

Of Time and Knoxville



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FRAGMENT OF AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Anne W. Armstrong

Edited by Linda Behrend

The University of Tennessee Press / Knoxville



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a teenager in 1885 and spent her early formative years there. Her memoir discusses the
University of Tennessee, a growing west Knoxville (Cumberland Avenue and Kingston
Pike, in particular), and other notable areas in what we now know as the university and
downtown districts. Armstrong is also author of *This Day and Time*, an Appalachian
novel credited as the first fictional account to depict the region realistically. Linda
Behrend has written a critical introduction and meticulously annotated Armstrong's
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*To Ed and Roger Naylor
great-grandsons of Anne Wetzell Armstrong,*

and

*In memory of
Robert J. (Jack) Higgs (1932–2015)
professor emeritus, East Tennessee State University,
who kept her memory alive.*

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Preface

The greatest part of a writer's time is spent in reading, in order to write; a man will turn over half a library to make one book.

—Samuel Johnson: in James Boswell's
Life of Samuel Johnson (1791)

The first time I heard the name “Anne Wetzell Armstrong” I was working in the library at East Tennessee State University (ETSU) in Johnson City, Tennessee. The technical services archivist had come to my department to verify her name in an online database. I immediately associated her with Annie Armstrong, the Southern Baptist missionary for whom an annual offering is named. I soon learned that this was a different “Annie Armstrong” and that the Archives had acquired a photocopy of her typewritten manuscript “Of Time and Knoxville.”

Through unforeseen circumstances, within a year I was working in the ETSU Archives myself—and learning more about Anne Wetzell Armstrong and the manuscript. The more I learned, the more interested I became. The manuscript had been donated to ETSU by Marshall D. Hogan, M.D., of Kingsport, Tennessee, probably through the efforts of Dr. Robert J. “Jack” Higgs, an English professor who had arranged for the Research Advisory Council at ETSU to reprint Armstrong's Appalachian novel *This Day and Time* in 1970. I contacted Dr. Hogan (who has since died) and asked to interview him. He had known Mrs. Armstrong from his childhood and also knew her grandson, Roger “Bob” Naylor, who was around his age. He had kept in touch with Mrs. Armstrong over the years and told me of visiting with her in Abingdon, Virginia, up until the time of her death. He said that a mutual friend had given the manuscript to him after her death. When I visited him on September 6, 1999, he gave the original typescript to me, saying: “You're young; you can do something with it.”

For a long time, “doing something” with the manuscript was on hold. The copy at ETSU had restrictions stating that it could not be reproduced for publication. The whereabouts of Roger “Bob” Naylor were unknown. Dr. Hogan and Dr. Jack Higgs had told me that Mrs. Armstrong had two great-grandsons in Texas, but I had not been successful in locating them. They had been born in Houston, but

were now living in Austin. However, I continued to learn about Armstrong and to accumulate documentation on her life. Beginning in 2003, I gave several presentations about her at annual conferences of the Appalachian Studies Association. I also wrote entries on her for both the *Encyclopedia of Appalachia* (2006) and *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* (Volume 9: Literature, 2008). Meanwhile, I changed jobs and moved to Knoxville.

In 2005 I was working in Hodges Library at the University of Tennessee when I received a telephone call from Roger Naylor, great-grandson of Anne Armstrong. To quote his brother Ed: "We found you as we were going over the copyright records for Anne's book *This Day and Time* and Roger googled her name and you popped up." They had run across a grant application I submitted in 2004 seeking funds to travel to Houghton Library at Harvard to examine a collection containing some of her correspondence with Thomas Wolfe.

I talked with both Ed and Roger Naylor on the telephone, and we kept in touch via e-mail until January 2006 when I was able to visit them in person while in Texas for a library conference. We shared information about Armstrong, and they allowed me to examine boxes of her papers and memorabilia that were in their possession. I presented them with the original typescript of their great-grandmother's memoir—making it clear that I would like to edit it for publication. Not long afterward, Ed Naylor let me know that he had found a handwritten manuscript which appeared to be Part 2 and a continuation of the memoir I already had. Ed performed the monumental task of transcribing the handwritten chapters of Part 2 and putting it into digital form.

The brothers had known very little about their great-grandmother. Their father, born October 7, 1921, had been barely a year old when his father, Roger Franklin Armstrong, died on October 26, 1922. When their father's mother (the former Anne Marie Baker) remarried, she and her new husband, Charles Edward Naylor, moved to Houston, Texas; and her child, who had been named Roger Armstrong (after his father), assumed the surname of his step-father, becoming Roger Armstrong Naylor, later nicknamed "Bob." He died in November 1984, leaving Mrs. Armstrong's great-grandsons to carry on her legacy.

Editing the manuscript and researching the history involved has been quite a journey. I wish to thank both Ed and Roger Naylor for allowing me to edit this work for publication; my thanks especially to Ed for his diligence in transcribing the handwritten portion. Thanks also to Roger and his wife, Ann, for graciously receiving me in their home and making me feel welcome. Our mutual goal has been to tell Anne's story; I hope that my part in this effort has succeeded in doing it justice.

At this point, I feel that I need to make a couple of disclaimers. First, I am not a historian. However, if not the credentials, I *do* have a background that, I feel, helped prepare me for this endeavor. My first work experience and training were

in journalism, where the facts—and documenting the facts—are of utmost importance. After that, I became an information specialist (AKA librarian), which involved learning and using the skills needed for research. Secondly, like Anne Armstrong, I am not a native Knoxvilleian, although my mother grew up in Knox County and most of her extended family still lives in the area. During my growing up years I came to Knoxville frequently to visit relatives and friends of hers.

I spent four years in Knoxville earning a B.A. in English from the University of Tennessee. Twenty years later, I again studied at UT, receiving a Master's degree in Library Science. I had wanted to live in Knoxville for a long time before I was able, in 2001, to make it my permanent home.

Although I felt that I knew Knoxville fairly well, preparing Mrs. Armstrong's memoir for publication has been an education for me, not only in the history of Knoxville and the late 1800s, but also in the books she read and the authors to whom she referred. I have consulted a lot of books about Knoxville and the time period in order to create annotations that I felt would best provide background material and, in some cases, bring the information about people and places in her story up to date.

Acknowledgments

First of all, I need to again acknowledge Ed and Roger Naylor, who trusted me with their great-grandmother's manuscript. I cannot thank them enough for allowing me to edit her memoir and for their support during this endeavor.

I wish to thank Norma Myers Riddle, director, and Marie Tedesco, Ed Speer, Ned Irwin, and Georgia Greer, staff members in the Archives of Appalachia at East Tennessee State University during the time I was working there, for introducing me to Anne Wetzell Armstrong and for their many kindnesses to me during that time. I acknowledge the University of Tennessee Libraries, Knoxville, for awarding me two Faculty Research Incentive Program grants which supported my research on Armstrong and enabled me to visit her great-grandsons in Austin, Texas.

My thanks to Jack Neely and another individual who read first drafts of my edited and annotated version of the manuscript, enthusiastically recommended its publication, and offered helpful suggestions for improving the work.

Knoxville is indeed fortunate to be home to the Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection, which came after but actually figured into Anne Armstrong's story during a time when Calvin McClung was still living and she visited in his home. We owe a great debt to Ed and Roger Naylor for generously donating their great-grandmother's manuscripts, photographs, books, and other papers to the McClung Collection. I have spent many hours there using its wonderful resources, and I thank manager Steve Cotham, archivist Joanna Bouldin, and all the staff for their assistance. Many of the pictures in this book, as noted, are part of the McClung Collection. In addition, classes in genealogical research, provided by the East Tennessee History Center, were of immense help in preparing me for work on this publication.

Thomas Wells, my editor at the University of Tennessee Press, has patiently guided me through the publication process, and I thank him.

I thank my children for their support—my son Kevin Akard for technical assistance with computer issues, his wife Kathy for help with maps and family trees, my daughter Alison Akard for help with genealogical research and the initial construction of genograms for the Wetzell, Armstrong, and Naylor families, and my son Keith Akard and daughter Lucy Reynolds for their support and encouragement.

Finally, I want to thank my friend Martha Whaley, who is a constant source of encouragement.

Critical Introduction

In *Of Time and Knoxville*, Anne Wetzell Armstrong claims Knoxville, Tennessee, as her home town—even though she was not born there—saying that it was “where I had spent the most impressionable years of my life.” Her memoir provides important primary source material on the history of Knoxville and its people during the last several years of the nineteenth century at a time when major railroads were connecting Knoxville to the rest of the country and the town grew into a city.

In the 1850s the East Tennessee & Virginia (ET&V) and the East Tennessee & Georgia (ET&G) railroad companies built lines that connected Knoxville with other already existing railroads; from 1869–1894, Knoxville was the headquarters for the ETV&G Railroad. Knoxville was especially important during the Civil War, because both sides needed the railroads for transporting troops and supplies. After the war, Knoxville became a boom town and great southern jobbing center, with the railroads providing transportation for goods into and out of the city. According to Bruce Wheeler, “By 1885 Knoxville was the fourth leading wholesaling center in the entire South . . .” and by 1896, “the South’s third largest wholesaler.”¹ Other sources (MacArthur, Rothrock, Deaderick) agree.

People were coming to Knoxville from the northeast and midwest and even from other countries, most notably England and Canada. They came to teach school or to invest in Knoxville’s businesses or as speculators in Knoxville’s growing economy. Knoxville was full of immigrants who came to work in the mills, marble quarries, and factories that were springing up. Some immigrants, such as Peter Kern and Peter Staub, who both appear in *Of Time and Knoxville*, would make important contributions to Knoxville’s cultural life. This was Knoxville’s “Golden Age,” into which our heroine arrived in 1885.

Born Anne Audubon Wetzell on September 20, 1872, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Mrs. Armstrong was close to thirteen when she came to Knoxville. Her father, Henry B. Wetzell, moved his family to establish a timber and lumber business in the town’s post-Civil War economy. Wetzell and his brothers had a successful lumber business in Michigan, but he had been to East Tennessee as a Union soldier and knew the area’s abundant resources. Other members of the family were her mother, Lorinda, sometimes called Linnie; her older brother, Harry, who was enrolled as a cadet at the University of Tennessee; and her younger sister, Mary, usually referred

to as “May” in this narrative. The family found housing in a part of Knoxville known at that time as “West End” (the present-day Fort Sanders neighborhood).

Looking back on her teenage years, Mrs. Armstrong takes us on a tour of Knoxville as it was in the late 1880s through the end of the century. She paints a vivid picture of the town at that time: the people, schools, churches, food, clothing, social customs, and the lingering effects of the recent Civil War, including a poignant story about her father’s involvement in the Battle of Fort Sanders. She describes African-American cooks and her family’s interactions with their household help. She gives detailed accounts of shopping with her mother at the Market House and of attending Second Presbyterian Church, where she first saw her future husband, Robert F. Armstrong, son of the couple for whom Knoxville’s Bleak House was built.

She tells about influential businessman and landowner Perez Dickinson, whose “Island Home” was a social center of the time. Others who stand out in her narrative are Miss Molly Hayes (her favorite teacher), her neighbor and chum Mary Gaines, and her school friend Laura McAdoo, whose brother, William Gibbs McAdoo Jr., later became U.S. Secretary of the Treasury. Of all the local townspeople whom Mrs. Armstrong mentions, it is clear that she came close to idolizing Lizzie Crozier French, who led Tennesseans in the fight for women’s suffrage, and that she had an equally strong dislike for Mary Boyce Temple, a local socialite who, nevertheless, is credited with saving Knoxville’s Blount Mansion from demolition.

Mrs. Armstrong’s “fragment of an autobiography” is really more a reminiscence, rambling and episodic, lapsing into flashbacks and stream of consciousness at times, as she remembers her experiences as a young girl in Knoxville and relates them to happenings later in her life. She often goes off on tangents, but her style is sophisticated and witty, with an occasional barb; her tongue can be acerbic. Some readers may find her speech quaint, but it is a reflection of the time in which she lived, and I have preserved it in order to contribute to her depiction of Knoxville at that time.

Similarly, her depiction of African Americans is a reflection of her time. Despite some deprecating remarks about black people, she does not seem to have had any ill will toward those with whom she came into contact; most of them she knew as servants or household help. In fact, one of the reasons she gave for breaking her engagement to Jim Ramsey was his attitude toward African Americans. But Knoxville also had a number of influential middle-class professional African-American citizens at the time, such as businessman Cal Johnson, lawyer William Yardley, and Charles W. Cansler, who became a teacher about the same time Armstrong was teaching in Knoxville. Others served as elected officials, such as aldermen.

Mrs. Armstrong’s narrative is full of literary allusions; everything makes her think of a book or author she has read. She was obviously enamored with authors

Henry James, Charles Dickens, and, later on, others such as Walt Whitman and Robert Browning. She writes of “[her] own insatiate curiosity about books,” and, in her own inimitable way, relates many of her stories to literary works of her time and to literature in general. She was highly educated and extremely well-read. By the time she wrote her memoir, she had lived in many different places and had traveled widely. Her literary allusions could almost be said to constitute a reading list for the latter half of the nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth, and her way of expressing herself a window into that time. Authors with local ties whom she mentions include Mary Noailles Murfree, James Agee, Frances Hodgson Burnett, and Joseph Wood Krutch.

Anne W. Armstrong, as she most often identified herself, became a well-known author in her own time. Her first pieces were published while she was still a student at Mount Holyoke Seminary and College in South Hadley, Massachusetts. She went on to publish in *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper’s Monthly*, *Saturday Review of Literature*, *Yale Review*, and other prestigious periodicals of that time. Her first novel, *The Seas of God*, was published anonymously by Hearst in 1915 and by Mills and Boon in Great Britain in 1916, at which time she revealed her identity as the author. This story, based somewhat on her own life, is partially set in Knoxville (although she calls the town “Kingsville”) and contains the first known description of Market Square in a novel.²

Other authors with a Knoxville connection who have included scenes on Market Square in their novels are James Agee, David Madden, Cormac McCarthy, and Richard Marius. Agee, whose autobiographical novel *A Death in the Family* was set in a thinly-disguised Knoxville, had even more in common with Anne Armstrong. Both of them had a devout church-going mother and a father who, although known as a good man, was “not a member of any church.” Armstrong, after her father’s death, expresses fear that the minister performing his funeral will say that he was not a Christian because he was not a member of the church. In the case of Agee’s father, the priest refuses to read the complete burial service over him because he had never been baptized. Armstrong grew up attending Second Presbyterian Church, but she also went to St. John’s Episcopal Church (where Agee was a member several years later) with her first husband, and she had her son christened by its minister. She was acquainted with Agee’s grandparents and even visited in their home, in which Agee was later born. She and he, although over a generation apart in age, both lived on Highland Avenue during their time in Knoxville. And each of them, in telling a story about growing up in Knoxville, included a walk up to the ruins of Fort Sanders—Armstrong with “Theodore” and Agee (as Rufus) with his uncle following his father’s funeral. Perhaps most striking, both of their fathers died as the result of an accident involving a motor vehicle—a train wreck in the case of Armstrong’s father, an automobile wreck in Agee’s.

Some of David Madden's books have other things in common with Armstrong's story. His novel *Sharpshooter* (1996) imagines a young Confederate soldier's war experiences and gives a fictionalized account of him shooting General William P. Sanders from the tower of Bleak House (the Armstrong home which Longstreet commandeered as his headquarters during the siege of Knoxville). Madden's earlier novel *Bijou* (1974) concerns the movie theatre that was made out of Lamar House by expanding the building and adding a stage—the same Lamar House where General Sanders was taken after being shot and later died. Madden's youthful fascination with the movies echoes Armstrong's interest in the performing arts, to which she was exposed in Knoxville at Staub's Opera House, just across the street (until it was torn down) from the Lamar House/Bijou.

Cormac McCarthy described Market Square in his first book, *The Orchard Keeper*, but his best remembered scene is from *Suttree*, when his title character wanders down Market Street through the square with a sack of fish to sell. Armstrong knew something about people like Cornelius Suttree from teaching their children. In Part 2, Chapter Nineteen of her memoir, she writes: "With the river only a block or so below the Bell House, some of them [the boys] came from tough families who lived in dilapidated houses along the river-front, piecing out a precarious existence. . . ."

Another creative figure with Knoxville (and Armstrong) ties is film director, producer, and scriptwriter Clarence Brown, who, like Armstrong, was not born in the south but spent his formative years there. Most sources report that he came to Knoxville at the age of ten or eleven (he was born May 10, 1890), when his father was appointed to a position at Brookside Mills. He graduated from Girls' High School (GHS) in 1905 at a time when high school ended with the tenth grade. Not only did GHS include boy students, it also had classrooms for grades three through seven. Based on his year of graduation, Brown would have been in seventh grade at GHS during the 1901/02 school year, Armstrong's final year of teaching in Knoxville, and could even possibly have attended sixth grade at GHS in 1900/01. In her memoir Armstrong mentions that, although officially the ninth-grade teacher, she would at times go to other classrooms to teach rhetoric and literature "to less or more advanced classes." I cannot help thinking that Clarence Brown was Armstrong's student, or at least fell under her influence since she, as Supervisor of Literature, developed a new course of study in literature for the high school grades (which was adopted beginning with the 1898/99 school year), and she also prepared a supplementary reading list for the lower grades.

In midlife, Mrs. Armstrong held positions in personnel and industrial relations with National City Company of New York City (1918–1919) and Eastman Kodak Company (1919–1923), and she later wrote numerous articles dealing with business and labor relations that were published in nationally-circulated journals and

magazines. On the other hand, she had an abiding interest in the mountains of the southern highlands and a facility for describing the land and its people. (Readers of her memoir will be amused to hear her tell about a family trip to “the wilds” of Jonesboro and Erwin.) Her novel *This Day and Time* (1930) is considered by many to be the first book of realistic writing about Appalachia. It portrays the life, speech, and customs of the mountain people in upper East Tennessee during the early twentieth century. Mrs. Armstrong and her husband had built a home in the Big Creek section of rural Sullivan County, Tennessee, in 1916, and the mountain people of that area provided the setting and many of the characters for *This Day and Time*. Readers who are familiar with the heroine of *This Day and Time* will notice a marked similarity between her and the mountain woman hired as a cook for the Wetzell household in *Of Time and Knoxville*.

One of the features in *This Day and Time* for which Armstrong has been consistently recognized is her use of dialect to create authentic speech for her mountain characters. In 1971 Earl J. Schrock Jr. published an article entitled “An Examination of the Dialect in *This Day and Time*” in the *Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin*. It was anthologized in *Voices from the Hills: Selected Readings of Southern Appalachia* and has been frequently cited.³

In her memoir, Armstrong includes quite a few examples of her penchant for dialect—beginning in the first chapter when Bithe, the maid, comes in to “do up” the room and in the conversations of washerwomen in the street below her window. In addition to other instances of African-American speech throughout the book and her use of the Appalachian speech of their cook, she puts dialect in the mouth of Mr. Barnes, whom she dislikes, and Mr. Joy (the janitor), whom she does like. She counts visiting Marblehead, scene of “Skipper Ireson’s Ride,” as one of the most rewarding experiences during her summer in New England and quotes the refrain from Whittier’s poem, which is made even more terrible by his use of dialect.

After the rush of business articles that Mrs. Armstrong published in the 1920s and *This Day and Time* in 1930, she wrote on a wide variety of topics. Two still-cited articles are “The Southern Mountaineers” (*Yale Review*, March 1935)⁴ and “As I Saw Thomas Wolfe” (*Arizona Quarterly*, Spring 1946). Mrs. Armstrong met Thomas Wolfe in April 1937 when he stopped in Bristol, Tennessee/Virginia, on his way to Asheville, North Carolina, to spend the summer. In September that year, on Wolfe’s return trip to New York, he spent several days (or just a few, accounts vary) in a cabin on Mrs. Armstrong’s property in northeast Sullivan County, Tennessee, before she took him to meet Sherwood Anderson in nearby Marion, Virginia.⁵ Mrs. Armstrong described Wolfe’s visit in “As I Saw Thomas Wolfe.” She and Wolfe also corresponded, and some of their letters are archived in the “William B. Wisdom Collection of Thomas Wolfe” (MS Am 1883-1883.3) in Houghton Library at Harvard University. Like Wolfe, Mrs. Armstrong found that the thinly veiled

semi-autobiographical novel she set in Knoxville (calling it “Kingsville” as Wolfe called Asheville “Altamont” in his first novel *Look Homeward, Angel*) stirred up hard feelings among local residents.

It seems obvious that Mrs. Armstrong patterned the title of her memoir after *Of Time and the River*, the title of Thomas Wolfe’s semi-autobiographical novel published in 1935 by Charles Scribner’s Sons. Perhaps Wolfe’s subtitle, “A Legend of Man’s Hunger in His Youth,” gives a clue to her choice. Or perhaps her intention was just to reflect on what Knoxville was like at a particular time in her past, a theme she muses on in her introduction to her book.

But her memoir is also a “coming of age” story. She seems to be infatuated with boys—what we used to call “boy crazy”—although her stories are probably just a reflection of her age and the customs of her time. However, we can be sure that when she says her beaux “made love to her” she did not mean what it would mean today. She shows an open-minded attitude toward sex and did not hesitate to talk about it in her book, including prostitutes (e.g., the madams of Crozier Street), sadism, and sexual as well as physical abuse. She seems to have had more than a passing interest in fallen women—Mrs. Hamilton (supposedly), Em Parham, and Lydia, the character she created in her novel *The Seas of God*. Given the history of her disastrous first marriage, it is no wonder that in both her novels the main character is a strong “single” woman raising a son by herself under adverse conditions. On the other hand, she feels confused about “marrying a man I did not love and had never wanted to marry” and shamed by being a divorced woman. She is convinced that Knoxville look down on her because she is unconventional and does not belong to any church.

Mrs. Armstrong acknowledges that the stimulus which prompted her desire to write about Knoxville was John Gunther’s insult to what she considered her home town. His remark was: “Knoxville is the ugliest city I ever saw in America, with the possible exception of some mill towns in New England. Its main street is called Gay Street; this seemed to me to be a misnomer.”⁶ (It must be remembered that Knoxville was, at one time, something of a mill town.) Armstrong had lived in Knoxville, except for brief periods, from 1885 until 1902 and remembered it quite differently. Nevertheless, she thanked him because, she said, writing the memoir “has furnished me a rewarding experience as I have groped my way back through the mists of time to a town . . . even whose blemishes are still dear to me.”

She also objected to the book she calls the “*History of Knox County Tennessee*,” published in 1946,⁷ just a year before Gunther’s *Inside U.S.A.* appeared. This book’s actual title is *The French Broad-Holston Country*, indicating the important role these rivers played in the history of Knox County. The point at which they come together, a few miles above Knoxville, is still called the “Forks of the River.” The Tennessee River, along which Knoxville was founded, was still called the Holston

all the way to the mouth of the Little Tennessee (several miles below Knoxville) until 1890, when a federal statute recognized the confluence of the Holston and French Broad as its beginning.⁸ In Armstrong's time the river was used not only for transportation, but also for recreation, like swimming and boating, as she recounts. Knobside, the home that Armstrong and her husband built in Sullivan County, was on the South Fork of the Holston River in upper East Tennessee.

Her memoir is the story of Knoxville as she knew it near the end of the nineteenth century, but she wrote it some fifty years later, during the middle of the twentieth century, when she was in her late seventies and early eighties. Based on her date of birth and the date that *Inside U.S.A.* was published, Mrs. Armstrong would have been at least seventy-five when she began her memoir. A 1952 newspaper article about the production of a play by Mrs. Armstrong mentions that she, in her eighties by that time, had completed a two-volume autobiography (the work at hand).⁹

Anne Wetzell Armstrong was indeed "one of the most remarkable women ever to live in Knoxville" as stated in *Heart of the Valley: A History of Knoxville, Tennessee*.¹⁰ Perhaps the very eclectic nature of her writings, plus the fact that her first book was published anonymously, are reasons why she is not better known as an author today even though *This Day and Time* is still considered an important example of realistic writing about the Appalachian region. We can be glad that her "tell-all" memoir survived to give us such a vivid picture of Knoxville as it was just before the beginning of the twentieth century.

NOTES

1. William Bruce Wheeler, *Knoxville, Tennessee: A Mountain City in the New South*. 3rd ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2020), 18.
2. Jack Neely, *Market Square: A History of the Most Democratic Place on Earth* (Knoxville: Market Square District Association, 2009), 114.
3. Earl J. Schrock Jr., "An Examination of the Dialect in *This Day and Time*," *Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin* 37 (June 1971): 31–39; Robert J. Higgs and Ambrose N. Manning, eds., *Voices from the Hills: Selected Readings of Southern Appalachia* (New York: Ungar, 1975), 460–473.
4. "The Southern Mountaineers" was later anthologized and also reprinted in *Reader's Digest*.
5. Ted Mitchell, *Thomas Wolfe: A Writer's Life*. Rev. ed. (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1999). Published in cooperation with the Appalachian Consortium), 73, 78–79; Andrew Turnbull, *Thomas Wolfe* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), 272–273.
6. John Gunther, *Inside U.S.A.* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1947), 761.

7. Mary Utopia Rothrock, ed., *The French Broad-Holston Country: A History of Knox County, Tennessee* (Knoxville: East Tennessee Historical Society, 1946).
8. Anne Toplovich, "Tennessee River System," *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History & Culture*, ed. Carroll Van West (Nashville: Tennessee Historical Society / Rutledge Hill Press, 1998), 943-44.
9. Ralston Matheny, "Granny's Millions," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, September 22, 1954: 15, knoxnews.com, accessed July 11, 2017.
10. Lucile Deaderick, ed., *Heart of the Valley: A History of Knoxville, Tennessee* (Knoxville: East Tennessee Historical Society, 1976), 449.

Editorial Note

Anne Armstrong was such a good writer that I have made very few changes to her text. I have endeavored, as much as possible, to let her speak for herself in her “fragment of an autobiography.” Just as her story is about Knoxville in the last decades of the nineteenth century, I felt that the style and wording should reflect the language and spelling of that time. Therefore, I have preserved certain spellings and conventions of the day, such as “Michael Angelo,” “Hayti,” “Tolstoi,” “can not,” “to-day.”

Also, given the time period of the story, certain racial terms appear that would not be appropriate today. These have been retained as part of the historical record. Armstrong does not seem to have felt any ill will toward blacks with whom she came in contact. Although she uses words such as “slatternly” when talking about some African-Americans, she also uses them in reference to poor whites.

Armstrong tended to use the British spelling for certain words (e.g., fibre, centre, furore, neighbour), and I have retained her spelling. I have also kept her capitalization of the seasons and certain other words (e.g., Spring, Southern, Century) that we do not now capitalize. Inconsistencies and minor errors in spelling have been silently corrected or explained in a note. In several instances, Armstrong misspells the names of people or misstates their relationships. In these cases, I have inserted bracketed information to correct her error or have added a note of explanation.

At this point, I feel that I need to say something about names: especially, Annie Wetzell, the name by which our author was known growing up. After her first marriage and divorce, she retained her married surname and went by Annie Wetzell Waldron. When she married again, she was often referred to (especially in newspaper articles) as Mrs. Robert F. Armstrong, but she almost always used “Anne W. Armstrong” (occasionally, “Anne Wetzell Armstrong”) as her by-line, although she admits that, early on, she sometimes put “A. W. Armstrong” on submissions because of the reluctance of publishers to accept articles by a woman. I have used AWA instead of her name in most footnotes, partly out of convenience and partly for reasons of space.

In her memoir, she chose to use the name “Theodore De Groot” for the man who became her first husband. If she had a reason for choosing this name, I do not know it and will not speculate about it. His real name was Leonard T. Waldron.

She calls one of her boyfriends “Hu White,” but I have not been able to find any information that might identify him. Possibly she changed or made up his name.

When I first read Mrs. Armstrong’s memoir, I doubted some of her stories. However, as I began checking sources and verifying information about the people and places she was telling about, I came to find that, for the most part, she is accurate in her reporting. She may have fabricated or embellished some of her stories, of course, but in only a few places does she get things mixed up. I have added notes to correct the details where Mrs. Armstrong has either misremembered, or confused relationships or the timing of events. Errors in some proper names (e.g., Schmitt instead of Schmidt, Midland—not Midlands—Bank) have also been explained in notes. Other annotations have been added to flesh out and provide background information on people and places that Mrs. Armstrong mentions but which may not be familiar to present-day readers or to those not familiar with Knoxville (or Knoxville as it was before the turn of the century).

Changes that I have made include substituting italics for underlined words in Mrs. Armstrong’s text, standardizing the style for decades (e.g., the ’80s instead of 80’s), and using a single *em* dash for multiple dashes and spaces within and at the end of sentences. Where ellipses appear, they were hers.

In the interest of space (Part One of the manuscript consists of 368 double-spaced typed pages and Part Two of 1,017 handwritten pages), some sections have been omitted, but in such a way that the story proceeds seamlessly. Therefore, I have not used ellipses to indicate omissions. Only in the case of Mrs. Armstrong’s story “The Branner House” (Chapter Six: Mama and the Gaines Family) and Robert Houston Armstrong’s “Trip to Texas” journal (Chapter Thirteen: Bleak House) did I insert an editorial note explaining that part of Armstrong’s original text has been deleted.

Chronology

- 1867 Henry Bower Wetzell marries Lorinda “Linnie” Snyder on December 5
- 1870 Henry “Harry” Wetzell born April 24 in Brooklyn, New York
- 1872 Annie Audubon Wetzell born September 20 in Grand Rapids, Michigan
- 1877 Mary E. “May” Wetzell born May 7 in Grand Rapids, Michigan
- 1885 Wetzell family moves to Knoxville, Tennessee, in September
- 1888 Harry Wetzell drowns on June 5
- 1889 Flat Creek train disaster, August 22
- 1889/90 & Annie Wetzell attends Mount Holyoke College
1890/91
- 1892 Spring – teaches at Miss Ogden’s School in Knoxville
- 1892 marries Leonard T. Waldron on July 1 in Chicago
- 1892 Fall – lives on Whiskey Row in Snohomish, Washington
- 1893 January – moves to Fargo, North Dakota
- 1893 Summer – visits Waldron’s sister on South Side of Chicago and spends a few days at the Chicago World’s Fair
- 1893 August – returns to parents’ home at 306 Highland Ave., Knoxville
- 1893 son Roger Waldron born on September 8
- 1893 late November(?) – moves w/Waldron to little house “out near Bell Ave.”
- 1894 early June – moves back to her parents’ home on Highland Ave.
- 1894 divorced from Leonard T. Waldron on August 22 (final decree)
- 1894 Henry B. Wetzell dies on September 11
- 1894 takes job as traveling “general agent” in October(?)
- 1895 accepts position teaching third grade at Bell House School in late January; moves with her mother to North Knoxville; moves back to West End (500 White Ave.) at end of summer

- 1895 Fall – begins teaching at Girls’ High School (will teach there seven years: 1895/96, 1896/97, 1897/98, 1898/99, 1899/1900, 1900/01, 1901/02)
- 1897 July – visits Tennessee Centennial Exposition in Nashville
- 1897 or ’98? visits Tullahoma during summer and runs into Jim Ramsey
- 1898 enrolled in summer quarter at the University of Chicago
- 1898/99 named “Supervisor of Literature” at Girls’ High School; introduces new course in English and American classics
- 1899 May Wetzell marries Leon L. Roach on February 27 in Franklin, Ohio
- 1900 spends summer visiting literary shrines in New England
- 1900 or ’01 moves to Miss Hilton’s boarding house at 708 Walnut
- 1902 leaves Knoxville at end of school year (presumably to marry Jim Ramsey)
- 1902-04 [unknown]
- 1905 Annie Wetzell Waldron marries Robert Franklin Armstrong on June 14
- 1915 publishes *The Seas of God* anonymously
- 1922 son Roger Franklin Armstrong (born Waldron) killed on October 26
- 1930 publishes *This Day and Time*
- 1930 visits Knoxville in September, “Thirty Years After”
- 1931 Robert Franklin Armstrong dies on March 24
- 1958 Anne Wetzell Armstrong dies March 17 in Abingdon, Virginia

Of Time and Knoxville

“... mingled yarn, good and ill together”

Author's Preface

During the palmyest days of the *American Mercury*, Henry Mencken, then its Editor, commented in its pages, in his inimitably insulting fashion, on some place or other that it had sunk to the cultural level of Port-au-Prince, Hayti, and Knoxville, Tennessee.¹

At the time, I still considered Knoxville my home town, although I had long lived far from it. But I relished Mr. Mencken's reference to a spot on the earth's surface where I had spent the most impressionable years of my life. I could not forget certain smug aspects of the town and its all too frequent evidences of religious bigotry. Since the Scopes' Trial² the very name of the state had become a synonym for abysmal ignorance. More than this, I had recently heard a report, whether true or false, that Joseph Wood Krutch, the distinguished critic and essayist, member of a highly respected and admired Knoxville family, had been pilloried in the local press in an article headed, "A Son of Knoxville but Knoxville not Proud of Him."³ About the same time a report reached me that an able professor at the University of Tennessee (located at Knoxville) had just been asked to resign when he confessed having read Robinson's *Mind in the Making*, considered by the University authorities to be subversive.⁴

I wrote Mencken: "I know nothing about Port-au-Prince, Hayti, but a good deal about Knoxville, Tennessee. Would you like it?"

The answer came: "We would."

Circumstances, however, prevented my supplying the article I had in mind. But in the quarter of a century that has intervened between that time and this every once in a while I have speculated on just what *was* the cultural level of Knoxville. Was it really lower than the cultural level of other Southern towns, or for the matter of that of other towns of like size in the United States in the same period? Today, my response to Mr. Mencken would be somewhat different from the one that in the 1920s I solicited space for on the pages of the *American Mercury*.

Nevertheless, I should never have attempted any rebuttal to Mr. Mencken's now ancient though still provocative charge except for the publication in 1947 of John Gunther's *Inside USA*. What fired me here was Mr. Gunther's tagging Knoxville as the ugliest city he had ever seen in the USA—a statement which, coming from a

man who had seen Gary, Indiana, and Los Angeles, California, aroused me to such an unreasonable pitch of resentment as to make me wonder anew what it was in this dirty old town of Knoxville that could still command from me an allegiance I had never felt for any other place.

I got to thinking about Knoxville. I have no acquaintance whatever with the sprawling, overcrowded city which TVA,⁵ for all the compensating blessings it has showered upon the surrounding region, together with Oak Ridge, in close proximity to Knoxville (with the more dubious benefits it has conferred upon the human race), have made of this town. But the desire grew in me to recapture, if I could, something of the old Knoxville which still lives in my mind, a Knoxville of the '80s and '90s and of the turn of the century.

I am aware, of course, that there are as many Knoxvillees as people who have called it home, or known it even fleetingly. This is simply a *Knoxville To Me*: full of the trivia which after all make up the lives of most of us. Though there are facts in it, it is not primarily a book of facts. It is a tissue, if I may call it so, woven of memory, legend, of myth, of gossip, even of scandalous tittle-tattle—and of dreams, for often in dreams I still walk the streets (streets whose very names have changed), climb up and down the hills of old Knoxville.

But while I do not claim this to be in essence a factual work, I have thought it desirable to base it on a certain irreducible minimum of fact, and to this end have read, conscientiously I hope, the rather recent *History of Knox County, Tennessee*; a bulky volume, most of its pages devoted to the founding and development of the town of Knoxville, and sponsored by the East Tennessee Historical Society,⁶ to which I hereby acknowledge my indebtedness for such services as it has rendered me. Chief among them is the realization that for a completely denatured history of Knoxville, none will ever surpass it. It is, in fact, incredible that what I had always known as a highly colorful community could be so completely drained of all its color. Far from being a story of the flesh and blood men and women who in the course of long years acted out their infinitely varied parts on the Knoxville scene, it refrains from all references which might be considered in even the slightest degree damaging. It may be looked upon as a Calendar of Saints. The only sinners listed in its long roll of pioneers, civic leaders, and their descendants from 1786, when the town was founded, until 1945, when this volume appeared, was one Sam Rutherford who, in 1813, in the course of a brawl bit off part of the ear of a fellow citizen of Knoxville, one John Garod; and a Peggy McMahan who got herself preserved in print through having been, also in 1813, indicted by the "Grand Inquest" on the score of being a common scold.⁷

Now all this is very curious to one who was in a position to know and early recognized that despite its prodigious display of piety and its strong streak of Puritanism of our deadly Southern variety, there was probably as much pure worldliness, as

large a proportion of rascality and lubricity in Knoxville, as many young rake-hells among its first families, as in any equal area in the United States.

What I have attempted then, is the Profane History of Knoxville; or rather, to state the much more modest aim I have had in view, a small segment of that history. Many individuals whose names appear in the pages of the *History of Knox County*, I knew, knew well, and as a child in their midst long ago, unconsciously taking notes, I have had things to say about a considerable number of them, in my effort to show something of what it felt like to be growing up in Knoxville in the 1880s and 1890s.

NOTES

1. This statement did appear in *The American Mercury*. However, it was not H. L. Mencken but Charles Angoff, assistant to the editor, who wrote: "Once the Athens of America, Boston now plunges downward toward the cultural level of Port au Prince and Knoxville, Tenn." Charles Angoff, "Boston Twilight," *American Mercury* (December 1925), 439.
2. In July 1925, John T. Scopes was tried for teaching evolution in the public schools of Dayton, Tennessee. See George E. Webb, "The Scopes Trial," in *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History & Culture*, ed. Carroll Van West (Nashville: Tennessee Historical Society, Rutledge Hill Press, 1998), 830–31.
3. Krutch was not named in the *Knoxville Sentinel* editorial that said, in part, "We wish this native son to know that we are not proud of him" in response to an article that Krutch wrote for *The Nation*, which had assigned him to cover the Scopes trial. In his biography of Krutch, John Margolis discussed at length the article and Krutch's reporting on the trial. *Knoxville Sentinel*, July 10, 1925; John D. Margolis, *Joseph Wood Krutch: A Writer's Life* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1980), 56–61.
4. According to the Finding Aid for a 1923 diary held in the University of Tennessee Special Collections Library, University President Harcourt A. Morgan allegedly dismissed Professor J. W. Sprowls because Sprowls had assigned a text, *The Mind in the Making*, which discussed evolution. The diary was kept from April 9 to August 20, 1923, by Philip M. Hamer, professor of history at UT during that time. *The Mind in the Making: The Relation of Intelligence to Social Reform* was written by James Harvey Robinson and published by Harper in 1921. Hamer, Philip M., (Philip May), 1891–1971. Finding Aid for the Philip M. Hamer Diary, MS.0526. 1923. http://dlc.lib.utk.edu/spc/view?docId=ead/0012_002914_000000_0000/0012_002914_000000_0000.xml (viewed March 5, 2018).
5. Tennessee Valley Authority.
6. Mary U. Rothrock, ed. *The French Broad-Holston Country: A History of Knox County, Tennessee* (Knoxville: East Tennessee Historical Society, 1946).
7. Rothrock, *French Broad-Holston Country*, 63, 64.

PART ONE



Annie Wetzell, about age 9. Taken in Grand Rapids, Michigan, before moving to Knoxville.

Chapter One

Gay Street

Like James McNeil Whistler, who did not “choose” to have been born in Lowell, Massachusetts, but in Baltimore, Maryland, St. Petersburg, Russia, or where he would,¹ at the moment, I choose—whatever my birth certificate may state—to have been born in Knoxville, Tennessee. It is certainly true that, while presumably by train, I have not the faintest recollection of arriving in Knoxville. My first memory of the place is of sitting at an open window, facing on Gay Street, in old Schubert’s Hotel, old even then, in 1885.² Once a log tavern, and in the intervening years a fashionable gathering place which advertised in the *Knoxville Journal* its “elegant bar-room, spacious ballroom, and large open fire-place in the commodious lobby,” Schubert’s at the time of my own first acquaintance with it, had become pretty dingy. Only the “elegant bar-room,” whose slightly sour and powerful fumes pervaded the whole hotel, survived to suggest its earlier grandeur. Soot-stained, however, and generally grimy though it was, it still retained a certain air of old-fashioned comfort and dignity and my parents had probably been given to understand that Schubert’s was better, whatever its failings, than its only two rivals in the town, the pillared, dilapidated yet statelier looking Lamar House on the corner below, or the somewhat more modern, if unimpressive, Hattie House, farther up the street.³

It was September, late in the afternoon, and from various connecting circumstances of which I retain vague memories, I think the day must have been Saturday. My parents had placed my younger sister in my charge when they started out in a livery carriage on what promised to be a prolonged excursion. They were house hunting and with prospects thus far, it seemed, far from encouraging.

I think, if my dream-like memory of it all can serve as guide, that I must have been sitting for most of the day, gazing, sometimes leaning, out of the open windows, guiltless of screens (one of those “Northern ideas” to which Knoxville was not yet ready to yield). Meantime my little sister May played with her dolls, or dozed in the sweltering heat on the big black-walnut bed, above which was suspended a voluminous canopy of white mosquito-netting, now in the day-time draped back over the bed’s towering head-board. But the room, with its drab walls, lofty ceiling, massive and ornate Early Victorian furniture, its huge wardrobe, marble-topped washstand bearing on it a china bowl and pitcher decorated with water-lilies, its worn and rather badly spotted crimson carpet and its musty smell, though different

from any I had known before was not sufficient in itself to hold my interest—not with so much happening down below on Gay Street, the origin of whose name, incidentally, I have never been able to discover, and one to which Mr. John Gunther objected, in his *Inside USA*, as a misnomer,⁴ but which presented, on that long past September day, if not a gay scene, at least a far from very grim one, to my own young unjaundiced eye.

But it was not, to be truthful, a wholly innocent eye with which I contemplated Gay Street for the first time. Considering my years—I had not yet reached my teens⁵—I was already, measured by the standards of the day, what might almost have been regarded as a traveled person. Child of traveling parents, whether traveling merely for pleasure or where my father's far-flung business interests called him—of parents, moreover, who were wont, at a moment's notice and in the face of vigorous protests from teachers, to take any or all of their children out of school in the middle of a term and traveling with them, I had had more than a passing glance at a host of cities, large and small, from New York and Boston and Philadelphia to the raw young town of Duluth, perched above the steely waters of Lake Superior. I knew Long Branch, New Jersey, Greenwich, Connecticut, Mackinaw Island, and the Falls of Minnehaha. But here, in this Knoxville, were new sights, sounds, smells—an utterly new feel.

Down below, on the street, bulky or lean Negro women were slopping by, pieces of shoes tied on their feet with rags, and balancing on their heads great willow baskets heaped up with what it was plain were freshly laundered clothes they were carrying home to their white folks somewhere. I could catch the sally a Negro woman threw out to another, with jovial insolence in passing: "Lord 'a mercy, nigger, where *you* gwine?" and again the mincing exchange as two black acquaintances met: "How's you-all?" "Why, we's tol'able, thankee." All of the time shackly wagons were clattering by, wagons hitched to mules, loaded with women and children, or with men in the wagon-box, eating water-melons as they rode, spitting out seeds into the street. There were a good many men, too, black and white, on mules or horse-back, all going, as the afternoon waned, in the direction of the bridge over the river, down at the end of Gay Street, only a few blocks away; shouting to each other, guffawing, going home to the country, you could tell, after a day's trading or idling in town. Often, in striking contrast, genteel surreys, with or without fringe on top, would pass, and occasionally a Victoria, the black coachman on the box in livery, and in the back the prettiest ladies and young girls I had ever seen, I thought, and all in the daintiest of summer toilettes, their voile or organdy dresses trimmed with ruffles and narrow lace frills; on their heads broad-brimmed Leghorn hats with ribbons streaming from the low crowns.

What puzzled me, though, and gave me the feeling of slight anxiety were groups of men on the corners below and gathered here and there along the curb opposite—

young men, well-dressed, often handsome, and others older, seedier. The groups kept forming and re-forming, but the men in them always talked in hushed voices, though with gestures and evident heat, about something that seemed, secretly, to concern them in common. What were they so excited about? In a few more hours I would know. Meantime, directly across the street, in front of an empty store building, stood a blind man with a ragged, dirty-faced little girl beside him who held out a cup for coppers. The blind man sang over and over, in a loud, high-pitched, nasal voice, with each syllable long drawn out, a ballad which began:

His name was Hicks Car Michael,
His char-ac'-ter was bad.

But what attracted me most in the view from the hotel windows was Staub's Opera House,⁶ on a corner obliquely across from Schubert's, a squarish brick building, then of a soft yellowish tone, as I recall it, and with out in front what obviously were bill-boards announcing future attractions, a lure I finally was unable to resist, so that some time during the day I had deserted my post, and slipped across the street, stopping to drop a few pennies into the cup of the ballad singer and receiving in return a printed copy of the ballad from which I learned that the man whose



Staub's Opera House, corner Gay Street and Cumberland Avenue.

name was Hicks Carmichael had killed someone, unhappily run afoul of the Law and met his own “sad fate” when not long before he had been hanged in Knoxville. It was a ballad, I may add, whose mournful strains were to sound now and then from corners of Gay Street for years to come.⁷

At the theatre, I read on the bill-boards that Emma Abbott was to be heard the coming week in Donizetti’s popular *Daughter of the Regiment*, in *Martha* and *The Bohemian Girl*. I had heard of these operas, though never gone to an opera, notwithstanding the fact that my parents, along with constantly interrupting the schooling of their children to take them traveling, had also taken us, at a very tender age, to see Edwin Booth in *Hamlet*, the great Salvini, the Elder, in *Othello*, Joseph Jefferson in *Rip Van Winkle*, Madame Modjeska, the Polish star, in *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, Ristori, the Italian tragic actress who had been a rival of the immortal Rachel, in *Francesca da Rimini*, and many other famous players of the day. As for Staub’s Opera House itself, though I had seen much more imposing opera-houses, as theatres in general were called then in the United States, yet immediately it took on for me a romantic aspect such as no other theatre had ever worn, or ever was to, not even the *Comédie Française*.

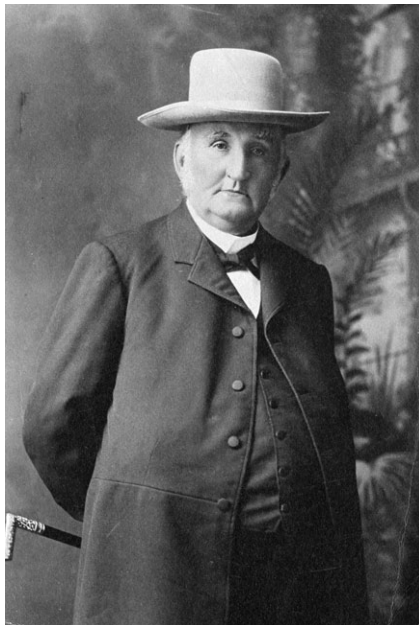
It was, I believe now, looking back, more than anything else, the *old* look of things in Knoxville—even things like Staub’s Opera House that were not, in reality, very old, but that Knoxville’s damp sooty winters, its long, moist, hot summers, had combined to make look so—it was this, I think that began at once working its magic on me. Main streets with which heretofore I had been familiar were broad well-kept thoroughfares, plate-glass windows flashing along their lengths. Here, the very shabbiness on every hand: across the way the scarred mouldy store-fronts of stores that looked dim and cool inside, their windows half-shrouded in indigo-blue shades; the uneven brick pavements, moss pushing up in places between the bricks; the steep, shadowy narrow street which I could see opposite, plunging down the hill at the side of the Opera House—why, this was like some place I had read about and seen pictures of in *St. Nicholas*, that children’s monthly on which I had been brought up and only recently discarded in favor of the more sophisticated delights of Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair*. It was like some worn and ancient town in the Old World with narrow steep streets, dark and malodorous but tinged with history. And Knoxville itself was tinged with history. The Battle of Fort Sanders, in “the late War,” had been fought here.⁸ My father had helped throw up its earth-works. The heart knows its own climate when it finds it, and where I had always wanted to be—from the beginning—was in Knoxville!

Then the smells—fumes from the bar-room downstairs and from nearby saloons up and down the street; the ammoniac reek from Pryor Brown’s Livery Stable, biggest and best in town and directly back of Schubert’s Hotel;⁹ the stench—as it can only, in candor, be called—arising from the open ditches, instead of closed sewers,

through which the city's waste was still disposed—these smells, old and evil though they were, old as sin, yet in some mysterious and exciting way blended, in time, with impressions of the bewitching ladies in the Victorias, of the blind ballad-singer, the wicked man, Hicks Carmichael, who had been hanged, of black faces constantly in sight, served only to enhance the spell which Knoxville was beginning to exert.

The heat became more oppressive as the sun went down. My thin summer dress clung to my skin and I kept mopping my forehead and fanning with a big palm-leaf fan I had found in the room. But suddenly my attention was turned from the heat to a magnificent equipage lumbering into view from further up Gay Street, an open landau, two stalwart mulattoes in high hats on the box and on the back seat, alone, the corpulent figure of an old man in a white linen suit, with an abundance of snowy hair escaping from under the wide-brimmed hat he wore and framing his broad, clean-shaven, florid face. His hands were resting on a gold-headed cane. This, as I was soon to know, was the Hon. Perez Dickinson, born in Amherst, Massachusetts, and a close kinsman of the poetess, Emily Dickinson, "Uncle Perez," as the irreverent in Knoxville called him.

Merchant, planter, banker, one of Knoxville's wealthiest and most influential men, at seventeen he had come South—as had so many other New England men



Perez Dickinson (ca. 1893).

and women—to teach school. But after three years of school-teaching had abandoned it for a more lucrative enterprise, shortly becoming silent partner in the emerging firm of Cowan, McClung & Company, wholesale drygoods, groceries, and shoes, with Knoxville, developing then—in the 1830s and '40s—as a wholesale distributing center for all the surrounding Southern States.

Childless, over seventy, a widower for forty years past when I first caught sight of Col. Dickinson, as he was generally called (a title inescapable in a time when all men of any importance in Knoxville were Colonels, Majors, or at very least, Captains), he maintained not only what was referred to as his “princely mansion” in town, but a sumptuous country house, “Island Home,” on his great plantation near Knoxville, entertaining lavishly in both.¹⁰

Of all this I knew nothing, of course, when, from a window in Schubert’s Hotel, his resplendent figure arrested my attention, though neither then, nor later, could I have imagined Col. Perez Dickinson against a measured New England background. Ironically enough, this son of Massachusetts, with his spacious ways, was, and ever remained, Knoxville’s outstanding example of that romantic and legendary figure, the Southern planter, at his flamboyant best. None I had seen on the stage was pictorially his equal, though everything now in Knoxville was beginning to take on the character of a play or story, and after Col. Dickinson had passed in his landau I should hardly have been surprised to see golden chariots rolling down Gay Street.

But I had been prepared—conditioned, I might say, in previous months, to expect marvels in Knoxville. My father had first seen the old town—old for an American town—as a soldier, during the War; been impressed by its climate and its splendid situation—“built, like Rome, on seven hills.” I had heard, or overheard, much, in fact, about the whole great valley of East Tennessee, rimmed by mountains—one of the most beautiful and potentially rich valleys in the United States, and with Knoxville, “The Marble City,”¹¹ at its very heart, the strategic center of a region abounding not only in marble, but in iron and coal, with endless tracts of timber, an all but inexhaustible supply, to which the axe had not yet been laid. Fabulous fortunes would be made here!

It is true my father had already made a fortune, or so I had inferred from words let drop by our eccentric but able and prosperous Cousin Simon: “By George, Henry a millionaire, and not yet forty!”

It was almost dark now and in a strange place (as any birth-place is bound to be), I was getting a little anxious for my parents’ return. When they opened the door, Mama—I can see her plainly—, beautiful all her life, and in a modish dress of cream-colored batiste, a touch of scarlet about it somewhere, its overskirt bordered, as were the sleeves, with a deep flounce of English eyelet embroidery in the same delicate creamy shade; with a bustle—which no lady of the period would have been

seen without—, and her hat, gloves, parasol, all in harmony with the rest of her costume. I can see the refinement, and the dignity, without stiffness, which she never lacked, but a look of being a trifle wilted now, her face unusually flushed, perhaps from the heat, and in her dark eyes a faintly fretted expression. She went into the adjoining bedroom to freshen up and my father lit the gas and sat down, taking my sister in his lap.

“Your Mama,” he said, “is a little disappointed in the house. It was all we could find to rent, or to buy, for that matter—any we would consider. It’s not in very good repair and it’s not *very* clean!” He burst into a laugh at this, a boyish, yet not boisterous laugh. “Well, I think your Mama will like it better,” he said, “when it’s been scrubbed and scoured and maybe some fresh paper and paint applied. Anyway, we won’t have to live in it very long, only till we know Knoxville better and where we want to build. But children,” he said, lowering his voice and a mischievous look in his eyes, “I’ll tell you something, a secret—I sort of like that old house we found out there near Fort Sanders. We’ll move in as soon as the owners move out. Of course it’s an old-fashioned house and hasn’t many conveniences, but it has little wooden balconies—regular Romeo and Juliet balconies—hanging around it from the upstairs rooms. It has a big yard, plenty of room for Trix [the dog] to run around in. It has some wonderful magnolia trees in front and apple trees and pear trees and cherry trees in the back, and a grape trellis hanging just full of grapes—.”

By this time, I could hardly wait to see the place.

But it was always thus when Papa appeared. Tall, broad-shouldered, with no superfluous flesh, yet not exactly lean, all his movements were easy. But it was not alone that he was the very image of physical vigor united with flexibility, of abounding health. It was more than this. He was one of those people, those vital and decisive people, in whose presence we felt a power to cope with whatever arose, felt instantly secure. And so it was now.

We went down to supper. The old Negro waiters in their not too clean white coats hovered around Papa obsequiously. It was a little cooler here in the dusky ground-floor dining room which opened, on its Gay Street side, directly on to the sidewalk. There were no printed menus but appetizing odors from dishes on all the tables mingled with the pungent, all-enveloping winery fumes from the adjacent bar-room. There were grapes and peaches and melons, platters of golden-brown fried chicken, of ham and of steak, platters of steaming corn on the cob, which the waiters called “roastin’ ears.” There were heaped-up dishes of string beans that had been boiled with bacon; dishes of lima beans and of the smaller, more tender variety of limas—butter beans; there were sweet potatoes, just dug from the ground, cucumbers and tomatoes only a few hours off the vines—all the fresh, rich, home-grown products of Knoxville’s market, of which there was none better then, it is safe to say, in the whole South, or certainly not in the Mid-South. There were

new-made jams and jellies, too, of every description and on every table a high glass compote of deep amber honey, made, Papa explained, from the blossoms of sourwood trees, and the best honey, he said, in the world. And there were the old waiters scurrying back and forth on their flat feet, constantly bringing fresh supplies of small flaky biscuits, piping hot, of strong hot coffee, and big glass pitchers from which they refilled your glass with sweet milk, or with buttermilk still with little blobs of butter floating on it as it had come from the churn, and while Mama might find the string beans too greasy, the thin fried steak that had been dipped in flour and was crisp and brown, a poor substitute for rare, juicy Porterhouse, so far as I was concerned never before, nor after, was a supper quite so delicious as that first supper at old Schubert's Hotel.

Just the same, all of the time we were eating, I was not quite easy. The dining-room was getting crowded. Young men kept coming into it from the Gay Street entrance, or through the swinging-doors from the bar-room, joining other young men at the tables in the back of the room. With the few and poor lights in the room and its thick smoky atmosphere, I could only see the young men dimly, but I could tell, from their heads close together, they were conferring about something or other. I noticed that the old Negro waiters, as they hurried back and forth, with their huge trays, held aloft, exchanged keen furtive glances with each other and occasionally that one of them gave a quick backward, almost imperceptible but knowing nod in the direction of the young men, several of whom I recognized now as the same I had seen from the bedroom windows, gathered in knots on the street below. I became conscious of a feeling of suppressed excitement diffused through the whole dim, crowded, sultry room, merged with its heavy smell of good food and drink. Something was afoot in this highly charged atmosphere and instinct told me it was nothing good.

But when I questioned Papa he put me off lightly. It was only when Mama questioned him that in turn he questioned the waiter. I strained my ears.

"Dey's young men," the old waiter said in low tones, his grizzled head bent down, "who's come up from Loudon, Sweetwater, Athens—all de little towns round about. You see, suh, der was a young man kilt heah in Knoxville a couple o' days back, a travelin' man, mighty well liked. Oh, yas, suh, de Law got de man dat kilt him. He's in de jail-house heah, but dere might be a little trouble. Of co'se I don't know nothin' about it 'cep'n what I heahs, but some says . . ."

That was all I could catch, but I saw across our cluttered and now disordered table a look of slight alarm rise in Mama's somber eyes. What sort of a place *was* this to which her husband had brought her?—this man whose adventurous lead she had followed many years and heretofore without a moment's misgiving.

Papa spoke reassuringly. The city authorities, he was confident, were well advised. They would take all precautions.

Next morning Mama and Papa went to church. Mama was to present to the Second Presbyterian Church in Knoxville her "Letter" from the church of which she had previously been a member. Papa was not a member of any church. When he and Mama lived in New York during the early years of their married life they had attended the Plymouth Church in Brooklyn and for its pastor, Henry Ward Beecher, he always expressed high respect, as later for Spurgeon, the famous English preacher, whom he went to hear whenever he was in London.¹² But in general—I was already aware—neither religious denominations nor religious dogmas made any strong appeal to my father, although he dutifully put on his frock coat and every Sunday morning accompanied Mama.

A fat, slatternly, good-humored black chambermaid, with a white rag around her head, came in to do up the room. She said her name was Tabitha, but just call her Bithe. She kept talking more or less to herself as she went around, draping the voluminous folds of the mosquito canopy over the back of the bed, changing the dingy bluish linen for some fresh but smelly linen of the same hue; as she slapped with her dust-cloth here and there and emptied the slops. "Law, honey, you-all best not be roamin' aroun' ter-night. Dey's gwine ter be trouble in dis ole town shore as Judgment Day."

But she gave some attention now to my little sister, bent over a book of fairy tales, her shy face almost hidden by the long fair ringlets which fell below her shoulders. "Ain't she sweet as an angel?" Bithe said, but then, turning quickly to where I was standing in front of the windows, looking out, and at the same time trying to braid my hair in the two braids I wore down my back, "But you're sweet, too, honey. Lawd 'a mercy, sech fine hair—fine as silk! Want Bithe to he'p you plait it?"

It was the first compliment I had ever received on my hair, which was perfectly straight and ash brown. Bithe's honeyed words, in her deep, soft, rich voice, seemed to establish an immediate bond between us. She remained at the windows, pointing a black finger and half whispering now: "Right down dere, down de hill, on Crozier Street—second street below dis heah one, Gay—dat's where de man—white man—was kilt, in one o' dem whorehouses down yonder."

A shiver ran through me. I had seen the word "whore" in the Bible, but never before heard it spoken. I understood its meaning, however, if vaguely, and recognized at once that in this good-natured black chambermaid I had a source of knowledge about the mysterious subject of sex. I must have asked some questions. At any rate, Bithe explained that Crozier Street (long since, I believe, Central Avenue) was Knoxville's "bad street," with whorehouses, she said, from one end to the other. She pointed now in another direction, toward the "jail-house," down by the river, close to the bridge. They kept bloodhounds there. Sometimes of a night you could hear the hounds. It made your blood curdle. And that's where the young man was they were going to "string up." Bithe was full of excitement, her eyes, with their



Annie and May Wetzell (ca. 1880).

yellowish, blood-shot whites, bulging as she poured all this into my eager if horrified young ears. “De young mens shore is a-gatherin,’” she went on, mutteringly, “but yet an’ still I don’t reckon dey’d lynch him of a Sunday, de Lawd’s day. But dey might. Ain’t no tellin’—”

A strong, unfamiliar, musky and animal smell still lingered in the room after Bithe had left with her slop-bucket and broom. But she had left behind her, as well, something warm and human and comforting, despite the fact that some of the new knowledge she had imparted had made me feel faintly sick.

But at noon my brother Harry came to have dinner with us and Crozier Street lost, for the time, the powerful and disturbing impression its name had made on my mind.

Three years older than I, a tall slim youth with dark, waving hair and dark eyes, not sharp eyes, but smouldering, like Mama’s, Harry was strikingly handsome. Of course I should have liked to be as handsome as Harry, as pretty as my little sister May with her long bright curls. But I can not remember that the matter gave me any particular concern. Certainly it did not prevent my being impressed by Harry’s appearance in his natty new uniform and jaunty cap. He had entered the University of Tennessee—which at the time was a military establishment as well—and was living there until we had established a home.

It was after Harry had returned to the Hill (as Knoxville referred to the university in its midst) that I went for a walk with Papa.

Gay Street, so lively the day before, proved now as dull, deserted, as lifeless, as utterly depressing as the main streets in most American towns of the period (and many since) on Sunday afternoon. Not even a horse and buggy went by.

We stopped on the corner of a narrow cross-street called Clinch and my father pointed out where his offices would be, opposite us, on the ground floor next the Hattie House (later the Imperial, and still later in belated honor of Admiral Farragut, born in a log cabin close by,¹³ the Farragut). Beyond the Hattie House the wholesale houses that lined the street for a block or two—wholesale drygoods, clothing, hardware, shoes, drugs—had their indigo-blue window shades pulled all the way down, giving the street all the more a funereal air.

But Gay Street, with Knoxville's "bad street" scarcely more than a stone's throw below—Gay Street, for all its Sabbath solemnity had staged its own riotous scenes. Only a year or so before, on a busy market day, the street thronged, Thomas O'Conner, who had amassed a fortune through building railroads and other early ventures in East Tennessee, president of Knoxville's oldest and most important bank, owner of its finest home, "Melrose," had shot and killed the two hot-headed young Mabry brothers, who looked upon Tom O'Conner as an upstart, while the Mabry brothers had shot and killed O'Conner in the same fray; all three dead, a matter of minutes, in front of the stores from which they had just emerged.¹⁴

But as Papa and I turned from Gay Street into Clinch, I had not yet heard of the O'Conner-Mabry feud and its tragic termination, for all that the town was still



Harry Wetzell.



Post Office and Custom House. Art Work of Knoxville, 1895.

ringing with it, and as we crossed the street to the Custom House (as the Postoffice was called then) to mail some letters,¹⁵ my attention was arrested by the sight of some of the same young men standing around outside in knots that I had seen the evening before at supper and earlier from the hotel windows. They were in their black Sunday suits now, though still talking together in ominously hushed tones. The words of the Negro chambermaid ran through me, “*Dey might. Ain’t no tellin’—*”

Papa did not seem to notice the young men. We came out of the Custom House, and there, obliquely across from us, was the lovely old Second Presbyterian Church, which Papa and Mama had attended in the morning, and which, I reflected, not too joyfully, Harry and May and I later would be expected to attend with them, whether we wanted to or not. Nevertheless, this church made its instant and lasting impression on me. Built close to the ground, it stood far back from the street, and with its graceful spire, tall pointed windows, its mellowed red-brick walls partly overgrown by ivy, and a broad brick walk leading from the gate to its few shallow steps, it looked, I thought, just as a church ought to look, at once stately, simple, and somehow humanized by time. All around—for the church yard occupied almost a block—were tall ancient trees with ivy clambering over them, and at the

side and back of the churchyard were old graves, their rounded, weather-stained head-stones embroidered with lichens, their inscriptions almost obliterated, and still older graves, above ground, burial vaults, a marble slab, with worn carving, resting on the low brick walls of each of these tombs.¹⁶

Papa and I walked slowly along Prince Street (now Market) at the side of the churchyard, which, like almost everything else in the Knoxville of that day, was not very well kept, but softened, like the church itself, by the English ivy which covered much of the ground, by the deep green carpet of periwinkle spread here and there, by the neglected but blooming roses and the tangles of honeysuckle blooming too, now in September for the second time, and whose heavy sweet perfume, with its sensuous, faintly sour under-scent, we could catch as we leaned over the low stone wall, trying to make out inscriptions on the tombs nearest us, a scent, a mere whiff of which, to this day, wherever I am, can recreate for me instantly, disturbingly, as nothing else, the old Knoxville I knew in my youth.

For me, as for Papa, there was nothing melancholy, nothing morbid, in the attraction which the old churchyard held for us. I found in it the same strong appeal I had found in the narrow shadowy streets, fouled by weather and dirt, which I had gazed down into from the windows of Schubert's Hotel. As for Papa, while he was not in the least afraid of new things, especially of new ideas—which he went out to meet—, yet he liked old churches, old streets, old towns, filled with a sense of the past; and what he liked, I liked, so my mind was at ease as we crossed over into Market Square behind the churchyard, my father pointing out, in passing, Peter Kern's Ice Cream Parlor, a red-brick building (for Knoxville was a red-brick town in those days) on the corner of the Square nearest the churchyard, and a favorite social resort and gathering place of the period.¹⁷ Long afterwards, in old towns in Spain and Italy and Southern France, where markets and marketing were cheek-by-jowl with scarred old churches in open squares—often conducted on the very steps of the churches—, I would be carried back nostalgically to Knoxville, with the bustling swarms of people coming and going to its Farmer's Market on Market Days, to the peaceful tree-shaded old churchyard of its Second Presbyterian Church and Peter Kern's Ice Cream Parlor—all pleasantly jumbled together in the heart of the town. It was after my time in Knoxville that, mindless of the fact that New York had preserved its Trinity Church and Churchyard in the very heart of its own downtown district and notwithstanding grown to be one of the great cities of the world; that Boston had saved not only her Common with its ancient graves but many of the narrow, crooked, historic streets leading into the Common and still grown mightily in power and wealth and population—it was after my time that the city fathers of Knoxville, to widen Prince Street in the interest of "civic progress," and obliterating the name the street had borne from frontier days, re-naming it Market,¹⁸ tore down the Second Presbyterian Church, reducing to rubble what



Peter Kern's Confectionery.

in architectural proportions and setting was not only the town's most beautiful church, but one of the most beautiful in the Mid-South; that they laid waste the old churchyard, disgorging graves that for a hundred years had remained undisturbed in their midst; deprived the town for all time, of an open space at its centre, a daily vision of beauty and tranquility to refresh the spirits of its people—destroyed, in a word, in a single operation, sturdy vestiges of the town's bygone history worth more than all the thousands of pages of emasculate [*sic*] print that would ever be issued on the subject.¹⁹

It is, however, perhaps too much to ask of city fathers that they be possessed of aesthetic appreciation, or be sensitive to imponderables that would enrich beyond measure a community life over which, for their little day, they preside. In any case, happily for me, none of these civic crimes of time to come cast their shadows athwart our path on that Sunday afternoon when I walked with my father across from the cool shadowy churchyard of the Second Presbyterian Church to the narrow thoroughfare leading along the east side of Market Square.

The old wooden Market House, built in the '50s, capacious but shed-like, and that still stood then in the center of the Square, was tightly shuttered on Sundays, and the farmers' wagons that on week-days would be backed up to the curb, with the farmers noisily crying their wares—all this was absent now. Only some wisps of

straw, and bits of refuse which a miserable, mangy stray dog or two were picking up from the gutter, attested to the furious activities of Market Square on week days.²⁰

We looked through the dusty windows of closed-up shops where dry groceries were sold—dark, disorderly, overcrowded shops, but which carried, we would know in time, the widest variety and choicest quality of supplies; rare cheeses, Bombay chutney, kegs of pickled oysters, *pâté de fois gras*—all manner of exotic specialties to meet the demands of the town's gourmets and *bon vivants*, of which there were many, and shops from which even now a smell of spices reached us mingled with the aroma of freshly roasted coffee. We glanced into cheap-Jack shops where shoddy clothing was displayed in the windows, and then, emerging from the Square at its far end, crossed another narrow street and started up a hill bordered on either side by substantial, dignified, rather aristocratic-looking old houses, set amidst trees and shrubbery.

But it was an old square red-brick house, a rather handsome home, which stood on a corner at the foot of the hill, on Wall Street, facing the rear of the Market House, which was to make a more lasting impression on me than anything else on this first brief journey in discovering Knoxville—and not exactly the house either, but a large wire enclosure we came upon as we climbed the hill, and in it some deer, among them a doe and a little fawn. We stopped to look at the deer, delighting in their color, dainty movements and pretty black muzzles; and saw now, at a slightly higher elevation, but belonging to the same house, a rose garden, in riotous bloom, for in a day when no one sprayed or had so much as heard of black spot Knoxville was full of blooming roses in September, and there were few Knoxville homes, rich or poor, of whites or blacks, without their larger or smaller garden of roses—Jacqueminot, LaFrance, Malmaison—all the old-fashioned, full-scented roses people grew then.

I had seen deer before—many of them in parks and a few in the wild. I had seen rose gardens, roses blooming with equal and perhaps greater profusion, but for some reason these deer, these roses, so near to the grimy Gay Street, to Market Square, remain with me as something in an all but forgotten dream, and a little different from any I would know again.²¹

NOTES

1. American artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834–1903) was born in Lowell, Massachusetts, but during the trial resulting from his libel suit against critic John Ruskin “claimed St. Petersburg, Russia, as his birthplace, declaring, ‘I shall be born when and where I want, and I do not choose to be born in Lowell.’” Whistler had lived in St. Petersburg as a boy; he later lived in Baltimore as a young man. Lisa N. Peters, *James McNeill Whistler* (New York: Smithmark, 1996), 11; Ronald Anderson and Anne Koval, *James McNeill Whistler: Beyond the Myth*, (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1994), 38.

2. Schubert's Hotel was on the northwest corner of Gay Street at its intersection with Cumberland Avenue.
3. The Lamar House, onto which the present-day Bijou Theatre was built as an addition in the early 1900s, still stands on the southwest corner of the same intersection. Hartie House, on the northeast corner of Gay Street at Clinch Avenue, was on the site where the Farragut Hotel opened in 1919.
4. After calling Knoxville "the ugliest city I ever saw in America . . ." John Gunther goes on to say: "Its main street is called Gay Street; this seemed to me to be a misnomer." John Gunther, *Inside U.S.A.*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Bros., 1947), 761.
5. Annie Wetzell and her family arrived in Knoxville on Wednesday, September 3, 1885, according to an article in the *Knoxville Daily Journal* on the next day (p. 4). Her thirteenth birthday would be September 20.
6. A performing arts venue on the southeast corner of Gay Street and Cumberland Avenue. Built in 1872 by Peter Staub, a Swiss immigrant. Lucile Deaderick, ed. *Heart of the Valley: A History of Knoxville, Tennessee* (Knoxville: East Tennessee Historical Society, 1976), 463–4.
7. Although there *was* a local ballad telling the story of Hicks Carmichael, the murder for which he was hanged did not occur until May 1888, nearly three years after the day that Armstrong describes. *Knoxville Journal*, May 22, 1888, July 21, 1888. William D. Mercer, of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, published a research article, "The Ballad of Hicks Carmichael: Law, Music, and Popular Justice in Urban Appalachia," in the online peer-reviewed journal *Law, Culture, and the Humanities* (June 1, 2018). The "Ballad of Hicks Carmichael" was first recorded by folk song collectors Edward Capers Kirkland and Mary Neal Kirkland in 1937. *The Kirkland Recordings: Newly Discovered Field Recordings from Tennessee and North Carolina, 1937–39*, notes by Kip Lornell (LP Record, Tennessee Folklore Society, 1984).
8. This Civil War battle took place Sunday, November 29, 1863. For a description of the siege of Knoxville, the battle and its aftermath, see Mary U. Rothrock, ed., *The French Broad-Holston Country: A History of Knox County, Tennessee*. (Knoxville: East Tennessee Historical Society, 1946), 138–141.
9. In 1925, Pryor Brown built a mixed-use parking garage on the corner of Market and Church, where his livery stable had been, and added to it in 1929. Known for a time as the "House of Brown," this four-story building was a transit center with a fleet of taxis and a freight transfer service in addition to providing parking for automobiles. Jack Neely, *The Legend of the Gold Bricks, and Other Knoxville Stories*, ed. Paul James (Knoxville, Tenn.: Knoxville History Project, 2018), 27–31. In 2016, developers, along with Knoxville city leaders, announced plans to turn the historic Pryor Brown parking garage into a mixed-use facility with upper level residential units and storefronts on the street level. *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, June 2, 2016.
10. Perez Dickinson, born in Amherst, Massachusetts, and a cousin of poet Emily

Dickinson, came to Knoxville in 1829 and became Knoxville's foremost citizen, a merchant and banker—one of Knoxville's "merchant princes"—and first president of the Knoxville Board of Trade. He married Susan Penniman, also of Massachusetts, in 1845, and brought her to Knoxville, but she died the next year following the birth of their child, which also died. Although Dickinson's principal residence was on Main Street, he owned some six hundred acres outside the city, where he developed a model farm and had his "Island Home," a show place for entertaining visitors and giving parties. The house is now the residence of the superintendent of the Tennessee School for the Deaf, which is located on Dickinson's former property. See: Rothrock, *The French Broad-Holston Country*, 411–412; Betsey Beeler Creekmore, *Knoxville!* (Knoxville: East Tennessee Historical Society, 1991), 103–122.

11. Because of its many marble companies and their importance in the marble industry, Knoxville came to be known, at that time, as the "Marble City." Michael J. McDonald and William Bruce Wheeler, *Knoxville, Tennessee: Continuity and Change in an Appalachian City* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 21–22.
12. Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892).
13. Admiral David Glasgow Farragut (1801–1870), born at Lowe's Ferry on the Holston River in west Knox County, was the first Admiral in the United States Navy. Rothrock, *The French Broad-Holston Country*, 416.
14. Killed in the October 19, 1882, gunfight were O'Conner, Joseph A. Mabry, Jr., and his son (not brother) Joseph A. Mabry III. Deaderick, *Heart of the Valley*, 565. Mark Twain includes a detailed description of the shootout in a lengthy footnote in Chapter 40 of *Life on the Mississippi*.
15. Built of Tennessee marble between 1871 and 1874 at the corner of Clinch Avenue and Prince (now Market) Street, Knoxville's Custom House served as U.S. Post Office and federal building until 1933. It later housed the main offices of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). Today, after a major renovation and expansion in 2004, it is home to the East Tennessee History Center, comprising the Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection, the Knox County Archives, and the East Tennessee Historical Society and Museum. Knox County Public Library, <http://www.knoxlib.org/local-family-history/custom-house-history-center> (viewed October 10, 2016); Knox Heritage, <http://knoxheritage.org/our-work/neighborhood-tours/historic-downtown-knoxville-walking-tour/us-custom-house-post-office/> (viewed October 10, 2016)
16. Second Presbyterian Church was founded in 1818. The church building to which Armstrong refers, on the west side of Market Street between Clinch and Union Avenues, was erected in 1860. Rothrock, *The French Broad-Holston Country*, 281–282.
17. Peter Kern (1835–1907), a German immigrant, began his business life in Knoxville as a baker. The three-story building constructed in 1876 to house his bakery/confectionary, ice cream parlor, and the Oddfellows Hall, is still standing at the corner of Market Street and Union Avenue. Today, its space is occupied by two restaurants and the