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**“A COMMON BAND
OF BROTHERHOOD”
Male Subcultures, the Booster
Ethos, and the Origins
of Urban Social Order
in the Midwest of the 1840s**

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The origins of the middle class in antebellum America lie rooted in the response of rural and urban people in both the East and West to the transformative forces of industrialization and rapid urbanization. As each force relentlessly specialized, centralized, and differentiated corporate rural and urban household and village economies across the North, most Americans were cut free from the structures of family and community life and compelled to fend for themselves as free agents in the marketplace. Whether they confronted the marketplace in New England villages, on southern plantations, or across the frontier, both rural and urban people responded by applying the traditional values of hard work, self-discipline, reason, and Christian faith more aggressively toward individualism and self-mastery. In a variety of ways, their efforts sharpened social, gender, and racial identities and intensified individual and group agendas to establish and maintain social control. In these efforts lie the origins of the more distinctive, sharply drawn, working- and middle-class cultures that shaped antebellum life in America.

Traditionally, this process of social development is viewed as having its origins in rural and then urban New England, and then gradually diffusing south and west across the frontier. Viewed as a periphery, the social development of the antebellum Middle West has



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generally been viewed as a process of in-migration, transference, and reestablishment of social values, structures, and class cultures brought from the East and replanted to grow and develop in somewhat distinctive ways in the West. In general, social order across the "urban frontier" was established by the transfer of evangelical Christianity, the booster ethos, and the gentility system to the West.¹ Brought West by "good settlers," these systems displaced or supplanted a social vacuum. The chaotic, disorderly, "mixed," highly mobile, socially isolating, and predominantly male "frontier" or "border" society was, if anything, a state of social transition rather than a social order with any structure or defining characteristics that contributed to social development either regionally or nationally.

Increasingly, however, as historians of the Middle West and West continue to abandon the frontier framework and view regional and national social development as intertwined, it is becoming apparent that social development at any place results from the complex interaction of the activities and behaviors of those "on the ground," both locally and regionally, migrants passing through, waves of subsequent immigrants—whether stayers or transients—and those elsewhere across the region or nation. From this perspective, local and regional social history becomes a layering of individual and group stories and activities, in which actors with their specific values and frameworks—rooted in timing and experience—interact and contribute to a local or regional process of social development while continuing to interact and take part in national life. From this perspective, the society of the urban frontier was not undeveloped but rather was shaped by the interaction between regional and national social processes over time at a specific place within the broader national social system.

It has been suggested, for example, that the private structures and dynamics of family systems embedded within migration systems crossing and settling the West provided a social mooring of private order within the region before more public ordering systems and institutions were in place.² From this perspective, it is assumed that there was little or no order within the highly transient, predominantly male societies at towns and cities across the frontier during the decade or so before subsequent migration evened out gender ratios and provided

the stable base for social development. But rather than living in social vacuums, more forts or camps than urban societies, some men within these predominantly male societies established structures of order that laid the foundations of western society. Therefore, instead of just supplanting social disorder across the urban frontier, genteel settlers brought the cultural system of "gentility" West and attached it to, or planted it within, the family systems and social structures that had located at various towns or cities across the region. In doing so, they emboldened those who were averse to efforts to try to tame the chaos of "border society" to suffuse and penetrate both the predominant male society and the nascent booster ethos that developed within it and to use both to construct a distinctive middle-class society in the urban West. Though often considered by both contemporaries and subsequent historians as a kind of "imagined" social order based more on expectations of future social conditions rather than on the actual structure, character, and dynamics of society "on the ground" across the urban frontier of the 1830s and 1840s, the gendered dynamics of that society affected the subsequent development of both regional and national society.

Urban and social historians are increasingly aware that across the antebellum urban North, men, parallel to the efforts of women, articulated distinctive class cultures to clarify self-identity and fix social order. In the large city and metropolis, middle-class "gentlemen" cultivated gentility and responded to the call of evangelical Christianity to differentiate and separate themselves from their working-class brethren. Working men in larger cities responded to the dislocation, downward mobility, and pressure from judgmental middle-class social control concomitant with urbanization by developing more aggressive and distinctive "sporting cultures,"³ or "bachelor subcultures" in which they cultivated and indulged in aggressive, uninhibited, liberating, and even violent recreational behavior and sexual activity, to socially and emotionally empower themselves. By flouting the norms of self-control and self-discipline that were changing the lives of men who aspired to, or considered themselves, middle class, they—as well as many middle-class young men who intermingled with this culture—enhanced self-esteem, articulated self-identity, fended off loneliness, and eased or vented social frustration.⁴

In the highly developed, differentiated societies of the urban East, male subcultures formed in alignment with the general tendency and social dynamic resulting from the industrial revolution and urbanization by differentiating and separating themselves from a social other to articulate class identity amid rapid social change. As exercises in social boundary management, they articulated and sharpened social delineations and established social order. Across the newly developing, shallowly rooted, extremely mobile, intensely competitive, and thus more "mixed" and egalitarian societies of the urban frontier, there was less room and tolerance for differentiation, opposition, and violence. Male cultures, by necessity, had to work centripetally to draw men from diverse backgrounds together and thus facilitate social interaction and encourage compromise and accommodation. They became a force or agent that settlers employed symbiotically along with the emergent booster ethos, and before the gentility system, to establish a semblance of social order upon which their social, economic, and cultural goals depended.

The rich and detailed evidence in the Caleb Forbes Davis collection from over forty autobiographies of men who settled and established the town of Keokuk, Iowa, in the 1830s and 1840s, provides an unprecedented database from which to discern the dynamics of social development in a western town. Among western towns in the late 1830s and early 1840s, few developed on such contested ground, as Keokuk, Iowa. Located at the southeast tip of Iowa just above where the Des Moines River meets the Mississippi River at the foot of the lower rapids, Keokuk was situated at or near the vortex of a series of economic, social, and cultural convergences between North and South, and East and West; between "civilization" and "savagery," and the core and the periphery; and between local investment and outsider speculation, and economic and social reality and booster expectation. Keokuk was a "border town" on the "Middle Border," inhabited by members of "border society," and surrounded by "border ruffians," and was known invariably as "den of cutthroats and desperadoes," and the "worst place on the river."⁵

As a trading post in the 1820s, the site of the town was a point of contact and intersection between American and mixed-blood and Native-American societies. When, in 1825, the federal government

granted a large tract of land in southeastern Iowa, called the Half Breed Tract, which included the site of Keokuk, to the few hundred mixed-blood descendants of the traders who had aided American endeavors on the frontier since the late eighteenth century, the native and mixed-blood presence in its vicinity increased. By 1832, American settlers from each of the major migrant streams intersected and moved across the region, encroaching on, squatting, and after Congress transferred the right to sell the land to the mixed-blood residents in 1834, buying lands from and settling among the few mixed-blood settlers who occupied the district.

In the 1830s, waves of American squatters, land speculators, entrepreneurs, opportunists, land sharks, and criminals shifting their attention away from the Lead District in northwestern Illinois, flooded the district in search of gain. That Keokuk and Lee County were located directly in a "zone" where migration streams from the upland south, middle Atlantic states, and New England intersected, at a time when migration from the patrimonial system, while intertwining with immigration from the declining fort and post system, mixed with entrepreneurial intraurban migration, only added to the social and cultural diversity of the local population and intensified disputes over land claims into social and cultural struggles for hegemony. Among the most significant entrants into the field was, for example, the New York Land Company, which began in 1836 and 1837 to purchase many of the "blanket claims" that squatters and mixed-blood people held on their plots and thus gain legal control of large tracts of land. Placing its agents at the settlements of Montrose, Fort Madison, and Keokuk, where a competitor had laid out a town plat and began to sell town lots to the mixed population of a few hundred men who had squatted at the site of an old trading post "Rat Row" where they engaged in the "lightering" of freight over the rapids, the New York Land Company set in motion the dynamics of urban development in the area.

In each case, however, that development would be carried out in the context of the larger legal and political confrontation over control of the Half Breed Tract, which would embroil Lee County for years. The New York Land Company's effort to purchase large tracts of the Half Breed lands in 1837 were met with violent opposition by the few hundred settlers, squatters, ruffians, and mixed-blood people who had

occupied and claimed rights to the land. When the territorial legislature supported the settlers by allowing them to claim and hold a plot until they settled all legal issues, the New York Company retaliated by getting the district court to grant a consent decree of partition of the land to 101 persons, including both mixed-blood settlers and those who had purchased directly from mixed-blood owners, which rewrote the deeds on the land in "The Tract" to facilitate its purchase and sale, on May 8, 1841. Many other claimants sued on the basis of insufficient notice of judicial proceedings and were countersued by the New York Company, entangling both sides into a complex litigation that would continue for fifteen years.

In response, the settlers coalesced and hardened into a solid legal and social bulwark against the "Company," carving a fault line, "half and half,"⁶ between the settlers or Anti-Decree men, as the "outs," and the Decree men, the New York Land Company and most newcomers, as the "ins," down the center of the rural and urban society within the region.⁷ The Anti-Decree settlers, who were predominantly from the South, organized, in the tradition of rural populist resistance, as a "law unto themselves" across the Half Breed Tract and routinely threatened with bodily harm any agents who came out into the Tract. In response to especially aggressive efforts by the Company to establish control over their lands in 1840-1841, 1844, 1846-1847, 1849, and again in 1850, 1852, and 1853, settlers mobs, or "committees" formed and marched into town to halt the Company's efforts.⁸ Urban vigilante committees and, once, even a "Decree mob," formed as a counter-response, resulting in a series of armed confrontations, which degenerated into "a half-breed war."⁹ In time, so deep did the rift between Keokuk and its hinterland become that crossing out into the "Tract" or "the county"¹⁰ became, for townsmen, a dramatic act fraught with political significance. "The Tract," in one local historian's eyes, became a kind of "small Ireland" set against the Decree men who analogously played the role of England.¹¹ It was upon this contested ground, divided by law, politics, and class, that those who arrived in Keokuk carved out a town plat from the layering of contested land claims, and then gradually, by exerting law and order, established an economic nodal point upon which "good" society could develop.

Through a network analysis of social contacts and connections made among most of the men in town in the early 1840s, a cohort analysis of migration patterns, a collective biography of the autobiographers, and rich personal reminiscences about social behavior and social interaction one can relate local to regional and national events and social and cultural to economic and networking activity. The evidence indicates that amid the predominantly male chaos of "border society," settlers resorted to more fluid, dynamic, and ad hoc modes of social and political interaction and behavior—in the "intermediate zone" between private and public, what one historian calls "the social sphere"¹²—to forge a semblance of order on the ground. They did this by undertaking a three-pronged strategy. Around the vortex of the nodal point of the local economy, a small core group of settlers formed a network of individuals who instead of pursuing simply their own self-interest began to work together for the good of each other and the good of the town. They fostered this kind of rudimentary cooperative support network or system, through very modest, practical, and cautiously employed booster rhetoric. Some men in town who considered themselves genteel would involve themselves in this network and interact with social others from among the ruffians and desperadoes, only to the extent they had to. Others sought to penetrate and suffuse the disorderly male life of the town. In doing so, they created male subcultures out of which eventually many gentlemen would emerge to join, in the 1850s, their more genteel cohorts to establish the gentility system and the basis of urban society.

This article focuses specifically on the efforts to construct and cultivate male subcultures as social ordering agents within the chaotic and disorderly society of the urban frontier. Early boosters in the 1830s and 1840s—aware that exaggerated expectations could lead to quick disappointment—rather than engaging in unrestrained "wind work,"¹³ adjusted their rhetoric to current reality and sought out and welcomed to the local economy and the ethos men or women who could both help them create or sustain order and were willing to restrain self-interest to work for the realistic collective goals of the town. In Keokuk, this network is defined by the specific references by the authors of fifteen to twenty autobiographies to those whom the author knew, was helped

by, or with whom he worked, socialized, or cooperated. In one autobiography after another, one can precisely map the author's progress from in-migration, to arrival, introduction, interviews, acquiring a sponsor, being screened, and then, upon gaining entrance, making further introductions, becoming socially situated, acquiring a job, finding a residence, making friends and associates, and becoming a member of the "system." In Keokuk, in 1841, this network involved 60 to 100 young, predominantly unmarried men, from different classes and regions, and from both sides of the half-breed war, who came together and cooperated to establish a local economy by running steamboats; operating stores, taverns, and hotels; selling lands; providing banking services; renting or building housing for newcomers; establishing newspapers; and boosting the town. By the mid-forties, this ethos or network almost operated as a "system,"¹⁴ screening and either turning away from or allowing into the informal and formal networks within the "social sphere" almost every individual who arrived in town through about 1850. That participants in this network came from both sides of the Decree dispute indicates the extent to which economic and civic demands were able to embrace political and social diversity. Nevertheless, these networks, involving intensely competitive men from various regions and backgrounds, who, as in the case of Keokuk, disagreed about major political and land issues, were, not surprisingly, extremely fragile and routinely prone to and imperiled by discord, violence, and chaos, which, by besmirching a town's reputation, could doom its future.

Though the booster ethos operated upon and through individuals and groups to contour and coordinate action and stimulate and promote town development, it alone could not foster social order before the late 1840s. The booster ethos, which sought to subsume self-interest and individual action to collective town goals, worked, to a degree, for the members of "good society" who awaited the arrival of more of their kind to establish outposts of genteel society, but it remained a volatile and unstable force, evolving as much out of, rather than creating or imposing, order. Threatened initially by violence and disorder concomitant with predominantly male, highly transient frontier populations, many participants in the booster ethos undertook two strategies, one working externally, the other internally, to stabilize and

solidify its extremely volatile structure. They did this while pursuing limited economic strategies and gendered modes of behavior that would counteract the tendency to confrontation and violence in such a "mixed" and unformed society. Externally, the members formed both extra-legal vigilante committees and mobs whenever they were deemed necessary to combat and quash violent threats to social order. Sometimes they defended the town against social "others" such as gangs of desperadoes and horse thieves, settlers mobs, or, given their proximity to Nauvoo, Illinois, Mormons. At other times, they suppressed disorderly behavior and violence among members of town society. In Keokuk, a central core group of several men—which included the sheriff and the justice of the peace—formed the Vigilante Committee, which ruled the town for five or six years. The fact that while waging "war" against gangs of criminals, desperadoes, ruffians, and Mormons, these partisan Decree men also isolated one of the main Anti-Decree opponents of the New York Company, Isaac Galland, suggests that they acted as part of the strategy of the New York Land Company to establish order in town and secure their land titles. In any case, together the Vigilante Committee and the New York Company faction dominated local politics and controlled the offices of mayor and the city council until the late 1850s. In waging a kind of war, vigilante committees stopped the escalation of violence through violence and created some degree of collectivity against a common enemy, while clarifying which men were included or excluded from the network or town. Even so, such external structuring strategies, as with other such strategies, still had to be used cautiously and judiciously lest the use of organized excessive force defame the town's reputation as much as the violence they sought to quell.

Within the booster ethos network, however, settlers still had to maneuver through a thicket of conflicting attitudes, ideas, goals, and expectations. Around the core of the ethos, other political and social groups, in ways similar to the Vigilante Committee, demarcated their own boundaries while straddling, navigating, or negotiating along, or even across, the deep Decree versus Anti-Decree fissure that bifurcated the network and local society as a whole. The realm of politics and office-holding (a patronage or caucus system in which one had "friends"),¹⁵ which included a small local Whig party (in a

predominantly Democratic town and region); the local or county bar association; the first members of "genteel" or "good" societies who founded churches, academies, and reform societies; the Masons; the "Keokuk Guards," a local militia; a temperance society; social and dancing clubs and committees; and even sporting clubs, formed a grid or web of interactions, bringing together different men in different circumstances in a variety of ways. On a less formal level, these same men, in different combinations, formed highly volatile social and recreational committees, sets, cliques, factions, circles, or gangs whose members, bound by "a common band of brotherhood," occasionally "went on tare[s]," "spree[s]," or "bender[s]," or held "jollification[s]" or indulged in "rough and tumble" "horse play" and roustabouts or frolics in which groups of men competed for some prize or trophy, thus adding further complexity to the social geography of the emerging booster ethos (see Figure 1).¹⁶

Amid such volatility, settlers were compelled to find more subtle means that worked specifically on the actions of individuals within the network to reduce the tendency toward confrontation and violence. The booster ethos was generally unable to reduce the tendency to disorder and violence for most settlers struggling to establish themselves within "border society." It satisfied people, eased social pressures, and established order only when, over time, the town proved an economic and social success. Men in these societies sought, therefore, more immediate social and behavioral means and mechanisms to quell, ease, vent, and release the pressures and tensions that were the sources of disorder and violence at the time. By reducing the tendency toward violence, such means would give the booster ethos time to take shape and develop, and thus worked symbiotically with it as a social structuring agent.

But how, other than satisfying material, cultural, social, and physical needs and wants, does one inculcate social order through negative processes that quell, defuse, vent, and ease social pressures? How does one, in short, satisfy, and thus reduce, social and competitive pressure, without really doing so? Anthony Rotundo has suggested that in such highly pressured competitive venues and social circumstances, men, aware of the fragility of the urban social order and of the negative consequences of violence, were compelled to pursue

coexistence, accommodation, and compromise, "maintaining a judicious balance between cooperation and competition . . . by channeling their aggressive and individualistic impulses in ways that would not tear the social fabric apart."¹⁷ One way to achieve this was to develop modes of behavior that both toughen up individuals and make them less sensitive to or better able to handle the social pressures that are characteristic of the localities in which they live. Another way is to develop behaviors that vent or release social pressures. Finally, one could ease competitive pressures by cultivating reciprocity, voluntarism, mutual dependence, and fraternity to break down social isolation.¹⁸ It was toward these ends that men across the urban frontier in the Midwest and West in the middle of the nineteenth century constructed male subcultures. In these gendered social realms, men from different classes, regions, and circumstances came together within a realm of shared values that diverged somewhat from those of increasingly feminine genteel society, and behaved in collective ways to pursue common social goals.

In some ways, by just enabling upwardly or downwardly mobile men, or those moving into married and family life, to maintain social contacts and thus keep the channels of interaction and communication open enough to pursue social compromises and accommodations, male subcultures could ease social confrontation and vent social pressures. Amid the moral and legal vacuum of the early urban West where society was less able to absorb or tolerate violence, many felt compelled to cultivate behavior that sought to obfuscate, elide, and smooth differences and boundaries and foster interaction, rather than simply ignore, isolate from, or try to coexist with an unacceptable external or internal social "other." The primary way men did this was to cultivate dissimulating and indirect social behavior. Nicknames, practical jokes, verbal jousting, collective recreating and conviviality and frolics, "mock" or "spoof" institutions and events, such as the Yellow Hand-Bill meeting, all employed indirection, sarcasm, irony, and humor to help vent social tensions and thus defuse or avert the very real danger that the "plain talk" and bravado characteristic of everyday discourse among men, as well as strategies to establish law and order through vigilante action, would escalate into confrontation, violence, mob action, or even social war.

It is striking to note, for example, that about half of the men in the booster ethos in Keokuk in the early forties (97 men and two women, whom I have been able to trace) were assigned nicknames. Those who assigned many of the 106 nicknames I have found were at the very core of the innermost circle of a group of friends or brothers who began to network and formed the Vigilante Committee between 1841 and 1846. From the perspective of the core, such names conferred, determined, supported, or confirmed status or membership and defined the boundaries of inclusion within or exclusion from the group.¹⁹ Fraternity and mutuality were cultivated by keeping most nicknames private, if not secret. They were used only among those who shared them or knew the inside joke upon which they were based, and usually were not even used to address the possessor of the name—except in the cases of the relatively few men who acquired public nicknames. Likewise, nicknames were rarely mentioned in letters or newspapers. This secrecy gave to the group, and the extent of the subculture across which the use of names extended, an elusive, mysterious, oppositional element, which worked, much like in fraternal associations, to inculcate loyalty and fraternity among its members. The distribution of nicknames among Keokuk's male population thus demarcated the boundaries and articulated some degree of hierarchy and order among members of the male subculture.

Correlating the timing of nickname assignment and the distribution of nicknames on one side or another of major social or political issues indicates the mediating role played by nicknames in response to political or social conflict. Discerning the meaning of nicknames by relating specific names to the characteristics or actions of specific individuals further indicates how, through dissimulation and irony, nicknames actually worked to mollify or vent social friction and thus promoted the emergence and diffusion of the booster ethos in town society and politics.²⁰ On one level, nicknames fulfilled a need to establish one's status in a nebulous egalitarian social context. On another, they helped reduce stress and tension in an impersonal and frustrating society fraught with risk, tensions, and conflict, by prolonging the fraternal homosocial collegiality of "boy culture."²¹ By fostering fraternity, they also helped to break the progression from passion and argument to confrontation and violence.



Figure 1: Three "Gentlemen" from Keokuk, Iowa: James F. Cox, "Uncle Jimmy," George E. Kilbourne, "Young Pidgewiskie," and William Worth Belknap, "Apollo" (left to right) 1852.

SOURCE: Courtesy of the Keokuk Savings Bank and Trust Company, Keokuk, Iowa.

While the sharing of names promoted collegiality, social knowledge, and fraternity among strangers, and ordered and delimited the confines of the network, the embedded meanings of nicknames indicate their more subtle social role working in different directions toward the same or similar end—social order. Though many names, such as honorifics (General, Squire, and Captain), and personal or diminutive names (Little . . . , Old . . . , Young . . . , Uncle) expressed honor, praise, friendship, endearment, or appreciation (the name "Old," for example, often applied to someone who became a kind of familiar "mascot" possessing some wisdom), most nicknames had an ironic or sarcastic meaning (see Figure 1). Compelled to cross over

lines of social otherness, sarcastic nicknames carried a heavier burden of dissimulation as a way to vent tensions and thus could assume a more complex semantic structure, able to serve the purposes of the various people who used it while they interacted in different circumstances and episodes with that person. An analysis of who gave nicknames to whom, and in what circumstances, indicates that almost every sarcastic or vulgar nickname was given by someone to another person on the other side of the Decree/Anti-Decree fault line, or some lesser line of demarcation, dividing town society. Likewise, other sarcastic or critical names were employed most often at points or along boundaries of social interaction, quite often adversarial, between men within different factions or circles within the ethos.

Though some honorifics or personal names—General, Squire, Chieftan, Citizen, King, Sweet, or Government—were ironic or sarcastic send-ups of someone's pretensions, self-importance, or arrogance, for example, most ironic and sarcastic names were from the slang used in the military, politics, the legal profession, as well as in saloons or gambling halls. As such, they tended to be more vulgar, caustic in tone, and thus much more ironic, interested as much in exposing and commenting on a character trait, action, point of view, or flaw as merely describing one or endearing one to the group. Thus they could be directed by those in the mediating center to either side of the various lines dividing town society. Hence, though many of these names were assigned to those in opposing factions, those who assigned names most frequently seem to have equally targeted both sides. But while the use of slang vulgarizes, it also complexifies, acquiring subtle different meanings in various contexts. Often contradictory names reflected a genuinely confused image that one held up before society. In their use of sarcasm—such as pointing out a physical trait (calling a cross-eyed man “Cockeyed,” a very tall man “Tall Cedar,” or a man with a prosthesis “Peg Leg”) or castigating a personal flaw (“Doubleheads” for a loan shark, “Heels,” or “Flutterfoot,” for an alcoholic), an embarrassing incident (reminding “Tight Squeeze” of the time he was arrested for assaulting a woman at a dance when he hugged her too tightly), or a moment of failure or notorious success (for example, naming a lawyer after a very unpopular defendant who he got off)—nicknames criticized and chastened individuals by

censuring and ridiculing actions; questioning a man's ethics, honesty, or character; castigating him for the order of his priorities; or simply mocking or tormenting him. But by doing so in a dissembling manner, nicknames allowed men to say indirectly what could not be said directly, while, in the spirit of friendship, still exonerating him, or supporting or encouraging him, thus easing emotions and venting social and political tensions. Situated between or extending across the lines and demarcations that crisscrossed local society, nicknames lubricated social interaction by reducing the threat that confrontation or discord would degenerate into violence, while facilitating communication.

Nicknames could, therefore, be considered as the signifying consequences, or marks, left on men in the course of their interactions with other men, which both established their equal membership and their status in the social hierarchy. They ranged from descriptive and endearing names or titles emerging from male bonding, camaraderie, and mutual interaction, to more obscure or ambiguous names that used slang, sarcasm, and indirection to sustain dissimulating behavior. When nicknames became more blunt and vulgar, their use became analogous to aggressive male verbal jousting involving bravado, braggadocio, and blackguarding, and an occasional duel (of which there were only two recorded in Keokuk), which emerged from greater tensions and more intense confrontations. Either way, such names lubricated social interaction by allowing men, in the course of daily interactions, to say things and express emotions not otherwise able to be said or expressed. Examples of actual verbal jousting out of which some names developed abound. Most involved, on some level, a question of someone's status, character, and honor. Though sometimes, when such jousting intertwined with more extensive mockery, joking, or rough housing, it began to approach the embedded point of more elaborate practical jokes and organized oppositional cultural activity, in which someone or a group sought to comment indirectly on the character trait or action of another through scripted action rather than discourse.²²

More specific practical jokes or pranks played by members of this fraternity of friends with nicknames served a similar role, if, in their more direct approach and thus apparent meaning, in a somewhat more

risky, even dangerous manner. Rather than using sarcasm and wit, practical jokes were meant, as they still are today by those who still play them, to expose, embarrass, or show up someone whose behavior or character the perpetrator wanted to comment on.²³ A number of members of this inner group of society in Keokuk were serious players of practical jokes. A number of the members of the core group within the booster ethos network established in 1840 to 1841 “were always getting up jokes or playing pranks” or “tricks” on various townsmen, strangers, and travelers, and “delighted in laughing at their calamities and mocked their fear when it came.” In the autobiographies and memoirs from the early forties, there are a number of examples of such jokes. These tricks and jokes ranged from doctoring the liquor in a bottle before someone drank it, to turning furniture over or setting it in other rooms of a hotel to infuriate the landlord, to dousing men or pouring water into their pockets on freezing winter days, to sabotaging harnesses and ropes on carriages, to springing a bear free from a stockade and chasing it around town—until it chased them—to emptying out a tavern by trapping a wild animal inside it, to simply pulling a person’s leg by performing a spoof. Sometimes the latter was done on Indians, but mostly it was done on travelers. Such jokes eased tensions by releasing an animus built up by disagreement or competition, by getting something off one’s chest, or by exposing the truth of someone’s behavior. Practical jokes could also be carried out simply to have fun or to be cruel.²⁴

One example of a practical joke indicates each of these purposes could be intertwined. A “lady visitor” arrived at “Sweet” (that is, gullible) William Coleman’s Rapids Hotel in Keokuk, Iowa, on a spring evening in the early 1840s and was shown to her room. An hour later, “Devil Creek” Bill Clark, the mayor of Keokuk, informed Coleman that while passing in front of her room, he had heard a man’s voice inside. Coleman rushed to the room, pounded on the door, and barged in to “discover a young lawyer . . . holding the lady on his lap with his arms around her neck.” Startled, the lawyer ran for dear life ahead of Bill Clark who chased him out the front door and down the length of Rat Row, a string of saloons along the wharf. Coleman, meanwhile, angrily ordered the woman to leave the hotel, but quickly discovered that “she was of the male persuasion and one of his boarders.” The

lawyer, it seems, as Clark later explained, had acquired a reputation in town for being "very fond of the society of a certain class of ladies," and the "boys," uncomfortable with his impolitic indiscretion, chose to expose him by luring him to the room with a false note from Isaac Galland's female assistant, and then having one of the practical jokers, dressed as a woman, entrap him in a compromising position that he could not explain away. The lawyer soon left town in disgrace.²⁵ Coleman and his wife were outraged and embarrassed by the whole matter and concerned about the genteel reputation of their establishment, which they had worked so hard to cultivate, a necessary concern in a town where houses of assignation were nearby.

In a similar joke, the justice of the peace, "Squire" Laban Fleak (who many in town thought a bit of a dandy), was caught with making a salacious joke when Fleak, asked by a man to perform his marriage to his fiancée even though the man would be unable to pay him—which Fleak knew to be a lie—"jokingly replied to him that if he would let him sleep with his intended the first night after their marriage, that would be satisfactory pay, which the bachelor agreed to at once." The following night at the wedding, when the groom got up to leave following Fleak out the door, Fleak inquired where he was going. The groom told Fleak that he intended to fulfill his side of the bargain and informed him that his wife was willing, indeed flattered, to sleep with him for services rendered. In spite of Fleak's protest that his remark had been "just a joke," the groom persisted and remarked that he would get his wife or nothing for payment. In the persistence of the man, Fleak quickly saw through the joke, which was being "played back" on him, and laughed embarrassingly, along with the entire bridal party who laughed at Fleak's embarrassment. Caught with having made a ribald joke, Fleak stood exposed, and, by laughter and rumor, was chastened for it because "it got circulated around the town in three days and there was not a man, woman, or child in Keokuk that had not heard of it."²⁶

In another case, a practical joke intertwined with other verbal jousting and spoof behavior, indicating their similar purpose. A visitor, "General" Daniel S. Lee from one of the "first families of Virginia [F. F. V.'s]," arrived in town with an intent to settle there. Finding out there was a dance of the "Twenties," a subculture group that had been

organized as a “dancing set” at a local hotel, he acquired an invitation. When he arrived dressed as a “Chesterfield” gentleman, “the boys” mocked his presence by parting their hair in the middle, buttoning up their jackets, and walking around talking in an affected Virginian accent. Lee, oblivious to the impression he made, ensconced himself in the best hotel in town, and, being “too-too” to engage in any business or “sordid employment . . . devoted most of his time to the ladies, dress, politics,” and collecting minerals. When he decided to ship his mineral collection of geodes back to Virginia, some pranksters, tired of his tales of aristocratic lineage in Virginia, stole the geodes and replaced them with local bricks, which the General forgot to check before opening the boxes in a grand presentation before his friends back home, who were astonished when they saw geodes, about which Lee had lectured for quite some time, that looked very much like bricks. To send him packing, a group of “the boys” gave him a spoof banquet, and even had the Governor Stephen Hempstead come down and grant Lee a “title” in the state militia, which Lee, entirely unaware of the joke, thought was very important and of which he later proudly boasted to friends back home, but which was “insignificant” and “not cared for or sought by anyone else.”²⁷

Invariably, practical jokes, spoof social occasions such as banquets or roasts, mock societies and committees, and mock political or militia parades involved individuals who wanted to make a comment or target other individuals across various political or social fault lines that crisscrossed the booster ethos network. The holding of “oppositional” balls, banquets, or celebrations, which sarcastically spoofed the more formal genteel system of social balls, parties, and dinners in which some members of the subculture routinely participated, is a clear example of this. To operate the more formal system of balls, parties, and dinners, the more “genteel” members of the subculture, much as they did in the informal society of taverns, clubs, and associations, organized themselves into a number of committees, in which the same men participated year after year. In the autobiographies, one can trace the membership of various informal and formal committees throughout the forties and confirm that such “committee culture” mirrored the network of men who gave each other nicknames and traded practical jokes. As the system of gentility infiltrated this formal culture and

increased the social pressures and frictions among people, however, some members of this subculture, employing similar tactics to defuse such tension in other areas, began to organize sarcastic, carnival-like, spoof "oppositional" social and public events in which all the etiquette, rules, procedures, assumptions, and facts of the real events were turned topsy-turvy or appeared as a negative of reality.

At the late date of 1858, the tone and style of such events in the earlier subculture still emerged in an intriguing invitation to an annual festival, organized by a group called the Cosmopolitan Society on January 15, 1858 (see Figure 2). Using the biting sarcastic and ironic language of the male subculture (there are several references to specific members of the male subculture in the text), the invitation upbraids the social pretensions of emerging local elite by articulating, in a mock, sarcastic, reversed image, the socially demarcating agenda of more formal genteel occasions. By spoofing members of the elite who immigrated from New England, the Middle States, or Virginia, as well as the Irish, blacks, and illegitimate progeny, and then mocking philanthropers and boosters, the author, who ironically signed his pseudonym as the motto of the Union, created a topsy-turvy negative-image world in which the hierarchical matrix of regional, class, status, gender, and race identities that structured Keokuk society was literally elided by sarcasm, music, liquor, and capital.²⁸

The oppositional agenda of such mock reversed events often overflowed from balls, parties, and dinners into sporting contests, or team hunting competitions, and/or general, yet harmless, "horse play" or roughhousing behavior by large groups of men throughout the town.²⁹ In Keokuk, a few instances were recorded of a party or fight spilling out onto the streets in which a crowd of men "went on a tare," or "a spree" or a "bender." One time a large group of men, led by the mayor and his friends at the core of the male subculture, joined in a "terrific chorus" of "unearthly war whoops" to scare a group of travelers and then all went off on a "revelry," roaming the streets drinking and screaming. In another case, Bill Clark and the same group, the night Clark was elected mayor of Keokuk, mimicked Tammany Hall proceedings when Clark dressed up as a "big injin [*sic.*]" and was joined by a group of supporters who dressed as "braves" and they all marched single file through the town loudly celebrating Clark's victory.

Cosmopolitan Society.

Will hold their First Annual Festival at the WESTERN HOTEL on FRIDAY EVENING, JAN. 13th, 1898. All who have no justifiable proclivities,

"Propped by a cotter Pair or two,"
or are in any way hazy upon the subject of—GENEALOGY—
are invited to be present. No one belonging to any of the
annexed Associations will be eligible to admittance:

Whose Fathers sit in the Revolution.
Whose Fathers defended Washington in 1814.
No member of the Saint Andrew's Society.
No member of the Sons of Rip Van Winkle.
No member of the Hadlock Club.
No member of the West End Club.
No member of the Sons of Africa.
No one who boasts of Plymouth Rock,
"The Yankee Barney Stone."

No one who claims descent from "Daniel Boone," John
Resdolph, Fred or the Black Douglas.

No one who was ever snipe-shooting on the Eastern Shore
of Maryland, or held the bag for any snipe operation.

"In our own Green Prairie Land."

FUGLEMAN'S SWINETTE BAND is engaged for the occasion.

A. BARTLAND, Esq., of Point-to-Point, has kindly volun-
teered to sing a number of new and popular Songs, including

"Where did you come from."

"Music, moonshine, love and cider."

"Topsy dear, your brow are clouded."

"Is your maternal progenitor advised of your absence?"

Mr. U. GERUS FREEMAN will recite Coleridge's celebrated
poem of the "Ancient Rart-man," Thomas Hood's "Lost
Hair," and the best part of "Miss Kilmansegg and her pre-
cious leg."

A number of powerful Speakers are expected down on a
raft, and many distinguished "Strangers" are looked for,
"in a horn."

A collection will be taken up, which, in connection with
the proceeds of the Festival, will be applied towards the
erection of a "Foundlings Home" in Hoop-Pole Ward, city
of Keokuk, and it is hoped that all *Charitable Frisky Men*
will come right down with the "Spood-wicks."

E. PLURIBUS UNUM.

Figure 2: The Cosmopolitan Society

Even as the structures of Keokuk's society hardened and became more demarcated, the various kinds of behavior central to Keokuk's active male subculture—heavy drinking, assigning nicknames, verbal jousting, swearing, playing practical jokes, holding oppositional parties and balls, and participating in team and group frolics and competitions—were all carried out to relieve tensions and vent competitive pressure by connecting individuals to a common brotherhood, which converged in the Yellow (or Yaller) Hand-Bill meeting, Keokuk's

apparently "unique" public institution. These meetings developed in 1844 precisely along the fault lines created by the Decree that threatened the order of the booster ethos and male subculture and became, through continued half-breed fights and frictions over strategies to take within the booster ethos, an institutional mainstay of town life through the mid-fifties and continued as a town tradition until the late 1870s. Though one autobiographer described these meetings as "free and easy citizen meetings, . . . something like a 'third house' or 'mock legislature'" in which "any citizen could be attacked" and all were expected to take such criticisms "good humordly [*sic.*],"³⁰ such formal mock institutions were affected by rather than affected the male subculture. Both "moot" or "mock trials" among lawyers and the mock legislatures or the "lobby" among legislators emerged as those who entered the professions "combined" their new procedures—whether court, debating societies, or sessions of the legislature—with the "horse play" and sarcasm of the male subculture.³¹

Caleb Forbes Davis perceptively noted that "Silas Heaight was the getter up and moving spirit of such meetings. They were the escape pipe to the effervescent cussedness [*sic.*] of the early settlers; as necessary for the time as the blow off pipe to a steam engine. They were necessarily periodic and frequent, for in the early settlement of the county the congregation of all classes of humanity, upon a new soil, rank with vegetation, course diet, and poor whiskey the accumulation of bile was rapid and required frequent throwing off. Heaight was the exculpatus [*sic.*] to furnish the remedy." Perhaps sensing that nicknames, practical jokes, raucous parties, and general "fun" were too discursive to ease the building tensions simmering just beneath the surface of this urban male subculture, Heaight sought to draw together and concentrate the palliative of parody, humor, sarcasm, and irony by organizing more structured spoof meetings to discuss political issues.

Defining the underlying point of nicknames, practical jokes, verbal jousting, blackguarding, indeed, of the entire male subculture, Heaight expected that at these meetings "each and every person would 'pitch into' every other one, and anyone so sensitive that they could not stand a little lying or abuse had better be at home resting quietly in the bosom of his family." These meetings were usually announced by posters or handbills printed on yellow paper (two of these notices still

exist—one is sunflower yellow and the other is lemon yellow [see Figure 3]), which called upon the people “of the town or county” to come out and listen to discussions between noted speakers on controversial subjects, or, as one observer recalled, “any question [they] chose to speak on” often ranging across “twenty different subjects, none having any connection with any other.”³²

The first occurrence of a Yellow Hand-Bill meeting, which turned out to be an elaborate practical joke, suggests this central palliative purpose they played. In May 1841, when the district court of Iowa replatted the entire tract in a decree favorable to the New York Company to reestablish the legal basis of subsequent deeds, the “half-breed war”³³ erupted as groups of settlers and squatters, in response to the efforts of company agents to “warn” them “off” “the Tract,” organized as “law unto themselves,”³⁴ threatening agents who came out into the Half Breed Tract with bodily harm, while forming mobs, or “committees” to march into Keokuk to halt their efforts. Amid sporadic outbreaks of violence, the “half-breed war” was “fought” primarily by each side posting handbills or broadsides on trees, posts, and buildings, which either warned “squatters” off the land or threatened “Decree” men from the New York Land Company and their supporters from Keokuk, Iowa, to stay off the “tract.”

One morning in May or early June 1844, at a critical moment in the handbill war, “immense” yellow handbills³⁵—“full of capital head lines” which “impress[ed] on the reader the idea of an immense organization behind them” appeared on trees, posts, and buildings throughout Keokuk and the nearby Lee county. These handbills invited the voters of Lee county in highly sarcastic language to come to a special public meeting to discuss the Decree, settlers’ rights, and the county seat question and listen to three scheduled speakers, each of whom were widely known as soft-spoken and reticent men. On the day designated for the meeting, the plans for which remained secret, Silas Heaight alerted townspeople that in response to the handbills, a settlers mob had formed and was marching toward town. A crowd quickly gathered around several saloons at the foot of Main Street. Meanwhile, “one of the named speakers,” “Squire” Van Fossen, “a [very quiet] man of dignified deportment and elegant leisure,” was “mad enough to fight the man who issued the handbills.” He “smothered his wrath, however,

put on a ruffled shirt, and with a large gold-headed cane and a roll of documents under his arm, procured of 'Government' Adam Hine" [the meaning of carrying the papers is unclear], set out, accompanied by a growing number of "wharf rats," visiting one "whiskey shop," "dead-fall," and "box trap" after another, drinking and treating all who joined him as he went.³⁶ While this convivial "jollification" gained momentum, the crowd at the foot of Main Street grew in size. As the afternoon progressed, "outriders" sent into the country by Heaight, and then Heaight himself, returned with the news that a settlers mob, "a thousand strong," had formed, and was indeed "entering the town on Main Street in full force." As the crowd, now almost a mob itself, armed and readied itself for a critical confrontation in the half-breed war, however, Heaight disappeared. For awhile the agitated crowd waited expectantly, then some became impatient, and gradually one by one members of the crowd, amused or befuddled, but increasingly aware that they had been hoaxed, dispersed into the taverns and dives along the wharf. When Heaight quietly reappeared at a drinking place later that evening, most of the patrons, as well as two of the announced speakers, all of whom had been drinking for several hours, welcomed him warmly, enjoying the elaborate joke and talking over all aspects of the farce and how he had pulled it off.

Dan Dierdorff, another of the named speakers and a well-known ruffian whose nickname "Warrior" sarcastically ascribed his proclivity to fighting, failed to get the joke, however. He confronted Heaight "as the 'getter up' of the handbills and at once prepared for a fight." When Heaight, wanting no part of it, denied the charge and took to his heels, limping as he did—for which the boys gave him the nickname "Dot-And-Go-1 [*sic.*]"—Dierdorff followed. But when Heaight's "friends interfered and prevented trouble," the real race was co-opted by a feigned foot race down Main Street in the manner of a town "frolic." The frolic ended at the usual place, Widow Gaines' "corner" saloon at the foot of Main Street. There the boys, pretending to be afraid of Gaines, accorded her the role of "arbitrator" in this as in all disputes and fights in town, for which reason, they dubbed her "The Mayor."³⁷

By the later 1840s and early 1850s, meetings, organized as verbal jousting contests between speakers, and between the speakers and the

A MEETING OF THE PEOPLE!

Will be held at the COURT HOUSE on to-
morrow, Tuesday evening, at HALF-PAST
SEVEN.

**The Object of the Meeting is
a Good one,**

of which all that attend will learn and ap-
preciate.

All Good Citizens who feel an interest in
the safety and welfare of our City are ex-
pected to be present.

The Mayor, Common Council, Police and
City Officers are respectfully invited to at-
tend.

All the Gamblers, Vagrants, Thieves, Loaf-
ers, and Pimps, infesting the City are at
liberty to be present, as matters concerning
their welfare will be considered by the
meeting.

Let us have a full attendance, and one of
the old fashioned, Yellow Hand-Bill gath-
erings.

THE PEOPLE.

Monday, July 9th, 1861.

Figure 3: A Yellow Hand-Bill

audience, in much the same way as the give and take between performers and the audience in working-class burlesque shows of the time, actually took place. Such meetings were organized as combination public debates, public hearings, and town meetings, in which roles, procedures, rules of debate, and standards of etiquette and behavior were relaxed or reversed, making them spoof or mock events or “oppositional constructions,” not unlike “the lobby” or “mock trials” or even more raucous spoof or burlesque street parades, charivaris, or

Mardi Gras festivities in other cities of the time. The meetings of the 1850s especially drew together in a more organized and structured format on the edge of an emerging "genteel" culture the various modes of behavior and tactics of the male recreational subculture—nicknames, verbal jousting, practical jokes, and collective conviviality.³⁸

Male subcultures acquired a social purpose wherever the palliative of humor, sarcasm, and dissimulation was needed to elide political and social fault lines that threatened to tear the fabric of the town or city apart. The development of an elaborate culture of nicknames, verbal jousting, practical jokes, and mock culture and institutions, with its embedded humor, sarcasm, and indirection, can be read as seismic tremors reflecting deep social structural discord and tension in need of release. By keeping the channels of communication open and averting conflict and violence, the fraternal and recreational behavior of male subcultures helped sustain social order through turbulent times. Participating and dissembling among mixed society in male subcultures also bought genteel people time while they waited for more "good" settlers to arrive and found institutions that would enable them to pursue their agenda for social reform and control. In this way, male subcultures also erected the scaffolding or frame upon which, by means of the booster ethos, urban public culture and social order would be constructed in the 1850s and 1860s.³⁹ Many of the prominent "old boys" who ran booster ethos and established the gentility system in the urban Midwest of the 1850s, and later realized that their fraternal, localist assumptions were ill-suited to the dynamic forces of national capitalism in the 1860s and 1870s, had formed their values and learned their tactics in the 1840s among the "boys" in a "common band of brotherhood."

NOTES

1. Richard C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier: Pioneer Life in Early Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Lexington, Louisville, and St. Louis* (Chicago, 1959). See also the new edition, Richard C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier: The Rise of Western Cities, 1790-1930*, Introduction by Zane L. Miller (Champaign, IL, 1996). Don Harrison Doyle, *The Social Order of A Frontier Community, Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825-1870* (Urbana, IL, 1978); Carl Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen, Popular Economic Thought and Urban Growth in the Antebellum Middle West* (Westport, CT, 1981); Timothy R. Mahoney, *River Towns in the Great West, The Structure of Provincial Urbanization*

in the American Midwest, 1820-1870 (New York, 1990); Jo Ellen Vinyard, *The Irish on the Urban Frontier* (New York, 1976); Kathleen Conzen, *Immigrant Milwaukee, 1836-1860, Accommodation and Community in a Frontier City* (Cambridge, MA, 1976); Anita Shafer Goodstein, *Nashville, 1780-1860, From Frontier to City* (Gainesville, FL, 1989). This tradition continues in the following recent works: Jeffrey S. Adler, *Yankee Merchants and the Making of the Urban West, The Rise and Fall of Antebellum St. Louis* (New York, 1991); Jon C. Teaford, *Cities of the Heartland, The Rise and Fall of the Industrial Midwest* (Bloomington, IN, 1993); Kay J. Carr, *Belleville, Ottawa, and Galesburg, Community and Democracy on the Illinois Frontier* (Carbondale, IL, 1996). Also see Andrew R.L. Cayton and Peter S. Onuf, eds., *The Midwest and the Nation, Rethinking the History of an American Region* (Bloomington, IN, 1990).

2. Kathleen N. Conzen, "A Saga of Families," in Clyde A. Milner II, Carol A. O'Connor, and Martha Sandweiss, eds., *The Oxford History of the American West* (New York, 1994), 315-57.

3. Timothy Gilfoyle, *City of Eros, New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920* (New York, 1992), 81-4, 92-116.

4. Sean Willentz, *Chants Democratic, New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class* (New York, 1984), 300-1; George Chauncey, *Gay New York* (New York, 1994), 76-81; Elliot J. Gorn, "'Good-Bye Boys, I Die a True American': Homicide, Nativism, and Working-Class Culture in Antebellum New York City," *Journal of American History* 74 (1987): 388-410; Michael Kaplan, "New York City Tavern Violence and the Creation of a Working-Class Identity," *Journal of the Early Republic* 15 (Winter 1995): 591-617; Amy Gilman Srebnick, *The Mysterious Death of Mary Rogers, Sex and Culture in Nineteenth-Century New York* (New York, 1995), 51-8. Patricia Cline Cohen, "Unregulated Youth: Masculinity and Murder in the 1830s City," *Radical History Review* 52 (1992): 33-53; *The Murder of Helen Jewett, The Life and Death of a Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century New York* (New York, 1998), 73-6.

5 "Laban B. Fleak," Caleb Forbes Davis (hereafter, CFD). See Timothy R. Mahoney, *Provincial Lives: Middle Class Experience in the Antebellum Middle West* (New York, 1999), 62-112.

6. "A.W. Griffith," CFD.

7. J.M. Reid, *Sketches and Anecdotes of the Old Settlers* (Keokuk, 1879), 67.

8. May 13, June 5, June 26, August 21, 1841, May 11, 1844, March 3, 1845, David W. Kilbourne to Hiram Barney hint at some of the troubles with the Settlers. Hiram Barney Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. For a rare, brief, indirect reference to a Decree versus Anti-Decree altercation, see April 26, 1849, *Keokuk Telegraph and Weekly Dispatch*.

9. Hawkins Taylor, "Judge Mason and The Half-Breed Tract," *Iowa Historical Record* 2, no. 4 (October 1886): 354; "A. W. Griffith," CFD; Virginia Wilcox Ivins, *Pen Pictures of Early Western Days* (no publisher, 1905), 40-1; *Letter of Charles Mason to Gen. A. C. Dodge in Regard to the Halfbreed Question* (Burlington, IA, 1880), 11; James L. Estes to Charles Mason, June 13, 1853, September 6, 1853, Charles Mason Papers, Iowa State Historical Library, Des Moines; *Coy v Mason*, 58 U.S. (17 Howard) 697 (1855); B. L. Wick, "The Struggle for the Half-Breed Tract," *Annals of Iowa* 7, no. 1 (April 1905): 16-29.

10. D. W. Kilbourne to Hiram Barney, May 11, 1844; *ibid.*, March 5, 1845, Hiram Barney Collection.

11. Taylor, "Judge Mason," 354.

12. Karen V. Hansen, *A Very Social Time, Crafting Community in Antebellum New England* (Berkeley, CA, 1994), 1, 7-11.

13. David W. Kilbourne to Hiram Barney, January 25, 1842, Hiram Barney Collection.

14. Robin L. Einhorn, *Property Rules, Political Economy in Chicago, 1833-1872* (Chicago, 1991), 28-60.

15. Robert H. Wiebe, "Lincoln's Fraternal Democracy," in John L. Thomas, ed., *Abraham Lincoln and the American Political Tradition* (Amherst, MA, 1986), 19, 21.
16. "Autobiography of Hawkins Taylor" (Western Illinois University, Macomb), 26; "A. W. Griffith," CFD; Paul M. Angle, "Here I Have Lived," *A History of Lincoln's Springfield, 1821-1865* (Springfield, IL, 1935), 106-7.
17. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood* (New York, 1993), 196-205.
18. Hansen, *A Very Social Time*, 9; Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 199-205.
19. Gary Alan Fine, *With the Boys, Little League Baseball and Preadolescent Culture* (Chicago, 1987), 134-5; Richard D. Alford, *Naming and Identity: A Cross Cultural Study of Personal Naming Practices* (New Haven, CT, 1988), 81-5, 156-9.
20. Nicknames are mentioned in A. W. Griffith, E. R. Ford, Caleb Forbes Davis, Laban B. Fleak, J. A. Brown, and Adam Hine, CFD; Reid, *Sketches and Anecdotes*, 11-13, 74, 78, 144, 162, 167, 170, 176; Ivins, *Pen Pictures*, 17.
21. E. Anthony Rotundo, "Boy Culture: Middle-Class Boyhood in Nineteenth Century America," in Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds., *Meanings for Manhood, Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America* (Chicago, 1990), 15-36.
22. Jane Kamensky, "Talk Like a Man: Speech, Power, and Masculinity in Early New England," *Gender and History* 8, no. 1 (April 1996): 22-47.
23. For a rare contemporary view of practical jokes, see the film, *Watch It*, Dover One Films, Skouras Pictures Release, 1993, starring John Gallagher, Suzy Amis, and John Tenley.
24. Reid, *Sketches and Anecdotes*, 61, 62, 121.
25. "Laban B. Fleak," CFD.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*
28. Reid, *Sketches and Anecdotes*, 176; The "spondoolicks" were "resources." Elliott West, *The Saloon on the Rocky Mountain Mining Frontier* (Lincoln, NE, 1979), 77. Though the author of this very funny invitation is unknown, it should be noted that the title of the first song proposed to be sung, "Whar Did You Come From," is exactly the first question that everyone who entered Keokuk was first asked by some member of the subculture, as reported by E. R. Ford. So too, the person who named the second ward of Keokuk the "hoop-pole" ward, where hoop poles for barrels were "currency" accepted for payment at his store, was Ross B. Hughes, Isaac Galland's secretary and the town booster in an earlier day. CFD.
29. Angle, "Here I Have Lived," 106.
30. Reid, *Sketches and Anecdotes*, 78.
31. A rare example of such a "lobby" is the one that developed at the same time over in Springfield, Illinois. The irony, sarcasm, spoof committees, and rules of these entertaining proceedings were analogous to those of Keokuk's Yellow Hand-Bill meetings. Angle, "Here I have Lived," 106-8. References to the "mock trials" that convivial lawyers, especially when on circuit, indulged in are similarly rare. The best-known "mock tribunal" is, of course, the "Ogmatorial Court," which Judge Davis conducted and which Abraham Lincoln attended in the Eighth Illinois Circuit between 1849 and 1851. Henry C. Whitney, *Life on the Circuit with Lincoln* (Chicago, 1892), 50.
32. Caleb Forbes Davis, "Yaller Hand Bill Meetings," CFD; Hawkins Taylor, "Letters from Absent Members," *Pioneer Lawmakers Association of Iowa, Reunions of 1886 and 1890* (Des Moines, 1890), 131.
33. Taylor, "Judge Mason," 354; "A. W. Griffith," CFD; Ivins, *Pen Pictures*, 40-1; *Letter of Charles Mason to Gen. A. C. Dodge*, 11; James L. Estes to Charles Mason, June 13, 1853,

September 6, 1853, Charles Mason Papers; *Coy v Mason*, 58 U.S. (17 Howard) 697 (1855); Wick, "The Struggle," 16-29; May 13, June 5, June 26, July 10, July 24, August 7, August 21, and August 28, 1841, David W. Kilbourne to Hiram Barney, Hiram Barney Papers.

34. "Autobiography of Hawkins Taylor."

35. "Hawkins Taylor," CFD.

36. "A. W. Griffith," "Hawkins Taylor," CFD.

37. "Hawkins Taylor," CFD; Ivins, *Pen Pictures*, 17, 35.

38. Davis, "Yaller Hand Bill Meetings," CFD.

39. Adler, *Yankee Merchants*, 64; West, *The Saloon*, 4-11, 47.