mother's strong admonition that if she loved John Harlan enough to marry him, "*his* home is YOUR home; *his* people, YOUR people; *his* interests, YOUR interests . . . ." Moreover, if Malvina experienced pain in her marriage, her mother advised, she must cry in private.[81]

As a consequence, young women may have considered a suitor's passionate and sensitive declarations of love as an avenue for increasing the little economic, social and personal power they could exert as married women. Ellen Green used this prescription for sensitivity when she attempted to elicit approval from her fiancé Hector for a visit to her family and friends in Roxbury, Massachusetts. Ellen knew that she had no legal right to demand money from Hector for the trip and that she had little social ground upon which to appeal to others for aid in getting his permission. Public opinion in Kentucky granted Hector control over family decisions. Even Ellen's mother in Massachusetts advised her daughter that after she married Hector she would not have "any choice in the

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[81] Malvina Shanklin Harlan, *Some Memories of a Long Life, 1854-1911* (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), 11.

matter as your husband is the head."[82] When Hector objected to the visit, Ellen negotiated for power with the only tool she had available. She appealed to the passionate and sensitive love Hector professed for her by invoking the story of Heloise and Abelard, this time to reward Hector's sensitive nature. Unlike Abelard, an older man who reigned over the young and innocent Heloise with a cold heart, forcible compulsion, and stripes, Ellen flattered Hector for having refined sensibilities. Ellen reminded Hector that his authority over her should be gentle, and built on sentiment. As Heloise submitted to Abelard as his devoted pupil, however, Ellen would also submit to Hector's "delicate persuasion." Ellen assured Hector that it was because his persuasion was so delicate and he used the "mildest manner imaginable" that she loved him and thought of him as her "mentor" and "constant guide."[83] Ellen told Hector that she missed her family and dreamed of them and of her happy childhood in Roxbury, but she would, against her wishes, acquiesce to her "hero Hector."[84]

In the absence of women's legal and social rights, however, women had no guarantee of economic, social or personal power once they married. The emotional power of a suitor's ardent declarations of passionate love was temporary. When the power of love faded, nothing prevented a husband from exercising authoritarian behavior.[85] Even before Ellen married Hector, Hector turned out to be far less refined,

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[82] L. Ruggles to Ellen Ruggles Green, September 12, 1833, Folder 10, Green Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[83] Ellen Ruggles Green to Hector Green, August 4, 1833, Ibid.

[84] Ellen Ruggles Green to Hector Green, August 11, 1833, Ibid.

[85] Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1985), 35.

kindly, compassionate, and heroic than Ellen wished. Ellen's elderly mother finally had to make the arduous journey from Massachusetts to Kentucky in order to see her daughter.

Nevertheless, most young women hoped for and returned in kind the passionate and romantic declarations of love for their relatively penniless suitors. In fact, Thomas Bullitt thought that his own sisters ignored their financial futures because they "were by education" too "deeply imbued with the romantic" when they idealized marriage.[86] Ellen Ruggles returned Hector's declarations of love when she penned letters to him using phrases like "throbbing hearts," "amorous embraces," and "exquisite bliss." Ellen once declared her "anguish" at Hector's prolonged absence telling him "I am sick of love." [87] Forty years later, Pattie Kennedy's diary entries contain passionate and romantic expressions of her feelings for James Helm. Pattie felt James "dearer than life itself," and she loved him "with her whole heart." She believed that "he loves me," and suffered from his apparent reluctance to court her.[88] When Sallie True wrote to Lizzie Haldeman just after her wedding in 1876 she claimed to have "the dearest, best & noblest husband in the world. I love him more and more each day I live; he is so sweet and good to me

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[86] Bullitt, *My Life at Oxmoor*, 71.

[87] Ellen Ruggles to Hector Green, August 1833, Folder 10, Green Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[88] Pattie Kennedy diary, Buckner Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

and there is no life so sweet and peaceful as married life when you marry purely for love." [89]

Aware that their daughters had to leave their natal home and protective circles of their local communities, elite Kentucky mothers tried to ensure that their daughters married sensitive men. Francis Garrard educated her daughter in order that she might marry a man "possessing refined sentiments" in order to forge a "happy and respectable union for life" rather than an unhappy marriage leading to "extreme misery" from she could "never extricate herself." [90] Mildred Bullitt feared that one of her daughters planned to marry a suitor living in Philadelphia because this man had demonstrated a violent and jealous temperament. If her daughter married, Mildred worried that she would be far removed "from all who could succor or sympathize" with her and would lead a long and "miserable existence."[91]

Between 1830 and 1900, Kentucky's economy began to depend less on agricultural production as immigration and population growth caused increased land prices, and the Civil War exacerbated the difficulties of making a living by farming. At the same time, Kentucky's urban middle class fostered and built transportation networks that connected Kentucky commercial centers to national markets. As a result, at mid-century in Kentucky, more young, white, and formally educated people from rural areas

[89] Sallie S. True to Elizabeth Haldeman, October 1876, Folder 27, Haldeman Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[90] Francis Garrard to daughter, Sophia, dated between 1825 and 1839, Folder 3, Bullitt-Chenowith Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

moved into Kentucky's urban centers in order to make a living. The members of this emerging white middle class began to identify themselves as modern urban dwellers whose future economic and social successes relied on earning money and accumulating capital in a commercial economy. Consequently, they found it necessary to alter an older vision of marriage tied to land and slaves in order to construct one more suitable to their new environment and economic circumstances. They made marriage modern because it occurred in the city, and seeking to marry while they were young and still accumulating wealth, they defined marriage as the exclusive territory of the young. In addition, they focused on the necessity of love instead of wealth and family connection by making money and marriage polar opposites. They defined marriages based on wealth as immoral, and inevitably miserable.

In sum, Kentucky's middle class reconfigured traditional notions of marital emotion from reasoned affection to romantic and passionate love. This emphasis on romance and passion no doubt aided young by downplaying the need for established wealth when they courted and proposed. While it may not have been in a young woman's best material interest to marry a passionate rather than a wealthy suitor, young women also attempted to benefit from passion and romance, tempered with kindness and sensitivity that this marital discourse exhorted young men to offer. Because women had no legal and little social power once they married, they relied on a suitor's declarations of romantic sensibility in an attempt to ensure that a husband would exercise his legal and social right to govern the household with affection rather than tyranny. That this change

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[91] Mildred Bullitt to John Bullitt, June 5, 1846, Folder 153, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

in marital ideals generated conflict between generations within white families at mid-century is evident in the increasing attention paid to youthful elopements. However, at the same time that young, white women and men determined that they must marry only for love, young people had been handed the task of making their own material way in an urban environment. Of necessity, they had to return to the question of how to finance their passionate romances in their modern marriages in urban cottages.

Chapter 3

Money Matters: Contesting Visions, 1830 to 1900

As the public attention to romantic love and elopement at mid-century suggests, well-educated young whites in Kentucky exercised the right to marry for love even if it meant running away from home to do so. This development made the Reverend George Quinby of Cincinnati quite uneasy. He determined that young people approached marriage in a far too silly and jovial manner. He assumed that young couples immersed in gossip and rumors about love did not take into account the critical business of marriage. Young adults, he thought, ignored what their parents had to say regarding the material foundations of a good marriage. Accordingly, he decided to use the moral authority of his pulpit to impress some sound advice upon the young women and men in his congregation. In six sermons, penned in 1852, and aimed specifically at the young, he emphasized that marriage was not just about love. In fact, Quinby entirely bypassed the issue of affection or romance or passion in marriage. Instead, he concentrated on marriage as a serious economic endeavor. He advised young women to look for a husband who would keep a steady job, and he cautioned young men to search for a wife who would be happy and willing to wash and clean and cook and iron and frugally assist her husband in his daily quest to accumulate wealth.[1]

Had George Quinby been privy to the private deliberations of young, white women and men in Kentucky or been faithfully reading the pages of Kentucky's urban

[1] George W. Quinby, *Marriage and the Duties of the Marriage Relations in a Series of Six Lectures Addressed to Youth, and the Young in Married Life* (Cincinnati: J. A. and U. P. James, 1852), 196-198.

newspapers, he might have been heartened. Despite their pervasive and zealous focus on romance and passion, the youthful members of Kentucky's white middle class had not abandoned evaluations of their economic and social futures in their mid-century conversation about marriage. They understood well that money still mattered to their marital endeavors. They also understood that the responsibility for financing marriage had shifted from reliance on inheriting family land and wealth to their own abilities to accumulate wealth. They were, accordingly, as aware as their moralizing northern neighbor of the characteristics that individual women and men would now have to acquire in order to accumulate wealth.

Despite their discourse of romantic and passionate love, economically struggling middle-class men in Kentucky continued to acknowledge that having money mattered to their courtship and marriage prospects throughout the nineteenth century. Young men admitted, sometimes rather painfully, that the responsibility for accumulating wealth for their social futures rested on their own abilities and energies. In 1866, for example, William Sharpe worked at several occupations and complained to Sarah that his poverty interfered with his wish to see her. William hoped that he had not been too bold about his passions when he discovered that Sarah had better prospects with another gentleman of "higher rank and fortune" because he was yet a "poor man."[2] In 1872, another poor but hopeful suitor declared his love for Pattie Kennedy but also lamented not being able to court her. The young man was poor with sisters to support and his pride, he admitted,

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[2] William Sharpe to Sarah Park, February 22, 1866; March 26, 1866; May 25, 1866, Sharpe, William T., Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

would not allow him to ask a girl to marry him unless he could match her material worth. This particular young man felt so burdened by having to have money in order to marry that he admitted to being worn out from his efforts. He worked so hard both day and night in his quest to "get rich," he confided, that he felt on occasion so "weary of living," that he prayed at night "that I may never wake again." [3] Similarly, in the 1890s several impecunious young men living and working full-time in Louisville lamented that lack of money slowed their ability to court and marry. Despite his father's success in business and a degree from a Boston college, James Clark complained of being poor. He earned so little money in his work as a clerk that he couldn't meet his expenses. He confessed to his sister "I am in trouble." Since his next paycheck would be only half of what he owed, he guessed he would have to "fail and pay 50 cents on the dollar." In these circumstances, he regretted paying $4.00 to attend a dance and resolved for the present to be "too full of making money to be bothered going out." He had not given up courting, however, telling his sister "wait till I am worth a million or two and then I can cut a figure in society."[4] As late as 1899, a young man named Poynter felt burdened rather than delighted by a romantic attraction because he had no career and no money. Poynter wrote to his mother asking whether he ought to inform the woman of his tender feelings. At the time he was a student in college and still economically dependent on his family. He abandoned any notions of pursuing his romantic inclinations when his mother soberly

[3] Pattie Kennedy diary, Buckner Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[4] James Clark to Jessie Clark, December 21, 1890, Folder 12, Clark Strater Watson Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

advised him that it would be improper and "sheerest madness" to make his affection known before he had completed his education and begun his career.[5]

Privately, young men also admitted that money continued to play a critical role when their own acquaintances made marital matches. Although Thomas Bullitt thought that discussing the fortune of a beau was "very bad form," he acknowledged that certain ambitious mothers and daughters continued to "disregard custom" and value wealth and distinction above romance.[6] It may have been such ambitious mothers and daughters that made Ed Munford so adamant about the necessity of marrying for love. In his opinion, there was still far too much "temptation on both sides to make matrimony but legal prostitution." Ed thought it a sign of the uncivilized and artificial times that people still married for money or fame or to promote their social position. Such arrangements, he concluded, caused "woman to barter her most solemn vows at the alter for adventitious considerations."[7] However, when faced with the reality of having to build a professional practice while he yearned to marry, even Ed Munford appears to have considered money in his choice of a marital mate. One of his friends admitted that there had been a mania of marriage in Clarksville, Tennessee, in the last year and Ed was only one among "a great many others too useless to mention" who had "fallen victim to the fascination of the

[5] "Mother" to "My Dear Son," February 17, 1899, Folder 1, Poynter Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[6] Thomas W. Bullit, *My Life At Oxmoor: Life on a Farm in Kentucky Before the War* (Privately Printed 1911, Updated 1995), 72.

[7] Ed Munford to John Bullitt, Aug. 30, 1848, Folder 160, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

fair sex" and had married. In this young man's opinion, these unions had been influenced by "considerations . . . of a more solid nature."[8]

Even the romantically inclined Bullitt siblings seemed to have balanced material motivation with love when they married. Joshua Bullitt, for example, considered a woman's wealth when he evaluated his prospective matches. In response to his brother's invitation to court an acquaintance, Joshua responded: "If she has Miss Becton's figure, Miss Lizzie Smith's face, and Miss Fanny Smith's fortune, or any two of these recommendations," he would " breeze her to a certainty."[9] Susan Bullitt expressed her skepticism of marrying only for love more overtly than her siblings. In Susan's opinion to marry without wealth for "true love" would be like " running a race over the rough stones of poverty that [would] no doubt make its poor feet bleed awhile." Instead, Susan vowed, "I shall never marry a very poor man."[10] True to her word, Susan married a Archibald Dixon in 1853, a gray-haired man of fifty-one years with five children. However, Dixon was an already established and independently wealthy man, politically prominent in state and national politics. The sensitive and greatly impassioned John Bullitt did not convince Mary Boswell to marry him. Perhaps disillusioned with the pain that accompanied such passionate love, John seems to have struck a compromise between

[8] W. B. Dortch to John Bullitt, April 30, 1850, Folder 161, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[9] Joshua Bullitt to John Bullitt, February 2, 1845, Folder 148, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[10] Susan Bullitt to John Bullitt, November 16, 1845, Folder 150, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

a somewhat duller affection and material prudence when he married. John's acquaintances judged his new wife to be "by all accounts" possessed of both "a lovely disposition and a long purse."[11]

Newspaper editors also challenged the premature divorce of money from marriage. Perhaps because Walter Haldeman had modest economic roots and had struggled as a businessman, he published a great deal of material on the pages of several of his Louisville newspapers contesting the grandiose sentimentality that often informed romantic ideals of marriage. Some of these pieces took aim at romantic and sensitive notions of love as too soft for a man struggling to rise in the competitive world of business. As one modest newspaper protagonist explained, although love "understands no arithmetic and knows no reason," his love for his intended was not "a sickly, sentimental love." His feelings "counted the costs and calculated the chances." [12] This more pragmatic approach to marriage suggested, moreover, that grandiose sentiment was womanly and therefore naïve in the world of business. In the opinion of one contributor "the comic and sentimental song writers strike a rich mine" in the marriages of romantically deluded young women, but "the humor and the sentiment seem to be pretty well exhausted, and the moral doesn't jingle worth a penny."[13]

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[11] Annie Courtenay to John Bullitt, December 7, 1849, Folder 164, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[12] "Fanny Day's Decision," *The Louisville Weekly Courier*, October 2, 1847.

[13] Much of this material was in the form of humorous anecdotes, poetic ditties and jokes. "Love and Lightening," *The Daily Dime*, March 6, 1844; "Love and Marriage A Bachelor's Growl," *Kentucky Yeoman*, August 24, 1854; "A Brief Story for Romantic

Even when the discourse that separated money from love had reached an apex, one amateur poet, with tongue in cheek, disrupted the ideological consensus. His poem told the tale of a young woman whose parents ended their daughter's romantic attachment to a young but poor suitor by selling her to a wealthy man she did not love. The poor young woman suffered a life of marital despair. Having been thusly jilted, her true love also made a money match. Then, going against the prevailing romantic grain, the poet conjectured that marriage to a rich widow with a large plantation and plenty of servants cured the young man of the disease of love and he enjoyed the life of pomp and ease in a splendid mansion. The poet suggested that the ties between money and marriage endured when he wrote, "hearts were made to put in motion blood that otherwise would cool" but "pleasure, profit and promotion graduate at Cupid's school."[14] Moreover, money appeared persistently even in the volumes of marital fiction intended to expunge it. For example, fate often serendipitously intervened to reward large amounts of money to virtuous heroes who gave up any hopes of material comfort to marry for love. Marion, for example, chose an economically struggling suitor over a rich man and lived a life of self-denial. But Marion's material hardships proved exceedingly short-lived. Soon after she married, her husband rose to "both wealth and political eminence" and she became the center of social life in the capital. [15]

Young Ladies," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, April 3, 1867; "She Didn't Take the Ring," *The Capital Weekly*, August 16, 1884.

[14] "Heart History," *Tri Weekly Yeoman*, September 19, 1854.

[15] "True Love and False," *Kentucky Yeoman*, September 13, 1849; "The Lesson: A Tale of Domestic Life," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, March 7, 1847.

Because young men now had to earn their own living independent of family wealth, Kentucky's developing, white, middle class began to judge a young man's individual characteristics rather than his aristocratic family connections as the measure of his future social worth and economic success. At mid-century, the most critical trait a young man had to possess was his willingness and capacity to work in order to amass wealth in a profession or in business. In 1857, Mildred Bullitt summed up the necessary traits that a successful young man must demonstrate, develop and cultivate. She told her son that in order to become a successful man, he must be moral, intelligent, and industrious. He must strive to be "good first and then great . . . if you do not labor, you cannot be a man . . . if you let the weeds grow and choke the growth of your intellect you will be only a cipher in the world and you will be useless to yourself and to the world."[16]

The language used to describe a man's good character emphasized that accumulation of capital rather than inheritance of land and enslaved labor had become the new standard for success. By 1859, as one newspaper contributor pointed out, a young man's industry had become, almost literally, better than "ingots of gold" and a man's character was more valuable capital than credit.[17] This shift from evaluating family wealth to evaluating a man's independent capacity to work diligently is also clear in the changes that occurred in the biographies of prominent Kentucky men. As late as 1878, Kentucky biographers still focused most of their attention on a man's illustrious family lineage. For example, when biographers described Henry Slaughter, they used their

[16] Mildred Bullitt to Henry Bullitt, July 20, 1857, Bullitt-Chenowith Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[17] "Character Better than Credit," *Kentucky Yeoman*, October 20, 1859.

limited space to outline the subject's noble family roots in England and several influential farmers in Virginia. They dealt quickly and superficially with Slaughter himself noting only that he had been born in 1803 and that he was a physician and surgeon.[18] By 1896, in contrast, biographers paid scant attention to family connections. Now they suggested, a man's individual characteristics made him worthy. Biographers praised Lee H. Brooks, for example, for the long list of accomplishments accrued on the basis of his own merits. They described Lee as a Covington businessman who had climbed up the ladder of success becoming vice president of a tobacco warehouse and president of the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce. As "the architect of his own fortune," Lee was "an example of what a young man may do if he has the natural sagacity to discover opportunities and the ability and energy to improve them." Like other men who had started out in life without capital, he had used his "inherent talents, energy and enterprise" and his "native endowments."[19] This successful captain of industry had made his own way in the commercial market. He was neither responsible for the welfare of friends or natal family nor indebted to them for his riches.[20]

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[18] *The Biographical Encyclopaedia of Kentucky of the Dead and Living Men of the Nineteenth Century (*Cincinnati: J. M. Armstrong & Company, 1878), 75, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[19] For biographical sketch of Lee H. Brooks see the *Biographical cyclopedia of the Commonwealth of Kentucky: embracing biographies of many of the prominent men and families of the State compiled and published by John M. Gresham Company.* (Philadelphia: John M. Gresham Company, 1896), 6. Reprinted in 1980 by Southern Historical Press, South Carolina.

[20] Edward Ayers points out that this new marker of respectability caused some confusion (what he pointedly refers to as "aristocratic sniffing") for southerners used to carefully watching pedigree and lineages and who did not understand why or how new people with no family background were making their way into southern society. Ayers suggests this was occurring in the south after the Civil War. One suspects that in urban

By the middle of the century young men were well aware that they had to offer their individual enterprise and energy rather than their family's position to a prospective bride in the competitive marriage market. When John Bullitt wrote to Mary in 1845, he did not offer her the opportunity of marrying into his auspicious family. In fact, John distanced himself from his parents. He apologized to Mary for having to live at Oxmoor while he was still a poor student, about having to abide by his parents' wishes for his future education, and for having to depend on them financially. Although he admitted to Mary that his father would not consent for him to leave Kentucky in order to work in Mississippi, he implied that he would do as he wished as soon as he earned some money. In the meantime, still living at his parents' home, he felt that his time was not his own and that he was "discontented and dissatisfied with home and its associations" because he was not needed there.[21]

John Bullitt may have been a resourceless and landless and briefless attorney, but his letter served to remind Mary that at the close of his studies he would be a college-educated man ready to pursue success in his profession. In short, John assured Mary, he strove for manly independence. He would, he told her, don the "toga virilis" and expressed gratitude that Mary's love had changed him from a "merry boy into a very serious man." He imagined himself putting on the "long tail coat" and assured her that he

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centers in Kentucky such sniffing had begun prior to the Civil War. Edward Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 65.

[21] John Bullitt to Mary Boswell, March and July 1845, Folders 148 and 149, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

could answer yes when he asked himself "can I be the man?" [22] Mary's love had certainly ignited John's desire to work hard at his studies and his profession. His feelings for her, he promised, had given him a "new motive" to labor. According to John, Mary had put a "counter" in place of a "blank" by changing his complacent attitude toward life into "restless madness." Mary had added a "spring to his action" and an "impetus" to his energies; a "constancy of purpose that will urge me to the attainment of ends." She had inspired him to be "actively engaged" and to "put out some effort." In short, she had inspired him to "action – action – action."[23]

Because young white women increasingly had to choose a husband from a pool of young men struggling to establish a career, Kentucky's urbanizing middle class also found it necessary to reform what they expected of young women. By mid-century, however pressing, painful and laborious the task of uplifting her family's prestige through marriage may have been, it was no longer considered valuable labor. In short, in the process of moving from plantation to town, it was no longer enough to be known as Patrick Henry's beautiful and accomplished sister. Moreover, urban white women had to reevaluate the critical task assigned to privileged, white women in the antebellum South of having large families in order to produce male heirs to assure land inheritance.[24]

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[22] John Bullitt to Mary Boswell, July 31, 1845, Folder 149, John Bullitt Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[23] John Bullitt to Mary Boswell, dated March and July 1845, Folders 148 and 149, John Bullitt Private Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[24] Historians note importance given to motherhood, and a woman's willingness and ability to bear and raise many children remained a virtue in the antebellum south for elite, white women. This was the case in Kentucky but the cultural transformation of

Struggling middle class men needed wives willing to do their own work in a household that would support only a few slaves or servants, if any at all. Consequently, in their mid-century discussion of marriage, Kentucky's urban middle class began to transform visions of the socially and elegantly trained southern "belle," into an industrious domestic woman contented to marry a poor, struggling business or professional man. Kentucky's urban, white middle class determined that this ideal new woman would have to do her own housework or learn how to supervise servants. When elite young women engaged in the process of attracting wealthy and established suitors, they did not expect to do housework and had no training in the skills of managing domestic slave labor. Thomas Bullitt remembered, for example, that prior to the Civil War, his father and his mother and the children all worked "except the girls, who were expected to be ladies . . . ."[25] Accordingly, prior to the Civil War, elite families began to send daughters to boarding schools where teachers directed them in how to be industrious, self-sacrificing, serious, religious, sober and domesticated women.[26]

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women's role from plantation manager to modern urban helpmeet expecting to have fewer children began prior to the Civil War. John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988); Nancy Disher Baird and Carol Crowe-Carraco, "A 'True Woman's Sphere': Motherhood in Late Antebellum Kentucky," Filson Club Historical Quarterly Vol. 66, No. 3 (July 1992): 369-394.

[25] Bullitt, *My Life at Oxmoor*, 59.

[26] See Christie Ann Farnham's insightful analysis of the denouement of the ideal of the southern belle in the southern states prior to the Civil War. Farnham notes that northern teachers in southern boarding schools began promulgating this set of expectations for young women several decades before the Civil War. Christie Ann Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle: Higher Education and Student Socialization in the Antebellum South* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 177-179.

In 1852, when George Quinby offered marital advice to the young people in his congregation, he ostensibly aimed it at both sexes. However, his advice to his congregation would have made a deeper impression on the young women sitting before him. He geared most of his moralizing toward the goal of lowering young women's haughty expectations of marrying into social position and wealth. Consequently, he drew on the "ball room belle" as a symbol for an extravagant and idle young woman. In his estimation, ball room belles and their modern city counterparts were beautiful and fashionable on the exterior but their exterior appearance belied their true nature as French speaking, petulant, piano-sounding "simpletons" and "ninnies." [27] Therefore, Quinby advised young men to search for a wife who would be happy and willing to wash and clean and cook and iron and frugally assist her husband in his quest to accumulate wealth.[28] He advised young men to drop in unannounced at the home of a prospective mate on washday to ensure she helped her mother rather than lazing about or holding court.[29]

Prescriptive literature in urban newspapers also instructed parents to teach daughters the skills necessary for housework, and to live on moderate incomes rather than educating them in aristocratic ornamentals. This shift in expectations for young white women began to appear in Louisville newspapers as early as 1818 and continued unabated into the 1880s. One moralist, for example, writing before the Civil War, argued that parents kept their daughters in school too long learning arithmetic, geography and

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[27] Quinby, *Marriage and the Duties*, 121.

[28] Ibid. 196-198.

[29] Ibid. 111.

history. Even worse, girls learned drawing, dancing and music - all of which left them "in ignorance of economy." "Such ornamentals," the writer offered, do not teach girls how to be "economical" wives. Instead parents ought to be teaching girls how to sew their brothers' clothes and help their mothers do the washing and the ironing. In addition, in her view, Southern girls ought to learn to supervise domestic slave labor.[30]

The imagery of the new domestic woman outlined in urban newspapers in Kentucky posited two new possibilities for young women both of which celebrated women for their labors in the domestic sphere. One role model likely appealed to women from modest family farms. A young woman could style herself after protagonists skilled at doing their own housework. These domestic laborers sewed, ironed, washed clothes, cared for the children and made inexpensive but delicious meals with their own hands. Such fictional characters loved to do housework and did not expect that a husband would hire a servant to do their domestic chores, a lesson, wrote one newspaper editor, that young lady readers of "ordinary discernment will not fail to discover."[31] This literature advised young men, whose finances varied according to the vagaries of the business world, to look for an economical woman who could live within her husband's means. In "A Wife for a Man in Moderate Circumstances," for example, the writer told the story of a bachelor who had wisely chosen to marry a domestically competent young woman over

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[30] This advice piece was in a column entitled "Literary" in the *Louisville Public Advertise,* November 24, 1818, and introduced as the remarks of a female correspondent from the *Portfolio*. The *Portfolio* was a literary journal published in Philadelphia between 1801 and 1827.

[31] "Looking for a Domestic Wife," *Louisville Weekly Courier,* September 21, 1856.

an angelic but idle beauty. His intended, the hero apprised, was a woman of "life, purpose, industry, [and] independence" who knew "something of real life – a true, good, patient, enduring, self-denying, daring little body." This hero chided his skeptical and snobbish friend: "Don't you know that a new society had been formed among young men, and that some of the best "catches" among them have signed pledges not to marry any girl who is not willing to commence matrimonial life with two rooms and a kitchen, and who doesn't know how to bake, cook, sew, and to wash and iron in the bargain!" [32]

Alternately, young women from more elite backgrounds who expected to marry a professional man might have identified with the role of domestic manager. Writers portrayed domestic managers as well educated, accomplished women, possessing refined minds and genteel, lady-like manners. Domestic managers did not do manual labor. However, they did need to know how to cook and iron and wash and sew and mend because they must supervise the work of servants. In the words of one male protagonist, a rising young attorney, any woman he intended to marry must "to use a mercantile phrase . . . UNDERSTAND HER BUSINESS" so that she might "oversee her establishment."[33]

The message that young women must be domestically skilled and frugal in order to be useful gained momentum in the hardships and devastation spread by the Civil War. In 1867, one columnist warned young women that there were few men left to marry and

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[32] "A Wife for a Man in Moderate Circumstances," *Kentucky Yeoman,* August 20, 1859; "Rhoda's Valentine: How he was Taken 'For a Year, A day and Ever After,'" *Daily Evening News,* February 8, 1885.

[33] "Wealth and Worth or The Choice of a Wife" by Ellen Ashton, *Louisville Weekly Courier*, January 16, 1847.

those who survived the war alive had no fortune. As a result, if young women did not "shape up" they would forever be "on their parents' hands." Shaping up meant learning to sweep, dust, cook, sew and save pennies.[34] As late as the 1880s, journalistic moralists reminded "modern belles" that they must abandon their indolence, echoing earlier warnings to young girls that their ability to find a husband with an established reputation and wealth had waned and that being "attuned to the life of ornament" would not adequately prepare her for a husband's waxing and waning fortunes.[35]

All of the instructions to young woman in this public discourse about how to be useful generated some personal confusion. Young, white and formally educated women in Kentucky began to heed the message that they were not to be indolent and idle but were not always sure of how to be useful. This confusion may account for Martha Bullitt's ennui with her antebellum life at Oxmoor. For a period of seven years after Martha completed her elementary education, she lived the life expected of a southern belle complaining of occasional bouts of boredom and ennui. "I have been (as you know is often the case with me) so busy doing nothing," she wrote to her brother.[36] During the Civil War Eliza Peay frequently attended the opera, participated in plays and spent a great deal of time writing to her fiancé, a captain in the Union Army. As Martha Bullitt had done almost two decades earlier, however, Eliza professed boredom with the constant

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[34] "For the Girls: How to Get a Husband," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, July 3, 1867.

[35] "Hints to the Young Ladies," *American Democrat and Weekly Courier*, August 28, 1846; "The Modern Belle," *The Capital Weekly*, March 21, 1885.

[36] Martha Bullitt to John Bullitt, June 11, 1846, Folder 153, John Bullitt's Personal Correspondence, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

rounds of social events and attention to dress and comportment. Eliza so wanted to be useful that, much to her mother's consternation, she attempted to adopt a child from a refugee home in Louisville. After the domestic slaves abandoned the Peay household in the last year of the war, Eliza proudly told her fiancé that she did her own dusting, sweeping and other "delightful" household duties. When Eliza resumed her social activities in 1866, she traveled to Washington D.C. to visit an uncle in Andrew Johnston's cabinet, attending so many parties with her mother that they vowed to accept only the invitations that came from the President. Eliza's mother seemed pleased that her daughter had made a good impression on Washington society. Eliza, on the other hand, expressed boredom with her life of perfect idleness and frivolity that surrounded her in both Louisville and Washington. Eliza continued to express her need to "do good" and feel useful however contracted her sphere might be.[37]

Moreover, the message that southern belles must become hard-working household laborers did not appeal to everyone. Born in 1854, Pattie Kennedy of Louisville spent her childhood being waited on by domestic slaves and later by paid servants under her mother's supervision. Pattie spent her time planning her dress, enjoying the regular attentions of many allegedly besotted suitors, visiting, dancing, and getting into mischief during schoolgirl romps. When Pattie married at the age of twenty, she knew nothing of keeping house and found domestic labors distasteful. It was hard work, she complained, because the servants were all new and had to be taught everything and they were such

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[37] Eliza Peay and Peachy Peay to John Hardin Ward, Correspondence 1864 to 1867, Ward Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

"ninnies." Pattie's household servants, predictably, often left her employment and she had to rely on her sister-in-law to prepare meals, marveling at her skill and willingness to do so. Pattie's knowledge of household finances was even less rounded. "I know so little of money," she wrote in her diary, "I never think of how much a person is worth." [38] Pattie married into a line of prominent Kentucky attorneys and the women in her husband's family criticized her lack of skills in housekeeping and her acceptance of extravagant gifts from her still economically struggling young husband. Pattie appears to have responded to their oft-expressed expectations that she behave as a competent and skilled and frugal housewife with frequent fainting spells that made it necessary for her return to her mother's household, where, under the care of her mother and the household servants, she quickly and inevitably recovered. [39]

The economic responsibility for earning their own way in a market economy now rested with young women and men, and this responsibility prompted them to make a significant change in how they evaluated the economic aspects of potential unions. George Quinby may have interpreted an increase in elopements as a sign of youthful and therefore frivolous flight into notions of romantic passion. However, the increase in and public attention to youthful elopements in Kentucky at mid-century, also suggests that young people exerted the independence that accompanied the responsibility of earning their own livelihoods when they decided to marry.

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[38] Pattie Kennedy diary, Buckner Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[39] Ibid.

Accordingly, the members of an emerging, urban middle class in Kentucky eschewed an earlier settler proposition that marriage must be a materially and socially advantageous connection between respectable families. The marriage of George Sanders to Anna Reid illustrates how this shift from evaluating the importance of family wealth and name to evaluating individual character presented itself in one Carroll County family. When George Sanders proposed to Anna Reid in 1836, by letter, and sight unseen, George lived at home on his father's farm. Therefore, his economic future may have been unsettled. George worked with his father, and relying on several enslaved laborers, they raised cattle and thoroughbred horses for market. George may have expected to eventually inherit his father's farm, his slaves and his business. Because the letters that passed between George and Anna are no longer extant, one can only assume that when George proposed to Anna, he explained his current economic dependence on his father, and may have shared ideas with Anna about his future prospects for earning a livelihood. Despite his continued economic dependence, however, George was smitten by Anna, and clearly thought that his decision to marry was his alone. Consequently, just two or three days before the scheduled date of his wedding, George found it necessary to break the news to his father of his secret engagement and rapidly ensuing wedding.

Unlike George, his father operated on an earlier understanding of marriage. Lewis Sanders' own marriage to Ann Nicholas had been an auspicious and lucrative connection between socially and publicly prominent families, and Sanders continued to think of marriage as a connection between respectable families based upon considerations of a family's wealth and respectable lineage. In Lewis Sander's opinion, therefore, his son's marriage was "of the first and most important consequence to him and to my whole

family." [40] Ordinarily, the family of the potential bride or groom would have been easily and subtly able to verify the other family's quotient for wealth, prominence and respectability. Elite Kentucky whites usually married into local families and elite families were well connected in intertwined networks created by their affiliations in church, school and political institutions. In this case, however, George lived in Carroll County, Kentucky, and Anna Reid lived in New York City. Should he veto the match, Lewis Sanders feared that he would "impugn his son's honor," and perhaps force George into eloping. Instead, he immediately dropped his own business affairs and offered to accompany his son to New York as a companion for the long journey.[41] As soon as he arrived in the city, Lewis Sanders canvassed the neighborhood seeking knowledge of the Reid family's reputation from their nearby neighbors. Then, in order to be more "personally informed of the family and its position in society," he finally met with the Reids.[42] Lewis Sanders first evaluated and approved the Reid family's reputation, before he assessed Anna's accomplishments, physical attributes and character. He judged Anna as adequate to the task of marrying into his family, although he (and he suspected, George) found Anna somewhat lacking in beauty.[43]

The other older men involved in this marital negotiation operated on a similar understanding of marriage as an auspicious connection between families. When Anna

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[40] Lewis Sanders to Margaretta Sanders, December 10, 1836, Folder 7, Sanders Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

Reid informed her father of her secret plans to marry George, Captain Reid wrote to Henry Clay in Kentucky seeking information about the Sanders Family of Carroll County. In his reply, Henry Clay concentrated on family reputation. Although he did not know George well, he admitted, George's "connections" were "respectable." He assured Captain Reid that George's maternal grandfather was the most eminent lawyer in the state and his maternal uncle was one of the judges of the highest courts in Kentucky and "a gentleman of high respectability." [44] Henry Clay's evaluation of the bridegroom reads almost as an afterthought. He presumed that George Sanders did not have much property but supposed him to be a young man of enterprise and energy. [45] Having found the family lines suitably satisfactory, both fathers relented and granted permission for the couple to marry.[46]

In conclusion, despite their public and private declarations that one must only marry for love, the members of Kentucky's youthful middle class were painfully aware that they had to have money to marry and they clearly understood that earning and accumulating this money fell to their own resources. The changes they made to an earlier vision of marriage, therefore, reflected the new characteristics men and women would have to ply in a market economy in an urban environment. The ideal new young white man would have to demonstrate that he had the energy, willingness and character traits to be independent of family finances in order to be economically successful in business or a profession. Kentucky's middle class also tarnished a once lauded vision of the socially

[44] Anna Virginia Parker, *The Sanders Family of Grass Hills* (Wisconsin: Coleman Printing Company, 1966), 43.

[45] Ibid. 42.

competent southern belle in order to construct a new white woman, contented to do her own housework, to purchase frugally, and to aid her husband in accumulating capital. Moreover, when responsibility shifted away from reliance on family land and wealth to individuals charged with making their own living, young people revised how they evaluated their readiness for marriage. Because the site for the production of wealth moved away from dependence on family connections, Kentucky's middle class downplayed marriage as a materially and socially advantageous connection between respectable families. Instead, women and men looked for the gendered characteristics in each other that would materially sustain their urban marriages. It was not only an older generation of elite, white men like the men involved in the Sanders' surprise marriage that held onto notions of marriage as a critical connection between families. Kentucky remained a predominantly rural state throughout the nineteenth century, and most rural people in Kentucky continued to connect matters of material survival to their ideas about marriage.

[46] Ibid. 43.

Chapter 4

An Enduring Rural Vision: Marriage as a Gendered Labor Bargain, 1830 to 1900

Despite the rapid growth of Kentucky's urban centers from the middle to the end of the nineteenth century, most people in Kentucky continued to earn a modest living by farming. Consequently, unlike Kentucky's emerging urban, white middle class, most rural women and men continued to rely on a discourse of marriage that suited Kentucky's predominantly agricultural economy and culture well into the early twentieth century. Mary Fravert, a white woman living in the countryside near Louisville, for example, forthrightly described her marriage to her second husband, Herman, in materially pragmatic rather than romantic terms. Mary's first husband died in 1889 leaving Mary on her own with the responsibility of raising and supporting eight young children. Mary described her remarriage in 1891 in this way: "I have no property of any kind or description. When my husband Charles Stuedle died, we were gardeners - he left me with a house full of small children for whom I had to provide. I still worked early and late raising garden truck, and being unable to take care of my children, and attend to my garden, I remarried.[1] Herman Fravert did not say why he married Mary. Nevertheless, one can speculate based on circumstantial evidence. Fravert married within a year of his first wife's death. With all of the children from his first marriage grown and gone, Fravert lived alone. Herman likely married Mary in order to gain Mary's companionship, and to benefit from her domestic labors. Mary and Herman Fravert also engaged in the

[1] Pension affidavit, Mary Fravert, August 19, 1895, Herman Fravert claim, Certificate 540890.

sexual duties and obligations expected of a married couple because they had another child in 1892.[2]

Mary Fravert may have described her marriage in materially practical terms because it was a second marriage undertaken out of material necessity, and in later life. However, Mary Fravert was not alone in considering practical and material matters in her conception of the marital union. Throughout the nineteenth century, most rural white couples continued to envision marriage as a gendered labor bargain. Marriage was a woman's work because marriage was the only socially sanctioned way for her to gain material and economic security by virtue of her connection with a male property owner. In turn, men relied on a woman's productive and reproductive labors that were vital to a family's material well being, and the functioning of a family farm. In spite of their different material and social circumstances, African Americans born in Kentucky prior to the Civil War, adapted expectations of marriage as a gendered labor bargain similar to those of their white and rural counterparts.

Throughout the nineteenth century in Kentucky less wealthy white farming families vastly outnumbered the households of elite rural whites. Prior to the Civil War, some of these families owned a few slaves but a majority owned none. Regional variations existed in the sizes of land holdings and labor patterns between farms in the mountains of eastern Kentucky and those in the more fertile plains of the Bluegrass and Pennyroyal. Modest planters in the more fertile areas tended to establish small commercial plantations based on growing hemp and tobacco using slave labor, selling

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[2] Ibid.

their surplus crops in Kentucky's growing commercial markets. The Adams family, for example, had emigrated from Virginia to Clark County in the early decades of the nineteenth century and settled in the Bluegrass Region. In 1850, Peyton Adams owned a modest farm of about three hundred and forty acres on which he raised cattle, hogs and corn for sale with the help of a small, enslaved labor force. Prior to the Civil War, however, most farmers in Kentucky operated smaller farms and relied on the labor provided by their own family or extended family networks.[3] George Willet was more representative of the many more modestly positioned white farmers living in central Kentucky in the middle of the nineteenth century. George Willett owned fifty-three acres in Washington County, and his family raised cattle to sell. Appalachian farmers were typically subsistence farmers on less productive land, although they engaged in a cash-based market economy to some extent at mid-century. Some raised and sold livestock, cut timber or extracted iron, coal or salt for cash. However, eastern farming families remained relatively self-sufficient, growing mixed crops for their own use, and supplementing their needs by hunting.[4] In Floyd and Pike counties, for example, farmers

[3] Ross A. Webb writes that of approximately 83,000 farms in Kentucky in 1860, 74,000 averaged between twenty and fifty acres, with only about 200 farms being larger than a thousand acres. Ross A. Webb, *Kentucky in the Reconstruction Era* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1979), 7.

[4] Historians debate the extent to which Appalachian farming families remained subsistence farmers at mid-century or were engaged in the commercial economy. There is a consensus, however, that while Appalachian farming families may have sold surplus products and natural resources they extracted from the land, they were certainly not as tied to Kentucky's commercial economy as their cohorts in more fertile regions of the state. See Tyrel G. Moore, "Economic Development in Appalachian Kentucky, 1800-1860," *Appalachian Frontiers: Settlement, Society, & Development in the Preindustrial Era*, ed. Robert D. Mitchell (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 222-234; Altina Waller, *Feud: Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Change in Appalachia*, 1860-1900 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Robert S. Weise, *Grasping at*

typically owned from twenty to thirty arable acres, with a few hundred acres of mountainside on which to hunt, graze cattle and cull timber.[5] Even the members of the relatively well to do Adams family did not consider themselves part of Kentucky's white planter elite. They educated their boys and girls in local schools, where unlike the Bullitt children, they received training in English grammar and arithmetic rather than studies in foreign languages and the classics. The Adams family also did not send their young men off to college, and did not consider itself among the politically prominent or socially elite in Kentucky. At mid-century Peyton Adam's nephew, then a man with several small children, complained that the cost of corn, wheat and oats was so excessively high that he did not know "what we poor folks will do for bread."[6] In short, despite the growth of several urban centers in Kentucky at mid-century, over ninety percent of Kentucky's population still continued to make a modest living on farms from agricultural production in the latter part of the century.[7]

Consequently, the vast majority of white people in Kentucky throughout the nineteenth century had rural roots and maintained the marital customs that suited an agricultural economy. For most whites in rural Kentucky marriage and family were the primary institutions in which people fulfilled their material and affective needs.

Independence: Debt, Male Authority, and Mineral Rights in Appalachian Kentucky, 1850 to 1915 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001).

[5] Waller, *Feud*, 22; Weise, *Grasping*, 4.

[6] Nathan Lipscomb to Martha Adams, May 18, 1859, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[7] Lowell H. Harrison and James C. Klotter, *A New History of Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 221.

Consequently, rural families and community members expected and assumed that all young women and young men would marry. When Baptist preacher, Basil Manly, Senior, preached about familial duty in the antebellum South, he opened his first sermon on family relations with the sixty-eighth Psalm expounding that "God Setteth the Solitary in Families." It would be a young person "cursed with the most unhappy disposition," Manly warned, who did not wish to marry. [8]

When white women and men married, they did so at a relatively young age, and they expected to have a large number of children to aid them in their daily tasks. White women were generally married by the time they were twenty years old and men were only slightly older. Women from the more isolated mountain regions married even younger. Ruth King, for example, from an isolated area of Muhlenberg County, married about 1861 when she had just turned thirteen. Although Ruth did not know her exact age when she married she did remember that she was "barely able to cook and know how."[9] After Ruth and James King married in 1861, they had fifteen children, thirteen of which they raised to adulthood.

Rural family life in Kentucky continued to be much like that of their northern counterparts in a frontier economy in which the stem family served as a relatively self-sufficient system of production and consumption.[10] Both women and men engaged in

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[8] Basil Manly Senior, "Domestic Constitution," Basil Manly Senior Collection, Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.

[9] Pension deposition, Ruth King, February 13, 1920, James King claim, Certificate 422412.

[10] Mary Ryan, *The Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Weise, *Grasping*, 7.

producing what their families used in a specific and gendered division of labor necessary to the survival of a family farm. In his memoirs of life in Kentucky in the first decades of the nineteenth century, Daniel Drake outlined the expectations of farming couples that would persevere throughout the nineteenth century. Drake recalled that his father had hunted, chopped firewood, managed the larger farm stock, purchased and cleared land, constructed house and fences, planted, harvested and delivered the goods he produced to market.[11] Daniel Drake also witnessed the critical reproductive and productive work that women did to provide for her family's sustenance in frontier farm economies. As a small boy he had been charged with helping his mother with some of her usual daily tasks. Apart from birthing and caring for her children, baking bread, preparing meals, making soap, scrubbing down the house and "going to the pond on washdays," Drake's mother milked the family cow, made butter and cheese, tended the family's "'truck patch'" of vegetables and fruit, grated and pounded corn, toted water from a spring, and gathered wild berries to make fruit pies. [12] In some parts of Kentucky the importance of women's productive work prevailed into the latter part of the century. For example, in the rural farming economies of Appalachia most families still produced predominantly for their

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[11] Daniel Drake, *Pioneer Life in Kentucky 1785-1800* (New York: Henry Schuman, 1948), 24, 25, 36, 44, 63, 75–79.

[12] Daniel Drake's description of his mother's work is similar to that of a colonial "Goodwife" in New England. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich suggests that goodwives were responsible for the work that must be done in a house and its surrounding yard: tasks that included "cooking, washing, sewing, milking, spinning, cleaning, gardening," and caring for young children. A farmwoman's daily labors would have changed somewhat over the nineteenth century in Kentucky as more manufactured goods became available. Drake, *Pioneer Life*, 47, 94. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Goodwives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England 1650-1750* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 9.

family's use. As late as 1877, women in Floyd County made clothing from locally produced wool, cotton and flax; they tended chickens, cows and gardens. Their family economies, however, were now tied more firmly to Kentucky's commercial markets. Sometimes Floyd County women sold their eggs, chickens, molasses, fruit and ginseng at a local store.[13]

Although rural women contributed to the daily production of a family's critical material needs, both by law and by social custom, white men owned and controlled farmland, the major source of production. Therefore, like Kentucky's white elite and developing middle class, common white families in Kentucky's rural communities expected a married woman to rely on a male household head for her material support. When the preacher Manly exhorted that God had "setteth" the solitary in families, he had done so in order to assure the care of the "widow and the fatherless." [14] Manly's prescription for marriage took for granted that men provided for women and children because men owned and controlled the inheritance of land, its purchase and its sale. Although married women could legally claim property rights after 1894, the social practices among common whites lagged well behind. As one historian argues, "the decisions made in Frankfort" had little impact on the patriarchal control Appalachian white men exerted over family resources.[15]

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[13] Weise, *Grasping*, 163, 164.

[14] Basil Manly Senior, "Domestic Constitution," Basil Manly Senior Collection, Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.

[15] Some suggest that political agitation by elite, white feminists led by the Clay family in Kentucky pushed Kentucky's state legislators to finally pass the Married Women's Property Act in 1894. Helen Deiss Irvin, *Women In Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1979). Others suggest that it was mostly southern men

White men continued to conduct the family's business in rural Kentucky throughout the nineteenth century. Even in isolated areas of Kentucky, where public education remained sporadic, it was not uncommon for white men to have learned to read and write well enough to sign their names to contracts, although their wives were illiterate. [16] Hestor Carroll noted, for example, that she had never attended school and had never learned to read and write so her father filed for and procured her divorce at Liberty, Kentucky sometime during the Civil War.[17] Similarly, Mary Wiggins could only make her mark so Mary's uncle procured the license for her marriage in Saline

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who assured the passage of Women's Property Acts into law because it was in men's interests to do so in order to keep property under the control of family. Weise, *Grasping;* Nancy D. Bercaw, *Gendered Freedoms: Race, Rights, and the Politics of Household in the Delta, 1861-1875* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003). Nancy Cott suggests that both interpretations are valid. She argues that the impetus for enacting laws guaranteeing married women's property rights changed over time. Although married women's property acts were initially spawned in the nineteenth century by men to protect family assets from creditors in a volatile capitalist market, advocates for women's rights soon began to fortify married women's property acts to ensure a woman's ability to control and use property set aside in her name. Nancy Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 53. State legislatures had begun the process of instituting married women's property acts between 1845 and 1860, but by 1894, when Kentucky passed its act, women's rights advocates, including the women in the Clay family, had been active in suffrage reform and in making and changing legislation in Kentucky for some time. See also Hendrik Hartog, *Man and Wife in America: A History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

[16] Historians Hambleton Tapp and James C. Klotter indicate that in 1870, the illiteracy rate in Kentucky for the population as a whole was 25%. It fell in 1900 to 16.5% at a time when the national average was 10.7%. In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, attendance at public schools never climbed beyond forty percent of all eligible white children of school age and it was less for black children. Hambleton Tapp and James C. Klotter, Kentucky: *Decades of Discord, 1865 to 1900* (Frankfort: Kentucky Historical Society, 1977), 189.

[17] Pension deposition, Hester Carroll, January 9, 1905, George Carroll claim, Certificate 133196.

County, Illinois.[18] Men wrote contracts to facilitate land sales and they paid the family's bills. As late as 1906, James Underwood described himself as a good husband because he had worked his farm and had "provided well for [his wife] and family, furnishing plenty of clothing, plenty to eat and was a good provider and always paid her Dr.'s bills . . . ."[19]

One description of a typical southern country store in the post-Civil War South demonstrates that patriarchal control over family material resources remained deeply ingrained in rural southern culture into the latter part of the nineteenth century. Men gathered socially at the country store to conduct business or sit around a pot-bellied stove discussing fox races, cotton, horses, women, politics and religion.[20] Choosing what to consume was undoubtedly a gendered undertaking. Southern merchants carried a wide variety of goods that rural men and women would have used in their daily labors. Male customers would have evaluated supplies like snuff, whiskey, cheap colognes, farming implements and plows. Women would have evaluated a merchant's supply of groceries, soaps, fabrics, pills and petticoats. However, a woman's share in the task of deciding what her family consumed did not translate into control over money.[21] Men paid the

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[18] Pension deposition, Mary Wiggins, March 9, 1908, William Early claim, Certificate 590740.

[19] Pension report, Commissioner of Pensions, June 11, 1906, James F. Underwood claim, Certificate 52205.

[20] All of the photographs that Thomas Clark included in his work on country stores in the south in the post Civil War period depict men at work and leisure inside and outside local stores. Thomas D. Clark's, *Pills Petticoats and Plows: The Southern Country Store* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1944).

[21] Weise, *Grasping*, 213.

bills, and merchants recorded both debts and credits in the name of the male head of household.

Land and labor remained crucial to the survival of rural white farming families. As heads of households, therefore, men attempted to keep and acquire land by making and maintaining family connections. In addition, families relied on their own labor and they also had informal arrangements with an extended network of kin and close neighbors living nearby. Indeed, people tended to settle in communities made up almost entirely of kin. In Floyd County, for example, residents distinguished between different geographical areas of the county according to the name of the family group that had settled there and owned land. Fundamentally, "family connections guided settlement patterns and provided a rational for combining labor . . . ." [22]

Nevertheless, rural white couples do not describe their marriages in ways that suggest they married to forge land deals or only for material convenience. Young couples appear to have made their own choices about whom to marry based, at least in part, on emotional attraction. For example, George Carroll's family wanted him to marry his cousin, Susan, but he married Hannah instead.[23] Perhaps, like George Carroll, an older generation of common white women and men did evaluate family connections and the exchange of productive property as part of the conditions necessary for a good marriage. When Miles Terry married Cena Mason in 1866, Terry's uncle judged the union favorably because of the material exchange that occurred when the couple married.

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[22] Weise, *Grasping*, 60.

[23] Pension deposition, Hannah Carroll, July 21, 1904, George Carroll claim, Certificate 133196.

It was important to Terry's uncle that Miles brought a drove of cattle into the marriage and Cena's money helped them to purchase a farm.[24]

Rural couples may have inadvertently contributed to a consolidation and transmission of their families' land resources simply because they married from a relatively small pool of nearby neighbors.[25] White couples had generally been born and raised in the same communities. Cena Mason and Miles Terry had known each other since early childhood, living and growing up only three miles apart. In Cena's words: "I had known him about all my life . . . we growed up together." [26] Similarly, Carranda West's neighbor stated that he had known both Carranda and George "since they was small children. They was raised and always lived my neighbors and intiment friends." [27] White couples usually married at the home of the bride's father and solemnized their marriages in a ceremony attended by family and neighbors. A minister of the gospel or a justice of the peace officiated at the wedding. Francis Arthur's marriage to John Dixon in

[24] Pension deposition, William Terry, May 13, 1906, Miles Terry claim, Certificate 1074183.

[25] Mary Ryan has found a similar pattern in her study of Oneida County, New York. She suggests that marriages connected rural farming families in a way that kept both the means of production in land and the responsibilities and obligations of labor within an extended, intergenerational network.

[26] Pension deposition, Cena Terry, May 1, 1906, Miles Terry claim, Certificate 1074183.

[27] Pension affidavit, A. Spratt, November 24, 1894, George West claim, Certificate 144801.

1860 was typical. A Justice of the Peace solemnized the marriage, commemorated by a few family and friends at her father's home in Boyd County.[28]

Enslaved couples in antebellum Kentucky experienced different material and social circumstances than their common white counterparts. Even when it came time to court and marry, enslaved women and men had to defer to the authority of white male household heads. White slaveholders had the authority to consent to marriages but they also had the authority to disrupt them. Several widows described being married before the war, but having to live apart from their husbands. Charlotte Madison married James about 1862 in Georgetown, Scott County, Kentucky, in the local "colored" Methodist church. Charlotte and James belonged to different white masters. After they married Charlotte returned to live in Georgetown at the home of a dentist for whom she worked as a domestic, and James returned to his master's farm three miles outside of town.[29] White planters also sold families apart. When Amanda Toller married William, the couple lived together for some years until William's master sold him to a planter who lived nearly twenty-five miles away. The new master likely feared that William would escape somewhere in the "rough country" between the two farms because he rarely allowed William to leave the plantation to visit his wife and children. After their initial

[28] Pension affidavit, John D. Crum, September 8, 1900, John Dixon claim, Certificate 506752.

[29] Pension deposition, Charlotte Madison, June 17, 1901, James Elgin alias James Madison claim, Widow Certificate 532403.

separation, William tried to visit Amanda and their children as often as he could but eventually his visits ceased.[30]

Bound couples freely chose to adopt some of the marriage customs practiced by their white, land-owning neighbors. White slaveholders certainly limited the possibilities for choosing partners to court and marry by constricting the ability of enslaved people to travel but I have found no indication that white masters ever directly chose a mate for enslaved women or men. Enslaved people made their own choices about whom to marry from within their own community or from a plantation close by. When William Toller remarried after being sold apart from his first wife, he chose his partner although he was obliged to ask the white master for permission to marry. A fellow laborer noted that the white master "always seemed pleased" when his enslaved women and men chose someone to marry from home.[31] In addition, even though they lived with and worked for white families, most enslaved women and men also petitioned white masters for the right to a marriage ceremony.

When they married, enslaved women and men also called upon the authority of their church and their local preachers to bind their unions. When Basil Manly preached his sermons on marriage in the early decades of the nineteenth century he did so to a mixed congregation of blacks and whites. Some of Kentucky's early preachers also ministered to racially mixed congregations. The early records of the Baptist Church at the Forks of the Elkhorn, for example, indicate that in 1818, its membership consisted of

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[30] Pension deposition, John Burns, June 7, 1888, William Toller claim, Widow Certificate 159260.

[31] Pension deposition, Cravens Peyton, May 11, 1888, William Toller claim, Certificate 233480.

seventy-nine whites, along with "47 Slaves and Persons of Culler."[32] Freed woman Lou Seals made the influence of her church on her desire to formally marry clear. She married her husband in 1881 after having four children because "they don't let you stay in the church if you live together without being married so I told Thomas Seals if he wanted to continue to live with me he would have to marry me." [33] She may also have felt additional pressure to marry in church because her brother was a minister living nearby in Lexington. Itinerant black preachers commonly married couples in customary ceremonies similar to those of their white neighbors. Family members and guests from the community attended, witnessed and celebrated these ceremonies. For instance, when Lettie Parepont and Moses English married about1850, the couple did so "with the consent" of their owners on the Parepont porch, surrounded by members of the slaveholding family and their own family and friends in a service conducted by a local black preacher.[34]

Customary marriages between enslaved women and men did not become legally binding, socially recognized or protected prior to the end of the Civil War. However, enslaved women and men used public knowledge of their customary church-based marriages to confer moral authority on their unions within their own communities of black and white neighbors. During the Civil War, Vance and Laura Duncan had to call

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[32] William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists, 1783-1830* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), 402.

[33] Pension deposition, Lou Seals, March 1, 1924, deposition Thomas Henry Allen, March 17, 1924, Thomas Seals claim, Certificate 895444

[34] Pension deposition, Lettie English, June 28, 1897, Moses English claim, Certificate 807547.

upon all of the moral authority available to them in an attempt to counteract their lack of legal and civil rights as a married couple. Vance and Laura Duncan married in 1863 in Louisville with a Catholic priest officiating. With the permission of a white slaveholder and with members of their families and their community in attendance, Laura's mother could insist that the couple had married "under the customs of their race in slavery, with the consent of their owners under the forms of the Roman Catholic Church."[35] Like Laura's mother, people also demanded recognition of the legitimacy of their slave marriages by virtue of the language they used. Even though African American women and men sometimes referred to their pre-war marriages as "slave marriages" they considered their unions to be both legitimate and binding. Jackson Riley, a traveling black preacher, referred to antebellum marriages as having occurred "under the old constitution."[36] Several women also stated that they had married "under the old constitution" or "under the old slave law."[37] Although Rebecca Burgess married Washington in Kentucky prior to the Civil War, she determined that she had been legitimately married because a Methodist preacher had presided at the wedding.[38]

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[35] Pension affidavit, Nancy Morrison, circa November 3, 1905, Vance Duncan claim, Certificate 985872.

[36] Pension deposition, Jackson Riley, February 5, 1898, George Simpson claim, no certificate Issued, Widow's Application 441017.

[37] Pension deposition, Martha Odrick, March 6, 1900, David Odrick claim, Certificate 602562 and Letter to Commissioner of Pensions, October 10, 1883, Thornton Stephenson claim, Widow Certificate 322566.

[38] Pension deposition, Rebecca Burgess, August 29, 1902 and general affidavit Jane Sherman, November 13, 1897, Washington Burgess alias Washington Taylor claim, Certificate 416019.

Unlike most southern states, Kentucky did not automatically legalize slave marriages after emancipation. All of the efforts Vance and Laura Duncan took to legitimate their marriage still did not guarantee the legality of their union after slavery ended in Kentucky in 1865. The Kentucky legislature passed an act in February of 1866 requiring that couples married under slavery appear before a county court clerk and declare their intention to remain husband and wife. The fifty cents it cost to swear such an affidavit before the county court clerk and the additional twenty-five cents it cost to procure the paper proving they had done so proved to be an obstacle for people struggling to make a living in Kentucky after the Civil War. Nevertheless, many couples, including the Duncans, complied with the act and took the additional step of ratifying their marriages.[39]

Many of the black women and men who married after the Civil War did so in legally sanctioned marriages, their choices of marital partners limited only by the pragmatism of proximity. After emancipation freed men and women married partners living close by or with whom they worked. For example, Millie and Charles Georgia, who married in 1870, were raised in Fleming County, had extended family there, and had known each other before the Civil War. Lou Harris and Thomas Seals, a black couple from Clark County, had begun living together as husband and wife in 1874. They met because when they began working for the same white family. [40] Black couples also tended to have large families, although fewer black children than white survived into

[39] Victor B. Howard, *Black Liberation in Kentucky: Emancipation and Freedom, 1862-1884* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 122.

[40] Pension deposition, Lou Seals, March 1, 1924, Thomas Seals claim, Certificate 895444

adulthood. Susan Logan recounted that she and her husband had seven children during their eighteen-year marriage but that all seven had died.[41]

Despite their different economic, social and legal circumstances before the Civil War, an older generation of people raised in rural Kentucky, both black and white, exhibited a similar understanding of the meaning of marriage. When they spoke of marriage they often relied on an early nineteenth-century religious discourse. In the 1830s when Basil Manly delivered his sermons to mixed congregations of both white and black people in rural areas of the South, he focused on labor rather than love as the basis of a good marriage. For Manly, ownership of property based in land was the fundamental girder of family life, and family was a harmonious unit where all were bound by obligation in a division of labor to the common end of subsistence and shelter. Husbands were responsible "business agents" for the family, he expounded, while wives were obedient and hardworking helpmeets. Both worked toward a "mutual exertion in business."[42]

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[41] Pension deposition, Susan Logan, July 28, 1919, Henry Houghton alias Henry Logan claim, Certificate 1029874.

[42] Basil Manly Senior, "Sermons on Duty," Basil Manly Senior Collection, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Manly assumed that productive wealth rested in land but he employed a middle-class and urban language to describe labor. Manly had been an urban professional, a preacher and a bookseller in Charleston, South Carolina but he eventually accumulated enough wealth by 1852 to purchase land and enslaved labor to become a successful planter. A. James Fuller, *Chaplain to the Confederacy: Basil Manly and Baptist Lite in the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 2000).

Like the concepts of farm and home, rural people continued to bundle the concepts of labor and love together.[43] Like Mary Fravert, others occasionally overtly acknowledged that their own motivation to marry had rested on an exchange of labor. In 1890, a freed woman named Caroline Scott spoke of her marriage in this manner. Within six months of his first wife's death Charles Scott had married her, she said, because "Henrietta left several small children" and Scott "wanted some one to care for them."[44] When an older farmer praised his young daughter-in-law in 1877, he did so because she had been a virtuous and industrious woman who had "performed all the duties and obligations of a wife."[45] Freed woman Sarah Thomas made a similar connection between being a wife and the labor a woman expected to perform in marriage when she stated that since the death of her husband she had never "married any man or lived as a wife or housekeeper with any man."[46] Similarly, Ruth King described her long marriage to James King as "we both worked hard together."[47]

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[43] Mary Ryan argues that family survival in an agricultural economy was based on the productive capacity of the land in which family members were bound together by affection and by reciprocal material responsibilities and duties. Ryan, *The Cradle of the Middle Class*, 31.

[44] Pension deposition, Caroline Scott, June 2, 1920, Charles Scott claim, Certificate 688121.

[45] Pension deposition, William Ledbetter, July 17, 1877, Joseph Lyons claim, Widow Certificate 216400.

[46] Pension deposition, Sarah Thomas, September 28, 1918, Henry Lumpkins claim, Contesting Widow Certificate 858024.

[47] Pension deposition, Ruth King, February 13, 1920, James King claim, Certificate 422412.

In evaluating an individual's or a married couple's reputation within the community, most rural whites and black people focused on the labor that husbands and wives did in their reciprocal labor bargain. The respectability of a married woman rested on her willingness and ability to work hard raising children and performing the duties that fell to a farm wife. [48] Several neighbors who lived near Minnie Richardson determined that this woman had been a good woman and a good wife because she had been a hard worker. As a single woman, Minnie had worked as a cook and as a hired girl to contribute to her own support. When she married, despite frequent illnesses, she worked on the family farm and had a cow to keep her young children in milk. Minnie's industry earned the accolade from a near neighbor that she had "helped herself."[49] The Adams family feared that a young woman who had been left crippled by a recent illness would now also suffer from limited prospects for marrying. They reckoned that "no person would have her now as she was lame." [50]

Neighbors also regularly evaluated the respectability of a husband on the basis of whether or not a man could provide for his family. When the Adams family evaluated men as prospective husbands they looked for the physical attributes they thought necessary in a good farmer to make him a good provider. When Martha Hunt and Dink

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[48] Mary Ryan has argued, "men's expectations, women's behavior, and the whole supporting culture concurred in regarding the frontier wife as preeminently a worker in the home economy." Ryan, *The Cradle of the Middle Class*, 27.

[49] Pension deposition, Philip J. Bird, July 17, 1902, Coleman Richardson claim, Certificate 1080394.

[50] M. F. Lipscomb to Martha Adams, March 21, 1857 and Nathan Lipscomb to Martha Adams, February 20, 1859, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

Strode ran away to Cincinnati to be married, "the old folks were very much opposed to the match." Martha's parents had no qualms about the young man's character. In fact, "Strode [was] a very nice young man." The parents objected because they thought Strode wasn't physically up to making his living by farming. Strode, they thought, "was too small."[51] In the last half of the nineteenth century, being a good husband meant farming the land and increasingly any other work necessary to bring cash income into the family. Andrew Ferguson's near neighbors thought that he had been a good husband because despite being poor and ill, he had continued to work, to pay his debts and to support his family.[52] Similarly, several of Anderson Clark's neighbors thought highly of Clark Anderson and his little family. Although they mentioned rumors that his current wife might not have obtained a divorce from her first marriage, that she might not have always been faithful to Clark, and that there was a big difference in the couples' ages, they found the family respectable. The couple appeared to get along well, several neighbors noted, and Clark took responsibility for the support of his twins of whom he "appeared very proud."[53] Other parents and communities similarly ensured that men provided for their families. This is the gist of Ruth King's remembrance that her mother had carefully

[51] Nathan Lipscomb to Martha Adams, April 4, 1858, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[52] Pension deposition, Vincent Cheadle, May 7, 1898, Andrew Ferguson claim, Certificate 600782.

[53] Pension deposition, Rachel Moore, April 8, 1902, Anderson Clark claim, Invalid Certificate 351919, Widow Certificate 590156.

evaluated the man Ruth married because her mother had been "a mighty particular woman about us girls."[54]

While younger couples likely married for love, too much passion could be detrimental to the survival of the corporate farm family. At the end of the nineteenth century, a rural and traditional understanding of what ought to motivate marriage still contained expectations of affection between spouses similar to the less ardent affection imagined by Kentucky's white settler elite in the early decades of the century. Basil Manly preached to his rural congregations that the kind of affection demanded of married couples was prudent, steady, permanent and solid. Such affection must be rational and dignified. He warned that passionate love had no place in a dutiful marriage because spontaneous feeling or a love that displayed sentimentalism was transient and fickle and would soon disappear. A love based on sentimentalism, Manly emphasized, was a "sick love." [55]

The language an older generation continued to use when they talked about marriage was based on a religious discourse. The elder members of the Adams family expressed their thoughts and opinions in religious references. One of Martha's uncles, for example, wrote about his experience of life as a "world of trouble, disappointments and bereavements" from which he would welcome transcendence into a place where

[54] Pension deposition, Ruth King, February 13, 1920, James King claim, Certificate 422412.

[55] Basil Manly Senior also teetered between modern urban and traditional rural thoughts about the nature of love in marriage. While his letters to his own wife were affected by modern, middle class sentimentality and "great passion," he preached sentimental restraint when he addressed his congregations. For details of Manly's letters to his wife see Fuller, *Chaplain to the Confederacy,* 52.

"parting and trouble will be no more . . . ." [56] One missive, ending with the salutation "your brother in Christ," included thanks to God for "earthly blessings from the Great Creator," expressions of joy in "loud Hosanahs" for the progress of Christian civilization over the wilderness and it's "heathen inhabitants," and hopes that all were "still in that strait and narrow way that leads to joys on high."[57] Like the Adams family, who were devoted members of the Baptist church in Kentucky, one Baptist couple from rural Tennessee employed a religious discourse in their expression of marital and family affections when they wrote to each other during the Civil War. William Brown, a soldier in the Union Army, and his wife Nancy, left behind on the family farm, made their affection for each other and their five children abundantly clear. The couple fretted over each other's health and over the well being of their young children. They encouraged each other and attempted to alleviate each other's worries by downplaying the daily hardships they endured. Although Nancy admitted to William that her supply of meat would not hold out until the next fall, she quickly assured him that she and the children would be able to handle the garden and the animals.[58] William sent what money he earned to his wife, included messages addressed to his young children from their "Paw" and, when he was able, sent the children small trinkets he referred to as "pretties." Nancy, in turn, sent William "galluses" (suspenders) and socks and a book with a lock of

[56] D. Haggard to Martha Adams, December 19, 1858, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[57] John H. Oliver to Nathaniel Adams, February 2, 1855, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[58] Nancy Brown to William Laban Brown, May 2, 1865, Http://www.sounddoc.com/wlbrown/wlbrown2.html.

hair. The devoutly religious Browns declared their sentiments for each other in a religiously tempered rhetoric of kindness, affection, respect, and friendship. Nancy Brown began her letter with "very dear affectionate husband" and then thanked William for his "kind" letter. [59] In turn, William Brown noted that it was with "great pleasure and respect" that he wrote to his family and ended one letter to his wife with: "may the mercies of God rest upon you and keep you from all harm is my prayer written to all my friends."[60] Worried that he might not return from the war, Brown attempted to assure his wife, that if they should never meet again on earth he prayed they would meet someday on "Canaan's peaceful shore."[61] Brown also prayed that in his absence God would "bless you and be a husband to you and a father to the children."[62]

Whites from the more isolated mountain regions of Appalachia also continued to express a suspicion that passionate sexuality could be a danger to marriage. Unlike their middle-class and urban counterparts, they continued to draw on early counsels against sexual passion in their oral traditions. The most frequently occurring message in folk ballads warned that passionate love could be deadly. Ballads warned that "true love"

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[59] Nancy Brown to William Laban Brown, May 2, 1865, Http://www.sounddoc.com/wlbrown/wlbrown2.html. There is only one surviving letter from Nancy Brown to her husband. This letter reached him after his death in April of 1865, and Nancy Brown's letter was returned unread. William Laban Brown died on April 24, 1865 in an explosion on the steamship Sultana north of Memphis. He was one of over 2000 Union Soldiers aboard when the vessel left from Vicksburg, Mississippi.

[60] William Laban Brown to Nancy Brown, March 21, 1864, Http://www.sounddoc.com/wlbrown/wlbrown2.html

[61] William Laban Brown to Nancy Brown, May 18, 1863, Http://www.sounddoc.com/wlbrown/wlbrown2.html

[62] William Laban Brown to Nancy Brown, December 21, 1863, Http://www.sounddoc.com/wlbrown/wlbrown2.html.

often ended in separation, misfortune or death.[63] "Hard-hearted Barbara Allen," for example, found true love but died in grief. Barbara and her true love could lie safely together only in death, their bodies buried side by side. Anyone within listening distance of the plaintive tones of "Old Smoky" would have learned that the grief of parting swiftly followed the pleasure of courting because passion was fleeting and fickle: like a dewdrop in the morning gone by night. Sexual passion could be particularly detrimental to marriage. In the ballad of "Little Musgrove and Lord Barnard" passion led to adultery and adultery led to violent death. Sweet Betty, the Lord's wife, took Little Musgrove for her lover while her husband was fishing. The tryst ended badly when Barnard drew his sword and killed Little Musgrove; dragged Betty over the floor, cut off her head then "put the sword upon the wall, the point toward his breast." [64] Ballads suggest that although rural couples entertained flights of "true love" and sexual passion, they may also have expected to measure their marital affection in more stoic terms.

Both the measured quality of affection thought necessary for marriage and the emphasis on labor rather than love accounts for why the courtships for an older

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[63] One anthology of folk songs from the Appalachian Highlands of Kentucky contained 48 songs related either to love or marriage. Of these 48 ballads, 4 related to parental intervention, 5 to marrying for love or land or money, 7 to warning young girls to beware of the lying and cheating young men, 3 to warning young men to beware of the cheating and scornful young women, and 24 to an adulterous and passionate love affair that ended in misfortune or death. Some of these ballads made reference to London or an English nobility and referred to an Anglo-Saxon past. Others about temperance, railroads and the Civil War had been modified to suit life in the mountains in the nineteenth century. Travelers into the Appalachians who recorded on paper the ballads that people remembered and sang from oral traditions aided in the author's anthology. Harvey H. Fuson, *Ballads of the Kentucky Highlands* (London: The Mitre Press, 1931).

[64] See "Barbara Allen," "Little Musgrove and Lady Barnard" and "Old Smoky," Ibid. 47, 52, 119.

generation of rural whites and freed black people were prudently short in comparison to the long, often angst-ridden, emotionally passionate and carefully premeditated engagements of their middle class counterparts. Mary Haggard reported to her cousin Martha Adams that "yesterday morning Mrs. Pettit was married to Mr. Elkin. They were interduced to each other last Sunday and was maried yesterday . . . .[65] A black woman named Mamie Grayson described a no-fuss, no-nonsense courtship with her husband Thomas in the 1880s. Mamie Grayson explained that she met her husband while she worked for a white family in Louisville. "I first saw him coming to house next to where I was working," she explained, "he came after some carpets, saw me through the fence and that night be came back and taken me home. After that he used to come to our house to see me." [66] In 1867, Susan Pitcock, a white women from Monroe County, remarried for the third time only five months after the death of her second husband. By all accounts, this courtship, though short and practical, was not devoid of excitement. She and her fiancé met another couple and all four "rode together from near Meshack to Tompkinsville, Ky., and were married there sitting on our horses." [67]

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[65] Mary Haggard to Martha Adams, December 12, 1853, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[66] Pension deposition, Mamie Grayson, March 8, 1919, Thomas Grayson claim, Certificate 457457.

[67] Pension deposition, Nancy Hagan, August 18, 1897, James Pitcock claim, Widow certificate 615917.

Most Kentucky couples, both black and white, married only once and remained married over a lifetime.[68] Francis Arthur's marriage to John Dixon, for example, lasted for forty years, until John's death in 1900. Although couples had been sold apart and the Civil War had disrupted slave marriages, many of the marriages that black couples undertook during slavery also often endured well into the twentieth century. For example, George Davis and Amanda Moxley married in Shelby County in 1847 "under the old slave law." [69] In 1866, George and Amanda Davis ratified their marriage before a county court clerk. [70] In 1918 when George Davis died, the couple had been married a total of seventy-one years. Moreover, women and men tended to stay in a marital relationship throughout their adult lifetimes. If a married couple separated, one or both tended to promptly remarry. Amanda and William Toller each remarried soon after being

[68] Most couples married in a customary ceremony rather than cohabiting in a common-law marriage. This is the case for white couples and for freed black couples after the Civil War. However reliance on pension files alone may skew the estimate of couples that married ceremonially and therefore legally in nineteenth century Kentucky even after the Civil War. These files may represent only those women who had either legally married, or at least assumed they had legally married when they applied for a government pension.

[69] Pension affidavit, W. Spradling, September 18, 1918; Declaration of Marriage of Negroes and Mulattoes, May 26, 1866; Declaration of a Widow for Original Pension, January 26, 1918, George Davis claim, Certificate 957165.

[70] George C. Wright, *Life Behind a Veil: Blacks in Louisville Kentucky, 1865 – 1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985).

sold apart. [71] Similarly, within a year of his first wife's death, Joseph Anderson, a white farmer, married his first wife's younger sister who already resided in the household.[72]

Because courtships tended to be short and people tended to remarry soon after a separation or the death of a spouse, weddings in rural Kentucky were frequent. Marriage ceremonies occurred so often that Francis Lipscomb once interrupted her letter to her cousin Martha Adams in which she had begun to list all the recent engagements and marriages in her neighborhood to complain that there were so many new couples either married or currently "on the docket" she found them "too tedious" to mention.[73] Remembering the Dixon marriage many years later, one of the invited guests recalled an incident that reveals both the rural setting of marriage ceremonies and their frequency. Samuel Bartram had not been able to make his way to the home of the bride's father in time to see the couple married, he recalled, because his hounds "started a fox on our way to the house." Instead of attending the ceremony, he had "followed the hounds."[74] Perhaps Samuel thought he would have another opportunity soon enough to attend a neighbor's wedding but foxhunts were harder to come by.

In summary, even at the end of the nineteenth century, whether they lived in town or country, most whites living in Kentucky had been born and raised in rural areas.

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[71] Pension deposition, John Burns, June 7, 1888, William Toller claim, Widow Certificate 159260.

[72] Pension affidavit, Bettie Coon, not dated but circa 1891, Widow's Pension Application June 12, 1890 and Affidavit George W. Long, circa 1890, Joseph Anderson claim, Minor Certificate 298400.

[73] Martha Francis Lipscomb to Martha Adams, January 5, 1854, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

Accordingly, they continued to maintain marital beliefs that suited the social and material needs of farming families. Men relied on women for reproductive and productive domestic labor, and women relied on men because men owned and controlled land. Consequently, both women and men expected to marry, and usually did so to partners living close by. Because people relied on family for labor, they had large families and they also settled in communities of extended kin and neighbors. The ability of whites and blacks to guarantee the sanctity of their marriages differed prior to the Civil War. White couples tended to marry in a ceremony sanctioned by their local church, and therefore made legally binding. Black couples tended to marry in "slave" marriages, sanctioned within their local communities, solemnized by itinerant black preachers, but not legally binding. After the Civil War, however, black couples in Kentucky took advantage of their legal right to legitimate their marriages. Although their economic, social and legal situations differed prior to the Civil War, a generation of black women and men born before the war shared a meaning of marriage as a gendered labor bargain with most of their white rural neighbors.

Accordingly, among most of Kentucky's rural white and freed black populations, an older generation of women and men neither separated home from work, nor love from labor. Some spoke of marriage in a religious discourse based on a language of duty and obligation. In addition, when an older generation of rural people judged an individual's character, they based their opinion on an ability and willingness of women as wives and men as husbands to undertake gendered duties and obligations in the support of families. Preachers in the pre-Civil War South continued to warn against passion as a component

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[74] Pension affidavit, Samuel Bartram, September 11, 1900, John Dixon claim,

of marital love in distinct contrast to a white middle class in Kentucky that began to uplift their ideal of marital love from reasoned affection to passion and romance. Marital love, preachers asserted, must be reasonable and steady. Much as Kentucky's early setter elite had envisioned in their early newspaper prescriptions, an extant Appalachian oral culture also contained warnings about sexual passion. While mountain ballads spoke of "true love," they also warned that such love was a danger to lasting marriage. In short, most white and black folk in Kentucky approached courtship and marriage as a practical union based on affection and duty and obligation. They did so in their short courtships and in the frequency of their marriages and remarriages.

Certificate 506752.

Chapter 5

Marrying Martha Off:
Romantic "Ecstacys" and Economic Realities in
Rural Kentucky, 1850 to 1900

At mid-century in Kentucky common white rural youngsters, like their urbanizing middle-class neighbors, diligently engaged in the task of finding partners to marry. In the years between 1847 and 1859 Martha Adams spent a great deal of time and energy enlisting the aid of her cousins in Kentucky to find a beau. Martha's quest for a husband was the most important topic of discussion in the letters that went back and forth between Martha, in Hartsville, Summer County, Tennessee, and her cousins and friends in Clark County, Kentucky. The criteria that these young correspondents employed in their search of a marital mate for Martha (and each other) were youthfully exuberant, usually playful and sometimes romantic. One letter cousin Mary Haggard sent to Martha is typical. Mary began by launching into a long list of all of the weddings that had occurred since she had last spoken with Martha. "There is some weading evry week," she wrote, "a week or two ago Bet How was maried to Mr. Bush and Miss Bush to Mr. Readman and Clif Haggard to Mrs. Mary Haggard and tomorrow Miss Lucy Elkin to Mr. Freans of Madison." [1] When Lucy Bridgewater detected some interest toward Martha on the part of a young man living in Clark County, she wrote to Martha suggesting that Martha send this particular Squire a "consoling" word and better yet, if she sent him a "pretty book

[1] Mary Haggard to Martha Adams, December 12, 1853, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

marker" he would "go in ecstacys." [2] In contrast to the younger members of his family, Martha's uncle held rather more stoic and definitely old-fashioned views of the requirements of a good marriage match. For Peyton Adams, a balance of kindness and material comfort would do nicely. In his opinion a young woman of his acquaintance had made a good union when she married a widower with a young child because the widower was "a nice man," and he owned "as much property as one could wish.[3]

Martha and her male and female cousins were young adults while her uncle was an older and long- married man. However, the difference in expectations of marriage between the younger and older members of the Adams family was not due only to differences in gendered worldviews or ages and stages in life. There were signs that expectations of marriage were also in flux among modest farming families in rural Kentucky in the middle of the nineteenth century. A younger generation of the Adams' family was being influenced by middle-class and urbanized notions of romantic marital ideals that percolated into rural Kentucky by way of public schools and urban newspapers. Nevertheless, romantic expectations did not match marital practices on the ground for many common whites or for freed black women and men. In the difficult economic circumstances of post-Civil War Kentucky, the marital behavior of poor whites and freed blacks demonstrates that they continued to rely on marital practices premised on an ideal of marriage as a gendered labor bargain.

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[2] Lucy Bridgewater to Martha Adams, July 29, 1856, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[3] Peyton Adams to Nathaniel Adams, February 8, 1855, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

By mid-century, the correspondence of white youngsters from modest farming families demonstrates that a shift had occurred from church to school as the place where youngsters encountered ideas about marriage. The Adams elders relied on a religious discourse to express their understanding of marriage because they centered their lives in the church. They put great import, for example, into evaluating each new preacher. Peyton Adams informed his brother that "Brother Clay Smith is preaching at Winchester" and "he is a considerable man."[4] By the 1850s, younger members of the Adams family regarded school, not church, as the primary center of their lives.[5] Mary Haggard told Martha that she attended singing school, had recently participated in a "singing concert," that "Paty" had returned home from school, and that "Lesley groes very fast" and "will soon be large enough to go to school . . . ."[6] Young Mildred Woodford proudly informed Martha that she was learning geography, "gramer," arithmetic, reading and

[4] Peyton Adams to Nathaniel Adams, July 17, 1872, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[5] The Adams youngsters likely attended private schools in Clark County in the 1850s. Historians researching Kentucky's public school system note that it was not until the 1850s that Kentucky's legislators began to pay serious attention to the institution of a tax-based public, universally accessible public school system. Moreover, this public system was disrupted by the Civil War and not fully instituted until the late nineteenth century. Ellis Ford Hartford offers a précis of the literature related to the development of Kentucky's public education system. Ellis Ford Hartford, *The Little White Schoolhouse* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1977); Frank F. Mathias, "Kentucky's Struggle for Common Schools, 1820-1850," *The Register* Vol. 82, No. 3 (Summer 1984): 214-234, and Thomas D. Clark, "Kentucky Education Through Two Centuries of Political and Social Change," *The Register* Vol. 83, No. 3 (Summer 1985): 173-201.

[6] Mary Haggard to Martha Adams, July 23, 1854, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

"wrighting."[7] Her older sister Bettie was studying history, arithmetic, geography, spelling, and grammar, while her younger sister, Mary was learning from *McGuffey's First Eclectic Reader*.[8] Francis Lipscomb told Martha that the arrival of a new teacher had created rumor and interest for the local boys and girls of school age.[9] The Adams youngsters compared teachers not preachers.

Accordingly, common white youngsters relied on a language of courtship just then being shaped in school. They employed images of love and marriage that were gossipy and jovial rather than religiously or fatalistically dutiful. Other young women engaged in the same jovial banter that Martha Adams had shared with her cousins in the painstaking business of finding a man to marry. Mary Dawalt, for example, complained to her cousin, Jane Trueblood, that folks were all getting married, and she would have to wait to see who remained eligible. Jane advised her cousin not to wait but to "pitch on while you are young for when you get old you can't go to it anymore." Then Jane sought Mary's help in her marital endeavor. She asked Mary what had become of the bachelor or widower who had once admired her picture. Should Mary see him, she was to kindly do her the favor of telling him: "I wish him all happiness in this world and the world to come." [10] Marriage had become a romantic rather than a dutiful endeavor. The volume

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[7] Mildred Woodford to Martha Adams, July 23, 1854, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[8] Bettie Woodford to Martha Adams, February 14, 1858, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[9] M. F. Lipscomb to Martha Adams, January 5, 1854, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[10] Jane Trueblood to Mary Dawalt, October 1865, Dawalt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

of letters between the younger Adams cousins spiked considerably around the fourteenth of February because the young people sent "everything they could rake and scrape up" on Valentine's Day.[11] No doubt, this jovial banter was the basis for preacher George Quinby's lamentation in 1852 that the topic of marriage had become too lighthearted, the "pulpit" was mute, and the topic of marriage had become too "generally shunned by the Teacher of Righteousness."[12]

Notably, short jingles and rhymes of love appeared not in hymnbooks but on the flyleaves of well-worn textbooks in Kentucky schoolrooms. One love-struck poet, for example, penned the following lines on the cover of his textbook:

> You I love, and will forever,
> Times will change but I will never,
> Time will come when we must part,
> But time can never change my heart.[13]

Other young men relied on similar poetic ditties to share their romantic desires. Horace Scarlett called on the power of poetry to express his wishes to a friend in 1848. He hoped that his friend would attend spelling school with him again in the winter, and composed a simple poem to indicate the hopes he held for their future academic collaboration:

> If there's any girls out thear
> If any hear should be
> Then speak a good word
> To some of them for me.[14]

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[11] Bettie Woodford to Martha Adams, February 14, 1858, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[12] George W. Quinby, *Marriage and the Duties of the Marriage Relation in a Series of Six Lectures Addressed to Youth, and the Young in Married Life* (Cincinnati: J.A. and U.P. James, 1852), 7.

[13] Ford Hartford, *The Little White School House*, 76.

These poems indicate that most rural youngsters in Kentucky did not have the privilege of a university education that would have immersed them in a study of the linguistic conventions of the classics or the poetry of Lord Byron. These children premised the language of courtship and marriage on what they learned from a plain, English education based to a large extent on McGuffey readers. McGuffey did not present sex or passion or romance in his textbooks, not even in his workbooks for advanced readers. As an illustration, in his sixth and most advanced book for young adults, McGuffey presented a list of supplementary reading included seven plays by William Shakespeare from which *Romeo and Juliet* is notably missing.[15] Instead McGuffey provided students with plenty of middle class, urbanized sentimentalism in short stories and simple rhyming poetry in which the protagonists were good, kind, and sweet children who protected a natural world presented here as vulnerable and idyllic. Accordingly, when Mary Haggard wrote to Martha Adams instead of expressing herself in the sexual passions of Ovid or Lord Byron as the Bullitt siblings had done, she spoke of "'Ecstacys'" and of "beautiful scenes of nature."[16]

The terminology and the manner that most literate rural people began to employ to express their expectations for love and marriage may also reflect the increasing influence of Kentucky urban newspapers. Historians have noted that "the most common

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[14] Horace Scarlett to "Dear Friend," August 1848, Hiram Wingate Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[15] *McGuffey's Sixth Eclectic Reader* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1879).

[16] Mary Haggard to Martha Adams, December 12, 1853, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

reading material" in Kentucky in the nineteenth century "was . . . the newspapers of the period" dominated by the *Louisville Courier*. [17] A combination of some elementary English education and his regular perusal of one of Kentucky's urban newspapers may account for the romantic rather than stoically religious tones of Joshua Warner's letters to his wife during the Civil War. Joshua Warner was a Union soldier who wrote home to his wife during the last year of the war. Joshua Warner, a freed slave, wrote with some effort. He had been enslaved in Kentucky prior to the Civil War but he had managed to obtain some formal education, and he was very proud of this accomplishment. We know that Joshua Warner read Kentucky newspapers because he requested that his wife send papers to his camps. This may explain why Warner's expressions of affection for Francis seemed more sentimental and romantic than those of the religiously prudent Browns. Warner wrote to his wife Frances, for example, "oh Francious my very heart throbs for you evry hour and I wish I was with you all . . . ." [18]

The dissemination of new, middle-class ideals of romantic marriage in urban newspapers, including the frequent tales of young people running away from home to marry for love, may also account for Miles Terry's elopement. Just two years after Miles

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[17] Hambleton Tapp and James C. Klotter, *Kentucky: Decades of Discord, 1865 to 1900* (Frankfort: Kentucky Historical Society, 1977), 278-279.

[18] Joshua Warner to Frances Warner, August 3, 1864, November 10, 1864, November 21, 1864, November 27, 1864, January 26, 1865, April 3, 1865, and April 24, 1865, Pension Joshua Warner claim, Widow Certificate 350552. One can reasonably assume that Joshua Warner penned the seven letters that he sent to his wife between August of 1864 and April of 1865. The handwriting in the letters appears as if it were written by one hand and in his position as First Orderly Sergeant for his company in the United States Colored Infantry, Warner would have to have been able to write well enough to keep written records of supplies. Warner also suggests that he could write but his wife could not. In one of his letters he forgives his wife for not writing to him as often as he would like because she could not read or write.

Terry married Cena Mason in 1866, he ran away with Mary Huff in the middle of the night. As "very respectable and thrifty country people," Miles Terry and Cena Mason may have felt obligated to marry for more prudent than romantic reasons. [19] They had both brought resources into their marriage that would have helped them make their living by farming. However, Miles Terry loved Mary. An elderly uncle's account of the elopement suggests that Miles had been "sparking" Mary long before he married Cena. According to Uncle William, Miles had harbored no complaints against his wife. He believed her to be "as good a woman as the sun ever shawn on" but he could not content himself "to live with her enough to make a living." [20]

Despite her expectations for romantic love and "ecstacys," however, Martha Adams' eventual marriage appeared to be a socially and materially practical union. By 1859, Martha Adams' diligent quest for a man to marry had entered its twelfth year prompting Martha's cousins to become more active in Martha's search. In May 1859, Nathan Lipscomb wrote to Martha teasing "cousin Martha you may look for a beau from Kentucky this fall. I will not intermate who he is so that he may take you on surprise. I am in hopes you will marry this fall and invite me to your wedding."[21] Then, he added,

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[19] Pension report, A.G. Pollock, May 31, 1906, Miles Terry claim, Certificate 1074183.

[20] Pension deposition, William Terry, May 13, 1906, Miles Terry claim, Certificate 1074183.

[21] Nathan Lipscomb to Martha Adams, May 18, 1859, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

he thought that her cousins would soon have to "marry [her] off."[22] Just six days after Nathan penned his letter, and likely before Martha had read it, Martha was married. Perhaps Martha's quest to marry for love had taken too long, and Martha's parents did indeed marry Martha off to a widower with several small children.[23] One of Martha's Kentucky cousins reacted to the sudden, unplanned and unannounced marriage with some irritation. She wrote to Martha's parents stating that she "was very much astonished" at this surprising turn of events.[24] "She did as I always told her," her cousin wrote, "(that is) she would marry a man with five or six children."[25] Martha Adams must have been very disappointed in her arranged union. Despite the gentle urging of one of Martha's friends in Clark County seeking details of her recent marriage, Martha appears to have had no further correspondence with her Kentucky cousins.[26]

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[22] Bettie Woodword to Martha Adams, February 14, 1858, M. F. Lipscombe to "Cousin Martha," January 5, 1854, Nathan Lipscombe to Martha Adams, May 18, 1857 and December 1857 and Lucy Bridgwater to Martha Adams, July 29, 1856, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[23] Caroline Carter to Martha Adams, June 20, 1861, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[24] M.A. Woodford to Martha Adam's mother, August 14, 1859, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[25] M.A. Woodford to Martha's mother, August 14, 1859, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[26] Caroline Carter to Martha Adams, June 20, 1861, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky. Martha's youthful expectations for romantic marriage had been important to her. She saved the letters from her cousins in Kentucky and carefully filed them away. Nathan Lipscomb's last letter to Martha is included in this correspondence. After this, Martha saved only miscellaneous paperwork pertaining to property sales and business transactions of her husband's family.

Martha's parents would have thought themselves justified, although not comfortably in step with the romantic ideals of a younger generation, when they arranged this marriage for Martha. Several other parents also arranged their daughters' marriages to men they considered to be reasonably financially secure. In 1889, Ida Westbrook's parents influenced the marriage of their daughter to Green Clark. Clark had been working for a little less than a year on their family farm in Warren County, Kentucky, when he married Ida. This marriage lasted a little less than a year before Green Clark left Warren County and Ida, but Ida's recollection of her courtship and marriage leaves the impression that she had never been too enamored. She could not remember the date of the marriage or how long she had known Clark prior to the marriage. Moreover, she knew nothing of her husband's background. She could recall only that he had been "a man that never did much talking." He had never told her anything about his past, and she thought that he had been the "'queerest' man that way I ever knew."[27] When they married, Clark was a "gray-headed man" receiving a cash pension and Ida was a girl just fifteen years old.[28] In 1874, the parents of Anna Maynard arranged a marriage between a middle-aged man and their thirteen-year-old daughter, Anna. Anna suffered from a childhood disease that left her handicapped and profoundly deaf. Anna's parents married

[27] Pension deposition, Ida Conatsor, December 6, 1906, Green Clark claim, Certificate 614714.

[28] Pension deposition, Nancy Westbrook, December 6, 1906, Green Clark claim, Certificate 614714.

their daughter to Ryland Shuck, a business associate of her father, in an attempt to provide their disabled daughter with some material security.[29]

These arranged marriages suggest that the social and economic hardships rural people in Kentucky experienced between the middle and the end of the century took precedence over modern and urban notions of romantic marriage. Even prior to the Civil War, common white farmers in the fertile Blue Grass region of Kentucky began to experience increasing economic burdens. In 1857, one older man with land and a few enslaved laborers had assessed his own material competency as having "plenty of this world's goods."[30] At the same time, however, his sons and nephews faced more difficult choices in how they made their living. The high cost of land, the encroachment of cash into an agricultural economy, and a steady increase in population combined to make farming more difficult for young people born into most white families.[31] A lack of cash to purchase a growing variety of manufactured goods enticed farming families into buying on credit. The debts farmers incurred led, in turn, to crop liens and mortgages on land and farm stock, and sometimes to forced sale of lands. Like their more elite counterparts, modest white farming families also experienced a push from farms and a pull into Kentucky's urban areas to make a living. Young men and women from more

[29] Pension deposition, Sarah J. Packard, December 5, 1912, Ryland K. Shuck claim, Certificate 671228.

[30] Peyton Adams to Nathaniel Adams, March 14, 1857, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[31] This was the case in Pike County and Floyd County. Altina Waller, *Feud: Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Change in Appalachia, 1860 to 1900*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), and Robert S. Weise, *Grasping at Independence: Debt, Male Authority, and Mineral Rights in Appalachian Kentucky, 1850 to 1915* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001).

modest farming families gravitated from their parents' farms into town. Two cousins in the Adams family moved to Winchester, one working as a salaried clerk while two others were "going to keeping store."[32] Between 1840 and 1860 so many from among the Adams farming community moved into the town of Winchester that Nathan Lipscomb considered himself lucky because he would have "kind folks all over" town to put him up for the night.[33] By mid-century this cycle of debt had also reached into the more isolated farming communities of eastern Kentucky's Appalachian mountains once populated by relatively self-sufficient farming families.[34] In Logan County in West Virginia and Pike

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[32] Nathan Lipscomb to Martha Adams, February 20, 1857, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky. Scholars note that a similar process was occurring in Appalachian farming communities as some of the better-educated young men from Kentucky's Appalachian counties also ended up in county seats taking their place in Kentucky's developing urban middle class. For discussions of the continued dominance of agriculture in Appalachia along with the rise of a middle class in Appalachian towns see Thomas A. Arcury and Julia D. Porter, "Household Composition in Appalachian Kentucky in 1900," *Journal of Family History* Vol. 10, No. 2 (Summer1985): 183-187; Tyrel G. Moore, "Economic Development in Appalachian Kentucky, 1800 – 1860," 222-234 and Mary Beth Pudup, "Social Class and Economic Development in Southeastern Kentucky, 1820-1880," 235-260 in Robert D. Mitchell, ed., *Appalachian Frontiers: Settlement, Society, & Development in the Pre Industrial Era* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), and Waller, *Feud.*.

[33] Nathan Lipscomb to Martha Adams, April 4, 1858, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[34] Several historians discuss this cycle of farmers' increasing indebtedness particularly in Appalachian counties as the price of land rose and the need for cash created mortgage debt followed by bank foreclosures. Robert Weise argues that as population increased over the nineteenth century, Appalachian farmers faced land shortages, cash shortages and "constant, recurring debt." Weise, *Grasping*, 8. See also Altina Waller, *Fued*, and Ronald D. Eller, *Miners, Millhands and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachia South*, 1880-1930 (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1982). These three historians argue that industrialization based on the extraction of mountain resources in the later part of the nineteenth century also added to debt and loss of farm land leading to further loss of self-sufficiency for farming families in Kentucky's mountain communities.

County Kentucky, for example, prior to 1850 over two thirds of the men either owned their own land or expected to do so in time. Between 1850 and 1870 the number of people in Logan County who could claim land of their own declined to fifty percent, and more depended on a cash income from farm labor. Alternately, they left home to find waged work in the surrounding urban centers of Kentucky, Ohio or Indiana. [35]

The Civil War also produced significant economic and social changes for Kentucky's rural black population and that had an impact on their marriages. Immediately after the outbreak of the Civil War, the movement of Kentucky's black population into urban areas increased significantly. In the first year of the war, under the protection of the Union Army's northern regiments, black families began to leave plantations in large numbers. [36] The frequency and violence of a white backlash against former slaves caused further migration of freed blacks out of rural Kentucky. Between 1865 and 1870, tens of thousands of freed women and men left their neighborhoods, a trend that continued into the twentieth century.[37] Nevertheless, some black families chose to live and farm in the places they had been born and raised and where they had

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[35] Waller, *Feud*, 38.

[36] Slavery was not legally ended in Kentucky until December of 1865, when states ratified the Thirteenth Amendment. However, Victor B. Howard argues that in practice slavery's demise was accelerated by the events of the Civil War and in 1863 after Lincoln's Emancipation Declaration. Even prior to 1863, Howard demonstrates that black families and communities had already begun an exodus from plantations when it became clear they could rely on the protection of some Union Army commanders as well as the regimental troops who hailed from northern states. Victor B. Howard, *Black Liberation in Kentucky: Emancipation and Freedom, 1862-1884* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983).

[37] George C. Wright, *Life Behind a Veil: Blacks in Louisville Kentucky, 1865 to 1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985.

family networks. After Smith Long mustered out of the Union Army in 1865, for example, he moved to Richmond, Madison County where he had a sister and brother-in-law. Long lived with his sister, and worked about the county as a farm hand. When he married in 1871, he settled in Pendleton County among his wife's family where he bought land, and he and his wife farmed and raised a family of seven children.[38]

The Civil War and its aftermath exacerbated farmers' debts as a wider variety of manufactured goods became more available in an increasing number of country stores. This further forced both white and black farming families into a cycle of buying on credit and incurring debt. The extent of post-war changes is again evident in Floyd County where in 1880 about half of household heads owned land. By 1900, the percentage had fallen to only thirty-eight percent.[39] In 1900, ninety-five percent of the heads of households living in Appalachia still engaged in farming. However, many more worked as farm laborers on farms they did not own.[40] Even when families owned their own land they had accumulated large debts that led to large mortgages. Even though the Civil War had ended slavery, Smith Long was skeptical about the nature of his freedom. A lifetime of farming did not put the Long family in a position of having even a modest competency. Long once complained that he had won his freedom but he had come into freedom with nothing. He was, he said, "able to support himself and family very

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[38] Pension report, Federal Bureau, August 8, 1888, Smith Long claim, Certificate 480782.

[39] Weise, *Grasping*, 141.

[40] Arcury and Porter, "Household Composition," 183-187. These authors extrapolated their data from the census schedules for 1900 from Ashland, an eastern city in Kentucky and Pike County, a rural mountain county.

poorly."[41] When Smith Long died in 1896, a county court clerk estimated all of the real estate and personal property he had possessed worth six hundred dollars, and "encumbered by mortgage to the amount of seven hundred dollars."[42] Common white farmers also incurred significant amounts of debt. George Willett's family of Washington County continued to farm until his death in 1898. In a lifetime of farming, however, George Willett had amassed no savings. When he died, he left the land and a house both heavily mortgaged.[43] Similarly, James Whitehouse owned fifty-three acres of land worth about $1000 with a mortgage of $850. Even the once relatively well-to-do Peyton Adams added the outcome of the Civil War and emancipation of his enslaved labor force to his list of economic losses. Although Adams continued to farm his land after the war, he thought himself to be considerably reduced in material comfort and security. He continued to live in Clark County where he planted what crops he could cultivate with his own labor. But by 1879, he too complained of "hard times" because money was scarce and taxes were high.[44]

Whether they struggled to earn a living in the city or to farm in Kentucky's countryside, a generation of non-elite people born in Kentucky before the Civil War

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[41] Pension report, Bureau of Pensions, August 8, 1888, Smith Long claim, Certificate 480782.

[42] Pension, records, County Court Records, February 27, 1896, Smith Long claim, Certificate 480702.

[43] Pension affidavit, W. F. Booker, July 28, 1898, George Willett claim, Certificate 928339.

[44] Peyton Adams to Nathaniel Adams, July 17, 1879, Martha Adams Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

continued to marry according to the ideals inherent in a traditional, rural marital bargain. Rural white women continued to rely predominantly on making marital connections to earn a living for themselves and their families. When Melvina Sexton's first husband drowned in the currents of the Kentucky River in 1869, the support of her small family fell initially to her father. At the time, the couple's oldest son was two and a half and a second child was just four months of age. Melvina's father, a Baptist preacher, traveled to Lee County, and took her and her children back to his home in Menefee County, walking the distance "with the little fellow on his back." [45] Within a year of moving in with her father Melvina attempted to return to her own farm with her two children. She must have found farming on her own while caring for two small children very difficult because she "came home" within a year, this time to her father-in-law. Melvina's solution to her dilemma was to remarry because she lived with her father-in-law for a short time before she married for the second time.[46] Shortly after her husband left her with three children to support, Eliza Nolen lived in two common-law relationships in an attempt to provide material support for her children.[47] Similarly, Lear Ann Kitchen left her husband in 1862, but she did not do so until she had established a common-law marriage with another man, and assured that he would provide for her and her children.[48]

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[45] Pension deposition, Melvina Sexton, November 2, 1922, and David Spencer, December 13, 1922, Jacob Spencer claim, Widow Certificate 926259.

[46] Pension deposition, Melvina Sexton, November 2, 1922, Jacob Spencer claim, Widow Certificate 926259.

[47] Pension deposition, Eliza Nolen, February 5, 1894, Joseph Nolen claim, No Certificate Issued, Invalid Application 476326.

[48] Pension deposition, Nancy Hensley, February 6, 1885, John Kitchen claim, Widow Certificate 46063.

Louisa Grayson spent her entire adult lifetime trying to provide for her children, for the most part, by making marital connections. Louisa Grayson first married in Bath County, Kentucky, in 1858 but this husband abandoned her and their two children about 1864. Louisa subsequently lived with another man and had a third child. When this marriage ended Louisa married a man eighty-seven years of age.[49] Louisa married for one last time, and once more endured a martial separation when her husband abandoned the family. By now, however, Louisa had determined that she would rather just take care of the children she already had than marry again and "take chances of having more to take care of."[50]

The few women who did not remarry after the death or separation from a husband struggled to support themselves and family. Maria Stethen's husband abandoned her just after the Civil War leaving Maria only with a small plot of land and a few farm animals. Maria farmed her small plot and cared for her animals but had to supplement her income by working out. Because Maria had no children she had been able to support herself by washing, ironing, cooking, and by doing fieldwork for the neighbors nearby. [51] Abandoned by her husband in 1872, Mary Barnes supported herself and her family with more difficulty. Mary had to provide for and care for three small daughters. In addition, Barnes had left Mary in debt. He had borrowed fourteen dollars from a neighbor in order

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[49] Pension deposition, Louisa Timoney, November 4, 1909, and report to Bureau of Pensions, November 24, 1909, James Swim claim, Certificate 245521.

[50] Pension deposition, Louisa Timoney, November 4, 1909, James Swim claim, Certificate 245521.

[51] Pension deposition, Mariah Stethens, December 12, 1899, Jeremiah Nolen claim, Certificate 376998.

to finance his departure for which he offered the man his family's milk cow. The neighbor lost the debt, however, because "his wife was so unwilling to part with the cow I could not afford to drive the cow off and deprive the widow and three little children of milk." [52] In the opinion of one of her neighbors, Mary Barnes had subsequently supported her family by doing housework, by "hard scruffing," and sometimes by depending on the charitable assistance she could get from friends and neighbors.[53] Women left on their own when their children were older fared much better. After her husband died just after the Civil War ended, Sophia Treadway managed a small farm with success. Sophia kept a herd of beef cattle, one milk cow, eight hogs, and the crops she planted on forty acres of land. She produced food for her family, and an annual crop of tobacco that yielded her a cash income. Sophia was able to provide for her family because she had inherited some land, her children were grown, and she could rely on the labor of her adult sons.[54]

A few white women who separated from husbands relied on male relatives for financial support. For twenty-seven years, Joysey Hiatt and her invalid son lived with and relied upon the support of her brother for whom she kept house. [55] When George

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[52] Pension deposition, Mary Barnes, Feb. 21, 1895, and deposition, John S. Edwards, February 22, 1895, Joel Barnes claim, Widow Certificate 420068.

[53] Pension deposition, Greenup Meece, Feb. 22, 1895, and deposition, James M. Dykes, Feb. 22, 1985, Joel Barnes claim, Widow Certificate 420068.

[54] Pension deposition, Sophia Treadway, June 15, 1893, Elisha Treadway claim, Certificate 333244.

[55] Pension deposition, Joysey Hiatt, November 27, 1893, and report to Commissioner of Pensions, December 23, 1893, Stephen Hiatt claim, Certificate 314987.

Carroll abandoned Susan and their three children in 1870, she returned to the community where she was born and raised to live with her father. Susan never remarried. Thirty-four years later she continued to identify herself as Susan West, "the daughter of Barney West."[56]

White women cut adrift from a husband's economic support or the support of male relations frequently depended on the charity of strangers. During the Civil War, Virgil Smith abandoned Susan Smith, leaving her in Illinois without a home, in the early months of a pregnancy, and with no means of financial support. Susan Smith never remarried. As a result Susan relied on charity. Immediately after Smith abandoned Susan, one of her near neighbors in Illinois claimed to be her distant cousin, and offered to take Susan to live with his family. Susan drifted about living in several families until a woman finally took pity on her. Susan recalled that "as I had no home nor friends" she "came after me and wanted me to go to her place for a time" and she promised "she would help me to take care of my [baby?]." Susan settled with a family in Missouri, with whom she made her home for over twenty-three years. In 1908, however, Susan again lived alone in poverty. The members of the family with whom she had made her home for over twenty years were all dead so she lived in a small hut "out in the woods," and depended upon charity for support.[57]

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[56] Pension deposition, Susan West, October 19, 1904, George Carroll claim, Certificate 133196.

[57] Pension deposition, Susan Smith, December 23, 1908, deposition Mary A. Riley, December 24, 1908, and report to Commissioner of Pensions, December 31, 1908, Virgil Porter Smith claim, Certificate 699639.

By the 1880s, some single white women living in urban centers supported themselves and children without having to rely on making marital connections, the economic support of their male relations or on the charity of strangers.[58] Several urban white women supported their families when their husbands could not do so. Mary Schable worked in Louisville for over twenty years as a cutter for a tailor. During this time, Mary's income had helped to support her ailing husband, her children, and Mary's mother. [59] Similarly, in 1902, Magdalena Gutenkust's family had "met with reverses and lost all of their property" at a time when her husband became too debilitated to work. Consequently, Magdalena worked "every day for sixteen years to make a living."[60]

Black women in Kentucky earned a living by different means in the nineteenth century. Prior to the Civil War a significantly large black population lived in rural areas of Kentucky. In addition, a large population of enslaved laborers and free blacks lived in Louisville.[61] Whether living in town or country, most enslaved black women in

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[58] Joanne Meyerowitz notes that middle-class reform literature and the popular romance fiction of the period referred to single young women who left their rural homes or migrated to American cities in the latter part of the nineteenth century as "women adrift." Working-class women stood a better chance of earning a relatively independent living in an urban environment than their rural female counterparts who depended almost exclusively on making male connections. Meyerowitz argues that they were able to live on female wages, in part, because they forged social and economic relationships to counter a lack of family support. Joanne J. Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), XVIII, XIX.

[59] Pension affidavit, Joseph C. Ruhl, circa 1916, Charles Schable claim, Certificate 60796.

[60] Pension affidavit, Magdalena Gutenkunst, Kentucky, Feb. 7, 1920, Jacob Gutenkunst claim, Certificate 688693.

[61] George C. Wright notes that on the eve of the war, most of Kentucky's population of enslaved blacks (just over 200,000) lived in Central Kentucky in the fertile

Kentucky worked as domestics in white families. Once freed, black women, who remained in rural Kentucky, whether single or married, continued to rely on white families for employment. After the Civil War, freed women who moved to Kentucky's urban centers also continued to work in white families doing domestic labor. In Louisville most freed black women worked in white families as cooks, servants, laundresses or nurses to children. After Tiney Shuck moved from a small town into Louisville in 1881, she continued to "wash and iron" for a white family as she had done since she was a small girl.[62] Unlike their white counterparts, even after black women married they usually also worked for wages. After Millie Georgia married in 1871, she continued to cook for white families. In 1915, at the age of 62 Millie Georgia still worked for local white families near Georgetown, Kentucky.[63] It was also common for black women in Kentucky's urban centers to rely on taking in boarders to supplement their income. At the age of 77 in 1900, Rachel Odrick washed "for the white folks," and earned some income from a boarder.[64]

Some urban black women worked to support themselves and their children after a failed marriage. A few black women owned their own small businesses. Katie Diggs, for

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agricultural areas surrounding Lexington and Louisville but there was a population of about 2000 free blacks in Louisville, some of whom were members of Kentucky's incipient middle class. George C. Wright, *Life Behind a Veil: Blacks in Louisville, Kentucky 1865-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 7, 16.

[62] Pension deposition, Elizabeth Downs, January 14, 1893, and deposition Tiney Shuck, December 1, 1892, Albion Shuck claim, Widow Certificate 398383.

[63] Pension deposition, Millie Georgia, August 9, 1915, Charles Georgia claim, Certificate 704031.

[64] Pension, report, Commissioner of Pensions, March 16, 1900, David Odrick claim, Certificate 602562.

example, ran "a little restaurant" in the town of Westchester.[65] Frances Broyles married in 1888 but she left her husband shortly thereafter because he would not support her and their young son. Frances continued to live in with the family of a white physician in Louisville in order "to work and to make a living." [66] Emma Bagster remained a single woman, and in her later years she proudly declared that she "washed and worked and paid for [her] own home." [67]

Nevertheless, once black women had children, they found themselves in the same situation as that of Mary Fravert. They had to rely on a husband's contributions to the household economy in order to care for small children. Freed women Amanda Lewis explained why she had relied on a husband to help earn an income. Amanda had young children but she also worked out. Sometimes she took in laundry, and sometimes she worked in a tobacco factory in Lexington to help pay the rent. As a result, Amanda complained that her children often had no parental supervision.[68] Despite of lifetime of labor as a laundress for white families in Port Fulton, Indiana, Emily Purdie also demonstrated her reliance on her husband's financial contributions to her large family.

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[65] Pension deposition, Katie Diggs, April 7, 1900, John Holly claim, No Certificate Issued, Contesting Widow Application 637953.

[66] Pension affidavit, Frances Broyles, January 30, 1902, Cobe Broyles claim, Certificate 564939.

[67] Pension affidavit, Emma Bagster, July 11, 1912, Henry Lumpkins claim, Contesting Widow Certificate 858024.

[68] Pension affidavit, Mandie Lewis, circa 1916, Edward Lewis claim, Certificate 1159623.

Emily earned a living, in her own words, "right out of the washtub."[69] Yet, she expected that her husband would also contribute to the family's support.

Several older women married in an attempt to secure some kind of economic security in old age. Freedwoman Marie Ida Legett moved from New Orleans to Louisville about 1880 with a white family for whom she had worked as a nurse for over twenty-three years. In 1902, at the age of forty-three, Marie Ida had little savings, owned no property, and had no prospects beyond her continued labor to support herself as she aged. With this in mind she married Valentine Blakey in 1901 for the comfort his veteran's pension might provide. When Blakey died in 1902 Marie Ida expressed surprise when she discovered that she was not legally entitled to her husband's money. "I did not know I married him too late to get benefit of the pension," Maria Ida stated, but "I would be satisfied to get what was coming to him when he died. His funeral cost me $60." Marie Ida also suggested, at least in part, why she had chosen to marry Blakey. "He made out like he had plenty of means," she said, but "he had nothing."[70] Hestor Johnson, a white woman from Casey County, Kentucky, married for the third time to a pensioner with whom she lived until his death in 1882. Soon after this husband died, Hestor married another pensioner. When Hestor's fifth husband wandered off to Ohio, Hestor married yet again. Despite the number of marital separations she endured, Hestor

[69] Pension deposition, Emily Purdie, March 11, 1911, James Graves alias James Purdie claim, Certificate 1015062.

[70] Pension deposition, Marie Ida Blakey, June 5, 1902, Valentine Blakey claim, Certificate 499143.

lamented the lost of only one of her husbands. This man had been a pensioner, she wistfully recalled, who had received "a big pension."[71]

An older generation of men also continued to make pragmatic marital bargains in order to take advantage of expectations of a wife's duty to provide domestic labors. For Thomas Burton, the meaning of marriage included the domestic tasks necessary to maintain the daily functioning of his family farm. When Thomas Burton married Lizzie Damron in 1907, he was an older white man of sixty-three years who owned and farmed land near Louisa, Lawrence County, Kentucky. Burton's first wife had died in 1902, and when he married Lizzie, Thomas expected that she would leave town to live with him and his children on the family farm. However, once married, Lizzie balked at this arrangement. In Burton's words: "we had a contention as to whether we would live in her home here and mine out in the country." [72] After Burton made several unsuccessful attempts to convince Louisa to move to his farm, he promptly filed for divorce. Five months later, Burton married Margaret Montgomery. This must have been a much more satisfactory marriage for Thomas because Margaret lived and worked on the farm with Thomas and his children until his death in 1924.

Because women relied on male family household heads for their support, with very few exceptions, both white and black women remained close to employers or family and friends. Usually a woman did not leave her established community unless she was did so with a husband or with her natal family. Men, in contrast, often traveled alone

[71] Pension deposition, Hestor Carroll, January 9, 1905, George Carroll claim, Certificate 133196.

[72] Pension deposition, Thomas Burton, November 2, 1908, Thomas Burton claim, Certificate 310078.

from place to place mostly in search of work. When they traveled about they usually left their wives and family behind. Few institutionalized resources existed in rural areas on which men could depend for their domestic needs while those available in urban centers were likely not affordable. As late as 1880, for example, Louisville's two largest hotels catered to Kentucky's white elite and wealthy middle class. The number of boarding houses in Louisville increased significantly after the Civil War, however most boarders were members of a business or professional middle class. [73] It was out of necessity, then, that traveling men often married where they landed. Frank Smith relied on making marital connections in order to procure domestic care for himself and his two sons. About 1879, Frank Smith left his wife Mary in Lawrence County, Kentucky, to work in the coal furnaces. Because Frank took his two young sons with him he needed to care for his children as he traveled about from furnace to furnace. One of Smith's sons could recall being in the care of five women as his father worked the coal furnaces in Kentucky, West Virginia and Ohio. Sometimes he married, his son noted, but sometimes his father "took up with" the women with whom they lived.[74]

Older men often married for the nursing care women provided. [75] This was particularly true of aging Civil War veterans. After the war veterans required significant

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[73] *Caron's Directory of the city of Louisville for 1880* (Louisville: C. K. Caron), 1880.

[74] Pension deposition, Charles Smith, November 10, 1899, Frank Smith claim, Certificate 334905.

[75] Pension deposition, Jesse Edwards, February 22, 1895, Joel Barnes claim, Widow Certificate 420068; affidavit, Magdalena Gutenkunst, March 20, 1916, Jacob Gutenkunst claim, Certificate 688693; deposition, George Kohler, October 5, 1910, Timothy Kohler claim, Certificate 358240.

amounts of medical care as the wounds and the chronic diseases they contracted during their service combined to accelerate the normal degenerative process of aging. Joel Barnes summed up the situation that many Civil War veterans faced after they mustered out. "We soldiers," he said, "had gone through so many hardships we would never be able to do much work any more and never would be stout again."[76] Even urban veterans had to leave their local communities to seek institutional care. Timothy Kohler lived in Louisville but traveled to Kansas City to sign himself into a veteran's hospital. Similarly, Charles Schable could not afford to pay local physicians for treatment for his illnesses, so he spent his summers away from his Louisville home at a veteran's hospital in Dayton, Ohio. Usually men relied on wives to administer medical care. Valentine Blakey had suffered severe wounds during his wartime service that left him with physical disabilities and chronic headaches, and Marie Ida had nursed him during their marriage. "He and I lived together as husband and wife from time of our marriage to date of his death" she stated, "and [I] took take of him and put him away and paid all the doctor bill myself."[77] When a freedman named Henry Lumpkins married Sarah in 1878, he was a relatively young man of about thirty-five years. However, Lumpkins had been infected with a chronic disease during his service in the war. Henry had been "emaciated at time of discharge." Between 1865 and his death in 1881, he had been sick all the time with

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[76] Pension deposition, Jesse Edwards, February 22, 1895, Joel Barnes claim, Widow Certificate 420068.

[77] Pension deposition, Valentine Blakey, July 24, 1890, and deposition, Marie Ida Blakey, June 5, 1902, Valentine Blakey claim, Certificate 499143.

chronic diarrhea.[78] When Sarah married Henry in 1878 his health was poor. His friends described Henry as "just a skeleton of a man."[79] Sarah had "washed and worked and cared for him until he died."[80]

An older generation born prior to the Civil War raised few eyebrows at these pragmatic marriages. Such marriages were respectable and acceptable providing wives and husbands kept up their end of the reciprocal labor bargain.[81] Mary, who married Herman Fravert in order that she might tend her small children, was very well respected in her farming community just outside of Louisville. During their married life Herman supported Mary and their children on his income and Mary tended to her domestic duties and gardening. Similarly, Henry and Sarah Lumpkins were well-respected members of the Mount Zion Baptist Church in Indianapolis, Indiana. Their neighbors, friends and preacher had all formed a very favorable attitude toward the couple. In the opinion of all who knew them, during the three years they were married, Sarah had been a "kind and

[78] Pension affidavit, Robert Wright, June 29, 1912, and affidavit, Emma Bagster, July 11, 1912, Henry Lumpkins claim, Contesting Widow Certificate 858024.

[79] Pension affidavit, Buford Hubbard, June 25, 1912, and affidavit, Ephraim Palmer, July 22, 1912, and affidavit, Robert Wright, June 29, 1912, Henry Lumpkins claim, Contesting Widow Certificate 858024.

[80] Pension affidavit, Buford Hubbard, June 25, 1912, and affidavit, Emma Bagster, July 11, 1912, Henry Lumpkins claim, Contesting Widow Certificate 858024.

[81] Nancy Cott argues that this was the case on a national level as well, writing that "carrying out the standard obligations of the marriage bargain – cohabitation, husband's support, wife's service – seems to have been much more central to the approbation of local communities at this time than how or when the marriage took place." Nancy Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 38.

obedient wife." [82] Both Mary and John Wiggins's short courtships and pragmatic marriages were also acceptable to their separate communities. When John Wiggins left Mary in 1869 she refused to divorce him because she relied on his material support. Very shortly after Wiggins left, however, she married William Early, a "relative stranger." [83] Mary's neighbors in Cairo, Illinois regarded her very highly even though she married a relative stranger because the couple had lived in a respectable marital union for twenty-two years. During all of these years, Early had supported Mary, and Mary had been a dutiful and faithful wife. [84] Similarly, when John Wiggins married Missouri Williams soon after he arrived in Posey County, Indiana, neighbors suspected that Wiggins was a "grass widower," that he was posing as a single man although he still had a wife. However, they were willing to just assume that he had divorced, and to accept this marriage as an acceptable and respectable union.[85]

Marriages in which either the husband or wife did not respectably keep up their end of the marital bargain wrought a community's condemnation. Selling sexual services elicited neighbors' complaints. A woman named Perlina, who operated a "regular house of ill fame," was frequently chased out of working class neighborhoods by complaints to

[82] Pension affidavit, Buford Hubbard, June 25, 1912, and affidavit, Emma Bagster, July 11, 1912, Henry Lumpkins claim, Contesting Widow Certificate 858024.

[83] Pension report of Department of Interior, June 27, 1908, William Early claim, Certificate 590740.

[84] Pension special examiner's report to the Commissioner of Pensions, March 28, 1908, William Early claim, Certificate 590740.

[85] Pension deposition, Grant Williams, April 9, 1908, William Early claim, Certificate 590740.

the sheriff. [86] People in rural areas of Kentucky also monitored their neighbors and their neighbors' sexual behaviors closely. In order to avail themselves of the sexual duties expected in marriage, men sometimes undertook mock marriages in which they married by ceremony but abandoned their wives shortly thereafter. Samuel King staged such a fraudulent marriage to Nancy Jane Curtis on the steps of a church in Carrollton, Kentucky, in 1879. King appears to have had an acquaintance pose as a priest, and marry them while they stood on the steps outside.[87] Emily Jane Huntingdon married Bailey Crisp in a customary marriage ceremony about 1865 in Lawrence County, Kentucky. Shortly after the couple married Crisp told Emily Jane that they had not legally married because he already had a living wife in another county so Emily Jane returned home to her father.[88] Local people disapproved of men they thought had married solely to take advantage of sexual relations referring to them as "not much" or "dissipated" men.[89]

Rural people also criticized women if they suspected them of marrying only for the economic benefits that accrued to women in the marital union. For example, they thought Virginia Farmer had been in far too much haste to claim her dead husband's pension money. On the same day Virginia buried Farmer, one neighbor noted, she "went

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[86] Pension report to the Bureau of Pensions, February 23, 1895, and deposition, James R. Wootton, February 8, 1895, and letter to Bureau February 19, 1895, and deposition, William Wilson, April 27, 1895, Jesse Kessinger claim, No Certificate Issued, Widow Application 420036.

[87] Pension deposition, Nancy Williams, February 6, 1903, William F. Lewis claim, Widow Certificate 81467.

[88] Pension "Incidental Matter" June 2, 1882, and report to the Bureau of Pensions, March 29, 1902, Bailey Crisp claim, Certificate 397468.

[89] Pension deposition, Daniel Ford, March 22, 1900, Marlin Farmer claim, Certificate 22955.

right from the burial to the house of my brother where she ate her dinner and then went onto the house of [her pension attorney] to see about getting soldier's accrued pension."[90]

Rural peoples' moral standards for judging whether or not a marriage was respectable became evident in two wholly opposing evaluations of one woman's five marriages. Nancy Jane Curtis married five times between 1864 and 1880. She began her marital career in Robertson County, Kentucky, where her first three marriages were marred by jealousy, one ending in murder. Between her third and fourth marriages, Nancy Jane had no place to live, and was in destitute circumstances. Motivated by her progressively deteriorating social and material circumstances, Nancy Jane married for the fourth time in August of 1879. Within three months of this marriage the fourth husband also abandoned Nancy Jane. Shortly afterward, Nancy Jane moved to Missouri, and in the fall of 1880 she married for the fifth and final time.

Nancy Jane's old neighbors in Robertson County, Kentucky, disagreed with her new neighbors in Missouri, over the respectability of both Nancy Jane and her marriages. According to one neighbor in Roberson County, Nancy Jane had been very forthright about marrying so many times, once proclaiming "she [had] had five Bills and would have seven before she died."[91] Consequently, the community in Kentucky thought Nancy Jane treated marriage too much like a business transaction. They accused her of being "a daring, brazen woman," "an awfully hard case," and a woman who drank

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[90] Pension deposition, Nancy A. Trotter, September 20, 1900, Marlin Farmer claim, Certificate 22955.

[91] Pension deposition, Joshua Bohannon, November 10, 1903, William F. Lewis claim, Widow Certificate 81467.

whiskey, kept company with several suitors at one time, and "went all the gaits."[92] However, after Nancy Jane married for the fifth and final time in Missouri, she lived continuously with her husband for twenty years. She joined the church and worked diligently on the family farm. In total contrast to her Kentucky kinfolk, Nancy Jane's Missouri neighbors unanimously adjudged her as a woman with "a good reputation for chastity and morality," an " honest and good woman," and "a straight honest old lady."[93]

People also accepted the arranged marriage between the very young and profoundly deaf Anna Maynard to middle-aged Ryland Shuck with relative equanimity despite Shuck's questionable character. In his youth Shuck had been "a pretty wild boy."[94] He had been jailed for fraud, had operated a saloon, and had earned a reputation about New Albany, Indiana, as a gambler.[95] In 1873, moreover, Shuck went to prison for breaking into a business in Michigan.[96] His acquaintances might reasonably have determined Shuck's marriages to be similarly morally questionable. He had been married three times before his marriage to Anna. People about town thought that Shuck's second

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[92] Pension deposition, Robert Wood, M.D., November 27, 1903, and deposition, Elizabeth Ferguson, November 25, 1903, and deposition, Percy Watson, November 24, 1903, and deposition Nimrod A. Tilton, November 25, 1903, William F. Lewis claim, Widow Certificate 81467.

[93] Pension deposition, Charles Thomas, February 6, 1903, and deposition, Partha Embree, February 6, 1903, William F. Lewis claim, Widow Certificate 81467.

[94] Pension deposition, Luther Whitten, March 10, 1913, Ryland K. Shuck claim, Certificate 671228.

[95] Pension deposition, William Cummings Childers, March 8, 1913, Ryland K. Shuck claim, Certificate 671228.

[96] Pension, report to the Bureau of Pensions, December 24, 1912, Ryland K. Shuck claim, Certificate 671228.

wife, Mary, had run off with another man while she and Shuck were still married.[97] Shuck married for the third time to Elizabeth in 1871, a woman who appears to have been, like Susan Smith, adrift, pregnant, without the support of friends or family, and "in an awful destitute condition." Shuck's comrades had arranged this marriage to Elizabeth. One remembered that "the boys were quizzing him about not having a home and they told him they would get a wife for him if he would marry. He agreed and they got that woman who she was and where she came from I do not know."[98] Within a year Elizabeth died giving birth, and Shuck married Anna.

Although Shuck's friends and acquaintances knew of his criminal background, he and his marriages warranted their respect. Shuck had been born in Macao, China, into a family of Baptist missionaries who had educated him for the ministry.[99] Consequently, they were impressed with Shuck's character because he had been a "smart, well-educated man," "gentlemanly in his manner," and skilled as a "full bookkeeper." [100] In addition, although Shuck had clearly strayed from the path that his parents had planned for him, he appears never to have abandoned his religious training entirely. He continued to value the diary that his mother published about her mission in China, and kept it with him when

[97] Pension deposition, Luther Whitten, March 10, 1913, Ryland K. Shuck claim, Certificate 671228.

[98] Pension deposition, Charles Sears, March 11, 1913, Ryland K. Shuck claim, Certificate 671228.

[99] Pension deposition, William Cummings Childers, March 8, 1913, Ryland K. Shuck claim, Certificate 671228.

[100] Pension deposition, Luther Whitten, March 10, 1913, and deposition, James Cosden, March 8, 1913, and deposition, William Cummings Childers, March 8, 1913, Ryland K. Shuck claim, Certificate 671228.

he moved about.[101] Moreover, a hint of Robin Hood accompanied Shuck's fraudulent behavior. Although he swindled a Louisville bank for twenty thousand dollars, he spent most of the money to provide his first wife and his two children with a home. Shuck also supported his second wife until her death in childbirth in 1872. After Shuck married Anna in 1873, he supported his widow and their only child in perpetuity. The couple remained married for thirty-nine years. When he died in 1912, Anna received a small amount of money as the widow of a Civil War veteran. Perhaps his neighbors believed that Shuck had married three fallen women on a journey toward his own redemption. Sometime between his marriage to Anna in 1873 and his death in 1912, Shuck became a captain in the Michigan chapter of the Salvation Army.[102]

In conclusion, a younger generation in modest farming families in Kentucky began to shift their expectations of marriage at mid-century, influenced by school rather than church, and by the dissemination of Kentucky's urban newspapers into Kentucky's rural hinterlands. Unlike earlier generations in modest farming families who relied on a language of duty and obligation combined with a measured marital affection, young people began to describe their more romantic expectations of marriage in a gossipy and jovial discourse. However, in the difficult economic environment for farming families in the last half of the nineteenth century, exacerbated further by the Civil War, an older generation of people in Kentucky continued to make respectable and acceptable marital

[101] Pension, report to the Bureau of Pensions, December 24, 1912, Ryland K. Shuck claim, Certificate 671228.

[102] When shown a photo of Shuck, three of his old comrades or acquaintances recognized him as the man in a tintype wearing the uniform of a Captain in the Michigan Salvation Army. Pension deposition, William Armstrong, March 10, 1913, and

bargains motivated less by ideals of marital affection, and in significant measure by the necessity of their material survival. Although some white women managed to support themselves by farming or by earning wages in Kentucky's urban centers, most continued to rely on forging marital connections. After the Civil War, most freed women worked for wages as domestics in white families even after they married, whether they remained in rural Kentucky or moved into urban centers. Nevertheless, black women with small children also relied on marriage for the economic support of their families. Moreover, white and black women relied on marriage for some economic security as they advanced in age. In turn, as men increasingly left their communities to find waged work, they married, sometimes often, where they landed in order to take advantage of women's domestic duties. As men aged, they also married in order to secure a wife's affective and medical care. Consequently, both the marital beliefs and behaviors of the majority of people in Kentucky, both white and black, differed from the more modern notions being promulgated by Kentucky's white and urbanizing middle class.

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deposition, William Augustine, December 5, 1912, and deposition, Melina Berridge, December 19, 1912, Ryland K. Shuck claim, Certificate 671228.

Chapter 6

"Love the Angel Broken Upon the Wheel of Necessity:" Middle-Class Public Discourse Polices Modern Marriage, 1840 to 1900

About 1850, Kentucky urban newspaper editors began to replace essays and fiction geared to persuading readers by moral suasion with ostensibly true stories that named, denigrated, shamed or threatened those who engaged in unacceptable marital beliefs and behaviors. How editors used the word "elopement" is illustrative. In the 1830s and 1840s editors used the term to signify approbation of young couples running away from interfering parents to marry for love. In the 1850s, they began to use the same term to publicly admonish those who engaged in informal marital practices that contravened marital laws.[1] In 1855, for example, an item entitled "an elopement in New York" publicly embarrassed a married woman from New York State when she ran off with one William Thornton of South Carolina during her husband's absence. The intent to warn of legal consequences rather than persuade readers against engaging in immoral behavior was apparent in the editor's comments that the enraged husband was "one of the

[1] Attention to legal issues in Kentucky was a response to the increasing number of laws related to family and marriage, in part to regulate the transmission of property, that were being written and rewritten, state by state, in both the American north and south in the nineteenth century. Editors attempted to culturally enforce these laws, particularly among a population of rural whites and blacks in Kentucky, who sometimes still relied on community rather than legal standards for marrying and separating. For changes in northern laws see Michael Grossberg, *Governing the Hearth: Law and the Family in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985). For changes in the south see Peter W. Bardaglio, *Reconstructing the Household: Families, Sex, and the Law in The Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995). See also Hendrik Hartog, *Man and Wife in America: A History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

oldest provision dealers in the city, as well as one of the wealthiest," and he was "determined to make an example of the parties if it is possible."[2]

This hardened tone, in part, reflected a change in the nature of Kentucky's newspapers in the 1850s from "'fine writing,'" "poetic flurries," and "'personal journalism'" to news of "real life" generated by professional journalists, often from the nation's courtrooms.[3] However, this change also represented a response to challenges presented to white and patriarchal control of the institution of marriage both from inside the ranks of Kentucky's developing, white middle class, and from outside Kentucky's borders. In the predominantly male forum of urban newspapers, editors began to police a white, middle-class vision of romantic companionate marriage that kept the value of women's labor and control of accumulated property and capital firmly under the ownership and command of white, urban, patriarchs.

Kentucky's urbanizing middle class tended to separate romantic and material aspects of their discussion about marriage into the gendered territory of private and public. Publicly men ascribed romantic hyperbole to women while privately filling their

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[2] "Elopement in New York," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, February 3, 1855. Similar items purporting to be true stories begin to appear with great frequency in the 1850s, under headlines such as "romances in real life" or "bigamists convicted." See "Bigamist Convicted," *American Democrat and Weekly Courier*, July 28, 1846; "A Romance in Real Life," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, August 30, 1851; "Romance and Matrimony," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, September 13, 1851; "An Elopement," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, June 1853; "A Shaker Bigamist," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, January 13, 1855; "An Interesting Chapter in the Career of a Scoundrel," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, July, 1855; "Bigamy – Queer Case," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, February 16, 1856; "Elopement Extraordinary," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, February 23, 1856; "Another Elopement Case," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, March 22, 1856; "A Scandalous Affair, The Wife of a Prominent Citizen Elopes with a Dry Goods Clerk, the Injured Husband in Pursuit of the Guilty Pair," *Louisville Daily Courier* May 30, 1866.

love letters with declarations of heightened passion. This may be the reason that Thomas Bullitt could recall that his sisters held thoroughly romantic notions of marriage, but was apparently unaware that his brother wrote with poetic passion to Mary Boswell.[4] In public men similarly connected sentiment with femininity. One perturbed newspaper reader charged city editors with producing a spate of "outrages upon literature" because they published romantic nonsense written by female sentimental pens. This "false literature," he claimed, "paled in comparison to the work of great men like Byron or Shakespeare or Moore."[5] Another contributor suggested that soft sentiments about love in marriage originated in the writings of romantically deluded young women.[6] However, young men wrote a great deal of these deluded outrages upon literature. Much of the love poetry published at mid century was dedicated to various "Misses," and penned by anonymous male suitors. Moreover, young people's elopements suggest that both men and women took the message of marrying only for love very seriously.

In contrast, conflicts over whether husbands or wives controlled accumulated family resources occurred predominantly in the public and masculine forum of Kentucky's urban newspapers. Although local Kentucky women contributed to some

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[3] Herndon J. Evans, *The Newspaper Press in Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1976), 43, 44.

[4] It is possible that John Bullit did not share his intimate thoughts with Thomas, because Thomas was a younger brother. When John Bullit courted Mary Boswell, he was a young man of 21 years and his brother Thomas was only 13. In his letters John Bullitt confided in his sister, Martha, who was 18 or 19 at the time and closer to him in age and interests.

[5] "Women's Rights," *Louisville Courier*, January 3, 1852.

[6] "A Brief Story for Romantic Young Ladies," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, April 3, 1867.

extent to the evaluation of modern women's domestic roles in this public debate, men owned and edited urban newspapers and this space remained masculine territory throughout the nineteenth century.

White male editors and their readers faced several challenges in their public quest to maintain control over urban property and capital. In fact, they had a hand in creating some. For example, editors inadvertently fuelled conflict between husbands and wives over material resources. In their efforts to reform southern belle expectations editors relied on literature that portrayed the best potential modern urban helpmeets as industrious women who were willing and skilled domestic workers. The most heroic urban housewives worked diligently in their urban cottages. A married woman now had the responsibility of aiding a husband in the accumulation of family resources. Her ability to do so rested on her willingness to be frugal when she purchased the goods and services her family needed. Advertisements began to cater to this newfound role of wife as competent and independent purchasing agent by appealing directly to female consumers. One enterprising salesman placed an ad describing two "plucky" women who returned to robust health because they had been wise enough to purchase his miraculous cure. Once cured, they stood up to an obnoxious, drunken man and forced him out of their train car. The ad suggested, moreover, that while married women had a duty to exert their financial independence, it must also be a right. "The habit of independence should be cultivated whenever possible," the ad read, "and exercised whenever necessary for maintenance of personal rights."[7]

[7] "Two Plucky Women," *Frankfort Roundabout*, December 16, 1884.

Kentucky editors also introduced the possibility that married women had a right to determine how family income might be spent. They borrowed articles from northern newspapers in which fictional female protagonists, whether acting as domestic laborers or domestic managers, overtly challenged the idea that while they labored and managed household finances, they must submit totally to their husbands' decisions about money. [8] These essays appear to have been written by middle-class women and advocates of women's rights who argued that urban women worked, this work had economic value, and, therefore, married women had rights to control at least some portion of family resources.[9] One Louisville reader capitalized on the heroic traits and actions of literary domestic heroes to argue that as family consumers it was necessary for women to have a role in allocating family resources. A story written for the *Louisville Daily Courier* in 1855, for example, suggested that local women also expected to have more control over cash. A local writer told the story of Ellen who had been raised in town where she had received a finished education. Wiley, Ellen's husband, had provided a comfortable dwelling, fashionable furniture, nice carpets and "even a piano forte." But Ellen complained that he never gave her any money. Wiley purchased everything that came into the house prompting Ellen to rebel. She found her lack of autonomy embarrassing

[8] Jeanne Boydston found among a northern middle class in the antebellum period that white middle-class women claimed their domestic labor had value and argued that this value gave them a right to some ownership and control of family economic resources. Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), xi.

[9] Boydston, *Home and Work*; Nancy Folbre "The Unproductive Housewife: Her Evolution in Nineteenth-Century Economic Thought," in Jane Humphries, ed., *Gender and Economics* (Hants: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 1991), 59-77.

because she knew that other women had cash to make their own purchases. Ellen felt like the "commonest" of wives and a "dependent menial."[10]

The reality of economic life in Kentucky before and after the Civil War also challenged the idea that all men could and did support wives and families. After her engagement to Hector Green in 1832, Ellen Ruggles imagined that her wifely role would be to "assist Hector in accumulating" so that they may yet "get along independent of others."[11] She could economize, she assured Hector, by being prudent and frugal with her purchases. However, Ellen's role as passive accumulator did not work out quite the way she imagined. Shortly after the couple married, Ellen found that she had to take charge of family finances because Hector Green could often find no paid work. Ellen often asked for and occasionally received money from her family in Massachusetts. Ellen once wrote to Hector telling him: "As it appears difficult – dearest for father to raise the sum requisite for your business I have written to Boston for a small sum that I have there in the savings bank that I hope will tend to expedite the matter." [12] By 1850, Ellen made many of the family's purchases, and elicited and received monetary aid from friends and family in order to keep her sons in school. Some white widows who applied for federal pensions after the Civil War noted that due to abandonment, death or a

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[10] "Wiley Mason or the Man Who Never Gave His Wife Any Money," *Louisville Daily Courier*, June 14, 1851. The newspaper editor published this story, submitted to him as part of a contest he had sponsored for local fiction. Although it is possible that a local woman wrote the story, it is not possible to know for certain because the editor did not include a by-line.

[11] Ellen Green to Hector Green, September 26, 1833, Folder 13, Green Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[12] Ibid.

husband's ill health, they had worked on Kentucky's farms and in Kentucky's urban centers to provide the main economic support for their families. The large number of married black women working in white families in most of Kentucky's towns and cities as domestics, both before and after the Civil War, also contradicted the idea that all married women were economically dependent on husbands. After emancipation, an urban white elite and middle class continued to rely on the domestic labor of married black women. In fact, when married freed women began to leave white households to care for their own families, urban middle class men exhorted them to work for wages. One Danville attorney gave clear expression to this idea that black women must continue to work. Any "able-bodied negro woman," he thought, ought "to work in a large measure for her support." [13]

Kentucky editors also created potential problems for middle-class men in search of a suitable wife. When Kentucky's middle class began to refashion its vision of marriage, Kentucky editors published fiction in which writers took for granted that all educated, refined young people wanted to and would eventually marry. Fiction about young people's courtships uniformly purveyed the message that all single young, white, educated and refined protagonists living in the city dedicated themselves to the singular task of finding a suitable mate to marry, although it assumed they would do so with the help of peers rather than parents. One storywriter insisted, in fact, that all respectable women wished to marry when he determined that his hero, Maria, had an independent

[13] To Commissioner of Pensions, December 8, 1902, John Boughman claim, Certificate 79447.

voice "in giving herself away."[14] In their reformation of the southern belle ideal, however, editors raised the contesting possibility that educated, competent and economically independent single women might choose not only whom to marry but they might choose not to marry at all. Editors offered Kentucky readers a glimpse of young, single white women earning money and living in northern cities. Fiction and essays portrayed the most marriageable young women as educated, domestically skilled, hardworking and competent. Writers often used the language of an urban market economy to portray such paragons. They portrayed young female protagonists as women who knew their business. Moreover, this productive and useful helpmeet shared similar characteristics with all of the hard working, rising, urban, male entrepreneurs. One writer portrayed a sewing girl, for example, as a genius with a needle at an early age. She had become so adept at handling her finances that she kept her charitable contributions a secret from her family even while she contributed to her family's income.[15] One young hero sacrificed a life of marriage and remained single while she cared for her orphaned brothers and sisters. This admirable domestic manager kept her family together by supervising the work of her younger brothers and sisters while they tended to their own and neighbors' farm chores. She coordinated the family's labor and the family's finances

[14] "A Sculptor's First Love," *American Democrat and Weekly Courier*, May 9, 1846. Nancy Cott writes that since the Revolutionary Era in the United States, marriage has been idealized as a voluntary bond based on the consent of the governed. Only tyrannical despots, including English Kings one would assume, and polygamous despots coerced women into marriage. Cott, *Public Vows*, 16.

[15] "The Sewing Girl," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, March 24, 1855; "A Wife for a Man in Moderate Circumstances," *Tri Weekly Yeoman*, August 20, 1859; "The Village Schoolmistress: A True Story of Life," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, September 11, 1847.

entirely on her own, proudly refusing help from her friends and neighbors.[16] Some young heroes, therefore, were not only competent and industrious, but also single and economically independent.

Although Louisville editors routinely ignored their presence when they engaged in discussions of marriage, people living in Louisville would have been well aware of the growing number of single young white women making their way into the workforce even prior to the Civil War. After the Civil War, their numbers increased rapidly as young women came into the city to teach, to work as sales or office clerks or to work in factories. By the turn of the century, there were 44, 518 girls and women employed in Kentucky industries largely "unnoticed by most Kentuckians," and by Kentucky newspaper editors.[17] In fact, when they referred to single working women, editors chose examples from outside the state. One Frankfort editor decided, for example, to make an example of a northern woman, who had decided to become a lawyer. The editor offered the opinion that she would do better with a "little'un rather than Lyttleton."[18]

When they took issue with northern feminists, however, editors opened the door to charges that marriage was economically coercive for women. One Louisville editor even presented a northern writer's cogent argument that [white] women must marry even when they had attained an education and even when they did not wish to do so because they had few opportunities to be economically self-supporting. The editor presented this

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[16] "A Heroic Life: The Story of a 'Disagreeable and Fussy Old Maid,'" *Lexington Weekly News*, December 6, 1884; "Lida," *Capitol Weekly*, May 9, 1885.

[17] Helen Deiss Irvin, *Women in Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1979), 67,69

[18] "Woman Lawyers," *Kentucky Yeoman*, July 18, 1854.

feminist's argument in its full splendor. The writer argued that marriage continued to be an economic necessity for young women. Even those who chose careers, "struggled along" with so little money that marriage "is to her the only way out . . . ." The body of the essay might have suggested this editor agreed that marriage was akin to slavery because young women were forced into marriage for their support, except for his contrary opinion expressed subtly in his title: "Why Girls who do not Marry Should be Considered Failures."[19]

Moreover, Kentucky newspaper readers, would have been very cognizant that most white women married, in part, for economic support. In the 1870s, Kentucky readers would have been familiar with Laura Clay from the politically prominent Clay family, who became an outspoken advocate of women's rights in Kentucky. They would also have been aware that Clay had chosen to remain single, but she had only been able to do so because her father bequeathed to her a large tract of land on which she supervised hired labor to engage in commercial farming.[20] An older generation of rural women and men immersed in an understanding of marriage as a gendered labor bargain married or made marital connections out of social and material necessity - a necessity exacerbated in the difficult post Civil War economy. Poor white women, like Nancy Jane Curtis, were

[19] "Why Girls who do not Marry Should be Considered Failures," *Capital Weekly*, August 9, 1884.

[20] Paul E. Fuller, *Laura Clay and the Woman's Rights Movement* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1975), 19.

very honest about marrying for financial support.[21] When Nancy Jane married for the fourth time, she admitted that her fourth husband had been "comparatively a stranger."[22]

In the decade prior to the Civil War, Kentucky's white middle class also faced challenges to their romantic vision of marriage from a national public debate about marriage reform.[23] This national debate connected the economic, social and political inequalities of enslaved southern blacks with white married women's subordination and inequality in patriarchal marriage. In fact, as one historian argues, "marriage values and practices animated the rhetoric of both sides" of a rapidly escalating sectional debate over slavery.[24] Abolitionists, for example, argued that slaves' inability to legally protect their marriages morally deformed marriage by allowing white masters sexual access to their black female dependents. In turn, critics of married women's economic and social subordination argued that married women, like southern slaves, were dependent and

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[21] Pension deposition, Nancy Jane Williams, January 24, 1904, William F. Lewis claim, Widow Certificate 81467.

[22] Pension deposition, Nancy Jane Williams, February 6, 1903, William F. Lewis claim, Widow Certificate 81467.

[23] Nancy Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 75. Nancy Cott refers to this national debate as a debate over "women's rights, marriage protests, the bogey of free love, communitarian alternatives, and state legislatures' provisions for divorce and married women's property rights." Historians of the free love movement or sex radical movement also note that the rise of radical critiques of marriage began in the 1850s in the American north. While Cott ties the rise of critiques of marriage to an increase in agitation for abolition, Joanne Passet and John Spurlock tie the increased promulgation of radical critiques of marriage to a developing print culture in the United States that burgeoned in the middle of the 1850s. John C. Spurlock, *Free Love: Marriage and Middle-Class Radicalism in America, 1825 – 1860* (New York: New York University Press), 1988, and Joanne E. Passet, *Sex Radicals and the Quest for Women's Equality* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 40.

[24] Cott, *Public Vows*, 57 – 65.

lacking in free will.[25] Advocates for women's economic rights began to use the analogy of slavery to agitate for married women's right to her earnings and to property. In addition, state legislators revised divorce statutes making divorces more readily available with more economically equitable settlements for women. More radical critics of marriage tied class, race and gender inequalities directly to the private control of property, and therefore, called for the communal ownership of property and the equal distribution of community resources.[26] Consequently northern marriage protests and arguments for abolition posed a two-prong threat to middle-class white males in Kentucky by threatening their continued private ownership and control of productive property and the profits gained both from white women's and enslaved people's labor.

Efforts to undo the legal, social and economic inequalities that patriarchal marriage and slavery wrought occurred inside Kentucky at the same time as they swirled about its northern and western borders. Despite the legal entrenchment of the institution of slavery in Kentucky until 1865, from the time that Kentucky adopted its first constitution in 1792 right up to the opening of the Civil War, a small number of vocal crusaders had managed to keep the issues of gradual emancipation and abolition alive in Kentucky's legislature and before the public eye.[27] William Bullitt, for example, a slave owner himself, had been an outspoken supporter of gradual emancipation in Kentucky's legislature in the decades prior to the Civil War. Several religious leaders in Kentucky

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[25] Ibid. 65.

[26] Passet, *Sex Radicals*, 2, 32.

[27] Lowell H. Harrison and James C. Klotter, *A New History of Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 175-178.

also took an active and vocal role in calling for wholesale abolition of slavery.[28] Although suffragists did not begin to establish organizations dedicated to women's political equality in Kentucky until a decade or so after the Civil War, several outspoken advocates for women's political and economic rights made public appearances in Kentucky as early as 1828 and increasingly in the 1850s. In the 1850s, for example, Lucy Stone spoke in Louisville of "'Woman's Rights,'" "'The Political and Legal Rights of Women,'" and "'Marriage.'"[29] Groups of sex radicals also established communities in Ohio and Indiana in the 1830s, and by the 1850s, both sex radicals and abolitionists took advantage of Cincinnati as one of the leading publishing centers in the United States to disseminate their messages.[30] One outspoken abolitionist living in Ohio, for example, determined that when a woman was forced to marry "'for a home or for a position in society'" marriage became a "'system of prostitution.'"[31] In addition, by the 1850s, Indiana with its liberal divorce laws had become a "'divorce mill'" situated on Kentucky's northern border.[32]

Because these challenges to white and patriarchal control over the institution of marriage were neither distant nor idle, by 1850, elements of this national debate began to

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[28] Victor B. Howard, *The Evangelical War Against Slavery and Caste: The Life and Times of John G. Fee* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1996).

[29] Carol Guethlein, "Women in Louisville: Moving Toward Equal Rights," *Filson Club History Quarterly* Vol. 55, No. 2 (April 1981): 151-178; Fuller, *Laura Clay*, 22.

[30] Passet, *Sex Radicals*, 36.

[31] Ibid. 69.

[32] Cott, *Public Vows*, 51.

appear on the pages of Kentucky's urban newspapers. In was in the context of a hardening climate of debate about marriage that Kentucky urban editors began to respond to all of these challenges by policing their preferred vision of companionate marriage. Editors and their male contributors attempted to establish an alternate role for the urban helpmeet that diminished her relationship to family property and kept control of urban wealth in the hands of husbands as "heads" of families. In direct prescriptive contrast to stories of economically competent wives, editors began to publish a variety of work that denigrated married women's economic competency. Although some fiction suggested that a single woman might be wise, competent, practical and charitable when she earned and allocated her money, other pieces suggested that once married she became devoid of competence and lost her capacity for prudent management and foolishly squandered her husband's money. Poetry, jokes and ditties carried the message that wives spent money faster than husbands made it. For example, one poet growled that lovers might be wooed by cooing, but once married "Hymen, more honest," reveals his duty of paying up bills."[33] Another determined that the only reason an investor had managed to avoid the loss of his investment was because he pulled his money out of the stock before its collapse - to buy his wife's spring wardrobe.[34] Editors also contested the portrayal of fictional wives as thrifty consumers. They published jokes accusing young women of being materialistic and greedy. One young woman, for example, spurned a brash and forward lover, not because he presumed to make her acquaintance by seeking a kiss and an engagement, but

[33] "Love and Marriage: the Bachelor's Growl," *The Tri-Weekly Yeoman,* August 24, 1854.

[34] "Moral for Husbands, Capital Weekly, August 9, 1884; "A Story with a Potent and Far Reaching Moral," Lexington Weekly News, March 28, 1885.

because the ring he offered was too small and greatly out of style.[35] Disgruntled male contributors increasingly used humor to lament that women spent too much money, chained men to debt, henpecked husbands, and wore the breeches. [36]

Now, editors began to publish stories that mollified their male readers threatened by feminist challenges. For example, the editor of the *Louisville Daily Courier* used the feminist declaration of rights issued at a convention in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, to warn his readers that it might portend laws that would place control of money in the hands of wives and that would produce disaster.[37] The article took the form of a series of letters between a wife and a husband outlining what a ridiculous state of affairs would arise should wives ever have control over family resources. When Charles approached Jane to borrow money, as a wife who knew her "rights," she flatly refused because he had not paid back what he already borrowed. Charles explained to Jane that he must have money to pay the mortgages on the house and his business. Jane held firm, telling Charles that if they lost the house she would buy one of her own – since the law stated

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[35] "She Did not Take the Ring," *The Capital Weekly*, August 16, 1884.

[36] "The Humbugged Husband," *Louisville Daily Dime*, May 24, 1844; "On a Tombstone in Essex," *Louisville Daily Dime*, May 30, 1844; "Matrimony," *Flemingsburg Republican*, October, 1846; "The Bridal: by a Confirmed Bachelor," *Kentucky Yeoman*, June 8, 1854; "Love and Marriage: A Bachelor's Growl," *Kentucky Yeoman*, August 24, 1854; "The Antambia Society," *Louisville Daily Dime*, March 6, 1844; "Parody on I Want a Wife," *Louisville Daily Dime*, March 16, 1844. These conflicts were sometimes physical. Advice columns warned men to be of good temper, not to "play the lion," and to avoid using "stripes" when they exerted their rightful power as economic head of the household. "Wife-Taming," *Kentucky Yeoman*, June 10, 1858; "The Use of Marrying, *Louisville Daily Dime*, May 1, 1844; "Wife Murdering," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, May 14, 1853.

[37] "Married Folk's New Letter Writer," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, September 23, 1848.

now that she could control her own property. Furthermore, Jane kept the accounts at all of the local stores, forcing Charles to stay within budget. In other words, if a wife controlled cash, made purchases and prevented her husband from having credit, it would turn the gendered economic and social world up side down. It would be Charles rather than Ellen who became the "dependent menial," a "strange notion indeed."[38]

Editors also began to downplay married women's labor by extolling an alternative view of the modern urban helpmeet as an angelic wife and mother. Rather than celebrating a married woman's domestic labors or her ability to be a competent purchasing agent, this literature suggested that a woman's primary duty rested in her loving nature and it's behavioral expression. These pieces portrayed married women as virtuous, domestic angels.[39] Writers encouraged young women to bring love into marriage where womanly sentiment would act as a corrective to men's perverse natures. It was the duty of domestic angels to bring men pleasure and warmth by elevating their spirits. Or, as the title of one poetic exchange suggested, although her brothers might "Love to Live," a young woman must "Live to Love." [40] This literature exhorted a woman to be a clinging vine, a tender plant, supported by a husband, and dedicated

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[38] "Wiley Mason or the Man Who Never Gave His Wife Any Money," *Louisville Daily Courier*, June 14, 1851.

[39] Kentucky editors also borrowed this competing vision of woman as angel from northern newspapers. Several scholars have found that a northern middle class also denuded labor and the economic value of that labor from the ideal of the new domestic woman. Jeanne Boydston refers to this process as "the pastoralization of housework" and argues that it "permeated the culture of the antebellum northeast." Boydston, *Home and Work*, 151.

[40] "Woman's Affections," *The Daily Dime*, March 6, 1844; "I Love to Live" and "I Live to Love," *Kentucky Yeoman*, May 20, 1847.

wholly to the physical and affective care of husband and family.[41] By 1853, it had become acceptable to portray even a farmer's wife as an angel, a companion of worth and beauty with a true and affectionate heart who was always joyful and happy and willingly sacrificial to the emotional needs of her family. [42]

Editors also began to discourage pragmatic material considerations for marrying, including marrying for a gendered exchange of labor, by denigrating a vision of marriage held by most of their rural neighbors. Editors began to name and shame their rural neighbors' view of marriage as old and old-fashioned. They identified country people as silly in their practical courtships and short engagements, and rustic in their speech and dress. Usually local people penned this material but because they did so anonymously, and in an ostensibly humorous manner, it may have offered a way for the more modest members of Kentucky's white middle class to cautiously assert their views of marriage over that of their rural neighbors and their own parents and grandparents.

Poems and anecdotes portrayed rural folk as country bumpkins and their courtship and marriage practices as rustic and old-fashioned. Editors and contributors alike employed several linguistic conventions to signify that the story they told occurred among illiterate country bumpkins. They identified rural stereotypes using naming conventions. For example, country people were Hanks, or Bens or Sals or Jakes.[43] The

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[41] "Woman," *Fleming Republican*, July 10, 1845.

[42] "I Shall Be a Farmer's Wife," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, August 13, 1853.

[43] Writers used the name "Ben" to signify a country bumpkin. See "Missouri Wedding," *Kentucky Yeoman*, July 18, 1854; "Marriage Outright," *Louisville Daily Dime*, April 30, 1844, and "Cousin Ben or the Good Deed Rewarded," *Louisville Daily Courier*, August 29, 1856. "Jake" also appears as a common, local generic name to

idiom "down east" also indicated that a suitor and his intended were uneducated and lived in the country somewhere on the eastern seaboard or more often in the Kentucky Appalachians or the Missouri Ozarks. In "*Down on the Illiterate*," for example, one Louisville contributor portrayed Appalachian men, as nuisances in these days of "progress" because they do not "take the paper." Mountain women smoked cob pipes and when a baby cried they "stuffed it's mouth" and sang it "Barbara Allen." [44] These characters spoke the language of the uneducated and unlettered. One piece featured a man from Rhode Island who represented "a rough but apparently honest specimen of the country Yankee" who came to Boston with his modest "Dulcinea" wanting to "get spliced." He ordered the minister to "deu it up proud" promising him "yer money's redy." The bridegroom behaved "like a sick kitten hugging a hot brick" and the couple was as "pleased as a raccoon with two tails."[45] This literature demonstrated too that rural rustics were not sophisticated, well traveled or urbane. Another anonymous scribe told the anecdote of a young man named Hank from the "wild Ozarks" of Missouri who used one of the brass grommets from his father's "Sunday galluses" as an engagement ring. The

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identify country "bumpkins" that still held sway late in the nineteenth century. In a memoir that Edward Ayers tells of D. W. Griffith, who moved with his family from rural Kentucky to Louisville in 1889, "Jake" signifies all of the imagery that Kentucky's urban dwellers were able to conjure to denigrate their rural neighbors. The Griffith's wagon, loaded with all of their household furniture and effects, elicited jeers from city street urchins of "'Country Jakes!'" When Griffith came to Louisville, one man noted, "'we regarded him as a hick – tall for his age, loose-jointed and beak-nosed, he wore jeans that barely reached to his ankles, red suspenders [galluses] and rawhide shoes.'" Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 63.

[44] "Down on the Illiterate," *Louisville Daily Courier*, September 6, 1856.

[45] "One of the Weddings," *Louisville Daily Democrat*, January 27, 1852.

editor prefaced this anecdote with the explanation that Hank Hillard had never been out of the county, much less the state and his "ideas of engagement rings were limited."[46]

Editors sometimes demonstrated the distinct contrast that urban middle class Kentucky drew between romantic marriage and old-fashioned pragmatic marital customs by publishing romantic poetry along side poems or anecdotes portraying the courtships of rural people. The first part of a poem entitled "To Sally Ann," for example, began with "Soft is the down of the butterfly's wing, soft is the whisper when lovers speak." [47] This poet's romantic sentiment, his references to the "beautiful scenes of nature," and his fine grammar all marked him as an educated, refined, sensitive, and urban man. Sally Ann's name alone identified her as an uneducated, practical, no-nonsense, and thoroughly rural woman to a nineteenth-century Kentucky reader even before she had a chance to read Sally's poetic reply. "Soft am taters all mashed up," the poet imagined Sally's retort, "and mush are soft as soft can be, but softer bes that silly pup Vot write date va'se to me.[48] The editor of the *Democratic Banner* in Henderson also directly contrasted refined and rustic courtships by printing two contrasting paeans to courtship side-by-side. A poem to "Miss Ann B" by "ambulatory" compared her to the to the beauty of the rose.

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[46] "A Missouri Romance, He Got the Ring, Although Dad's Galluses were Spoiled," *Capital Weekly*, September 23, 1890. In the latter part of the century, editors began to print news items purporting to be accurate accounts of actual events disparaging men for either buying or selling a wife. There were several of these items purporting to be true accounts of men selling wives, or of old soldiers buying a wife. "Married at Last – A Romance," *The Frankfort Roundabout*, December 21, 1858; "A Discharged Soldier Buys a Wife – How He Was Taken In," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, January 3, 1866.

[47] "To Sally Ann" and "Sally's Reply," *American Democrat and Weekly Courier*, August 29, 1846.

[48] Ibid.

Beside this grammatically correct declaration of sentimental love the editor placed an anecdote about a rustic courtship between "Jake and Sal." Country gals, this scribe intimated, turned the tables on refined notions of marriage in which men did the courting and proposing. Jake approached Sal too slowly, so Sal turned refined convention on its head, took the aggressive lead in their courtship, and proceeded to teach Jake a thing or two about kissing. The piece described Jake as a "tarnal scary, long-legged, lantern-jawed, slab-eyed, pigeon toed gangle-owl" and concluded that once Sal had instructed Jake "their lips came together and the report that followed was like pulling a horse's hoofs out of the mire." [49]

Newspaper editors consistently portrayed all those who engaged in prudent and pragmatic marriages as old. In 1852, in "Choose a Wife by Cheese," an amateur local poet took humorous aim at the short courtships and pragmatic marital labor bargains of rural country folk. The poet portrayed Uncle Ben's approach to finding a wife as rather unrefined. His courtships were crude and short. Old Ben looked for a wife but he could not decide between three neighboring sisters. Pressed "like an ass between two loads of hay" Uncle Ben invited the three sisters, each of whom he admired equally well, to share his supper. Ben was wholly unsympathetic to any notions of romantic sensibility and therefore totally neutral in his affective preference. Instead he wanted a pragmatic wife. Uncle Ben determined to marry the sister who demonstrated the most prudence, cleanliness and thrift as she served up his expensive wheel of cheese.[50] These anecdotes

[49] "Courtship," *Democratic Banner*, September 2, 1852.

[50] This poem entitled "Choose a Wife by Cheese" appeared on the front page of the *Democratic Banner* of Henderson, Kentucky, September 30, 1852.

delivered the message that rural people were old-fashioned, they married to exchange labor, their courtships were crude and short, and their motivations were devoid of refined and romantic sensibilities. [51]

Just prior to the outbreak of the Civil War, editors began to rely on greedy materialistic Yankees as a new foil in their endeavor to sell their romantic vision of companionate marriage. In 1867, one Louisville editor accused Yankees of behaving in matrimony as they did in politics. They were good at business but as despotic in matters of love as they were in Congress because they married for money.[52] Materialistic Yankees coldly sought wealthy wives. Editors pointed to a marriage market in New York, for example, in which enterprising young men looked to marry wealthy women. They met in the back parlors of saloons "with the avowed object of securing rich wives." They gathered statistics on young women's ages, the amount of their inheritances, and the number of competing siblings. These mercenary Yankees considered orphans of marriageable age with the most lucrative inheritances already in hand as "first class" prospects because they would be most vulnerable to offers of marriage and because they had no competition for their inherited wealth. Editors also published news of corresponding clubs in New York that catered to "Eves in the pursuit of Mammon."[53]

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[51] "A Heartless Husband," *Kentucky Yeoman*, November 9, 1848; "How Widow Bedett won Elder Sniffles," *The Louisville Weekly Courier*, April 1, 1849; "Race for a Husband," published in both the *Georgetown Herald* and in the *Kentucky Yeoman* April 2, 1855; "A Queer Wedding," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, September 25, 1867.

[52] "In Matrimony as in Politics," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, January 16, 1867.

[53] "The Matrimonial Market: Piquant Revelations of New York Society Marital Clubs and Brokers," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, October 6, 1866.

Other pieces warned against the notion of marrying daughters off for money just as "millionaires on Fifth Avenue and haughty Lords in foreign parts."[54]

After the Civil War, the material editors printed to denigrate rural people and old - fashioned marriages began to use the language of a market economy by suggesting that old and illiterate farmers bought wives. One urban editor reported that a local man, a Mr. Lawrence Robey of Bullit County, went to Bloomington, Indiana, in search of a wife. He carried with him a letter outlining his qualifications as a good husband. Mr. Robey described himself as "age 43 years occupation Farmer Slitely greay headed Character unblemished owns a Butiful farm and is worth $5000 has bin married but his wife has bin Dead 2 years and he has no children." A friend of Robey had written the letter, the reporter explained, because Robey's "chirography" was "somewhat neglected in his youth." Robey found a willing fiancé who agreed to marry him with no romantic fuss. On the day he met his bride "the license was procured from the clerk, and the girl being poor, Mr. Robey advanced $30 for a wedding dinner, and a considerable sum for a splendid wedding attire for the bride." [55] As late as 1866, an old soldier portrayed as an "unsophisticated bachelor" offered a saloon keeper fifty dollars to find him a "good, plump, fat and docile wife." [56]

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[54] "Portrait of a Pill Quack," *Kentucky Yeoman,*1859; "Romance in Real Life," *Kentucky Yeoman,* September 14, 1858**.**

[55] "Another Kentuckian Seeking a Wife," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, May 3, 1856.

[56] "A Discharged Soldier Buys A Wife: How he was Taken in," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, January 3, 1866.

Editors also began to name and shame local couples in their determination that one must never marry for money. One Kentucky editor, for example, boldly reported the adulterous dalliance of an Indianapolis couple. Although the reporter did not actually name the couple, his numerous identifiers would have made them immediately recognizable in their local community. This respectable couple lived in town, and were both Methodists, he noted, referring to one as a pious light in the YMCA, and the other as a wealthy widow. The editor ended by accusing the man of courting the wealthy widow in order to "feather his nest."[57]

Editors also responded to criticisms that marriage was economically coercive for women by suggesting that marriage was only forced when old men married young women. In 1858, the editor of the *Kentucky Yeoman* in Frankfurt published an item in which a court reporter claimed to have come upon a couple as they applied for a license to marry. Disturbed because the man was so old and the young woman was so young, the reporter confronted the aging bridegroom who admitted that there was a "right smart" difference between their ages but "we kind o' concluded it would be best for us get married." The old man explained that his intended bride had been orphaned in infancy, and he and his wife had raised her as their daughter. After his wife died, the old man had petitioned his ward to marry him. When she refused, the old man reminded her that she had no other family on which to rely for material support, and she eventually consented to the marriage. The reporter concluded this marriage would be based on material considerations not love. Moreover, because the young woman had been forced into

[57] "Elopement at Indianapolis – Excitement in the City," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, December 12, 1866.

marriage for her material support, consent had been coerced rather than freely given. It was in this state of "half-despair" and "half wretchedness" that the young woman had been forced to marry. This bride, he added, would go into the state of matrimony as "the paschal lamb to the connubial sacrifice." "'Nature here was violated, he pontificated, because "love the angel was broken upon the wheel of necessity.'"[58] The reporter described the bargain made in this union as such an anomalous, tawdry and morally suspect event that he felt bound to expose it in order to "draw the curtain veiling the inner from the outward - the dark temple of the actual from the fair seeming of deceitful show!" [59]

In the 1850s, shaken by the criticisms that accompanied their project of refashioning companionate marriage, Kentucky editors began to police the parameters of marriage as monogamous, civilized, Christian and heterosexual. They did so by relying on stereotypes of other groups, nations and races whose marital beliefs differed from their own. Both before and after the Civil War, Kentucky's editors presented a smorgasbord of foils in articles reprinted from northern urban papers about the foreign and strange marriage practices of polygamous Mormons, morally depraved Native Americans, uncivilized 'Hindoos,' and on occasion, manly women who married other women.[60]

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[58] "Hymenial Sacrifices -- Nature vs. Necessity," *Kentucky Yeoman*, December 21, 1858.

[59] Ibid. For other examples of marriages between aged men and young women portrayed as tawdry, immoral or a ripe subject for scandal see "A Scandalous Affair, the Wife of a Prominent Citizen Elopes with a Dry Goods Clerk, the Injured Husband in Pursuit of the Guilty Pair," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, May 30, 1866.

[60] Nancy Cott has found that American marriage was always imagined as a Christian institution, between heterosexual couples and contrasted to "marital nonconformists . . . deemed 'racially' different from the white majority." Cott, *Public*

They also portrayed respectable marriage as white. Throughout the nineteenth century, the standard of legitimate marriage among educated whites in Kentucky had also always been imagined and presented as white in both private and public discourse. Like most white, slaveholding families in Kentucky, the Bullitt family drew a careful distinction in their pre-war correspondence between the social and affective lives of white and black family members despite their close physical proximity on Kentucky's plantations. The Bullitt family acknowledged the presence of their black servants usually only in regard to the needs, activities or events important to the white family. Although Mildred Bullitt insisted that her servants marry according to custom, her concern was more for her white family's respectability than with her servants' affective lives.[61] What occurred in private correspondence was reflected in the public forum of urban newspapers. Some of the free blacks living in Louisville prior to the Civil War were

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Vows, 4. For some of many examples Kentucky editors employed for this purpose see, "Romance and Matrimony," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, September 13, 1851; "Letter from a Mormon Wife Defending Polygamy" *The Georgetown Herald*, May 18, 1854; "Polyandry: A Woman with Three Husbands," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, August 21, 1867; "A Shaker Bigamist," *The Louisville Weekly Courier*, January 13, 1855; "The English at a Turkish Harem," *The Kentucky Yeoman*, July 27, 1854; "Curiosities of Marriage: How Different Nations Regard the Marital Relation," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, June 7, 1867; "A Woman Married to a Woman," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, May 10, 1856; "Manly Women: Description of creature who affects masculine ways," *Lexington Weekly News*, August 27, 1885.

[61] Thomas Bullitt penned his memoirs in 1911 long after the Civil War and his memory of slavery is both nostalgic and apologetic. He indicated that as children the Bullitt boys had played and hunted with the black children and that several of the Oxmoor slaves were favorites in the white family. He also noted that his mother often nursed both her own family and ailing black servants back to health. After the Civil War, Bullitt noted, he and his brothers had provided what financial aid they could to some of the former Oxmoor slaves. Prior to the war, however, the Bullitt correspondence, like that of most white, slaveholding families, indicates that they held their black servants and field hands at great social distance in public arenas. Bullitt, *My Life*.

members of Kentucky's developing middle class. [62] Nevertheless, for the first half of the nineteenth century, all material about marriage, whether presented as fiction or as real news, exclusively featured northern or southern white actors. The invisibility of black protagonists in fiction or as subjects in news items effectively rendered invisible both slave marriages and the marriages of free blacks. In the 1850s, in response to the threats that abolitionists posed to slavery, Kentucky's urban editors began to pay some attention to black marriages by denigrating marriages between free black men and white women in the north. The material they chose repeated a trope of young white women, seduced by abolitionists' ideals of racial equality, into marrying black men. Inevitably white parents, once numbered among the most strident "shriekers" for equality and freedom, learned the folly of their ways but repented too late to save daughters from aberrant marriages.[63] Both before and after the Civil War editors also published pieces shaming the marriages of free blacks in the north and of incidences of miscegenation in southern newspapers. [64]

In addition, in the middle of the nineteenth century, Kentucky's middle class also reaffirmed expectations that respectable marriage was a lifelong and unbreakable bond.

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[62] George C. Wright notes that on the eve of the war, there was a population of about 2000 free blacks in Louisville, some of whom were members of Kentucky's incipient middle class. George C. Wright, *Life Behind a Veil: Blacks in Louisville, Kentucky 1865-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 7, 16.

[63] See untitled news item about a black man who seduced his master's daughter, *Kentucky Yeoman*, July 29, 1854; "What the Spirit of Abolition Leads to," *Kentucky Yeoman*, June 8, 1854; "Abolition and Know-Nothingism in Massachusetts," *Kentucky Yeoman*, January 2, 1855; "Too Romantic By Half," *Kentucky Yeoman*, July 27, 1858; "More Negro Equality," *Kentucky Yeoman*, May 22, 1859.

[64] See "Almost a Tragedy," *Kentucky Yeoman*, March 22, 1859; "Shocking Case of Miscegenation in Louisiana," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, March 27, 1867; "Southern Miscegenation, Suit by a Mulatto Woman to Recover $7000 given for her Support," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, October 31, 1866.

In response to agitation for the liberalization of divorce laws occurring in northern organizations dedicated to marriage reform, Kentucky's Supreme Court policed "the inviolability of marriage" and created "powerful incentives to keep couples together."[65] Kentucky editors also began to take issue with increasing attention to separation and divorce. Since the northern clergy and mainstream newspaper editors linked feminism to marriage reform and the free love movement, editors were easily able to find articles to reprint from northern papers that took issue with adultery and divorce.[66] Editors blamed feminists and the free love movement for an outbreak of marital discontent and adultery. They chose articles that portrayed members of the free love movement as women and men who had abandoned their marriages and little children in order to engage in "promiscuous intercourse." Alternately, items portrayed men in the sex radical movement as villains because they behaved as vulgar, lustful, fanatics seducing innocent women away from respectable marriages only to later abandon them. These pieces tied free lovers to utopian socialism, to "the detestable doctrines of woman's rights," and to proponents of liberalized divorce, all who tended to "absolve the wife from allegiance to her husband" leading to "the source of ten thousand domestic sorrows."[67]

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[65] Hendrik Hartog, *Man and Wife*, 79, 84.

[66] The Shakers established a community in Pleasant Hill, Kentucky in 1810.

[67] "More Free-Loveism: A Young Wife Seduced from Her Husband," *Kentucky Yeoman*, July 6, 1858; "Free Love Eldorado," *Kentucky Yeoman*, November 10, 1859; "More Free Lovers in Disguise," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, November 3, 1855; "Letter from a Convert to Free Love," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, November 10, 1855; "A Washington Tragedy," *Kentucky Yeoman*, March 5 to April 28, 1859; "Free Love in New York: Individual Sovereignty Resolved, History of Free Love Society," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, September 22, 1855.

Kentucky editors inflicted public humiliation on divorcing couples by publishing ongoing accounts of actual divorces or separations containing scandalous details of their personal affairs. Reporters exposed the personal plight, whether real or imagined, of separating couples and often added their moralizing comments. For example, over a period of several weeks in 1859 a Frankfort editor kept his readers abreast of the tragic state of affairs that befell a prominent Congressman in Washington, D.C., named Sickles. Sickles was accused of murdering his wife's paramour and reporters included intimate details of the nefarious and adulterous activities of the wife and her lover authenticated only by rumors and local gossip. The moral of this serialized account became clear when Sickles' attorney argued, "an interference with the marriage relation must strike every reflecting mind as the greatest wrong that can be committed upon a human being."[68] The editor of the *Louisville Weekly Courier* made an example of a local woman from the wealthy, publicly well-known and socially prominent Ward family of Louisville. Sallie Ward had already been the subject of rumor in and about Louisville's social circles in 1847 when rumors abounded that Sallie's parents had married her off to the Lawrence family in Boston, a family of immense wealth.[69] Consequently, when Sallie Ward divorced her husband in 1850, the event provided lucrative fodder for disseminating a

[68] The editor of the *Kentucky Yeoman* in Frankfort reprinted "The Washington Tragedy" and subsequent columns dedicated to the Sickles murder trial from eastern newspapers including the *New York Times* and the *Cincinnati Commercial* between March 5, 1859 and April 28, 1859. See also "Marriage and Divorces: Why the former are Unhappy and the Latter Frequent," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, January 3, 1867; "The Forrest Divorce Case," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, February 7, 1852; "The Strong Divorce Case: Romance in Real Life," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, January 3, 1867.

[69] R. Hughes to John Bullitt, January 4, 1847, Personal Correspondence of John Bullitt, Bullitt Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

message to readers by way of an already familiar local social scandal. A Louisville editor published a letter sent to him from a Boston attorney impeaching Sallie's and her family's reputations. Readers learned that from the moment Sallie arrived in Boston the Lawrence clan viewed their new daughter-in-law as a spoiled and pampered belle who thumbed her nose at the tenets of respectability by painting her cheeks with rouge. Readers learned further that Sallie's mother engaged in blatant hypocrisy when she attempted to soothe the Lawrence family's collective feathers. In an attempt to assuage the concerns of the mother-in-law, she promised that she would write to Sallie and dissuade her from her from painting her cheeks. At the same time, however, Sallie's mother wrote to her daughter telling her to stick to her own desires, to "defy the epistles of the universe," the commands of her husband and his family, and to do so with her "mother's spark." Moreover, she added, if Sallie used only a little tint of cheek rouge, her husband and his family would never know.[70] Marriage could not be silently dissoluble in Louisville even for the fashionable, socially prominent and much loved Sallie Ward.[71]

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[70] "Lawrence Divorce Case," *Louisville Weekly Courier*, July 20, 1850. The Louisville editor published a letter ostensibly sent to him from the Lawrence family's Boston lawyer. In the letter the attorney attempted to salvage the reputation of the Lawrence family in Louisville because, he charged, it had been slandered in the papers. Consequently, these letters may or may not be from the pens of Sallie Ward and her mother, but once published in the Louisville press, they had the ring of fact and authenticity.

[71] Helen Deiss Irvin writes that Sallie Ward was married four times, and divorced from her first husband in Kentucky's state court. Her notoriety would have made her a perfect candidate for proving a point about divorce. However, according to Diess Irvin, it did not dampen Louisville's enthusiasm for Sallie. She was "adored" in Louisville, according to this historian, where anything superlative was called a "'Sallie Ward.'" Deiss Irvin, *Women In Kentucky*, 46.

It is difficult to know from reading the private correspondence between young people just how much they engaged in this reevaluation of the urban woman's domestic role or evaluated whether marrying ought to be a possibility or a necessity. However, it is possible to know that the conflicting, contradictory and contesting public discussion in Kentucky over middle class marriage had opened a window to further debate. George Quinby's defense of patriarchal control of household resources in 1852 was rather tentative but informative. Although he had admonished that wives must diligently wash and iron and cook and sew and save, the husband, he claimed, was still head of the family in all matters. He was clearly aware that there was trouble brewing among his female congregants, however, when he anticipated what their response might be. "Another duty of the wife is to 'obey' the husband," Quinby restated, followed by "'obey,' says the wife; 'I do not like the sound of that.'"[72]

Jessie Clark's premarital negotiation is another small example. Although Jessie Clark never overtly questioned the inevitability of having to marry, she demonstrated her knowledge that economic power wrought personal independence, and she applied this knowledge to assert some control of her future married life. Immediately after her fiancé proposed marriage, bolstered by his frequent lamentations that her lengthy absences made him "powerless," Jessie left Louisville for prolonged periods of time. Over the period of several months, during which the couple conducted an almost daily correspondence, Jessie told her lovesick suitor that she was a "gypsy by nature" and she would expect to continue to indulge her love of travel even after she married. Jessie also insisted on her

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[72] Quinby, *Marriage and the Duties,* 196.

right to spend money as she saw fit. She informed Strater that she drank alcohol and smoked cigars and played cards for money and when Strater objected Jessie took him to task writing: "I am fond of just such a life as you have seen me have so far," and that included "smoking, card-playing, drinking etc. all within bounds and under certain circumstances."[73] She also demonstrated that she was not naïve in matters of money. "After my washerwoman's money went into a jackpot," she wrote to Strater, "we got to calling my bets her stock" but " it got away below par in its fluctuations." [74] As further proof that she intended to do as she pleased after they married, she informed Strater that her own father approved of her gambling at poker because he sometimes loaned her the money. Jesse Clark entered into these pre-nuptial negotiations just one year before Kentucky's legislature passed a Married Woman's Property Act. In order to ensure an additional measure of some personal independence and rights to her own money, she moved in next door to her wealthy parents in Louisville, shortly after she and Strater married.

Even as Kentucky's urbanizing middle class carried out a their public debate over the meaning of marriage their visions faced challenges from within their own ranks, from within their own borders, and from a northern middle class. Defining the new urban helpmeet by her willingness to labor with industry, and be frugal in her purchases turned out to be a risky business. Public discussions in urban newspapers about the nature and value of women's domestic labor opened the door to conflict within marriage over who

[73] Jessie Clark to William Strater, September 21, 1893, Folders 15-22, Clark Strater Watson Family Papers, Manuscript Collections, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

[74] Ibid.

controlled household resources. Urban white men, charged with the new responsibility of accumulating the more liquid assets of cash and urban property, found it difficult to maintain total control of family resources at the same time as married women were charged with the contradictory task of helping to accumulate. Throughout the nineteenth century, a middle class vision of the urban helpmeet was also being challenged by the marital beliefs and practices of most white and black rural people.

In the middle of the 1850s, white and patriarchal control of marriage was further embattled by radical critiques of slavery ideologically connected to women's inequality in the institution of marriage emanating predominantly from the pens of northern middle-class reformers, but resonating on fertile ground in Kentucky. Although white men may have been willing to renegotiate the relationship of money matters and marriage, they were only willing to do so providing their fundamental ownership and control of resources was not threatened either by women's claims to economic control over resources or the end of the institution of slavery.

By the 1850s, Kentucky editors began to publish literature that culturally policed the removal of money matters from marriage, and money from married women's hands. They upheld marriage as a monogamous, lifelong union in which ownership and control of household resources rested firmly under white, men's control. Although Kentucky's middle class began to acknowledge in their public marital debate that economic and material coercion acted upon women to marry, they also downplayed marriage as economic coercion by portraying such marriages as anomalous, tawdry, moral travesties. In order to be useful to Kentucky's middle class, therefore, a suitable vision of romantic, modern marriage had to circumvent charges that marriage was economically or socially

coercive. Kentucky's middle class responded by usurping the definition of coercion. Marriage was only coercion, the public discourse began to suggest, when old men married young women and young women were forced into marriages for economic support.

Conclusion

Evidence in Kentucky suggests that in the nineteenth century an American version of companionate marriage was not yet a fait accompli even in a developing middle class. In the middle decades of the nineteenth century, this group began to refine an earlier vision of companionate marriage that had operated in the eighteenth century among a landed elite to better suit their needs as more young men entered an urban world of capitalist market relations. In their mid-century conversation about marriage, Kentucky's white middle class reaffirmed that marriage must be an individual choice. They boosted the kind of love required in marriage from affection to romantic passion, made marriage companionate only if it occurred between two young people, and publicly reinforced the characteristics required of young men and women in order to marry while they were still accumulating capital. They did so in a way that kept control of property and capital in an urban environment in white, male hands.

This great private and public debate about marriage corresponded with Kentucky's rapid entry into a market economy and the state's most intense period of urbanization. Kentucky's commercial economy began to flourish several decades prior to the Civil War as Kentucky's planters and merchants alike tied their fortunes to a nation-wide transportation and market revolution. Between 1830 and 1860, merchants in Kentucky's urban centers began to agitate to build the transportation infrastructures they deemed necessary to complete with other towns and cities in order to take advantage of connections to commercial markets in surrounding states, and in national and international markets. Gradually, Kentucky's participation in the market economy led to

the growth of an urban population and to the increasing importance of urban trade and industry over Kentucky's agricultural production. By 1860, there were eight towns of at least 2,500 people with Lexington and Louisville being the largest and most economically active. In addition, Louisville had become the "largest industrial center in the south" with an expanding circle of suburbs.[1] This great debate about marriage began about 1830, and reached its apex between 1840 and 1860, predominantly among an increasingly powerful, white middle class in Kentucky's urban centers, in tandem with these economic and social changes.

However, at mid-century leaders in Kentucky's urban centers still had a tenuous claim to authority. Early in the nineteenth century, Kentucky's municipal leaders had begun to engage in a conflict with powerful planters over economic, political and cultural power. Allen Share suggests that by 1812 "two societies had emerged in Kentucky, one rural and one urban" and they were divided by "distinct patterns of life, institutions, habits, and modes of thought."[2] By the middle decades of the nineteenth century an emerging white middle class in Kentucky's urban centers had begun to extend "their influence over the economic and political life of the hinterland."[3] Moreover, "as the cities grew tensions between urban and rural interests increased and became a major factor in political and legislative affairs."[4] However, in the antebellum period, wealthy

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[1] Allen J. Share, *Cities in the Commonwealth: Two Centuries of Urban Life in Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1982), 33, 47.

[2] Ibid. 20. Lowell H. Harrison and James C. Klotter, *A New History of Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 220.

[3] Share, *Cities in the Commonwealth*, 26.

[4] Ibid. 48.

Kentucky planters continued to control Kentucky politics, and accordingly, economic decisions. Until the outbreak of the Civil War, "Bourbon planters" continued to fill the seats of Kentucky's state legislature in Frankfort and to hand out money to city governments only "reluctantly," and in "dribs and drabs."[5]

At mid-century, moreover, like Uncle Ben, Kentucky's middle class was caught between two loads of hay. Kentucky's urban centers were small, and surrounded by a vast sea of rural neighbors. In 1860 only about ten percent of Kentucky's population lived in urban centers, and only twenty percent as late as 1900.[6] Moreover, Kentucky's middle class had a tenuous claim to an urban identity. Most had recently come from the country either as sons and daughters of Kentucky's powerful planter families or from modest, white farming families. Even urban newspaper editors were conscious of the "inherent rurality of Kentuckians" throughout most of the nineteenth century.[7] Although there was some consciousness of class conflict, particularly in the fiction that editors reprinted from city papers in the northeast, consciousness of differences in rank between classes in urban newspapers took a backseat to the conflict occurring between rural and urban culture. Accordingly, Kentucky's developing middle class fashioned a self-conscious, urban identity predominantly by defining itself as *not* rural.

Their mid-century conversation about marriage was one significant way that the members of Kentucky's middle class solidified their urban identity. They imagined

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid. 43, 47.

[7] Thomas D. Clark, *Agrarian Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1977), 59.

modern marriage as a union that occurred between white, educated, respectable and sensitive people living in the city. They also policed their romanticized vision of marriage by relying on rural stereotypes of their planter ancestors and their rustic neighbors. Only greedy, landed aristocrats thought about money and family connection when they married. Only old-fashioned, country bumpkins connected the need for labor to ideas about marriage.

The heated conversation about marriage ended in the 1880s, after Kentucky's urban capitalists had established their place as the state's progressive economic engine. By then, Louisville was a prosperous city of 200,000 people, and men with ties to manufacturing and production had established their positions as leaders in municipal politics, on Boards of Trade, and in the state legislature in Frankfort. Louisville began to exhibit "tenacious urban loyalties."[8] Louisville was now home to monumental buildings, gleaming skyscrapers, and an ostentatious railroad station, the "architectural embodiments of corporate prosperity," "the physical symbols of urban maturity," and the "visual proof of metropolitan progress."[9] Between the middle and the end of the nineteenth century business leaders would triumph over wealthy country gentlemen and replace agrarian values with an "urban ethos." [10] At the end of the nineteenth century, commenting on the changes he had experienced, one Kentucky man determined that between 1870 and the early decades of the twentieth century Americans celebrated the

[8] Share, *Cities in the Commonwealth,* 67, 76.

[9] Ibid. 78.

[10] Harrison and Klotter, *A New History*, 220.

"rise of the city," when the farmer, whether wealthy or poor, "was as out as if he lived in Alaska."[11]

In the project of shifting cultural hegemony from rural to urban leaders, Kentucky's white middle class created a public discourse of marriage that was all about control of money not love. However, private negotiations of marriage in Kentucky in the nineteenth century were not economic contracts. The rather pragmatic arrangements or expression of duty and obligation among most of Kentucky's rural population does not mean that their marriages were no more than material calculations. It does indicate that they were not versed in expressing their emotions for public consumption. Therefore, one cannot claim to know from answers they offered to middle-class, often officious pension agents, whether they married because they were passionately in love, were consciously or unconsciously following parental and societal prescriptions for unleashing their sexual feelings, searching for companionship, were motivated by material necessity, or some combination of all of the above. One can say only say that most rural women and men expressed their expectations in a language they knew for what they thought marriage ought to be. Similarly, adolescents in well educated, white families closely mimicked the discourse and sentiments about courtship and marriage that prevailed in their social circles and Kentucky's antebellum urban newspapers. Consequently this study demonstrates only the language, the discourse, the script or the "realm[s] of

[11] Share, *Cities in the Commonwealth*, 79

cognitive possibilities" in which these young women and men shaped their marital expectations. [12]

Rather than being simply moral instruction, moreover, the conversation was a debate. It was a vernacular discussion occurring among and between the members of a developing, white middle class in Kentucky. It was, consequently, constructed on the fly and laden with unresolved contradictions. It arose, consequently, already "fractured."[13] Nevertheless, Kentucky's middle class had discursively, at least, scoured marriage clean of grimy material considerations. One Louisville attorney determined in 1846, that the romantic vision of marriage he had a hand in constructing was timeless. He pontificated that romantic marriage based on love could be traced from modern times through olden times all the way back to Adam and Eve. It was, therefore cast in stone because it was in the Bible.[14] Although this attorney relied on the precedent of the historical past, he might have been predicting the future. One study done in 1912 suggests that among the white middle class in a small town in the American mid-west, "'romantic love [was now] the only valid basis for marriage.'" [15]

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[12] Nancy Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard UniversityPress, 2000), 8.

[13] Sanjay Joshi uses this term to describe the conscious but contradictory self-making of an urban middle class that stitched together old and new ideas to culturally fashion itself in Lucknow, India between 1880 and 1930. Sanjay Joshi, Fractured Modernity: Making of a Middle Class in Colonial North India (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[14] "The Breach of Promise Case," November 28, 1846, *American Democrat and Weekly Courier*.

[15] Nancy Cott, *Public Vows*, 150.

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