

A RESTLESS LANDSCAPE:
BUILDING NASHVILLE HISTORY AND SEVENTH AND DREXEL

By
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A dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty of Middle Tennessee State University in
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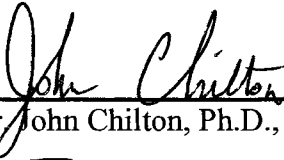
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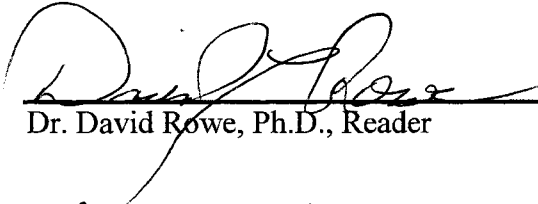
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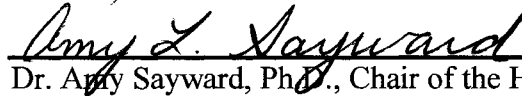
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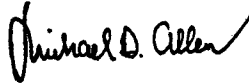
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ABSTRACT

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Drawing upon manuscript sources, historic photographs, census data, building plans, historic maps, and other evidence, this study examines the histories of the four inhabitants of the address at Seventh and Drexel Avenues as a case study of the changing social history of the downtown Nashville area during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It explores how the histories of the inhabitants--an estate owned by several of the city's white booster elites, an African American Roman Catholic parochial school, the southeastern flagship store of Sears, Roebuck, and Co., and the Nashville Rescue Mission--shaped and were shaped by the different built environments on the property and how those inhabitants used the property as a powerful tool to promote the traditioned social identities they represented. As a case study, the dissertation shows how the changes in ownership reflected the cultural and social changes that occurred in downtown Nashville during the period.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: SEVENTH AND DREXEL, THE RESTLESS LANDSCAPE OF NASHVILLE'S HISTORY

A. Interpreting a Restless Landscape

On a warm Sunday afternoon, 12 August 1990, two centuries of Nashville history gathered to see the unveiling of a new Tennessee Historical Marker. At the corner of Seventh Avenue and Drexel Street, on the western boundary of the property that housed a Sears, Roebuck, Inc. store that by 1990 was a shell of what it had once been when it was built in 1955 at the midpoint of the Dixie Highway, a crowd gathered to honor the memory of Tennessee's first Roman Catholic parochial and secondary school for African Americans.¹ With the nunnery, school buildings and parish church long gone from the site and the memory of most citizens in Nashville, this important landmark of local history received long overdue recognition. Attracted to the ceremony in the crowd that day were dignitaries of the state, descendants of local white gentrified families that had inhabited and run the town since the days of its chartering in the Cumberland Compact, representatives of the Roman Catholic Church with some of the Black Knights of Peter Clavier in full red-coated regalia, distinguished alumni of the school—doctors, businesspersons, a major league baseball player, lawyers and a judge, Fisk and TSU faculty members, nuns, and school teachers, and managers from the Sears store who, unbeknownst to those gathered, would close the store almost one year to the day. Surrounding the dignitaries and school representatives were local inhabitants from the

¹ "Historical Marker will honor Immaculate Mother Academy," *Nashville Banner*, 12 August, 1990.

neighborhood, a place that now mixed warehouse employees and the disenfranchised and homeless community of the city. In ten years members of that same homeless and disenfranchised community would become residents of the Sears store, when the city and Sears dedicated the property behind the marker as the city's newest homeless shelter and outreach center.² It may seem unlikely that on one sultry summer afternoon in 1990, the history of Nashville over two centuries could all gather together in one space at the same time to look one another over, but that is what happened.

B. The Restless Landscape of Seventh and Drexel

Observably, the history of the property at Seventh and Drexel over two centuries of habitation reflects a restless landscape that mirrored the social currents and changes of the larger city of Nashville and of the nation of which the address is merely one part. In 1900, the condition and use of the property reflected the Nashville of the previous century and its current fortunes. A federalist-style house called "Mile End" stood there, built on property marking the southern end of Nashville proper. Having experienced a near century of change and rebuilding, Mile End and the property were rich with the history of the city. In 1813 Anthony Foster, one of the original land surveyors who helped establish Nashville and the surrounding Middle Tennessee area, built the home. With the growth of the city during the first half of the nineteenth century, the property changed hands at least twice and during the 1830s-1850s accommodated the changing infrastructure of the city. Turnpike and railroad construction bringing commerce, agriculture products, and visitors into the city cut away at the property's northern,

² "Rescue Mission has grand opening," *Tennessean*, 6 June, 2001.

western, and southern borders during the period. In the 1840s the property owner parceled out approximately twenty-five of the site's original thirty-three acres for railroad tracks, businesses, and small working class homes that accompanied the changing transportation environment. The Union Army occupied Mile End's front lawn as a campsite during the Civil War.

The postwar years proved kinder. Between 1870-1900 Mile End changed hands several times and was home to a series of occupants all of whom were related and among the elite of the city. Residents of the home and citizens of the city viewed Mile End as an enduring, iconic home that stylishly presented the history and prestige of Nashville. Attendant fences, trees, and abundant gardens, an increasingly diverse neighborhood of homes, churches, and businesses occupied by both white and black citizens grew around the estate. This South Nashville landmark became a visible symbol of Nashville's "New South" identity at the turn of the century.

By 1904, the last of the elite families left Mile End for the burgeoning upper-class electric streetcar suburbs of West Nashville. Owners sold the property and its new purpose reflected not only the demographics of the neighborhood but the changing fortunes of the New South city. In 1905 Mile End became the site of one of the very few southern Roman Catholic parochial schools for African Americans, the others existing in Savannah, Birmingham, and a handful of other cities. The school was named the School for Colored Girls and run by nuns who were members of the Philadelphia-based Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and Josephite Priests from Baltimore, Maryland, the only order of Roman Catholic priests in America willing to work with African Americans. Roman

Catholic philanthropy and the faith-based school arrived in Nashville in the same year that the city enacted its first official “Jim Crow” laws.

Over time Catholic officials developed the property and renamed the school Immaculate Mother Academy. They eventually tore down Mile End and built a new school and convent on the property, which reflected the sensibility of the order’s founder Katherine Drexel, the Philadelphia socialite-turned-nun heiress to a fourteen million dollar fortune. A Northern parochial priest architect designed the new academy buildings and church on the property while African American Tennessee craftsmen constructed the buildings with Tennessee brick. The style of the academy buildings was a mixture of Romanesque and Italianate details, with solid towers on either end and Italianate window designs that mirrored the manor halls and schools that were built by Christians of the Middle Ages as part of their academic feudal villages. A small Gothic style church, Holy Family, was constructed on the property in 1919 and the medieval effect was complete.

Over time the built environment created by academy leaders accomplished its goals of higher learning combined with Christian piety, and the property became a veritable snapshot of the scholastic culture of the medieval Roman Catholic monastic orders occupying and dominating a feudal village, writ into the soil of twentieth century Nashville. Mother Drexel and the nuns eventually opened the academy to men and changed the curriculum from an industrial arts emphasis to a college preparatory scheme. In 1942, Immaculate Mother Academy achieved status as Tennessee’s first state-accredited parochial academy for African Americans.

The academy was one of the most recognizable landmarks south of downtown along the legendary Dixie Highway which was completed in 1926. The school remained

open during the Depression decade as well as World War II. The school changed significantly in the 1950s as the civil rights movement became part of the fabric of life in downtown Nashville. When the United States Supreme Court in 1954 ordered public school desegregation, the Roman Catholic Diocese in Nashville was one of the first parochial school systems in the country to comply with the new reality, combining its African American students into the population of both Cathedral and Father Ryan High Schools within months of the 1954 *Brown v. Board* decision.

The property was not abandoned for long. In 1955 Mother Drexel and her order sold the buildings and land to Sears, Roebuck and Co., whose officials liked the Dixie Highway address and ample space for parking. Sears looked both ways before crossing the Dixie Highway and saw commercial success just around the bend. Sears tore down the academic village and built its southern flagship store on the property to accommodate the already steady and still growing automobile traffic of the American consumer public. The store was a modern commercial wonderland, setting one rectangular cube on top of another. A complete automobile service center, a landscape designed with clear straight lines, and inviting red and white signage made the property easy to recognize by passing motorists. Playgrounds were paved and parking lots were put up. The finest escalators in the city, which anchored the center of the building, escorted children and parents into the capitalist wonderland of glass cases filled with every conceivable gadget, toy, and candy confection on the planet. The 170,000 square foot store was filled with matronly dressed manikins, riding lawn mowers, innumerable shop tools, and all the newly invented affordable electronic gadgets from every corner of the globe that every family in America needed to make a house a home. Music was piped into the store, a food court was

included, and a pastel palate of interior decoration completed the one-stop shopping/recreation destination. Sears stayed almost forty years. The building was transformed several times from shopping center to warehouse outlet to shipping center. This series of moves reflected two recent trends: the relocation of shopping centers to strip malls and mega-malls on the borders of the city; and Nashville's development from city to county to metropolitan area, as its borders extended from 125 square miles of city to 508 square miles of metropolitan property. By the twentieth century's last decade, Sears eventually followed Nashville's automobile public out to the malls and suburbs where the new infrastructure traffic patterns of U.S. interstate construction had taken it.

As its roadways led shoppers and homeowners to the ever-increasing suburbs on Nashville's fringe, the downtown area's built environment became a conglomeration of ever-increasing government agency buildings, skyscraper offices, entrenched warehouses, and tourist destinations. The disenfranchised and homeless citizens of the city were left as the only full-time residents of the area. In 2001, the modern commercial wonderland that had been Sears' flagship store became home to the Nashville Rescue Mission, reconfiguring interior retail space to meet the needs of a disenfranchised population. Championing their cause with the motto "From Retail to Rescue," the Rescue Mission replaced plate glass cabinets and outdoor equipment showcases with a 400 seat chapel, 550 beds for transient residents, recreation areas, a job-training center, and a dining room as large as any in the city. The adaptive reuse structure is a model of design in the increasingly necessary privatized social service industry.

The fortunes of the property at Seventh and Drexel are, then, observably those of the fortunes of the city and the nation, but the story is greater than that. It is a story with a

beginning, chapters, and an ending. It does bear the weight of importance of being tagged with important historical themes and markers like educational reform, race relations, and commercialization. But the story has a depth that deserves the attention of history, the narration of a depth of humanity in the world it has made and that has made it. That it happened at all and that it happened the way it did, is a story worth recounting. There is more here, however, than the merely predictable patterns of hegemonic progress, a concatenation of expected events dictated by political action and infrastructure (re)construction, though those forces did play a part in its history. What the history of this property reflects is an interesting exchange between competing ideological forces and actors, agents who built and rebuilt history in ways that changed things and often anticipated change, instead of merely reacting to it. It includes a variety of opportunities to observe history as the competition of cultures over time at one address, each with its own intentions, and each deserving of study.

C. Doing History at Seventh and Drexel

“History is not the past; it is an artful assembly of materials from the past, designed for usefulness in the future.”³ To Henry Glassie history means the obvious, the evident accountings of past events and built environments, narrativized to be retold with all of their cultural and mythic richness. If history is what Glassie suggests, it impinges on the artful assemblies of the past, probably better said as pasts: the traditioned cultures, reconfigurations, transfigurations or the creations of “ideals” as we find them in the built environment or constructions of the world. These pasts present themselves for historical

³ Henry Glassie, “Tradition,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 108 (Autumn 1995): 395.

recollection by means of built environments in order to be explained. What history does is connect will to circumstance in the built environment in a way that invites reflection and thought.⁴ This necessitates the need for fieldwork and the observation of history in the place where it is created. In the case of the property at Seventh and Drexel, this becomes how history layered re-configured reality over time in the showcase of a restless landscape.

Theoretical discourse informs the history of the property at Seventh and Drexel in Nashville, Tennessee and connects it to broader movements in historical scholarship and the broader themes of the history of which it is a part. Appealing to the idea that a historical study like this is best done through the narrativizing of competing cultures and the materials that they were made of, it will make use of the many or multi-disciplined offerings in the current state of the historical writing concerned with architecture and the built environment as the stabilizing force of culture and its varied attendant theories which add much to the conversation. The purpose of this history is to reconstruct the different social orders, the traditioned lives that connect historical observation to material culture studies in a way that leads to a thorough discussion of built environments, human lives, and eventually to that which can be called identity, one of history's many purposes.⁵ That history has so many purposes—the narrativization of events, pushing

⁴ Henry Glassie, "On Identity," *The Journal of American Folklore* 107 (Spring 1994): 241.

⁵ I realize the academic difficulty and recent theoretical discourses concerning the use of the term "identity" in doing history, a term with wide application throughout the social sciences. By invoking the term "identity" here, I mean to situate the claims of this paper in the conversation that has emerged among the many multi-disciplinary conversations that tie the built environment of local histories to broader historical markers like city, urban, nation, politics, e.g. architectural history ala Dell Upton and others which tie the built environment to terms like Anglican or American, the folklorists Henry Glassie and Elliot Oring of some fifteen years ago discussing the end of folklore as identity construction through cultural and

evidence into time both synchronic and diachronic, clarity, depth, memory, morality, culture, tradition, heritage, exhibition in many forms, preservation, tourism, and entertainment only adds complexity to the richness of the exercise and the responsibility of the historian.⁶

D. Privileging Culture/Tradition

Regardless of the forms we press it into—text, picture, brick, interpretation, habit, museum exhibit, formal dissertation⁷—history is a narrativizing of things and events, the

material culture studies, and the more recent discussions of the “New Material Culture” studies developing among British archaeologists regarding agency in the built environment and the idea that things are expressive of building and behavioral patterns older and more political than decoration and use. Of course, several words can and will be subtly substituted as metaphors for identity like tradition, culture, social expression, artifact, art, performance, etc. Identity, as I am using it here and throughout the dissertation, is what the built environment of the social and historical remains of a people living traditioned lives tell us about them individually and collectively as human beings in history. For an accomplished recounting that uses this approach of situating identity as revealed and apprehended within material culture or the built environment, see Glassie, “On Identity”; Elliot Oring, “The Interests of Identity,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 107 (Spring 1994): 242-247; Dell Upton, *Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial America* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986) and Julian Thomas, *Time, Culture and Identity: An Interpretive Archaeology* (New York: Routledge Press, 1996). I take the inclusion of identity to be necessary of historical study generally and essential to it. I will return to the concept of identity in other parts of the dissertation, so it is important to note it here.

⁶ I am aware that such a simple dissertation as this cannot fulfill the many purposes of history and remains incomplete, as indeed any one or several or perhaps even all histories remain. History is not the completeness of the past and Henry Glassie ably reminds us that among history’s virtues is “that it is, at last, impossible.” Henry Glassie, “The Practice and Purpose of History,” *The Journal of American History* 81 (1994): 966. What this dissertation does is what other history does, i.e. it attempts to be responsible to that which it represents and recognize within that representation that purpose or meaning exists, that the things it discusses are thereby recognized as important and are given voice as participants in the greater history of which they are a part or fragment. That any dissertation recognizes those purposes and seeks to push historical discourse onward and toward them by embracing history as purposeful is what makes history so important and worth doing.

⁷ This approach overcomes the unnecessary distinction between the disciplines of academic history and public history, as though their respective methods and products are the property of one or the other, and takes them as the complementary fields that they are within the discipline of history, so Douglas Greenberg, “History is a Luxury: Mrs. Thatcher, Mr. Disney, and (Public) History,” *Reviews In American History* (1998): 294-311; Richard B. Morris, “An Academic Historian’s Effect on Public History,” *The History Teacher* 16 (November 1982): 53-61; and David Waldstreicher “Two Cheers for the ‘Public Sphere’ and One For Historians’ Skepticism,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* (January 2005): 1-10. Such an approach also reminds that “History” as a discipline has always been public and has never been

description of cultures within time, of traditioned peoples living in a built landscape of things with semio-mantic construction designed to re-create and re-present them as persons and cultures and things with meaningful lives.⁸ That those lives and constructions continue to be present and demand to be accounted for in some way, to be a part of the ordering of society, perhaps history's grand purpose, to encourage more knowledgeable and thoughtful participation in and with the world by more knowledgeable and thoughtful humans is our end.⁹

This dissertation is academic work bound by the technics, standards, and formal brackets of history as a professional discipline. As such, this work itself is privileged in every respect. We are privileged to do it. As academic history, it cites observable privileged examples, privileging certain historical "pictures" over others, ones that capture the observable model of meaningful living in a material instant or discourse of

"Modern" enough in any real sense, so that historians could cordon themselves and their work from one another, slicing it up into separate disciplines for merely academic purposes. That the discipline of history has many specializations or fields is easily recognized, but such distinctions should never mean the discreet notion of separate disciplines and should always be understood as complimentary notions within a discipline which allow for much borrowing and pushing historians to do better and more complete work. This is, of course, why this dissertation produces a written text and proposes a museum exhibition with a documentary film included in it.

⁸ So Hayden White's concerns in his *MetaHistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), noted below. While I am not sure that I am a "pure" representationalist, as if any historian could be, the idea of doing history without a qualified representation built through the meta-language of tropes which guide historical discourse, as White presents his case, is to me absurd. By phrasing my meta-approach this way, I mean to describe that a thing is obviously complex in its observation, a thing in relation to other things, which evokes both a pictured and a storied existence at the same time, i.e. a thing is a thing and not a number of other things, and history is an attempt to hold together things rather than an exploration into a thing itself. In this, I am attempting to resist the awful dichotomy that produces poor history not only by creating demonization (good vs. evil), but also disconnected-ness (the whole is the sum of its parts or even the whole is greater than the sum of its parts) inside a subject which makes it something other than what it observably is.

⁹ I will take this question of a more full participation as an exchange of cultures exhibiting identity as one of history's demanded virtues up in the conclusion of the dissertation and link it to this dissertation and the public history product of an exhibition design based on the dissertation its conclusion.

instants that fit the purposes of our construction. Such privileged discourses create precedents and become “history.” History relents to observable patterns in materials and the traces of life they leave behind. Those materials—selves, signs, lines, houses, pictures, old shoes, and rituals—become the mapping of something that we call history. As such history is an empirical challenge, a discipline that drives into the realm of the empirical, i.e. the realm of good evidence considered in light of material culture and built environments.¹⁰ As a history it is the recounting of the privilege of living in a material culture, being a part of an environment built by humans and things with their intentions and interests which stand as a monument to the past, meanings in our present, and as inspiration for the future.

Such constructions necessarily demand the privileging of as many voices in the academic conversation as possible and the notion of discursive as well as modal logic makes this not only a possibility but a demand.¹¹ As Daniel Miller notes in his introduction to *Materiality*, there is in material culture studies

¹⁰ Glassie, “On Identity,” 241. Glassie notes “Identity, like most folklore matters, is a straightforward empirical problem disguised as a heavy philosophical issue.” While this is true for folklorists, it is also true for historians. The historian’s need is the same as the folklorist’s: to discuss the empirical while being clear about the philosophical systems and claims within which she/he interprets the very empirical past.

¹¹This is what makes Hayden White and his program of *MetaHistory* so important in my opinion. His structuring of meta-historical language is helpful but in some ways merely redundant or self-evident to the writings of many, if not most, good historians. It is his articulation of how different kinds of logic are allowable within the writing of history that has made his voice an essential one, if not the essential one in current historical theory. Combine this with Clifford Geertz’s idea of a “thick description”(noted below) and it is easy to see how the disciplined approach of multi-disciplinary history has emerged. Its consequence is a now recognized and necessary “public sphere” (ala Habermas), which has always been available to historians and which means a variety of voices have to be allowed into the discourse of history and its many applications. The inclusion of such voices is the responsible work of historians and architects and museums and documentarians. That this has taken on even more importance in the twenty-first century is obvious.

no emperor on the throne, no golden age, so we can lower our sights to that which has created us—the processes of objectification that create our sense of ourselves as subjects and the institutions that constitute society but which are always appropriations of the materiality by which they are constituted . . . The goal of this revolution is to promote equality, a dialectic republic in which persons and things exist in mutual self-construction and respect for their mutual origin and mutual dependency.”¹²

Those whose voices have been ignored or suppressed, like women and minorities; counter-publics or networks within society whose existence has been as much to build their own culture as well as resist other more dominant ones;¹³ and those voices that exist as the forceful creations within the built environment, like buildings themselves but also roads, sidewalks, and the stylistic, intentional evidence of architectural adornment, interior room creation/decoration must be included. The discussion with other approaches to doing and being historical, some that resist the necessity of the “law of coverage” and seek to construct a self or an identity through a web of meaning rather than a narrated chronology of events, must also be allowed a voice in such historical construction.¹⁴

¹² Daniel Miller, “Introduction,” *Materiality*, ed. Daniel Miller (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 37-38.

¹³ On the notion and importance of the importance of including counter-publics in history see Ewa Domanska, “The Material Presence of the Past,” *History and Theory* 45 (October 2006): 346; Jonathan M. Chu, “The Risks and Rewards of Teaching Race,” *The History Teacher* 37 (August 2004): 1-18; Joanna Brooks, “The Early American Public Sphere and the Emergence of a Black Print Counterpublic,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 62 (January 2005): 1-29. Certainly the history of Seventh and Drexel shows such a need to recount the history of the emergence and existence of such a “counterpublic” with the presence of Immaculate Mother Academy within it, a community that existed as an isolated Black Roman Catholic School which had more Protestant students than it did Catholic ones in its 50 year existence standing so ‘counter’ to perceived notions of history like Christian or Catholic or Black or Education, that it has received little or only cursory notice in written histories about those subjects in Nashville up to this point.

¹⁴ So Mary Frederickson, “Surveying Gender,” *The History Teacher* 37 (August 2004): 1-15, who notes that at least in teaching history there is need of a new paradigm in which chronology does not dominate and students can learn about multiple viewpoints and competing historical narratives. Noting that many historians are tired of the “tyranny of coverage” by which she means reading history from a single, unifying point of view, citing Kathi Kern, “To Feel As A Part of History: Rethinking The U.S. History

Further, it is also necessary to allow room in the discourse of history for those things that are no longer “present” but once were that now remain present by virtue of their absence on or in the landscape and through the realizing of historical evidence that they once were present.¹⁵

This history recognizes that cultures lived out as tradition existed together over time and that they blend and contend at their address of shared history and in our world. There is no golden age in the past, and all traditions deserve a voice in history if we can find a way to posit them via the formal technics of historical writing and representation. The historian’s work is to recognize and “write” the patterns in a historically responsible way that allows them to communicate with the present in as much fullness as possible, avoiding rupture, bringing order and cohesion, the continuity of time and space together.¹⁶ To do all of this well, historians must recognize that we are now gatherers, artful assemblers of the past. The historian is not the one who debunks or deconstructs, but the one whose joy it is to assemble, to hold things together. Historical work is a

Survey,” *Perspectives: American Historical Association Newsletter* 34 (May/June, 1996): 7-8, she argues for creating a web of history rather than a chronology. While I am uncomfortable with this for obvious reasons, I am comfortable with thinking about history as a connected web of meanings within an historic landscape filled with competing historical narratives. If this suggestion could be more “region specific” or place oriented rather than philosophically biased, then I would be in agreement.

¹⁵ I am consciously avoiding the term “memory” here and instead opting for “presence.” I do so, not because I think memory as a term is necessarily unhelpful (it is one of history’s acknowledged purposes and I employ it below), but because of the baggage it brings with it in current academic circles, i.e. memory invoked as a category for creating a past that can only be described as “wished for” but not true, i.e. one that is created without the engagement of the past without qualified historical discourse. For the problems associated with this in the history of this landscape, see Chapters Two and Three below on Mile End and the idea of the “New South” as the creation of a certain but poor memory of a white, happy Nashville with no objection from minorities or a voice for racial or religious faith differences.

¹⁶ Glassie, “Tradition,” 396.

“gathering of things,” an assemblage out of the past that takes things into account in as much relational fullness as possible.

History as such must avoid discreet notions like form and content, thing and signified, chair as chair only. It is necessary for this meta-history to do all it can to realize that form and content are two sides of the same coin, being and doing the necessarily contiguous structure of reality, that agency be extended to both people and things in that we can tell what they were able to intend (culture), what was actually accomplished (tradition), and how those things and the people who used them were rewritten and reused in originally unintended ways. As Henry Glassie again reminds us, “History is ill-served by the dichotomizing of human beings.”¹⁷ To that I would add “and also by treating things and people as discreet notions of a singular particularity or type.” History demands the work of noting interaction, of connecting will to circumstance and people and beliefs to things and the land, and presenting all of this together with the fullness of what we can tell about it in the present moment. Such continuity will be more true of the past but also more helpful to the future.¹⁸

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ This is what has led the French historian and cultural theorist Paul Ricoeur to believe that history is all we have left as humans to help us find our way in the world, see Hayden White, “Guilty of History: The Long *Durée* of Paul Ricoeur,” *History and Theory* 46 (May 2007): 233-251. In White’s view Ricoeur’s reticence to write at the end of his life revealed that he had posited a “faith” in history to overcome evil in the world and provide a pathway to a future salvation, perhaps only a partial salvation in that human beings in general have hardly paid attention to history with any ritual sensibility. Religion, metaphysics, politics have all failed us, according to Ricoeur, and now history is what we have left to push us to a better humanity and any promise in the future. I would argue that he is only half correct. What we have failed to notice or believe in is the doctrinal force of things, i.e. that religion, metaphysics, politics, history or any other ultimate guide can only be rightly apprehended and appropriated by human beings, regardless of which ultimacy they ascribe to religion, history et al., within history and its appropriate arrangement of time. This also helps us to easily get past the recent return to atheism of Christopher Hitchens and the British science movement, another failed attempt whose failure to apprehend atheism within history leads so easily to nihilism. I am not arguing that atheism is wrong or evil, though it may be

In the case of the restless landscape of Seventh and Drexel, history is the artful recitation of this (re)creation of meaning by observing what happened over time at one address in downtown Nashville, Tennessee. The different built environments and the traditioned peoples that inhabited the property are each attendant to Glassie's definition and taken together provide clues to an even greater history than the address or a simple chronicle—a history, often difficult and occasionally glorious, of a structured and ordered society, the history of desires for the many things and ideals which make up both culture and personhood,¹⁹ the history of Nashville, and a window into the history of America. Our options of interpretation are as far-reaching as the evidence used to construct them will allow.

E. Historiology as Theory

The historiology, or “the knowledge and study of history” this dissertation draws from and contributes to, is multi-disciplinary, following the current trends of historical scholars who take their basic cues from Hayden White's *MetaHistory* and the turn of the last thirty years in historical scholarship, centering historical writing and presentation around an architectural approach through which to view the broader landscape of a given

both of those, but that, like any other guide that is perceived as rigidly transcendent, it has historically led to fatalism or nihilism because it has failed to provide any meaningful ground or ritual within history, in fact the recent attempts at atheism pride themselves on being non-historical. For interesting current presentations that avow this see these two films: David Fincher, dir., *Fight Club* (Art Linson Productions, 1999) and Alejandro Gonzalez Innarritu, dir., *Babel* (Paramount Pictures, 2006).

¹⁹ Carl Knappet, *Thinking Through Material Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 169, notes that any sense of personhood in history must take into account that human beings are in their totality made agents by conceiving of them as a hybridization of bio-psycho-social parts, dependent as being upon a sociality of encountering things as well as having biological and psychological makeup, hence human beings are inevitably bound up with things. Notes Knappet: “If we accept that mind and matter achieve codependency through the medium of bodily action, then it follows that ideas and attitudes, rather than occupying a separate domain from the material, actually find themselves inscribed “in” the object....Objects are bound up in humans in their guises as biological, psychological, and social beings, as bio-psycho-social totalities” (Knappet, 169).

historical subject as in the works of Henry Glassie and other vernacular architecture historians.²⁰ It weaves together ideas and theory from a number of fields of inquiry: material culture studies, architectural and built environment history, landscape studies, social history, cultural or human geography, and urban studies. It draws upon a variety of evidence: texts, maps, historic photographs, architectural drawings, missionary chronicles, newspaper stories, historic markers, buildings, and city records. It considers those things which make history most important: identity, values, transformations, presence, memory, and heritage. Further, it attempts to tell a good story which recounts the past in a way that gives it power for the present and the future.

F. Hayden White's *MetaHistory*

Confessedly, this dissertation depends mightily upon the work of the historical theorist, Hayden White and his *MetaHistory* program as it has emerged since the publishing of the book by that title in 1973.²¹ Writing against "scientific" or strictly referential history in general and especially as presented by Ranke and his followers in the nineteenth century, White, following Aristotle, argues that history, or more precisely for him historical writing, is as much poetry, i.e. structure transformed into sequence or the world brought into narrative or story, as it is science, i.e. a discourse connecting persons, events, and processes carried on by way the four major tropes or figurations of

²⁰ Penelope J. Corfield, "How To Get Back," review of *Why History Matters*, by John Tosh, *The Curse of History*, by Jeremy Black, *Making History Now and Then*, by David Cannadine, and *The Historians' Paradox*, by Peter Charles Hoffer, *Times Literary Supplement*, November 21, 2008, 22. Corfield notes that historiology is the current trade name for the growth industry of history writing which takes human experience and knowledge seriously while also exhibiting an intellectual rationale for the study of the past.

²¹ For an excellent recounting of his thought, see Hayden White, "An Old Question Raised Again," *Rethinking History* 4 (2000): 391-406.

metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony within an emplotment or narrativization which makes them possible as things held together or history.²² Recognizing the demand for interpretation and the creation of facts, White simply demands that historians posit their meta-history, or literary structure, up front, biases obvious and without guile. Further, he notes that good history is dependent upon discursive rather than deductive reasoning, a “narrativization of the events that displays changes in groups and transformations of relationships among them over the course of time.”²³ This allows for the humility necessary to do good history by recognizing that what the historian borrows from the past has been available before, even if unattended, and that what the historian produces will and must exist for the future, open to criticism, addition, and revision.²⁴

²² That he has been as vilified as he has been widely praised probably makes White as important as he is. Working almost strictly within a theoretical approach to history that is about linguistics or the writing of history, White has invited a great deal of misunderstanding about his work and criticism from all sides. Viewing history as an appropriate literary exercise and not a hard science, he uses slippery intellectual categories like “fiction” which has at least a double meaning and by which he means imaginative metaphor used in any literary construction historical or fictional and not a fictive version of events. Recognizing that history needs theory to explain the ways and means by which it proceeds, he uses the concept of meta-history by which he means the tropes and techniques of logic and sequence used to do associative historical gathering or the meta-language within which historians do their work. Because he is afraid of neither the real definitions of words like fiction or the use of a Meta-idea to organize discourse, he gathers criticism from the hard scientists on the one hand who decry anything less than history as the hard science of provable events ordered without aid of interpretation or literary device other than chronology and the postmodernists on the other who chafe at the mention of any overarching organizational principle in any exercise of any kind as devaluing freedom and the individual. White has attempted to respond to his critics by appealing to a narrativization and representation as theoretical approaches which all historians could agree to as centralizing forces in the discipline. Of course, neither attempt worked. For an excellent use of fiction in a fictional book which includes a narrativization of “real” meta-history in accounting for actual things within the confines of its narrative, see P.D. James, *A Death In Holy Orders* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), which accounts for the current identity crisis within the Anglican church, ornate churches called St. Anselm’s, a historical conspiracy theory regarding theological documents, human imagination lent to cottages named after the four evangelists of the Christian scriptures and the four doctors of the early church, and theories about the continual presence of people and things even after death or destruction within a fictional murder mystery.

²³ White, “An Old Question,” 394.

²⁴ White’s theory and the augmentation of it by his critics is obviously dependent, though not always acknowledged, upon history as defined by Giambattista Vico in his *New Science* (originally 1725,

His approach also demands historians avoid the arrogance of producing a “philosophy of history” but rather establish a meta-history or assembled historiography within which they are working, being responsible to an accurate representation of the subject amid the patterned, intentional, and interpretive discourse that they are writing.

G. The Enchantment of Things

This dissertation is, then, a narrativization of the people, things, and events or processes that were the inhabitants of Seventh and Drexel streets in downtown Nashville in the twentieth century. That it is a narration of things and events shows an extra-Whitean perspective that pushes his interpretation of representation to include material culture or built environment studies, a turn that regards artifacts and material culture to be as real as the story or creation of the facts in a text.²⁵ It takes advantage of recent

currently 3rd ed., trans. David Marsh, New York: Penguin Books, 2001) and *Autobiography* (originally 1728, currently trans. Max Harold Fisch and Thomas Goddard Bergin, New York: Great Seal Books, 1944). Vico, against Descartes’ idea that history is mere observation of what has always been categorized in the mind ala Plato (see below on anamnesis), asserts that history is perceived and theorized and presented in language dependent upon tropes and their topics (categories or descriptions) where historical knowledge can be stored and retrieved by humans as they structure the past by invention through language. For Vico this allows human interaction and imagination in recounting history, something like Aristotle’s poetics and discourse. For Vico history and culture are constructed by humans through the creation of verifiable experiences by using sophisticated linguistic figures of language or tropes which are mediated in writing by topics. This is an attempt by Vico to get beyond the nominalism so present in history and philosophical studies through Descartes (and Martin Luther and Duns Scotus before him) and in White, et al., to get free from modernism or the idea of a single or universal metanarrative which demands history only narrate or chronologize events from the past. For an excellent recent presentation of Vico see Eelco Runia, “Presence,” *History and Theory* 45 (2006): 1-29.

²⁵ I am, of course, not suggesting that White is in any way anti-things, though such a suggestion may be arguable. What I am arguing is what other historians have, that his theory of MetaHistory is essentially about how historians write history and does not push the boundaries of doing history much beyond writing texts that historians create in their recounting of a subject. For at least one place where White comes close to suggesting the need to turn to things, see White, “An Old Question,” 397-398 where he discusses how style in language-use turns an object into a subject of discourse.

scholarship that emphasizes that history has come to an “enchantment of things.”²⁶ It questions theories that either invoke a merely structuralist approach on the one hand and the merely linguistic notion that text alone exists and there is nothing outside of it on the other.²⁷ It pushes beyond such notions to a more connected view of history and the people and things that make it up. “Clearly things make people and people who are made by those things go on to make other things.”²⁸

What has led to such a turn? Unfortunately, much historical scholarship in the Whitean era has been dominated by the philosophical constructions of deconstruction, constructivism, functionalism or a “facts only” narrative approach that has treated material culture and things only as objects, important in history only for their place within written texts. Ewa Domanska notes that this turn to material culture studies has arisen out of the need for a useful conversation among historians to discuss how things manifest themselves in relation to human beings and how such a discussion posits a more meaningful understanding of history as something real and not merely imagined, i.e. history is now a “regaining of objects (things) conceived as a means for re-establishing contact with reality.”²⁹

The turn to push White’s ideas into more empirically grounded histories comes from a “stubbornly realist attitude” among historians about things which seek to show the

²⁶ I am indebted to Ewa Domanska for the use of this phrase, 346. It is interesting that Domanska notes a recent turn to things as subject in the “hard” sciences as well.

²⁷ See Bruno Latour, “Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern,” *Critical Inquiry* 30 (Winter 2004): 231.

²⁸ Christopher Pinney, “Things Happen: Or, From Which Moment Does That Object Come?,” *Materiality*, ed. Daniel Miller (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 256.

²⁹ Domanska, 337.

historical and social dimensions they create and act within.³⁰ Things are not merely passive but are actants that “perform a socializing function . . . they solidify interpersonal relations, they participate in the creation of human identity at the individual and collective levels, and they mark its changes.”³¹ Things are forces within the historical landscape that are engaged but that also engage, causing humans to think, do, respond and so must be treated as “active agents of social life.”³² Following the lead of Bruno Latour, a repentant-constructivist turned empiricist politician, and others, material culture, or things studies, now capitalizes on a Heideggerian inclusive universe where all things, vulgar or ordinary, encompassing even objects—things made in high style—are understood to be as active in the realm of history as humans and should therefore receive the fullest critical treatment of historians.³³ The idea is clear: history cannot be understood as the human playground but must also be understood as the study of “the being of things around us and how things manifest themselves and in putting things in relation to humans and treating them as active agents in social life.”³⁴ Things are as much agents as anything else, with the ability to affect transformation as well as being transformed.³⁵ I am not implying here, nor do Latour and those who follow his lead, that

³⁰ Latour, 231.

³¹ Domanska, 340.

³² Ibid., 339.

³³ See Latour, “Critique Run Out Of Steam,” above. This is the concern that has created the “New Material Culture” movement among British archaeologists, see Julian Thomas *Time, Culture, and Identity*, 234-238, noted above.

³⁴ Domanska, 339.

³⁵ Andrew Martin, “Agents in Inter-Action: Bruno Latour and Agency,” *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 12(December 2005): 283-284.

things have some “mystical” or even psychological power to generate their own will. What I am acknowledging, following Latour, is that artifacts or things are used to create representations of the world in “a long process of negotiation between the material world, historical associations and people” and emerge as actors and forces in the logical spheres of the world where understanding is sought.

The result of granting agency to things as well as people also requires a reconsideration of the structure of historical work calling for a more interactive accounting in history between people and the built environments that they live in, one that gives history a grammar and syntax within which to work that is as grounded as much in participles as nouns and verbs, as much about the “becoming” that took place as the “was” or even “thing.”³⁶ Thomas Gieryn cites Durkheim’s influence in this idea among historians noting, “Structure itself is encountered in becoming, and one cannot illustrate it except by pursuing this process of becoming. It forms and dissolves continually; it is life arrived at a certain measure of consolidation.”³⁷ That such “consolidation” is the subject of history is sure, but that it continually gives way to renewed discourse is the ongoing necessity of history’s narrative and the recognition of the strength of Durkheim’s premise.³⁸

³⁶ Dell Upton recognized this grammatical base early on in the current turn to things. In his 1983 article, “The Power of Things: Recent Studies in American Vernacular Architecture,” *American Quarterly* 35 (1983): 273, he notes that Henry Glassie’s main influence in pushing folklore past mere intracultural communication into vernacular architectural and thing history was Noam Chomsky and his ideas about grammar and syntax as learned behaviors translated into creativity.

³⁷ Quoted in Domanska, 336. She suggests calling history “social structure becoming.”

³⁸ This is surely what supports White’s call for a return to narrativization and representation, though I have no reference to Durkheim among the many philosophers he notes.

Two things also demand attention at this point, one obvious the other consequential. First, this approach has generated a renewed interest in theoretical studies, i.e. the grasping of the vocabulary of the subject of material culture and things has lead to new or restated questions and results about history and how it is done.³⁹ It has demanded that history not relent to the idea that White and others are so critical of, that history is merely a “statement of fact” about things or anything else which leads to a perpetual “presentism” and lacks historicity or historical depth. Instead, history is the gathering of things as history, not merely as “matters of fact,” but as “matters of concern” for which the historian is called to care.⁴⁰ This makes historical work as important as it should be. The historian is no mere chronicler, no scribe of the current conquerors of our age. Such an idea leads to the next.

There is most assuredly within the “enchantment of things” a more moral focus for history as a discipline, one that is certainly tied to the current idea of historian as “activist.”⁴¹ Historians who are attempting to recover a moral voice for history in current debates concerning politics and human rights are now extending such rights to things and advocating “democracy extended to things” which recognizes the importance of the agency of things. Further, this granting of agency raises new questions in writing and doing history. “The central question is not whether this happens or doesn’t happen, but in

³⁹ Domanska, 40.

⁴⁰ Latour, 231. This is of course is tied to the attempt to get beyond a Rankean or modernist approach to history as noted in section on Hayden White above.

⁴¹ So the importance of the historic preservation movement since the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act, but also historians like Robert Merry, *The Sands of Time: Missionary Zeal, American Foreign Policy, and the Hazards of Global Ambition* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005).

what kind of way it happens.”⁴² Answering this question is what history does, and this creates the idea of material culture as an arena in which things help create the “public” or social sphere around them. Such a politics represents history as a gathering of humans and publics around and within things and acknowledges that history must take into account the social ramifications of things as well as their presence. History so oriented to the built environment of humans is a discourse that reflects “a need for concrete actions when merely intellectual considerations fail to effect changes in the world,”⁴³ and has even led the likes of Henry Glassie to end his magnum opus, *Material Culture*, with a discussion of sin and hope as such concepts relate to refusing to act responsibly once one has encountered the materially real subjects of history.⁴⁴ Social history is multi-dimensional, has many applications, and invokes responsibility from historians.

H. The Fruit of “Social History”

This current understanding of history results from twenty years of discourse on historical theory. It emerges out of the “social history” of Peter Burke and others who engaged the views of anthropologist Clifford Geertz that culture, in general, is the rallying point of history. Geertz asserted that chronology or existential reflection, while having their importance, are only a small part of the behavior and ideas creating culture. Geertz advocated the creation of a “thick description” of the complex of things in culture,

⁴² Pinney, 256.

⁴³ Domanska, 39.

⁴⁴ Henry Glassie, *Material Culture*, (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1999), 352-53.

including chronological and personal narratives, for history to do its work well.⁴⁵ Geertz opened the door for a “cultural” turn to history, and historians since have stretched and extended his thinking to include a multitude of things, ideas, ideals, and evidence in doing their work. “Thick” now means “layered,” a competition of cultures that, in turn, interact through the borrowing of patterned representationalism from other cultures/traditions. Thick leads to the scholarly assertion that space and time are intertwined, thus, decoding the built environment as a cultural construct gains importance. Historians now work with the physical forms and built environments within which humanity lives, recognizing them as conflicting and competing cultures and contexts that exist in the same landscape with their own political and social ideologies.

I. The Embarrassment of (Historical) Riches: A Variety of Approaches, An Abundance of Evidence

Working with theory and across disciplines, demanding material culture as evidence, alluding to ideals and styles means history is, then, multi-faceted and can be especially productive when it resists the temptation to reductionisms like form over content or being instead of doing. This approach to history imbricates stories, allowing them to overlap in the landscape, some evidence presented in one way, some in another, some for one end, some for another, as much as the evidence will allow. The purpose is to understand the region or place or landscape as it exists over time. Such a history is continuous, traditioned, and centered on the evidence of human living as reflected in

⁴⁵ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: HarperCollins, 1973), 27-28. For the work of Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993) and *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, 2nd ed., ed. Peter Burke (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2001), both of which champion a “history from below” or history of the every day lives of people groups with a breadth of social engagement demanding the voices of women, ethnic groups, social arrangements of space, etc.

things like buildings, rescue missions, schools, and homes. History so conceived is region, place, and site specific, and rich with the possibilities of creativity.

Historians are realizing that multi-disciplinarity means that history can also be written as a number of historical products leading to a number of uses—e.g. this dissertation, a museum exhibit, a documentary, a tourism site, and the preservation of buildings over time. Further, the idea and use of historical evidence must be broadly conceived. Certainly the written record as an artifact of history is prominent and must be so alongside history's other primary artifacts: photographs, floor plans, diagrams, maps, material remains, etc. What is needed is a context within which these gathered things make sense.

J. Material Culture: The Gathered Paradigm

This dissertation is site specific and interdisciplinary, really multi-disciplined, in approach. It brings together the work of a number of historical theorists, historians, folklorists, landscape historians, philosophers, sociologists, historical geographers, and a democracy of scholarship rich with the diversity of works and ideas from Hayden White, Henry Glassie, Ewa Domanska, Eelco Runia, Jon Goss, Timothy Gilfoyle, John Brinkerhoff Jackson, Thomas Gieryn, and others. It combines this scholarly diversity with a multiplicity of evidence to study people and their built environments in the same space over time resplendent with their politics, ideals, and social invention.⁴⁶ It seeks to

⁴⁶ An excellent example of how this is bearing fruit currently is the discussions occurring within the discipline of architectural history. The *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 65 (March 2006), 5-25, in a special section on "Learning From Architectural History" brings together urban theorists, geographical specialists, and economic historians to discuss history with architectural historians across disciplines. Of course, such work must be discriminating. It must be very aware of the theories being employed, their philosophical limits, and insure the integrity of the technical, academic procedures of

bring together a cooperative arrangement of contemporary historical scholarship that is theoretical, evidence-driven, and functional. It is built on the idea that material culture, the array of things as a gathered culture, relents to being told historically in all of its doxological depth in context. Henry Glassie argues, “Our need is for a more expansive and inclusive history. It cannot be based solely on writing, the expressive mode of a rare few. Material Culture—human works made permanent in buildings and books, in clothing and tools—provides the resource.”⁴⁷

Clearly the locus of culture here is architecture and its setting. “The emphasis on culture, particularly the dynamism of subcultures, has contributed to a convergence of architectural, social, and cultural history. Here the locus of urban culture is defined not by leisure, work, or even ethnic cultures but by the manipulation of landscapes and built environments.”⁴⁸ Henry Glassie notes that history bound together by material culture is the record of “the human intrusion in the environment (or landscape).”⁴⁹ History is, then, the record of human building which makes the case for the order intended by builders, consumers, resemantizers and the proceeding stories of how buildings are

gathering and interpreting evidence, but the idea bears much promise. Further, it is critical to note, that in doing so this current approach to history resists the idea that such terms as built environment or material culture, urban or city, landscape or geography, space or place are differentiated terms which must be used discreetly and rigidly categorically, though those debates continue. Instead, it sees them as complementary and uses them interchangeably as I do here.

⁴⁷ Henry Glassie, *Vernacular Architecture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 155.

⁴⁸ Timothy Gilfoyle, “White Cities, Linguistic Turns, and Disneylands: The New Paradigms of Urban History,” *Reviews in American History* 26 (1998): 180. While the arguments about truth and reality created by White and his critics have raged, the vacuum those arguments created within the discipline of history has now filled by all sorts of historians as noted above.

⁴⁹ Glassie, *Material Culture*, 1.

reshaped, rebuilt, or reused for other than original intentions within the same landscape. Here is the restless landscape, marking shifts in “cultural priorities.”⁵⁰

In his excellent book, *Thinking Through Material Culture*, Carl Knappett argues that what the turn to things in a Whitean context demands is that historians use material culture studies as the guide to bring together a variety of disciplined approaches with the abundance of evidence to plumb the relations between meaning and the material object. He argues that the collective or gathered thing (what we call context) and individual organism (thing) are constitutive of one another, that people need objects to think and to become cultured or storied.⁵¹ He also notes, along with a number of other historians, that architecture and architectural studies is the galvanizing center of the “new” approach to material culture studies.

K. The New Architectural History

In recent decades the visual turn directed historians toward the built environment increasingly grounding their architectural analyses in historical contexts, contexts reconstructing economic and political parameters of the building activity. The built environment has more to offer than architectural theory because it looks beyond pedigreed buildings to connect architecture to broader social and economic forces.⁵²

Historians now consider architecture and the built environment to provide the primary record of history. Architecture is the cultural and social context of history, the stabilizing place where all available evidence is presented as the ongoing discourse which history demands. Architecture is the gathering place for history, the multifunctional context of

⁵⁰ Ibid, 2.

⁵¹ Knappett, 169-170.

⁵² Maiken Umbach, “Urban History: What Architecture Does Historically Speaking...,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 65 (March 2006): 14.

history, working on pragmatic and ideological levels at the same time, seeing structures as time and place and culturally specific with artifacts that manifest history's stories. As so many historians have recently reminded us, buildings are the objects that need to be explained and must be allowed then to do the explaining.⁵³

The new architectural history demands that urban studies⁵⁴ and cultural or human geography⁵⁵ and ideas about the social construction of space and place be a part of the

⁵³ So the oft-quoted dictum of Winston Churchill delivered in an October 1943 speech to the House of Commons regarding the massive rebuilding of the city of London after its bombarding by the Nazi air raid in World War II, "We shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us."

⁵⁴ What has emerged in the new architectural approach to history is an emphasis on cities and their built environments so strong that the economic historians A. Amin and N. Thrift can claim that "The city is everywhere and everything," *Cities: Reimagining the Urban* (London: Polity Press, 2002)1, and that such a claim can be reiterated by Maiken Umbach, "A Tale of Second Cities: Autonomy, Culture, and the Law in Hamburg and Barcelona in the Late Nineteenth Century," *The American Historical Review* 110 (June 2005), an eminent historian whose specialty is early modern legal discourse in Germany and Spain, tells us enough about how prominent it has become. That this dissertation is also a discussion of an urban landscape, of a specific site or address within a certain city, means that there will be many intersections, certainly too many to list in any history. Further, the patterns of life that create urbanity, better called infrastructure, such as roadway constructions, engineering standards, city codes, and unnoticed or ignored spaces which become alleys must be explored as creative forces within the discourse of history. Indeed, in many ways they are the genesis of such things as boundary or building structure. Urban studies are good evidence and must not be ignored as they are an important part of what happened in history's narrative over time. By studying infrastructure, the process by which time becomes spatial and things are created out of intention as well as necessity can be seen. History connected to infrastructure unites a site with the observable space of its broader context beyond site boundary, connecting, in this case, the address of Seventh and Drexel with what has been and is Nashville.

⁵⁵ Historical Geography studies have provided a necessary, if difficult, compliment to the discourse. According to Jon Goss, "The Built Environment and Social Theory: Towards An Architectural Geography," *Professional Geographer* 40 (November 1988): 398, geography should "concern itself with the way in which architectural" studies gather "to produce an image of particular localities, neighborhoods, districts, and even cities." Goss also states that geography serves as a necessary reminder of the gathering power of history, of "architecture as a social product, a spatial configuration or dance that is the built environment that incorporates its economic, political, and ideological dimensions" (Goss, 394). Historical Geography's challenge comes when it is limited by some of its practitioners to Cultural Geography or Human Geography, emphasizing that humans are the primary actors, perhaps the only actors or agents in the study of buildings. For example, cultural geographer Richard Schein notes that though a landscape is a tangible, visible articulation of numerous discourses with "material phenomena, reflective and symbolic of individual activity and cultural ideals," those things are merely a window into the thoughts and practices of individuals who happen to be using them, Richard Schein, "Cultural Landscape Studies: Reception and the Social Mediation of Meaning," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 65 (March 2006): 17-18. His works is indicative of this problematic strand within cultural geography for architectural studies: "As a

“multi” in multi-disciplinary. “Place always involves an appropriation and transformation of space and nature that is inseparable from the reproduction and transformation of society in time and space.”⁵⁶ To put it more clearly: history has become what happens when people create. It is in their creation of built environments that humans intend and build and then resemantize what they have built, giving the creation its own logic of social relations and societal ideology which extends to the boundaries of place and interacts with the urban territory around it.⁵⁷

Extending this theory of history to architecture and the creation of built environments means that buildings with their exterior and interior creation reflect the social and political intentions of their builders. They are the cultural artifact, and their value systems, which change over time, are the living cultural traditions of those who inhabit them. Howard Davis notes that this extends architectural history beyond the study of buildings to include the processes and economic and political forces like bankers, material suppliers, engineers, and landmark events in the broader society in

cultural geographer I study the origins, form, meaning and symbolism of the cultural landscape. I focus on the landscape as a material thing or collection of things—an object of study that mandates the attention to architecture and the built environment—and an epistemology, a way of knowing the world that is normative in its spatial and visual disciplines and which provides us an interpretive entry into the social processes that constitute the world . . . not interested in origin or a builder’s design intentions but what considerations went into a building,” (Schein, 17) Schein’s quote reveals that he has no place for style in his thinking, no room for archival analysis or empirical descriptions, but only a discussion of how a building works socially. This collapses the distinctions between high style and vernacular in a way that diminishes their place in discourse, lessens their ability to communicate as epistemology and limits history to the actions of humans. Such a notion must be resisted for the built environment to be presented in its full historical depth and breadth.

⁵⁶ Allan Pred, “Place as Historically Contingent Process: Structuration and the Time-Geography of Becoming Places,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 74 (1984): 279. Pred uses Gidden’s theory of allowing agency to buildings and the mud, brick and stone, those things that make up place to illustrate his point.

⁵⁷ William Whyte, “How Do Buildings Mean: Some Issues of Interpretation in the History of Architecture,” *History and Theory* 45 (May 2006): 153-155.

which buildings are located that created them as well.⁵⁸ Julian Thomas, the British archaeologist, argues that this allows identity in things, that buildings and built environments have their own personalities and are forces and do not have to refer to a single unified culture.⁵⁹ They can have a multiplicity of meanings, make new ones, offer options, etc. The Danish architectural theorist N.J. Habraken equates social processes through the material creations of humans, a culture exposing things like difference, power, inequality, collective action, even protest through the gathered creation of a building or built environment.⁶⁰ This does not mean that such an approach is new, though it has certainly been re-newed by recent theorists and historians, but it does mean that new questions arise out a renewed discourse. Alain de Botton, in his *The Architecture of Happiness*, posits that “belief in the significance of architecture is premised on the notion that we are, for better or worse, different people in different places”—and on the conviction that it is “architecture’s task to render vivid to us who we might ideally be.”⁶¹ The new architectural history asks what kind of people we were in certain buildings and places and how this might extend into the present.

⁵⁸ Howard Davis, *The Culture of Buildings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 5.

⁵⁹ It is important to note that these historical negotiations are always connected to the land which they occupy. As I will explain the turn to landscape studies in a later section, it will suffice to say here that connecting ideas to structure and things—like the river/stream underneath the ground at Seventh and Drexel, the geographic rise toward the property from the section of flooded “Black Bottom,” highways connected to other infrastructure and today to the homeless community save such ideas as identity, heritage, and memory from the fright of a “Freudian” or interior exploration of emotions, feelings, etc. While such things are invariably a part of any history, i.e. people do love place, face failures in built environments, such things need to be tied to the structure or building of the environment and history to be a helpful, constructive part of the narrative of history. Even things like ideology, God, and spirit, can be discussed in that they can be apprehended as a part of the built environment.

⁶⁰ N.J. Habraken, *The Structure of the Ordinary* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 6-7, 252-255.

Scholars of vernacular architecture have, in some measure, been the generators of this renewed insistency of architecture as the centering focus of history. Anticipating this turn in 1991 and following the lead of Dell Upton in his “The Power of Things,” the editors of that year’s edition of *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Thomas Carter and Bernard Herman, set out a program which has been successfully followed. The “new” architectural history unites the study of buildings of all styles and functions with current trends in social history, historical archeology, and folklore research, all of which stress the broader interpretation of American society and culture.⁶² Architectural history as material culture has to move beyond older paradigms of style, toward a notion of aesthetic performance and identity within a well-conceived narrative that is a performance of which people, rooms, houses, and cities they inhabit leave a material trace.

Vernacular architecture today means more than a building without plans; it means buildings themselves and scholarship that employs physical objects as primary data. Henry Glassie argues that “vernacular architecture is an approach to the whole of the built world.”⁶³ Buildings become historical documents that are representative of cultures and all buildings, high style, colloquial, commercial, and even parochial, like every

⁶¹ Alain de Botton, *The Architecture of Happiness*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), 13. This is very important to history in that it begs questions like “Might we be different people in the same place over time?” and “Can we risk vividly allowing for a rendering of all of the uses we have been in a place to show us who we might ideally be?” Of course, this means architecture is, as the focal point of history, about morality and this is why it is so primary in this approach.

⁶² Thomas Carter and Bernard L. Herman, “Introduction: Toward a New Architectural History,” in Carter and Herman, eds., *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, IV* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1991), 1-6.

⁶³ Henry Glassie, *Vernacular Architecture*, 21.

culture, are worthy of study.⁶⁴ “Vernacular architecture studies will have reached maturity when we have defined an inclusive approach to the study of all architecture that will eliminate the need for such an exclusive label as vernacular architecture.”⁶⁵ Of course this means that good history neither deconstructs architecture nor disconnects it from the necessity of time and place. Worthwhile studies must encompass exterior and interior, as well as what is revealed and concealed in buildings. The new architectural history can offer glimpses into thought processes normally hidden from historical view. Vernacular architectural historians champion a new social history which privileges many voices over one and contend that such an approach must extend agency to things as well as people. This approach to history means that architecture becomes the place where philosophy and pragmatics can be discussed together, as they should be. Lizabeth Cohen notes the possibilities of this: “The built environment offers historians a unique opportunity to pursue the complex interaction of structures and agency . . . it brings together the givens of economy, entrenched power, existing urban fabric and the surprise of (the) architect’s vision”⁶⁶ It should be added that this approach is especially aided by White’s recognition of the helpfulness of discursive logic in representing history. Discursive logic allows for the overcoming of history as a chronology of events where each episode or event disrupts what has existed in the acknowledged past. Discursive

⁶⁴ Dell Upton, “Architectural History or Landscape History?,” *Journal of Architectural Education*, 44 (August 1991): 195-199, notes that such an approach to architectural history acknowledges the multiplicity and fragmentation of environmental meaning as well. The interpretation of building styles extends into all areas of historical study.

⁶⁵ Upton, “Power of Things,” 264.

⁶⁶ Lizabeth Cohen, “A Historian’s Labor in the Built Environment,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 65 (March 2006): 12.

logic allows for people, cultures, and built environments to be presented as traditioned, not disruptive, a momentary representation of a culture which continues time past for the period of their present-ness. Discursive logic is not the bane of architecture, history, and tradition, but rather, its boon.⁶⁷

Architecture is not only the object that needs to be explained, but the object that does the explaining--therefore the built environment is an important historical source in its own right. Henry Glassie reminds us of the importance of all this. "My argument is done. Architecture provides a prime resource to the one who would write a better history Its dynamic depends upon impurity."⁶⁸ That impurity or diversity is the range of evidence that any built environment is capable of producing.

To accomplish this task, and following the work of Dell Upton, this dissertation will evaluate the built environment of Seventh and Drexel using a taxonomy that assesses the architecture of the built environment, the culture of the building's enduring values as lived out in its local setting, the social processes and encounters that took place within and around it, and the symbolic nature of the building. Further, each built environment will be studied as a part of the landscape that it occupied.⁶⁹ The result will be an attempt

⁶⁷ Pinney, 256ff., recognizes the logical consequence of this position is that materiality is not merely a representation of the social nor a mere chronologizing of events but must extend to a matter of interpretation where material things may be said to have their own temporality as well as agency, a notion that does not seem too far fetched given the limited shelf life of buildings however well made they are. Following this idea, he posits that this means history is a process of disrupted events. It is no stretch to counter this notion as I do following the lead of Henry Glassie, in his article "Tradition," and argue the very opposite.

⁶⁸ Glassie, *Material Culture*, 342.

⁶⁹ Upton, "The Return to Things," passim. In using this taxonomy, I am placing the building as a cultural representation built by humans before the social relations it enacted, instead of after as Upton does. I do so from the conviction that traditioned social relations proceed from a building's cultural denotations ala Henry Glassie and Bruno Latour. "Culture resists time . . . tradition is a temporal process concept. Now

to take into account the totality of the built environment at Seventh and Drexel during the twentieth century as a set of regional, American buildings that were used to inspire, position, arrange, and refine the world with intentions for humans, their cultures, and their society. Raising the question of what buildings reveal about how their inhabitants intended to represent or portray themselves in the world over time even to the point of reinvention and transformation opens a rich vein of observation and interpretation for history.

L. The Taxonomy of Architecture at Seventh and Drexel

A building is more than it seems. It is an artifact—an object of material culture produced by a society to fulfill particular functions determined by, and thus embodying or reflecting, the social relations and level of development of the productive forces of that society. Buildings can be viewed as statements of purpose—shelter, meeting, making, marketing—created in an environment of opportunity and constraint and with a given level of technology. They are also physical expressions of a way of life representing culture and its attending traditioned behavior interacting with other cultures. Buildings reflect not only culture, however, for they are engaged in reproduction of social relations, both as monuments or more prosaic signs and symbols in communication of social meaning, and through their relations of separation and containment. A building is invested with ideology, and the space within, around, and between buildings is both produced and producing.⁷⁰

This excellent summary from the historical geographer Jon Goss explains why buildings have so dominated recent history: they stabilize social life. Indeed, they structure social

define tradition as culture's dynamic, as the process by which culture exists, and it emerges as a swing term between culture and history" Glassie, "Tradition," 399. By history I take Glassie to refer to those social interactions which occur when a building or culture interacts with other cultures and then embodies and spatializes social relations. Those social interactions are exactly what Latour is attempting to ascribe as history which is denoted by the agency of things and people in the built environment.

⁷⁰ Goss, 392. I will return to this idea in the conclusion arguing that if these "buildings" are any count and they are, then within this built environment are societies with grand intentions, well worth consideration.

life and its attendant ideologies, like the behavior patterns of Catholic school children, homeless men, consumers, and Nashville's booster elites.

Not excluding time or change, architectural history studies fix for at least an observable series of moments the social formation(s) that occurred. That buildings and landscapes have been altered simply means that such a site is a place of reinterpretation, allowing a historian the advantage of comparing values and processes.⁷¹ That these occurred in a landscape and in relationship with buildings shows how pliable and interesting things like earth and brick really are. Buildings are attractive to historians in that they are such good evidence of so many things and they demand that we account

⁷¹ Recognizing that architectural history has been, until recently, undertheorized, contemporary or recent historians are beginning to do the necessary work of tying this ideal to philosophy which recognizes the agency of buildings as noted about things above. In "What Buildings Do," *Theory and Society* 31 (February 2002): 35-74, the sociologist Tom Gieryn ties together recent social theory by Anthony Giddens who understands buildings to be the continually reinterpreted products of human agency, and Bourdieu's thesis that buildings are objectified social strata written into wood and brick within the Durkheimian argument about becoming to suggest that as social constructs buildings must be understood as constructs where intentions and people exist together and compete, each with its own intentionality, in the same environment. He notes that like human agency, buildings that are agents are also capable of a range of result. "Buildings stabilize social life, they give structure to social institutions, durability to social networks, persistence to behavior patterns. But buildings stabilize imperfectly. Some fall into ruin . . . some are unendingly renovated into something they were not originally. Buildings don't just sit there imposing themselves" (Gieryn 35). Like human beings, buildings exist as and with culture, e.g. Mile End is as indicative of the "New South" as was its owner, Samuel Keith. This reminds us that things being assembled as history offer the historian a chance to do interpretation, to offer meaning to history. Buildings and things offer themselves as "objects of (re)interpretation, narration, and representation—and meanings or stories are sometimes more pliable than the walls and floors they depict. They sit somewhere between agency and structure—we shape them, and they shape us." William Whyte, "How Buildings Mean," 156, attempts to tie buildings to semantic or semiotic theory, ala recognizing buildings as texts to be read, but read as a certain kind of texts. Citing the many ways architecture/built environments have enlivened recent scholarship and have done so for quite some time, he argues that, at least since Gibbon, et al., all sorts of attempts to uncover the meaning inherent in architecture have been at the center of much of historical study but that the attempt to create meaning is simply not going far enough. Such studies, like all history, require good theory to support them. "Buildings are a particular sort of text: one that bears very little similarity to verbal, linguistic, or even artistic texts. As such the idea that they can be read—read in the same way one reads a novel, a portrait, or even archaeological site—simply does not stand up to scrutiny." He argues that what buildings offer is the evidence of being instruments by which emotions, ideas, and beliefs are articulated; they do resemble and help represent social systems, but they must be read in each instance and then instant to instant as a "transposition" of the intentions of cultures.

well for the evidence given us, including style or aesthetic⁷² as indicative of social/historical importance, i.e. such an approach or theory insists that the aesthetic be understood as a sign or way into understanding what is historic and social within the landscape.⁷³

This approach to history as a product of material culture, centered on built environments, allows for history to be the “artful construction” mentioned at the start of this section by Glassie. Buildings as architecture center the study as defining an ideal or appropriate world where something can occur to a full measure like education or consumer consumption or lost cause pride, but it also lets design ideals have a say, for people to have a say, for mechanics and building functions or building cultures to have a say. This means history presents a narrative, any narrative as a competition of ideologies or social exchanges etched into a context or landscape by built or over time, the continuity of humanity being lived out toward high ideals over time, and this is worth considering. Studying not only what happened, but also how it occurred and why and where—all of the things within the subject that occurred and how they impinged upon each other—makes it a restless landscape within which history occurs, constantly needing

⁷² For style as evidence see Jules David Prown, “Mind in Matter,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 17 (Spring 1982): 1, “Material culture is the study through artifacts of the beliefs—values, attitudes, and assumptions—of a particular community or society at a given time,” and “Style as Evidence,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 15 (Spring 1980): 198, “The way in which something is done, produced, or expressed is Style and style is manifested in form rather than content. So evidence and classification according to accepted standards necessary for material culture studies, so we can know intentions and relate this to broader patterns and meanings from things past.” While I certainly agree with his assessments, in order to allow buildings that agency they so obviously have, it must be argued that style is as revelatory of content as it is of form. This granting of agency keeps style as an approach and offering to the discourse of history and keeps things from becoming an end in themselves.

⁷³ For an excellent example of this approach see Carroll Van West, *Tennessee’s New Deal Landscape* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001) and *Tennessee’s Historic Landscapes: A Traveler’s Guide* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995).

to be renamed and allowed to speak in order for the dominant and the less so, the present and what is present by now being absent to come to bear upon us who experience it, to make something of us within the context where history happens. That buildings are symbolic of intentions and the people who created them rounds out the taxonomy.

M. The Taxonomy of Landscape at Seventh and Drexel

“Landscape is history made visible.” John Brinkerhoff Jackson⁷⁴

Recreating the past from landscapes, from places where history and culture can be encountered, a landscape setting is more than just the spatial environment in which these things occur, as a history with its many contributing “elements mobilized into interaction.”⁷⁵ Landscape studies, a field of history championed by John Brinkerhoff Jackson in the late twentieth century, keep things from losing their distinctively social efficacy and individual presence by refusing to allow them to become unhistorical, refusing to allow them to digress into meta-narratives which rob them of themselves. This makes buildings what people do with them and people what happens in their buildings and within their landscape. Landscapes, like buildings and people and the material productions they leave behind, are artifacts. They each provide the historian with a locus within which to discern and discover the social processes and concerns which is history itself.

Put together all of the observable processes and concerns that occur within one site, and you have a landscape fraught with history and evidence aplenty to discuss. All

⁷⁴ Jackson quoted in Pierce Lewis “The Monument and the Bungalow,” *Geographical Review* 88 (October 1998): 523.

⁷⁵ Anthony Giddens quoted in Gieryn, “What Buildings Do,” 38.

of these artifacts are easily recognizable as cultural artifacts, signs that must be read for their semiotic and semio-mantic value. Each artifact is a multifunctional object within a landscape that demands the presence of things, artifacts to be interpreted.

Landscape studies as a field of history remind of the need to hold together the many things historians gather. Landscape studies force historians to “tie” things together, to build a history using the available evidence from this region, taking its form as seriously as its content.⁷⁶ Landscape studies study how space is organized and re-organized by a community or a building. Landscape history, by way of its product, “explains architecture as a social product, as the spatial configuration of the built environment incorporating economic, political, and ideological dimensions.”⁷⁷

Further, by recognizing the need for efficiency, landscape studies takes the land seriously and notes the way that boundary lines are drawn and redrawn, and, therefore, how any landscape is a part of the larger context within which it is found. The study of a built environment as landscape pushes history to discuss its subjects with regard to those things outside of the boundary of which it is apart, not only spatially but also temporally, into the present. Landscape, which both gathers in place/space and pushes beyond to broader contexts, reminds us of the necessity of multi-disciplinarity. Because this makes history so vast, landscape studies remind us of the necessity of philosophy to hold things together and make them recognizable among the conglomeration of landscapes of which a subject is a part. “The commonplace aspects of the contemporary landscape—the

⁷⁶ John Brinkerhoff Jackson, “By Way of Conclusion,” *Landscape in Sight: Looking at America*, Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 309.

⁷⁷ Goss, 394.

streets and houses and fields and places of work—could teach us a great deal, not only about American history and American society, but about ourselves, and how we relate to the world.”⁷⁸

Landscape studies, combined with architectural history and the multi-disciplinary fields which contribute to it, strike a chord that history cannot ignore. History by way of things extends to stories and morality. Ideas, meaning, and philosophy arise out of the landscape and its broader context, making it important work. “Storytelling is the history of reading the landscape not as an archive of material culture but of ideas and meaning If the study of landscapes is to acquire intellectual appeal then it must venture into the field of cultural comparisons, and into the philosophical origins of these patterns as they are inscribed on the surface of the earth.”⁷⁹ There is more to history, more to any landscape than the things merely found within it. Relationship between things is there to be sure, but also the political and social dimensions of life in their fullness, and the past as well.⁸⁰ In sum, “landscape is an historic document that tells a story, nay multiple stories, about the people who created the landscape and the cultural context in which the landscape was embedded.”⁸¹

N. Anamnesis—Remembering a Meaningful Model of the Real World

⁷⁸ Jackson quoted in Lewis, 507.

⁷⁹ Jackson quoted in Paul F. Starrs “Brink Jackson in the Realm of the Everyday” *Geographical Review* 88 (October 1998): 492, 497

⁸⁰ I am not arguing that the “past” is somehow out there waiting to be discovered in all of its vastness so that it might overwhelm historians. What I am acknowledging is that the past is not entirely lost to us and in some, perhaps many, way(s) stands ready to reveal itself in the discourse of history. As a convinced empiricist, I simply remain in the argument that the built environment has much to offer if open to a variety of interpretive methods.

⁸¹ Lewis, 508.

In his 1988 article, Jon Goss posits, from Richard Ford, that the idea of tying cultural geography studies to the new architectural history can produce a “meaningful model of the real world.”⁸² And that is what this dissertation and its historiography as history is after. But how does such a model emerge? Given all the ground covered above, it seems that what the new architectural history is trying to offer to the present, by virtue of what it represents, is the chance to walk around with and observe the dead as a meaningful part of the present, to observe past forms of meaningful life with their concentrated ideologies, practices, and interactions with one another which make up historical discourse and have a discussion with them about the future.

This is very much like Plato’s idea of anamnesis in *The Meno*, the reflective return of the living to the world of forms, outside of time and immaterial because of their perfection, by way of human recollection. Such a recollection allows things to be properly observed as they “are” and then becomes the tool by which the re-collectors gather meaning into things in their present experiences of the material world.⁸³ Anamnesis allows a recovery of meaning, a/the positing of meaning and possibility in material things, by way of recollecting those things in their material existence for all they are worth. Unlike Platonic thought, the new architectural history insists that this is possible without returning to the world of forms, a realm of universal meaning contained only in some dimension beyond and outside physical reality. The new idea of architectural history, I argue, is one that is an anamnestic practice, that anamnesis is a quality within and of history, and has the possibility of producing a “meaningful model of

⁸² Larry Ford quoted in Goss, 402.

⁸³ Plato, *The Meno* (New York: The Kessinger Press, 2004), 10.

the real world,” in the present. Such an anamnesis is an encounter of the living present with meaningfulness that can only be apprehended by a re-presentation of the material past for recollection in the present moment. That such an encounter, such a model can be created is not only testimony to history’s power but also to its promise. To be able to view the past and dialogue with it is both powerful and promising. What are we that this could have happened? Who could/might we become that this has happened?⁸⁴

Further, using architecture as its locus, history becomes an arena where sub-communities interact over time. Each community has its own intentions and style, language, practices, and place. Each community has “its own universe of symbolic and material actions.”⁸⁵ Architectural history well-done is what Dell Upton calls intercalation or transversality, the process of weaving together the several fragile strands of identity and culture into an inter-locking narrative. Such a narrative represents history in its totality so that it can be considered and remembered together to as great an extent as is possible. Such an approach allows for each community within a history to exist on its own but as a part of the greater whole, even cooperating with and critiquing the other communities that it exists together with. Intercalation allows history to approach the goal of creating a meaningful model of the real world with a coherence that is necessary.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ This is a restatement of Vico’s definition of providence from *New Science*, 145. I do not intend it to be necessarily theological, but moral and historical as he did.

⁸⁵ Dell Upton, *Another City: Urban Life and Urban Spaces in the New American Republic* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 13.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

O. Summary/Conclusion

To sum up, the purpose of this dissertation is to present a privileged account of the historical identity(s) that has been the built environment over time of an address in downtown Nashville, Tennessee in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and to provide an argument that what is important in that account is the variety of evidence and approach which necessarily attempts to explain a theory of what happened over time in this one address that produces a model of the real world. It also attempts to connect what happened with material culture studies as a broad and excellent way of doing history, an understanding of tradition, the locating of patterns, and arguments about identity and the future.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MILE END ESTATE, 1813-1905

A. Mile End and Nashville History

By the turn of the twentieth century the history of the city of Nashville, Tennessee was written deep into the soil of the five acres occupied by the estate known as “Mile End” at the corner of Seventh, or Stevenson Avenue, and Drexel, or Central Street.¹ Anthony Foster, one of Nashville’s leading citizens, built the home when he bought the property in 1813. Foster, though not among the original settlers of Nashville, was one of the original surveyors of the settlement of Nashville and the surrounding area that had begun with the Cumberland Compact in 1780.² A Revolutionary War veteran, he was a friend of President Andrew Jackson and Tennessee’s territorial Governor William Blount.³ In 1792 President George Washington and Secretary of War, Henry Knox, asked Foster and James Robertson, Nashville’s most noted early citizen, to negotiate a treaty settlement with the Native American Chickasaw and Cherokee tribes after several violent skirmishes between the settlers and Native Americans.⁴

¹Nashville street names were changed and rechanged during the 19th and 20th centuries. For street name changes, see Denise Strub, *Stories behind the street names of Nashville and Memphis* (Chicago: Bonus Books, 1993); see also Friends of the Metropolitan Archives, Nashville, <http://freepages.history.rootsweb.com/~nashvillearchives/streetchange.html>

² “Cumberland Compact, May 1, 1780,” Tennessee Genealogical Project Website, <http://www.rootsweb.com/~tndavids/cumbrcom.htm>; Foster is mentioned among the original surveyors employed to plot the area of Middle Tennessee by Wilbur Foster Creighton, *The Building of Nashville* (Nashville: Wilbur F. Creighton, Jr., 1969), 189.

³Edythe Rucker Whitley, “Revolutionary War Soldiers in Davidson, County, Tennessee,” *William and Mary Quarterly Historical Magazine* 11 (1931): 15.

⁴ The treaty papers were apparently well received by the Cherokee, but the Chickasaw tore up the treaty in front of Foster and Robertson. J.G.M. Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee to the end of the 18th*

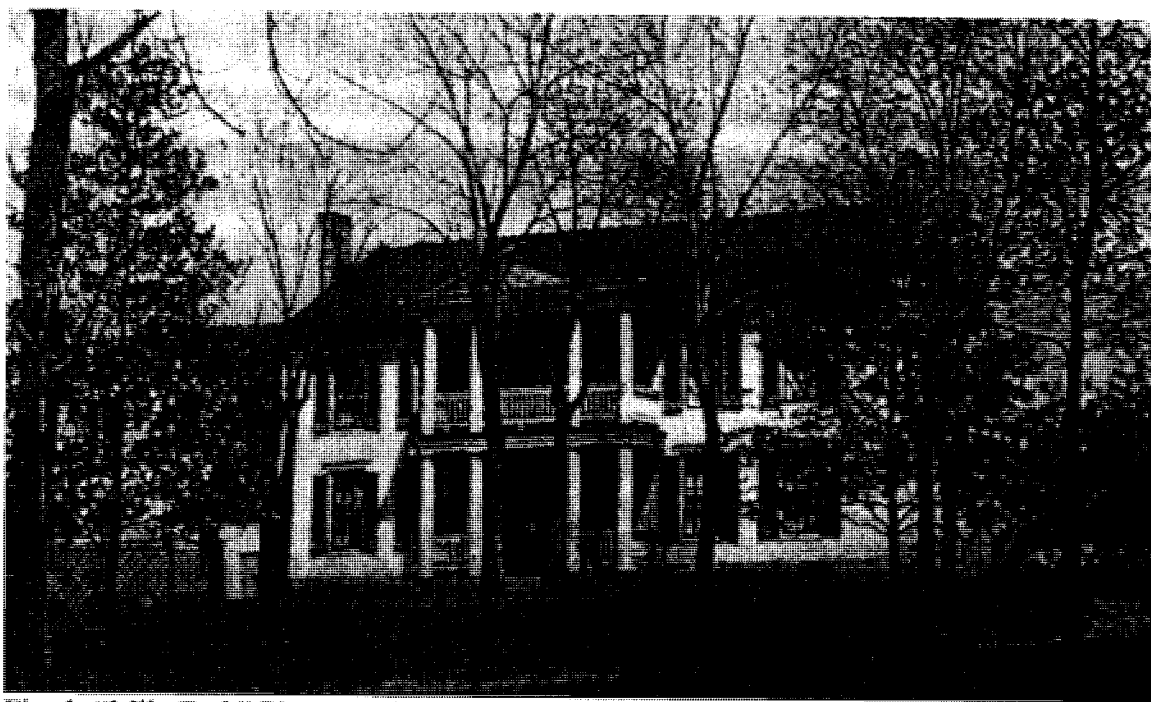


Fig. 1. "Mile End," Photograph courtesy of the Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nell Savage Mahoney Papers

Foster was a lawyer, a merchant, a surveyor, and a soldier.⁵ By 1804 he had established his family on a plantation farm of some 700 acres, complete with a two-story

Century (Charleston: John Russell, 1853), 598; Lawrence Kinnaird, *Annual Report of the American Historical Association 1944: Spain in the Mississippi, 1765-1794, Part III: Problems of Frontier Defense, 1792-1794* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1944), 402; *American State Papers: Indian Affairs Vol. IV, Part One 1832* (Washington, DC: Kessinger Publishing, 2005), 266; *A History of Tennessee: The Land and Native People*, Tennessee State Government, <http://state.tn.us/sos/bluebook/05-06/40-history.pdf>, 16, notes: "Indian warfare flared up in 1792, as Cherokee and Creek warriors bent on holding back the tide of white migration launched frequent attacks. The Cumberland settlements, in particular, were dangerously remote and exposed to Creek raiding parties, and by 1794 it seemed questionable whether these communities could withstand the Indian onslaught. Exasperated by the unwillingness of the Federal government to protect them, the Cumberland militia took matters into their own hands. James Robertson organized a strike force that invaded the Chickamauga country, burned the renegade Lower Towns, and eliminated the threat from that quarter. The Nickajack Expedition, as it was called, and threats of similar action against the Creeks finally brought a halt to raids on the Cumberland settlements." There is no record of whether or not Foster accompanied Robertson, who had lost a brother and two sons to earlier Native American attacks on settlements in the Middle Tennessee area, on the Nickajack Expedition.

⁵ Anita Shafer Goodstein, *Nashville: 1780-1860* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1989), 26. Goodstein notes that Foster's connections with landed elites and national politicians allowed him to

log cabin and 150 acres cleared for agriculture in the community of Palmyra on the Cumberland River in then Dickson County.⁶ Foster owned and traded in slaves as did many other landowners in the Tennessee territory.⁷

In October 1813, probably as the result of his second marriage, Foster paid \$4000.00 for some thirty-three and two-thirds acres near the southern end of the city of Nashville's original 640 acres of public land from the trustees of Davidson Academy, of whom his brother was one of the principals, and moved his family into Nashville.⁸ Foster's purchase was originally part of the 240 acre plot deeded for the school at the city's incorporation and demanded by its officially incorporated status by an act of the North Carolina Legislature.⁹ Foster's slaves built "Mile End" and its name acknowledged its location on the fringe of the city circa one mile from Nob Hill, the site of the eventual Tennessee State Capitol building location and the centering demarcation

import goods to Nashville for merchant trading on credit in major commercial and financial centers both North and South in cities like Philadelphia and New Orleans.

⁶ Goodstein, 26. Harriet Louise Arnow Simpson, *Seedtime on the Cumberland* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1960), 274. Simpson quotes an article from the February 1, 1804 edition of the *Tennessee Gazette* in which Foster notes some of his hardships in establishing his farm and only being able to clear 150 acres of it for agricultural production.

⁷ Goodstein, 74-75, 85.

⁸ *Nashville Deed Book K*, 457-458, recorded in the Nell Savage Mahoney Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

⁹ J. Wooldridge, ed., *History of Nashville, Tennessee* (Washington, DC: H. Crew, 1890), 89. The school's existence was certainly due to the dogged determination and leadership of James Robertson, who incidentally could not read and write when he first led the school. While the school's early history indicates it was held at two sites, the one in Nashville and one where it eventually settled in what is now Sumner County. The Nashville campus eventually became Cumberland College in 1803 and by 1807 its campus occupied a scant seven of the original 240 acres of Davidson Academy. Between 1803 and 1820 when Cumberland College gave way to becoming the University of Nashville, the land was parceled out by the school's board of trust. Foster's purchase was a part of that parceling out of the land.

point between the northern and southern sections of the city.¹⁰ With Foster's war and Native American experience, and the continuation of occasional violent episodes between the Nashville settlers and Native Americans, it is no stretch to believe that the home stood as something of a sentinel on the city's southern border.

Foster and his family prospered in the ensuing years. His nephew Ephraim Foster founded one of the state's most lucrative law practices with the help of his mentor Andrew Jackson. Voters three times elected Ephraim to the Tennessee State House, and twice he was chosen a member of the United States Senate.¹¹ With his family's connections and his professional reputation, Anthony Foster also landed a nomination as

¹⁰ There is some indication that Foster was instrumental in procuring the current site of St. Mary of the Seven Sorrows Roman Catholic Church, ca. 1821. The Roman Catholic church was making its first forays into Tennessee attempting to seize the opportunity before the Episcopal Church and James Otey arrived with their visitation of liturgical pomp in the state in 1833. Foster apparently was able to have the site deeded into the possession of Bishop Flaget of Bardstown, Kentucky, who was conducting the visitation. When eventual Bishop Richard Pius Miles (either 1838 or 1843, there is some dispute) began the settlement of the church that would lead to the creation of its Nashville Diocese in the early 1830's, he claimed the site, apparently already occupied by a small wooden frame church. Eventually the first diocesan cathedral, St. Mary's, was built when Miles employed the architect Adolphus Heiman in 1845. Heiman (not William Strickland whom many have mistakenly supposed as the church's architect) designed the building in a style reminiscent of the State Capitol which dwarfs the building, see Gifford A. Cochran, *Grandeur In Tennessee*, (New York: J.J. Augustin Publishers, 1946), 106. Bishop Miles was interred in the church's basement, though his remains were forgotten and only discovered in 1969 when they were moved. For Foster's involvement with Bishop Flaget see Victor Francis O'Daniel, *The Father of the Church In Tennessee: or, The life, times, and character of the Right Reverend Richard Pius Miles, O.P., the first bishop of Nashville* (Washington, DC: Dominica, 1926), 303-304, 403.

¹¹ Philip M. Hamer, "Ephraim Hubbard Foster," *Dictionary of American Biography* (Washington, DC: American Council of Learned Societies, 1928-36): <http://galenet.galegroup.com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/servlet/BioRC>.

the federal surveyor of Florida.¹² Anthony Foster died in April of 1825 at the age of sixty, and his son Robert sold Mile End in 1829 to Joseph Minnick.¹³

V.K. Stevenson and his partners acquired the home at some point in the 1840s in their push to acquire land for what was to become the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad. Among Stevenson's partners were brothers Moses and William Wetmore and Orville Ewing. Ewing would eventually take up residence at Mile End to oversee the construction of the new railroad at the southern end of the property.¹⁴ Through his partnership with Stevenson and in several other business ventures, Orville Ewing and his family increased their fortune and became quite wealthy.¹⁵ Ewing was a local politician, serving on Nashville's Board of Aldermen in 1844, a merchant, a lawyer, and, like

¹² Major William Lewis, confidant and advisor to Andrew Jackson nominated Foster for the position during the administration of President James Monroe. There is no record of Foster ever having served in the post. Daniel Preston, *A Comprehensive Catalogue of the Correspondence and Papers of James Monroe* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 813.

¹³ *Nashville Land Office Book G-7*, 193, Nell Savage Mahoney Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives. It is interesting to note that in the same year that Foster was buried, his good friend James Robertson's remains were re-interred in the Nashville City Cemetery very near his plot. Robertson died in 1814 and had been buried near the city square.

¹⁴ Wooldridge, *History of Nashville*, 332, lists Ewing and his brother Andrew among the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad officers. Orville served for a time as treasurer of the company.

¹⁵ Ewing's family history stretched back to at least 1780 in Nashville, and one of his forefathers had received a land grant in the Cumberland Compact across the Cumberland River in East Nashville. Orville and his brothers Andrew and Edwin were well known Nashville citizens. Albert and Edward were both lawyers and judges who were active in local politics and served in the United States Congress. Albert, another brother, married the daughter of Church of Christ founder Alexander Campbell and was a Church of Christ minister serving his church in Eureka, IL, William S. Speer, *Sketches of Prominent Tennesseans* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2003, originally published Nashville, 1888 by the author), 140. Edwin made the speech at the laying of the cornerstone of the state capitol in 1845, *Art Work of Nashville* (Chicago: The W.H. Parish Publishing Company, 1894), manuscript unnumbered. Like many Nashvillians of the era, the Ewings were alternatively Whig (Edwin) and Democrat (Andrew) and apparently sympathetic toward African Americans though ardent supporters of keeping the American union together. Edwin is somewhat famously known to have purchased the freedom of a Frank Parrish, for whom he acted as attorney. Parrish was a quasi-freed mulatto slave who had lived independently in white society as a slave and as the estate of his owners was being settled was going to be put up for auction as property of the estate and sold into servitude, see Bobby L. Lovett, *The African-American History of Nashville, Tennessee, 1780-1930* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1999), 12.

Stevenson, a real estate industrialist.¹⁶ He would become president of Planter's Bank by 1855.¹⁷

During the period of 1845-55, Stevenson, Ewing, and one of their partners in the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad, Moses Wetmore, parceled out most of the land from the original Foster deed to plots created for working class homes and businesses that would serve railroad needs and interests.¹⁸ They left the home intact on a five acre square plot that sat directly in the middle of the newly formed neighborhood. From the site of "Mile End," Ewing could keep his eye on the building of the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad tracks that lay at the south end of the property, probably built with either slave or cheap convict labor under Stevenson's direction. The railroad's eventual headquarters would be just two blocks to the West in the Nashville rail yards.

By 1850, Orville Ewing, his wife, and their six children occupied the home.¹⁹ Ewing's wife, Milbrey or Mildred Williams Ewing, one of Nashville's leading elite

¹⁶ Wooldridge, 121, 332, 337. Goodstein, 161. The *Annals of the State of Tennessee, 1853-1854* (Nashville: M'kennie and Brown, 1855), 483-485, notes that Ewing and Stevenson were partners in more than one venture as they established a wharf at Lick Springs northwest of Nashville for the purpose of receiving goods and charging tariffs.

¹⁷ John P. Campbell, *Nashville City Directory* (Nashville: Published by Author, 1855), 96.

¹⁸ George M. Hopkins, *Atlas of the city of Nashville, Tennessee: from official records, private plans and actual survey* (Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins Company, 1908) reflects this development showing the neighborhood around Mile End as being created according the Ewing/Wetmore Plan (see below page 50). The plan borders Stevenson Street, then Vine Street, now Seventh Avenue. The plan, reflected in the map, called for the parceling out of the acreage within the five acre space of Mile End, a plan that was not carried out. The map also reflects the proposed connection of Central Avenue, now Drexel Street, a connection that was never achieved and played an interesting role in the reorganization of the property by Mother Katharine Drexel and the Immaculate Mother Academy in the twentieth century.

¹⁹ Colonel William Willoughby, "Reminiscences," *History of Davidson County, Tennessee with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of its Prominent Men and Pioneers*, ed. W.W. Clayton, available online at <http://freepages.history.rootsweb.com/~nashvillearchives/willoughby.html>, Metro Nashville Archives. Willoughby's reminiscence notes both Ewing and Foster occupying the house. Ewing's wife, Milbrey Williams Ewing would die in the house in 1864, and many of the Ewing children and grandchildren, who

citizens in her own right, created an elaborate garden on the grounds.²⁰ An early survey of Tennessee historic gardens described it:

Graveled walks radiating from the center and intersecting at right angles formed squares where calacanthus, pyrus japonica, lilacs, bridal wreath, and roses flourished. On the north side a brick wall formed a natural trellis for the grapevines, and on the south fruit trees and a vegetable garden lay beyond the flower beds. On the east side handsome trees and a hedge of Bois d'Arc formed a green background for the garden.²¹

A strong underground stream which ran beneath the property aided the garden's abundance and afforded the many plants plenty of nourishment. The garden had a large greenhouse, the entrance of which was covered with "star jasmine, and here pomegranates, Marechal Neil, and other rare plants were kept."²² Many city residents apparently enjoyed a walk to the Ewing home to visit the gardens.²³ The Catalonian Jasmine plants from the greenhouse furnished the bridal bouquets for many family weddings.²⁴

continued to help form the core of Nashville's, elite were born there, e.g. the obituary of Andrew Ewing, a prestigious Nashville lawyer, in *The Tennessean*, 11 October 1956, notes that he was born in the house.

²⁰ Milbrey Ewing was apparently an accomplished woman and a leading citizen of Nashville in her own right serving as a trustee and founder with, among others Mary Middleton Rutledge Fogg, of the Protestant School of Industry for the education of poor white and black women as domestics who would work in the homes of the Nashville elites. Carole Stanford Bucy, "Mary Middleton Rutledge Fogg," in *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, ed. Carroll Van West (online edition): <http://www.state.tn.us/tsla/history/state/acts/tnact-e2.htm>.

²¹ Roberta Seawell Brandau, *Homes and Gardens of Tennessee* (Nashville: Parthenon Press for Cheekwood Botanical Gardens, 1936), 164.

²² Ibid.

²³ Mrs. John Trotwood Moore, unpublished manuscript "Garden Club Lectures," 1909-1910, Mrs. John Trotwood Moore Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives, 10.

²⁴ Brandau, 164. One can only imagine the weddings such flowers must have participated in as the Ewings were intermarried with many of the wealthiest and elite families of the city. A quick genealogical search shows the Ewing named intertwined with Morrows, Cockrills, McGavocks, and Roberstons among others.

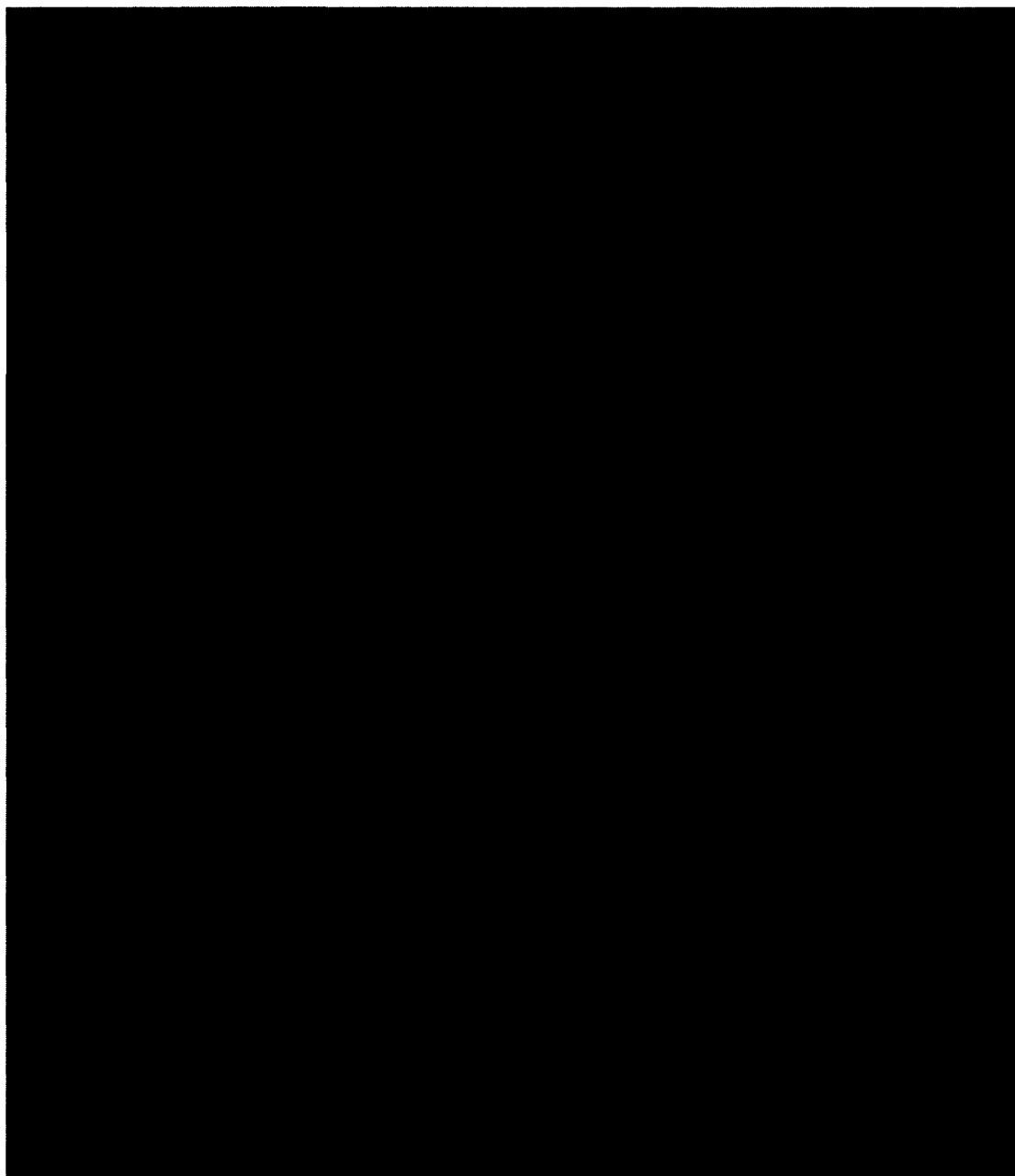


Fig. 2. Map of Seventh and Drexel property showing Stevenson-Ewing plan. George M. Hopkins, *Atlas of the city of Nashville, Tennessee: from official records, private plans and actual survey* (Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins Company, 1908), Plate 7. Courtesy Nashville Public Library, Special Collections

The Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad began construction on its first rail line in 1848 along the back edge of the neighborhood property (where the track still lies today). By 1851 the railroad had laid enough track to open the route between Nashville and

Murfreesboro. The railroad would prove to be quite a success in bringing commerce and people to Nashville. Stevenson, Ewing, and the other stockholders became wealthy industrialists in the process. When the Civil War broke out, the railroad center in Nashville made it a key city in the conflict. After the Union Army occupied the city in early 1862, Orville Ewing made a deal with the Union Army “allowing” them to camp on the lawn.²⁵ The area, being so close to the railroad and the Cumberland River and with its natural amenities of vegetative produce and wellspring water, made an appealing army campsite. The Union Army commandeered Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, in the adjacent block to the east, for use as a hospital.

Enduring the war and the death of his wife at Mile End in 1864, Ewing was one of many businessmen of the city who capitalized on Nashville’s opportunities as a gateway city during Reconstruction. The commercial gateway of the railroad and the relatively easy treatment Nashville received compared to the rest of the south during Reconstruction allowed men like Ewing to use the post-war boom to build even greater wealth.²⁶ Mile End easily made the transition to the New South, being one of the many

²⁵ Letter of Orville Ewing to General Rosecrans, July 17, 1863 cited in Consuela Marie Duffy, *Katharine Drexel: A Biography* (Bensalem, PA: Mother Katharine Drexel Guild, 1966), 258. The letter from Ewing to the Union Army general offers a lease of the property for encampment and was enacted on January 25, 1865. For an idea of what this would have looked like, see photograph in Jan Duke, *Historic Photos of Nashville* (Nashville: Turner Publishing Company, 2005), 7, which could have been taken at or near Mile End. The decision to do so must have been a commercial one, as the Ewing’s son Edwin was a major in the Confederate Army. In his recounting of Nashville’s occupation by the Union Army Randall McGavock noted that while many of the city’s elites had used their wealth to flee the city, the officers of Planters Bank had all remained in the city and all had taken the oath of allegiance “except Orville Ewing who is sick.” Randall McGavock, *Pen and Sword* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1959), 638. There is no record found showing that Ewing ever took the oath, though it seems doubtless he would have been allowed not to.

homes in Nashville which carried Old South values into the commercial success and boosterism into the new era. After the war, Ewing and his children occupied the home until his death in 1876.²⁷

To keep the property and its key location for railroad and commercial travel in the family, the home was sold to either James Morrow or his father, Dr. William Morrow, the renowned Union Army medical man, in 1876. Sometime before 1880 the Morrows sold the home to James Woods, another family member.²⁸ In 1880, the home was sold to yet

²⁶ It is curious that Alfred Leland Crabb includes both Mr. and Mrs. Orville Ewing, as he did many of Nashville's elites, in his historical novel on the Reconstruction period, *Breakfast at the Hermitage* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1945). Obviously, Mrs. Ewing was dead by the time of Reconstruction.

²⁷ Orville Ewing died in 1876 in Gainesville, FL where he had gone ca. 1873 to ease the discomfort of the consumption, or tuberculosis, that would take his life, *Nashville Daily American*, 10 October 1876. He is buried in the Nashville City Cemetery.

²⁸ It is unclear whether Mile End was owned by Dr. William Morrow or his eldest son James who married Jane Ewing, daughter of Orville and Milbrey Ewing. There is little indication that the elder Morrow ever lived in the home, as it appears from his several obits that he lived out his life in his very large mansion atop Second Avenue South overlooking downtown Nashville and the Cumberland River until his death in 1895. It is clear, however, that James and Jane Ewing Morrow lived there and apparently had at least one child in the home. Apparently, James Morrow and his new wife did not occupy the property for long because the pollution and conditions of industry as well as encroachment of new homes around the property made it a less than desirable place to raise their infant son. They moved out of the home and down Eighth Avenue or Franklin Pike to Elmwood where Ewing relatives apparently lived. For an excellent account of Dr. William Morrow's almost unparalleled rise from the ashes to "New Man" of the "New South" with great wealth and a wide variety of business interests, including using convict labor, see Don Doyle *New Men, New Cities, New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 109. Morrow's rise to prominence was one of the more spectacular displays of boosterism and new money in the city. He was a medical doctor of some kind during his days with the Confederate army hospitals, born in Nashville then moved to Knoxville after the Civil War where he married Elizabeth Saunders Luttrell, of the famous Luttrell clan who could trace their roots to the Battle of Hastings, 1066, see "The Luttrell Family" http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~celticlady/luttrell/knox_county_luttrells.htm. Morrow returned to Nashville in 1871 and is said to "own nothing," and then comes up in the world as a majority shareholder in Cherry, O'Connor and Co., who used convict labor to make stabling equipment and used their capitol to finance a number of ventures including roadbuilding. His net worth listed at \$300,000 in 1881, and by the time he dies in 1895, it is estimated at well over \$1,000,000. For Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Woods, see Jane Thomas, *Old Days in Nashville* (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, 1897), 64, 93. Thomas' book is a series of reminiscences from her long life in the city; it was published first as a series of newspaper columns for the Tennessee Centennial Exposition and then as a book. She calls Mrs. Joseph Woods "one of the two loveliest women I ever knew," and notes that when her husband was alive that he was a banker and that they shared an "elegant, decorated the house with furnishings from

another family member, the up-and-coming president of First National Bank, Samuel Keith.²⁹

The occupation of Mile End by Samuel Keith in 1880 marked a historical milestone in the city and an even higher level of status for Mile End. In 1880 Nashville celebrated its centennial and planned its future. The Centennial in 1880 was the beginning of a new era of “boosterism,” a move designed and championed by the commercial and industrial elites of the city to raise Nashville to the same “New South” status as Atlanta, Charleston, and Savannah, and other growing urban centers in the southeastern United States. These “New South” cities were determined to reap the harvest of commercial reward in the post-Civil War economic boom, taking advantage of commercial efforts to rebuild a war-torn southern landscape. To do so, they recreated their cities in a northern image in infrastructure, social life, and politics. Nationally advertised public celebrations and the publication of a number of guide and

her Philadelphia trip.” Thomas gives an intricate description of their home interior on High Street; she notes that they had no children but raised the four children of her sister who died early. Thomas also notes that James Woods’ partner in banking and business was James Washington, third son of President George Washington, who was married to Jane’s sister Susan. In 1808 George Washington visited the Thomas homeplace at the Tolbert farm outside of Nashville.

²⁹ Brandau, 164. There is clear evidence that the Ewings, Morrows, Woods, and Keiths were all related and descendants of James McAdoo, one of the original signers of the Cumberland Compact who had moved his family to Tennessee in 1759. McAdoo apparently never lived in Nashville, but moved his clan to a sprawling estate in the open confines of Dickson County. Samuel Keith’s son Walter married Emmie Ewing of Bedford County, Tennessee, a cousin of the Nashville Ewings. See “The Ewings,” <http://worldconnect.genealogy.rootsweb.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=:ag683&id=I0875>. The couple’s first four children were all born at Mile End, giving some evidence that the younger Keith occupied the property with his Father in the 1890’s. One of the magnificent clerestory windows in Nashville’s West End United Methodist Church was given in Walter’s memory by his wife. There is no evidence that Anthony Foster, who also moved to Dickson County at the end of the eighteenth century, is related in any way to the McAdoo clan, but the chances would be good that there is some familial connection between the two groups. For the McAdoo family connections, see Sallie W. Stockard, *The History of Guilford County, NC* (Knoxville: Gaut-Ogden Company, 1902).

trade/commercial books made the clear connection between Nashville and the growing industrial centers of the North like Philadelphia, New York, and Detroit.³⁰

Samuel Keith embodied the city's progressive ideals of commercial success, political patronage, and social status. Tall, sturdy, and possessed of good looks, money, and great business sense, Keith was born in Gainesboro, the seat of Jackson County, Tennessee in 1831. His was a classic Tennessee/Southern pedigree sharing Scottish ancestry on both sides of his family. His father Alexander's family had come from North Carolina to Tennessee in 1804, and his mother, Mary McAdoo, had family roots in Tennessee that stretched back to 1759 when her grandfather, James McAdoo, came to the state from Guilford, North Carolina.³¹ After attending public schools, Keith worked on his father's farm until he moved to Nashville in 1855 to work first as a clerk and then a grocer. His fortunes during the Civil War are unclear, but in 1866 he moved to New Orleans where he engaged in the tobacco and cotton exporting business with his former Nashville partners, a business move which proved quite lucrative.³²

³⁰ I am aware of those arguments by Wilbur Cash and David Goldfield which do not interpret the rise of the "New South" as being modeled after Northern commercial cities. I remain unconvinced by these arguments and instead follow the lead of Don Doyle, and more recently his student Louis Kyriakoudes, who see the New South cities as patterning themselves after Northern urban commercial centers. Given the evidence for the industrial revolution that dominated Nashville's built environment after 1840 and the parceling out of large tracts of lands within the city limits for businesses and working class homes, there is little to suggest that Cash and Goldfield's argument is anything but a sentiment that was certainly prevalent among some of Nashville's elites. Their ideal better fits the musings and longings of later twentieth century groups like the Agrarians than it does the actual landscape of the city. For a listing of the guide and trade books and their importance see below on building culture in Nashville.

³¹ Appleton's *Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. 8, ed. J.T. White (New York: J.T. White, 1898), 277. The citation on Keith, which includes his rise to prominence as a Nashville banker, has a handsome drawing of him.

³² Ibid.

With a good fortune intact, he returned to Nashville in 1878 and was elected president of First National Bank.³³ In 1882 he was named president of the newly created Fourth National Bank, a position he would hold until his death of a heart attack in 1909. Keith was a Methodist, a member of Vanderbilt University's Board of Trust, served on a number of civic committees, and owned a number of properties throughout the city. Don Doyle's statistical description table of Nashville's "New Man" notes the forging of an upper class between 1880-1915 whose median age was 52. Over half were affiliated with the Methodist church; 65 percent had no schooling or grade/public schooling; 60 percent had a birthplace in the South other than Nashville; 39 percent were experienced in wholesale commerce; and 20 percent were employed in finance. Samuel Keith fit well the characteristics of the "New Man" of the "New South."³⁴

Keith's Nashville was an expanding and generally prosperous city. The Nashville City Centennial of 1880 celebrated the city's recent gains as it ritualized the marriage of Old South values like military valor, agricultural fertility, family, and home to progressive principles of commercial success, racial solidarity, religious and sectional harmony, federalism, and national importance.³⁵ Leaders in Nashville, like so many other southern cities, sought a 'new' pathway that gave lip service to past values while

³³ For a good account of the history of Nashville Banking during the Reconstruction period, see Louis Kyriakoudes, *The Social Origins of the New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 29-31.

³⁴ Don Doyle, *Nashville In The New South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 64-65.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3-18.

they adopted a corporate capitalistic infrastructure, integrated into greater federal and international economic networks.³⁶

Keith's good fortune and family connections allowed him to easily find a place in Nashville's elite. He became a classic "civic capitalist" of the late nineteenth century, helping others with business loans, financing civic projects, and making philanthropic contributions.³⁷ Keith owned and operated a number of interests and properties in downtown Nashville.³⁸ He was a member of the Vanderbilt University Board of Trust from 1894-1909 and a well respected churchman, serving as a financial adviser on the board that saved and reorganized the United Methodist Publishing House in 1897.³⁹ Don Doyle emphasizes the reign of these 'New South' boosters:

The new men of the New South were not all young but had the postwar era wind of a rising tide of economy and good geographic location—Nashville as the crossroads of the Midwest and the South. Some used their position only for personal wealth, but many saw themselves as the harbingers of a new order which they would help build out of the wreckage of the old.⁴⁰

³⁶ Don Doyle "Nashville In The New South," *Nashville: Its Character In A Changing America*, ed. Robert Mode (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1981), 36-48. In steering such a middle path, Doyle successfully avoids the extreme of Old South/New South continuity with relatively no change in social politics and context ala Wilbur Cash and his *Mind of the South* (New York: Knopf, 1941) and Cash's current disciple David Goldfield and his "plantation in the city" interpretation offered in *Skyscrapers and Cotton Fields* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), as mentioned above, on the one hand and the classic C. Vann Woodward paradigm of utter discontinuity between "Old" and "New" Souths in his *Origins of the New South, 1877-1931* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951) on the other.

³⁷ William Waller, *Nashville in the 1890's* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1970), 279.

³⁸ The G.M. Hopkins Nashville Map of 1908 lists Keith as the owner or proprietor of no less than five properties in downtown Nashville.

³⁹ Oscar Penn Fitzgerald, *John B. McFerrin: A Biography* (Nashville: Methodist Episcopal Publishing House, South, 1888), 360. McFerrin was chosen to rebuild the Methodist Episcopal Publishing House in Nashville in 1882 and tapped Keith to serve on its board. Keith was pallbearer at McFerrin's funeral. See also Samuel Jackson Keith Collection, 1986, Vanderbilt University Library Archives.

⁴⁰ Doyle, *New Men*, 109.

Such is an apt description of the life and career of Samuel Keith.

Keith's economic power came from his financial empire. Banking after the Civil War in the United States was risky business. Keith, however, made the most of his opportunity. Fourth National Bank had deposits totaling over two million dollars by 1892.⁴¹ So great was its wealth and Keith's business acumen that during the bank panic of 1893, his bank was the only one in Nashville to stay open and survive the crisis without injury. Fourth National would continue to prosper under Keith until his death in 1909.

Keith and his friends from the upper register of Nashville's booster elite society controlled economics and politics in the city and succeeded in making Nashville a prosperous commercial center.⁴² Their entrepreneurial leadership and Nashville's status as a railroad gateway made the city the South's leading wholesale market with access to surrounding agricultural and trade goods, Northern commercial markets, and an interior gateway to the world taking goods as far south as Savannah for international trade.⁴³ All Nashville needed was a showcase for its triumph. That showcase would become the Tennessee Centennial Exposition of 1897.

In the middle of the 1890s Nashville banked on the idea of a world's fair, patterned after Chicago's 1893 Columbian Exposition to boost the city's image as a

⁴¹ Doyle, *Nashville In The New South*, 50-51.

⁴² William Waller, *Nashville, 1900-1910* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1972), 155. Waller mentions the Keiths on an automobile tour of the West with the Percy Warners and Whitefoord R. Cole and wife, Cole the only son of railroad baron Col. E.W. Cole. 155.

⁴³ Kyriakoudes, 22.

reconstructed city where commercial, cultural, and social triumphs were being achieved and to bring even more success and business to the city. The Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition of 1895 had not been a commercial success but had succeeded in proving the point that the South was not merely a series of plantations turned into cities. Organizers hoped that the Tennessee Centennial would capitalize on the point made by the Atlanta fair and then some.

The Nashville Chamber of Commerce promoted the Tennessee Centennial Exposition as early as 1894. The advertisements by the Chamber boasted that thousands of people from all parts of the world would come to Nashville on the railroad and that “millions of dollars will be shot through her channels of trade like a golden stream. Nashville will be by the end of the century one of the greater cities in the United States.”⁴⁴ Nashville was achieving its long-held promise of commercial success and national recognition.

Nashville’s boast proved true and in the middle of the success was Samuel Keith. Keith was the treasurer of the Exposition’s Executive Committee.⁴⁵ Due to good attendance with well over one million visitors, its excellent blueprint modeled on the Chicago fair of 1893, and the financial acumen of Keith and its other financial backers, the Exposition did not lose money. The new wave of commercial interests and financial investors that followed in its wake made true the predictions of its promoters.⁴⁶ Nashville

⁴⁴ Doyle, *Nashville In The New South*, 60.

⁴⁵ Wayne Publishing Company, *The Wayne Hand-book of the Tennessee Centennial Exposition* (Fort Wayne: Wayne Publishing Company, 1897), 15, lists Keith as the treasurer of the exposition.

was indeed the new commercial gateway to the South and beyond. “Bank clearings more than quadrupled between 1900-1915. Luxurious new buildings were erected along Union Street which later came to be touted as the Wall Street of the South. Samuel Keith’s Fourth National Bank remained the largest and moved into elegantly furnished quarters in Nashville’s new skyscraper, the Stahlman Building, in 1907.”⁴⁷

Not satisfied with their success outside the region, the business elite of Nashville turned their entrepreneurial efforts toward business and agricultural commerce within the state. Beginning in 1903, the Nashville Booster Club, a rival to the Chamber of Commerce and a remnant of the Centennial leadership, began a series of recruiting trips throughout Tennessee to Knoxville and Chattanooga and any of the orbiting towns on the riverways and rail lines.⁴⁸ Nashville and its New Men convincingly moved the city into the Twentieth Century as a commercial and cultural success.

The idea of Nashville as a bustling, thriving city mingling patronage, business, industry, and political interests with a harmonious citizenry, the city image projected so successfully by the Centennial Exposition, was already a passing dream by 1900. What happened at Mile End at the turn of the century demonstrates the darker side of Nashville boosterism and urban growth. The expansion of warehouses and light industries along the railroad displaced many residents of south Nashville. Pollution, noise, and unchecked industrial expansion into residential areas led other South Nashville residents to seek

⁴⁶ For statistics and achievements of the exposition see its official history, Herman Justi, *Tennessee Centennial and Exposition* (Nashville: Brandon Printing Company, 1898).

⁴⁷ Doyle, *Nashville In The New South*, 53.

⁴⁸ Kyriakoudes, 2003, 18.

homes in the city's burgeoning suburbs. The ease of streetcar travel only made such moves more convenient. Keith stayed behind longer than most and for reasons unknown. Mile End remained an iconic home place centered in a thriving business class neighborhood, a reminder of Nashville's successful re-creation as a "New South" city until 1905.

B. Architecture

1. Built Environment

Mile End, whose architects and builders are unknown, had several architectural influences. Like many of its Nashville counterparts, the architecture of Mile End intends a home place, strong and large enough to provide space for a large family with its needs to bolster life on the frontier and entertain the opportunities of a growing commercial settlement. Nashville's landscape was saturated over its first century with Federal-styled homes, similar to earlier colonial homes in Virginia and North Carolina. Twin chimneys on either gable end, symmetrical sets of upper and lower six over six sash windows with shutters, and stout brick construction reveal the Federal style designation so typically used by architectural historians.⁴⁹ The historic photograph (above page 44) of the house shows a later addition on its northern gable end and the extension of the house to the kitchen beyond the addition which was certainly originally unattached. The two-story Greek temple front portico may be original, but could also easily be a later addition. The visual evidence shows a home that was originally, in all probability, more an unadorned colonial style farmhouse fit for life in a city that was more rural than urban and still being

⁴⁹ See, e.g., Cochran, 10, and Henry Glassie, *Material Cultural*, 227-353.

settled on the Tennessee frontier. Stout and firm in its construction, the house would sit on the site for over ninety years.

The two-story, two-part Greek Revival-styled portico is very much like that attached to other famous Nashville homes of the period. Its influence is not easily traced, but the portico probably dates between 1830-1850. The evidence is clear that several of those homes, e.g. Rock Castle in Hendersonville (built ca. 1784), added like porticos in building rehabs undertaken in the middle of the nineteenth century. Given the evidence of homes like Hamilton Place in Maury County and Fairview in Gallatin, Tennessee, both built in 1832, the two-story portico with upper level veranda or porch belongs to a period of mid-century Greek revival construction in Nashville and the Middle Tennessee area.⁵⁰ Such additions and remodeling occurred during the late 1840's and early 1850's, when many buildings in Nashville refitted their entryways and adornments to mirror and mimic the grand Greek Revival style of William Strickland's Tennessee State Capitol, which was built between 1845-1859.

The only description of the home's interior notes its fashionable decoration at the end of the nineteenth century. The parlor walls of the home were adorned with pale blue paper and had silver and ivory trimmings around the room's cornice and ceiling area. Rounded blue curtains and other like adornments filled the downstairs of the home. The interior had folding doors between the downstairs rooms. A substantial oak banister led

⁵⁰ Cochran, 23.

the stairways to the upper floor. Gentility and fashion with expensive interior decorations noted the wealth of the Keiths.⁵¹

The house itself was a mixture of architectural styles which reflected the development of the city in the first half of the nineteenth century. At one and the same time, it reflected the need for construction strength on the frontier, the embodiment of the pride of the settlers in their Old World roots, and, with its Greek Revival accents, an embracing of the city's growing sense of national pride during the period, a pride so potent and evident that it brought an architect of William Strickland's stature to the city.⁵² It is also clear, however, that such style continued to serve the city's residents well throughout the century. The connection that those "Old South" homes gave the "New South" city of Nashville built after 1870 with its concentration on railroads, industrial buildings, and eventual downtown highrises or skyscrapers was of great importance. Homes like Mile End gave the city its enduring link to ancestry, family, and the achievement of settlement heritage that served to inspire Nashville's new status as a commercial gateway to industry throughout the United States.

The material value of Mile End to its inhabitants was its ability to embody the stability, size, and image of those ideals which people like the Fosters, Ewings, and

⁵¹ Waller 1970, 259. Katherine Drexel, letter to sister, Sept. 8, 1905, Archives of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Bensalem, PA.

⁵² James Hoobler, "William Strickland," *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, ed. Carroll Van West, online edition, <http://tennesseencyclopedia.net/imagegallery.php?EntryID=S108>. Mile End is in some sense the embodiment of the connection between Nashville and the culture and commerce of Philadelphia, a connection like that of other major U.S. cities during the nineteenth century like Cleveland, Ohio. Along with the trips made there for both commerce and culture by Anthony Foster and Mrs. James Woods noted above, the development of the railroads in the second half of the century only served to deepen this connection.

Keiths would need to settle, conquer, and thrive. Mile End had the touches of a genteel fortress with its considerable two-story size and width, solid brick construction, and westward-facing hilltop construction. Mile End endured into the industrialization of Nashville as the material embodiment of the power of the construction boss and landowner of the railway system in the south Nashville neighborhood. As the city of Nashville progressed in the New South, its materiality was a reminder that the progress of the present was connected by many to the grandeur of the city's past. Buildings like Mile End with their gracious trappings of garden and adornment in the Greek revival style provided just the mix of boosterism and nostalgia appropriate for Nashville in the late nineteenth century.

2. Building Culture

Mile End and the many other homes built in the Federalist style in the surrounding area intended to represent the values of the English frontier settlement in their new surroundings. Its Georgian style would endure well through the changing faces and fortunes of Nashville during the century. The building was a powerful indicator of a persistent culture strong enough to withstand the challenges of settling the frontier. The fact that Nashville so successfully achieved the end of establishment and then capitalized on the technological and economic opportunities of the mid-nineteenth century only solidified Mile End and other homes like it as an embodiment of the culture of the city with the building of roads and railroads. The ability of the building to transcend the challenges of the nineteenth century like industrialization and the Civil War and to negotiate a continuing prosperity during occupation is testimony to the willingness of its owners to resemantize their existence.

Mile End served the efforts of Nashville's boosterism in the New South era. Beginning with the Nashville Centennial of 1880, culminating in the 1897 Tennessee Centennial Exposition, and continuing well into the twentieth century, the era produced a number of testimonies to Nashville's willingness to get past the odium of North/South relations in the post-Civil War era and into the realm of commercial and cultural achievement during Reconstruction and after. A spate of guide and commercial/trade books promoting the city produced by financial and political concerns offered propaganda about Nashville's loyalty to the union, the commodification of its commercial success, social diversity and cultural richness, and desire to be a gateway city for industry and tourism connecting all corners of the nation.⁵³

⁵³ Charles Robert, *Nashville and her trade for 1870: a work containing information valuable alike to merchants, manufacturers, mechanics, emigrants, and capitalists...* (Nashville: Roberts and Purvis, 1870); Nashville Centennial trade guide and business directory (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Lithographing and Engraving Company, 1880); *Manufacturing and mercantile resources of Nashville, Tennessee: a review of the manufacturing, mercantile and general business interests of the "Rock City": to which is added a historical and statistical sketch of its rise and progress* (Nashville: Industries of Tennessee. City of Nashville, 1882); Enterprise Publishing Company, *Nashville: an illustrated review of its progress and importance* (Nashville: Enterprise Publishing Company, 188?); *Nashville, Tennessee: the Rock City of the great and growing South. Richly endowed by nature as a manufacturing and distributing center and a place of residence* (New York, 190?); Andrew Morrison, *The city of Nashville* (Nashville: Geo. W. Englehardt, 1891); Albertype Company, *Nashville, Tenn. In photo and gravure from recent negatives* (New York: A. Wittemann, 1892); *The Wayne Hand-Book of Nashville and the Tennessee Centennial Exposition* (Fort Wayne: Wayne Publishing Company, 1897); J. Prousnitzer and Company, *Centennial Album of Nashville, Tennessee: containing exposition buildings, officers of the exposition, representative citizens, public buildings, business houses, and private residences* (Nashville: J. Prousnitzer and company, 1896); The Committee of '98, *Historical handbook and official guide to Nashville. With map and illus.* (Nashville: University Press, 1898); Nashville Chamber of Commerce, *Nashville in the 20th century* (Nashville, TN: Foster and Webb, 1900); R.A. Hailey, *The city of Nashville: advantages possessed by Tennessee's capital as a home and as a place of business* (Nashville: Foster and Webb, 1903); Nashville Board of Trade, *Nashville, its advantages and opportunities* (Nashville: Keelin-Williams Printing Co., 1906); *Nashville: the gateway of the South* (Nashville: S.H. Kress, 1907); *Nashville, "Rock City", "The Gibraltar of Commerce". A compendium of firms and institutions contributing to the city's rapid growth* (Nashville: Brandon Printing Company, 1907); May Winston Caldwell, *Historical and beautiful country homes near Nashville, Tennessee* (Nashville: Brandon Printing Company, 1911); American Illustration Company, *Pen and sunlight sketches of Nashville: the most progressive metropolis of the South* (Nashville: The American Illustrating Company, 1911). Though this tradition of boosterism waned in the twentieth century it did continue with books like Third National Bank's *Nashville, 1927-1952: twenty-five years of progress* (Nashville: Third National Bank, 1952).

The books featured profiles of local businesses, portraying their proprietors as men of standing and commercial success who had worked their way up to their positions of wealth and authority. Many featured photographs and sketches of the substantial buildings that dotted the skyline of the city. Beginning in 1870 with Charles Roberts' *Nashville and her trade for 1870: a work containing information valuable alike to merchants, manufacturers, mechanics, emigrants, and capitalists* . . . and continuing well into the twentieth century, the books highlighted the promise of the city to corporations and working class alike. Noting that Nashville had adopted the nickname of the "Rock City" or the "Gibraltar of Commerce," most were the products of groups like the Nashville Chamber of Commerce, organized in 1847, or the Group of '98, or the Nashville Retail Merchants Association. These groups sought to extend their commercial and financial gains by inviting trade and capital investment. Some of the books, like *Nashville Centennial trade guide and business directory* and *The Wayne Hand-Book of Nashville and the Tennessee Centennial Exposition* were produced with an eye toward linking success stories for the city's Centennial Celebration of 1880 and the World's Fair Tennessee Centennial Exposition of 1897.

While several of these books mention Mile End's owners, two of them point to its cultural importance as an icon of Nashville's historical and commercial elite culture. *Art Work of Nashville* was a large book with prominent photographs first printed in 1894 and again in 1901, produced by the Tennessee Historical Society. Its 1901 edition included Mile End among the city's notable buildings that embodied its cultured and traditioned sense of history. The book included prominent homes, commercial buildings, churches, cemeteries, and a well-written and lengthy textual history, noting how the city had

produced presidents and national business leaders. The volume showcased the culture of a white, well-mannered ruling class and highlighted the sensibility of Nashville as an important city on the American scene.⁵⁴

During the Depression decade Roberta Seawell Brandau's *Homes and Gardens of Tennessee* also included Mile End as a lost landmark.⁵⁵ The book was an outgrowth of Mary Daniel Moore's Garden Club lectures given to various groups around the city in 1909-1910. Moore, wife of Tennessee State Historian and Librarian John Trotwood Moore, ran the state library and archives for twenty years after his death.⁵⁶ Her lectures were an attempt to rally the waning community club scene in the later years of the New South era.⁵⁷ In her lectures, preserved in the Tennessee State Library and Archives, Mrs. Moore highlights the homes and gardens of booster elites, like President and Mrs. James K. Polk, in the state in an attempt to recapture the past glory of the South, for many like her the source of cultural and historic pride.⁵⁸ Moore especially mentions Mile End and Mrs. Milbrey Ewing in her lectures among the number of significant mid-state families and homes around the mid-state area. The treatment of Mile End in both Moore's lectures and Brandau's book came years after the home had disappeared, replaced by a

⁵⁴ *Art Work of Nashville* (Chicago: W.H. Parish Publishing Company, 1894); *Art Work of Nashville* (Chicago: The Gravure Illustration Company, 1901); *Art Work of Nashville*, 1894-1901, reprint edition (Nashville: Tennessee Historical Society, 1981). Unfortunately Mile End is mislabeled in the book as Maplewood. The mistake was not corrected in the reprint edition.

⁵⁵ Brandau, 164.

⁵⁶ John H Thweatt, "John Trotwood and Mary Daniel Moore," *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, ed. Carroll Van West, online edition, <http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/imagegallery.php?EntryID=M120>.

⁵⁷ For the clubs and social register scene in Nashville, see Doyle, *New Men*, 208-225.

⁵⁸ Mrs. John Trotwood Moore, Unpublished lecture, Mrs. John Trotwood Moore Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

Roman Catholic parochial school for African Americans. The inclusion of Mile End in these books is a witness to the potency of the ideal of an elite culture that had settled and successfully conquered the terrain and history of Nashville during the Old and New South eras.⁵⁹ The culture of Nashville was bound up in the palatial and well-adorned homes and grounds with the families who had been the leading players in the city in the nineteenth century.

Certainly Mile End fit this ideal well. The building was a veritable snapshot of the extract from Lillian William Foster's report of the privileged culture of the city of Nashville from her trip through the area in the 1850's.

This city (Nashville) has many handsome private residences tastefully furnished, some in sumptuous and magnificent style, and all surrounded by beautifully laid out grounds which give them a look of retirement and repose, and they are more like the splendid palaces of opulence and rank, surrounded by the gardens of fashion, than the habitations of a republican city.⁶⁰

Calling large, federal style homes with Greek temple fronts magnificent palaces is probably a stretch, but the intentions of the culture of Nashville are clear and far reaching.

With status and money, the homes and buildings of Nashville became symbols of a cultured society whose lives were a reflection of the cultural riches of the city. The *Nashville American* on September 10, 1888, noted: "There is a great number of houses in Nashville to-day capable of entertaining on a liberal scale, more money at the society's

⁵⁹ Mrs. Moore was the assistant editor of Brandau's book.

⁶⁰ Lillian Foster, *Wayside Glimpses, North and South* (New York: Rudd and Carleton, 1860), 188.

command . . . than at any time in local history.”⁶¹ The social life of Mile End underscored its status as a center of culture. On New Years day in 1890, for example, the Keiths hosted one of a number of open house parties for the city’s elites and their seventeen-year old daughter who made her entrance into society at the event.⁶²

3. Social Exchange

The historical geographer Jon Goss notes that buildings “are physical expressions of a way of life.”⁶³ Buildings do more than just shelter or protect, but show the ways of life in which their inhabitants find meaning. For Mile End’s inhabitants, white settlers, industrialists, financiers, leading citizens of a city with state and national ambitions, this is clearly true. Mile End was a place where white, gentrified commercial industrialists and financiers interacted regularly with other cultures and peoples present within the landscape of Nashville. That such a wide variety of exchanges could occur over time tells us much about the history of the city and the intentional ways in which Mile End and its inhabitants represented themselves through social interaction. In its relations with Native Americans, Mile End was a clear marker of the boundary between white settlement and frontier or country still being settled. That it stood at the southern border of the city marked it as both a protective bulwark of defense against outside intruders and an entry point for Native Americans and other travelers who would come into a settlement city.

⁶¹ *Nashville American*, 10 September 1888 cited in Doyle, *New Men*, 214.

⁶² “Local Events,” *Nashville Banner*, 2 January, 1890. Mile End is the only building mentioned by name among the seven families who hosted the parties from West End to East Nashville with local bands providing dancing music.

⁶³ Goss, 392.

As the century progressed, Mile End continued to serve as a defining point of the social relations of the city's white citizens with those other groups who occupied Nashville's space with them. As African Americans became established citizens, first as slaves and then as freedmen, hired ex-slaves, and laborers during the nineteenth century, buildings like Mile End meant negotiating master/slave relations, a place for work, and the trappings of a hierarchical society.⁶⁴ When railroad and industrial workers became a part of Nashville's terrain in the mid-nineteenth century and after, social relations meant that Mile End took on the role of overseeing commercial production and success, a watchtower of an industry boss keeping track of workers and railroad construction.

During the Civil War Mile End continued to be occupied by its owner rather than being abandoned as so many properties in the city were. This meant difficult social negotiations during the war between North and South, but more so the social negotiations between military and commercial societies. The idea of saving the advancements of the commercial success of the railroad by Orville Ewing, who certainly had Southern sympathies with family members fighting for the Confederate cause, outweighed sectional loyalty.

When Samuel Keith occupied the home in 1880, the society of the New South was coming into its own. Mile End was representative of Nashville's attempt to promote the values of the revised and revitalized city: upwardly an icon of white Southern hospitality characterized by upwardly mobile success that retained the familial home-place style and entertaining good manners of the Old South. The social exchanges within

⁶⁴ The issue of slavery in Nashville is hardly as simple as ownership and overseer. African Americans had more than one "status" in the society of Nashville and all were not slaves and not all slaves were of one class. See Bobby L. Lovett, *African American History of Nashville*, 1-46.

Nashville's white elite community and the philanthropy of that community with the rest of Nashville's citizens portrayed a neo-Jeffersonian America where the landed gentry governed the city in good order politically, commercially, and socially for the good of those not so privileged. As the continuing centerpiece of a neighborhood surrounded by working class whites and blacks, commercial and industrial concerns, churches, and philanthropic institutions, Mile End was as iconic a representation of the New South as any building in Nashville.

4. Building as Symbol

This dwelling and the lives of its inhabitants were a thick presentation of immense political and economic resources designed to portray both a defensive posture against forces that would rob the city of its desired social status and an open avenue into the success of the city. The building was one of the many visible signs of power relations in a society dominated by white landed elites, albeit on an urban, rather than a rural, scale. The message of social status and dominance within the competing cultures present in Nashville was that of a place that contained and presented itself as a wealthy, powerful symbol of success vis-à-vis other cultures.

C. Landscape History

The Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1897 gives a good picture of the landscape setting of Mile End at the end of the nineteenth century. The home was etched into the property at the crest of a small rise of a hill and had an underground stream for well water on its property. Its location on the southern border of the original boundary lines of the

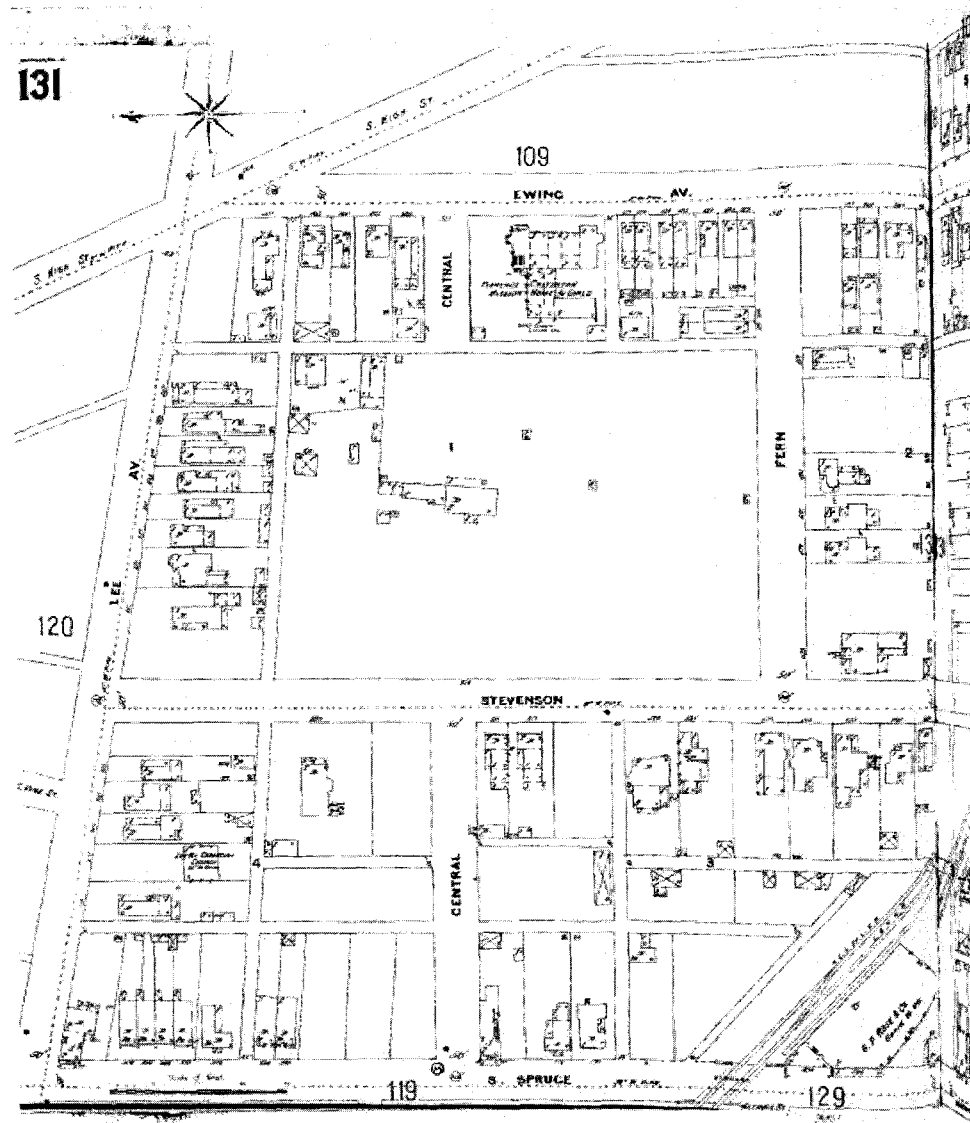


Fig. 3. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Nashville, 1897. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, 1867-1970-Tennessee.

city proved to be an advantageous spot in the development of Nashville's landscape.⁶⁵

As the city moved from settlement to commercial center and then to cultural status in the

⁶⁵ Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, 1867-1970-Tennessee, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Nashville, 1897*, available online at <http://sanborn.umi.com/>.

nineteenth century, the property was eventually bordered by two major turnpike toll roads, Murfreesboro Pike built in 1832 and Franklin Pike, which opened in 1831, and the tracks of the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad.⁶⁶

Viewed as a landscape of building industry within a growing city in the nineteenth century, Mile End reveals much. What is clear from its history is that Mile End was a place of interaction between the cultures of masters and slaves, White and African American cultures, governing and working cultures, Federal and Confederate cultures, and social and cultural elites amid new businesses and working class citizens. The competition between these groups and the continuing semanticization of Mile End by its owners as a cultural stronghold of landed wealth and power is indicative of the challenge within American culture noted by John Brinkerhoff Jackson: “As a landscape filled with many vernacular or local cultures American history presented those who owned and governed between being one amid a group of cultures who worked together to secure and build a landscape together or being a dominating culture of property and permanence and power.”⁶⁷

As the property was parceled out in the 1840s and 1850s, the inhabitants of Mile End took the necessary steps for the home to retain its place of importance in the landscape by enhancing the garden. “Antebellum elites . . . physically separated themselves by constructing ‘patches of elegance’ in their neighborhoods—renaming specific blocks, planting trees, and erecting picket fences to physically extend the

⁶⁶ Wooldridge, 321-322.

⁶⁷ John Brinkerhoff Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven: Yale university press, 1989), 152.

domestic space outward. Geography became equated with gentility.”⁶⁸ The opulent gardens kept the site as a powerful reminder of the privilege of Nashville’s elite culture. The gardens attracted travelers from the city and carved out its reputation as a historical property of note even into the twentieth century.

The landscape of Mile End also discloses the seemingly inevitable urban turn within Nashville’s history. With the desire of Southern cities to become commercial centers and the building of avenues of transportation for goods and services with railroads and turnpike toll-roads, an urban rebuilding of the landscape became manifest in the late nineteenth century. What became the “New South” and the rise of cities like Charleston, Atlanta, and Nashville seemed inevitable.⁶⁹ There was simply no chance of achieving the success of the markets in places like Philadelphia and New York unless southern cities redeveloped themselves along the same industrial, commercial, and transportation lines of their northern counterparts. “Southern trading centers had no chance of success as long as lands and negroes held a superior attraction for capital,” observed Arthur M. Schlesinger in 1940.⁷⁰ The desire to escape the commercial dominance of northern cities and reap a greater share of the rewards pushed Nashville in an urban re-direction. Mile End and other elite homes were able to easily make the transition. In 1900 however, Mile End and the urbanity that was Nashville were ushered into a new century where the idea of what Nashville was would be challenged and

⁶⁸ Gilfoyle, 175.

⁶⁹ Arthur M. Schlesinger, “The City in American History,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 27 (June 1940): 43.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 55-56.

changed by a new and different set of values. The fortunes of Mile End in the twentieth century would reflect those changes.

D. Summary

The history of Mile End reveals a multi-functional object where a world came together. Mile End was the architectural rendering of a Southern, white, cultured, and commercial world bounded by travel and financial interests with railroads and two major turnpikes bringing commerce, travel, and culture into the burgeoning and often redefined city. Though white cultural dominance in the setting and building of Mile End is clear, it is also clear that the presence of other cultures bounded the property and interacted with it. The presence of travelers and African Americans, as slaves in the city and later in the homes and neighborhoods around the property, tell a story that is very different than the presence of one dominant culture. The narrative of Mile End includes many threads brought together in a building where one world view interacted with others and together shaped the history of the building and the settlement of Nashville. The deep desire for commercial success so prevalent in the history of Nashville since its earliest days, the changing infrastructure of transportation, and the political challenges of the nation supported and propelled these stories into interaction with Mile End. These cultures and ideals would have greater prominence in the twentieth century, but it is impossible to ignore the fact that their presence was always a part of the built environment of Nashville and Mile End. The continuing interchange of cultures, between the white settlers who would become the city's cultural elites, would serve as a harbinger of things to come in the twentieth century.

CHAPTER THREE

A MEDIEVAL ACADEMIC VILLAGE IN COMMERCIAL NASHVILLE

A. Immaculate Mother Academy and Nashville History

When the *New York Times* announced “Mother Drexel’s Bounty” in its February 14, 1905 edition, the five acre home that was Mile End in Nashville, Tennessee entered a new world.¹ A new use for the building and a social challenge to the white, commercial boosterism of Nashville accompanied the announcement. Mile End was now home to a Roman Catholic parochial, industrial school for African American girls. The nuns who were to run the school would arrive by June and the school would open in September. The story, advertising an exclusive to the paper, announced, perhaps ambitiously, that one hundred pupils were expected to enroll.

The local announcement of the new school had actually come a day earlier in the *Nashville Banner* and had beaten the national newspaper to the punch. On February 13 the Banner carried the first volley in a series of textually volatile exchanges between the world that was white, industrial, commercially elite Nashville and a new one that was beginning at the turn of the twentieth century, a world of the Jim Crow “New South” that had taken root in Nashville. The sale of the property placed the home in the hands of Philadelphia nuns who would use it as an industrial arts school for local African American girls.² A clash of cultures was underway, and for some it came in an underhanded, unexpected, and frightening way.

¹ “Mother Drexel’s Bounty,” *New York Times*, 14 February, 1905.

Nuns were not new to Nashville in 1905, and neither was Roman Catholicism, not even African American Roman Catholicism.³ The Roman Catholic Church had established itself in the city during the 1830's and from 1844 evangelized African Americans. In that year, Richard Pius Miles, the first Roman Catholic bishop of Nashville, organized an African American Sunday School and held services for African Americans in his residence. Bishop Miles baptized enslaved persons in both his personal residence and the public confines of the cathedral church of St. Mary's of the Seven Sorrows.⁴ He showed no qualms about such activity even though the baptisms were illegal and contributed to Protestant suspicions about Roman Catholicism and its ability to fit into a Southern slave state.

The Civil War and Reconstruction period diminished most of the gains that were made among the African American community by the Roman Church, mostly due to the crusading militance of Confederate anti-Catholic Methodists led by Tennessee Governor Parson Brownlow, who served the state for a shortened two-year term beginning in 1865.⁵ After the war, Nashville's status as the "Protestant Vatican" was secured with a number of Protestant publishing concerns and Protestant churches on virtually every

² "School For Colored Girls. Sisters of Blessed Sacrament Own Keith Home. Industrial and Religious," *Nashville Banner*, 13 February, 1905.

³ O'Daniel, *The Father of the Church in Tennessee*, passim. Roman Catholicism actually came early to Middle Tennessee when Timothy Demonbreun, the French explorer and devout Roman Catholic, brought his faith with him ca. 1765.

⁴ Christopher Murray, "Work of Church Among Negroes Discussed in Seminarian's Thesis," *Tennessee Register*, 31 July, 1938.

⁵ E. Merton Coulter and Frank L. Owsley, *William G. Brownlow, Fighting Parson of the Southern Highlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937). Stephen V. Ash, ed. and introduction to the book, *Secessionists and Other Scoundrels: Selections from Parson Brownlow's Book* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999).

corner of the city. Anti-Roman Catholic sentiment remained a staple of Nashville's culture well into the twentieth century.⁶

Such sentiment did not deter Bishop Thomas Byrne when he was seated in 1894 in Nashville. By 1900, he actively moved to re-establish the Roman Catholic work among African Americans.⁷ Byrne started a number of Roman Catholic churches, schools, and church plants for African Americans throughout Tennessee in the cities of Nashville, Memphis, Jackson, Chattanooga and Knoxville and in 1907 he was appointed the first head of the Catholic Negro American Mission Board, a project urged by Mother Drexel and on whose board she sat as a lay member for many years. For his Nashville project, Bishop Byrne recruited a priest, Father Thomas Plunkett, from the Josephite Order of Baltimore, Maryland to establish a new church in Nashville for African Americans. Plunkett came to Nashville from Fayetteville, Arkansas and started Holy Family church in that year, first in a rented building between a Masonic lodge and a secret society for African Americans on First Avenue North and then in a Greek Revival-styled church at Third Avenue and College Street which the Second Presbyterian congregation had earlier used. Working with the Josephites, Bishop Byrne appealed to

⁶ John Wicklein, "Anti-Catholic View Found Widespread In Parts of the South," *New York Times*, September 4, 1960. Actually any sense of Nashville as a Protestant Christian bastion is due more to perception than fact with the presence of non-Protestant Christians and representatives from a number of world religions, primarily Jewish, finding a place in the city, mostly due to railroad traffic and construction, by 1875. See James W. McCarty, *Nashville as a World Religious Center* (Nashville: Cullom and Ghertner, 1958).

⁷ Owen F. Campion, "Bishop Byrne: U.S. Pioneer in Black Ministry," *Tennessee Register*, 16 February, 1987.

the Philadelphia heiress-turned-nun, Mother Katharine Drexel for funds to help with the work in Nashville.⁸

In 1890 Drexel, with the blessing of Pope Leo XIII, started her own order, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, dedicated to working with African and Native Americans and providing education for children of those races. Mother Drexel was one of the three daughters of Anthony Drexel, Philadelphia banker, senior partner in the Pierpont Morgan financial firm, and a devoted Roman Catholic. Upon his death in 1885, Katharine and her sisters inherited a fourteen million dollar fortune. The proceeds of the inheritance were strictly allocated for distribution to Roman Catholic charitable works.⁹ One sister, Elizabeth, died in childbirth in 1890 and Katharine and her other sister Louise set out to fulfill the wishes of her father investing the funds in what they felt was a special calling. The idea of using their wealth to bring the Catholic faith and all of its attendant blessings to Native Americans and African Americans was born in the charitable work of their father but pushed into ethnic ministries when the sisters chose to give their funds to the work of John LeFarge among African Americans and several missionary congregations devoted to converting Native Americans.¹⁰ Together they opened an

⁸ Duffy, *Katharine Drexel, a biography* (Bensalem, PA: Mother Katharine Drexel Guild, 1966), 251-258. Since she was beatified in 2001, the literature on Mother Drexel has been steadily growing. Most of it, unfortunately, is as much legend as fact. For generally reliable biography of Mother Drexel see Duffy listed here and also "Drexel, Katharine," *Dictionary of American Religious Biography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), 150; John Fialka, *Sisters: Catholic Nuns and the Making of America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 114-116.

⁹ "Obituary: Anthony Drexel," *New York Times* 16 February, 1885; Duffy, 78-79. Anthony Drexel's death notice in the *Times* noted that he was believed to be the richest man in Philadelphia. His second wife was a Bouvier and great-aunt to Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. The stipulations of the will demanded that no part of the fortune could be left to any of his daughter's heirs and all funds not distributed to Roman Catholic charities during the lifespan of the girls were to go to the charities of his stipulation.

institute for African Americans in Rock Castle, Virginia outside of Richmond in 1901.

Katharine led St. Francis De Sales School for boys, and Louise the school of St. Emma's for girls.¹¹ The sisters named the two schools in honor of their parents.

In the ensuing years with Louise giving her time and energy to raising a family as well as doing charitable work, Katharine set to fulfilling the work of passing out the grand fortune through the work of her order and established over sixty churches and schools for Native and African Americans across America.¹² The nun-philanthropist and her sister, who preceded Katherine in death by ten years in 1945, did all they could to exhaust the fortune and build parish schools and churches for African Americans and Native Americans, giving away about one thousand dollars every day during sixty-five years of ministry. Noted for her frugality and iron will, as well as her catholic spirit, Mother Drexel and her missionary order devoted themselves to the work. The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament order continues to this day, and Mother Drexel is one of the few American-born Roman Catholic saints, canonized by Pope John Paul II in 2000.¹³

¹⁰ Duffy, 78. Within days of their father's death, priests from a missionary congregation to Native Americans led by Father Martin Marty, O.S.B. came to call on the bereaved daughters at their Philadelphia residence. Whatever they impressed upon the girls struck a chord for the work that stuck.

¹¹ Ibid., 204-211.

¹² "Gave Away \$1,000 A Day," *Washington Post*, May 15, 1955. Mother Drexel's frugality and philanthropy provided a model of devotion and business sense that even changed the U.S. Tax Code. Mother Drexel was always trying to find ways to save money and spend more on her projects and the taxes on her estate were considerable. After several years of lobbying the federal government to do more for charitable organizations, the "Philadelphia Nun Provision" was enacted in 1917 which allowed a complete deduction of charitable contributions to anyone who had contributed over ninety percent of their income to qualified charities in at least eight of the previous ten years. As very few would qualify for such steep requirements, the provisions went through without much debate. Her great wealth and even greater frugality allowed for Mother Drexel to qualify for the deduction and add a great deal more wealth to the coffers of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. Duffy, 120.

In 1902, Mother Drexel responded to Bishop Byrne's call and sent a check to Nashville for \$2,667, which covered the lack of the \$8500 purchase price of the building formerly owned by the Second Presbyterian Church and the promise of another \$3000 if a school for the parish was started.¹⁴ Knowing that she had funded Native American and African American schools in other cities and staffed them with nuns from her Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament convent, Byrne also asked that Mother Drexel consider staffing such a school in Nashville.¹⁵

Mother Drexel finally relented to the wishes of Bishop Byrne after he traveled to New Mexico to meet with her in early 1904. In November 1904, Bishop Byrne and Thomas Tyne, a lawyer and active Roman Catholic layman, hosted Drexel in Nashville. They showed her a prospective piece of property that they thought would fit the needs of the school.¹⁶ In the middle of an unusual snow storm and from the curtained interior of a horse carriage to hide her habit from the citizens of the city, Mother Drexel viewed the property and agreed. That property was Mile End.

Impressed by the prospects of the campus and encouraged by Father Plunkett's earlier work at the newly established Holy Family parish for African American Roman Catholics, Mother Drexel authorized the purchase of Mile End. Tyne negotiated a price

¹³ "Church will recognize nun as saint Sunday," *Nashville Banner*, 25 September, 2000; "Nashvillians mark canonization of Katharine Drexel," *Nashville Banner*, 2 October, 2000.

¹⁴ Duffy, 251.

¹⁵ By 1904, Mother Drexel had already started schools for African Americans or Native Americans in the aforementioned Rock Castle, Virginia; Arizona, South Dakota, New Mexico, and Missouri, see Fialka, 117.

¹⁶ Duffy, 252. Thomas J. Tyne was the author of the article on Tennessee in the Roman Catholic encyclopedia *New Advent* published in 1899. See "Tennessee," <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14508a.htm>.

for the property from William Ready, the local real estate agent representing Keith, on February 11, 1905 without revealing the buyer. Tyne paid for the estate at the negotiated price of \$25,000 and the sale became public. Then the fireworks ensued.

On February 15, 1905, Samuel Keith began a letter-writing campaign designed to rescind the purchase of the home. He wrote Thomas Tyne offering to buy the home back at full price and make a donation of \$2500 toward the purchase of an old people's home that the Little Sisters of the Poor, another charitable monastic order active in the city, were attempting to purchase.¹⁷ Receiving no quick response as the Bishop was out of town, he then wrote Mother Drexel directly on February 17. In his letters, Keith made clear that he would not have sold the property had he known the identity and intentions of the buyer. He claimed that his change of mind was just business and reflected no prejudice against the work of the church or the order. In a fashion typical to the boosterism of the New South, and particularly that as portrayed in the Tennessee Exposition of 1897, Keith argued that if a school for Colored children were to occupy the property, it would drive down the property value of the surrounding neighborhood by introducing an undesirable element into the landscape. Other areas of the city would be more appropriate for the needs of the school.

¹⁷ "Sale of the Keith Home," *Nashville Banner*, 28 February, 1905. There can be little doubt of the public relations campaign being waged on both sides. Certainly the notice of the sale in the *New York Times* on February 14 was placed by Drexel who often used the paper, as her father did, to foster her interests and projects. The *Banner* article of 28 February notes in the headline that Keith "did not know object of purchase until after delivery of deed." With Keith's bank and financial interests it would be important that he make every attempt to maintain the property value of the buildings in the surrounding neighborhood and downtown area. The value of Keith's own properties in Nashville would be ca. \$1,000,000. His personal connections to other property owners through Nashville's network of commercial elites with historic connections to the city's first families only served to heighten the stakes. The Little Sisters of the Poor eventually purchased the residence of Dr. William W.E. McCampbell and an adjoining lot on Main Street in the heart of downtown Nashville for their work. "New Home For Catholic Order," *Nashville Banner* 29 March, 1905

Keith pressed his case. When he had no response from Bishop Byrne by late February, he published his letters to both Bishop Byrne and Mother Drexel, along with her firm correspondence of refusal to him in the February 28 edition of the *Banner*. Keith repeated his earlier themes of declining property values and segregation while adding a note of sentimentality toward his family's home place. He again offered to buy the property back with a donation to be made for any similar good work. Had Keith received complaints about selling his property for the establishment of an African American school? His letters hint that such protests had been directed at the Roman Catholic diocese as well. In addition, several local African American Protestant ministers preached hard against the coming school from their pulpits.¹⁸

Keith's words and any community protest that existed failed to move Drexel. She announced her good intentions to run an academic school that would be a day school and keep no borders. Believing that the African American students would be well-behaved and orderly, Mother Katharine did not fear the students' impact on the neighborhood. In fact, she noted that her school's neighborhood, filled with African American homes, ideally placed it for the school's clientele. Her rejoinder included the idea that such a situation would even warrant the staffing of the school with colored teachers were they available, though that was not her plan.

Noting the sentiment Keith attached to the building as his home place, Drexel played the theology card. In an interesting counter-argument to Keith's capitalistic concerns, she told how she had sold her own revered familial home and felt the same love

¹⁸ Duffy, 254.

for father, mother, and the things of the past. Being caught up in such a cycle of life, however, should be exchanged by Christians for a more purposeful view of the meaning of life. Writing in the grand historiographical tradition of Augustine's The City of God (ca. 425) she reinvented the dialogue and attempted to give Keith and progressive, Protestant Nashville a different way of seeing the transfer of property.

When I saw a bill of sale on it (her home), a whole crowd of fond recollections of father and mother and sisters, etc., came vividly to my imagination. Then I more than ever realized how all things temporal pass away, and that there is but one home strictly speaking, that eternal home where we all hope to meet our own and where there will be no separation any more. And so temporal things, after all, are only to be valued inasmuch as they bring us and many others—as many as possible—to the same eternal joys for which we were created.¹⁹

The thoughtful counterpoint fell on deaf ears and strengthened the resolve of Mother Drexel and Bishop Byrne.²⁰

In April, Bishop Byrne responded to Keith in public, noting that while he understood the concern, he believed it unfounded.²¹ Byrne, agreeing with Mother Drexel, noted that there were already a number of African American homes in the neighborhood. The property had been carefully chosen for its placement along the Murfreesboro Road

¹⁹ "Sale of the Keith Home," *Nashville Banner*, 28 February, 1905. Mother Katharine was upset when she learned that a private correspondence had been published in the newspaper without her consent and, when inquiring as to why it had not been sought by the paper, learned that the three column article had actually been treated as a paid advertisement taken out by Samuel Keith and so the letters were published without reservation. Duffy, 255.

²⁰ Mother Drexel to Bishop Byrne, 5 April, 1905. Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament Archives. It is interesting to note in this dialogue between elite cultures and white elite persons that in her private correspondence with Bishop Byrne during the public relations tempest, Mother Drexel, whose good breeding would help her to know the difference, calls Keith a rude, vulgar, churlish plebian. Byrne, whose support of the project and Mother Drexel and her nuns never wavered noted in response that "there must be much good to come of it or there would not be so much opposition to it." "Missions In The Mid-South," *Souvenir Volume of the Golden Jubilee, Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament For Indians and Colored People* (Bensalem, PA: Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, 1941): 86.

²¹ "Bishop Byrne to Mr. Keith," *Nashville Banner*, 19 April, 1905.

corridor, the heart of the established African American community in Nashville. The corridor, which began at the railroad tracks just west of the junction of Eighth Avenue and Lafayette Avenue/Murfreesboro Road, extended eastward from the city center about two miles to the historic African American Greenwood Cemetery on Elm Hill Pike, encompassed Meharry Medical School and Hubbard Hospital off First Avenue South, and a little further out, Walden University, a school run by the Methodist Episcopal Church South's Women's Missionary concern on a site where St. Mary's Roman Catholic Orphanage had been before the Civil War.²² In truth, Mile End was in a voting ward and surrounded by two more that had so high a number of registered African American male voters that they constituted a majority within the three voting districts.²³

Byrne and Drexel agreed. The property was ideally situated for an African American school of the type proposed. The Mile End property was in the "very middle of a large colored settlement." The nuns coming to run the school were women of good breeding. The school would be run to the highest standards and with appropriate and religious order. Elite language met with elite counter-point. The deal was set and plans moved forward. There would no rescinding the sale of the property.

Mother Drexel came to Nashville on May 29, 1905, hired workers, and on June 1 began refitting Mile End's interior for school exercises, complete with a chapel for religious devotion in the interior parlor. Mother Drexel sewed some of the interior

²² This was clearly true and the presence of African American homes and businesses in the neighborhood stretched as far back as the 1850's. Bobby L. Lovett, *African American History of Nashville*, 11-12, notes the presence of a black barbershop on Cherry Street run by a quasi-freed slave whose freedom was purchased by the Ewings less than a block from the home on Ewing Avenue ca. 1855.

²³ Doyle *Nashville In The New South*, 172.

curtains herself, fitting them with lace and other trimmings from Drexel family heirloom garments.²⁴ The nuns would live upstairs in the former living quarters of the Keith family. Hearing of the activity, Mrs. Samuel Keith, apparently accompanied by some friends, made her way to the home to try and sell its furnishings to Mother Drexel. The women were forced to conduct their negotiations with Mother Drexel as she walked from room to room accompanying Bishop Byrne, who had come to do a service of house blessing for the property.²⁵

In a last ditch effort to stave off the opening of the school the newly formed Stevenson Avenue Ladies group petitioned Mother Drexel on June 17, this time pushing a debate about race, religion, and capitalism into a discussion about constitutionally guaranteed rights. A number of women, some from families of previous owners and some of Nashville's leading female elites like Mrs. Mary Moore, wife of the Tennessee State Librarian and Archivist, who claimed to own estates on the three streets surrounding the property, formed a concerned citizens group and demanded again that Mother Drexel find another campus to house her school. They published their letter in the *Nashville Banner* on July 1.

The women echoed Keith's concerns about the school's being a "property-destroyer" and noted that they only wanted to help those of the lesser race to move to another location. Their letter to her concluded thus: "We beg to say that we highly appreciate and cordially commend your worthy enterprise among the Colored People,"

²⁴ Mother Katharine Drexel to Louise Drexel Morrow, 8 September, 1905. Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament Archives, Bensalem, PA.

²⁵ June 1, 1905, *Annals of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament 1905*, Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament Archives, Bensalem, PA.

the women told Drexel. “There are a number of localities in and around the city where Colored People live, and where no objection would be made to the location of your school. On the contrary it would be welcomed as a distinct good and a social blessing.”²⁶ The publication of their letter was accompanied by a biting editorial by one Patrick Henry and an anonymous *Banner* writer noted that the women of the Stevenson Avenue group were the offspring of the forefathers of the nation with rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of property.

Some of the ladies who sign this petition are the grand-daughters of our revolutionary fathers and have occupied these homes for half a century. They are the offspring of the men who gave us a white man’s government under a constitution that guarantees the protection of our property rights and which never contemplated this injury of those rights by any species of legal fraud or unfriendly legislation against their inalienable and God-given inheritance.²⁷

While the rhetoric claimed no racial prejudice, the implications were clear. Race, religion, and commerce in America created a white, privileged, elitist landscape that must be preserved.

Katharine Drexel’s response to the Stevenson Ladies Association echoed the April letter of Bishop Byrne. She explained that the property had been carefully chosen. The large Negro settlement close by the site made for an ideal climate for the school. The broad lawns and shade trees would be preserved and could only serve to appreciate property values as they now stood. With a wish for God’s blessing on their property and homes, Mother Drexel rebuffed any final concerns that could be raised.

²⁶ *Nashville Banner*, 1 July, 1905. Quoted in Duffy, 260.

²⁷ “The Keith Property Transaction,” *Nashville Banner* 1 July, 1905.

The opening of the school was announced on August 30, 1905. The promises made by the Bishop and Mother Katharine were kept.

Colored Girls' School Opening. September 5 Date Selected. Good Attendance Assured. Advantages Offered. Thursday September 5, is the date determined upon for the opening of the School for Colored Girls on the old Keith property. The school is to be run under the auspices of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, and Mother Katharine Drexel of Philadelphia is a member of the order who has been most instrumental in establishing the school here. Valuable assistance has been rendered her by Bishop T. S. Byrne. Already quite a number of applicants have passed examinations for entrance to the school and it is believed there will be a full attendance. The building has been renovated and improved and is now fitted up handsomely and conveniently. Only day pupils will attend the school. The pupils, in addition to the splendid school course to be offered them, will have an opportunity to learn all branches of cooking and housekeeping, sewing, nursing and other useful accomplishments.²⁸

Order, decorum, academic testing, and good manners were to be the order of the day.

The actual opening of the school with full procession and memorial mass on September 3 received good reviews in the *Banner*.²⁹ The Bishop and Father Plunkett participated in the opening exercises.

Mother Drexel and the diocese had weathered the storm. However, the difficulties with the 'concerned citizens' of the city had not been the only hurdle in opening the school. Bishop Byrne and Father Brown had envisioned an exclusively Roman Catholic school, but Mother Drexel was a missionary. Having received a new influx of postulants into the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament at the turn of the twentieth century and her order now numbering over 100, Mother Katharine believed that she had the womanpower to do the job of staffing a school that served African American Roman

²⁸ "School For Colored Girls," *Nashville Banner*, 30 August, 1905.

²⁹ "First Session. Negro School Founded By Mother Drexel Begins Work," *Nashville Banner*, 6 September, 1945.

Catholics and Protestants alike in Nashville. Drexel, ever the missionary, designed her order to educate both Catholics and Protestants. She believed such an approach would propagate the Catholic Church by conversion and help to build a better society by quelling suspicion and anti-Catholic prejudice through good will and hard work. Mother Drexel demanded that the diocese submit to her demands regarding admission and curriculum for the school.³⁰

Their ensuing dialogue by letter gives great insight into Mother Katharine's vision for the school and her missionary work in general. On 7 December 1904, she wrote about the evangelical nature of her cause and her commitment to education. "Our Congregation is consecrated to God for the conversion of the Negro and Indian races. A missionary congregation could not make this (Catholic) distinction."³¹ Mother Katharine was herself one quarter Jewish as her mother's mother was an ethnic Jew. Her mother had been born into the Protestant Dunkard tradition in the Church of the Brethren. No doubt this drove her vision as well as her religious convictions. She demanded and won the right to admit non-Roman Catholic students and that practice continued throughout the school's history. The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament made regular recruiting trips to African American homes throughout the city, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, offering their services to any who would and could afford to attend.³²

³⁰ Duffy, 251.

³¹ Mother Drexel to Bishop Byrne, quoted in Duffy, 253.

³² "Reflection," *VisionQuest, Newsletter of the Saint Katharine Drexel Mission Center and Shrine*, 3 (Fall 2007): 5, recounts the experience of Clariane Campbell who as a Protestant, along with her five brothers and sisters, attended Immaculate Mother Academy. The nuns came to their home and recruited the students offering free tuition, lunches, and uniforms. See also "The Immaculate Mother Mission," *Mission Fields At Home* 4 (April 1932): 110.

This missionary stance toward the African American race in Nashville would bode well for the work. Mother Drexel and the sisters were quickly embraced and a harmonious and beneficial relationship between the two was cemented. The sisters became beloved by the African Americans, and eventually Mother Drexel was so revered by the city that Central Street which ran on either side of the property was renamed Drexel Street in her honor.³³

Holding classes in the downstairs rooms of the house and the nuns living upstairs, Mother Katharine quickly developed Mile End to reflect its new direction. Enrollment in 1905 began with fifty-eight students. The school quickly outgrew the house. With Father Brown supervising construction, a new school building was erected on the grounds to the south of the house in 1906-1907. The building was a plain, brick Gothic school house with twin towers on either end. When the building's construction was complete, officials rechristened the school Immaculate Mother Academy.

The school's interior included several class rooms, a formal parlor, and one of the largest auditorium spaces in the city, a 300 seat chapel/auditorium. All were appropriately furnished for the work and included touches of Roman Catholic piety. Crucifixes and pictures of Jesus and Christian saints adorned the walls throughout the facility. When Mile End was condemned by the city in 1909, Mother Drexel built on the old homesite a new Renaissance-styled convent to house the nuns that complimented the

³³ The name change of the street was in place by 1914. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, 1867-1970-Tennessee, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Nashville, 1914*, available online at <http://sanborn.umi.com/>. The street remains named in her honor and the historical marker honoring the school's former presence is placed on the corner of Seventh Avenue and Drexel Street.

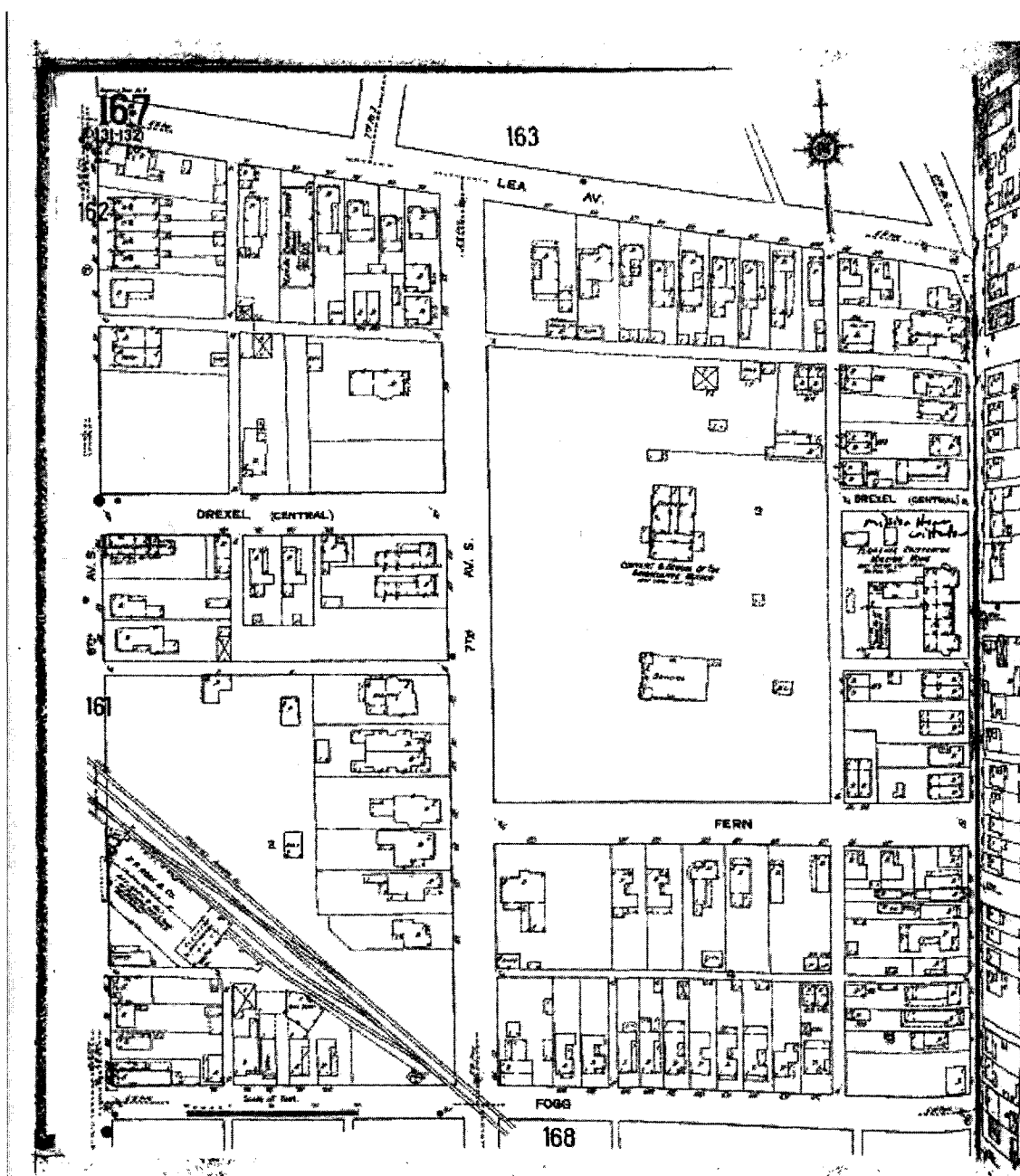


Fig. 4 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Nashville, 1914. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, 1867-1970-Tennessee.

architecture of the school. Again, Father Plunkett acted as construction superintendent.³⁴

The nunnery had a small chapel for private masses.

With enrollment gains in the school and rising attendance and baptisms at Holy Family church on Third Avenue a few blocks away, the project was well on its way to success. Seeking to establish the work even deeper into the soil of the neighborhood, Father Brown took up residence at a rectory and three adjoining lots on Stevenson Avenue (Seventh Avenue) and moved across the street from the school in 1906. Capitalism being the final note in any relationship in Nashville, the diocese purchased the properties for \$3,800 from Samuel Keith.³⁵ The school admitted male students in the fall of 1907 and total enrollment soared to 120.

The next ten years witnessed steady growth. The school's enrollment grew to 200 by 1908 and continued at or near that mark throughout its first three decades. In 1919, the diocese moved Holy Family Church within the confines of the property and built a small brick Gothic church, complete with the bell from the former Presbyterian Church housed in its south end single tower. The *Colored Harvest* Josephite newspaper of

³⁴ It is unclear why the building was condemned. It could have been due to Keith's continuing interference, simple decay of the architecture due to age, or a typhoid outbreak in the convent which had taken the lives of three of the nuns in late 1908. Father Plunkett's reputation as a builder preceded him in Nashville and would create the circumstances for his departure, as well. While in the Nashville diocese he supervised the constructing of several buildings for Bishop Byrne, including the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on West End Avenue. While serving the diocese as priest and builder, he befriended and acted as confessor for the diocesan secretary, a local born priest named Joseph Stritch. Stritch would later become Cardinal Stritch and served the diocese of Toledo and Chicago as bishop. Plunkett followed him to both locations and served as building superintendent for a new cathedral in Toledo. When he arrived in Chicago, he quickly succumbed to illness and died a short time later. "Father Thomas J. Plunkett, S.S.J." *Josephite News and Views*, Spring 1996: 1.

³⁵ "Davidson County, Tennessee, Holy Family Rectories, Nashville," Josephite Brothers Archives, Baltimore, MD.

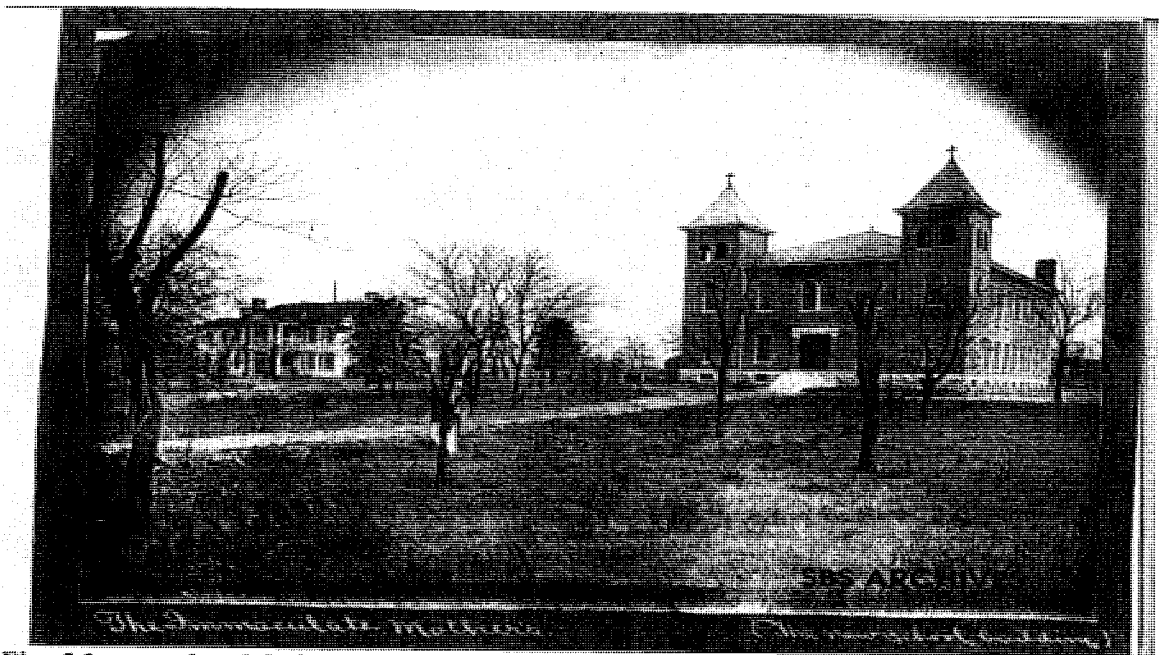


Fig. 5 Immaculate Mother School with Mile End in the background, ca. 1907.
 Photograph courtesy of Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament Archives, Ben Salem, PA.

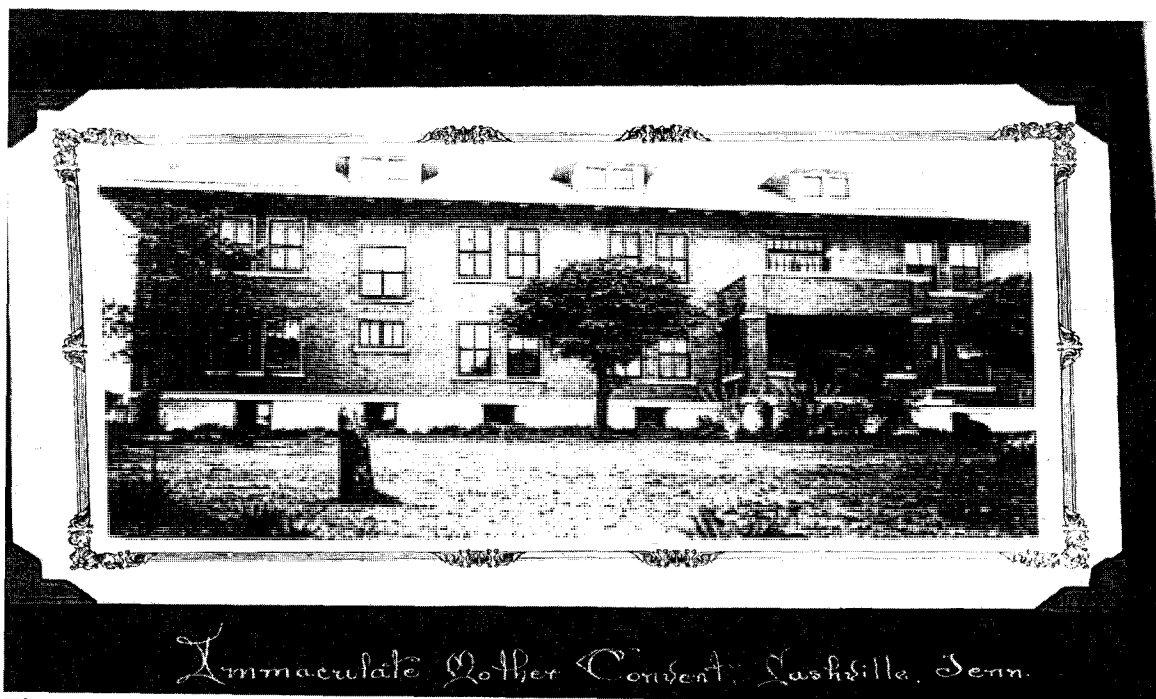


Fig. 6. Immaculate Mother Convent built on spot of Mile End, ca. 1910. Photograph
 courtesy of Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament Archives, Ben Salem, PA.

March 1921 called the site the “finest group of buildings for Negro Catholics in the South.”³⁶ The restless landscape changed with the needs of the school and parish. A new cultural world had taken shape at Seventh and Drexel.

During its decades at the address, the school took on the form of life of an elite, parochial school. Choirs were started and performed at churches and civic events throughout the city. Sometime during the 1920s, the school formed the “Immaculate Players” acting troupe which held plays and programs in the school’s Entertainment Hall that were well attended by the community. The church established a number of women’s and men’s social societies. Sodalties and confraternities were formed to advance good works and social reform by the students in the city of Nashville. African American elites, Roman Catholic and Protestant alike, who worked in banking, commercial investment, and higher education at Fisk University supported the school with students and donations.

The parish experienced success as well. With a new church building on the property after 1919, Josephite priests held weekday services on the property at 7:00 and 8:15 a.m. for students and their parents. The priests also held Wednesday evening prayer meeting novenas for St. Therese of the Little Child Jesus, of whom the parish apparently held a relic. The church provided evening adult classes offering instruction in the arts and information on the Roman Catholic Church on Tuesday and Thursday nights.³⁷

³⁶ “Negro Work in Nashville,” *Colored Harvest* 9 (1921): 4-5.

³⁷ “Growth of Negro Catholic Population Called Amazing,” *The Tennessee Register*, 26 March, 1944.

During its five decades of service to the community, Holy Family Parish registered 1,207 baptisms and 864 converts.³⁸

When Mother Drexel opened Xavier College in New Orleans in 1925, it changed the situation of Immaculate Mother Academy.³⁹ With the opening of Xavier African American Roman Catholics now had a Roman Catholic college to attend, adding to existing higher education opportunities at Fisk, the Y.M.C.A. Southern College and Graduate School run by Vanderbilt University from 1919-1936, and the public-funded Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial University (now Tennessee State University) which opened in 1912. During the 1920s and 1930s, Roman Catholic administrators slowly transformed Immaculate Mother Academy from an elementary and vocational school with an industrial arts/commercial curriculum to a college preparatory curriculum offering high school diplomas. The change required higher tuition, certified teachers, the refitting of the school's curriculum and facilities to include the teaching of required courses, an expanded library, and space for science experiments. The Great Depression of 1929 and the economic uncertainties of the first years of the 1930s made the change slower still. With its first four-year high school classes forming in 1937, Immaculate Mother Academy finally held its first high school graduation exercises in 1940. The school entered a decade of greater academic and community success than it had previously known. In February 1942, a women's quartet representing the school and

³⁸ Ibid.; "Holy Family Parish Annual Report Year by Year," Josephite Archives, Baltimore, MD. Another African American Parish, St. Vincent's, was established in 1933 in North Nashville after Fisk and Meharry-Hubbard relocated to that neighborhood near Tennessee State University in the 1920's.

³⁹ A.J. Spence, "Mother Drexel: 'Debutante' nun came South," *The Tennessee Register*, 2 February 1987.

parish won a singing contest on WLAC radio with a \$150 prize.⁴⁰ In March of that same year, Immaculate Mother Academy placed its first graduate at Meharry Medical School.⁴¹ In 1945 the school was accredited by the Tennessee State Board of Education.⁴² With such exposure and the academic achievement of the school, enrollment reached an all time high of 269 in 1944 and continued at or around that mark into the 1950's. By that decade Immaculate Mother Academy had an alumni base of over 1,000 former students.

The story of Immaculate Mother Academy came to an abrupt end in 1954. The racially restless landscape of the United States was changing as well. With the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in February of that year, the diocese of Nashville moved quickly to integrate its schools. In a sermon to the Holy Family Parish in July of 1954, a directive from Bishop Adrian was read announcing that the school would be closed. Parents could send their children to any diocesan school in the city they wished. Most of the elementary school students went to St. Vincent's in North Nashville, the diocese' only other African American school. High school students attended either Cathedral High or Father Ryan High School, both being located on West End Avenue at that time. Many of the Immaculate Mother Academy alumni left the parish system and decided to attend the city's public schools, which did not fully integrate until 1967.⁴³

⁴⁰ "Colonial Quartet Winners for January," *Nashville Banner*, 16 February, 1942.

⁴¹ George Johnson to Mother Mary Leery, 2 March, 1942. Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament Archives, Bensalem, PA.

⁴² "Catholic Colored School Given Recognition by the State," *Tennessee Register*, 6 May, 1945. At the same time Immaculate Mother Academy was given Associate member status in the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools (SACS). Though the school qualified for full accreditation it was only allowed associate status because it was a school for African Americans.

Later in 1954, Immaculate Mother Academy was closed and the landscape became restless again. In early 1955 the property was sold to another unidentified buyer.

B. Architecture

1. Built Environment

The built environment of the African American Roman Catholic parish school and church campus was a veritable snapshot of the stability and intentions of the Middle Ages where the Christian church dominated European history and geography creating “Christendom,” or a culture that was dominated by the presence and daily activities of the Christian churches and religious devotion in the local environment. Immaculate Mother’s history, once it passed through the initial maelstrom from a white, Protestant, gentrified Nashville, like its built environment, was stable, thoughtful, and productive.

The architecture of Mile End proved as adept at adapting to the needs of the School for Colored Girls as it had for the uses of white elites over the course of the nineteenth century. When the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament took possession of the building and property in 1905, they refitted the downstairs interior rooms for classroom space and a chapel for Christian prayer, and the upstairs rooms for a small nunnery. The needs of monastic work and prayer were easily fixed into the ample exterior shell provided by the building. The interior fittings used by the Keiths and the families before them were transformed for use by the school. The nuns reused the curtains and other furnishings. The wallpaper and existing wall and ceiling adornments and cornices were

⁴³ “Desegregation: To be or not to be,” *Tennessee Register*, 23 February, 1987. The integration of Roman Catholic schools was an unpopular decision among Blacks and Whites. IMA and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament opposed the move as being too quick and the students were not warmly welcomed at the other diocesan schools.

saved. The cool blue, pearl, and silver-toned interior of Mile End provided a fine, even traditional color scheme match to the school that would eventually be named for the virgin mother of Jesus Christ. The nuns and students easily retailored the services, space plan, and stuff of Mile End for their educational and religious needs. The site and



Fig. 7. Mile End as Convent of the Blessed Sacrament showing adaptive reuse of the home. Photograph courtesy of Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament Archives, Ben Salem, PA.

structure and skin stood firmly in place while African American school children used the property's lawns and garden for outdoor exercises and playgrounds. The nuns and students found the commodious site with its trees and gardens quite well-suited for religious contemplation. The religious philanthropic idealism of Mother Drexel found

Mile End house appropriate to the ends of education and the need for belonging in the competitive atmosphere of the Southern city.⁴⁴

When Drexel and the Roman Catholic officials restructured the property, they used an old model to accomplish its intentions. Between 1906-1920 Mother Drexel, Father Plunkett, and the Diocese of Nashville built a medieval academic village in downtown Nashville's industrial and commercial neighborhood district. Added to the property's landscape, in turn, were a schoolhouse, a convent, and a parish church. The diocese added a home and three lots to the plan directly across the street from the property on the west side of Seventh Avenue (Stevenson Avenue) in 1906. This landscape recreation had its roots in medieval Roman Catholicism that was continued in an "existing American Roman Catholic tradition of generating community identity through the creation of a physical locale loaded with religious devotion, educational opportunity, ethnic predominance, and emotional attachment...a landscape carved for participation."⁴⁵ The campus, like Mile End before it, was a place of social interaction inviting schoolchildren, workers, travelers, visitors, religious devotees and even critics to its site. The buildings had room for education, religious devotion, community events, and monastic dwelling places.

The gothic sensibilities of the buildings, stylish and firm yet very religious, introduced a competitor into the built environment of Nashville, already well endowed with local educational institutions and built environments of religious habits. The strong doors, Italianate cut windows of a variety of styles and sizes, room and chapel/church

⁴⁴ See Stuart Brand, *How Buildings Learn* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 13.

⁴⁵ Gilfoyle, 177.

interiors filled with relics, icons, crucifixes, and other objects of religious devotion, towers anchoring building construction, and decorated, pointed rooftops were elements borrowed from the medieval vision where the universal symbols of a Roman Catholic culture were brought to bear on human interiors and human formation through the transfiguration of the local built environment.

2. Building Culture

The new design of the property brought a new culture with it. The medieval academic village concept bore a great deal of fruit at Seventh and Drexel. The educational intentions of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and the priests who served the school and parish caused them to morph their buildings and their surroundings to meet the changing opportunities for students inside the school and fit them with an education that could carry them into post-secondary academics. The Roman Catholic leaders also used those same buildings for religious services and information/evangelism meetings. The different uses of the buildings and property speak to the broad vision of the church and the ability of the nuns and priests to create in a built environment room for a number of activities, all designed to meet the many needs of ecclesiastical culture. That it reached so many school children and produced so many members and conversions for Holy Family Church over a fifty year period speaks to the thoughtful stability of the built environment as well.

Immaculate Mother Academy and Holy Family Church were built out of and for a culture of religious devotion. The schoolhouse, nunnery, and church created a cathedral of culture fitted with room for chapels, objects of religious devotions like icons, crucifixes, and prayer beads, and the constant reminder of nuns in habits. This rich

material culture prompted religious devotion. The things of the culture acted as forces that led to and were in turn objects of piety and education.

The religious educational culture of Immaculate Mother Academy also shows the ability, even of religious schools, to adapt to opportunities for racial advancement in education and society. Mother Drexel's wealth and vision of schools that integrated Roman Catholic and Protestant Blacks allowed her to adapt to the changing opportunities available to all African Americans as America entered the civil rights era. The willingness to rehab an historic home like Mile End, change curriculum, and upgrade facilities for new educational practice in the school notes the strength of wealth and vision in an educator/philanthropist like Mother Drexel and the strength of the medieval cultural insight.

Such adaptivity also lends itself to devotion to buildings and cultural practices, something essential to the longevity and success of Immaculate Mother Academy. "*Age plus adaptivity* is what makes a building come to be loved. The building learns from its occupants, and they learn from it."⁴⁶ Such was certainly the case of the culture ensconced at Seventh and Drexel in the first half of the twentieth century.

3. Social Exchange

Seventh and Drexel was the scene of one of the more interesting cultural and social exchanges in Nashville in the twentieth century, a story of race, religion, politics, and wealth. The contrasting cultural interchanges between black and white, rich and poor, southern and northern, Protestant and Catholic, male and female, priests and nuns were

⁴⁶ Brand, 23.

only made more interesting by the fact that those exchanges created competition between one elite, ruling culture challenging the social space and commercial strength of another elite, ruling culture.

The nuns from Philadelphia came to town in 1905 and energized the social competition between an established white commercial civic elite and the demand for equality and inclusion from an underserved and underprivileged African American culture. The exchange between Drexel, Byrne, and Keith added fire to already tense race relations in Nashville. The year 1905 proved a difficult one for race relations in Nashville. In April suspicious fires destroyed the main building of Roger Williams University, a key private college for African American women, as well as the main building on the adjacent segregated Vanderbilt University campus which had welcomed Roger Williams and donated property for its building across the street from their new location on 21st Avenue South. While Vanderbilt remained on the property, Roger Williams felt forced to move their campus to a less conspicuous campus in a black neighborhood near White's Creek Pike in North Nashville on the far shore of the Cumberland River away from downtown and its white, commercial community.⁴⁷ On July 5 of that year, the city of Nashville enforced the legal segregation of street cars, forcing African Americans to the cramped, segregated sections on the back of the public vehicles.⁴⁸ African Americans protested loudly and announced a boycott. White officials

⁴⁷ Bobby Lovett, "Roger Williams University," Tennessee State Library and Archives, online at <http://www.tnstate.edu/library/digital/roger.htm>.

⁴⁸ August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, "Negro Boycotts of Jim Crow Streetcars in Nashville," *American Quarterly* 21 (Winter, 1969): 755-763. An organized and angry boycott of the public streetcars and prolonged protest by the African American community, followed the implementation of the streetcar

ignored them that summer and things grew worse. In August, a letter to the *Nashville Banner* called for the State of Tennessee to start an Industrial College for African Americans, the type of which was present in every other southern state, citing that the lack of such a school was a “form of discrimination, unjust in every way.”⁴⁹ State officials ignored that plea as well. In 1905 most whites wanted to limit opportunity, advancement, and education for African Americans. With Nashville already a well-segregated city, the city council was moving to halt any future establishment of schools for African Americans.

The exchange between Drexel and Keith concerning Mile End continued into the summer with the *Nashville Banner* printing letters and running headlines concerning the establishment of the school. The exchange provides an insightful backdrop to race relations in the city. Samuel Keith was, in his own mind, simply upholding the desired social status quo, fortunate or not. Controlling the environment through segregated landscapes and the well-established commercial and political hierarchy of the Jim Crow era South kept homes like Mile End, large and symbolic of power and landed wealth, in the hands of white elites. White, industrial capitalists depended on property and social control to maintain their social and commercial advantages over African Americans.

The commercial and social competition in the name of philanthropy by Mother Drexel and Immaculate Mother Academy challenged that system and for fifty years held it at bay, if not triumphing over it. The challenge by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and the Diocese of Nashville contributed to the new social dynamic in the city. The

laws on July 5, 1905, a protest that was certainly a harbinger of the sit-ins and freedom rides that would occur in the city later in the century.

⁴⁹ “State Industrial School for Negroes,” *Nashville Banner*, 19 August, 1905.

social competition and indeed the success and plight of schools like Immaculate Mother would eventually create another social climate, which led to their demise, the climate of desegregation.

The social interchange of Roman Catholic religious sensibilities, borrowing from the formidable power of medieval European culture and mixing with an emerging sensibility of racial equality, hit hard against the white, Protestant commercialism of Nashville. Catharine Albanese argues that American religious history is that “ever-changing set of responses to the choreographies of contact and combination” that occur at the corner of the intersection of every street named Boundary and Exchange in every little village in America.⁵⁰ During the days of Immaculate Mother Academy, Seventh and Drexel could just as easily have been named Boundary and Exchange. The exchange between Drexel and Mrs. Keith during the house blessing and the ease of the 1906 property transaction between Keith and the diocese are excellent examples of what happens when industrial and societal divisions cross the boundaries of religion and place. The undesired and unexpected altercation of rich southern whites with rich, privileged northern Roman Catholics intent on using the hallowed sphere of home, family, and social acme for the education and catechizing of a race considered inferior and undesirable in a religion considered suspicious and demonic shows how interesting the exchange between cultures can be in a built environment. That Mother Drexel and the diocese had the wealth and the will to endure the first attacks and then to see the school through to meeting its educational and religious goals is a credit to their wealth but also

⁵⁰ Catharine Albanese, “Exchanging Selves, Exchanging Souls: Contact, Combination and American Religious History,” in *Retelling American Religious History*, ed. Thomas Tweed (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 201.

to the social graces they possessed. The vision of creating equal religious, social, and commercial opportunity for African Americans, though not through integration, made for interesting social exchanges of several kinds.⁵¹



Fig. 8. Female students of the Immaculate Mother Academy, ca. 1907. Photograph courtesy of Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament Archives, Ben Salem, PA.

The continuing competition of social life between white and black, southern and northern, rich capitalist and wealthy philanthropist was also a part of the ongoing social negotiation within the parish itself. While Immaculate Mother Academy was a Catholic culture, it also was a Catholic culture supported by a wealthy white woman. Drexel, in

⁵¹ Mother Drexel was slow to allow African Americans to join the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and only did so after the opening of Xavier College in 1925 which allowed for post-secondary education for African American religious. It should also be noted that the families of Immaculate Mother Academy were not in favor of integration nor of closing IMA when Bishop Adrian closed its doors in 1954.

turn, had to constantly negotiate with the male-dominated Roman Catholic Church to maintain control of the school. Mother Katharine and her order paid the bills, visited the community and repeatedly asserted their control over matters of curriculum, instruction, and religious orientation. The “missionary” or inclusive stance of Immaculate Mother Academy towards Protestants not only led to better social relations among blacks in Nashville, it also profited converts and baptisms in Holy Family Church, something that the Josephites and the Diocese of Nashville religiously took credit for.

Most important, the success of the school for a fifty-year period rests in the fact that the nuns and the African American families of Immaculate Mother Academy presented the students as “normal” citizens of the city, as normal as anybody else, with the same desires for education and a meaningful American life. The nuns and priests became the religious equivalents of Protestant ministers and philanthropic missionary societies working for the good of the community so easily accepted in Southern cities like Nashville. Singing on the radio, playing on the school campus, interacting with the city in sports events and spelling bees, wearing uniforms to school, achieving school accreditation, living in the neighborhood presented a lifestyle of social ease, religious devotion, and academic success which rivaled the social life of any white school, private, parochial or public, in the city.

4. Building as Symbol

The new landscape at Immaculate Mother Academy existed as a strong symbol of faith and reform in Nashville. Immaculate Mother Academy and its academic village of buildings was a powerful symbol within the larger environment of Nashville. The architectural power of this distinctive landscape came from several elements: the Gothic-

styled school building anchored by its twin towers; the stylish Renaissance convent built directly on the spot where Mile End once stood; Holy Family Church with its bell taken from the tower of Second Presbyterian Church after the parish vacated those premises; and the interior decoration of those buildings flush with the symbols of the faith of the Roman church. The power of ownership and the status of place, particularly when the place was previously an iconic symbol of a competing culture, class, and race, contributed to Mother Drexel's decision to create an academy in the compelling Roman Catholic imagery. To Drexel, the built environment of the church could mitigate racial differences, in part, through an architecturally derived landscape that could uplift young African Americans.

C. Landscape History

Immaculate Mother Academy and its recreated landscape is an excellent southern example of historian Timothy Gilfoyle's description of old world religious and parochial schools built into the American environment. Gilfoyle notes that such schools were "a physical locale loaded with religious devotion, educational opportunity, ethnic predominance, and emotional attachment...a cultural center that became the center of the local universe, a landscape carved for participation."⁵² First, it encouraged the climate of ethnic culture that had already taken root in the soil of South Nashville as African Americans and newly arrived immigrants moved there to work for the railroad, warehouses, and factories. Comparing the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1897, of the property with the company's 1914 redrawing of the same area (both shown above), there

⁵² Gilfoyle, 177.

is a notable increase in the number and concentration of working class homes, businesses, and new ethnic Protestant churches in the neighborhood.

The development of automobile transportation in the following decades, however, reshaped the neighborhood. The influential Dixie Highway passed through the middle of the neighborhood in the 1920s and caused even greater growth. The 1941 Sanborn map shows a neighborhood rife with civic, commercial, and religious activity. Several African American churches, including Holy Family Church on the property, and church concerns dot the skylines. The highway corridor spurred owners and investors to build on previously uninhabitable land in the blocks just north and east of the property, and practically no uninhabited parcel remained in the neighborhood. The urban ideal became a reality, and it was an African American reality that inhabited it. The neighborhood was a modern day, working-class, industrial village, defined by railroad tracks and paved roads, but with a medieval-like Roman Catholic compound sitting proudly in the middle.⁵³

The changing infrastructure and landscape of the property also tells the story of an improving and changing infrastructure in Nashville. The midpoint of the Dixie Highway, built between 1919-1926 to give the burgeoning automobile traffic of America access to tourism and commercial opportunities in cities as far apart as Miami and Chicago, was on

⁵³ Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Nashville, 1941*, available online at <http://sanborn.umi.com/>.

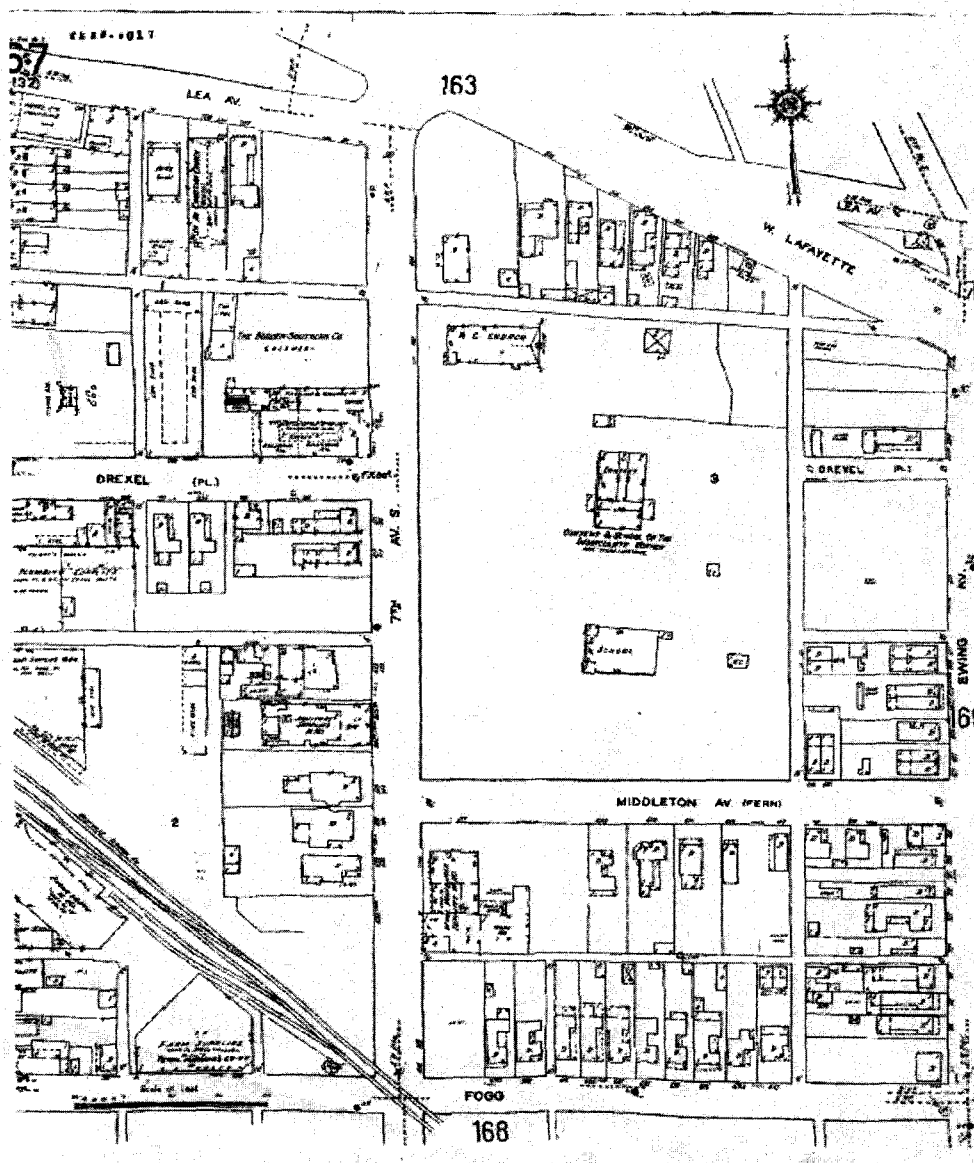


Fig. 9. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Nashville, 1941. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, 1867-1970-Tennessee.

Immaculate Mother Academy's northern boundary, Lafayette Street, which was connected to Murfreesboro Pike and Lea Avenue as a part of the Dixie Highway. In 1939, the New Deal's eradication of the slums and civic degradation that was called Black Bottom, a natural drainage pit that ran through several city blocks on Fourth and

Fifth Avenue just beyond the Dixie Highway to the north of Immaculate Mother Academy, made the area even more attractive to sprawl. Immaculate Mother benefited from this situation and helped to maintain the working, urban setting with the cultural values of education and religion.

Second, the school, with its lush property, was an aesthetic oasis in the midst of this urban sprawl. The school's built environment helped to maintain a climate of religious devotion in the growing urbanity of the neighborhood. The buildings were beautiful compared to their surroundings. The property's broad lawns and small garden were well maintained. The sight of happy school children bustling on their way in the morning and afternoon made the place beloved in the African American community.

The memory of this landscape remained strong in the memory of Immaculate Mother Academy alumni and the African American community of Nashville. Though the buildings were torn down by Sears, Roebuck, and Co. in 1955 when they purchased the property, the school's students continued to meet and preserve the memory of the culture and its influence in Nashville. The memory of the school and its built environment created a sacralized attachment to the property. The school had accomplished what Drexel intended. It created African Americans who competed and succeeded in the cultural arena of Nashville. Their lives and the marker they erected on the property in 1990 are lasting testaments to the power of the historic landscape of Immaculate Mother Academy.

D. Summary

The architectural history of Immaculate Mother Academy demonstrates powerful competing forces vying for control and success. Managing elitisms through building,

refitting, and rebuilding the local environment is indicative of the processes of identity creation so prevalent in American culture. The appeal of the built environment and the rebuilt environment is in the ability of buildings to indicate both the dominant ideals of a culture like Roman Catholicism or Nashville in the New South, but to also show the distinctive characteristics of the local version of that culture. In order to understand what happened at Immaculate Mother, it is necessary to understand that Mother Drexel was not only Roman, but a certain kind of Catholic. To understand the success of the school and the continuing devotion of its students and the importance of its place in Nashville's history, it is necessary to see the built environment of the campus as indicative of a catholicity and inclusiveness from within a supposedly Catholic religion that spoke truth to power and challenged both a racially divided city and a religiously divided Christendom. Such ideals can appear arrogant and underhanded, particularly when African American children are pictured taking their place as the rightful inhabitants of previously segregated white property or when the pealing of church bells or a nunnery built on the spot of a Protestant home place are constant reminders of the dominance of wealth and time. Those same ideals are arrogant enough to suggest that inclusion and equal opportunity for all people, particularly those who are underprivileged and underserved, are things that are worth fighting for and over. The wealth of competition and the wealth of the commercial society would rule the day again after 1955. For fifty years, however, the wealth of a religious socialite-turned-nun held sway in Nashville at Seventh and Drexel.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE TRIUMPHANT RETURN TO CAPITALISM: A “NEW” SEARS STORE AT SEVENTH AND DREXEL

A. Sears and Nashville History

In 1955 one of the world’s most prominent retailers rebuilt the restless landscape of Seventh and Drexel again. Sears, Roebuck, and Company bought the property and returned it to the capitalistic, commercial world of downtown Nashville. Sears tore down the buildings, razed the campus and its academic parish village and replaced the nurtured, bucolic grounds with a parking lot. The 180,000 square foot shopping center and its attendant seven hundred parking spaces made it one of the city’s largest retail enterprises.

Sears had been a staple of downtown shopping in Nashville since 1927 when it opened its first Nashville store with eight employees on West Broad Street Avenue. The new Sears store in 1927 reflected America’s shift to an automobile culture as more and more Nashville residents used automobiles to travel from home to work to shopping districts via the growing road systems of the United States.¹ Downtown Nashville experienced growing success as a commercial shopping center aided by the number of avenues into the city for shoppers via streetcar, railroad, and highway traffic from every direction. Nashville was well-situated for the automobile culture that had grown throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Sears’ success in the city was so great

¹ “15,000 Tourists Visit Nashville The Present Year. Motorists Will Spend More Than Half Million Dollars Here.” *Nashville Banner*, 11 November, 1921. The article contains a long description of how roadways from the direction of north, northwest, south, southwest, and southeast all funnel into the Nashville Basin and how motorists prefer the scenic views of Tennessee’s roads to those in other states by the secretary of the Nashville Automobile Club, C.H. Peay.

that in just seven years the corporation garnered an indefinite lease on a larger, five-story 70,000 square foot store at the corner of Eighth Avenue and Church Street, just four blocks north of Seventh and Drexel where it would remain until 1955. The site was leased on an indefinite basis from local businessman Claude P. Street, and one of Nashville's leading architectural firms, Hart, Freeland, and Roberts, built the building.

Sears, like Mother Drexel, bought the property at Seventh and Drexel through intermediaries, W.H. Criswell acting as real estate agent and Reber Boulton as attorney, so as to keep its intentions unknown.² Competition between downtown commercial businesses was keen and every company sought to keep its competitive edge at a premium. Sears, using American General Life and Casualty as its purchasing agent, bought the Drexel property and five additional parcels of working class family homes along the northern edge of the property bordering Murfreesboro Pike/Lafayette Street for \$200,000. The properties were zoned in a commercial B district for industrial businesses related to railroad interests with distances of required measurement between the neighborhood churches and any commercial shopping concerns and service stations. The property also contained the proposed throughway of Central/Drexel Street that was never completed, but was still on the city planning books and two alleys that were the result of neighborhood traffic of homes and families. To accomplish the property makeover and convert the land parcel into total commercial use meant that Sears needed a change in zoning. Considering the boost to the local economy, Mayor Ben West and the Nashville

² "Zoning Changed for Sears Store," *Tennessean*, 18 February, 1955.

Chamber of Commerce intervened and city officials quickly approved the zoning change.³

When Sears announced the building of the new store in February 1955, it had an initial price tag of \$2,500,000.00 for 140,000 square feet of retail and office space. The newly appointed store manager, E. Mack Cates, and Sears southeastern regional vice-president, Charles Kellstadt, announced that four hundred more employees would be needed at the new store. The large investment of Sears and the store's spacious confines made it a Class "A" store, among the company's largest in the nation. Interior air conditioning, a complete drapery department, garden shop, farm store, electric stairways,



Fig. 10. Artist's rendering of Nashville Sears Store, 1955. *Tennessean*, 18 February, 1955. Courtesy of the Nashville Room Archives, Nashville Public Library.

³ Ibid.

and in-house eating would be the highlights of the shopping experience.⁴ An artist's rendering of the new modernist building, with window space limited to the first floor, accompanied the announcement in the newspaper.⁵

The plan of the Nashville store followed a post-Depression redirection of design for the company, a departure from the company's original signature buildings patterned after the company's very first store opened in Chicago in 1905. The earlier design featured a central Chicago-skyline-tower, in some plans as tall as twelve stories, which rose from near the middle of a three to eight-story building base that housed both shopping area and catalogue shipping department. The two-in-one design made the company's catalogue business a major part of its retail base. The first wave of Sears stores, built across America from 1905-1932, followed this pattern of architecture, featuring the design in virtually every one of the stores that the company built from Vermont to Tacoma throughout the United States.⁶

In the post-Depression era, the interior retail shopping experience became the major focus of the company's building and retail efforts. The new approach brought an architectural redesign of the company's signature stores. The new company design reflected a modern approach to architecture that Sears first highlighted in Leslie Janes' display at the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago in 1933. Janes was promoted

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ See artist's rendering, Figure 10.

⁶ Richard Longstreth, "Sears, Roebuck and the Remaking of the Department Store, 1924-1942," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 65 (June 2006): 240-243, 269-272.

from within the company to head Sear's new Store Planning and Display department in 1932, a unit that quickly dominated the company's store planning. "In every respect," notes architectural historian Richard Longstreth, "the scheme had evolved from the interior requirements . . . focusing all efforts on merchandise and none on the building."⁷ Critics and architects alike heralded the new design as a modern, mature approach to retail practice by architects and design critics alike.⁸ The architecture was timely, obviously inspired by modernist sensibilities and the work of Roland Wank and his many Tennessee Valley Authority structures that populated so many of the states where the new Sears stores were built.⁹

Janes's functionalist approach to interior design focused solely on displaying goods and had a "complete disregard for dramatic or otherwise elegant presentations."¹⁰ He promoted interior air conditioning, brighter fluorescent lighting systems, wider aisles, and a spotlight on self-selection of a larger variety of goods to "a degree then seldom practiced."¹¹ Janes's approach made the building "invisible" to some, but its functionalist aesthetic was gaining popularity throughout the country.

Janes's design at the 1933 Exposition display featured a new architectural invention, the idea of a "windowless" department store. According to Janes, an open patterned "Big Room" approach to design that included the use of air conditioning and

⁷ Ibid., 261.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid, 258, 261.

¹⁰ Ibid, 256.

¹¹ Ibid.

fluorescent lights meant that windows were only necessary on the street elevation and then only as an enticement into the building's interior. Exposition attendees approved of the windowless design and Janes's new commercial building concept attracted the attention of noted national architects like George Carr of North Carolina and Jock Peters of California. They soon joined Janes in his redirection of the company's approach to retail architecture. Working with Sears's corporate architects John Raben and John Redden, Janes refined the interior spaces as well.

The windowless design gave Sears stores a bold, modernist look with the strength of its new buildings in the tall concrete, windowless walls. These walls extended upward from atop the first floor two and sometimes three stories into the air. Bright signage with large red letters decorated the exterior sides of the building, easily recognized by automobile passengers from a great distance.

The new Sears concept clearly catered to automobile traffic. After 1937, the shopping centers included unattached automobile service centers on the grounds. The automobile service center coupled with the conveniences of an "all-in-one" shopping destination desired by the automobile public created a dramatically new Sears retail environment. The changes in architecture followed Sears to Nashville when the new store was built.

The new Sears store at Seventh and Drexel also reflected the retail chain's strategy to secure prime retail position as the rebuilding of roads and infrastructure for the American automobile culture progressed. As downtown shopping areas became more crowded, cities were redirecting incoming traffic to perimeter roadways with singular viaducts into the central shopping districts. For Nashville this perimeter was the Dixie

Highway, and the main viaduct connecting incoming automobile traffic from virtually every direction came together in downtown at the corner of Eighth Avenue and Murfreesboro Pike, just one block west of Seventh and Drexel. The move to the perimeter of downtown areas provided greater space for parking lots and the opportunity to catch shoppers before they made their way into the interior shopping districts. Sears' new building in Nashville embraced a significant planning trend then dominating the American landscape: "Commercial buildings in mid-twentieth century central America had a new purpose, given the universality of automobile travel. Those that lined the strip promised to satisfy the contemporary notions of pleasure for those who drove by at high speeds."¹²

The changing roadway-friendly design of Sears was indicative of roads and highways as the dominating design element of the built environment in America in the twentieth century. "Within the first half of the twentieth century, a new social order was imposed on urban street life. Streets were increasingly reserved for vehicular traffic, terminating their use as playgrounds for children, markets for peddlers and consumers, open-air churches for pilgrims, and sexual emporiums for prostitutes."¹³ The ability of retailers to adapt to "contemporary notions of pleasure" like shopping and automobility meant that commercial buildings became the defining element in urban construction and identity. As Timothy Gilfoyle emphasizes, "The department store and a broad network

¹² J.B. Jackson quoted in Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, "J.B. Jackson as Critic of Modern Architecture," *Geography Review* 88 (1998): 472.

¹³ Gilfoyle, 181.

of institutions—art museums, investment banks, universities, chain stores, advertisers—generated an urban landscape of consumer desire” by 1930.¹⁴

The downtown Nashville retail landscape in the twentieth century certainly denotes this pattern. The downtown shopping district of the 1930’s was removed from the city’s bluff avenues along the river and pushed to the blocks west of the Cumberland river and nearer the railroad lines and highway and streetcar connection points where shoppers could reach them with greater ease and walk on level streets removed from the river bluff and undulating hills of the inner city’s core. The move of the shopping district to a more easily negotiated geographic platform was especially redesigned with female shoppers in mind.¹⁵

After World War II, the downtown shopping area made even more changes to make the central business district more advantageous to shoppers and retailers. A greater variety of stores was added and large department stores were allowed to build to take advantage of Nashville as a central highway juncture in America. After the 1936 flood, the Corp of Engineers created a new lock and dam system in Nashville’s rivers and lakes to prevent the floods which periodically ruined and devastated downtown buildings and retail stock in warehouses.¹⁶ Using Federal grants, officials cleared public space around

¹⁴ Ibid, 191.

¹⁵ A.E. Parkins, “Profiles of the Retail Business Section of Nashville, Tenn., and Their Interpretation,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 20 (September 1930): 164-175.

¹⁶ Nashville experienced such intense flooding in 1912, 1922, and 1936 that most of the downtown area had to be evacuated while the floodwaters drained and many buildings rehabbed or rebuilt. The flooding was particularly severe on South Fourth and Fifth Avenues just blocks from the Seventh and Drexel sites due to the underground waterway running beneath the Sears property meeting drainage runoff from the Cumberland River which backed up into that location.

the state capitol and perimeter of downtown, eliminating the famous “Hell’s Half Acre” red-light district and neighborhoods of working class African Americans.¹⁷

Downtown retailers benefited from the renewal program as well. Large retail anchor stores, like Harvey’s, Castner Knott, and Cain-Sloan, built or rebuilt stores within the downtown shopping core during the mid-twentieth century. Harvey’s, new to Nashville in 1942, was the brain trust of Ed Potter of Commerce Union Bank and Fred Harvey, who trained in retail at Marshall Field’s Chicago store. Harvey’s brought bells and whistles to the fray as the store included an interior carousel, caged animals, and the first escalators in the city. With the continued development of downtown by banks like Commerce Union, which added a Renaissance hotel to its growing list of properties, the situation was clear. Major department store retailers were a needed draw for the downtown shopping district.¹⁸

By the mid-1950’s downtown was in trouble. The development of suburban shopping and the building of neighborhood developments beyond the city limits and the Davidson County line were taking a toll on downtown property values and retail dollars. “The outer parts of the metropolitan community are growing in steamroller fashion both in population and in assessed property valuation,” noted political scientist Daniel R. Grant. “The development of the central city core is slowing down to a snail’s pace.”¹⁹

¹⁷ The focus of these efforts affecting African Americans was so great that critics called the urban renewal plans “Negro removal.” Most of the working poor were resituated in government-funded housing projects like the J.C. Napier housing projects along the Murfreesboro Road corridor a mile beyond the city center. Doyle, *Nashville Since the 1920’s*, 125.

¹⁸ Ibid., 137-138.

The announcement of the new Sears flagship store in February of 1955 seemed to be just what the downtown district was looking for. While it put the other downtown retailers on competitive notice and took advantage of the new perimeter-oriented traffic patterns of the city, it also provided a much-needed impetus for the local economy. City leaders greeted the announcement with acclaim. The zoning issues were easily negotiated in Sears' favor. The influx of investment by Sears into the economy was good for business and therefore good for Nashville. The economic might and innovative shopping designs of America's major retailer had come to town.

The *Nashville Banner* gave front-page coverage to the February 1955 announcement of the new Sears building. The two-story with basement shopping wonderland of "glass, aluminum, brick, and stone with ample space to accommodate top-of-the-line merchandise stocks in all departments" was on its way. Sears management noted its faith in Nashville as a "sound city with a great future."²⁰ The new facility would be a retail-only location with the catalogue and shipping departments removed to a new 76,000 square foot building within the new SIDCO industrial development at the southern limits of the city on Franklin Pike with convenience to both truck and railroad traffic.²¹ The storefront was laid out facing Lafayette Avenue/Murfreesboro Pike and included a two-story front window bank housing its offices.²²

¹⁹ David R. Grant, "Urban and Suburban Nashville: A Case Study in Metropolitanism," *The Journal of Politics* 17 (1955): 83.

²⁰ "Sears Tells of Multi-Million Store Plans," *Nashville Banner*, 17 February, 1955.

²¹ Ibid.

²² The window bank offices on the north elevation had an excellent view of downtown Nashville and were a deviation from Sears' normal store designs. The two-story glass structure was original to the

Nashville Mayor Ben West was pleased with Sears' announcement, and predicted that the retail traffic patterns of the 1940's would return to the downtown area: "I am very pleased at the confidence these smart retailers are showing in downtown Nashville. I am a firm believer that Nashville is on the upgrade . . . while suburban specialty markets have their place, the downtown will always remain the principal marketplace of our City."²³ Victor Johnson, president of the Nashville Chamber of Commerce, echoed West's optimism. Johnson cited the building as a sign of Nashville's growing importance as a retail distribution center with Sears in the center. "Other businesses of many types are bound to be attracted to this new area."²⁴ Sears move was perceived to be the panacea to the downtown area's decline.

The store opened in October 1956 to great fanfare. The original two and one-half million dollar project had grown into a four million dollar investment in Nashville's economy. The originally planned 140,000 square feet of space turned into 180,000. Both of Nashville's major newspapers, *The Tennessean* and *The Nashville Banner*, carried stories about the store and its new advantages in double-digit page spreads highlighted by multi-page advertisements of in-stock items, maps to the store's location, and store hours and conveniences. The newspapers published half-page artistic renderings of the store building hoping to make the facility instantly recognizable to new customers.

Nashville location throughout Sears' many locations and may be the only use of such a structure in the company's history.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ "Sears Drawing Power," *Tennessean*, 11 October, 1956.

Local civic and commerce leaders feted Sears managers and corporate representatives in private dinners at the Belle Meade Country Club and the local Aladdin plant. City leaders lauded Sears managers as cutting-edge progressives in newspaper articles which featured their photographs and company biographies. Fred Hecht, Sears' National Retail Sales Manager, attended from the company's home office in Chicago. Charles Kellstadt, Sears' southeastern region vice-president, and several of his management team from Atlanta attended the event as well and announced that the store was "open to all."²⁵

Sears' publicity campaign for the store's opening was well planned, and acknowledged Nashville's attempt to sell a positive commercial image. Local news stories portrayed Sears' success in America and now in Nashville as a combination of hard work, good business practices, and investing local profits into the local culture. The chronicles featured the life and work of Julius Rosenwald, whose values and charitable work throughout the South resonated with many of Sears' Nashville consumers, especially from the African American community. Newspapers pictured Mack Cates, the store's local manager, as an American success story, having worked his way up through the company's ranks with twenty-one years of dedicated service. The American dream was alive and well and living at Sears in Nashville.

The company also noted its devotion to the city of Nashville. Sears had been undeterred when its original store had a fire on its opening day in 1927. The company thanked the city for clearing up the zoning issues, calling the month-long debate in the

²⁵ "Sears Store Open to All," *Tennessean*, 10 October, 1956.

city council only a “slight unpleasantness.”²⁶ Sears also emphasized how it supported other local businesses by selling the products of many local companies like Aladdin, Tennessee Tufting, Temco, and the General Shoe Company on its shelves. Sears spent more in the South than it sold in the region, keeping the South competitive as an open avenue to markets across the country. The company was glad to be opening a major store in a city it rated as high as other great Southern cities—Miami, Atlanta, New Orleans, Birmingham, and Charlotte—where the company located the region’s other twelve Class “A” stores.²⁷

Sears hired four hundred new Nashville employees at the Seventh and Drexel store, doubling the number of workers compared to its previous location on Eighth Avenue. The brass ring of advancement in the cutting-edge retail market was offered to hard working citizens who placed company above self. Sears trained employees through day-long programs explaining company policies and good customer service techniques. Sears planned the store with employee needs and morale in mind. Carpeting and piped-in music made for a comfortable working environment. Private restrooms for employees were available in the store’s office complex. The company outfitted a spacious employees-only recreation room with luxurious lounge seating and a food bar where employees could eat chicken and dumplings or ice cream.²⁸

A comfortable workplace was not the only innovation in the store. The commitment to the new science of mature retail was also apparent in the escalators which

²⁶ “Zoning Change for Sears Store,” *Tennessean* 18 February, 1955.

²⁷ “Sears Buys More In South Than It Sells,” *Nashville Banner*, 10 October, 1956.

²⁸ “Recreation Room Mighty Tempting,” *Tennessean*, 11 October, 1956.

anchored the building, its fluorescent lighting throughout the store, and the many technological advances like the Food Court and its Servea-Tira dining center where consumers could buy lunch and desert together and all automatically through machines.

Sears already had tested these new innovations in retail science at its Chicago laboratories known as the “Buyers Supreme Court.”²⁹ The results of the extensive retail experimentation conducted to discover those aspects of retail design and product offering which consumers found most appealing and stimulating were applied throughout the store. When buyers walked into the “big room” shopping floors all of the departments therein were located with a sweeping glance. The different departments were individuated, as were exits, service areas, and stairways by carefully chosen pastel colors in over one hundred shades of blues, greens, reds, grays, and yellows. Each tint represented a different area, a break between one “department” and the next. The pastel tints were scientifically applied because they offered a “tremendous psychological lift” for the consumer. Large aisle ways, carpeted to provide a comfortable walking area for consumers, offered a clear map from one island of desire to another. Background music, carefully chosen to reflect the moods of listeners during certain hours of the day, was piped in through a store-wide sound system. The soothing music was played to promote a good mood for buyers and workers, thereby increasing the courtesy in customer relations. Store manager Mack Cates noted that “the system is not designed as entertainment, but to increase the working pleasure of our customers and employees.”³⁰

²⁹ “Sears Laboratory Serves As Buying Supreme Court,” *Tennessean*, 11 October, 1956.

³⁰ “Sears Customers Can Shop To Background of Music,” *Nashville Banner*, 10 October, 1956.

Customer convenience and meeting the various needs of a wide-ranging constituency under one roof was the hallmark of the large all-in-one facility. A variety of merchandise as diverse as the public could imagine was available under one roof. Sears' version of "new look" merchandising, where buyers could see each department with one look as they entered the shopping floor, offered a toy section with over one thousand different items, apparel for the whole family sporting the ivy-league look, a women's apparel section with outfits for every occasion of life with variety as great as the distance between look-like fur coats and lingerie, a full electronics section with radios and television sets, sporting goods, farm implements, and even a hardware section outfitted with "thingamajigs" to meet any customer needs.³¹ The innovation of the luncheon dining center and an optometrist's office with eyeglasses for sale were hallmarks of the Sears' commitment to meeting as many customer needs as possible in one place. If the consumer could not find what they wanted or needed within the store's confines, the catalogue department office on the second floor of the building offered over 100,000 additional items for sale with next-day availability from the Sidco Industrial Park service center. Credit was available to qualified customers for purchases totaling more than twenty dollars. No stone was left unturned.

The basement entrance to the store away from Lafayette Avenue featured the largest department store garden center in the state. Sears had carefully planned the store in conjunction with several local garden clubs and stocked it with items suggested by

³¹ "Even a 'Thingamajig' Not Impossible To Obtain," *Tennessean*, 11 October, 1956.

garden club members. The garden store was so large that it employed three full-time gardeners.³²

The property's unattached Super Service Station, a feature that became a Sears Class "A" feature in 1937, was billed as the company's top auto center anywhere in the chain and the top automobile service of its kind in the state. Its 11,664 square-foot space handled as many as forty-two cars at one time offering such wide-ranging services as tire repair, battery charging, and complete engine exchange. The Seventh and Drexel auto center also marked the first time the Sears Company offered a complete line of auto parts to consumers. Any part for any model of car, no matter how old, was available for purchase. It stocked one hundred different car batteries. It provided two service trucks for on-site road service, twenty-four hours a day. A motorcycle and motor scooter department was on the property, rounding out the offerings of the service station.³³

What was left of the eight-acre property after retail construction was one of the city's largest retail parking lots. A full two hundred thousand square feet of lighted parking space was available to the automobile public. Special policemen were hired to help handle the large traffic volume the new store hoped to acquire.

The store at Seventh and Drexel, hailed as the company's largest in the South and the "finest store we have ever built" in the entire Sears chain, opened for business with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 9:30 a.m. on 10 October 1956. During its opening day, a steady stream of 40,000 shoppers from a dozen Tennessee counties and Kentucky and

³² "County's Garden Clubs Helped Sears Plan Its Planting Areas," *Nashville Banner*, 10 October, 1956.

³³ "Nashville Has Sears' Most Complete Service Center," *Nashville Banner*, 10 October, 1956.

Alabama jammed the store from opening bell to closing at 9:00 p.m. A special police traffic squad assigned to the event waved thousands of cars into the property from the Dixie Highway during the twelve-hour shopping day, hailing it as “just like a high school homecoming game, only this crowd came all day long.”³⁴ The most up-to-date store in the chain, hailed by Kellstadt as a “merchandiseland,” was an immediate success.³⁵

When Sears moved to the perimeter of the downtown area in 1955 with a Class "A" store, it wanted to become the major player in Nashville's retail market. Taking advantage of the city's rebuilt roadway intersections and its innovative architectural design, Sears' wanted to be the first building north-bound motorists saw when they approached downtown Nashville. Easily recognizable with its large signage, parking lots, and signature stream-lined architecture, the new Sears was easier to get to than department stores surrounded by the maze of banks, warehouses, and other downtown buildings. Sears quickly became first choice for shoppers in downtown Nashville. The intention was achieved: When one thought about downtown, the first building they recognized and thought of was Sears. Sears became the symbol of downtown shopping.

For a generation after its opening, the Sears store at Seventh and Drexel was a Southern flagship location for the chain. While the product offerings and styles offered by Sears changed with the times, the building remained intact and quite functional. It served the retailer's needs quite well until the 1970s, when new developments moved with the directions of the new interstate highways. Nashville was the juncture of three major highways during the 1970's. As the traffic patterns of Nashville shifted toward the

³⁴ “Forty Thousand Shoppers Join Sears for Opening of A Store,” *Tennessean*, 11 October, 1956.

³⁵ “Sears Store Open to All,” *Tennessean*, 10 October, 1956.

interstates, consumers shifted shopping allegiances to perimeter shopping malls. This change in retail commerce would make the property at Seventh and Drexel restless again. Sears eventually abandoned the property in 1992, after several attempts at renovate the building for new retail failed.

B. Architecture

1. Built Environment

The Sears building of 1955 was a modernist cube and a retail marvel. Sears made the most of the building's potential. Its design of limited "ground floor only" show window approach to architecture meant that it was dominated by solid upper floor exterior walls. Using concrete construction, Sears made the building's two upper exterior floors a "big box" with walls that served as a canvas of advertisement easily recognized by passing motorists. The building's appearance was unlike any department store Nashville had ever seen.

The store's architecture also featured a storefront two-story bank of windows exterior to and extended away from the big cube of the building. This exterior projection along the building's frontage was functional and interior-driven as well, providing the store's management spacious offices and one of the more scenic views of Nashville's skyline. The projection of aluminum and glass, away from the building's cube-shaped concrete exterior, served to break up the monotony of the building and make it both more attractive and more recognizable to passing automobile traffic.

The modernist, concrete style of the building was easily recognized by Tennesseans as it had first appeared in the state's public buildings and structures of the New Deal. The broad concrete walls, solid and large, setting one cube atop another was

something any automobile consumer traveling in the Ohio Valley or the Southern United States would have been used to seeing in the many New Deal architectural projects which rebuilt the American landscape in the post-depression era. The functionalist New Deal buildings were also designed along the same lines as one of Sears' main retail strategies: to bring urban technological advances into rural settings.³⁶ While Sears' product lines and advertising campaigns helped the corporation accomplish this goal, the Sears stores built in the South, like the one at Seventh and Drexel, were actually accomplishing this goal in reverse. The appeal to an "Old South" rural mindset by advertising items for home and family use in an urban modernist, New Deal notion of a building during a period of economic, retail boosterism where those items would be more affordable was a move by the company that brought it retail success from its Southern public.

2. Building Culture

Sears' strategy of store building and location developed from a variety of factors, which emerged in the remaking of a "modern" America in the mid-twentieth century. Each Sears store was designed to be a retail cultural representation of a complete world where desire and improvement were available and affordable to all. A complete commercial world under one roof was a modern notion of a culture open to those who could drive to and afford the goods offered in the retail paradise. New South retail

³⁶ Carroll Van West, *Tennessee's New Deal Landscape*, 4-8. West argues that New Deal spending and programs gave Tennessee's rural counties a chance to join the nation's economic mainstream by way of improved, paved roads and inexpensive public utilities providing jobs and services. These ideals combined with new school buildings featuring hot lunches, gymnasiums, libraries, and electricity, and social service facilities, the New Deal combined social reform and economic renewal. Sears retail policies and buildings borrowed those ideals and, as America's economic fortunes were restored in mid-century, turned a healthy profit margin doing so. For an interesting comparison of the architecture of the New Deal in Tennessee with that of Sears compare the Ocoee Dam No. 3 powerhouse pictured on page 246 with the Sears building at Seventh and Drexel.

culture, convenience, buying power, and opportunity came together under one roof, offering a complete shopping experience which negated the burgeoning retail culture of the suburbs. “We are as complete as one of the suburban shopping centers,” Sears store manager Mack Cates said.³⁷

The culture of retail developed by Sears in the post-Depression era eschewed aesthetics and instead appealed to the functionalism that remade America in post-Depression era New Deal government rebuilding programs. This functionalist ideal made for an interesting poesis that turned desire into a science. Combining new interior and exterior building techniques with stores placed conveniently on the new geography of America’s developing roadways, architects like Leslie Janes and his counterparts at Sears combined psychological and social science research and technological advance in their new buildings. The goals of a better quality of life linked by the architecture of the store to the federal and state social reform programs of the New Deal, worked well for the chain. The culture of desire, noted by historians like Gilfoyle, attached the idea of architecture to the notions of necessity and happiness. Retail shopping centers like the Sears store at Seventh and Drexel were the visible manifestation of this idea.

The culture of the Sears building was also designed to bring rural America into the modern age and remind the modern age of the solid values of its rural roots. This culture played particularly well in cities like Nashville, Birmingham, and New Orleans, where similar strategies of boosterism had created new economies in the post-Civil War New South. Unfortunately, the culture of Sears and other retailers, like every notion of a

³⁷ “South’s Largest Finest Sears Store Opens Here,” *The Nashville Banner*, 10 October, 1956.

pre-Civil War Old South, was dependent upon the idea of segregation. In the retail world of the mid-1950's, with the Civil Rights Movement beginning to stir, segregation was implicit in advertising words like "affordable" and "automobile" and explicit in architectural drawings where employee restrooms and recreation areas were limited to "Whites only." Sears' employee photos and advertisements featured white faces only. The culture of desire in the New South was still the culture of desire from the Old South.

3. Social Exchange

The social exchanges that occurred at Seventh and Drexel with the coming of Sears meant a radical change for the property. What had been home to a culture of religious and educational devotion was redirected to its earlier commercial roots in the nineteenth century. What had been an African American Roman Catholic parish set in an established African American neighborhood became the home of automobile consumers, most of whom were white, devoted to purchasing needed goods or the latest and most novel forms of the American dream.

The battle for an integrated society and equal rights, including freedom of religion and equal commercial opportunities for all Americans, was written into the soil at addresses like Seventh and Drexel long before it spilled over into the streets of Southern cities in the 1950s and 1960s. While Mother Drexel and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Nashville had provided the opportunity for one counterpoint to the white-dominated culture of Nashville, Sears and the events of American cultural life had bought the property back for the desires of those like Samuel Keith.

This social exchange at Seventh and Drexel in the mid-twentieth century remained segregated, but this time the segregation was the result of the commercial

culture of America that dominated the country's post-World War II landscape. Racial exclusion was scientifically calculated, the result of the homogeneous unit principle propagated by a national, commercial retail giant excluding those who did not fit into their market niche through the social viaducts of demand, neglect, and price. Add to that the physical infrastructure of Jim Crow-defined spaces and road systems geared toward those wealthy enough to afford individual commercial automobility. Commercial building became a way of keeping the dragon of racial equality at bay and extending the control of white America. Lizabeth Cohen argues that retail patterns enforced racial discrimination as commercial shopping center developers defined their retail palaces in exclusionary racial and economic terms and cities complied by rescheduling bus routes to remove African Americans from shopping center areas during prime shopping times.³⁸

The cultural exchanges between Sears and its retail rivals across Middle Tennessee also reflected social changes taking place in America. Sears billed itself as an attractive retail alternative to the city center which was congested with services and stores spread across city blocks and also to the town center shopping districts of the suburbs with their limited retail offerings in a setting with limited public utilities. Sears' "complete" store offered the chance to live, at least for a day or an hour, in the ideal city, an island of culture housed under one roof with the broadest variety of cultural experiences imaginable, pleasing music, air conditioning managed for human comfort, and white middle-class cultural values built into the tapestry of the facility. The shopping experience was clean and modern with the newest technological advances, scientific

³⁸ Lizabeth Cohen, "From Town Center to Shopping Center: The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America," *American Historical Review* 101 (October 1996): 1058-1072.

planning behind every display, and capable of satisfying virtually every human urge imaginable.

The social realm of the Sears store design portrayed its customers as happy, thriving, purchasing white consumers building homes full of the most up-to-date technological conveniences as could be afforded. Further, Sears took full advantage of the idea of the automobile redesigning the American retail experience. Sears customers paid to get their cars washed and cared for like members of the family. Sears customers needed parking and Sears had plenty of it for free, as opposed to the pay lots that dotted the downtown shopping district streets. Sears offered safety as well. Initially special traffic police and eventually traffic lights near parking lot entrances kept things moving smoothly and quickly. Shoppers traveled between floors on electric escalators. Sears customers lived an ideal life and never had to go outside.

4. Building as Symbol

The built environment of the Sears operation meant a return to the identity of capitalism that had so long dominated Nashville. The razing of the religious, philanthropic academic village and the replacement of it with a bold development plan that included the solid, sophisticated 180,000 square-foot retail “complete-city-under-one-roof,” an attendant automobile service station, and 200,000 square feet of paved free parking was a powerful reversal of fortunes for the corner of Seventh and Drexel. The replacing of the aesthetic, highly ornamented medieval landscape with a sparse, functional, technologically advanced box of a building was also an announcement of Nashville’s move into the modern architecture of the twentieth century.

C. Landscape History

The Sanborn Fire Insurance map of 1957 shows the radical reorientation of the landscape at Seventh and Drexel. Homes and dwelling places disappeared from the landscape as more and more businesses moved into the neighborhood. The strip of land separating the extension of Lea Avenue and Murfreesboro Pike from the property's northern border disappeared as well. The map shows the eight-acre tract sitting directly on the boundary of the Dixie Highway.³⁹

The placement of the building at the northwest corner of the property, where previously only lawns and gardens had been, also marked a redirection within the landscape. The corner section was particularly advantageous to vegetation because an underground stream ran underneath it. This stream of continuously flowing water was one of the causes of the continual flooding problem in the blocks just north and east of the property, a problem which the Corp of Engineers solved after the 1936 flood.

When Sears built on the property's corner to take maximum commercial advantage of the roadfront, it had to engineer the building on top of the stream. The design firm built two drainage pumps into the building's footing at the direct centerpoint of the western and eastern walls of the facility to pump water away from the foundation and toward the Corp of Engineers' drainage system in either direction. With the building on the northern road front, the southern end of the property was perfect for parking customers. The slight rise of the hill toward the southern end of the property those

³⁹ Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, 1867-1970-Tennessee, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Nashville, 1957*, available online at <http://sanborn.umi.com/>.

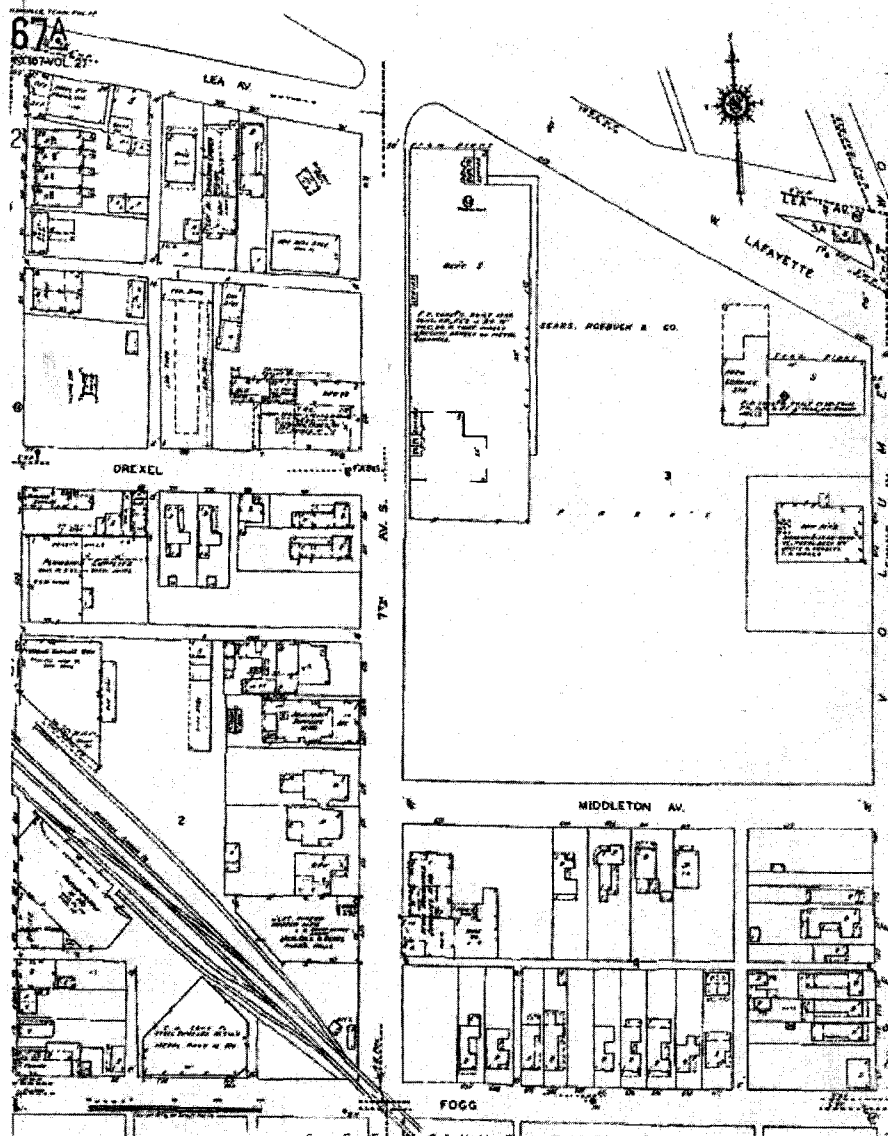


Fig. 11. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Nashville, 1957. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, 1867-1970-Tennessee.

parking their cars were offered one of the more picturesque views of the city with sightlines affording views as far away as the eastern shore of the Cumberland River.

Sears' redevelopment of the landscape also meant that infrastructure had to be updated to meet the demand of the consumer. As Sears gained success in the 1950s and 1960s, Murfreesboro Pike was enlarged again and again. The building and rebuilding of

the transportation and utility infrastructure to support the commercial demands meant that almost every trace of the old residential neighborhood had disappeared by the 1970s.

The long-term success of the urban advance into the rural market, robustly driving traffic to the Sears facility over a thirty-year period, showed that the marketing strategy possessed great potency, and the infrastructure offered the stability needed to sustain consumer confidence. While this efficacy was certainly due to its market-based research design, it was equally owed to the increasing importance of roadway infrastructure and automobile sales across the region and nation. These two factors tied urban and rural together into a single retail landscape that transcended both contexts and created traffic in both directions.

D. Summary

The triumph of capitalism in the building of the Sears store lays bare the architectural clash of cultures that is the history of Nashville. The buildings that dominated the Southern skyline of the city over time were indicative of the powerful, wealthy competing forces vying for control over the lives of their inhabitants and the environment of the urban center named Nashville. The attention to detail in the Sears building is certainly due to the emergence of retail trade as a science in the early twentieth century and to the powerful wealth of a national chain who built like visions of America throughout the country. It also signifies something else.

Forces like race, equality, exclusion, speed, and consumption demand constant attention, but even greater attention to detail in the built environment. The material culture of Sears used things—shirts, coats, tractors, candy, toys, cigarettes, vending machines, plants, cars—as active enticements to a preferred, privileged clientele who

responded by manipulating those things and demanding more things. Managing capitalism through the rebuilt world of the store triumphed over the philanthropic ideal of an elite society of religious devotion aimed at racial improvement. The two ideals would, of course, continue to compete throughout the broader landscape of Nashville. The building of the Sears facility in 1956 and its successful commercial run over the next three decades meant that at Seventh and Drexel a victory for capitalism was built into the landscape replacing one American dream with another.

CHAPTER FIVE

FROM RETAIL TO RESCUE:
A HOME FOR THE HOMELESS IN NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

A. The Homeless and Nashville History

The restless landscape at Seventh and Drexel changed again as downtown Nashville moved into the twenty-first century. On June 11, 2001, the Nashville Rescue Mission took up residence within the built confines of what had once been the southeastern flagship store of Sears, Roebuck, Inc. The Monday grand opening of the newly renovated space for the homeless brought Nashville politicians and entertainers to tour a building that had experienced a four-million-dollar overhaul to meet the needs of the mission. The Nashville Rescue Mission's new home more than tripled the size of their previous facility up the block on Eighth Avenue South. The refurbished building gave them one hundred and seventy thousand total square feet of space with four hundred and forty-one beds, a three-hundred-seat dining hall, a huge commercial kitchen, a four-hundred-seat chapel, medical and dental clinics, eight classrooms with thirty computer workstations, forty transitional apartments, three recreation rooms, and sixty thousand square-feet of storage space.¹ The Missionary Tech Team out of Dallas, TX who led the redesign efforts, called the project "From Retail to Rescue," as they transformed the retail store, stripping its accoutrements of retail identity and turning the building into a state of the art twenty-first century social services building.

¹ "Rescue Mission has grand opening," *Tennessean*, 6 June, 2001.

The real surprise of what happened to the Sears building at the Seventh and Drexel location was not that it had closed its doors in August of 1991 nor that the homeless population of Nashville finally had a home besides the streets of the city.² The real surprise was that Sears was able to keep its downtown retail clientele for over thirty years in a Nashville retail market that experienced a complete change of direction and focus since the building opened in 1956.

When Sears opened its modern store at Seventh and Drexel, Nashville's downtown business district was already seeing the signs of urban and suburban change. Expanding state highways and roadways and building projects at the city's edge and past its boundaries was an emerging pattern of development throughout the mid-state area. "Like many medium and large cities in the age of the automobile, Nashville's central business district suffered from the steady diminution of residents, along with retail, wholesale, and manufacturing businesses from the city center to the periphery."³ Automobiles, commonplace even "among middle-class and blue-collar families" by the 1950's signaled a change of direction in building, traffic, and retail patterns.⁴ Life was moving away from the downtown area.

In the second half of the twentieth century, three major factors changed the direction and focus of Nashville and led to the closing of the Sears store and its abandoning downtown Nashville. First was metropolitanism, combining and integrating the administration and government of the city of Nashville with the surrounding

² "Nashville to lose 'in town' Sears," *Nashville Banner*, 1 May, 1991.

³ Don Doyle, *Nashville Since The 1920s*, 121.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 179.

Davidson County and Middle Tennessee area, an idea which was floated as early as 1955. Metropolitanism in Nashville, as elsewhere in America, was as much a result of growing racial tension during the civil rights era as it was the recapturing of a rural ideal and the desire for homeownership. Second, the construction of the inter-state highway roadway system in Tennessee which began in 1955 and was finally completed in 1967 aided and abetted the desire for metropolitanism and suburban development. Third was the resulting change in shopping patterns in the mid-state area as a consolidated government and newly constructed roadway system opened suburbs and new retail opportunities to automobile consumers. This interconnected redirection of the landscape was not exclusive to Nashville or even to the American South but was pervasive throughout the United States. Thomas Hanchett notes that scholars have loosely connected the changed retail patterns toward suburban shopping centers and malls in post-World War II America to the rise of suburbia, growing racial tension during the 1950s and 1960s, and the availability of automobile travel to practically every social class.⁵

While the calls for some sort of consolidation of city and county services had been sounded in Nashville since at least 1915, the metropolitanism that had been formally introduced as legislation in 1955 and at first defeated, was finally achieved in the city in a special election by city and county residents in November 1962.⁶ Civic leaders and local academics helped make the case for metropolitan annexation and pave the way to victory. They asserted that the downtown area and middle Tennessee in general had ceased to

⁵ Thomas Hanchett, "U.S. Tax Policy and the Shopping-Center Boom of the 1950s and 1960s," *The American Historical Review* 101(October 1996): 1083-1084.

⁶ Doyle, *Nashville Since The 1920s*, pp. 214-215.

show signs of commercial vitality and growth as early as 1950. Unless the move was made to provide city services of roadways, sewers, land development, shared schools, hospitals, fire departments, and tax burdens, the experts argued that the city would fall so far behind the curve of other incorporated and industrialized cities like Birmingham, Atlanta, and Cincinnati that it would be unable to attract and promote progress and business.⁷ The initial idealism of metropolitanism saw the possibility of a progressive society where Nashville, Davidson County and anywhere from four to eight of the surrounding counties would coalesce into a single government entity bringing prosperity and much needed government services throughout the mid-state area.

Not everyone, however, in Nashville or the surrounding counties saw consolidation as a progressive benefit. The move to combine city and county governments was an acrimonious, prolonged affair that ran the course of Nashville Mayor Ben West's twelve-year term between 1950-1962. It included civil rights protests, a failed special election in 1958, charges of communism in a cold war political world, violent outbursts across the county, and the end of the political career of Mayor West whose crowning achievement was the successful 1962 election into Nashville metropolitanism.⁸

On April 1, 1963, a new Nashville appeared. Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson County opened for business. "A city of 73 square miles and approximately 171,000 people became a new entity of 508 square miles and over 400,000 people."⁹ The results

⁷ Daniel R. Grant, 82-99.

⁸ Doyle, *Nashville Since The 1920s*, 179-221.

of the expansion were numerous. Hundreds of miles of new sewer systems were laid. New fire and rescue services were located throughout the metropolitan area. People quickly purchased homes in suburban areas with the hopes that the planned roadways and services would catch up to them quickly. The promise of the new government “stimulated a kind of civic revolution of rising expectations.”¹⁰

The greatest sign of the vitality of the new metropolitanism, however, was the rapid construction of downtown manufacturing and office buildings and, most important, the new interstate freeways circling the downtown building district.¹¹ While the building of the United States interstate highway system actually started in the southernmost portion of the state near Pulaski in 1957, it took decades to complete the proposed highways throughout the state even though the Federal Highway act of 1956 mandated that the federal government would fund 90 cents of every dollar for highway construction. Given Tennessee’s difficult terrain with multiple river crossings and mountains, the difficulty in completing the highway projects is not surprising. However, local politics contributed as much as geography to lengthen the time it took for the divided highways to complete their proposed routes, snaking throughout the state and joining at least two major interstates in each of the state’s four largest cities.¹²

⁹ Ibid., 215.

¹⁰ Robert Horton in interview by Daniel Grant, *ibid.*, 215.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 216.

¹² Tammy Sellers, “Interstate Highway System, Tennessee,” *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, ed. Carroll Van West, online edition,

Though the construction of the James Robertson Parkway was started in the late 1950s, Nashville had been as slow as any of Tennessee's four main cities to push major road building projects through its downtown area. After the metropolitan consolidation in 1963, things changed. Interstate road building projects were key to providing quick and easy transportation for an especially white automobile public from their homes in the burgeoning suburbs to their jobs inside the city limits, many in or near the downtown business district. As the roads were constructed, many of the proposed routes into downtown were adjusted to flow through or around the inner-city neighborhoods and housing districts where African-Americans and lower class whites lived and labored.¹³ Progress prevailed and when the dust settled Nashville was one of only three Southern cities where three major interstates converged: I-40, I-65, and I-24

The push to the suburbs and new roads changed traffic patterns and also gave rise to a change in commercial retail patterns as well. Strip mall shopping and unregulated commercial sprawl developed along the roadways between downtown Nashville and its

<http://tennesseencyclopedia.net/imagegallery.php?EntryID=M120>. See also Tennessee Department of Transportation, *Interstate 50th Anniversary: Celebrating a National Milestone* (2007), <http://www.tninterstate50.com>.

¹³ Don Doyle notes that many whites had indeed followed the newly constructed roads out of Nashville's city center to the peripheral suburbs in part in an attempt to recover the 'Old South' rural ideal, but also because of an unspoken fear of blacks at a time when the Civil Rights movement was removing physical and social barriers in society. The new highways were a convenient 'barrier' between the races. This, of course, made the fact of the rerouting of the interstates through African American neighborhoods and business districts even more difficult to take. The result was a prolonged lawsuit over the construction of Interstate 40 through North Nashville and the Bordeaux area which garnered national attention that allowed the construction to continue unimpeded. Doyle, *Nashville Since The 1920s*, 179. See also Margaret Martin Holleman, "The Evolution of Federal Housing Policy from 1892-1974 in Nashville, TN," Nashville Civic Design Center, <http://www.civicedesigncenter.org>; "Bias Is Charged in Highway Suit: Nashville Negroes Appeal on Route in Slum Area," *New York Times*, 26 November, 1967; "Wall-to-Wall Concrete," *New York Times*, 27 November 1967. On the suburb as the racial divide in post-Civil Rights Era America, see Lizabeth Cohen, "From Town Center to Shopping Center: The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America," *The American Historical Review* 101 (October 1996).

outlying communities and eventually led to the building of malls, suburban retail commercial conglomerations, which brought the retail stores that had formerly inhabited downtown to the suburbs.¹⁴ First came 100 Oaks Shopping Mall south of downtown along Franklin Road in the 1960s, followed immediately by Harding Mall Southeast of downtown in 1969. Rivergate Mall north of downtown was constructed in the early 1970s and Hickory Hollow Mall east of the central business district along Murfreesboro Pike came a few years later. Changes in the federal tax code aided the new suburban reality. These codes allowed for land speculation purchases to be counted as either a deduction or a loss for tax purposes, the deduction of interest paid on new construction loans, and personal property taxes to be deducted as a business expense for individuals.¹⁵ Given the overwhelming evidence of road building, mall construction, and new economic realities, it is clear that “as the malls mushroomed, older central business districts faltered.”¹⁶

The new reality for Nashville shoppers as the 1960s pushed into the 1970s and 1980s was a visit to the mall with larger parking lots and more stores available in one place, rather than a trip downtown where trucks and business traffic dominated the interstates. By the time Hickory Hollow Mall opened in the mid-1970s downtown Nashville was so bereft of commercial appeal and enterprise that Mayor Dick Fulton’s

¹⁴ To understand how sprawl developed around Nashville and particularly between downtown and Murfreesboro on the Murfreesboro Pike corridor running through Smyrna, see Owen D. Gutfreund, *Twentieth-Century Sprawl: Highways and the Reshaping of the American Landscape*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 197-226.

¹⁵ Hanchett, 1093.

¹⁶ Kenneth T. Jackson, “All the World’s a Mall: Reflections on the Social and Economic Consequences of the American Shopping Center,” *The American Historical Review* 101 (October 1996): 1117.

Century III committee, appointed to plan the city's bicentennial celebration in 1980, forwent the idea of celebrating the city's past in order to concentrate on a major reconstruction of the downtown area for new convention, tourist, and retail businesses.¹⁷ This new reality of metropolitanism, changed automobile traffic, and a new retail environment meant a redirection for the downtown city center and the rebuilding of a new downtown landscape. Nashville historian Don Doyle notes that the changed landscape meant deterioration for downtown businesses: "The decline of the retail shopping district downtown had accelerated with the opening of the new suburban shopping malls....."¹⁸

The decline and ultimate demise of the downtown Nashville Sears store is this same story written into the landscape at the corner of Seventh and Drexel avenues. When Sears opened its doors at Seventh and Drexel in 1956, the reversal of direction and fortune of downtown Nashville as a shopping destination was already underway. While the store benefited from its location, the widening of Murfreesboro Pike from two to four lanes in 1951 redirected traffic both into the city center and away from it as well. Road construction was a two-way proposition.¹⁹ As the improved and new roads reached suburbia shopping patterns followed the new paths of asphalt.

In 1968, Nashville's first indoor mall opened and the new reality of the American shopper came to Nashville.²⁰ 100 Oaks Mall, south of downtown by some three miles

¹⁷ Doyle, *Nashville Since The 1920s*, 265.

¹⁸ Ibid., 220.

¹⁹ Gutfreund, 203.

opened on Thompson Lane on a tract of land that ran parallel to Interstate 65 and brought progress to Nashville with the J.C. Penney's and Harvey's department stores anchoring the facility. Within half a decade Sears began its march away from downtown with its own venture into the suburbs, building a stand-alone store north of downtown on Gallatin Road, not far from an interchange on Interstate 65. The new store's opening in March of 1968 was occasioned by the cutting of a ribbon made up of a rope strung together with phonograph records with an electric Sears knife. Mayor Beverly Briley was on hand to do the cutting and tell the crowd that as a local resident of Madison "he was real glad to welcome Sears to the area, where we'll all be shopping together."²¹ He also reminded them that the new store was the result of the metropolitanism he had championed as county administrator before the 1963 merger, when "in 1959...we began trying to get sewers for this area. We did and this great development is the result."²² About 100 people attended the opening, a far cry from the forty thousand who had crossed the threshold of the Sears store at Seventh and Drexel when it had opened a decade before. Sears opened a third store at Hickory Hollow Mall at the Interstate 24 boundary of Davidson and Rutherford Counties in 1978.²³ In 1988, Sears abandoned its Madison location after a twenty-year tenure. The cozier confines and higher sales volume at Rivergate Mall, of which it was an original tenant, located north of the city on Interstate

²⁰ "\$64M Vandy investment spells healthy 100 Oaks future," *Nashville Business Journal*, March 14, 2008, <http://www.bizjournals.com/nashville/stories/2008/03/17/focus1.html>.

²¹ "Officials Welcome New Sears Store," *Nashville Banner*, 13 March, 1968.

²² Ibid.

²³ "Hickory Hollow shifting gears," *Nashville Business Journal*, July 18, 2008, <http://www.bizjournals.com/nashville/stories/2008/07/21/story1.html>.

65 near the border of Davidson and Sumner Counties made it an easy decision.²⁴ In each case the opening of new stores was occasioned by the improvement of roadways, suburban housing developments, and a higher volume of shoppers who found the mall a more appealing and safer destination at which to do business than downtown. Sears' Rivergate store manager Carrol Calegan told the *Nashville Banner*: "There is a big increase (here) and the synergies of the other things going on in the mall."²⁵

As the volume of shoppers and business moved more toward the Sears locations at suburban malls, the downtown store saw fewer and fewer shoppers. A reorganization in 1987 to make the Seventh and Drexel store a clearance outlet for the chain actually brought the store to its all-time low volume in sales.²⁶ A nationwide reorganization of the brand in February 1989, highlighted by a forty-two hour nationwide shut down of all Sears stores, transformed each Sears into a discount-oriented twin of the Wal-Mart chain. This marketing ploy failed to attract new customers as well.²⁷

When the construction of Cool Springs Mall, a new development south of town on Interstate 65 past the Davidson County line and in the city of Franklin in Williamson County, was announced in early 1990, Sears signed on as an anchor store.²⁸ Rumors quickly began to circulate that the days of the store at Seventh and Drexel were

²⁴ "Sears expects move to mean sales up 50%," *Nashville Banner*, 15 January, 1988.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ "Nashville to lose 'in town' Sears," *Nashville Banner*, 10 May, 1991.

²⁷ "Piecing together new prices," *Nashville Banner*, 28 February, 1989.

²⁸ "Construction is on schedule for an Aug. 7, 1991 opening of the Cool Springs Galleria in Franklin," *Tennessean*, 25 November, 1990.

numbered.²⁹ The store that had opened to national acclaim as an “ultra-modern store” with a four million dollar price tag and 170,000 square feet of space in 1956 was finally closed in August 1991.³⁰

As the automobile traffic and new roadways led many residents away from the city’s center to the suburbs, the improved roadways actually made it easier for the homeless to make the downtown area of the city their domain. With six legs of interstate roadway leading cars, buses, and industrial traffic into the city center, Nashville became an easier destination for the homeless and those drifting from place to place. No longer having to compete with shopping schedules and cars full of parking lots, the homeless found the interior of the central business district less populated. Social service agencies like the Nashville Rescue Mission saw the abandoning of the downtown area as an opportunity to increase their aid to the homeless and disenfranchised citizens of the downtown area.

The Nashville Rescue Mission was formed in 1953. In October of that year Dr. Charles Fuller, a visiting evangelist, noticed the sizeable homeless population in the downtown area. Fuller, who was in town to hold what was advertised as “A One Service Only Old-Fashioned Revival Hour Rally” at the famous Ryman Auditorium, seized the moment.³¹ During the service, Fuller allowed the testimony of a man named Jimmy Stroud, who had been “reclaimed” by the work of a rescue mission in Memphis. After

²⁹ “Sears downtown faces duel with CoolSprings,” *Tennessean*, 18 April, 1990; “Sears says downtown still an ‘if’,” *Tennessean*, 22 April, 1990.

³⁰ “Some say they’ll miss downtown Sears store,” *Nashville Banner*, 7 August, 1991.

³¹ “Our History,” Nashville Rescue Mission. www.nashvillerescuemission.org/vision.htm

the testimony, Fuller gave a plea to the crowd to do something to help the many homeless people he had met on the streets of Nashville walking from his room at the Sam Davis Hotel to the Ryman. A spontaneous offering of support and funding came from the crowd. Dr. Fuller added his speaker's fee for the meeting to create a fund to aid those living on the streets of Nashville. By the end of the year, an interdenominational drive gathered over eleven hundred signatures to support the creation of the Nashville Union Mission whose stated purpose in its Charter of Incorporation read:

The Nashville Union Mission has for its purpose: promoting the teaching and spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by public gatherings, by radio, and personal work of all kinds: conducting inter-denominational evangelistic services in prisons, on the streets, in shops and elsewhere, in the promotion of Christianity and morality; and other means, and encouraging converts to affiliate with and become active in the Bible believing and Bible teaching Church of their choice, providing temporary shelter and food for homeless persons, and through spiritual and material aid, helping in their rehabilitation.³²

Churches, social agencies, and philanthropic individuals previously had made several attempts to deal with the problem of the dispossessed and those living on the streets in Nashville in an organized fashion. Most notably, a coordinated city-wide effort led by the office of the International Travelers Aid Society during the Great Depression in 1932 offered food, temporary housing, and other services to the homeless.³³ With the move of residents to the suburbs and the abandoning of the inner city by the retail and commercial industry in the late 1940s and 1950s, the Union Rescue Mission was an idea whose time had come.

³² Wendy Ragan, *For These We Serve At The Nashville Union Rescue Mission, First 45 Years*. (Nashville: Copyright Pending, 2001), 8.

³³ Marion Newcomb LaSater, "Nashville Makes a Venture," *Social Forces* 11 (December 1932): 219-223.

By spring of 1954, supporters secured offices for the mission on McGavock Street in downtown Nashville and established an interdenominational Christian ministry.

Though started with meager funds, the mission has become a multi-million dollar annual ministry incorporating the Travelers Aid society into its ranks. The Rescue Mission has inhabited several buildings in Nashville on Seventh and Eighth avenues, held recovery and Christian discipleship programs on farms in Joelton and Dickson, TN, and a Women's Center on Rosa Parks Boulevard north of the city center.³⁴ Mission-driven throughout its history, the Nashville Union Mission was renamed the Nashville Rescue Mission in the 1970s. It has preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to the city every day both at the mission venues and on the radio. The mission administers programs offering medical aid, addiction recovery, transient housing, transitional housing, food, safety for battered women, education, literacy and job skills, and youth mentoring to those who have come to it needing assistance.³⁵

When the Sears location became available in 1991, the Nashville Rescue Mission eventually made an offer on the property after two years of negotiations. In July of 1993, the mission attempted to buy the building but the building's owner, American General Life and Casualty Corporation, rejected the offers.³⁶ After several years of the building sitting fallow with no suitors on the horizon, in 1999 the Rescue Mission finally

³⁴ Nashville Rescue Mission, *Financial Statements and Additional Information*. December 31, 2006.

³⁵ "Ministries," Nashville Rescue Mission. www.nashvillerescuemission.org/ministries.htm

³⁶ "Sears Roebuck may become home for the Nashville Union Rescue Mission," *Nashville Banner*, 9 July, 1993. It is curious that American General continued to hold title to the building throughout the years that Sears occupied it. American General had made the offer for the property on behalf of Sears when it purchased the land in 1954 and apparently still retained some right of privilege to the building.

purchased the property for \$500,000 dollars and a sizeable tax-write off for the Sears Corporation, for whom American General had held the building in trust.³⁷ In order to make the purchase and begin a four million dollar building rehab, the Rescue Mission sold off the three properties it owned on Seventh and Eighth Avenues near Demonbreun Street to First Baptist Church, Nashville for 2.4 million dollars.³⁸

With the purchase of the Sears building and the sale of its old facilities complete, the Rescue Mission contracted the Missionary Tech Team engineers and builders of Dallas, Texas to design the adaptive reuse. The work was completed in February of 2001.³⁹ The 170,000 square foot facility was teeming with those homeless, to whom the shelter was providing ministry in addiction education seminars, feeding meals in the cafeteria, transients tickets for bus rides home or to the next stop, and medical and physical relief in the building's doctor and dentist offices. Moving from three buildings where as many as four hundred residents of mixed gender and age at one time shared 50,000 square feet of space, twelve communal showers, one hundred sixteen cafeteria seats during meals, and only 140 real beds, the new mission offered more space and a better quality of existence for those who called the Mission's confines home. The "From Retail to Rescue" building rehabilitation created a state-of-the-art social services industry building that gave the homeless population of Nashville a home in a downtown area that

³⁷ The 2002 Nashville Assessor's office map and appraisal of the property shows a value of 3.3 million dollars. Assessment Map, Metro Planning Department, Parcel ID: 09314029400. Nashville, TN 2002.

³⁸ "Shelter sells prime property to church," *Tennessean*, 27 December, 1999.

³⁹ "New Mission To Offer More Space, Structure," *Tennessean*, 6 February, 2001.

had been largely abandoned at the end of the twentieth century by every other residential population.⁴⁰

B. Architecture

1. Built Environment

The “From Retail to Rescue” rehabilitation was accomplished with relative ease given the original ‘open’ interior concept of the facility. The building’s shell was as solid and strong in 2000 as it had been in 1956, a testament to good design and solid construction.⁴¹ After removing any interior walls and the escalators that anchored the center of the building from top to bottom, the architectural renovation adapted the space of the building to fit the latest trends in architecture for the homeless and to refit the building for the specific needs of a social service Christian ministry. Renovation was faster and cheaper than new building construction, and the large square footage within the building’s three floors allowed the architects to include the comfort and appeal of private bathrooms in transitional apartments, over sixty individual showers on the dormitory floor, recreational game rooms, a workout room, and prayer/quiet meditation rooms on every floor. This design anticipated the ‘best practices’ approach to homeless architecture that initially appeared in academic circles a few years later.⁴²

⁴⁰ The very end of the twentieth century saw the beginning stages of planning and construction of high rise condominiums bringing some Nashville residents back to the city’s center for their living quarters. Most of these buildings were not actually constructed or opened until the earliest years of the twenty-first century.

⁴¹ Missionary Tech Team, Design Development Package, “Phase II-Retail to Rescue, Nashville Rescue Mission, Lafayette Street, Nashville, TN,” scale 1 foot = 1/8 inch (April 10, 1999), in possession of the author.

⁴² On social service industry redesign and renovation of existing buildings in downtown areas where homeless populations congregate see “Renovation for Homeless is Faster Than Building Shelters,”

The first and most bold move of the designers was to add column bay windows to building's exterior walls. The new windows allowed exterior light into the dormitory and apartment units constructed on the second and third floors, as well as at other key positions near entryways and offices. The windows added to the living units were glazed over for privacy and accomplished two purposes with multiple benefits: the addition of light and warmth into a darkened interior and the "humanization" of the facility, i.e. making it a place for humans to live and work rather than a retail shopping destination. The benefits of the windows were added safety at entry points into the building, the sense of human comfort, additional light to help control electricity costs, and added natural



Fig. 12. Nashville Rescue Mission, East Elevation with bay windows. Photograph by the author.

New York Times, 10 September, 1987; "Different Levels of Care; Two Renovations for the Homeless," *New York Times*, 16 July, 1995. For the 'best practices' approach to architecture for the homeless that began to appear in architectural schools and journals as the first decade of the twenty-first century progressed, see especially Sam Davis, *Designing for the Homeless: Architecture That Works*, (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 2004).

warmth to the dormitory facility. They also served a symbolic purpose: the Christian spiritual illustration of allowing light to shine in the darkness signifying the coming of Jesus Christ into the world and transformation of the lives of Christian converts as outlined in the first chapter of John's Gospel in the Christian Bible.⁴³

To the building's façade, designers added a concrete arch with the name "Nashville Rescue Mission." Large eight-foot signage, easily recognized by people approaching the building on foot from the central downtown area or Murfreesboro Pike, with the name and heart-shaped logo of the Rescue Mission replaced the Sears name on both the façade and east elevation of the building. Dignity for an unadorned modernist box building and recognizability by the homeless population are the built environment's external signatures.

Designers treated each of the interior three floors of the building as a separate entity. They segregated one from one another in order to meet the Mission's different needs and ministries, granting access from one floor to the next through a single service elevator in the rear of the building dedicated to staff use and tiny stairwells at either end of each floor. The basement floor was cleared of any interior walls and is reserved for storage of food products, clothing, hygiene products, and other donations to the mission. The first floor is dedicated to meeting the needs of the four hundred transient clients who call the shelter home each evening. It features an entrance lobby, four hundred and twenty beds, sixty shower stalls, a commercial kitchen and dining room with seating for

⁴³ "The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it." Gospel of John 1:5.

300 people, a chapel, and counseling and medical rooms. The first floor also houses the offices of the Travelers Rest program. The office is located at the front of the building easily visible to passersby. The second floor was refitted with 40 transition apartments for clients who enter the Mission's rehabilitation programs. In addition to the apartments, which have private bathrooms, the second floor has eight classrooms with 30 computer work stations. The second floor also houses the Mission's administrative offices, a prayer room, and a workout facility.⁴⁴

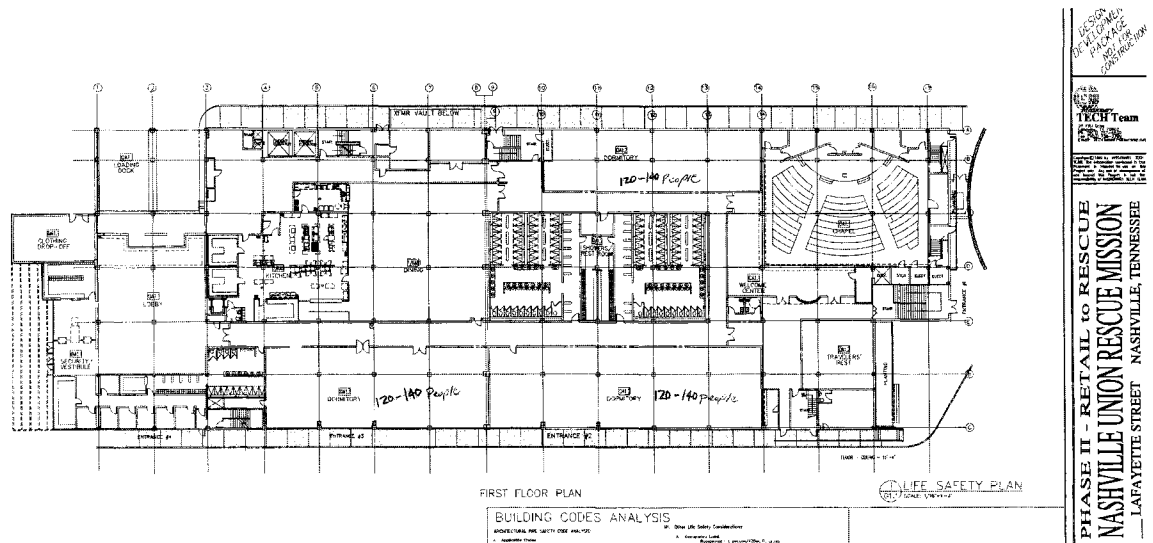


Fig. 13. Nashville Rescue Mission Second Floor Design with chapel and dining room. Missionary Tech Team, Nashville Rescue Mission Design Development Package.

2. Building Culture

The redesign strategy of the Missionary Tech Team had a dual purpose: 1) to create an attractive human living environment and 2) make space where the Protestant Christian ideals of conversion, education, moral rehabilitation, and social prosperity were

⁴⁴ Missionary Tech Team, Design Development Package. In possession of the author.

written into the fabric of the facility. The Protestant ideals of John Calvin's Geneva where all citizens were forced to go to Bible lectures everyday and where the enforced code of moral conduct for citizens was based upon the laws listed in the Old Testament books of Exodus and Leviticus shine through the redesign of the building as much as the idea of providing human comfort to the homeless in the form of couches, game rooms, and window lighting. The culture of the building expressly encourages the morality of good manners and Christian prayer services as well as it clearly meets the basic human needs of hunger, health, and cleanliness.

Architect Sam Davis, who specializes in designing facilities for the homeless, argues that the homeless want buildings worth living in, space that stabilizes their lives, and quarters that do not resemble public institutions like jails.⁴⁵ The Rescue Mission redesign created broad hallways with plenty of lighting and brightly colored walls with encouraging messages painted on them. Game rooms are spacious and open to all residents. Each transitional apartment has its own bathroom for privacy. Vending machines are available for residents to use, something unusual in an environment where stealing is an assumed norm.

The refitting of the entire building as a desirable homeless facility for a Christian ministry with Protestant ideals was the major focal point of the interior redesign. Renovation meant redemption of the Christian variety as much as it reclaimed social space for an underserved social population at such a prominent site in the city's history. A large lighted cross adorns the first floor chapel, which is filled with chairs and

⁴⁵ "The homeless respond to good quarters, comfort, says architect," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, 21 February, 2005.

aisleways all pointing toward the front of the room where the cross, the pulpit and the altars provide a boundary of salvation where seekers can come to pray during worship services. Large banners decorated with crosses announce the name of the different areas and room uses throughout the facility. Scripture verses from the Ten Commandments are painted on the building's sixteen inch square columns reminding the facility's occupants not to take the name of the Lord in vain, steal, bear false witness, nor kill one another.

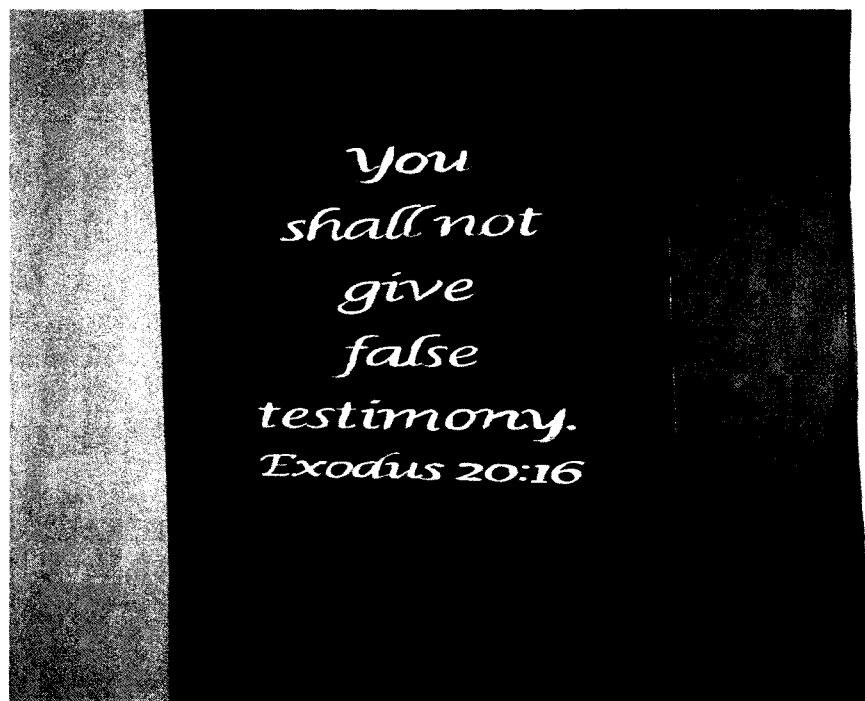


Fig. 14 "You shall not give false testimony." Photograph by the author.

Prayer rooms are found on the occupied floors at either end of the building and prominent bookcases with Christian bibles and reading stations near living quarters. The eight rooms committed to education where bible study, job training, GED preparation, life skills, and group counseling occur, shows the commitment to individual rehabilitation and self-improvement that characterizes the Rescue Mission's mission-driven culture.

The hallway walls outside the classrooms are filled with the photos of former homeless clients of the mission who are now sober or have earned their GED due to the Rescue Mission's programs. The idea that cleanliness is next to godliness accounts for the large amount of space committed to personal hygiene, health, and laundry facilities.

The built environment created an attractive environment designed to make the homeless desire a better existence where cleanliness, personal health, and education were achievable goals inside the walls of the Rescue Mission. This new approach to homeless ministry reflected a growing national trend.⁴⁶ The different approach to homeless architecture and building culture by rehabilitating and upgrading facilities meant a greater push toward the rehabilitation and improvement of individual lives. More and better services in a nicer and more structured environment meant a new kind of homeless culture.

3. Social Exchange

The redesigned environment of the building brought high ideals and high expectation for the social exchange between the homeless population housed at the Rescue Mission and their environment. The hope that better facilities would lead to greater motivation to cease being homeless, give up addictions, or become better educated and so return to a normal non-homeless rehabilitated life was high minded indeed. While it is difficult and perhaps impossible to judge the success or failure of those ideals with less than a decade of results as evidence, some patterns have emerged since the Rescue Mission inhabited the former Sears building in 2001.

⁴⁶ "New Mission To Offer More Space, Structure," *Tennessean*, 6 February, 2001.

First, the Mission is seeing greater success in getting homeless people off the streets and into transitional and then steady housing. The facility's space allowed for more structure and accountability in the six-month program where participants learn routines of study, work, recreation, and faith.⁴⁷ The pictures of successful graduates of the Mission's different programs adorn the hallways of the building as a reminder that success toward a life beyond homelessness is possible.

Second, the Mission's approach of creating better facilities and treatment plans for the homeless has had the unexpected consequence of making the homeless a class of citizens with higher expectations of the services given to them and a greater voice in the conversations concerning their treatment. In short, the homeless have become consumers of their own advancing culture. The empowerment of better facilities and greater recognition and visibility within the broader culture of the city has resulted in the homeless forming their own advocacy group, the Nashville Homeless Power Project, made up almost exclusively of homeless citizens. The group has a website and sends press releases to media outlets to register complaints against perceived mistreatment of the homeless in the city and promote the rights of the homeless.⁴⁸ In January 2008, the Nashville Homeless Power Project sent out a press release accusing the Nashville Rescue Mission of "horrible conditions" for those seeking shelter and treating the homeless "like children." In the ensuing story in the Nashville City Paper, one of the Power Project leaders, Kay Rowe, noted that not all the homeless wanted God, the basis for the entirety

⁴⁷ "Ministries," Nashville Rescue Mission. www.nashvillerescuemission.org/ministries.htm

⁴⁸ The www.homelesspower.org website, viewed on December 17, 2008 reveals that the homeless in Nashville are working to reclaim vacant government-owned houses and are suing a local car wash for minimum wage benefits.

of the Rescue Missions efforts to aid the homeless.⁴⁹ Empowerment and social exchange have been effected by the new approach of the Rescue Mission's built environment and building culture.

4. Building as Symbol

The symbolic meaning of the transformation of the property at Seventh and Drexel from a historic house where many of Nashville's civic elites and boosters created a medieval Roman Catholic educational village to commercial retail flagship store and finally to one of the largest homeless concerns in the southeastern United States meant a reinterpretation of the importance and power of the homeless in Nashville. The very size of the facility and its easily recognized exterior signage signaled a new importance for the building's inhabitants. Its placement in Nashville's built environment at a prominent highway junction and proximity to the interchanges where all six arteries of the Interstate roadways converge in the city, meant more than easy access for the homeless. These factors combined to create a site of power where the homeless began to express a desire to control their environment. Home ownership in America signals the power of property rights and the right to moral self-definition. A home for the homeless in downtown Nashville at Seventh and Drexel acknowledged that the homeless have finally arrived as a permanent part of the city and a growing partner in the city's heritage and influence.

⁴⁹ "Homeless groups spar over approaches to getting people off the street," *Nashville City Paper*, 30 January, 2008.

C. Landscape History

When the original redesign of the property for the Rescue Mission was drawn up, it included a complete landscape overhaul. The former auto service facility on the periphery of the property was sold by the Rescue Mission to a local business. The basic

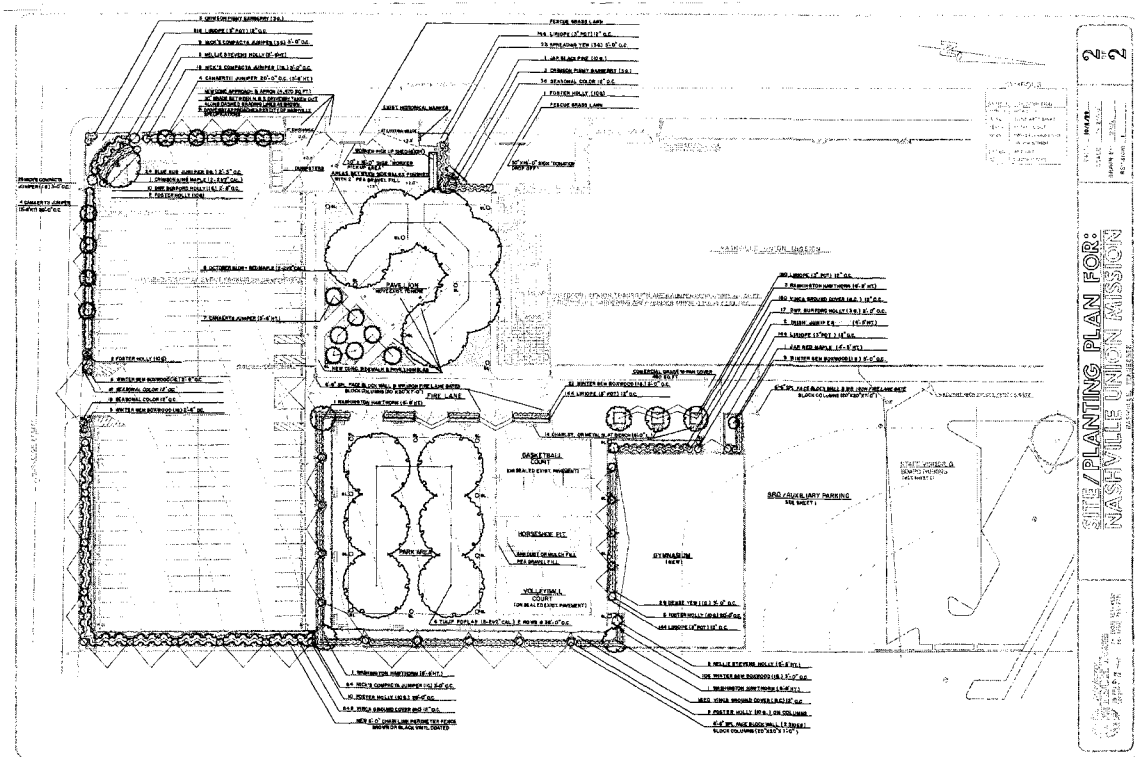


Fig. 15. Nashville Rescue Mission Landscape Redesign. Missionary Tech Team Site/Planting Plan for Nashville Union Mission. In possession of the author.

idea of the redesign was to build new parking lots complete with dozens of varieties of plants and tree lined barriers cordoning off the exterior of the property to outside influences, a gymnasium, outdoor volleyball, horseshoe and basketball courts, and a

covered outdoor pavilion surrounded by brick walls eight feet high.⁵⁰ The Rescue Mission did sell the auto service facility and the eight foot high walls for the outdoor pavilion were built, but landscape redesign plans went no further. The parking lots of the facility have never been repaved nor redesigned, with the Sears signage advertising the letter and number of the parking spaces still hanging from light poles. The result is an odd mix of retail design needs and homeless gathering space. The courtyard at the rear of building is a gated facility and its prison-like presentation is in direct contrast to the humanitarian redesign approach of the building's interior.

D. Summary

A home for the homeless signals the abandonment of the property by one socially idealistic community, the consumer retail wonderland, and the embracing of the property by another socially idealistic community, the homeless mission. The rise of suburban living, a metropolitan government to bring services to those suburbs, newly built highways, and changed shopping patterns meant that the Sears building, like many other retail ventures in the downtown area, was abandoned as its proprietors made their way on the newly built highways to the suburban fringe malls. The new situation signaled a new use for the property at Seventh and Drexel. Just as each inhabitant of the property before it had done, the Nashville Rescue Mission rebuilt and refit the property to suit its needs. Just as each of the other inhabitants had a mission--some to build personal fortunes and civic greatness, some to educate and convert an underserved minority population, some to sell goods and meet consumer needs--so the Rescue Mission lived a mission of social and

⁵⁰ Missionary Tech Team, "Site/Planting Plan For: Nashville Union Mission," scale 20 feet = 1 inch (October 8, 1999), in possession of the author.

religious uplift for the city's homeless population. Just as the built environment influenced and changed the social and cultural lives of the previous owners, so the social service redesign of the building according to the desires of the Rescue Mission created a new and somewhat unexpected social circumstance for the property and its surrounding culture. The homeless finally had a home that fit their place in the downtown landscape.

The history of the address of Seventh and Drexel reveals a restless landscape of cultures competing with one another for the fortunes of the city and the right to express their own ideals and hopes. Visions and hopes built into stone, brick, concrete and asphalt created social opportunities and social exchange and social duress, though not always in that order. The material of each culture articulated a different and hopeful vision for the present and future of the city of Nashville. Together they render a veritable snapshot of the history of the city of Nashville over the last two centuries. What they all mean together is the story of a people whose existence must be interpreted through the lens of the architecture and built environments that created it.

CHAPTER SIX

THE RESTLESS LANDSCAPE OF SEVENTH AND DREXEL: WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM BUILDINGS AND HISTORY

Reading a landscape as restless as that at Seventh and Drexel in Nashville invites an array of historical interpretations. So much evidence arising within the same ground signals many of the usual interpretations that historians offer to create meaning from the events of the past. At one layer, this is simply the old story of disruption and the will to power, perhaps the clean break of human choice or the unavoidable consequence of a more powerful will exerting itself over a weaker one. History done this way is simply the rupture of paradigm shifts that cannot be avoided. One (old) tradition, one culture, one history has gone, another (new one) has replaced it entirely. Other layers proceed from the same story. A history that moves from farm to urbanity to diversity to abandonment proves that history is about the need of humanity to build something only to tear it down and begin again. Other historians will measure this narrative in the traditional Whig terms of hegemonic history. Progress and its inevitable partner Regress, a cycle which only leads back to further progress, keeps the Whig god on the throne. Elites win, non-elites lose. History recycles itself. More humanist historians will see within such a restless landscape a city continually bound by an identity crisis in which said city's citizens cannot make up their collective mind about who they are. Still other historians will attempt to restructure this complexity into a simple "tag-line" approach to historical writing that fits the many layers under a single-headline like "Classical Nashville" or "The Athens of the South."

Such readings are, of course, limited. These interpretations forget what history loves most—the massive fact of continuity, the engagement of difference over time, the competition of different visions of the future in the ongoing game of material construction. As Henry Glassie notes in his *Vernacular Architecture* our need is for a more expansive and inclusive history, a history whose approach to the whole built world is to “reveal shifts in emphasis, tendencies in time that give us some purchase on the slow, tremendous change during which one architectural form was replaced by another.”¹

Glassie emphasizes: “History is ill-served by dichotomizing human beings....”² If we proceed from such a dictum then a different history is possible, a history through which the landscape and its built environments over time tell the story of a people striving, longing, working, building, and living together. We begin to see a more continuous, more expansive history. Writing history as the continuity of built environments, built by people black and white, young and old, Protestant and non-Protestant, modern and non-modern, presents a historical interpretation of another kind. History done architecturally notes interaction, not disruption. It explores and explains the connection of will to circumstance by seeing the landscape as a continuing narrative of competition and debate that joins people and beliefs to things and the land, and presenting all of this together with the fullness of what we can tell about that landscape in the present moment. It allows for each participant within the broader landscape, each building, each builder, each user, to have as full a say as the evidence can support. Such an interpretation explores many layers together, even allowing them to critique their

¹ Glassie, *Vernacular Architecture*, 106-107.

² Glassie, “Tradition,” 396.

shared history when possible. Creating a layered continuity of history within the same landscape will be more true of the past and provide a pathway in place toward the future.

Material culture studies, the study of architecture and built environments, recognizes that humans, buildings, design intentions, and artifacts are bound in a logical sphere of creating and recreating the world in the landscape where they are found. Changes occur and history is made. Glassie argues that instead of reading such changes within the landscape as rupture, we should couple the terms “history” and “tradition” along with the terms “identity,” “communication,” “performance,” “art,” and “culture” and present them for what they are: the interplay of humans and their environments where people create and are creatively affected by buildings, pots, desks, beds, and places of collective identity like Nashville. Seventh and Drexel is a particularly rich place because of the diversity of its residents: the Fosters, the Keiths, Roman Catholic nuns, the Immaculate Mother Academy students, the “help,” the Sears officials, the clerks, the customers, and the homeless.³

If we do history as Glassie suggests and as material culture as a discipline demands, the built environments at the address become the representations of something other than successive changes built upon notions of politics or progress. The built environments are a competition of narratives, a competition of traditions within the same spot, a veritable cornucopia of history observable at the same address over time. Following Glassie, this is what good history does. It narrates the connection of will to circumstance in the materially built environment in which one finds it.

³ Henry Glassie, “On Identity,” 239.

History told architecturally, with its attendant components of built environments, building cultures, social exchanges, symbolic activities, and landscape designs, pushes us to the goal of an expansive and inclusive historic narrative set within the architecture that helped create it. Studying history as the combination of built environments interconnected by place and over time makes history episodic and diachronic at the same time, expanding and not limiting, refusing synchrony and isolation in the pursuit of engagement and the generation of a more inclusive narrative. Such a heteroarchitecture simply means that because of the nature of what a built environment is and because of the array of artifacts that it gathers—plans, material, landscapes, users, lives, identities—it becomes more possible to do history via a long *durée*, i.e. architecture considered in the same place over time.⁴

All of the layers of history at Seventh and Drexel have significance: there is no “golden age” of the address at Seventh and Drexel. The Mile End Estate, for example, was not the golden age of the property, nor a representative of all that is good and right about a white, male, domineering America. That place was a traditioned culture reflecting previous patterns of a people living the tradition of American plantation life brought with them from Europe and then played out in location over time, adapted for a changing urban context. The Fosters and the Keiths acted traditionally to create their own future on that spot. The same could be said of the efforts of Mother Drexel and her followers and students. Roman Catholic educational parish compounds in American cities are a modern continuation of an older tradition of medieval European educational

⁴ This is suggested by Charles Jencks and championed by Henry Urbach following some suggestions in the writings of the French philosopher Michel Foucault on space and architecture. See Henry Urbach, “Writing Architectural Heterotopia,” *The Journal of Architecture* 3 (Winter 1998): 347-354.

villages. Sears blends the entire commercial world together in a big box building of a universe. A rescue mission creates a mini-city dedicated to reforming behavior and religion in the same building Sears used to create shoppers. One gives way to the other as a result of the continuity of communities with their changing traditioned responses to their historically configured circumstances.

So What? This is always the question for any good historical narrative and the restless landscape offers an assortment of responses, all useful and necessary to the observer of the historical landscape. Obviously, this approach reminds us first of all, that vernacular architecture is more a discipline than an approach. It requires holding to the canons of narrativity ala Hayden White but also requires the ability to notice and interpret details of design and human interest. Taken as a discipline these things are never left alone but always gathered into a nesting of location and time.

Vernacular architecture so disciplined requires historians to bring all of their powers to bear in the exercise. Intellectual acumen is necessary. Philosophical understanding a must. The ability to list and codify catalogues of artifacts according to time period, notable attributes, historical precedent, and logical, provable consequence are all required. Historians must be folklorists, material culture specialists, and philosophers all at the same time.

Historians must be honest in noting the privileged nature of the historical enterprise. The artifacts so arranged in sequence and privileged by history reveal a chosen, privileged past, one that notes historic ideals focused on moments when consciously-employed models of cultural history were so obvious and observable that they revealed individuals within their communities as those built environments intended

them to be. Such moments can be a transfiguration of the past, the creation of a better ideal to lead the way to the future, but can also be a momentary flash of potential, both model and deviant. History is open to endless revisions. History and its many products—texts, tours, building preservation, museum exhibits must be material culture done well.

The history of Seventh and Drexel proves that narrating past events as a landscape of continuity provides a more stable history. Over time and in time “buildings stabilize social life. They give structure to social institutions, durability to social networks, persistence to behavior patterns. What we build solidifies society against time and its incessant forces for change.”⁵ Thus, history creates the opportunity to see the fixed contents of built environments for the intentions with which they were created and the actual histories they produced. With continuity and stability as the attendant safeguards buildings and social networks can be represented, viewed, used, discussed, and allowed to tell stories of purposes and negotiations. Architectural history reminds us that buildings do much. They keep the weather from within. They display taste, store stuff, and keep out intruders. They also create social strategies and stratifications which are struggled with, over, and reinterpreted as they reveal to us who we are and what we might be.

Built environments viewed together over time also point toward a better history, an architectural heterotopia which is expansive and inclusive enough to be a meaningful model of the real world. This keeps identities and individualities and buildings, even torn

⁵ Gieryn, “What Buildings Do,” 35.

down or recreated, real and available for the future. History now means the observation of architecture with patterns and intentions and lives as both foci and trajectory.

Common and high styles, elite and common lives treated the same. Put together in the same space means that architecture is artifact--not merely design, though design can be evidence. The built environment as artifact is story and narrative done as episodic and regional at the same time. Architecture as history employs "a series of case studies that illuminate the ways common figures and metaphors cut through and ordered the lived landscape, linking buildings and builders in loose-jointed but unmistakable ways."⁶

Thus joined, such a history provides a heterotopia of architecture, the universe in a village. These episodes or "histories" are put together to form a meaningful model of the real world as it exists at the corner of Seventh and Drexel in Nashville, TN. In order for history to provide an accurate narration of that history, it must attend to the buildings and people who have lived out the history of the address in order to reflect upon each inhabitant of the address but as a part of the whole and the complete history at the same time. This generates what the historian James Deetz calls a "living history of the entire history of the property," one that gives opportunity to see each inhabitant for the important part it played but to also consider the meaning of the whole and beyond the meaning of the address to the broader histories, movements, and social issues it is connected to.

Every effort must be made to create a world so convincing that the visitor comes to it much as an anthropologist would come to a community that he wanted to study. Only then can an historical re-creation on the scale of a whole community be used to effectively convey a sense of cultural

⁶ Dell Upton, *Another City*, 15.

change. All the pieces must fit systematically. A re-created community is far more than a collection of historical houses, each interpreted on its own. The community is a single exhibit and must be treated as such...Done well, such an exhibit has no equal in placing visitors in another time and giving them a sense of the great and complex change that has marked the progress of American culture.⁷

The active role of the land and the landscape record produced by history is also an integral part of vernacular architecture. Landscape reminds us that land is persistent and that it forces actors to creativity in their surroundings. At Seventh and Drexel the landscape has been a fortress against intruders, a garden of beauty and variety drawing lovers together, an academic Christian city on a hill, and a massive box building settled over two underground rivers that require the constant attention of underground pump stations to maintain stability. Landscape also means infrastructure and roadways and the affects of roadways remain largely underexplored. Add landscape as a creating agent as active as humans and buildings and the history of Seventh and Drexel becomes a more intense setting of exchange and competition.

What ties the restless landscape together is the narrative of social exchanges between cultures created within the landscape over time. The different actants in this narrative are certainly representative of the greater city, Nashville, of which it is a part and so the landscape is a microcosm of the city's relationships over time. Elites and non-elites, minorities and non-minorities exist together in this continuous history of exchange. Social exchange creates accessibility and denies accessibility. Religious exchanges show up in abundance in a very religious city as well. Protestants and Roman Catholics deny

⁷ James Deetz, "A Sense of Another World: History Museums and Cultural Change," in *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, ed. Battina Carrbonell (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 380. Deetz applies this idea of doing history to the creation of meaningful, dialogic museum exhibits. I apply this to the creation of the museum exhibit based upon this text in chapter 7.

or attempt to deny one another ownership, Roman Catholics and Protestants come together as an educational force for fifty years bound by race. Social messages of status for homeless people and shoppers newly empowered by a booming economy and automobility in the 1940s and 1950s show up to prove their place in the story. Traditions live themselves out together and are remembered and active even when they are unseen.

What this means is that buildings and built environments are social expressions of the physical lives that humans live. Buildings, like humans, “are multifunctional objects rather than reflective facades. Buildings reflect culture, engage in social relations as monumental signs of social meanings in relation to others, but also in their presentation of separation and containment of the life or culture within the built environment.”⁸

The great demand of history so multi-disciplinary and disciplined is logic itself. Logic is merely the observable patterns of history, but seen in built environments over time those “logics” become cultures bearing traditions and creating history. Material culture as a disciplined way of doing history requires those histories with their own logics—cultures lived traditionally—to be respected as active, creative agents. Material culture studies means things are not only respected for existing, but respected for their ability to create. As such, the historian’s task is to make sense of them as she sees fit, as she understands social exchanges and the recreations of landscapes. This requirement carries with it the moral demand of representing history as it “was” and, just as important, recognizing that representation of each history for what it contributes to the whole. In that presentation is the promise of what history recreates.

⁸ Goss, 392.

History recreates and narrates tradition, a people's creation out of their own past. Tradition implies continuity and strength and shows people, even those whom history names as powerless and less powerful than others to be fully human--resourceful, thoughtful, intentioned, and privileged, arguing from ideal forms for and to ideal forms. The key to doing this well is producing a history that reads material markers for all what they were and for all they are worth. Representing traditions considers them for all they were intended. The way forward, toward an even more useful, artful rendering of history is to carefully consider all the patterns any tradition represents or could represent, particularly because of the givenness of their context as buildings within their particular landscape. As J.B. Jackson notes, "Real American buildings...are required to sell goods, to establish social position, to inspire confidence, to impress, or elevate or excite. The result is a carnival of extravagant taste, an architectural idiom partaking more of advertising or theater or landscaping than pure space."⁹ These ideals are all opportunities for historical interpretation if the evidence of the artifacts presents them as such. Buildings are arrangements of interesting, often contrary forces that give history its meanings.

Historians must read built environments and buildings and interiors and useable trinkets as history but also as art and communication and culture. The key is to do as much history as possible in as many ways at one address as one can imagine. Read the built environment for the consciously constructed, identity-creating traditioned structure that it is. Learn fully the traditions of the past, so that you can recognize and explain

⁹ J.B. Jackson quoted in Horowitz, "Critic of Modern Architecture," 473.

those patterns when they appear in the environment. Remember that “all objects are traditional in the sense that everything is created, however surprisingly, out of precedent,”¹⁰ and then connect the historical dots. Explore the boundaries of what Greek Revival architecture can do among a people. Argue over what kind of citizens are created by the culture of automobility. Explain in artifact and touring guide speech and caption label what an object is but also how it was used and interpreted and how it played out over time in the built environment it was a part of. Tell as much of the story as time will bear.

This means that history is also about identity, a difficult but necessary term to be sure. Taking that Glassie is correct about what history is as an artful aggregate of material from the past assembled for usefulness in the future, identity, while the focus of material culture studies, does not overwhelm the task. Identity thus described becomes merely a “straightforward empirical problem, disguised as a heavy philosophical issue.”¹¹

With the empirical realm as the place where history happens, we can push the envelope to note that history has many uses like producing a text and in the case of this dissertation in an academic program of public history, a museum exhibition as well. The key to a good museum exhibit or a history dissertation based on material culture, is to let the empirical, the artifact carry the weight of interpretation and the presentation of identity. This shows why identity is the center of material culture studies but also shows why it must be clearly shown to be a material construct with a traditioned existence. Time tells the story of how well or how poorly such identities are lived out. Historians in

¹⁰ Glassie, “Tradition,” 405.

¹¹ Glassie, “Identity,” 241.

some sense merely record the empirical evidence with the fullness of its own stories attached to it. Such fullness takes into account construction and deconstructions, arrangement and rearrangement. This does not detract from continuity but rather enlarges it and makes it more useful and meaningful to the greater whole of which it is a part, whether that whole is humanity, a city, a nation, or a debate about value or morality. In his work on materiality, Pinney notes that such an arrangement of material culture envisions a village or city as a republic “in which persons and things exist in mutual self-construction and respect for their mutual dependency.”¹² So history goes beyond rupture and dichotomy toward a better metaphysic of participation and simultaneity.

In the case of the address of Seventh and Drexel considered over the span of two centuries, history must connect the different built environments with their own well-storied traditions and also then connect them to one another. In the case of the point of view of this restless landscape, the interpretation is the social history of Nashville, Tennessee, a competing set of narratives all connected by the space and time they occupy. White gentrification, civil rights, religious devotional practices, consumer consumption, automobility, human nobility all play a part and represent their ideals in their version of the built environment of the address at the time in which they occupied it. Together they create an interpretation of the greater whole, the identity of persons, created and thoughtful, in Nashville, Tennessee in the 20th century.

History continuous and expansive presents a narration of the greater whole that is an intercalation of events and cultures and traditions. Intercalation is an interweaving of

¹² Pinney, 256.

the different episodes within a landscape into a single thread or history. The consequences of viewing history as intercalation are important. It allows for keeping the different episodes of history in the same frame together. This interplay is important when considering history through overarching themes like urbanism or technology and important when considering the many products of history: exhibits, texts, stories, tourism, films, lore, and politics to name a few.

History thus done presents the straightforward empirical evidence of artifacts in the logical and interesting way that those articles of identity were assembled in and over time. The heavy philosophical issues that emerge from the evidence must be artfully challenged and recited: “What does this all mean?” “What is next for downtown Nashvegas?” Is any one history more valuable to the politics of a city than another?” “Should homeless people be employed as extras in music videos?” Such questions must be explored in relation to the material culture that produced and produces them. They must take into account not only the material re-construction of history, but also identity and tradition, the intentions of patterns and forms and built environments, the people they create and produce, and the ways such material reality created a life where individuals found fulfillment and meaning. Even when difficult or unflattering, history should be recreated and displayed to be a meaningful part of the present within which it is even intercalated.

Such history will connect will to circumstance, material built environments to addresses and historic periods and allow that construction with all of its patterned intentions to be its focus. Identity will be presented as the material creation that it is. Tradition, itself an interesting avenue of academic study, will be presented as the

traditioned past of a people living traditionally in their present circumstance. Competing interpretations and narratives and traditions and identities will be allowed voice in a museum exhibit, a display of the power of history to combine the individual and the collective to create the personal, the interesting lives of people who lived meaningfully within their own history while overwhelmingly connected to the continuity that is time.

The history of Seventh and Drexel is a wonderful example of how this understanding of history works. There are interesting lives that are the result of built environments, traditioned people exploring their present traditionally while purveying meaning and choice and even change as a part of their identity. There are buildings whose forms indicate social preferences that change lives and the course of history. There are interesting material creations with identity-connoting powers—things like automobiles, soup kitchens, nun habits, gothic architecture that always points the person and the environment toward “heaven.” The patterns of “folk” and the stories of “lore” are rich with historical continuity (Greek, African, Roman Catholic, American) and visions of the future (Order, Equality, Opportunity) that speak the power of material creations to be bearers of meaning and identity, appealing indicators of history worth telling.

History thus exhibited will be, as Glassie notes, “too complex to contain in any one structure.”¹³ The idea of presenting the restless landscape of Seventh and Drexel will take as its primary aims the creation of this dissertation telling the story and a museum exhibit that represents the several material structures and objects that chartered a society

¹³ Henry Glassie, “The Practice and Purpose of History,” 964.

over time in downtown Nashville, Tennessee. Taken as a whole this history is that of a society with different voices, distinct identities and competing goals and all as revealed on one piece of property over the time period of 1813-2000. The possibilities of other structures of representation remain. Heritage tourism, documentary film, and a popular collection of historic photographs are other options.

What the history of Seventh and Drexel promises arises from the same options as its historical approach. Representation, fullness, an expansive array of artifacts, a meaningful model of the real world are all at hand. The inner logic of a city's own history, troubled and promising, rich and poor, black and white, distinct and still becoming, emerges from this approach to history. There is a logic to this and that logic has a name, Nashville, and an address. It is full of difference and held together by the sameness of its spot in the universe. That logic has its own staid past, but is rich with cultural and political differences. Studying such a past through material culture where agency is given to things as well as people pushes toward a better understanding of what occurred. In championing this way of doing history, the French theorist Bruno Latour noted that studying the built environment will "recognize in a given time and place there will be a link between the practical engagement with materiality and the beliefs and philosophy that emerged at that time."¹⁴ So to revisit the history of Seventh and Drexel is to be made aware of the dreams of the plantation life and style of the 'Old South' homeplace of the Fosters and the highly technical and commercial homeplace of the Keiths that emerged as a model of the philosophy of the 'New South' post the American

¹⁴Bruno Latour, find citation information

Civil War. To stand among the convent and school and parish church during the fifty years that Mother Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament occupied the property along with African American students who, though among the elite of their own community, were discriminated against by a Jim Crow white society and talk about religious faith and education as pathways to self and societal improvement which led to an integrated society becomes a reality. Embodied in built environments which stand together as this address, as a network of simultaneity where relationships, the desire for personhood, for acceptance, for ownership can be explained and explored. Rewriting older narratives and creating new ones allows for the past as well as the present to compete for the dreams and fortunes of the city.

“Clearly, things make people and people who are made by those things go on to make other people...”¹⁵ Material things are a force in history and offer their own promise. The promise of regaining the past is tied to reconnecting to things, of allowing them to speak again their own stories and understandings of what happened and what should have happened. Creating a past where the homeless of the city can talk to the landed, where shoppers can talk about what consumption made of them, where African Americans can express their own opinions about landmark U.S. Supreme Court cases is the goal. Things tell the story as much as people do and each affects and effects the other. The key is exploring the logic, pressing these buildings into philosophical interpretation that shows how these things affected each other and in their interaction

¹⁵ Pinney, 256.

created history. Beyond this, these same things from the past can speak into the present existence of the people whose history they are.

The ambiguous character of material culture is that its mere existence establishes the presence of the past in its present, yet its manipulation, modification and redefinition sanction the transformation of social and political relations. By focusing on the reciprocal relation between (a place) and its immediate environs, it may be possible to illuminate the ways in which long-term and large-scale cultural transformations are generated at the level of interpersonal social action.¹⁶

This interaction is the promise of the larger identity of a society or an urbanity that emerges over time as it discusses politics, social possibilities, and its future.

Such a history also promises surprise. It remains attendant to what Eelco Runia¹⁷ calls presence, those metonymies that remain the landscape and in history awaiting to be discovered. That the history of the landscape at Seventh and Drexel is full of surprises is proof of the power of history to surprise. The emergence of railroads, African American powerfulness in Nashville's Jim Crow era, the decision of Nashville's Roman Catholic diocese to integrate schools as quickly as any sector of American society in 1954, the unrelenting power of automobile commerce in the Sears reconstruction of the property all materialize as surprises. That the homeless would have a home so spacious, a universe of rehabilitation written in stone at the same spot may be the biggest surprise of all. Such surprises are proof of the strength of architectural history which intercalates one thread of culture around the others threads with which it shares history.

The promise of such surprises reinforces that an historic landscape is an intercalation of different patterns and arguments brought together so as to view each one

¹⁶ Julian Thomas, 186.

¹⁷ Runia, "Presence," 1.

with its own patterns, language values, practices and intentions and the whole at once. History then is “convergence without coincidence, conjuncture without concordance, overlapping without assimilation, and union without absorption.”¹⁸ A landscape approach means that the inhabitants of Seventh and Drexel can coexist and cooperate in a historical narrative, a museum exhibit, the minds of the citizens of Nashville without being absolutely identical. Thus cooperating and coexisting they are history, a narrative over time in time and place about cultures and traditions that proceeds “as an open-textured gathering of expanding possibilities.”¹⁹ They give us those things that we as a people and society landed in time need with which to discuss value, change, power, the morality of dominating the land. Such discussions make us a people together, a city more aware of itself, a voice for the past and its grand intentions: technological advancement, home ownership, belonging, philanthropy, charity, intelligence, religiously faithful. Such an inclusive expansive view is our purpose and on a warm Sunday afternoon in August of 1990 in front of a new historical marker at the intersection of two streets of property loaded with all the burden and happiness of their shared past, history happened. Just like that.

So what will be the usefulness of such history in the future? Obviously, it will need to adhere to the demands and rigors of good scholarship thus helping that discipline continue. It will faithfully recreate the stories of the inhabitants of Seventh and Drexel with accuracy as to detail and significance. But it may also do much more.

¹⁸ Upton, *Another City*, 13.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Thus committed to history, it may be able to provoke others to what it hopes to inspire. It may serve as the harbinger of a better society. It may provoke discussion about which identity Nashville really wants or ever had. It might cause interest in the land, the love of a restless town and a searching people. It might help people to refuse the convenient social disconnections of a media-driven reality and instead opt for a more responsible view of history, one that is so fanciful and diverse and historically correct that it inspires them to activism. It might help conceive of ways of building a world where they can live better together as one people with individual identities at the same time. Accept this one fact, to end this dissertation that connects materiality and human will to circumstance in the identity of people who lived together at one address for two hundred years, it just might.

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APPENDIX A

“A RESTLESS LANDSCAPE:
BUILDING NASHVILLE HISTORY AT SEVENTH AND DREXEL”

Museum Exhibit Design Footprint

A. Exhibit Rationale¹

“A Restless Landscape: Building Nashville History at Seventh and Drexel”

museum exhibition recreates an account of the historical identities that have been the built environment of one address in downtown Nashville, TN over the last two centuries. It argues that what is important in that account is material culture and its observable intentions, those observable and arguable identities which are the necessary focus and result of the built environments of the property’s past. The exhibit necessarily attempts to connect the narrative of Nashville history lived out at one address over time to explain a theory of material culture studies, an understanding of tradition, the locating of social and cultural patterns, an argument about the identity of the city of Nashville, and to teach the history of the city in the process.

B. Exhibit Narrative

The histories located within the address of Seventh and Drexel over the last two centuries reflect a restless landscape that mirrored the social, commercial, religious, and cultural currents and changes of the larger city of Nashville and of the nation of which the

¹ Obviously I am referencing here those chronologies and arguments regarding history made in the six chapters of this dissertation. While I recap those arguments herein, I do so for the purpose of the exercise, i.e. that of creating a museum exhibition proposal based upon the research for the dissertation which would normally be presented to prospective museums for consideration or in arenas other than an academic paper. There will be some overlap in presentation between this chapter and the previous chapters which is practically unavoidable given the exercise.

address is merely one part. In 1900, the address was a veritable snapshot of Nashville's history in the nineteenth century and its current fortunes. The property was inhabited by a federalist-styled house called "Mile End," so named because it was built on property that marked the southern end of Nashville proper. By the turn of the twentieth century, Mile End and its site were already rich with the history of the city. The home was built in 1813 by Anthony Foster, one of the original land surveyors who helped establish Nashville and the surrounding Middle Tennessee area. With the growth of the city during the first half of the nineteenth century, the property changed hands at least twice. Sometime during the 1840's, the owner of the property parceled out twenty-five of the site's original thirty-three acres for railroad tracks, businesses, and small working class homes that accompanied the changing landscape of the city, as it rebuilt after the Jacksonian era and prepared for technological industrialization and the coming of the railroad. The house, as well as the rest of Nashville, endured a serious challenge to its industrial plans when its front lawn was used as a military encampment by the Union army during the Northern occupation of the city during the Civil War. Between 1870-1900, Mile End changed hands several times and was home to a series of families who were related and among the elite of the city. With its attendant fences, trees, and abundant gardens, the estate was a visible symbol of Nashville's "New South" identity in the Progressive era.

In 1904, the last of those elite families vacated the property and sold Mile End. The sale of the property again reflected the changing fortunes of the city. The property at Seventh and Drexel became the home of one of the very few parochial schools for African Americans in the South. The white, gentrified "country in the city" home place

that was Mile End became the location of the School for Colored Girls, run by nuns who were members of the Philadelphia-based Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and staffed with Josephite Priests from Baltimore, MD. Philanthropy and an integrated social order arrived in Nashville when the school opened in the fall of 1905, the same year that the Nashville enacted its first official “Jim Crow” laws.

Over time the property was developed by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Nashville and renamed Immaculate Mother Academy. In the process of that development, Mile End was torn down to make way for a new school and convent on the property, which reflected the sensibility of the order’s founder, Mother Katharine Drexel. The new buildings were grand yet solid reminders of the educational culture of the Middle Ages, with towers on either end and Renaissance and Italianate influences that mirrored the manor halls and schools of European village life. A small, but clearly gothic church, Holy Family, was constructed on the property in 1919 and the medieval educational village effect was complete.

Over time the built environment accomplished its goals of higher learning combined with Christian piety, and the property became a model school based on the scholastic culture of the medieval Roman Catholic monastic orders. The school was eventually opened to men and the curriculum changed from an industrial arts emphasis to a college preparatory scheme. In 1942, Immaculate Mother Academy achieved status as Tennessee’s first state-accredited parochial academy for African Americans.

The construction of the Dixie Highway, completed in 1926, whose Nashville leg ran along the northern edge of the property, brought automobility and progress to Nashville. People ventured out and tested the waters of personal independence, self-

determination, and capitalist buying power. With increasing participation across boundary lines of rural/urban communities, interstate highways, commerce, and opportunity, Nashville changed again.

Nashville also changed during the 1940s and 1950s as the civil rights movement became part of the fabric of life in the downtown area. When the United States Supreme Court ordered the desegregation of American schools in 1954, the Roman Catholic Diocese in Nashville was one of the first school systems in the country to comply. It combined the students of Immaculate Mother Academy into the population of both Cathedral and Father Ryan High Schools and Mother Drexel's school was closed.

Since the property was no longer needed by the church, it was sold again and the built environment was reconfigured for the new owners, Sears, Roebuck and Co., who looked both ways crossing the street of the Dixie Highway, and saw commercial success just around the bend. Sears tore down the academic village and built its southeastern flagship store on the property to accommodate the automobile traffic of the American consumer public. The store was a modern commercial wonderland, setting one rectangular cube on top of another. A complete automobile service center complimented the property and sat adjacent to the store's parking lot with 700 spaces. The clear straight lines of the building were adorned with large and inviting red and white signage easily recognized by passing motorists.

Sears stayed almost forty years. The building was transformed several times from shopping center to warehouse outlet to shipping center, a series of moves that reflected the relocation of shopping centers to strip malls and mega-malls on the borders of the

city. Sears eventually followed its automobile public out to the malls and suburbs where the new infrastructure traffic patterns of U.S. interstate construction had taken it.

As its newly built roadways led shoppers and homeowners to the ever-increasing suburbs on Nashville's fringes, the central business district area was largely abandoned by retail ventures and residences. The disenfranchised and homeless citizens of the city were left as the most visible residents of the downtown area. In 2001, the modern commercial wonderland that had been Sears' flagship store became home to the Nashville Rescue Mission. The mission reconfigured the interior retail space to meet the needs of a disenfranchised population. Championing their cause with the motto "From Retail to Rescue," the Rescue Mission replaced plate glass cabinets and outdoor equipment showcases with a 400 seat chapel, 550 beds for transient and transitional residents, recreation areas, a job-training center, and a dining room as large as any in the city proper. The adaptive reuse structure is a model of urban social service design.

C. Exhibiting Material Culture Studies

These compelling patterns of history may be most effectively interpreted through a museum exhibit, one that reaches a large audience and allows for public interaction. The purpose of this appendix is to conceptualize and outline a model exhibit that will be a material representation of the built environments that have occupied the address of Seventh and Drexel Streets in downtown Nashville over the course of its two centuries of existence. Capitalizing on re-creations of the built environments of the address over

time, it attempts to use architectural history to produce a “meaningful model of the real world.”²

D. Exhibit Assumptions and Philosophy

As with any work of history, it is important to admit biases at the outset. The proposed exhibit titled, “*A Restless Landscape*,” would interpret the history of the site and of Nashville by creating historical “pictures” of the different built environments that inhabited the property. Taken together these different pictures provide the basis for the exhibit. As anthropologist James Deetz notes,

The past is ever subject to interpretation, and we will never be able to recreate it completely, with all its subtleties and textures, or to know the past as a participant in it might have done. It is the task of the museum to choose the aspects of an earlier time that are worthy of interpretation and to devise effective methods to make that interpretation work.³

This exhibit chooses those built environments that make up the history of Seventh and Drexel and those people and cultures that inhabited them in order to present the history of the site.

Privileged discourses create precedents and become “history.” History relents to observable patterns in materials and those materials—selves, signs, lines, houses, pictures, broken pottery, rituals—become the mapping of something that holds them together called identity. Identity happens and it happens consciously through the creative engagement of humans with the world and the creative engagement of things with the humans that create them. Identity is the privilege of living in a material culture, being a

² Jon Goss, quoting the urban historian Richard Ford, notes that it is the goal of the new architectural history with its attending studies of cultural geography, landscape theory, urban studies, and the like to posit a “meaningful model of the real world,” Goss, 402.

³ James Deetz, 375.

part of a built environment with its intentions and interests that stand as a monument to the past but also as inspiration for the future.

“History is not the past; it is an artful assembly of materials from the past, designed for usefulness in the future.”⁴ With these words folklorist Henry Glassie invites criticism to be sure, but he also invites something else. He invites an exploration into the great vastness that is the glory of our options in doing historical work. With his definition in view, we can see history as the obvious, the self-evident accountings of past events whatever their form, but we can also see much more. If history is what Glassie suggests, then museum exhibitions in particular are fit for such a task. They impinge on the artful assemblies from and of the past and represent them in and for the present and future in an exhibit showcase of identity.

Re-presenting identity is one of the purposes of any effective museum exhibit. Public history best serves its public when it connects the role of creative intention to circumstance in the built environments we call our lives, i.e. the purpose of material culture studies as history is to express through historical observation that which can only be called identity. What we call the historical work we do, regardless of the forms we press it into—text, picture, brick, interpretation, habit, museum exhibit--is the description of traditioned peoples living in a landscape of semio-mantic construction designed to re-create and re-present them as material persons with meaningful lives.⁵

⁴ Henry Glassie, “Tradition,” 395.

⁵ By using the term meaningful, I mean to describe what a thing is in its observation, a thing which evokes both a pictured and a storied existence at the same time. Further, meaningful is here used to preserve the thing as it is, e.g. a Sears shopping building or a Rescue Mission for homeless relief, and not describe it as a number of other things. In doing this I am attempting to resist the awful dichotomy that

In the case of the *Restless Landscape* exhibit, history is the artful recitation of this (re)creation of meaning over time at one address that brings fieldwork into the exhibition arena. The different inhabitants of the address over time are each attendant to Glassie's definition. Taken together they provide clues to even broader historical patterns, including that of a structured and ordered society, the desire for personhood, and certainly the creation and recreation of Nashville as it has presented itself.

The proposed *Restless Landscape* exhibit storyline has a depth that deserves the attention of history, the narration of a depth of humanity in the world it has made and that has made it. That it happened at all and that it happened the way it did on the small plot of land that it did, is a story worth recounting. There is more here, also, than the merely predictable patterns of hegemonic progress, a connected and expected series of events dictated by political action and infrastructure (re)construction, though those forces did play a part in its twentieth century history. What the history of this address reflects is an interesting exchange between competing ideological forces and actors, agents who built and rebuilt history in ways that changed things and often anticipated change, instead of merely reacting to it. It includes a variety of opportunities to observe history as the competition of cultures over time at one address, each with its own intentions, and each deserving of study.

On one level, the story is told as a simple and quite obvious tale. Society changes, demands consume, buildings fall down, people separate, and needs are met according to individual social preferences. On another level the exhibit story is about the

produces poor history by creating demonization (good vs. evil) and also disconnected-ness (the whole is the sum of its parts or even the whole is greater than the sum of its parts) inside a subject which makes it something other than what it observably is.

struggle for progress in different eras of American history. Ever purposeful, history is just one apex after another, progress built on top of progress, always leading us into a better and brighter tomorrow. On another level still, the story line is about the desire for personhood. Given the insight of Glassie and Deetz, there is much more than all of this, too.

What this recounting of built environments over time suggests is that history done as material culture regards both its product and its method as something conscious rather than unconscious. Built environments are the product of intelligence and design. Because of the multiple occupants of the address over time, the property at Seventh and Drexel Streets in Nashville is the scene of competing cultures and identities written into stone rather than simple reactions to felt needs or nostalgia. Material culture studies regard humans and their creations as agents who act and allow themselves to be acted upon. Greek Revival houses and those who build them have intentions for the world. Those who create parking lots and the asphalt and brick and glass cases that cover them attempt to create a reality of desired ends. That more than one scenario like this can occur in the same place over time could suggest history as mere constructions of power or the sheer chaos of random chance, but if Glassie is right, and I believe he is, then perhaps such “histories” suggest something more.

These “histories” put together form as a meaningful model of the real world as it exists at the corner of Seventh and Drexel in Nashville, Tennessee. The exhibit potentially recreates an accurate reflection of the buildings and people who have lived out the history of the address in order to offer visitors the opportunity to reflect upon each inhabitant of the address, but as a part of the whole and the complete history at the same

time. The effect will generate a living history of the entire life of the property, one that gives opportunity to see each inhabitant for the important part it played but to also consider the meaning of the whole and beyond the meaning of the address to the broader histories, movements, and social issues to which it connects. Changes are presented within the broader landscape of the property and the city of which it is a part. This allows visitors to sense how interesting and complex each culture was and how the changes within the environment mark the movements within American history over the last two decades. Anthropologist James Deetz notes the potential value of such an exhibit:

Every effort must be made to create a world so convincing that the visitor comes to it much as an anthropologist would come to a community that he wanted to study. Only then can an historical re-creation on the scale of a whole community be used to effectively convey a sense of cultural change. All the pieces must fit systematically. A re-created community is far more than a collection of historical houses, each interpreted on its own. The community is a single exhibit and must be treated as such...Done well, such an exhibit has no equal in placing visitors in another time and giving them a sense of the great and complex change that has marked the progress of American culture.⁶

Material culture as a discipline of museum exhibition is the foundation of our interpretation of the history of Seventh and Drexel. The built environments at the address become the representations of something other than successive changes built upon notions of politics or progress. The built environments may be pictured as a competition of narratives, a competition of traditions within the same spot, a veritable cornucopia of history observable at the same address over time.

⁶ Deetz, 380.

This approach underscores that there is no “golden age” of the address at Seventh and Drexel. For example, Mile End was not the golden age of the property, nor a representative of all that is good and right about (white, male, domineering) America. It was a traditioned creation from previous patterns of a people living the tradition of American plantation life as that played out in its location over time. It was a people acting traditionally to create their own future on that spot. The same idea of patterning the built environment from previous cultural and social forms of life could be said of the efforts of Mother Drexel, Sears, and the Rescue Mission. One gives way to the other as a result of the continuity of communities with their changing traditioned responses to their historically configured circumstances.

This design rationale and philosophy to the *Restless Landscape* exhibit recognizes and frees us from the terrible temptation to reading such a variety of landscapes constructed one after the other on the same ground as disruption, perhaps the clean break of human choice or the unavoidable consequence of a more powerful will exerting itself over a weaker one. One (old) tradition, one culture, one history has gone; another (new one) has replaced it entirely. Such a reading forgets what history loves most—the massive fact of continuity, the engagement of difference over time and the competition of different visions of the future in the ongoing game of material construction.

As Glassie notes, “History is ill-served by dichotomizing human beings....”⁷ Museum exhibits often focus on one place or picture from within history. Glassie argues that instead of reading changes in that landscape as rupture, we should read them as

⁷ Glassie, “Tradition,” 396.

continuity and couple the terms history and tradition with the terms identity, communication, performance, art and culture. In this proposed museum exhibit such a focus leads to the interplay of the individual (creative buildings, pots, desks, beds made by people) with the collective (Nashville, The Fosters, Roman Catholic, Sears, Rescue Mission, no matter the function) that creates the personal with all of the intentions and desires that those recountable, observable historic materially-designated realities represent.⁸

The property at Seventh and Drexel provides a wonderful opportunity to do history materially by connecting historical people with their own stories in the intentionally patterned ways that they told them with all of their ramifications, even those that surprised their own creators. Locating these patterns is essential to doing a museum exhibit as material cultural recreation. Historians must recognize the physical past and then read from those trinkets and artifacts the artful patterns that are pressed into communication and culture.

The key to doing as much history as possible in as many ways at one address is to recognize and explain social and cultural patterns when they appear in an environment and to always remember that “all objects are traditional in the sense that everything is created, however surprisingly, out of precedent,”⁹ and then connect the historical dots. Explore the boundaries of what Greek revival architecture can do among a people. Argue over what kinds of citizens are created by the culture of automobility. Explain in artifact

⁸ Glassie, “On Identity,” 239.

⁹ Glassie, “Tradition,” p. 405.

and caption label what an object is, but also how it was used and interpreted and how it played out over time in its built environment.

This makes creating a museum exhibit particularly challenging and means that the curator/creator must bring all of her powers to bear in the exercise. Intellectual acumen is necessary. Philosophical understanding is a must. The ability to list and codify catalogues of artifacts according to time period, notable attributes, historical precedent, and logical, provable consequence is required. The curator must be a folklorist, a material culture specialist and historian all at the same time. The curator must be honest in noting the privileged nature of the historical enterprise. The displayed artifacts are those that reveal a chosen, privileged past, one that notes historic ideals focused on moments when consciously employed models of cultural history were so obvious and observable that they revealed individuals within their communities as those built environments intended them to be. Such moments can be a transfiguration of the past, the creation of a better ideal to lead the way to the future, but they can also be a momentary flash of potential, both model and deviant. History is open to endless revisions. A museum exhibit, material culture done well, is a revision of the built past that brings to light the identity as it makes sense to the historian doing the work. Read the built environment for the consciously constructed, identity-creating structure that it is.

What is the role of identity in the proposed exhibit? Identity can be a “straightforward empirical problem, disguised as a heavy philosophical issue.”¹⁰ The key to an effective museum exhibit based on material culture, is to let the empirical, the

¹⁰ Glassie, “On Identity,” p. 241.

artifact carry the weight of interpretation and the presentation of identity. The proposed exhibit will present the straightforward empirical evidence in the logical and interesting way reflecting how those articles of identity were assembled in and over time.

The history of Seventh and Drexel embraces the interesting lives that are the result of built environments, traditioned people exploring their present traditionally while purveying meaning and choice and even change as a part of their identity. It embraces buildings whose forms indicate social preferences that change lives and the course of history. It embraces interesting material creations with identity-shaping powers—things like automobiles, soup kitchens, nun habits, gothic architecture that always points the person and the environment toward “heaven.” It reflects the patterns of “folk” and the stories of “lore” that are rich with historical continuity and also connected to visions of the future that speak to the power of material creations to be bearers of meaning and identity, appealing indicators of history worth telling.

The future value of the exhibit is grounded in good historical scholarship that faithfully recreates the stories of the inhabitants of Seventh and Drexel with accuracy as to detail and significance. The exhibit will teach and interpret for visitors certain information, substance, and ideals as related to the subjects of the exhibit: Nashville history, architectural history, race relations, the social patterning of society, the history of the building and infrastructure history in Nashville and America, certain themes of Southern history and American history.

Committed to representing history materially and as completely as possible, such an exhibit may be able to do what others like it aspire to. It may serve as the model of what a better, more-inclusive society would look like. It may provoke discussion about

which identity Nashville really wants or ever had. It might cause interest in the land, the love of a restless town and a searching people. It might help people to refuse the convenient social disconnections of a media-driven reality and instead opt for a more responsible view of history, one that is so fanciful and diverse and historically correct that it inspires them to activism. It might help them to conceive of ways of building a world where they can live better together as one people, with individual identities at the same time.

E. Exhibit Development and Planning

Exhibit development will follow the project model in David Dean's *Museum Exhibit*.¹¹ Using his sequential timeline project model, the project will proceed through the Conceptual Phase (idea gathering) to the Development Phase (planning/design) then to the Production Phase (fabrication and installation) to the Functional Phase (operational then terminal stages) to the Assessment Phase (evaluation stage then an idea gathering stage for any future exhibits that may be considered). As the recommended exhibit will illustrate, a number of avenues are pursued to gather research and artifacts, test audience expectations, and create advisory teams with input into the design of the exhibit, particularly to allow for discussions about socially and culturally sensitive issues, like race relations and respecting underserved people groups in the population like the homeless. Due to the sensitive nature of some of the subject matter it is vital that the planning stage be worked with the maximum level of community participation and

¹¹ David Dean, *Museum Exhibition: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 1996), 9-18.

assessment. Perceived lack of sensitivity or exclusion from the planning process by any group within the community could weaken the exhibit.

Ideally, the Development Phase will allow for two stages covering a one year period. The first is a planning stage that will occur over a six month period during which a design team/advisory board of five-ten people will be created to assist with assessment and advice of exhibit conception. Membership will be drawn from consultants, the Tennessee museum community, local educators and citizen's advisory groups. This group will help in doing initial assessment of the exhibit as it relates to audience expectations, educational curriculum collaborations, and visitor experiences. Suggestions will be considered and changes implemented to reach the desired goals of the exhibit as stated in the exhibit project design rationale. Second, a Design Stage for the next six months that combines research, expertise, and input gathered during the planning stage into a complete exhibit footprint/design. The footprint will include realistic drawings for each exhibit area, computer-generated visual designs where possible, the written text for all labels, complete artifact lists, potential interactives, and fabrication and installation instructions.

The Production/Fabrication stage can be done in six months, whether the fabrication takes place "in-house" at the museum where the exhibition will take place with the assistance of local carpenters, builders, sign-makers, textile experts, and curator, or is bid in latch-key fashion to a museum fabrication company. Almost certainly, some fabrication will be contracted with outside firms, particularly for banners and perhaps some proposed audio-visual elements of the exhibit design. Fabrication will follow the plans for each exhibit group/section and each group/section will proceed as an

"individual project" with designs, build plans, and assessment tools to insure that the exhibit pieces are meeting the design intentions and specifications. Treating each group as a mini-exhibit insures that details are addressed fully and allows collaboration and shared responsibility between curator, fabricators, and design advisory team. If volunteer assistance is used, curatorial oversight and effective plans will be at a premium in the fabrication process. The Installation/Opening/Assessment (Initial-through Completion) will be completed in concert with the museum where the exhibition is displayed and will develop visitor survey/satisfaction instruments to be administered from the beginning to the end.

F. Key Design Elements

Following the approach outline in Dean's *Museum Exhibition*, the proposed museum exhibit titled, "*A Restless Landscape: Building Nashville History at Seventh and Drexel*," will incorporate the following key design elements¹²:

Value: Because of the serious and sensitive nature of the subject matter, exhibit sections will begin with darker colors on their edges and moving toward their centers incorporate lighter shades of the same color. The abrupt change from one dark color to the next as the visitors move from one exhibit section to the next will create a sense of historical boundary between sections. It also allows for the recognition of the individual importance of the history of each section. Lighting that spots specific visuals and allows for some shadows will also help order the value of the exhibit.

¹² Dean, 32-66.

Color: Again to fit the subject matter, background colors will be darker and deeper than normal in each section to begin with and then move to lighter shades of the same color within each section. Blue for Mile End, Maroon for Immaculate Mother, Green for Sears, Yellow for the Rescue Mission, Grays for the Dixie Highway, Browns and Sepia tones for Nashville: Greatest Negro Educational Center In the World, Orange to Beige for How Buildings Learn. Labels in each section will be adapted to this color scheme and use black or white text where appropriate.

Textures: Textures will be kept smooth throughout the exhibit.

Exhibit Sections: Each section will be dedicated to a re-creation of different built environments of the property. These re-creations will carry the greatest weight in presenting the story to visitors. Balance in telling the story will be achieved by a lively interchange between those presentations and artifacts, labels, audio-visuals, historic photographs, historic text representations, documentary films, and statues. Visuals and artifacts will be laid out within each section set in circular patterns, often interlocking, that suggest that each is a self-contained entity, set within a symmetric pattern. The effect of this patterning is to help the visitor see each section as having its own identity within an intentionally built environment of material culture that centered on particular models or goals as it was put together.

The line structure of circular arrangement of visuals encapsulated with the square or rectangular setting of the walls of the exhibit will captivate the design of each group. Linear visuals will dominate the segues between sections with long straight lines in exhibits in order to highlight the difference/changes as the property changed hands through the centuries. These highlights will also push visitors to consider broader issues

addressed in the exhibit, like race relations or how buildings are shaped and in turn re-shaped by the cultures and people who inhabit them.

The shapes of hard-edged squares and rectangles, oval and square photographs, and the rounded portal archway of the Nashville Rescue Mission will dominate the exhibit.

Overhead banners will be hung from the ceiling of the exhibit for two purposes: First, to announce the big idea/title of the exhibit itself and the titles of the different sections; Second, several of the exhibit photographs, particularly biopic photographs of subjects like Samuel Keith, Mother Drexel, and homeless citizens will be printed on sheer material to create a "ghost-like" effect through which those subjects will be present throughout the exhibit. Once a logo for the exhibit is decided upon, a four-panel vinyl banner with logo and major exhibit sections will be developed to hang on the exterior of the museum to advertise the exhibit.

Labels: Labels will follow the simple instructions from Beverly Serrel's *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*.¹³ Labels will be divided into groups for exhibition titles, introductory labels, group labels, and caption labels.¹⁴ Perpetua font has been chosen to take something of the sharpest edge off of the visual text in the normal Times New Roman, thus allowing for a very different reading experience than one gets from more traditional sharp-edged fonts. The effect is that the visual words will work to soften

¹³ Beverly Serrel, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*. (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1996).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

their reception for the visitors and encourage thoughtful participation in the exhibit and the historical questions it presents as well as the reception of information.

Visitor Flow: A free flow of visitor traffic is suggested for design purposes. The exhibit ideally inhabits 2000 square feet of space. Floor layout is based on the idea of the sensitive nature of presenting historic subjects together and allows enough room for each subject to receive critical consideration. The square footage allocated to each theme/section is fairly equal in number, save in the exception of the Immaculate Mother auditorium where a documentary film tracing the entire history of the address of Seventh and Drexel will be shown. The design suggests a pattern of visitor flow that allows a "free choice" approach. Visitors may move to any section or panel in the room as they wish or be directed by visuals along the Dixie Highway section in the center of the room to sections of interest or even chronological order. This plan assumes fairly equal space for each section of the exhibit and allows visitors to choose their own experience.

G. Exhibit Footprint Description

The footprint for *A Restless Landscape: Building Nashville History at Seventh and Drexel* museum exhibition brings the universe of Nashville history into a re-creation of the local built environments of the site and its place in the Nashville landscape. The exhibit is designed for a big-box room exhibit that allows visitors to travel through two hundred years of history. The exhibit has ten sections, each described below, which together run the course of the history of the property. The nature of the exhibit footprint brings up questions for visitors to consider as they interact with the presentation. The questions of race relations and civil rights, the value of commercial success over/against the needs of unsuccessful and underserved people groups, the need to regulate buildings

in the urban environment, urban planning to meet human needs, how humans adapt their environments to meet their needs, and the ways in which humans are formed and reformed by the agency of the physical environments in which they live and work.

Each section of the exhibit tells an integral part of the story. Section 1 centers the exhibit around the Tennessee state historic marker, which is still displayed on the property, and whose unveiling brought the inhabitants of the address together for an historic instant in the late twentieth century. This event is recreated in statuary and memorial and text and is designed to introduce the exhibit and push visitors toward the different exhibit sections for further exploration. Sections 2, 3, 5, 7, and 8 tell the stories of the different inhabitants of the property over time—Mile End house, Immaculate Mother Academy, Sears, and the Nashville Rescue Mission--and recreate the built environments of those buildings as the representative agents through which the history of the property and the ideals of its builders occurred. Each re-creation is detailed according to the record of the historical descriptions and details of each built environment. It features interactives, e.g. documentary films, as well as labels interpreting those histories. Sections 4, 6, 9, and 10, covering the role of building adaptation and reuse in society and individual existence, the effects of infrastructure and road building, Nashville's African American history, and the importance of automobile culture in twentieth century United States history are each dedicated to those broader cultural movements and social currents with which the built environment of Seventh and Drexel interpreted, shaped, and interacted.

H. Exhibit Plan

Introduction:

Section 1. Immaculate Mother School Historic Marker

Title/Big Idea: *A Restless Landscape*: Building Nashville History at Seventh and Drexel Streets

Description: This section anchors and centers the exhibit around the Tennessee historic marker honoring Immaculate Mother Academy erected in August of 1990. A reproduction of the marker, placed at the mid-point of a floor graphic that mimics a two-lane highway representing the Dixie Highway, is surrounded in an intimate circle of statues of those who inhabited the property over the duration of the history of Nashville: Samuel Keith, Mother Drexel, African-American parochial school children in uniforms, Sears store clerks, and homeless citizens of Nashville all gazing thoughtfully toward the marker. A banner with the exhibit title will hang directly above the marker facing the exhibit's entry. Two introductory labels will be written on panels anchored to the floor graphic on either sides of the marker re-creating the scene of 12 August 1990 when the history of Nashville gathered together for an historic instant around it. The two-sided labels will use text from newspaper stories recreating the event. The labels will also include accurate descriptions of the built environments and inhabitants of each of the four built environments connecting those building cultures to the broader social and cultural movements.

Label Examples:

Introductory Label 1:

12 August 1990—On a sultry Sunday afternoon, the history of Nashville gathered on this spot. The group was there to witness the unveiling of the new Tennessee Historical Marker at the corner of Seventh and Drexel streets that remembered Immaculate Mother's Academy. Long gone from the address and the memory of most of Nashville, this important piece of Nashville's history was finally getting its due. In the crowd were dignitaries of state representing Nashville's distinguished citizenry, representatives from the Catholic Diocese of Nashville, Alumnae/i from the school, managers from Sears and Roebuck who had inhabited the property with their southern flagship store since 1957, and interested folks from the neighborhood—a mixture of businesses, social agencies and the city's disenfranchised and homeless population. What those gathered for the unveiling of the marker didn't know was that the Sears and Roebuck store immediately to their east would be closed for good almost one year to the day in 1991. Ten years hence, those homeless and disenfranchised would take their place within the walls of its very spacious 170,000 square foot building.

Introductory Label 2: The four inhabitants of the address at Seventh and Drexel in downtown Nashville, TN—Mile End House, Immaculate Mother Academy and Holy Family Parish, Sears, Roebuck and Co., and the Nashville Rescue Mission—during the twentieth century represent more than just the changing owners of a piece of property over time. They represent the fortunes and fate of the city as it recovered from the Reconstruction era and attempted to keep up with the progresses and turns that was the history of Nashville in from 1900-2000. The patterns of the buildings tell the story of the citizens of Nashville who created their worlds with hopes and dreams, seeking acceptance and a meaningful life for themselves and the city.

d. Artifact List: *Nashville Banner* and *Tennessean* stories about the erection of the historic marker, Immaculate Mother Academy Tennessee Historic Marker, statues of inhabitants, historic photos of Mile End, Samuel Keith, Mother Drexel, Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament nuns, Immaculate Mother Academy, Sears, Nashville Rescue Mission, newspaper and magazine stories and advertisements

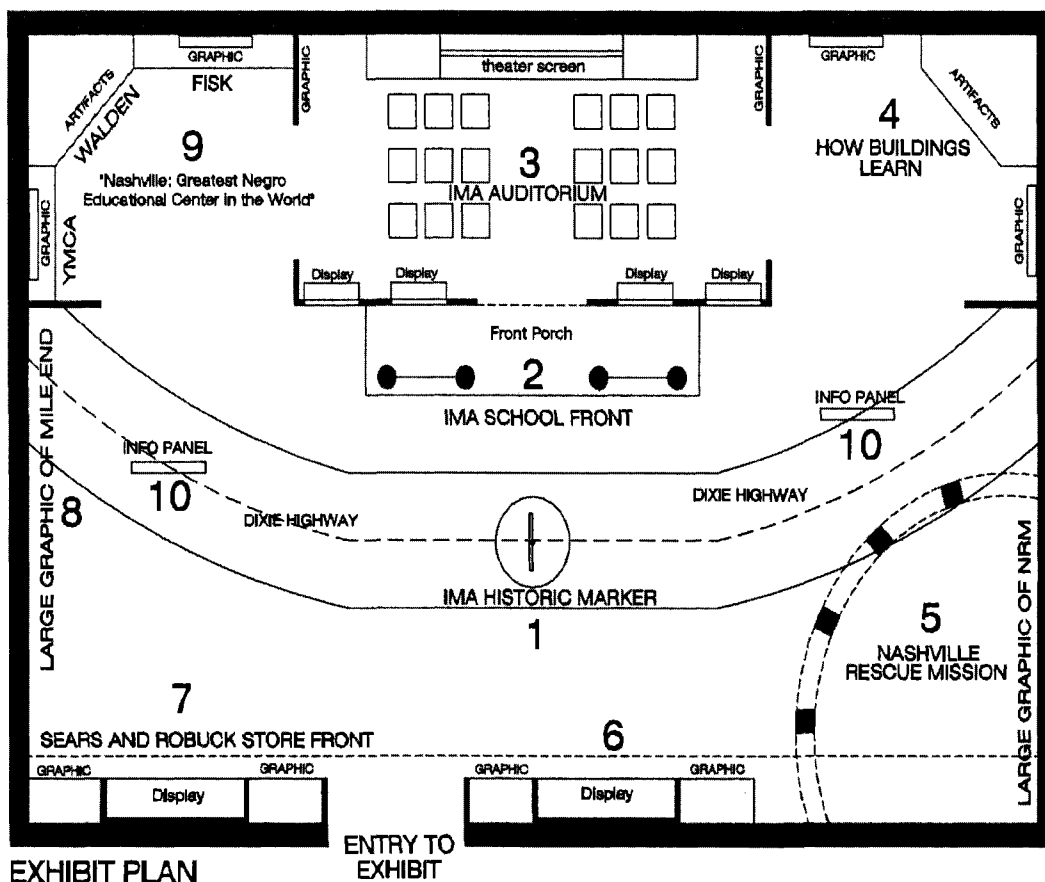


Fig. 16. “A Restless Landscape” Exhibit Floorplan. Commissioned by the author.

Section 2. Immaculate Mother School Front

Title/Big Idea: From Historic Home to School House:

Immaculate Mother Academy Builds a Medieval Academic Village in Nashville

Description: This section re-creates the front of Mile End house and shows the history of the Immaculate Mother Academy in the building’s windows. This re-creation is a key piece in teaching visitors to think about buildings, history, and identity in the fluid fashion of the exhibit. This approach allows visitors to peer into the school’s windows and see the interaction between historical eras and agents by viewing African American students and the white nuns who taught them, at work in the home/school building over

time, by using historic photographs from the different eras of the school's history, 1905-1954. One window will be dedicated to telling the story of the SBS order and its founder, Mother Drexel, who spent her inherited fortune building Roman Catholic parochial schools in African and Native American communities throughout the United States. Elevating the visitors to the porch front, ca. one foot above ground level, creates a point for reflection on the entire exhibit. An exhibit title banner will be hung above the school, and two introductory labels positioned on either side of the porch doorway. The first will tell the story of the history of the school. The second will describe the re-creation of the property by the SBS, first by an adaptive reuse of Mile End as both school and convent and then by the building of the medieval educational village model community on the property with separate Italianate and Gothic structures: a convent for spiritual devotion, a school for religious and educational instruction, and eventually Holy Family Church with a complete program of religious services and formation classes. Further, the doorway into the school serves as a 'natural' segue into Section 3, the Immaculate Mother Academy Auditorium.

Label Examples:

Caption Label: Title: Immaculate Mother Academy classroom, ca. 1945.
Text: The school became the first accredited private high school for African Americans in the early 1940s.

Introductory Label: Title: Immaculate Mother Academy. Text: Immaculate Mother Academy served Nashville's African American community from 1905-1954. The school was originally conceived as an industrial arts school to train women to be domestics in Nashville's elite white elite households, often the only jobs available to them. Over time the school changed focus, became co-educational, and included a college preparatory course of instruction, sending many of its students to Drexel University in New Orleans.



Fig. 17. Mile End/Immaculate Mother Exhibit Front. Commissioned by author.

Artifact List: historic photos of Immaculate Mother Academy classrooms, historic photos of Mother Drexel and SBS nuns in Nashville, Mother Drexel's shoes from the SBS archives in Philadelphia, school textbooks, yearbooks, graduation exercise and school play programs, newspaper and magazine articles telling the story of Immaculate Mother Academy, Mother Drexel and the SBS

Section 3. Immaculate Mother School Auditorium

Title/Big Idea: Viewing Nashville's Restless Landscape

Description: Section 3, re-creating the Immaculate Mother Academy three hundred seat auditorium writ small, a setting for school and community programs which was known as

one of the finest educational and entertainment venues in the city, from an historic photograph, serves two purposes: First, it presents an intimate and detailed sketch of the ‘interior’ life of the school dedicated to teaching African Americans classical education, industrial arts skills, and medieval Roman Catholic patterns of devotion all in the same area. The displays and graphics in the section are dedicated to describing the interior of the buildings Immaculate Mother Academy inhabited over time. The section also takes full advantage of telling the biographies of the school’s graduates and students, many of whom became civic leaders in Nashville; Second, Section 3 serves as the auditorium for the exhibit’s documentary film, *A Restless Landscape*. The film is a ten-minute historical documentary, which presents the histories of the different inhabitants of the property as contending parts of Nashville’s historic identity and links them to the broader outlines of the city’s built environment and socially-constructed identity.

Label Examples:

Group Label: Title: Immaculate Mother Graduation Exercises, 1940-1950.
Text: Graduation Exercises for the school were held in the auditorium and featured dramatic readings, choir and vocal selections, Roman Catholic religious services, and the granting of diplomas. As the school became a college preparatory academy, these exercises took on a greater significance in the life of the students and the school.

Artifact List: Historic photos of Immaculate Mother Academy, auditorium chair reproductions, Immaculate Mother Academy paraphernalia, personal accounts and reminiscences from students of Immaculate Mother Academy of their time at the school including video from a public session on the school produced by the Nashville Public Library.

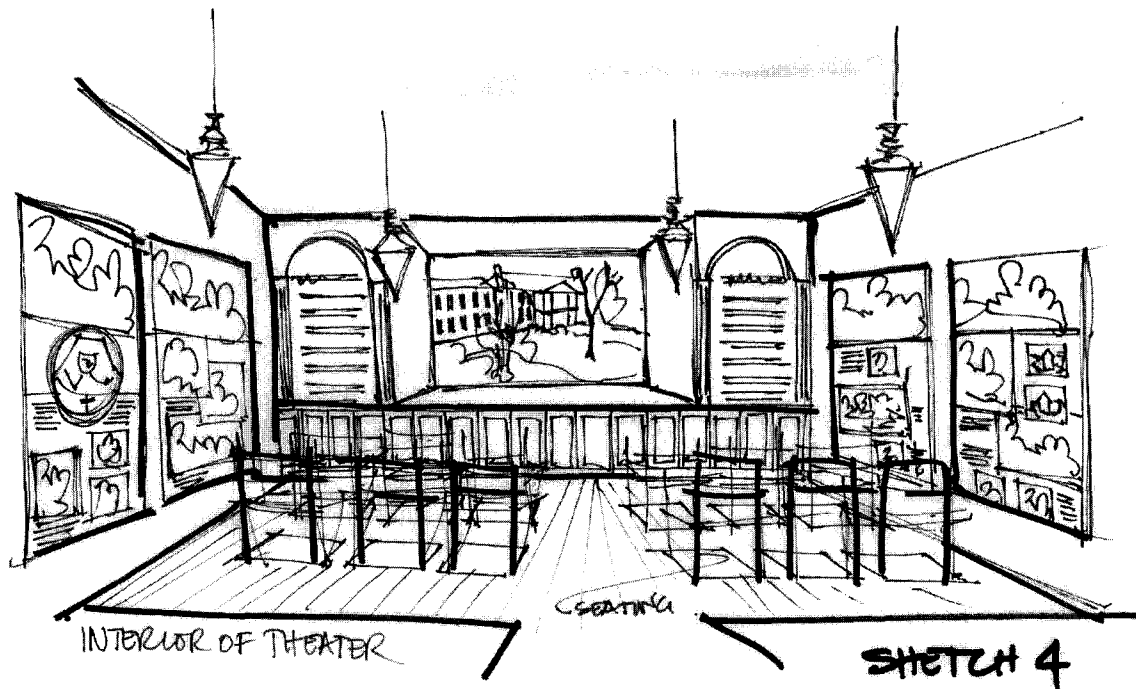


Fig. 18. Immaculate Mother Auditorium/Theater. Commissioned by author.

Section 4. How Buildings Learn

Title/Big Idea: How Buildings Learned:

Refitting and Refurbishing

The Built Environments of Seventh and Drexel

Description: Section 4, How Buildings Learn, borrows the ideal and ideas of adaptive building reuse from Stewart Brand's book, *How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They're Built*, to interpret how and why the different inhabitants and cultures of Seventh and Drexel adapted existing structures for new uses.¹⁵ The graphic panels in the section will be dedicated to two such efforts, the adaptation of Mile End from a plantation home

¹⁵ Stewart Brand, *How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They're Built*. New York: The Viking Press, 1994.

into a convent and school, and the complete interior redesign of the Sears store into one of the largest homeless shelters in America. The artifact case in the section will include Mother Drexel's hand-written description of the interior redesign of Mile End and banners and signage from both the Sears store and the Nashville Rescue Mission. Exhibit title banners at both entry points of the section will bring visitors into the room where large introductory label banners with quotes from Brand's book will accentuate the space. These large banners hanging above the section will serve to captivate thought and bring visitors into connection with the graphics and artifact case. Two or more stand-alone explanatory labels anchored to the floor in front of the graphic displays, explaining Brand's theories about how buildings learn and applying them to the built environments at Seventh and Drexel, will further explain the section's theme. Utilizing Brand's ideas of a building having an exterior skin that is mutable and adaptable for the needs of its users and an overall approach to the building's site of sheared layers culminating in interior space plans and stuff which can be exchanged, redirected, or replaced. This design approach, while departing from the 'norm' created by the consistency of the other sections, is necessary as the section ties together many of the underlying assumptions and philosophical assertions of the exhibit. Section 4 also is the only section of the exhibit with no singular focus and may therefore be ignored by visitors who do not make the instant connection of the section to their interests in Nashville history.

Label Examples:

Introductory Label: Title: Layers of Change. Text: These diagrams compare the Sears building's original layered plan and shows how the Nashville Rescue Mission adapted and reinvented both the skin of the structure and interior floor plan and stuff of the building to transform it from a commercial shopping center into a building focused on meeting the basic human needs of shelter, warmth, clothing, and eating.

Introductory Label: Title: Commercial and Domestic Buildings Change Differently.—Stewart Brand Text: Commercial buildings like Sears are easier to redesign and can change quickly. Domestic buildings like Mile End are more difficult and changes occur more slowly, usually after decades of use.

Introductory Label: BUILDINGS TELL STORIES—if they're allowed and if their past is flaunted rather than concealed.—Steward Brand

Artifact List: Mother Drexel's letter to her sister describing the redesigned interior of Mile End by the SBS 1905, Sears signage, Nashville Rescue Mission Signage, interior photos of Sears and Nashville Rescue Mission, newspaper stories describing the building of the Sears store in 1956, building plans for Sears store dated 1955-1956, building plans of "Retail to Rescue" building redesign by Nashville Rescue Mission in 1999-2000.

Section 5. Nashville Rescue Mission

Title/Big Idea: From Retail to Rescue: A Home for the Homeless

Description: This section details the adaptive reuse of the Sears store by the Nashville Rescue Mission. A reproduction of the Rescue Mission's signature doorway arch invites visitors into the section and large graphics and newspaper story reproductions recounting the redesign and the history of the Nashville Rescue Mission since its conception as a Christian ministry to the homeless of Nashville during a city-wide revival in 1958. The building plans from Missionary Tech Team of Dallas Texas, and photos of the different ministry areas in the interior of the building will also show the different design emphases

that inhabit the building. Several of the Rescue Mission's video appeals for help and funding and news stories and documentaries created by local media outlets, including the Mass Communications Department of Middle Tennessee State University, will be shown in the section.

Label Examples:

Group Label: Title: Nashville Rescue Mission Redesign Blue Prints.
Text: These blueprints, drawn by the Missionary Tech Team who redesigned the building, show a complete recreation of the building's interior space for Christian ministry and human services for Nashville's homeless citizens.

Artifact List: Nashville Rescue Mission design plans, Nashville Rescue Mission interior paraphernalia: advertising posters, directional banners, student success plaques, furniture, etc., Nashville Rescue Mission-produced videos, video news features and documentaries



Fig. 19. Nashville Rescue Mission Exhibit Section. Commissioned by author.

produced by local media outlets, newspaper and magazine articles telling the history of the Rescue Mission.

Section 6. Highway to Metropolis

Title/Big Idea: The Road Goes Both Ways:

Building a New Nashville in the Interstate Highway Era

Description: This section describes the rebuilding of the city of Nashville that occurred as the U.S. Interstate Highway system caused a major restructuring of the city. New roadways took downtown residents to the suburbs and Nashville created a new metropolitan government encompassing the city of Nashville and all of Davidson County together. As residents and shopping centers moved further and further to the fringe areas of suburbs and surrounding counties, the downtown area was left to tourists, industrial and corporate enterprises, and that class of Nashville's citizenry that remained downtown, the homeless. A title banner will hang overhead and the display case and graphic sections will showcase interstate building plans and the stories of the difficult creation of Nashville's metropolitan government between 1950-1962, as well as large photographs bookending the sections which compare Nashville's built environment and skyline from 1950 to 2000.

Label Examples:

Caption Label: Title: Nashville Interstate 40 Building Plans. Text: These plans detail the building of the section of I-40 north of town which sparked protests and lawsuits from Nashville's African American community.

Artifact List: Interstate building plans, photographs, souvenir books, and advertisements from the Tennessee State Library, the Tennessee Department of Transportation, and the State of Tennessee's Governor's Office for Highway Safety, historic photos of road building in Nashville, newspaper articles recounting the building of Murfreesboro Pike in the 1830's from the *Tennessean*

Section 7. Sears and Roebuck Store Front

Title/Big Idea: A Shopper's Paradise on the Dixie Highway:

Sears' Nashville Flagship Store

Description: Section Seven describes the events and details of the rebuilding of the property when Sears, Roebuck Inc. acquired it in 1955. An overhead re-creation of the concrete 'box top' of the second story of the Sears building replete with vintage era Sears signage will put the history of the store in its architectural context. The graphics and display panels in the section will give a chronological account of the selling of the property after the Roman Catholic Diocese of Nashville integrated parochial schools in the city within months of the landmark *Brown v. Board* 1954 Supreme Court decision to the closing of the store after a long run of commercial success. The chronology will highlight the changing nature of Nashville's built environment and its connection to retail success by telling the story of Sears' several unsuccessful attempts to revive the store's customer base. A section on maps of the roadway changes at Seventh and Drexel, including a Dixie Highway map, the initial Interstate Highway Commission planning maps, and maps to show the way to the Sears store used in commercial advertising highlights the section.

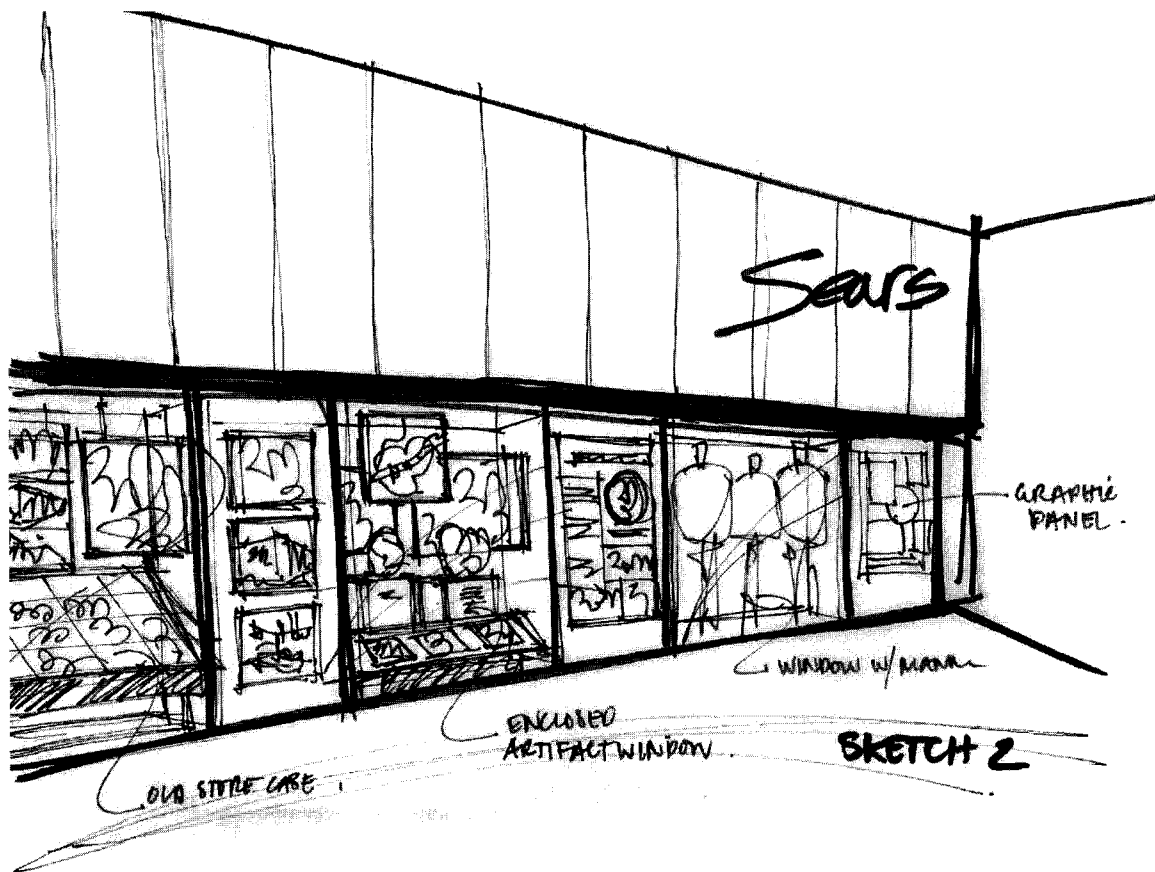


Fig. 20 Sears Store Front exhibit section with exhibit cases. Commissioned by author.

Label Examples:

Caption Label: Title: Our Finest Store In The Southeast (newspaper article artifact). Text: Sears opened its new store to rave reviews in full-page newspaper advertisements and over forty thousand shoppers on its first day in October, 1956.

Caption Label: All Roads Lead to Sears (map artifact). Text: Beginning in the early 1950s, Sears built its downtown anchor stores on the periphery of the central shopping districts to allow for greater ease of access and larger parking lots for automobile traffic.

Artifact List: Sears advertisements from local newspapers and magazines some featuring artistic maps designed to show shoppers the way to the store, Sears products, historic

photos, Sears original signage for the store, building accoutrements, Seventh and Drexel
Sears store building plans, Dixie Highway map, Interstate Commission maps

Section 8. Mile End

Title/Big Idea: The End of the City:

Nashville's Century of Progress at Mile End, 1813-1905.

Description: This section tells the story of Mile End house and the role it played in Nashville's nineteenth century history of progress. It will employ the biopic stories of the buildings inhabitants from its builder Anthony Foster, who was a surveyor of the city, friend of Andrew Jackson, and Revolutionary War Hero to its last occupant, Samuel Keith, banker, treasurer of the Tennessee Centennial Exposition, and model man of the New South, to detail the history of Mile End in a clock-like presentation placed onto a wall-size graphic of the historic home. A small Greek temple-front re-creation near the section's intersection with the rear of the exhibit away from the entryway will be used to tie the home to the broader built environment. The connection of the homeplace to the city's elite civic booster class and the transition it represented in Nashville's history when it was occupied by Roman Catholic nuns and African Americans in 1905, will complete the story.

Label Examples:

Introductory Label: Title: Mile End, Home to Nashville's Civic Booster Elites. Text: Mile End was home to a number of Nashville's most wealthy families over the course of the nineteenth century. Those families were active in banking, railroad, and commercial interests throughout the city and helped make Nashville one of the most powerful and profitable industry markets in the Southeastern U.S.

Artifact List: Historic photos of Mile End, biographical accounts and sketches of the home's occupants over the duration of the nineteenth century, accounts of the home in the books of Nashville's social registry, especially home and garden art books, portrait of Ephraim Foster, Tennessee State Senator, whose uncle built the home, bill of sale to Orville Ewing in 1850's in Tennessee State Archives, maps of Nashville.

Section 9. Nashville: Greatest Negro Educational Center In the World

Title/Big Idea: Nashville: Greatest Negro Educational Center In the World

Description: Section 9 capitalizes on a series of articles run in the Saturday edition of the *Nashville Banner* newspaper in 1905 proclaiming Nashville as the "Greatest Negro Educational Center In the World." The story connects the events of the Immaculate Mother Academy story to the building of the educational culture of the African American community in Nashville in the generation of the Civil War and in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Label Examples:

Caption Label: Walden University Photo, ca. 1900. Text: Walden University was started as a Freedmen's school for African Americans by the Women's Missionary Concern of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in 1877. Walden held classes at several campuses throughout the city and gave birth to Meharry Medical College at a house where classes were held on First Avenue South. The house is preserved and is distinguished by the presence of a Tennessee State Historical Marker on its property.

Artifact List: Nashville Banner newspaper articles from 1905 series, historic photos and school paraphernalia such as year books, diplomas, and student reports relating to the histories of Walden University, the YMCA Graduate School, and Fisk University from

The Tennessee State Library and Archives, The Tennessee State University Archives, Fisk University Archives, and the Nashville YMCA.

Section 10. The Dixie Highway

Title/Big Idea: Riding the Pathway of America's History:

Nashville, the Dixie Highway, and the Building of an Ideal America

Description: Section 10 is the ribbon of two-lane highway that runs across the exhibit and ties the built environment to the infrastructure and roadways that make up a significant part of the landscape of the site and its history. This section shows the agency of things like roadways and landscape and the role they have in the story of the site, Nashville and America. The roadway floor graphic will include Dixie Highway signage and logos in its design and will have several stand-alone graphic panel displays telling the story of the creation of the Dixie Highway and how the building of roads to accommodate automobile traffic has changed the course of local, state, and federal history. The panels will include maps, historic photos, automobile paraphernalia such as steering wheels and car horns for interactives, and newspaper and magazine stories, as well as text interpreting the importance of the highway within the landscape of the site as it was created at the edge of the property. There will also be a panel dedicated to the development of Murfreesboro Pike from its beginnings in the 1830s and throughout the nineteenth century, as route to and from Nashville's suburbs in the 1940s-1950s, and the development of sprawl and shopping centers during the 1950s-1980s.

Label Examples:

Introductory Label: Title: Connecting America: The building of the Dixie Highway, 1919-1926 (map artifact/graphic reproduction). Text: The Dixie Highway, constructed between 1919-1926, connected Miami, FL to Chicago, IL and brought America's automobile public together on a single roadway system. Automobiles and their passengers visited cities along the way like Nashville and the newly constructed roadway became the single greatest factor in the rebuilding of the nation in the new century. Economic growth, social progress, cultural interaction, and the creation of a new national pastime in car travel were all important factors in the highway's success.

Artifact List: Dixie Highway maps and paraphernalia, early automobile parts, historic road signs, historic photographs, historic Nashville maps, Murfreesboro Pike maps, floor highway graphic