

---

Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects

Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects

---

2018

## An Order to Society/A Place Where "You Can Live Freedom"

James Franklin Lowe

College of William and Mary - Arts & Sciences, [j.franklin.lowe@gmail.com](mailto:j.franklin.lowe@gmail.com)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/etd>



Part of the [History Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Lowe, James Franklin, "An Order to Society/A Place Where "You Can Live Freedom"" (2018). *Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects*. William & Mary. Paper 1550153797.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.21220/s2-rbhg-2603>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@wm.edu](mailto:scholarworks@wm.edu).

An Order to Society/A Place Where “You Can Live Freedom”

James Franklin Lowe

Fayetteville, GA

Bachelor of Arts, Samford University, 2016

A Thesis Here presented to the Graduate Faculty of The College of William &  
Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Arts

Lyon G. Tyler Department of History

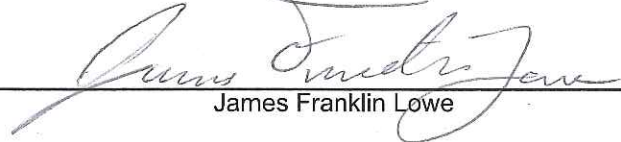
College of William & Mary  
August, 2018



## APPROVAL PAGE


This Thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

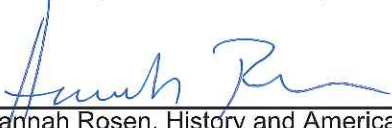
Master of Arts

  
James Franklin Lowe

Approved by the Committee August, 2018

  
Committee Chair  
Professor Hiroshi Kitamura, History  
College of William & Mary

  
Professor Fabricio Prado, History  
College of William & Mary

  
Professor Hannah Rosen, History and American Studies  
College of William & Mary

## ABSTRACT

“An Order to Society: Soeur Ste. Reine and the New Orleans Ursulines as Agents of Empire, 1727-1779” addresses the Ursuline Sisters of New Orleans as participants in an international, multiethnic system. All of these men and women helped to create a society and morality for colonial Louisiana and its capital city. Catherine Mauricette de Kerogon de l’Etang, Soeur Ste. Reine provides insight into the secular, temporal implications of her Sisters’ ministry in New Orleans. After her return to a convent in Normandy, Kerogon wrote a series of letters to the French Court, asking for monetary compensation and defining herself as an agent of empire. Through their service to the various Atlantic populations of New Orleans, especially women and young girls, each of the Ursulines of New Orleans – French, Spanish, and Creole in origin – took part in the construction of a Eurocentric society in their New World home.

“A Place Where ‘You Can Live Freedom’: The Landscape of the Highlander Folk School, 1932-1962” is an environmental history of the Highlander Folk School, a training site for labor and civil rights activists. Myles Horton, founder of Highlander, and his staff and students all contributed to the physical, built, and symbolic landscapes of the Folk School. Located on “Monteagle Mountain,” on the Cumberland Plateau of middle Tennessee, the Highlander Folk School welcomed generations of leaders, workers, and activists to a small farm outfitted with simple structures and furnishings. There, inspired by a common ideology of potential, they discussed the movements they led, practiced radical adult education, planned for the future of the South, and created a model of integrated, egalitarian, communal living – a model that students could experience *in situ* and then carry home, to their own communities throughout the region. Each layer of the environment – physical, built, and symbolic – influenced the realization of Highlander’s ideology of potential and affected the growth of the labor and civil rights movements of the twentieth century South.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	ii
Dedications	iii
Chapter 1. Intellectual Biography	1
Chapter 2. An Order to Society: Soeur Ste. Reine and the New Orleans Ursulines as Agents of Empire, 1727-1779	4
Bibliography	25
Chapter 3. A Place Where 'You Can Live Freedom': The Landscape of the Highlander Folk School, 1932-1962	30
Appendix	64
Bibliography	89

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My gratitude goes out to so many individuals and communities – my people in every sense of the word. At the College of William and Mary, I benefited from the advice and encouragement of my seminar professors -- Tuska Benes, Adrienne Petty, Jeremy Pope, Fabricio Prado, Hannah Rosen, and Jay Watkins -- and from Guillaume Aubert, who made so much of "An Order to Society" possible. Oliver Jervis, Margo Shea, Carol Frieden, and Jennifer Barth all facilitated my research on the Highlander Folk School, as did Emily Senefeld, who so generously offered to introduce me to the site and turn my project into an act of community service.

From Samford University, Erin Mauldin, LeeAnn Reynolds, and Jennifer Speights-Binet continued to inform my connection to the civil rights movement and to social geography, and I will always be grateful for our years together and our continued friendship. Bryan Johnson and the University Fellows Program have been my constant source of inspiration and confidence, and I would not be the scholar and man I am without their faith in me.

The Reverend Tyler Montgomery and the Canterbury Association at William and Mary have supported me throughout my year in Williamsburg, and the connections I made within that community will serve me for years to come. I would also like to thank the communities of First Baptist Church, Riverdale, GA, St. Luke's, Mt. Brook, AL, and the men and women of the Precincts -- their prayers and encouragement have sustained me each and every day. Best wishes and much appreciation to my intrepid cohort in Blair Hall, especially Jane Snyder and William Sutherland, my fellow southerners. To Elizabeth, Stone, Laura Ann, Regan, Julia, Bailey, Hannah, Susan, the Texans, and the lost boys - you are my joy and my strength. I could not have gotten this far without you.

My last "thank you" must go to my family -- all the loud and loving Lowes spread throughout the South -- and my mother in particular: Ann G. Lowe, editor-in-chief.

This portfolio is dedicated to my fellow pilgrims, with grace and peace.



## Intellectual Biography

In the middle of my spring semester at the College of William and Mary, I took two trips away from campus and my pattern of classes. Over spring break, I joined a pilgrimage to Cambridge University and Canterbury Cathedral, and two weeks later, I traveled to Tennessee's Cumberland Plateau for a research trip related to the Highlander Folk School. Earlier, in the fall, I had taken a more conventional journey back to Birmingham, Alabama, for homecoming at Samford University. These three trips away from Williamsburg reflect the reasons I came to William and Mary, and they relate to the trajectory of my graduate research. For me, pursuing this Master's in History was both a bridge towards employment and a consolidated time of discernment. Coming from Samford, represented by that brief weekend in Alabama, I expected to build a career in Academia, but my year at William and Mary has helped me see that I will be much happier applying my graduate studies to the high school classroom – instead of the undergraduate lecture hall. I associate my middle trip, to the sites that created so much of English culture and Anglican/Episcopal identity, to my ongoing quest for personal clarity. I am actively considering a future in vocational ministry, but I also want my scholarship to affect my development as a person and a leader. Studying activism within the South, broadly defined, has allowed me to question my views of society and my potential role within it. My final trip, which provided so much information for my second research paper, conveyed my willingness to study theory, argument, content, and historical developments, but also my commitment

to my own path towards education or community engagement. Writing an environmental history of the Highlander Folk School has long been my dream project, and my arc through academia seems complete.

I have often branded myself as a southern women's historian, but more accurately, I am a student of southern history, women's history, environmental history, and studies of the long civil rights movement. My undergraduate career provided me with a foundation in each of those fields, but my graduate seminars and research opportunities at William and Mary solidified my relationship with these types of history. Based on the themes of my two research seminars, and my desire to apply new theories to my understanding of southern history, I wrote one paper on the Order of St. Ursula, a community of women religious active in eighteenth-century New Orleans, and one paper on the physical, built, and symbolic landscapes of the Highlander Folk School, which trained leaders of the labor and civil rights movements. Though the basic subject of "An Order to Society: Soeur Ste. Reine and the New Orleans Ursulines as Agents of Empire, 1727-1779," was a continuation of an undergraduate assignment on using primary texts, this paper was primarily a product of discussions about the theories of an Atlantic World and the development of specifically Atlantic societies and cultures throughout that region. Through my analysis of a previously un-examined set of documents – which Professor Guillame Aubert brought to my attention and helped me to translate – I came to see these Ursulines as part of a larger system of sacred, secular, European, creole, and indigenous agents that influenced the cultural identity of colonial New Orleans.

For my second research paper, I maintained my regional focus on the American South and my interest in the shaping of society and morality. Thanks to the focus of my spring seminar, I returned to my usual period of study: the rights movements of the twentieth century. I had read about the Highlander Folk School for years, on the periphery of my studies of women and the civil rights movement, but only recently learned of its location, near the University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee. My father attended Sewanee, and we frequently visited the Mountain throughout my childhood – which made me even more interested in this other site of education, located so nearby but no longer in operation. Based on my familiarity with landscape theories and social geography, I studied the environmental history of Highlander, and defended its landscape as a unifying force for all the people who came to the School, to further its radical understanding of adult education and southern society. Just as my trips to Alabama, England, and Tennessee represent my various seasons of reckoning while a graduate student at William and Mary, they also convey my transition away from the interests I retained from undergrad, and towards a concentration on my ideal project and capstone for my graduate career. Of course, my personal commitment to studying the historical development of moral, equal, and free societies has also influenced the direction of my scholarship, and I have gathered numerous lessons and insights that will inform my future as an educator, community organizer, or minister.

An Order to Society: Soeur Ste. Reine  
and the New Orleans Ursulines as Agents of Empire, 1727-1779

On April 30, 1779, a seventy-four-year-old woman, Catherine Mauricette de Kerogon de l'Étang sent her last letter to the King of France.<sup>1</sup> For six years, she had petitioned her king and his Department of the Navy for a series of funds to support herself and her family. The king to whom she wrote was Louis XVI, his Minister of the Navy was Antoine Raymond Jean Gualbert Gabriel de Sartine, comte d'Alby, and Sartine's head clerk, the one in charge of funds for the navy, colonies, and wounded veterans, who eventually met her requests, was a Monsieur Guigance.<sup>2</sup> Each of these men, from the one at the pinnacle of French power to the one who made such a shining peak financially possible, recognized the value of this woman's request. They established a *brevet*, a yearly pension, for her and her family, and though the amount they paid was a faint fraction of the sum she had requested, the king's officials still lauded her as an agent of France's expansion and colonial pursuits and ensured that her efforts were appreciated and compensated.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Documents 224-226, Archives nationales d'outre-mer, "Secrétariat d'État à la Marine - Personnel colonial ancien (XVIIe-XVIIIe s.)," "Lettres H à K:" "Kerogon de L'Étang, Catherine Mauricette Reyne de, religieuse ursuline de Morlaix, chargée de l'instruction des orphelins créoles de la Louisiane, brevet de pension le 1er juin 1779 1774/1779," accessed October 9, 2017, <http://anom.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/ark:/61561/up424ojc>.

<sup>2</sup> *Almanach Royal, 1777*, (Paris: Le Breton, 1777), 218-219, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=wUJAAAAAcAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=en&pg=GBS.PP1>.

<sup>3</sup> Document 220, Archives nationales d'outre-mer, accessed October 9, 2017, <http://anom.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/ark:/61561/up424ojc>.

This woman's role as an instrument of the burgeoning French empire might not have been apparent, however, because she was not the leader of a merchant company or a military garrison, nor an administrator of the French State or its constant companion, the Roman Catholic church. Even the name she used to sign her letters, her family name of Kerogon, disguised the particularity of her role in the development of France's colonies, for in life she would have answered to her religious name: Soeur St. Reine.<sup>4</sup> She was a nun, a woman religious in the Order of St. Ursula, the family she represented was the Ursuline convent in the Breton town of Morlaix, and her years of serving France's dreams of temporal expansion had actually been intended as a commitment to the growth of Catholicism and the education of girls and young women.<sup>5</sup> For nearly twenty years, from 1754 to 1772, she lived in New Orleans, the frontier capital of the colony of Louisiana, and joined the small community of Ursuline Sisters that cared for the women of the city, from girls of great privilege to battered women, orphans, plus hospital patients.<sup>6</sup> Already champions of female ability and French tradition, Soeur St. Reine and the Ursulines of New Orleans became agents of empire when they established their cloister within the city, accepted women of various Atlantic origins into their community, and sought New World sources of income to fund their ministries, all to bring order to the society they served.

---

<sup>4</sup> Kerogon's religious name can be spelled either Reine or Reyne. She uses this spelling, as will this paper; administrative documents vary. Emily Clark, in *Masterless Mistresses*, lists a Sr. Ste. Reine without any Christian or family names. As Clark claims this Sister came from Morlais and lived at the convent from 1754 to 1772, after which primary documents show Kerogon returned to Morlaix, assumedly Clark's Sr. Ste. Reine is Kerogon.

<sup>5</sup> Document 225, Archives nationales d'outre-mer, accessed October 9, 2017, <http://anom.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/ark:/61561/up424ojc>.

<sup>6</sup> Emily Clark, *Masterless Mistresses: The New Orleans Ursulines and the Development of a New World Society, 1727-1834* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 267.

Through their lessons and largess, these Ursulines took part in the development of New Orleans' society, including its social institutions, ethnic and cultural divisions, and popular dialectics. Yet, other populations – the official administrative branches of Church and State, merchants and settlers of various European and New World origins, and communities of Amerindians and enslaved Africans – also took part in the social structuring of their shared city. The New Orleans Ursulines were a source of Old World tradition, education, and religion in this distinctly New World environment. While other individuals and institutions reiterated the French ethos of New Orleans, or added Spanish sensibilities to the city after its administration transferred in 1763, the Ursulines alone instilled their values of cultural construction within the female populace of the city and, therefore, its homes and many female-run businesses and communities.<sup>7</sup> From their founding in 1727, through the years of Kerogon's ministry, the New Orleans Ursulines simultaneously held fast to their French traditions and adapted to the diversity, needs, and desires of their adoptive city. Like other, official agents of European expansionism, these women religious developed a New World sensibility in order to ensure the success of their definitions of propriety and society for the peoples of New Orleans and the survival of their Old World ideals.

Scholars of early Louisiana and New Orleans have long debated which individuals and institutions can be identified as agents of empire. In 1966, Charles Edwards O'Neill suggested that only the great institutions of the age, the

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 157-160. For a detailed explanation of the high numbers of female merchants and shopkeepers who worked in New Orleans, see Sophie White's article in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, "A Baser Commerce': Retailing, Class, and Gender in French Colonial New Orleans."

church and state, could be credited with the foundation and early successes of the colony.<sup>8</sup> He valued ecclesiastical and civil influences in equal measure, but terminated his narrative with the failures of the Company of the Indies and the transfer of Louisiana's administration to the King of France. His presentation of French settlement in the Americas is entirely "top down," with the personalities of leaders, especially those in Europe or sent from Europe to the colonies, as primary catalysts for policy and productivity. Mathé Allain upheld this institutional interpretation of the colony's origins in 1988, though he specified Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the Minister of the Navy from 1669 to 1683, as the central figure in the history of early Louisiana.<sup>9</sup> Such readings of the colony's establishment favored events in the metropole, rather than developments in the colony or its capital.

Over the next two decades, scholars considered the social structuring and racial reckoning that occurred in Louisiana and advanced a more gradual, organic view of its colonization. In 1999, Thomas N. Ingersoll studied New Orleans as an essentially slave-based society; one which eventually shifted from a plantation-dominated town with little urban development, to a centralized city with rural production on its periphery.<sup>10</sup> He expanded the periodization of early Louisiana to include the Spanish and French Republican periods and introduced

---

<sup>8</sup> Charles Edward O'Neill, *Church and State in French Colonial Louisiana: Policy and Politics to 1732* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

<sup>9</sup> Mathé Allain, *"Not Worth a Straw": French Colonial Policy and the Early Years of Louisiana* (Lafayette: The University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1988).

<sup>10</sup> Thomas N. Ingersoll, *Mammon and Manon in Early New Orleans: The First Slave Society in the Deep South, 1718-1819* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1999). Other texts relating to slavery and race consciousness in and around New Orleans include "Français, Negres, et Sauvages": Constructing Race in Colonial Louisiana," by Guillaume Aubert and "Creation of a Slave Society: Louisiana Plantations in the Eighteenth-Century," by James T McGowan.

themes of gender, race, class formation, and the context of other slave societies, thereby reforming the definition of who could be cited as a source of influence in the colony. Shannon Lee Dawdy, an historical anthropologist, built upon Ingersoll's findings in 2008, when she explored the lived experiences of the city's colonists, argued that individuals at every stratum of society took part in the process of colonization, and grappled with the very notion of colonialism.<sup>11</sup>

Historians writing in the twenty-first century also began to understand Louisiana as a part and product of the vast Atlantic World. In 2005, Bradley G. Bond edited a collection of essays that placed French Louisiana in conversation with Amerindian societies, other colonial communities in North America and the Caribbean, and the west coast of Africa.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, Cécile Vidal engaged the historiography of the Atlantic World in 2014, but she edited her essays into three concentric spheres of influence: empires, networks, and families, each of which brought the traditions of Europe, Africa, and the Americas into New Orleans.<sup>13</sup> Throughout the progression from Euro-centric to localized and Atlantic, scholars sought to understand who took part in the settlement and administration of the city, and in doing so, they identified a breadth of peoples, places, and institutions that all helped in its colonization.

Beginning in 1922, some historians of early New Orleans shifted to debates on gender, race, ethnicity, and class in the city, and asserted that non-

---

<sup>11</sup> Shannon Lee Dawdy, *Building the Devil's Empire: French Colonial New Orleans* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Bradley G. Bond, ed. *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005).

<sup>13</sup> Cécile Vidal, ed. *Louisiana: Crossroads of the Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).



Europeans had also acted as influential colonists and settlers. That year, Gwendolyn Midlo Hall presented working class, lower class, and enslaved individuals as helping in the development of their city, even as customs and empires shifted over and around them.<sup>14</sup> Simultaneously, Daniel H. Usner, Jr. studied the interaction of the region's small population of European colonists, enslaved African work force, and much larger populace native to America.<sup>15</sup> As he tracked patterns of trade and contact between these ethnic groups, he examined how each race took part in the development of the culture, economy, and geography of the region surrounding New Orleans. Also in 1992, Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon compiled an edited volume that cited both France and Africa as the sources for culture in New Orleans and debated how American, African, and French identities intersected for the city's inhabitants.<sup>16</sup>

Questions of colonists' heritage continued into the 2010s, though identity became an even more central component in these debates on New Orleans' early social structures. In 2008, Jennifer M. Spear approached the city's racial reckoning through its legal and economic histories and considered how men and women from various ethnic backgrounds perceived their race.<sup>17</sup> She also sought the reality of race in New Orleans, and her book addressed the range of regulations, divisions, marriage and sex patterns, and racial codes that the city's

---

<sup>14</sup> Gwendolyn Midlo Hall. *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

<sup>15</sup> Daniel H. Usner Jr., *Indians, Settlers, & Slaves in Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley Before 1783* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

<sup>16</sup> Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon, eds. *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

<sup>17</sup> Jennifer M. Spear, *Race, Sex, and Social Order in Early New Orleans* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

administrators produced. Sophie White adapted similar methodologies for a 2012 study on interchanges between French settlers and Amerindians in New Orleans and the construction of ethnic identities, which she determined occurred throughout the city's homes, businesses, and churches.<sup>18</sup> Through texts focused on the impact of New Orleans' African and Amerindian populations, authors and editors could discuss how the particularity of Louisiana's capital city shaped its inhabitants' perceptions and experiences, and how such diverse social institutions created the character of New Orleans.

The 1990s also featured the genesis of debates that identified various orders and operatives of the Roman Catholic Church as primary agents of French imperial expansion. In 1993, Glenn R. Conrad edited an anthology on the persistent presence of the French branch of the church within Louisiana. Throughout each of the essays he collected – on ethnicity, church growth, education, notable leaders, and the arts – a narrative emerged of a church that thrived in spite of its institutionalism, and thanks to the intervention of laypersons and ordained men and women of many backgrounds.<sup>19</sup> Also in 1993, Jane Frances Heany, herself a Sister of St. Ursula, suggested that the New Orleans Ursulines, in particular, should be studied as sources of civilization within the city, though she never went so far as to suggest that the Ursulines acted as agents of empire.<sup>20</sup> She honored her predecessors with a description of their heroism in

---

<sup>18</sup> Sophie White, *Wild Frenchmen and Frenchified Indians: Material Culture and Race in Colonial Louisiana* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> Glenn R. Conrad, ed., *Cross, Crozier, and Crucible: A Volume Celebrating the Bicentennial of a Catholic Diocese in Louisiana* (New Orleans: The Archdiocese of New Orleans and the Center for Louisiana Studies, 1993).

<sup>20</sup> Jane Frances Heany, *A Century of Pioneering: A History of the Ursuline Nuns in New Orleans, 1727-1827* (New Orleans: The Ursuline Sisters of New Orleans, Louisiana, 1993).

the face of adversity and authoritarian interference, and though she limited her history to the Ursulines' existence in their succession of cloisters, she still identified the outward political, social, and economic forces that influenced their lives.

Such scholarship on the leadership of women religious in French colonies has continued into the twenty-first century, but with an added emphasis on social structures like race, class, and gender. In 2010, for example, Sarah A. Curtis asserted that the ministry of French female missionaries on the colonial frontier featured an adherence to the conservative traditions of female holy orders that made women religious effective but essentially subversive agents of the church.

<sup>21</sup> Though Curtis applied her theory to female Catholicism throughout the French Empire, not just Louisiana or New Orleans, and to the period following the French Revolution, she certainly supported the most prominent contemporary scholar of the New Orleans Ursulines, Emily Clark. The sole author from the twenty-first century to gain access to the Order's archives, Clark has produced dissertations, articles, and book chapters addressing the various facets of the Ursuline ministry to New Orleans and the Sisters' interactions with race, gender, and colonialism.<sup>22</sup> In 2008, she published *Masterless Mistresses: The New Orleans Ursulines and the Development of a New World Society, 1727-1834*, to situate the Ursulines at the crossroads of Atlantic migration, racial reckoning, the

---

<sup>21</sup> Sarah A. Curtis. *Civilizing Habits: Women Missionaries and the Revival of French Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>22</sup> Emily Clark, "A New World Community: The New Orleans Ursulines and Colonial Society, 1727-1803," (PhD diss., Tulane University, 1998), <https://search.proquest.com/dissertations/docview/304456120/E261978BD4404468PQ/3?accountid=15053>, accessed December, 1, 2017.

pursuit of empire, female ability, and the history of religion in their adopted city.<sup>23</sup> From an early interest in its institutions, to studies of African culture, Amerindian interactions, and gendered practices in the city and its Church, the scholars who debated the agents of New Orleans' colonization built a holistic, contextual environment for the experiences revealed in Kerogon's letters and the lives of her eighteenth-century Sisters.

The Ursulines who settled in New Orleans, from the founders of the convent to Kerogon's more diverse cohort of converse and choir nuns, acted as agents of France's imperial pursuits in a truly frontier capital, a city still under physical and cultural construction. When these women religious arrived, the masculinity of church, state, merchants, and military dominated the culture of the city, though families of various Atlantic origins filled its population.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, from Normandy, Brittany, and the *ancien régime* of France, these Ursulines carried an appreciation of tradition, of the French language and its elite culture, of education, refinement, propriety, pageantry, domesticity, and female ability.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Clark, *Masterless Mistresses*.

<sup>24</sup> Dawdy, 3. Marie Madeleine Hachard, "Letters of Marie Madeleine Hachard," in *Voices from an Early American Convent: Marie Madeleine Hachard and the New Orleans Ursulines, 1727-1760*, ed. Emily Clark (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2007), 42, 77-78. Charles Edward O'Neill's *Church and State in French Colonial Louisiana* addresses the masculine leadership in place before the Ursulines arrived, as do essays by Guillaume Aubert, Alexandre Dubé, and Sylvia L. Hilton, in Cécile Vidal's *Louisiana*, and the chapter by Bertrand van Ruymbeke, and to some extent the essay by Emily Clark, in Bradley G. Bond's *French Colonial Policy and the Atlantic World*.

<sup>25</sup> Sr. St. Stanislaus/Marie Madeline Hachard, Sr. St. Augustin/Marie Tranchepain, and at least two more of the first twelve Ursulines in New Orleans all came from Rouen, in Normandy. Kerogon and another nun, Sr. Ste. Marie des Anges/Jeanne Louise Louchard de Monthion, came from Brittany in 1754. In the intervening years, Norman and Breton towns sent upwards of fifteen Sisters to support the New Orleans convent – Clark, *Masterless Mistresses*, 265-267. For more on the connection between French aristocratic culture, the Ursulines, and colonialism, see "Floating Cloisters and Femmes Fortes: Ursuline Missionaries in Ancien Régime France and its Colonies," by Heidi Keller-Lapp.

They acted as spiritual mothers to New Orleans – nurturing, supporting, educating, and raising children – in order to ensure the literacy and piety of the city’s female populace.<sup>26</sup> Their students and lay congregants, from the many strata of society, left the Sisters’ tutelage equipped and encouraged to become mothers who could produce the next generation of educated, devoted Catholics, for the good of both soul and State.<sup>27</sup> Though most of their ministries matched those undertaken in the hundreds of Ursuline convents in Europe, once within their cloister and community in New Orleans, this New World order experienced populations and challenges that would have been unimaginable had they not decided to leave their homeland.<sup>28</sup> By the 1770s, after Ursulines had lived and worked in New Orleans for a mere half a century, they had a very different presence in the city, because their own community, their constituents and mission, and their relationship to France and the cultures of the New World had all changed, as had the structures and institutions of society in New Orleans.

---

<sup>26</sup> Joan Marie Aycok, “The Ursuline School in New Orleans,” in *Cross, Crozier, and Crucible: A Volume Celebrating the Bicentennial of a Catholic Diocese in Louisiana* ed. Glenn R. Conrad (New Orleans: The Archdiocese of New Orleans and the Center for Louisiana Studies, 1993): 203-218.

<sup>27</sup> Tracy Ebbs, “Subjected and Productive Bodies: The Educational Vision of the Ursulines in Early Colonial New Orleans,” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1996), accessed December 1, 2017, <https://proxy.wm.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/304300843?accountid=15053>: 65, 98, 178, 197, 207.

<sup>28</sup> Clark, “Patrimony without Pater: The New Orleans Ursuline Community and the Creation of a Material Culture,” in *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World* ed. Bradley G. Bond, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 98. Emily Clark, trans., “Obituary Letters,” in *Voices from an Early American Convent: Marie Madeleine Hachard and the New Orleans Ursulines, 1727-1760*, ed. Emily Clark (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2007), 93-118. These four letters, written by the Mothers Superior of the convent in 1728, 1731, 1742, 1760, suggest the peculiarity of the Ursulines’ mission in New Orleans, as they each fully explain the service and sacrifices of their departed sisters and the populations they experienced. The letters would have been circulated among Ursulines in France.

The Ursulines of eighteenth-century New Orleans established their cherished cloister in a series of houses, convents, and a hospital, for their own benefit and to welcome students and beneficiaries from the various cultures of Louisiana and the wider Atlantic world. In letters that she wrote to her father in Normandy, Marie Madeleine Hachard, Soeur St. Stanislaus, a novice and founding member of the New Orleans order, explained how dearly the Ursulines clung to the concept of living a cloistered life, even insisting upon such a separation as they traveled to and through the swamplands surrounding New Orleans.<sup>29</sup> Yet, as Emily Clark explained in *Masterless Mistresses*, even their fervor for *clausura* revealed the Ursulines' conviction that a religious order should deal directly with the populace it served, for they "observed a modified form of cloister," rather than one of strict seclusion and prayer.<sup>30</sup> Once finally in the city, they found construction begun on one half of their arrangement with the Company of the Indies: the hospital they had uncharacteristically agreed to run, but no permanent home planned for themselves.<sup>31</sup> So, they moved into the home of the colony's former leader, Kolly House, and began a journey of over thirty years, towards a sturdy, brick convent that had inadequate accommodations for masses and boarders, but sufficient boundaries for the rule of cloister that they could expand, fund, define, and defend as they saw fit.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Hachard, 52.

<sup>30</sup> Clark, *Masterless Mistresses*, 55.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-49, 55-56. Heany, 115.

<sup>32</sup> Charles E. Nolan, "Education and Evangelization," in *Cross, Crozier, and Crucible: A Volume Celebrating the Bicentennial of a Catholic Diocese in Louisiana* ed. Glenn R. Conrad (New Orleans: The Archdiocese of New Orleans and the Center for Louisiana Studies, 1993): 201. Joan Marie Aycock, "The Ursuline School in New Orleans, 1727-1771," 211. Heany, 133-138.

To ensure the success of their ministry to the women of the New World, two classes of Sisters inhabited the Ursulines' permanent convents and invented cloisters: choir nuns and converse nuns. Kerogon primarily petitioned the Department of the Navy for her pension because of her work with creole, female orphans, or "[les] créolles orphelines," and "[le] hospital general des troupes Françoise," or the French military hospital.<sup>33</sup> Such duties, plus her lofty surname and aristocratic godparents, which suggested a wealthy birth and background and the ability to provide a dowry, signified that she would have been a choir nun.<sup>34</sup> As had been the case in all Old World Ursuline convents, the choir nuns of New Orleans were full participants in the order, voting and teaching, though some of the New World Ursulines also worked in the hospital or cared for women and girls more in need of protection than education.<sup>35</sup> Converse nuns constituted the convent's other, non-voting servant class; they had often been born in America, to parents of European heritage or derivation, and hailed from the homes of lesser merchants or workmen and sometimes the Ursuline's own classrooms.<sup>36</sup> After Kerogon had returned to Morlaix, however, the heritage of the choir nuns in New Orleans shifted from Old World to New, as fewer French nuns traveled to New Orleans to join the convent.<sup>37</sup> In their stead, creole women from New Orleans and Spanish Sisters from Cuba began to populate the

---

<sup>33</sup> Documents 219, 223-225, 236, Archives nationales d'outre-mer, accessed October 9, 2017, <http://anom.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/ark:/61561/up424ojc>.

<sup>34</sup> Documents 221-223, Archives nationales d'outre-mer, accessed October 9, 2017, <http://anom.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/ark:/61561/up424ojc>. Clark, *Masterless Mistresses*, 68-70.

<sup>35</sup> Clark, *Masterless Mistresses*, 68-70. Emily Clark, "Patrimony without Pater," 97-99.

<sup>36</sup> Clark, *Masterless Mistresses*, 64, 68, 70-72.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 265-270.

community, which became younger and ever more reflective of the diversity outside its cloister.<sup>38</sup> Yet, even the roughly fifty years between the convent's founding to Kerogon's departure exhibited the Sisters' willingness to adapt, survive, and shoulder additional, unexpected sacrifices and responsibilities, all so their ministry could persist in the New World.

Into their community of female ability and sacred seclusion, these Ursulines welcomed women and girls from the entire range of Atlantic communities found in and around New Orleans. At the beginning of their ministry in the city, the Ursulines taught day students of both Amerindian and African heritage and shared their quarters with twenty residential students, three adult women, three orphans, and a small contingency of enslaved women who left the cloister once they could be baptized and married.<sup>39</sup> Whether boarding students or day students, these girls all received instruction in the catechism and religious rites, "reading, writing, manual training, spelling, and arithmetic" with additional classes in domestic arts and duties for resident pupils.<sup>40</sup> Into this mélange of mentees, the Sisters admitted a much larger company of orphans in 1729: the victims of an attack on a French fort in Louisiana's less colonized countryside. Though Amerindians forces had created this additional burden on the Ursulines' limited work force, the Sisters still admitted day students native to the Americas in the decades prior to Kerogon's residency in the colony.<sup>41</sup> As the eighteenth century progressed, however, the diversity of the Ursulines' classrooms shifted

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 126-132.

<sup>39</sup> Hachard, 82-83.

<sup>40</sup> Heany, *A Century of Pioneering*, 110, 112.

<sup>41</sup> Hachard, 82-83.



more towards French and Spanish creoles, Anglo-Americans, and Africans.<sup>42</sup> Other, more mature women of African descent joined the Ladies Congregation of the Children of Mary, a lay confraternity that appealed to the wealthiest of New Orleans' French population, including both rural and urban slave-holders, and to women with families engaged in lesser trades and commerce, or without any family to claim.<sup>43</sup> Each of these apprentices to the Ursuline existence benefitted from her inclusion in the Sister's cloister, a seclusion that quickly became a physical and spiritual sanctuary for those aspiring to acceptance, piety, and propriety in a city so vulnerable to conflict and vice.<sup>44</sup>

By the time of Kerogon's ministry, much less her return to France, the New Orleans Ursulines had become a product of both tradition and adaptation, of the patterns established in their convents throughout Europe and France and of the possibilities still being realized in the shops, homes, ships, fields, and Atlantic networks of New Orleans. This precedence of adaptation began with the very founding of the Ursuline mission in New Orleans, when its first Superior, Marie Tranchepain, negotiated a relationship with the leaders of the city, the Company of the Indies.<sup>45</sup> In Europe, the fathers and families of Ursuline novitiates had provided dowries to fund all of the Order's charity, but the dowries were to be

---

<sup>42</sup> Clark, *Masterless Mistresses*, 140-149.

<sup>43</sup> Emily Clark, "'By All the Conduct of Their Lives:' A Laywomen's Confraternity in New Orleans, 1730-1744," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (October 1997). For more on the intersections of race, gender, and Catholic tradition in New Orleans, inside the Ursuline convent and without, see Emily Clark and Virginia Meacham Gould's article in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, "The Feminine Face of Afro-Catholicism in New Orleans, 1727-1852."

<sup>44</sup> Shannon Lee Dawdy's *Building the Devil's Empire* is a thoughtful, anthropological study of the vices associated with New Orleans, and the various strains of disdain and nostalgia that have been expressed, relating to the city's infamy.

<sup>45</sup> Clark, "Patrimony without Pater," 99.

used in the young woman's convent, not on a trans-Atlantic missionary pursuit. So, Tranchepain sought a different sort of patron: a secular company of merchants and rather hapless administrators desperate to find a religious order willing to run the city's only hospital.<sup>46</sup> Thus, the Ursulines, so committed to the education of girls, became a nursing order as well, though they did insist on waiting for a permanent convent before taking on any administrative or medical duties.<sup>47</sup> Yet, as Emily Clark recorded in her chapter in *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World*, the "nuns provided essential social services in expectation of reasonable financial payment," from their unofficial partnerships with the Company and the French state, but met mismanagement and miserliness instead.<sup>48</sup> In the 1740s, still without an income but unwilling to depend on their postulants' dowries or the interference of male authorities, the Sisters turned to another distinctly New World source of funding when they invested in two plantations and dozens of enslaved Africans.<sup>49</sup> Until the 1780s, they were shrewd slaveholders and traders, but these Ursulines – already teachers and patronesses of African and enslaved women in New Orleans – seemed at least uncomfortable with this financial solution, because they enslaved families as units and even purchased individuals to reunite families or couples.<sup>50</sup> Following Kerogon's years in their orphanage and hospital, the

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 99-102. Heany, 133-138.

<sup>47</sup> Emily Clark, trans., "Procession Account," in *Voices from an Early American Convent: Marie Madeleine Hachard and the New Orleans Ursulines, 1727-1760*, ed. Emily Clark (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2007), 124-127.

<sup>48</sup> Clark, "Patrimony without Pater," 102.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 102-104.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 104. In "The Influence of the Roman Catholic Church on Slavery in Colonial Louisiana Under French Domination, 1718-1763," Mary Veronica Miceli offers a thorough examination of the particularities of the relationship between various Catholic institutions, including the New

convent granted manumission to their enslaved persons and “retreated from the marketplace,” but her Sisters had still proven themselves to be resilient and adaptable, implicit agents of empire and willing contributors to the economy and sensibility of the New World.<sup>51</sup>

The Ursulines also adapted to their New World surroundings in other ways, not as formal as running a hospital or working with the Company of the Indies or as obvious as extending hospitality to women with American and African origins; these women religious also seemed to abandon some of the pretension associated with the Ursuline order in Europe.<sup>52</sup> Kerogon might have filled her letters to the King’s court with references to well-placed friends and current events in the palace, but she had still toiled for twenty years with girls far below her standing in a traditional social hierarchy, prayed and chanted alongside women with skin that should have defined them as her inferiors, and encouraged the literacy of the working women who helped revitalize the city that the French abandoned and the Spanish ignored.<sup>53</sup> As Joan Marie Aycock noted in her chapter for *Cross, Crozier, and Crucible*, “One of the greatest blessings handed down from St. Angela to her daughters was a freedom to change when

---

Orleans Ursulines, and the colony’s status as a slave society of plantations, urban centers, and ports that all benefitted from enslaved labor.

<sup>51</sup> Clark, “Patrimony without Pater,” 103.

<sup>52</sup> To understand how Ursuline Sisters adapted to other New World circumstances, especially French Canada, which was less urban than Louisiana and which required more contact with Amerindians and male colonists, see *The Autobiography of Venerable Marie of the Incarnation, O.S.U., Mystic and Missionary*, and *Word from New France: The Selected Letters of Marie de l’Incarnation*. Also, Thomas Carr’s “Writing the Convent in New France: The Colonialist Rhetoric of Canadian Nuns,” in *Quebec Studies*, Leslie Choquette’s “‘Ces Amazones du Grand Dieu:’ Women and Mission in Seventeenth-Century Canada,” in *French Historical Studies*, and Timothy G. Pearson’s “‘I Willingly Speak to You about Her Virtues’: Catherine de Saint-Augustin and the Public Role of Female Holiness in Early New France,” in *Church History*.

<sup>53</sup> Dawdy, 7.

there was a need... Tradition and progress have ever been the watchwords of Ursuline education.”<sup>54</sup> Denied their traditional source of income and any sort of consistent administration for the city they attended, the Ursulines rooted themselves in the traditions of their Order, especially their belief in the inherent ability of women, so that they could transform themselves into the servants New Orleans needed most.

As educators, nurses, mentors, slave owners, and women of influence, the Ursulines helped create a polite society for New Orleans, with ability and piety honored alongside good breeding, but they tempered their traditional ideas of cultural identity with their desire to adapt and thrive in the New World. In “White Women and Respectability in Antebellum New Orleans, 1830–1861,” Jonathan David Sarnoff credited the Ursulines with creating a unique class of “respectable women” who were interested in pursuing education for themselves and their children, involved in public life as independent philanthropists, and confident in their ability to discern the moral from the immoral.<sup>55</sup> That the Ursulines did not restrict their lessons to the daughters of minor nobles, wealthy creoles, or French immigrants suggests that less privileged women associated with the Order could have expressed these signs of respectability and female capability, as well. In fact, Emily Clark detailed how some men, especially merchants of Spanish or Anglo-American origin, established connections with the

---

<sup>54</sup> Aycock, 217.

<sup>55</sup> Jonathan David Sarnoff, “White Women and Respectability in Antebellum New Orleans, 1830–1861,” (PhD diss., The University of Southern Mississippi, 2003), accessed December, 1, 2017, <https://search.proquest.com/dissertations/docview/288256695/CDD54F9707574CC9PQ/13?accountid=15053>: 19.

Ursuline convent to move up in status, enter into the city's various transatlantic and American markets, or prove their credibility.<sup>56</sup> Following the insurgence of creole Sisters in the years of Kerogen's ministry, this shift towards a more Atlantic student body, achieved after Kerogen returned to France, meant that American-born Sisters would have been teaching increasing numbers of girls with similar, New World backgrounds.<sup>57</sup> The end of the American Revolution, for example, introduced the daughters of many British and American traders into the convent's classrooms because the Sisters offered "such students a place and an identity rooted, not in nationality, but in gender and piety[ and an] entrée into an established community that might otherwise have been closed to them."<sup>58</sup> To these young women, and the female laity that flocked to the Sisters' services and sphere of influence, the Ursulines taught a traditional and elitist, yet distinctly French and oddly progressive, understanding of social orders which valued "a collective female identity among the city's diverse constituencies," above "the development of a society increasingly locked into rigid structures of race, ethnicity, and class."<sup>59</sup> Through their structuring of society in New Orleans, the Ursulines negotiated which women, families, and communities could be

---

<sup>56</sup> Clark, *Masterless Mistresses*, 144-149. In later decades and centuries, many women from New Orleans continued to take great pride in their connections to the Ursuline convent or to credit the Sisters with the well-mannered society they enjoyed. For nineteenth-century examples, see Eliza Ripley's *Social Life in Old New Orleans* and Grace King's *Memories of a Southern Woman of Letters*.

<sup>57</sup> Clark, *Masterless Mistresses*, 267-273.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 144-145.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 150, 156-160. Such inclusivity surely affected the lives of the Sisters' pupils and the families they eventually raise, but it also affected the political environment within the convent. Spanish Sisters – exports from Cuba and that island's diocesan leaders, who governed the New Orleans Ursulines – could not fathom such a rejection of the strict hierarchies of race, birth, and transatlantic marriage patterns that governed Spanish colonial societies. Frequently, these sisters voted against the wishes of the aging French sisters and their francophone creole allies. – Clark, *Masterless Mistresses*, 131-139.

incorporated into an empire, and they turned female education into a compassionate form of imperial expansion, a complement to the militarism already employed throughout the city.

The attention, education, and system of virtues that the Ursulines offered to the female populace of New Orleans often reiterated the ideals of colonial policy that city planners, officials, and administrators designed for the capital, and reflected the realities that its diverse population determined through their daily interactions. Before leaders of the Company of the Indies and the Catholic Church even approached the marshlands that they later claimed as New Orleans, architects working in the colony's parent metropole began to design the city that would link the traders and trappers of Canada to the planters of the French Caribbean.<sup>60</sup> Lawrence N. Powell, in *The Accidental City: Improvising New Orleans*, determined that such architects meant New Orleans to be a French adaptation of Spain's lush and successful cities throughout the New World, a capital fitted with city squares, gardens, and battlements that could efficiently conquer the land and its inhabitants.<sup>61</sup> To uphold these ideals, France sent out what Charles Edward O'Neill deemed "the religious policy of the French monarchy in the colonization of Louisiana," which consisted of edicts that charged the military and persons of "prestige" with the well-being of the city, promoted the "Frenchification" of Amerindian populations, and legalized slavery

---

<sup>60</sup> Lawrence N. Powell, *The Accidental City: Improvising New Orleans*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012): 60-64.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

as a Christian institution.<sup>62</sup> Yet, Shannon Lee Dawdy, in *Building the Devil's Empire*, declared that the New Orleans that actually came to be was a “precocious but disastrous experiment in modernity and venture capitalism [with] a spirit of experimentation, of adventure and individualism, of designing ambition and political idealism, as well [as] danger and confusion.”<sup>63</sup> Such an environment attracted men and women who turned France’s proposed policies and Spain’s well-rehearsed conventions of colonization into an intricate system of social interactions, intimacies, and economies that favored those indigenous to the Americas or those who immigrated to New Orleans and its ports and plantations. As a result, the frontier capital became a “creolized” city, a site where New World realities reinvented Old World traditions, with complex, yet close-knit networks of free peoples of African descent that challenged the efficacy of slavery and leaders of society and social change who represented Amerindian communities that rivaled recent French émigrés for their sophistication.<sup>64</sup> With each of these developments, idealized and official or localized and based in harsh necessity, the inhabitants of New Orleans acted as imperial agents, contributing to the colonization of their city and incorporating its vast diversity into the systems of empire that spanned the Atlantic.

---

<sup>62</sup> Vincent Confer, “French Colonial Ideas Before 1789,” *French Historical Studies* 3, no. 3 (Spring 1964): 339. O’Neill, v. White, 6. Vidal, ed., 21-22.

<sup>63</sup> Dawdy, xvii.

<sup>64</sup> Powell, 204. White, 77-111. For various interpretations of the development of free black culture and networks within New Orleans’ slave-based society, see Thomas Ingersoll’s “Free Blacks in a Slave Society: New Orleans, 1718-1812,” in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Mary Niall Mitchell’s “‘A Good and Delicious Country’: Free Children of Color and How They Learned to Imagine the Atlantic World in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana,” in *The History of Education Quarterly*, and Laura Foner’s “The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Dominique: A Comparative Portrait of Two Three-Caste Slave Societies,” in *Journal of Social History*.

From the first Sisters to establish a cloister or wait impatiently for their convent, to Kerogon, Soeur St. Reine, who so confidently claimed twenty years of sacrifice as service to her king, these Ursulines built upon Old World traditions and New World potential to become an Order that served and shaped the society of eighteenth-century New Orleans. When the Ursulines fought to establish their ministry in this frontier town – a capital, meant to be glorious and prosperous, that the French crown had already abandoned – they committed themselves to healing the city, physically and spiritually, and offering a more hopeful future to its residents: one of literate mothers who would raise their families to respect the diversity of their utterly New World home.<sup>65</sup> While Clark Robenstine could claim, in “French Colonial Policy and the Education of Women and Minorities: Louisiana in the Early Eighteenth Century,” that the Ursulines’ curriculum was no more than French propaganda offered to young girls, the Sisters’ other acts of social structuring, their inclusion of women from throughout the Atlantic World and their creation of a social hierarchy that valued each of these women’s experiences, marked them as more than just tools of the French crown.<sup>66</sup> The New Orleans Ursulines were active, independent agents of empire.

---

<sup>65</sup> Dawdy, 2.

<sup>66</sup> Clark Robenstine, “French Colonial Policy and the Education of Women and Minorities: Louisiana in the Early Eighteenth Century,” *History of Education Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 195, 208.



## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

*Almanach Royal*, 1777. Paris: Le Breton, 1777. <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=wUJAAAAAcAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=en&pg=GBS.PP1>.

Clark, Emily, trans. "Obituary Letters." In *Voices from an Early American Convent: Marie Madeleine Hachard and the New Orleans Ursulines, 1727-1760*, 93-118. Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2007.

Clark, Emily, trans. "Procession Account." In *Voices from an Early American Convent: Marie Madeleine Hachard and the New Orleans Ursulines, 1727-1760*, 119-127. Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2007.

de l'Incarnation, Marie. *The Autobiography of Venerable Marie of the Incarnation, O.S.U.: Mystic and Missionary*. Translated by John J. Sullivan. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1964.

de l'Incarnation, Marie. *Word from New France: The Selected Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation*. Translated by Joyce Marshall. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Documents 16-21. Archives nationales d'outre-mer, "Secrétariat d'État à la Marine - Personnel colonial ancien (XVIIe-XVIIIe s.)," "Lettres H à K:" "Kerogon de L'Étang, de, soeur Sainte-Reine, religieuse ursuline de Morlaix à la Louisiane 1773." Accessed October 9, 2017. <http://anom.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/ark:/61561/up424ojc>.

Documents 218-236. Archives nationales d'outre-mer, "Secrétariat d'État à la Marine - Personnel colonial ancien (XVIIe-XVIIIe s.)," "Lettres H à K:" "Kerogon de L'Étang, Catherine Mauricette Reyne de, religieuse ursuline de Morlaix, chargée de l'instruction des orphelines créoles de la Louisiane, brevet de pension le 1er juin 1779 1774/1779." Accessed October, 9, 2017. <http://anom.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/ark:/61561/up424ojc>.

Documents 223-235. Archives nationales d'outre-mer, "Secrétariat d'État à la Marine - Personnel colonial ancien (XVIIe-XVIIIe s.)," "Lettres S et T:"

“Sainte-Reyne de Kerogon de l'Étang, ursuline chargée de l'instruction des créoles orphelines de la Louisiane après 1763.” Accessed October 9, 2017. <http://anom.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/ark:/61561/up424ojc>.

Hachard, Marie Madeleine. “Letters of Marie Madeleine Hachard.” In *Voices from an Early American Convent: Marie Madeleine Hachard and the New Orleans Ursulines, 1727-1760*, edited by Emily Clark, 20-91. Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2007.

### **Secondary Sources**

- Allain, Mathé. “Not Worth a Straw”: *French Colonial Policy and the Early Years of Louisiana*. Lafayette: The University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1988.
- Aubert, Guillaume. “Français, Nègres, et Sauvages’: Constructing Race in Colonial Louisiana.” PhD diss., Tulane University, 2002.
- Aycock, Joan Marie. “The Ursuline School in New Orleans.” In *Cross, Crozier, and Crucible: A Volume Celebrating the Bicentennial of a Catholic Diocese in Louisiana*, edited by Glenn R. Conrad, 203-218. New Orleans: The Archdiocese of New Orleans and the Center for Louisiana Studies, 1993.
- Bond, Bradley G., ed. *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005.
- Carr, Thomas. “Writing the Convent in New France: The Colonialist Rhetoric of Canadian Nuns.” *Quebec Studies* 47 (Spring/Summer 2009): 3-23.
- Choquette, Leslie. “‘Ces Amazones du Grand Dieu’: Women and Mission in Seventeenth-Century Canada.” *French Historical Studies* 17, no. 3 (Spring 1992): 627-655.
- Clark, Emily and Virginia Meacham Gould. “The Feminine Face of Afro-Catholicism in New Orleans, 1727-1852.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (April 2002): 409-448.
- Clark, Emily. “Patrimony without Pater: The New Orleans Ursuline Community and the Creation of a Material Culture.” In *French Colonial Louisiana and*

- the Atlantic World*, edited by Bradley G. Bond, 95-110. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005.
- Clark, Emily. *Masterless Mistresses: The New Orleans Ursulines and the Development of a New World Society, 1727-1834*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.
- Confer, Vincent. "French Colonial Ideas Before 1789." *French Historical Studies* 3, no. 3 (Spring 1964): 338-359.
- Conrad, Glenn R., ed. *Cross, Crozier, and Crucible: A Volume Celebrating the Bicentennial of a Catholic Diocese in Louisiana*. New Orleans: The Archdiocese of New Orleans and the Center for Louisiana Studies, 1993.
- Curtis, Sarah A. *Civilizing Habits: Women missionaries and the Revival of French Empire*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Dawdy, Shannon Lee. *Building the Devil's Empire: French Colonial New Orleans*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Ebbs, Tracy. "Subjected and Productive Bodies: The Educational Vision of the Ursulines in Early Colonial New Orleans." PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1996. Accessed December, 1, 2017.  
<https://proxy.wm.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/304300843?accountid=15053>.
- Foner, Laura. "The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Dominique: A Comparative Portrait of Two Three-Caste Slave Societies." *Journal of Social History* 3, no. 4 (Summer 1970): 406-430.
- Hall, Gwendolyn Midlo. *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992.
- Heany, Jane Frances. *A Century of Pioneering: A History of the Ursuline Nuns in New Orleans, 1727-1827*. New Orleans: The Ursuline Sisters of New Orleans, Louisiana, 1993.
- Hirsch, Arnold R. and Joseph Logsdon, eds. *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992.

- Ingersoll, Thomas N. "Free Blacks in a Slave Society: New Orleans, 1718-1812." *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series 48, no. 2 (April 1991): 173-200.
- Ingersoll, Thomas N. *Mammon and Manon in Early New Orleans: The First Slave Society in the Deep South, 1718-1819*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1999.
- Keller-Lapp, Heidi. "Floating Cloisters and Femmes Fortes: Ursuline Missionaries in Ancien Régime France and its Colonies." PhD diss., University of California, San Diego, 2005. Accessed December, 1, 2017.  
<https://search.proquest.com/dissertations/docview/305001902/previewPDF/CDD54F9707574CC9PQ/5?accountid=15053>
- McGowan, James T. "Creation of a Slave Society: Louisiana Plantations in the Eighteenth-Century." PhD diss., University of Rochester, 1976.
- Miceli, Mary Veronica Miceli. "The Influence of the Roman Catholic Church on Slavery in Colonial Louisiana Under French Domination, 1718-1763." PhD diss., Tulane University, 1979. Accessed December, 1, 2017.  
<https://search.proquest.com/dissertations/docview/302942014/CDD54F9707574CC9PQ/10?accountid=15053>.
- Mitchell, Mary Niall. "'A Good and Delicious Country': Free Children of Color and How They Learned to Imagine the Atlantic World in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana." *History of Education Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (Summer 200): 123-144.
- Nolan, Charles E. "Education and Evangelization." In *Cross, Crozier, and Crucible: A Volume Celebrating the Bicentennial of a Catholic Diocese in Louisiana*, edited by Glenn R. Conrad, 194-202. New Orleans: The Archdiocese of New Orleans and the Center for Louisiana Studies, 1993.
- O'Neill, Charles Edwards. *Church and State in French Colonial Louisiana: Policy and Politics to 1732*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966.
- Pearson, Timothy G. "'I Willingly Speak to You about Her Virtues': Catherine de Saint-Augustin and the Public Role of Female Holiness in Early New France." *Church History* 79, no. 2 (June 2010): 305-333.

- Powell, Lawrence N. *The Accidental City: Improvising New Orleans*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Ripley, Eliza. *Social Life in Old New Orleans*. New York: Arno Press, 1975.
- Robenstine, Clark. "French Colonial Policy and the Education of Women and Minorities: Louisiana in the Early Eighteenth Century." *History of Education Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 193-211.
- Sarnoff, Jonathan David. "White Women and Respectability in Antebellum New Orleans, 1830–1861." PhD diss., The University of Southern Mississippi, 2003. Accessed December, 1, 2017. <https://search.proquest.com/dissertations/docview/288256695/CDD54F9707574CC9PQ/13?accountid=15053>.
- Spear, Jennifer M. *Race, Sex, and Social Order in Early New Orleans*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009.
- Usner Jr., Daniel H. *Indians, Settlers, & Slaves in Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley Before 1783*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992.
- Vidal, Cécile, ed. *Louisiana: Crossroads of the Atlantic World*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.
- White, Sophie. "'A Baser Commerce': Retailing, Class, and Gender in French Colonial New Orleans." *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series 63, no. 3 (July 2006): 517-550.
- White, Sophie. *Wild Frenchmen and Frenchified Indians: Material Culture and Race in Colonial Louisiana*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

## A Place Where “You Can Live Freedom”:

### The Landscape of the Highlander Folk School, 1932-1962

#### **A Place to Learn and Gather**

Between 1959 and 1962, the landscape of the Highlander Folk School of Grundy County, Tennessee changed. The School's physical landscape may have stayed the same, since it continued to match all the other hills and hollers in that part of the Cumberland Plateau, but its built and symbolic environments changed nearly beyond recognition. In those three years, legal and local scrutiny mounted against the School – already one of the county's oddest institutions -- and ultimately forced its staff from the landscape they had inhabited, created, and adapted since 1932. Other sites of education and civil communion dotted the region, familiarly known as Monteagle Mountain – The University of the South, St. Mary's Convent and School, St. Andrew's School, the Sewanee Military Academy, and the Monteagle Assembly – but none of them attracted a similar level of vitriol, of red-baiting, threats, lawsuits, or FBI investigation. While those associations all welcomed a permanent student body, housed wealthy visitors, or conferred degrees, the Highlander Folk School was an entirely different sort of institution. Before and throughout these targeted attacks, Highlander acted as a training site for workers, thinkers, musicians, ministers, politicians, and activists who wanted to work together to realize the potential they saw in the people of the segregated and frustrated South. So, when the physical, built, and symbolic environment of Highlander changed so abruptly – as authorities padlocked, sold, and divvied up the small farm with its lake, simple structures, and international

network of labor and civil rights activists – the landscape of the South changed as well.

Highlander's history featured two great waves of activism: working with labor unions like the Congress of Industrial Organizations and fostering conversations and programs that joined other grassroots efforts in making the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s.<sup>67</sup> When Myles Horton, a native Tennessean trained at Cumberland University, Union Theological Seminary, and the University of Chicago, opened the Folk School in 1932, he wanted to establish an institute of radical adult education, so that he could empower and educate the inhabitants of the Appalachian Mountains, then known as Highlanders.<sup>68</sup> He considered any model that might work for the empowerment of the mountain people he regarded as particularly vulnerable to the aggressions of the state, poverty, capitalism, and discrimination – and the people he counted as his own.<sup>69</sup> By the early 1960s, Highlander had grown into a school where often un- or under-educated adults came to discuss theories of activism and to consider the society they hoped to create, where families experienced an existence in opposition to segregation, and where college students gathered to

---

<sup>67</sup> In this paper, "civil rights movement" will refer to the series of protests and demonstrations that black men and women led across the American South in the 1950s and 1960s. I did not capitalize this term, because "Civil Rights Movement" has historically indicated an emphasis on male, Christian, middle class leaders. Within the movement's historiography, that narrow focus has been deemed the "short" civil rights movement, while the "long" civil rights movement, also called the black freedom movement or the black freedom struggle, is more accurate to this paper. Though some scholars of the long civil rights movement begin their histories before Brown v. BOE and into WWII, Highlander's involvement in the early civil rights movement began in the mid-1950s.

<sup>68</sup> Myles Horton, Judith Kohl, and Herbert Kohl, *The Long Haul: An Autobiography* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1998): 63.

<sup>69</sup> Aimee Isgrig Horton, *The Highlander Folk School: A History of Its Major Programs, 1932-1961* (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing Inc, 1989): 11-27.

organize into their own branch of the black freedom movement. Over these thirty years, Horton and his family, colleagues, staff, and students continually adapted the mission of the Folk School to meet the needs of the ever-changing South. They made these decisions organically, based on democratic discussions rather than strict creeds or philosophy, and the personality and pedagogy of Highlander shifted many times while it stayed on Monteagle Mountain.

Since its days of activism and activity, Highlander's historians presented the Folk School as the product of Horton's own education and direction, of other men and women who developed the programs and culture of the Folk School at its institutional level, or larger developments in educational theory and southern activism. Each of these scholars, Horton included, understood Highlander as the product of people who came to a place, but the landscape that welcomed, housed, and briefly freed these individuals can also be seen as a source of the school's success.<sup>70</sup> In 1979, D. W. Meinig edited a collection of essays, *The*

---

<sup>70</sup> *Unearthing Seeds of Fire, The Long Haul, and The Highlander Folk School: A History of Its Major Programs, 1932-1961*, represent the first generation of histories of Highlander. Horton featured prominently in these works, as he did in H. Glyn Thomas's article, "The Highlander Folk School: The Depression Years," in *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* and Kenneth Torquil MacLean's "Origins of the Southern Civil Rights Movement: Myles Horton and the Highlander Folk School," in *The Phi Delta Kappan*. Ella Baker: *Community Organizer of the Civil Rights Movement, Freedom's Teacher: The Life of Septima Clark*, and "Local Leadership in the Early Civil Rights Movement: the South Carolina Citizenship Education Program of the Highlander Folk School," represented a historiographic shift to more diverse histories of the Folk School, as did Alicia R. Massie-Legg's "Zilphia Horton, a Voice for Change." For writings on the pedagogical influences and developments at Highlander, see: Frank Adams' "Highlander Folk School: Getting Information, Going Back and Teaching It," in *Education, Participation, and Power: Essays in Theory and Practice*, Thomas Patrick Barker's thesis, "Music, Civil Rights, and Counterculture: Critical Aesthetics and Resistance in the United States, 1957-1968," Frank Dallas Durham's thesis, "Opposition in process: The press, Highlander Folk School, and radical social change, 1932-1961," Jon N. Hale's "Early Pedagogical Influences on the Mississippi Freedom Schools: Myles Horton and Critical Education in the Deep South," in *American Educational History Journal*, Dale Jacobs' *The Myles Horton Reader: Education for Social Change*, Troy A. Murphy's "Civil Society, the Highlander Folk School, and the Cultivation of Rhetorical Invention," in *The Communication Review* and Roy Williams' *Reds, Whites, and Blues: Social Movements, Folk Music, and Race in the United States*.



*Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*, in which he and Peirce Lewis developed theories on reading a landscape like a text.<sup>71</sup> Meinig and Lewis theorized that “ordinary” landscapes can become culturally important and influential, and that scholars can read these landscapes from many viewpoints. Since so many visitors attached “a translation of [their] philosophy [onto the] tangible features,” of its terrain and buildings, the Folk School can best be understood as an ideological environment, specifically a landscape of potential.<sup>72</sup> Horton and Highlander turned their idea of human potential into a virtue and an inspiration for thirty years of social education – and the landscape they cultivated made all that potential a reality. From the early 1930s, when the School served local mountain people, through decades of adaptation and hopeful redirection, until the first years of the 1960s, when the school became a model for a desegregated South, the landscape of the Highlander Folk School – its physical, built, and symbolic environments – realized its ideologies and fulfilled Horton’s dream of “a learning place as well as a gathering place.”<sup>73</sup>

### **A Place to Get the People Together**

When Horton and Don West first sought out a plot of land to house a school for the people of the southern Appalachian Mountains, they intended to

---

<sup>71</sup> Peirce K. Lewis, “Axioms for Reading the Landscape: Some Guides to the American Scene,” *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*, edited by D. W. Meinig (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979). D. W. Meinig, “Symbolic Landscapes: Some Idealizations of American Communities,” *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*, edited by D. W. Meinig (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979). D. W. Meinig, “The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene,” *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*, edited by D. W. Meinig (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

<sup>72</sup> Meinig, “The Beholding Eye,” 6.

<sup>73</sup> Judith Kohl and Herbert Kohl, introduction to *The Long Haul*, ix.

replicate the folk schools of Denmark that turned folklore and agriculture into a basis for citizenship.<sup>74</sup> The two men, from Tennessee and Georgia, planned to provide a series of similar schools for the poor of each southern state.<sup>75</sup> At the same time, Dr. Lillian Johnson, a retired college president and “leading Southern suffragette” intent on establishing the agricultural cooperative movement in America, hoped to find someone to take over her farm near Monteagle and “carry on her work.”<sup>76</sup> Though she considered their ambitions for a “community residential school without course or a planned curriculum” to be too radical, she agreed to let Horton and West lease her land and “sturdy, two story house” for a year, until she could be sure of their viability as a school.<sup>77</sup>

Once Johnson’s generosity allowed for Highlander to be rooted within the mountains Horton and West hoped to improve, the school’s first generation of staffers adapted their educational ideals to the needs of their new neighbors. Horton admitted, “We were still toying with ideas about how to set up Highlander,” until Jim Dombrowski arrived as the first executive secretary – functionally the head of the school – and put Horton, the first education director, in charge of establishing a pattern of taking “turns teaching different subjects,” so that staffers could learn through teaching.<sup>78</sup> Throughout the early 1930s, Highlander’s cast of college-educated teachers – including “school-community

---

<sup>74</sup> Ridley Wills II, “Highlander Folk School, Grundy County’s ‘Public Nuisance,’” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 66, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 352. Stephen A. Schneider, *You Can’t Padlock an Idea: Rhetorical Education at the Highlander Folk School, 1932-1961* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2014): .6-7.

<sup>75</sup> Horton, *The Long Haul*, 63.

<sup>76</sup> Frank Adams and Myles Horton, *Unearthing Seeds of Fire: The Idea of Highlander* (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 1975): 26-27.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Horton, *The Long Haul*, 65-66.

librarian” Dorothy Thompson, her brother, The Reverend John Thompson, Ralph Tefferteller, Zilla Hawes, and Connie West – surrendered their formal training and addressed whatever practical concerns the locals voiced.<sup>79</sup> While not the proper Folk School that West and Horton had originally envisioned, their loose collection of “Community Nights,” summer camps and schools, and classes on psychology, geography, economics, and religion still “attract[ed] a wide variety of visitors, writers, ministers, musicians, labor and political leaders, students, educators, government officials, [and] social reformers” who each influenced Highlander’s future.<sup>80</sup>

By the late 1930s, Highlander expanded its classes to meet the needs of Southerners beyond the Appalachians and committed itself to the southern labor rights movement. Its small collection of cabins and tents, radiating out from Dr. Johnson’s repurposed home, became the primary training center for workers representing “aluminum, garment, auto, mine, textile, rubber, pecan, farm, teamster, and other unions.”<sup>81</sup> Increasingly, Highlander also acted as a home base for its staffers, who carried their views of education and collectivization to strikes and either disgruntled or potential unions throughout the South.<sup>82</sup> Frank Adams noted that Highlander’s commitment to “help workers unite with other workers for common strength and not to help some individuals rise above others,” solidified their relationship with black workers, who were the population

---

<sup>79</sup> Horton, Aimee, 39-41. Horton, *The Long Haul*, 63, 65-66, 75. The Wisconsin Historical Society’s Highlander Research and Education Center records include incomplete but fascinating lists of staff members at various times throughout Highlander’s history.

<sup>80</sup> Horton, Aimee, 42.

<sup>81</sup> Adams, *Unearthing*, 82-87.

<sup>82</sup> Horton, *The Long Haul*, 79.

least likely to unionize.<sup>83</sup> Men and women, white and black, attended Highlander's community programs, longer residential terms, and "informal weekend conferences," to learn through music, dancing, drama, and democratic discussion.<sup>84</sup> The Folk School remained closely connected to the labor movement until 1949, when the Congress of Industrial Organizations chose to disassociate itself with potential communists, including Highlander.<sup>85</sup> In response, the school's staff sought out another facet of southern life that they could address, analyze, and encourage towards activism.

Having established sufficient networks of labor unions throughout the South, Highlander shifted its focus to encouraging the "idea of freedom [that] was stirring among Southern blacks."<sup>86</sup> As Horton recalled,

We had made the decision to do something about racism – we were having some workshops with black and white people to figure out some answers – but we didn't know how to tackle the problem. The Highlander staff didn't approach it theoretically or intellectually, they just decided to get the people together and trust that the solution would arise with them.<sup>87</sup>

From these workshops, Highlander and activists from the South Carolina Sea Islands developed the Citizenship School Program, which eventually spread throughout the South and became a major channel for turning potential activists into local – even national – leaders.<sup>88</sup> Esau Jenkins, Septima Clark, and Bernice Robinson joined the Highlander network in these years, but Clark became integrally involved, serving as Educational Director and defending the school,

---

<sup>83</sup> Adams, *Unearthing*, 36. Horton, *The Long Haul*, 88-93.

<sup>84</sup> Horton, *The Long Haul*, 78.

<sup>85</sup> Adams, *Unearthing*, 85-88.

<sup>86</sup> Adams, *Unearthing*, 122.

<sup>87</sup> Horton, *The Long Haul*, 97-98.

<sup>88</sup> Horton, *Aimee*, 215-230.

even after her arrest during the raid on the campus in 1959.<sup>89</sup> These black educators strengthened the relationship between the activism happening across the South and the training that the Folk School offered, as did black activists already involved in local politics and protests, such as Rosa Parks, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Martin Luther King, Jr.<sup>90</sup> As the Highlander staff became more closely tied to the burgeoning civil rights movement – a cause that the School encouraged but “could not and did not claim” to initiate – they continued to learn through trial and error and to adapt to the “immediate material conditions” of black southerners.<sup>91</sup>

During the final years of Highlander’s presence in Monteagle, the Folk School’s initiated a series of conferences for the college students who flocked to the school, much to the frustration of many of their parents.<sup>92</sup> Ella Baker and students like Marion Barry, Diane Nash, Charles Jones, and John Lewis eventually solidified these Easter Weekend workshops into the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which became the young people’s branch of

---

<sup>89</sup> For more on the Citizenship School Program and Clark’s leadership at Highlander, see “‘I train the people to do their own talking:’ Septima Clark and Women in the Civil Rights Movement,” in *Southern Cultures* (Summer 2010,) LaVerne Gyant and Deborah F. Atwater’s “Septima Clark’s Rhetorical and Ethnic Legacy: Her Message of Citizenship in the Civil Rights Movement,” *Journal of Black Studies* 26, no. 5 (May, 1996,) Peter Ling’s “Local Leadership in the Early Civil Rights Movement: the South Carolina Citizenship Education program of the Highlander Folk School,” *Journal of American Studies* 29, No. 3 (December, 1995,) Katherine Mellen Charron’s *Freedom’s Teacher: The Life of Septima Clark* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009,) Clare Russell’s 2010 thesis, “More Than Mrs. Robinson: Citizenship Schools in Lowcountry South Carolina and Savannah, Georgia, 1957-1970,” and Amanda Shrader Jordan’s 2008 thesis, “Faith In Action: The First Citizenship School on Johns Island, South Carolina.”

<sup>90</sup> Horton, *The Long Haul*, 144-160. For more on the connection between Highlander, Rosa Parks, and other black activists, see Eliot Wigginton’s edited collection, *Refuse to Stand Silently By: An Oral History of Grass Roots Social Activism in America, 1921-1964*, John Egerton’s *Shades of Gray: Dispatches from the Modern South*, and *Interviewing Appalachia: The Appalachian Journal Interviews, 1978-1992*, from J. W. Williamson and Edwin T. Arnold.

<sup>91</sup> Schneider, 8. Adams, *Unearthing*, 122-124.

<sup>92</sup> Adams, *Unearthing*, 142-148.

the civil rights movement.<sup>93</sup> Throughout these decades, the school's commitment to the potential of the region – which Stephen Schneider attributed to “Horton's prophetic sensibilities, as well as his pragmatic commitment to reconstructing contemporary society along democratic lines” – required the point and pedagogy of Highlander to grow organically and change to fit the needs of a restless South full of unrealized potential.<sup>94</sup> In her 1962 autobiographical text, *Echo in My Soul*, Septima Clark decided that all these changes in Highlander's “activities” meant that the School “expanded considerably to embrace larger programs involving more people over a greatly extended region,” but “its purposes – it's character, I might say – have never changed.”<sup>95</sup> Highlander's commitment to integration and the black freedom movement also condemned the school to decades of raids and lawsuits; these violently segregationist attacks culminated in 1959, when local authorities padlocked its doors and the state confiscated its land and property. Its Monteagle landscapes sold at auction, Highlander's leaders sought and received a new charter, under a new name and tied to a different environment.<sup>96</sup> At each point of change, transition, or expansion, the people of Highlander acted out of their commitment to an ideology of southern potential,

---

<sup>93</sup> Horton, Aimee, 245-246. Adams, *Unearthing*, 144, 177. For more on Ella Baker's role as a guide for the student movement within the black freedom struggle, see J. Todd Moyer's *Ella Baker: Community Organizer of the Civil Rights Movement* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2013) and Aprele Elliot's article, “Ella Baker: Free Agent in the Civil Rights Movement,” in *Journal of Black Studies* 26, no. 5 (1996).

<sup>94</sup> Schneider, 8.

<sup>95</sup> Septima Poinsette Clark and LeGette Blythe, *Echo in My Soul* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1962): 122.

<sup>96</sup> Horton, Aimee, 253. Highlander re-chartered as the Highlander Research and Education Center, and operated out of two facilities near Knoxville, TN. Frank Adams was the first director, and the Center is still active.

and the landscape that they chose and constructed helped to make this potential a reality.

### **A Place Where the People Are**

Horton and Highlander utilized the physical landscape – the boundaries of the school’s site, its acreage, location, and the resources it provided – as a foundation for the experimental, experiential training site they created over thirty years of residence and cultivation. The Folk School recognized that having an established center for its activities meant that its ideology of human potential could be harnessed and developed on site and then spread abroad, as its students returned to their own homes, factories, protests, and local movements. Highlander separated itself from Grundy County and Monteagle with an easily permeable border that allowed students to venture further into the other landscapes of the region, either for research, activism, or recreation. Within these boundaries, Highlander developed features like a lake and plots for food production, which made the school both symbolically and actually self-sufficient. Since Highlander kept its physical landscape distinct from the rest of the Cumberland Plateau – but unspectacularly so – the School could relate to locals, mountain people, working people, southerners, and civil rights activists, without requiring these students to transition to an exotic, unique, or unrelatable physical environment. Thus, their ideology – realized within the Folk School’s own acres and bounded sufficiency – could be reproduced throughout the region and nation, which multiplied the potential championed and discussed within the Highlander landscape.

According to Frank Adams, Highlander considered “*starting where the people are*” as central to creating productive dialogue, but this principle also affected the School’s location in Monteagle – and its consistent proximity to the southerners it served.<sup>97</sup> Highlander’s charter made no mention of the physical environment that brought its founders to Grundy County, but Adams argued that the idea of a landscape situated in the Cumberland Plateau preceded the Folk School’s official founding.<sup>98</sup> Horton stipulated that his dream of a “mountain school for mountain people” could only exist within the Appalachian landscape he hoped to empower, because he believed that a welcoming, approachable space would ground the mission he had in mind.<sup>99</sup> In 1932, Highlander inhabited forty acres, but by 1962, when all of Highlander’s properties went to auction, the School owned one hundred and seventy-five acres; a report in *The Tennessean* noted that a local businessman “purchased the lion’s share” of the land, in addition to buildings and “lakefront lots.”<sup>100</sup> In the intervening years, Highlander had acquired piecemeal plots of land, including the “Glovier Property,” where Myles and his wife Zilphia settled and raised their family.<sup>101</sup> To distinguish the physical environment of Highlander from the other farms of the surrounding region, the School’s staff, residents, and participants maintained a mostly imaginary border. Only Septima Clark described a literal boundary for part of the

---

<sup>97</sup> Adams, *Unearthing*, 213. The emphasis is original to Adams’ text.

<sup>98</sup> “Charter of Incorporation,” 1934, Highlander Folk School Archive, Box 1, Folder 1 (Administrative Files: Charters and Constitutions, 1934, 1957, 1961,) Highlander Research and Education Center Records, Wisconsin Historical Society.

<sup>99</sup> Adams, *Unearthing*, 12. Horton, *The Long Haul*, 60-63.

<sup>100</sup> “Highlander Sale Brings \$43,700,” *The Tennessean* 57, no. 67, July 8, 1962, <http://tennessean.newspapers.com/image/?spot=19234139> (accessed April 14, 2018).

<sup>101</sup> Horton, Aimee, 32. Glen, 249. Adams, *Unearthing*, 135.



Highlander farm – when she wrote of her desire to return to the Folk School and “[go] with some friend along the path through the woods and out into the pasture and over the barbed wire fence to the corner of the campus where suddenly and precipitately the land falls away a thousand feet into a great gorge [where] one may stand in awe.”<sup>102</sup> Locals could come to the School for classes or socialization, and students could transition from working “in residence” to “in the field,” but everyone – in and especially outside of Highlander – understood the space that the Folk School occupied to be different and distinct.<sup>103</sup>

Though some sides of the Folk School’s boundaries butted up against neighboring landscapes, other ends of Highlander’s acreage stopped as so many Appalachian spaces do, rolling off into the next set of basins and hills. Adams related how James Dombrowski’s interactions with this part of the physical environment – “Behind Dombrowski’s cabin, through woods, the mountain plateau Highlander rested on suddenly dropped into a Cumberland valley [and he] headed to the cliff’s edge to relax in solitude” – inspired feelings of both isolation and satisfaction in the School’s first executive secretary.<sup>104</sup> Adams noted that the school’s isolation affected how many people perceived the School and how its eager students traveled up Monteagle Mountain and throughout the rugged, undeveloped countryside: “Roads were poor. Feet or mules provided the chief means of transportation, especially in the hollows, where there was a

---

<sup>102</sup> Clark, *Echo*, 232.

<sup>103</sup> “Staff Job Descriptions,” c. 1958, Highlander Folk School Archive, Box 3, Folder 9 9 (Staff organization and benefits, 1958-1961,) Highlander Research and Education Center Records, Wisconsin Historical Society.

<sup>104</sup> Frank T. Adams, *James A. Dombrowski: An American Heretic, 1897-1983* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992):99.

marked absence of social life.”<sup>105</sup> After the Depression, however, cars often brought students past the simple entrance to Highlander (see figures 1 and 2.) Students’ accounts detailed the process of finding rides with other southerners headed up to Highlander, and carloads of visitors, converging all at once, became a common site inside the Folk School’s physical landscape.<sup>106</sup> Proponents of the Folk School, like Virginia Foster Durr and the Nashville Christian Leadership Council, also testified to the challenges students and their sponsors willingly endured.<sup>107</sup> Eventually, even providing transportation to the distant, yet centrally located landscape of Highlander became a sort of participation in the black freedom movement.

Once Highlander existed within its own stretch of the Cumberland Plateau and established the boundary between life at Highlander and life throughout the rest of the South, the Folk School’s students and staff understood its physical landscape as one of many pedagogical tools available to them. In *The Long Haul*, Horton detailed Highlander’s holistic approach to providing an education, especially for the residential students who came to Monteagle and immersed themselves in both communal living and the Folk School’s landscape.<sup>108</sup>

---

<sup>105</sup> Adams, *Dombrowski*, 88.

<sup>106</sup> Eliot Wigginton ed., *Refuse to Stand Silently By: An Oral History of Grass Roots Social Activism in America, 1921-1964* (New York: Doubleday, 1991): xiv-xv, 240.

<sup>107</sup> Virginia Foster Durr, *Outside the Magic Circle*, edited by Hollinger F. Barnard (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1985): 278-279. Bobby L. Lovett, *The Civil Rights Movement in Tennessee: A Narrative History* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2005): 145.

<sup>108</sup> “Appendix C,” c. 1957, Highlander Folk School Archive, Box 1, Folder 1 (Administrative Files: Charters and Constitutions, 1934, 1957, 1961,) Highlander Research and Education Center Records, Wisconsin Historical Society. Part of Highlander’s Charter of Incorporation with the State of Tennessee, probably from September of 1957; includes a list of residential students who came to the school from 1932-1940. Over 180 students are listed, men and women, and five are listed as attending more than one of these six week sessions.

“Residential workshops [were] a twenty-four-hour education,” and often took workers away from their strikes or removed activists from the struggle in their own communities.<sup>109</sup> Highlander wanted students to be quickly and fully immersed in the pattern of chores, discussion, entertainment, and communication that staffers established within the confines of their physical environment. So, teachers and other staff members carefully considered the implications of the food they served, the furnishings they provided, and the recreation they encouraged. Horton remembered, “Even calling attention to the beautiful mountain view is part of it. We like to get them out on the front porch so they can see the mountains and talk about them, and about the birds, flowers, and rivers. And then, if people want to talk about very serious things, they can walk in the woods.”<sup>110</sup> Highlander’s physical landscape – including its natural features, aesthetics, and sense of place – contributed to the School’s ability to espouse and share its ideology of potential.<sup>111</sup> While proximity to the rest of Appalachia might have first attracted Horton and West to Johnson’s Monteagle cooperative, the Folk School used all the inborn features of its physical environment to further its mission and to create a space in which freedom could be taught and experienced.

---

<sup>109</sup> Horton, *The Long Haul*, 160.

<sup>110</sup> Horton, *The Long Haul*, 159-160.

<sup>111</sup> For an explanation of spaces that can be understood as different types of landscapes, see Meinig’s “The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene,” in which he explains how one landscape can be seen – either in turn or all at once – as Nature, Habitat, Artifact, System, Problem, Wealth, Ideology, History, Place, and Aesthetic. Also see William M. Reynolds’ *Forgotten Places: Critical Studies in Rural Education*, and *Interpreting Our Heritage*, from Freeman Tilden and R. Bruce Craig.

The physical environment provided space for the people of Highlander to develop certain locations and plots of land as resources for the School, which made the institution not just distinct from other Grundy County landscapes but also largely self-sufficient. In Highlander's early years, when Horton and Dombrowski shared administrative responsibilities, the School's directors wanted the school to be "financially self-sustaining," but "the school's finances were dismally low."<sup>112</sup> In response, Joe Kelly and Kate Bradford Stockton offered over one thousand acres of their lands in Fentress County, Tennessee, but the Folk School remained in Monteagle.<sup>113</sup> By the civil rights era, Highlander seemed to be thriving within its almost two hundred acres, since they filled the built environment with structures specifically suited to the needs of a radical center for adult education.<sup>114</sup> The School also turned part of the physical environment into a farm, which must have answered at least some part of that early call for economic independence. A document detailing the "Organization of Highlander," from about 1958, listed a "Plant Manager (Department of Plant Management)" as one of many permanent staff positions that reported directly to the School's director.<sup>115</sup> The duties of the Plant Manager conveyed how Highlander utilized the physical environment:

Manages the farm operation for the Corporation, exercising independent judgment according to the needs of the farm operation under direction of the Director; may supervise farm hands, laborers; may perform himself

---

<sup>112</sup> Adams, *Dombrowski*, 64, 71.

<sup>113</sup> Adams, *Dombrowski*, 71-72.

<sup>114</sup> "Auction," *The Tennessean*, December 10, 1961, <http://tennessean.newspapers.com/image/?spot=19234246> (accessed April 14, 2018). Adams claims Highlander had 200 acres on pages 44 and 136 of *Unearthing Seeds of Fire*. Auction reports state 175 acres.

<sup>115</sup> "Staff Job Descriptions," c. 1958, Highlander Folk School Archive, Box 3, Folder 9 (1958-1961). Highlander Research and Education Center Records, Wisconsin Historical Society.

any general farm duties in connection with fencing, cultivating, housing animals, growing crops, hauling or tending plants and animals.<sup>116</sup>

Chroniclers often mentioned Perry Horton, Myles' father, cultivating gardens to sustain the School's kitchen and dining room (see figure 3,) but the later presence of a farm indicated Highlander's eventual, full adaptation to the natural resources available within its physical landscape in Monteagle.<sup>117</sup>

Other features of the Folk School's physical environment garnered critique from persons outside the Highlander community, especially the manmade lake that stretched between the Horton home and the long, low library building.<sup>118</sup> Visitors to Highlander often posed along the lake's grassy shoreline or photographed groups of children and young people breaking through its surface (see figures 4, 5, and 6.) Laws of segregation made each of these integrated groupings technically illegal in the state of Tennessee, and while some white southerners reveled in the opportunity to break the rules of Jim Crow – Virginia Foster Durr remembered furnishing Rosa Parks with a swimsuit after encouraging her to enjoy the “swimming at Highlander” – many white citizens and politicians from the surrounding counties and states cited the lake as a prime example of the depravity at Highlander.<sup>119</sup> Friends and opponents of the

---

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Wigginton, 95.

<sup>118</sup> Adams, *Unearthing*, 79. The only indication that Highlander added the lake comes from *Unearthing Seeds of Fire*, and Adams' account of the intrepid Thorsten Horton printing an article on the day of his mother's funeral. The article said, “the progress being made in developing a lake at the school [because ‘the] fish wall will be finished in about four more days. The lake will be filled up in two weeks if the weather is what it's been lately.” By that account, the lake could have been natural, and the fish wall the addition. Because of its situation within the physical landscape, parallel to a plot of land turned into a garden or farm, the lake is included in the physical rather than built environment.

<sup>119</sup> Durr, *Outside the Magic Circle*, 278. Clark, *Echo*, vi. Wills, 366.

Highlander experience all understood the activities that took place within the School's physical landscape to reflect the education and ideals that the school championed. Yet, this environment also enabled teachers to provide sustenance and recreation for their students, so that visitors could "live freedom" before they returned to their own communities, strikes, or struggles.<sup>120</sup>

### **A Place Kept Comfortable and Homelike**

Atop the foundation of this physical landscape, the Folk School adapted and constructed a built environment of houses, libraries, and simple structures that they designed to welcome any student interested in experiencing a Highlander education. While its acres within the Appalachian Mountains might have met the School's initial requirements of space and resources, Highlander's staffers and students continued to add to its built landscape throughout its thirty years of residence in Monteagle. From Johnson's converted farmhouse to temporary dormitories and a technologically advanced film center, the people of Highlander designed their built environment to accommodate large numbers of adults from across the South. To teach these nontraditional students in a democratic, respectful, and unassuming way, Highlander featured simple furnishings, similar to those of working class homes in the mid-twentieth century, but it never became so like a home or a resort that work could not be done.<sup>121</sup> In fact, visitors often took on the responsibilities of maintaining and constructing Highlander's built environment, just as they actively sustained its radical rules of integration. As its staff and students added buildings to fit the changing needs of

---

<sup>120</sup> Adams, *Unearthing*, 143.

<sup>121</sup> Clark, *Echo*, 133-134.

the Folk School's mission, Highlander produced a built landscape particularly suited to radical education, but also an atmosphere that eased the transition from the world beyond Highlander to the life within its landscape of potential.

Over thirty years of use and adaptation, Highlander's built landscape grew from one farmhouse into a collection of homes, offices, and other facilities.

Gladys Beene drew a map of the Folk School in 1958, as a part of her Master's thesis and as one of the earliest attempts to preserve the history of the school, soon to be disbanded and divorced from its Monteagle environs.<sup>122</sup> Beene's map included fifteen buildings nestled around the lake and connected by dirt roads spreading out from State Highway 56. She identified a barn, the Main Building, Library, Community Building, Office and Dark Room, the Horton family's "Green Hill" home, Horton's mother's house, and other cabins, some associated with a particular family but others simply labeled as a log cabin or the cabin-by-the-lake (see figure 7). Originally, Horton and his staffers only had Johnson's home (figure 8;) the rest of the built environment, including the spaces that they converted within the "main building," reflected the School's needs during its time on the Cumberland Plateau. Adams contrasted the use of Johnson's home before the founding of Highlander,

By any standard it was Summerfield's finest house, with two indoor bathrooms, one upstairs and one down. A vine-shaded porch level with the lawn stretched the width of the house. Her living room had been a place for the play-party games of neighborhood children, as well as a lecture hall

---

<sup>122</sup> Gladys Beene, "The Highlander Folk School," Master's thesis, Middle Tennessee State College, May 1964. The Grundy County Historical Society owns an original copy of Beene's thesis, donated by the author. Beene also made a second map in 1964, which shows the arrangement of buildings after the auctions, fire, and switch from the HFS to the HREC. Because this paper ends in 1962, the map is included in the Image list, but is not mentioned in this section.

with its later incarnation, formed as the School settled into the space,

They started immediately to make the house into a residential center. The spacious attic was turned into a dormitory. The living room became a place for classes, meetings, square dancing, and dining. Extra beds were added in the three bedrooms in the second floor [and they] mailed out requests for books to start a library.<sup>123</sup>

This building became the heart of Highlander's campus, and visitors-turned-photographers often included its distinctive siding, porch, and clinging vines as a backdrop for their group portraits or images of historic moments (figures 9-14.) Other photos preserved the various ways that staffers and students utilized the building's interior: for independent study under a large bank of windows (figure 15) and for banquets and holiday parties that represented a successful coalition of union members active in various branches of the southern labor movement (figures 16 and 17.) Highlander continued to update this original building until the state began to question the School's charter and the old house "mysteriously caught fire and burned to its foundations between the first and second auction" of the early 1960s.<sup>124</sup> Despite such an eventful, eventual demise, the building at the center of Highlander's physical landscape and the core of its built environment represented the School's willingness to make manifest its ideology of potential.

Just as the first generation of Folk School staffers quickly turned one woman's home into a multipurpose facility, Highlander adapted and added to its built environment, until the School operated out of a collection of thoughtfully constructed and furnished structures. Adams explained, "Every staff member had

---

<sup>123</sup>Adams, *Unearthing*, 26-27.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.



a host of responsibilities [...] staff and students did all the cooking and cleaning. They maintained the house and built several additional cabins.”<sup>125</sup> In *Highlander: No Ordinary School*, John Glen counted out “fourteen buildings, and nine residences” present at the auction in 1962.<sup>126</sup> Those structures, all added over the thirty years Highlander stayed in Monteagle included log cabin homes, the community building that sometimes served as a school or nursery, and the specially built film center and library (see figures 18-21). Photos of other, distant spaces – in states and countries where Highlander staffers helped to develop extension programs or offered guidance to strikers and activists – revealed the built landscapes with which visitors to the Folk School might have been familiar (see figures 22-24) Highlander produced a similar aesthetic, with its crowded kitchen, bunkbeds, patterned curtains, overflowing library shelves, and long, trestle tables. Just as providing transportation to Highlander became a type of involvement in the movements the School supported, administrators also noted the contributions of people like Ruby Turner Norris, who donated a picture for the Folk School’s living room.<sup>127</sup> Later on, “over one thousand” locals would purchase all these furnishings at the 1961 auction, but each item of “linen, farm supplies, furniture, [and] the school’s 5000-volume library,” originally represented a donation, a careful investment, or a thoughtful attempt to accommodate Highlanders’ students.<sup>128</sup> The furnishings and detailed features of the Folk

---

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>126</sup> John M. Glen, *Highlander: No Ordinary School*, 2nd ed. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1996): 249.

<sup>127</sup> “Ruby Turner Norris: Ar. Jan 1938 – Left March 1938,” Highlander Folk School Archive, Box 3, Folder 8 (Staff Biological Information A-Z, 1932-1938, 1948, 1956-1961,) Highlander Research and Education Center Records, Wisconsin Historical Society.

<sup>128</sup> Glen, 248.

School's built landscape created an environment that any mid-twentieth century southerner could understand and appreciate, even as they committed themselves to a strenuous season of training, learning, and labor.

Many people who knew Highlander, either in the era of labor unions or the freedom movement, remembered the particular atmosphere of the Folk School and its landscape, and while some of these staffers or students listed off mountains and valleys, others discerned the built environment as a source of the freedom and potential they felt. Zilla Hawes Daniel, an initial member of the Highlander community and one of the School's directors, recalled specific memories tied to the School's built environment: "It seemed to me like Mom [Horton's mother, Elsie Falls Horton,] that lovely sweet woman, spent the whole time cooking, bringing in a big pan of cornbread every dinnertime along with everything else that she cooked. I can see the kitchen now in that old house at Monteagle," and "I remember playing volleyball. We had quite a few games out on the volleyball court in the back."<sup>129</sup> Photographs from this era show other students congregating, working in the kitchen together, and playing softball; all who came to the Folk School benefited from its open, adaptable, and inviting built environment (see figures 25-28.) In the midst of memories of Highlander's physical environment, Septima Clark also noted the importance of its built landscape, writing, "We did offer a wonderful mountain climate and gorgeous scenery, and adequate meals and comfortable though very plain lodgings," and "the hills, the woods, the little lake beside which sits the house that was so

---

<sup>129</sup> Wigginton, 95.

unfairly taken from [Horton], the simple but hospitable buildings.”<sup>130</sup> Clark understood that Highlander needed to provide these accommodations to make participants feel comfortable with one another, especially since one workshop could include students from throughout the South – and across class or color lines. Reflecting on the built environment that Highlander gradually constructed, Adams wrote,

The place – Highlander – is kept comfortable and homelike. Horton may not have realized the importance of low-keyed informality when he and West persuaded Dr. Johnson to let them use her house. They simply used what they had. Slowly the staff came to realize that this homey feeling was important – plain, well-used furniture, no desks or folding chairs, no bell, no cafeteria line, no tin trays, nothing to suggest an institution. Discussions are as likely to take place in the dining room as the in the meeting room. Furniture is light and can be moved around. Food is served family style.<sup>131</sup>

Throughout this observation, Adams highlighted the elements of the built environment, both spaces and furnishings, and revealed how permanent inhabitants and participants perceived this landscape at Highlander. He clarified, “Still, Highlander is not a home,” and though many long-term staffers did live there, this distinction – between one’s home and a homey space where one could comfortably learn – mattered to the students who came to the Folk School to study and labor together.<sup>132</sup>

Parallel to the School’s gradual and thoughtful adaptation to the needs of Southern society, Highlander continued to add to its built landscape throughout its years in Grundy County. In seasons of structural growth, the school even

---

<sup>130</sup> Clark, *Echo*, 133-134, 232.

<sup>131</sup> Adams, *Unearthing*, 211.

<sup>132</sup> Adams, *Unearthing*, 211.

asked its students, like the two groups of men framing houses in Figure 29 and Figure 30, to take part in the literal construction of their School. Some structures benefited staffers and students alike, like chicken coops and wells for washing laundry (see figures 31 and 32,) but other elements within the built environment specifically facilitated the School's large gatherings of students. According to photographs of men and children arranged in front of temporary dormitories (figures 33, 34, and 35,) Highlander could not always afford to add permanent structures, but the School and its built environment still welcomed these students, because of the potential good they could do – at Highlander or beyond. Photographs of gatherings in the library depicted how a later generation of students also modified the Folk School's built environment to match their needs. Both practicality and a common desire to act on potential inspired the Folk School's students to use this one interior to house discussions, lectures, informal gatherings, and radically integrated dances (see figures 36-39.) Experiencing the ever-changing and inviting built environment at Highlander empowered students to reenter the surrounding, anti-union and segregated South and apply the School's commitment to adaptability to their own involvement in the struggle for economic or racial equality.

Though most workers and activists only came to Monteagle for a weekend or a season – to experience a Highlander education within its own landscape – some staff members created their homes on the Mountain, as part of the Folk School's larger built environment. Clark remembered calling on Horton's mother and aunt, in their homes at Highlander, and on "May Justus, the writer, and Vera

McCampbell, the school teacher,” in “the charming little cottage on the edge of campus.”<sup>133</sup> Thirty years prior, Jim Dombrowski had also developed his own small part on the outskirts of the Folk School’s built landscape, removed from the offices and dormitories that controlled his workdays. Adams described the importance of the wealth of open space at Highlander, and of the cabin Dombrowski added there, when he wrote, “He found peace in his cabin’s simplicity, in the quiet at the cliff, and with his watercolors or rock garden. For the first time in his adult life, Dombrowski felt at home, easy and supremely happy.”<sup>134</sup> Once Zilphia Horton came to Highlander and married Myles, they also built their first home at the Folk School – “a one-room log cabin[,] a long walk through the woods from the main building” – but they later moved closer to the campus’ entrance, into a house that their family fitted with annexes and additions.<sup>135</sup> The cabins, canvas tents, and other facilities that the Folk School’s staff and students constructed represented Highlander’s commitment to the waves of men and women it welcomed and trained for the fight for human rights.

In addition to their practical uses, which changed to reflect the number of students attending a workshop or a shift in programming for the Highlander staff, these elements of the built environment also housed and exhibited the Folk School’s commitment to integration. Horton claimed that “We couldn’t have discriminated if we’d wanted to, because we couldn’t afford it,” but by the early 1950s, the school was decidedly and fiercely set against segregation.<sup>136</sup> As

---

<sup>133</sup> Clark, *Echo*, 233.

<sup>134</sup> Adams, *Dombrowski*, 99.

<sup>135</sup> Adams, *Unearthing*, 76.

<sup>136</sup> Horton, *The Long Haul*, 86. Horton, Aimee, 194-198.

Septima Clark understood the School, “it was an integrated institution that in recent years particularly had been emphasizing studies in race relations and the elevation of the Negro to first-class citizenship.”<sup>137</sup> Photos of Highlander workshops showed that many conferences, either short-term or lasting a whole residential season, included men and women of both races, even during the years of the Depression and the New Deal (see figure 40). However, such images also proved Highlander to be a completely unique landscape in the South, no matter how welcoming it may have been or how purposefully homey. The groups of people pictured in Figure 41 and Figure 42, eating together and sleeping in the same room, integrated spaces at Highlander that matched other built landscapes across the South – landscapes whose integration resulted in sit-ins, protests, grassroots movements, and legislation throughout the 1950s and 60s.<sup>138</sup> Anyone who came to Highlander would have understood the implications of black and white men changing in the same locker-room (see figure 43) or of an interracial group of students dancing in the School’s library (figure 39,) and they carried their experience of integration with them, back into the segregated South. Copies of prints like Figure 44 helped rally the School’s segregationist opposition, but images of integrated dinners and of truly democratic discussions (see figures 45-47) could have been just as damning. To the other sort of southerner – the

---

<sup>137</sup> Clark, *Echo*, 10.

<sup>138</sup> For more on these events, especially in the region around Highlander, see Bobby L. Lovett’s *The Civil Rights Movement in Tennessee: A Narrative History*, and the work that Sarah Wilkerson Freeman and Beverly Greene Bond edited, *Tennessee Women: Their Lives and Times*. Also Jenny Irons’ article, “The Shaping of Activist Recruitment and Participation: A Study of Women in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement,” and Bernice McNair Barnett’s “Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement: The Triple Constraints of Gender, Race, and Class,” both in *Gender and Society*.

directors, teachers, students, and visitors who supported Highlander – gatherings within a fully integrated built environment meant freedom and a realization of their vision of potential.

### **A Place of Spirit and Atmosphere**

Throughout its physical and built landscapes, Highlander also fostered a symbolic environment of signs, aesthetics, and distinction that conveyed its ideology of potential – for the School and throughout the South. Unlike many of the landscapes of the struggle for human rights, Highlander had an environmentally-exhibited ideology of potential, rather than protest, power, or conflict. Lunch counters in Greensboro, North Carolina, parks in Birmingham, Alabama, and water fountains across the Jim Crow South all functioned as racially segregated symbolic landscapes, until blacks demanded access to them. Highlander always opened its facilities and programs to black laborers, union members, leaders and activists, and these black staffers and students made it their own, just as white workers and foot soldiers did. The symbolic landscape of Highlander, from its integrated facilities to its open, inviting grounds, made the School's anti-segregationist stance recognizable to visitors. Though Horton and the Folk School staff surely influenced this layer of the landscape, the generations who came to Highlander and then recreated and reinterpreted its ideology through their activism, and eventually their memories, most thoroughly influenced the School's symbolic environment. As opposed to the racial identity being determined throughout the rest of the region, they cultivated their own understandings of race, equality, and society, all of which they realized through

this symbolic landscape. The built environment, made possible by the boundaries of the physical, encouraged the development of a symbolic space for the families, communities, and individuals who viewed Highlander as a retreat from the rest of the South and a place of preparation for the America they hoped to create.

The people of Highlander – from its board of directors to visitors who only stayed for a weekend workshop – all took part in the creation of the symbolic landscape of Highlander. For thirty years, they labored together to cultivate an atmosphere that furthered their ideology of potential. While borders around sufficient acreage contributed open space and access to communities in need and simple accommodations in easily adapted facilities allowed participants to feel welcome and at ease, the symbolic environment most clearly conveyed the character of Highlander. In *Unearthing Seeds of Fire*, Adams included the entirety of one anonymous letter because he believed it told “much about the atmosphere”; that student’s account of experiencing, traversing, and enjoying the space of Highlander communicated his understanding of the Folk School’s symbolic landscape.<sup>139</sup> Similarly, Clark implied a direct, even causal connection between experiencing the space of Highlander and internalizing its ideologies and vision. She described the school as “a place of light and hope and refreshment of the spirit,” emphasized that “Getting the feel of Highlander” helped activists “to go back home and work with the people,” and shared how “The very

---

<sup>139</sup> Adams, *Unearthing*, 41-42. It is a truly delightful letter, as is Eliot Wigginton’s account of a weekend at the Highland Research and Education Center, included in his introduction to *Refuse to Stand Silently By*.



atmosphere of Highlander, where living on an integrated basis eliminated stereotypes [proved] refreshing and immensely stimulating.”<sup>140</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, who supported the School through monetary donations and appearances at special events, also appreciated the time she spent within Highlander’s environment.<sup>141</sup> In “Highlander Folk School, Grundy County’s ‘Public Nuisance,’” Ridley Wills quoted the First Lady, “I often realize how rich my life is and how fortunate but occasionally it gets a little too rich and I lay awake thinking how I would like to be at Highlander. It is the only place I know of where I feel I am only myself and not Mother, Daughter, Wife, Sister or so.”<sup>142</sup> As students, participants, and benefactors filled their descriptions of the School with their awareness of the connection between the place and the potential of Highlander, they each helped to define the Folk School’s symbolic landscape.

Even as different generations of teachers, workers, and activists cultivated the sense of place at Highlander and connected their ideologies to the Folk School’s environment, they also designed their symbolic landscape to be expandable and transferable. Highlander staffers traveled to distant union strikes throughout the 1930s and 40s, sharing the insights they gathered at the School, but during the early civil rights era, more participants left the Folk School intending to return to their own landscapes and establish extension programs.<sup>143</sup> Clark – who so sufficiently proved the relationship between living within the Monteagle environment and experiencing the freedom that the Folk School

---

<sup>140</sup> Clark, *Echo*, 120, 131-132, 162.

<sup>141</sup> Adams, *Unearthing*, 97-98, 126, 192, 200.

<sup>142</sup> Wills, 358.

<sup>143</sup> Adams, *Unearthing*, 47-71. Clark, *Echo*, 160-167.

encouraged – also described this process of recreating the School’s atmosphere and dynamics, if not its entire symbolic landscape. She explained, “Our little school for illiterates on Johns Island was [...] an extension of Highlander, as soon others would be. And from it Highlander, its parent, would learn, too.”<sup>144</sup> In discussing the creation of this system of extension programs, Horton specified, “Now, Highlander doesn’t initiate programs; we help former students carry out the programs that they themselves ask us to help them with.”<sup>145</sup> He and Frank Adams explained that initiatives like the Citizenship Schools empowered black teachers, students, and communities precisely because they did not occur at Highlander.<sup>146</sup> The School’s symbolic landscape could provide space for processing and an example of a place filled with potential, but the actual activism had to happen within the spaces that needed to be transformed. Since Highlander designed its environment to be materially similar to – but culturally distinct from – the rest of the South, its symbolic landscape could only be experienced within the space it occupied, but its students transferred the Folk School’s character and radical education throughout the region.

As Highlander inspired Citizenship Schools and protests against segregation across the South, the staff and students who stayed at the Folk School continued to integrate its symbolic landscape and wrestle with the challenges of race. In an interview with Eliot Wigginton, Horton stated, “My impression is that neither Septima nor Rosa or anybody really thought of

---

<sup>144</sup> Clark, *Echo*, 152.

<sup>145</sup> Horton, *The Long Haul*, 100.

<sup>146</sup> Horton, *The Long Haul*, 99-108. Adams, *Unearthing*, 116-120.

Highlander as being a place where we were violating the law and a place of civil disobedience. They just thought of Highlander as a place where people were decent,” and Parks agreed, “Oh yeah, and could just enjoy the relaxing atmosphere without having to have color lines drawn anywhere.”<sup>147</sup> In December of 1955, only a few months after she attended a summer course at Highlander, on “public school segregation,” Parks helped initiate the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and Virginia Foster Durr discerned a causal relationship between Park’s protests and the Folk School’s symbolic, integrated landscape. In a letter to Zilphia Horton, dated January 30, 1956, Durr wrote,

When [Parks] came back she was so happy and felt so liberated and then as time went on she said the discrimination got worse and worse to bear AFTER having, for the first time in her life, been free of it at Highlander. I am sure that had a lot to do with her daring to risk arrest.<sup>148</sup>

In *Echo My Soul*, Clark reiterated these sentiments from Parks, with whom she frequently worked and communicated, but one of Clark’s biographers, Katherine Mellen Charron argued that Highlander’s integration and racial dynamics proved unsatisfactory for its Director of Education. Based on her analysis of Clark’s other correspondence – most of it written long after she served as the Folk School’s only salaried staff member of color – Charron presented Clark as isolated within the all-white community of Grundy County and often frustrated with Horton and the Highlander method.<sup>149</sup> Despite her concerns, Clark still came to the Folk

---

<sup>147</sup> Wigginton, 231.

<sup>148</sup> Virginia Foster Durr, *Freedom Writer: Virginia Foster Durr, Letters from the Civil Rights Years*, edited by Patricia Sullivan (New York, Rutledge, 2003): 103-104.

<sup>149</sup> Katherine Mellen Charron, *Freedom's Teacher: The Life of Septima Clark*. Chapel Hill (The University of North Carolina Press, 2009): 246, 266, 289.

School's defense in 1962, when its future and ideals of potential seemed impossible, and she proclaimed,

At Highlander over many months Southerners, white and Negro, have come together, lived together, studied and dreamed together, together launched their plans for the hastening of that better day. At Highlander integration of purpose and effort achieve integration of daily living, and so naturally that almost from the outset it becomes routine and commonplace. As integration should be.<sup>150</sup>

Staffers like Septima Clark and students like Rosa Parks helped turn Highlander into a singularly integrated southern landscape, where people of both races could experience “the dream of what could be in America, rather than what [was.]”<sup>151</sup>

Though some staffers may have disagreed with one another, in the midst of their pursuit of radical democracy, Highlander's integrated landscape still served as an inspiration for so many of the foot soldiers, grassroots activists, and young people who led the civil rights movement.

During its thirty years on Monteagle Mountain, the Folk School determined its vision for the South and began to produce this future, a product of both inherent potential and hard work, by transforming its own symbolic landscape. As always, working through Horton's methods involved a painstaking application of the School's virtue of democracy, difficult even within “the safe space of Highlander.”<sup>152</sup> In 1961, this process involved a workshop, distinct within all of Highlander's numerous conferences, in which “forty-seven whites and thirteen

---

<sup>150</sup> Clark, *Echo*, 185.

<sup>151</sup> Adams, *Unearthing*, 148. For a discussion of the racial segregation that defined the South outside Highlander's landscapes, see Jennifer Ritterhouse's *Growing Up Jim Crow: How Black and White Southern Children Learned Race* and Ruth Frankenburg's “Growing Up White: Feminism, Racism, and the Social Geography of Childhood,” in *Feminist Review* 45.

<sup>152</sup> Todd J. Moyer, *Ella Baker: Community Organizer of the Civil Rights Movement* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2013): 131.

Negroes representing fourteen colleges and universities within the South,” discerned how white activists could support the black freedom struggle.<sup>153</sup> This workshop culminated in the publication of a pamphlet, *Considerations by Southern White Students of their roles in the struggle for Democracy in the South*, which outlined appropriate levels of white involvement, encouraged greater interracial communication, and promoted black leadership within the movement.<sup>154</sup> Virginia Durr explained the challenges that these students, and the whole of the Highlander community faced, acting on their ideology of southern potential. She wrote,

I could give a lot more cases of people who left [segregated institutions] but this is enough to show the pressures that were on people... These were brave Southerners, unsung heroes, but they were not typical. The south is often talked about as if all Southerners are alike, but the race issue, particularly, affected different Southerners differently. Even so-called liberals were not always in favor of integration.<sup>155</sup>

Highlander, however, maintained its commitment to integration, to democratization, to potential, and to the southerners it set out to serve.<sup>156</sup> The subject of its lectures and dinner-table discussions may have changed – from the plight of local Appalachians to unionization, desegregation, and citizenship – but Highlander continued to grow within its landscape and adapt its plot of the Cumberland Plateau, until the School and its space was no more. Even then, Horton announced, “you can’t padlock an idea,” and proved the concept of

---

<sup>153</sup> Tim Carr, Robert Kauffman, Blanchard Weber, *Considerations by Southern White Students of their roles in the struggle for Democracy in the South: A report on the findings of a workshop on the role of the white student in the students' struggle for racial justice* (Monteagle: Highlander Folk School, 1961).

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Durr, *Outside*, 311.

<sup>156</sup> Horton, *The Long Haul*, 131, 144, 171.

Highlander to be viable, even when separated from the landscapes that created it.<sup>157</sup>

### **A Place of Potential**

The Highlander folk school exhibited its ideology of potential in the physical, built, and symbolic landscapes that it acquired and constructed in the rolling, shaded hills of the Cumberland Plateau. After 1962, however, Horton transferred the traditions of the Highlander Folk School to the the Highlander Research and Education Center, located in two campuses near Knoxville, TN. Though the later history of the Highlander method could suggest that School's ideas mattered more than the landscape that inspired them, the Folk School's students and staffers all understood their environment to be different, influential, and important. This landscape in Monteagle, these two hundred acres and few dozen structures in Grundy County, this distinctly non-segregated space in rural Tennessee helped change the future and potential of the South. Horton, his friends, followers, staff, and students could have taken their dream of a mountain school to any number of locations in the upland south, but the specific landscape they chose to inhabit affected the character of the Highlander Folk School that came to be. The physical, built, and symbolic landscapes of this Monteagle plot made possible the potential that Highlander discerned in the workers, activists, and everyday citizens of the twentieth century South.

I have been to the site that once housed the Highlander Folk School. It is no longer open and inviting, comfortable, aesthetic, or particularly integrated. Yet,

---

<sup>157</sup> Adams, *Unearthing*, 133. Schneider, 170-171. See figure 48.

the library still stands and local school groups still wade through tall grasses to sit near its lake. The Horton family lies buried in a cemetery across the highway, and the Tennessee Preservation Trust wants to gather up the Folk School's old acreage and create a living history museum. Historians continue to write about the experiences at Highlander, and the memories and photographs that preserve its environment still inspire southerners to improve the region around them. So, perhaps the potential of Highlander lives on, just as its landscape still stands high above the modern South, on Monteagle Mountain.

## Appendix



Figure 1, Three students gather near the simple, handmade sign that marked the entrance to Highlander.

Wisconsin Historical Society, "Students Next to Highlander Entrance," 51599. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM51599>.



Figure 2, Two CIO Students and Zilphia Horton near parked cars and the "Main Building."  
Wisconsin Historical Society, Emil Willmetz, "Zilphia Horton at CIO School," 50979. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM50979>.





Figure 3, After Elsie and Perry Horton joined their son at Highlander, she cooked and he gardened.

Wisconsin Historical Society, "Perry Horton in Highlander Garden," 1934, 52310. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM52310>.



Figure 4, A group of students, male and female, black and white, sit in the grass along the lake. Wisconsin Historical Society, Ida Berman, "Civil Rights Group Meeting near Highlander Lake," 51767. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM51767>.



Figure 5, Children from Koinonia, the Georgia cooperative farm who held a camp – which met at Highlander for a few years. Wisconsin Historical Society, “Koinonia Children's Campers in Lake,” 50473. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM50473>.



Figure 6, According to the WHS, “Youth project and children's campers swimming in Highlander Lake.” Wisconsin Historical Society, “Swimming in Lake Highlander,” 52045. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM52045>.

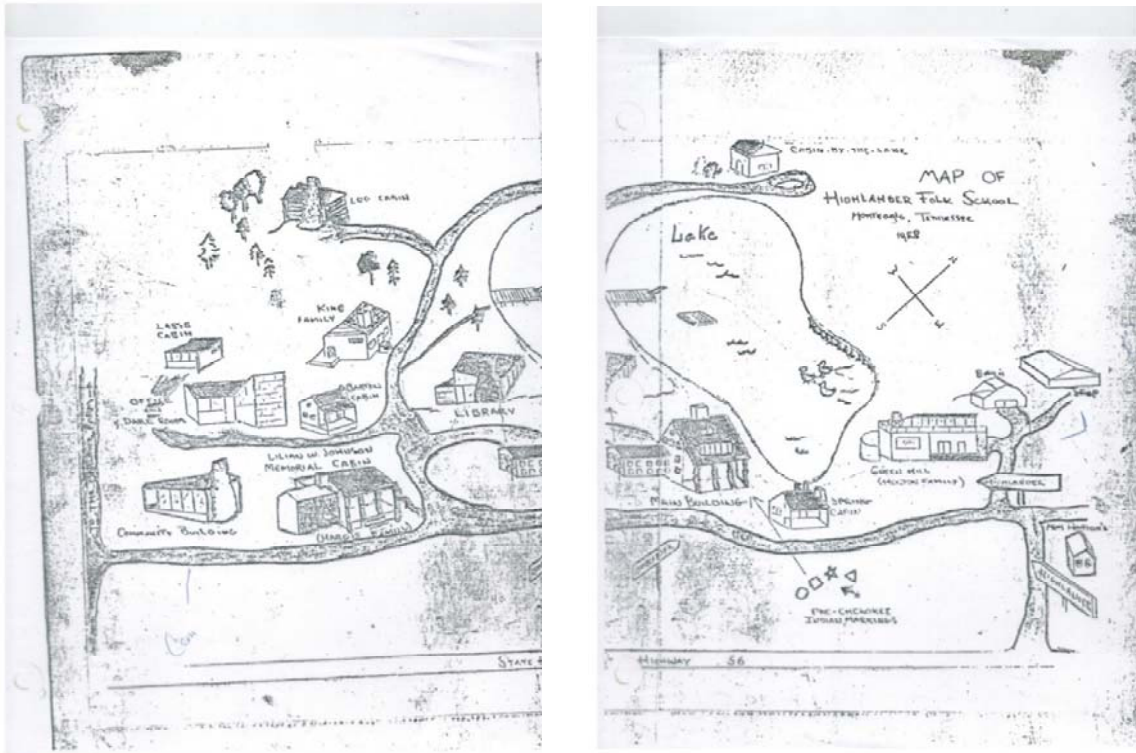


Figure 7, Map of Highlander Folk School in 1958.

Gladys Beene, "The Highlander Folk School," Master's thesis, Middle Tennessee State College, May 1964.



Figure 8, The Main Building, three years after Highlander converted it from a house into an all-purpose facility for sleeping, eating, lectures, and administration (Back View).  
Wisconsin Historical Society, "Highlander Main Building," 1935, 51308. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM51308>.



Figure 9, Group Portrait of Black Students, including Esau Jenkins, fifth from left.  
Wisconsin Historical Society, "Group in Front of Highlander Main Building," 52616. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM52616>.



Figure 10, From WHS, "A meeting at Highlander Folk School. Guy Carawan is holding a banjo on far left. Septima Clark standing third from the left. Matt Sturgis standing extreme right."  
Wisconsin Historical Society, "A Meeting at Highlander," 51074. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM51074>.



Figure 11, Three Students and Myles Horton, right, meet outside the Main Building.  
Wisconsin Historical Society, "Outdoor Meeting at Highlander Folk School," 47935. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM47935>.



Figure 12, Two female students sit outside the Main Building, on a bench connected to the wood and stone building's distinctive vine-covered porch.

Wisconsin Historical Society, Emil Willmetz "Two Women at CIO Session," 51228. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM51228>.



Figure 13, Bernice Robinson, the first Citizenship School teacher in the South Carolina Sea Islands, and Alice Cobb, who worked with special projects at Highlander, outside the Main Building.

Wisconsin Historical Society, "Alice Cobb and Bernice Robinson," 50823. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM50823>.



Figure 14, From WHS, "Eleanor Roosevelt, standing, with Myles Horton, and May Justus at the 25th anniversary of Highlander Folk School."

Wisconsin Historical Society, "Eleanor Roosevelt with Myles Horton and May Justus," 51773.

Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM51773>.



Figure 15, From WHS, "Karen Blondell of the Antioch co-op at Highlander Folk School." Interior of the Main Building.

Wisconsin Historical Society, Emil Willimetz, "Karen Blondell, Antioch Co-op," 51361. Viewed

online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM51361>.



Figure 16, From WHS, "Members of the CIO School at a banquet. Fifth from left, Bill Kornhauser, Antioch student, later professor of sociology. Zilphia Horton, extreme left foreground." Wisconsin Historical Society, Emil Willimetz, "CIO School Banquet," 56278. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM56278>.



Figure 17, From WHS, "Zilphia Horton leading singing at CIO School during Holiday season. At the table on the right, Myles Horton, Mike Ross, Tom Ludwig, and Joyce Mitchell." Wisconsin Historical Society, Emil Willimetz, "Zilphia Horton Leading Songs," 51638. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM51638>.





Figure 18, From WHS, "May Justus reading to Charis and Thorsten Horton, children of Myles and Zilphia Horton, at Highlander Folk School."

Wisconsin Historical Society, "May Justus with Charis and Thorsten Horton," 52775. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM52775>.



Figure 19, From WHS, "Highlander Film Center."

Wisconsin Historical Society, "Highlander Film Center," 51055. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM51055>.



Figure 20, From WHS, "Group portrait of adults at Highlander School."  
Wisconsin Historical Society, "Highlander Group Portrait," 47936. Viewed online at  
<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM47936>.



Figure 21, From WHS, "An elderly woman in a straw sun hat reading a book in the Highlander Folk School Library." Highlander students and Grundy County community members all used the Highlander Library.

Wisconsin Historical Society, "Elderly Woman in Highlander Library," 51374. Viewed online at  
<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM51374>.



Figure 22, From WHS, "Mrs. Brewer teaching a citizenship class at Edisto Island. Septima Clark, far left." Wisconsin Historical Society, "Mrs. Brewer's Class at Edisto Island," 51401. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM51401>.



Figure 23, From WHS, "Farmers Union ladies quilting. A sign in the background reads, "Mt. Pelia". In Weakley County." Wisconsin Historical Society, "Farmers Union Ladies Quilting," 52219. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM52219>.



Figure 24, From WHS, “A village near Cuautla, Mexico, where the Highlander-sponsored, Inter-American Educational Adults seminar was held, invited participants to a committee meeting in the square. Myles Horton is to the right, speaking. [...] Aimee Horton can be seen at the front table on the right.”

Wisconsin Historical Society, “Cuautla Educational Adults Seminar,” December 16, 1962, 51596.  
Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM51596>.



Figure 25, From WHS, “A small group meeting at Highlander. From left to right: J.C. McAmis, TVA; Myles Horton, Tennessee Farmers Union; Mr. H.N. Hatley, Tennessee Farmers Union; Lee Fryer, Secretary-Treasurer for the National Farmers Union.”

Wisconsin Historical Society, Emil Willimetz, “Small Group Meeting at Highlander,” 52719.  
Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM52719>.



Figure 26, From WHS, "CIO students doing kitchen duty at Highlander Folk School. Myles Horton helping."

Wisconsin Historical Society, "CIO Kitchen Duty," 50976. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM50976>.



Figure 27, From WHS, "A group of women working on hard boiled eggs in the Highlander kitchen. Betty Shipherd on right, Antioch student on left."

Wisconsin Historical Society, "Highlander Kitchen Scene," 52569. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM52569>.



Figure 29, From WHS, "A group of students taking a break to play softball at Highlander Folk School." Wisconsin Historical Society, "Everybody Out For Recreation," 52614. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM52614>.



Figure 29, From WHS, "Two men working on the construction of a building at Highlander Folk School." Wisconsin Historical Society, "Building at Highlander," 52399. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM52399>.



Figure 30, From WHS, "An unknown group of men lifting a pulley in the process of constructing an unknown building. A man in the background is filming the process."  
Wisconsin Historical Society, "Men Using a Pulley," 52401. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM52401>.



Figure 31, From WHS, "An unidentified man (Myles Horton?) using an axe to cut off a chicken's head."  
Wisconsin Historical Society, "Chicken on the Chopping Block," 51979. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM51979>.



Figure 32, From WHS, “Early 1930s laundry group that helped staff members. Dorothy Carlson at right.”

Wisconsin Historical Society, “Laundry at Highlander,” 1935, 51763. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM51763>.



Figure 33, From WHS, “Group portrait of men near the Highlander Folk School visitor housing.”

Wisconsin Historical Society, “Outdoor Group Portrait of Men,” 51082. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM51082>.





Figure 34, From WHS, "Group of children in front of a tent. Part of Highlander Folk School's Koinonia Children's Camp." Wisconsin Historical Society, "Koinonia Children's Camp Group Portrait," 50471. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM50471>.



Figure 35, From WHS, "A group of boys relaxing during Highlander Folk School Koinonia Children's Camp."

Wisconsin Historical Society, "Koinonia Children's Camp at Highlander," 52395. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM52395>.



Figure 36, From WHS, "Koinonia Youth Camp in the Highlander Library at the Highlander Folk School. The woman in the background is identified as Septima Clark. Koinonia is a farm in Georgia that was holding integrated children's camps when they were not allowed to do this in Georgia, Highlander let them come to Summerfield, held for two years, 1956 and 1957." Wisconsin Historical Society, "Koinonia Youth Camp in the Highlander Library," 50454. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM50454>.



Figure 37, From WHS, "A man giving a lecture to a group of students at Highlander Folk School." Wisconsin Historical Society, "Lecturing at Highlander," 52308. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM52308>.



Figure 38, From WHS, "A man is reading a book on a bench, while a woman is standing in front of the entrance to the Highlander Library. A small group of people can be seen inside of the library."

Wisconsin Historical Society, "Two People Outside of Highlander Library," 52636. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM52636>.



Figure 39, From WHS, "Youth dancing at the Highlander Folk School as part of the Summer Youth Project program. Wendy Davis in the lower left."

Wisconsin Historical Society, "Highlander Folk School Youth Project Dance," 50463. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM50463>.



Figure 40, From WHS, "A young woman teaching a labor class at Highlander Folk School."  
Wisconsin Historical Society, "Young Woman Teaching Labor Class," 53010. Viewed online at  
<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM53010>.



Figure 41, From WHS, "Mine, Mill and Smelter workers eating a meal at Highlander Folk School."  
One black man is seated at the far end of the table.  
Wisconsin Historical Society, Emil Willimetz, "Mine, Mill, and Smelters Union Meal," 51234.  
Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM51234>.



Figure 42, From WHS, "Members of a Farmers Union workshop at Highlander Folk School are seen relaxing in the men's dormitories on bunk beds."

Wisconsin Historical Society, "Farmers Union Workshop Members," 50912. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM50912>.

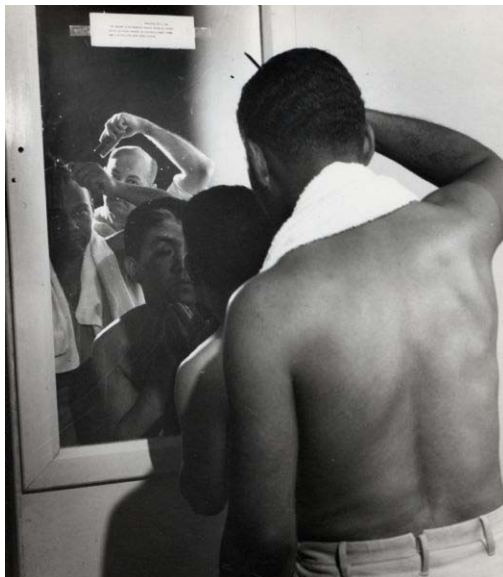


Figure 43, From WHS, "A group of men combing their hair in front of a mirror at Highlander Folk School."

Wisconsin Historical Society, "Men Combing Hair at Highlander," 51221. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM51221>.

Page Four THE AUGUSTA COURIER, JULY 8, 1960

# MARTIN LUTHER KING....AT COMMUNIST TRAINING SCHOOL

The above picture was made by an employee of the State of Georgia, at the Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee during the Labor Day week-end of 1957. The photographer was sent to the Highlander Folk School by the Georgia Commission on Education. The Highlander Folk School was abolished by an act of the Legislature of the State of Tennessee at a later date.

Those numbered in the picture are:

1. Martin Luther King, Jr., of the Montgomery boycott and the Birmingham riots. Karl Prussion, a counterspy for the FBI for twelve years, charges that Martin Luther King belongs to sixty Communist-front organizations — more than any Communist in the United States.
2. Abner W. Berry of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.
3. Aubrey Williams, President of the Southern Conference Education Fund, Inc., The Transmission Belt in the South for the Communist Party.
4. Myles Horton, Director of Highlander Folk School for Communist Training, Monteagle, Tennessee.

These "Four Horsemen" of racial agitation have brought tension, disturbance, strife and violence in their advancement of the Communist doctrine of "racial nationalism."

**JOIN THE AUGUSTA COURIER IN THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM**  
 Copies available - 100 for \$1.00 (include .30c stamps for postage)

**Alert Americans Association, Box 1222, L. A., Calif. 90053**  
 Order RIGHT WING DIRECTORY, listing all Right Wing Activities

*Handwritten notes:*  
 Left: He's dangerous, but not so dangerous as they tell us.  
 Right: And King will not help you to become a part of the system.

Figure 44, From WHS, "'Martin Luther King .... at Communist Training School," a broadside received by Wisconsin Congressman David R. Obey, while civil rights legislation was being debated in Wisconsin. The image of King at the Highlander Folk school was widely distributed to demonstrate King's left-wing connections. Four people are numbered and named on the broadside: 1. Martin Luther King, 2. Abner W. Berry, 3. Aubrey Williams, 4. Myles Horton. Rosa Parks can also be seen, the woman on the far left, in the front row." Wisconsin Historical Society, *Augusta Courier*, "Civil Rights Workshop Banquet," 1963, 94962. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM94962>.



Figure 45, From WHS, "Four women and a man eating at a table at a Civil Rights banquet at Highlander Folk School. Septima Clark, second from left."  
Wisconsin Historical Society, Ida Berman, "Civil Rights Workshop Banquet," August 1956, 52637.  
Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM52637>.



Figure 46, From WHS, "A Civil Rights workshop in session at Highlander School showing Myles Horton, Mikii Marlowe, Essau Jenkins, Septima Clark and Rosa Parks in attendance."  
Wisconsin Historical Society, "Civil Rights Workshop," 34374. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM34374>.



Figure 47, From WHS, "Eleven people, including Thurgood Marshall, Anne Braden, Myles Horton, and Septima Clark, are seated and standing during a Civil Rights meeting at Highlander School. Guy Carawan holds a guitar."

Wisconsin Historical Society, "Civil Rights Meeting with Thurgood Marshall," 34377. Viewed online at <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM34377>.



Figure 48, From WHS, "Myles Horton watching as the local sheriff puts a padlock on Highlander Folk School, following a trial in which Highlander was accused of propagating Communism."

Wisconsin Historical Society, Thorsten Horton, "Sheriff Padlocking Highlander

Folk School," 1958, 52898. Viewed online at

<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM52898>.



## Bibliography

### **Primary Sources**

- Adams, Frank and Myles Horton. *Unearthing Seeds of Fire: The Idea of Highlander*. Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 1975.
- Adams, Frank. "Highlander Folk School: Getting Information, Going Back and Teaching It." *Education, Participation, and Power: Essays in Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: Harvard Educational Review, 1976.
- "Appendix C." c. 1957. Highlander Folk School Archive, Box 1, Folder 1 (Administrative Files: Charters and Constitutions, 1934, 1957, 1961). Highlander Research and Education Center Records. Wisconsin Historical Society.
- "Auction." *The Tennessean*, December 10, 1961.  
<http://tennessean.newspapers.com/image/?spot=19234246> (accessed April 14, 2018).
- Carr, Tim, Robert Kauffman, and Blanchard Weber. *Considerations by Southern White Students of their roles in the struggle for Democracy in the South: A report on the findings of a workshop on the role of the white student in the students' struggle for racial justice*. Monteagle: Highlander Folk School, 1961.
- "Charter of Incorporation." 1934. Highlander Folk School Archive, Box 1, Folder 1 (Administrative Files: Charters and Constitutions, 1934, 1957, 1961). Highlander Research and Education Center Records. Wisconsin Historical Society.
- Clark, Septima Poinsette and LeGette Blythe. *Echo in My Soul*. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1962.
- Clark, Septima. "'I train the people to do their own talking:' Septima Clark and Women in the Civil Rights Movement." *Southern Cultures* (Summer 2010): 36-52.
- Durr, Virginia Foster. *Freedom Writer: Virginia Foster Durr, Letters from the Civil Rights Years*, edited by Patricia Sullivan. New York, Rutledge, 2003.

- Durr, Virginia Foster. *Outside the Magic Circle*, edited by Hollinger F. Barnard. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1985.
- “Highlander Sale Brings \$43,700.” *The Tennessean* 57, no. 67, July 8, 1962. <http://tennessean.newspapers.com/image/?spot=19234139> (accessed April 14, 2018).
- Horton, Myles, Judith Kohl, and Herbert Kohl. *The Long Haul: An Autobiography*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1998.
- “Ruby Turner Norris: Ar. Jan 1938 – Left March 1938.” Highlander Folk School Archive, Box 3, Folder 8 (Staff Biological Information A-Z, 1932-1938, 1948, 1956-1961.) Highlander Research and Education Center Records. Wisconsin Historical Society.
- “Staff Job Descriptions.” c. 1958. Highlander Folk School Archive, Box 3, Folder 9 (Staff organization and benefits, 1958-1961). Highlander Research and Education Center Records. Wisconsin Historical Society.
- Wigginton, Eliot, ed. *Refuse to Stand Silently By: An Oral History of Grass Roots Social Activism in America, 1921-1964*. New York: Doubleday, 1991.
- Williamson, J. W. and Edwin T. Arnold, eds. *Interviewing Appalachia: The Appalachian Journal Interviews, 1978-1992*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1994.

### **Secondary Sources**

- Adams, Frank T. *James A. Dombrowski: An American Heretic, 1897-1983*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992.
- Barker, Thomas Patrick. “Music, Civil Rights, and Counterculture: Critical Aesthetics and Resistance in the United States, 1957-1968.” PhD thesis, Durham University, 2016.
- Barnett, Bernice McNair. “Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement: The Triple Constraints of Gender, Race, and Class.” *Gender and Society* 7, no. 2 (1993): 162-182.
- Beene, Gladys. “The Highlander Folk School.” Master’s thesis, Middle Tennessee State College, May 1964.

- Charron, Katherine Mellen. *Freedom's Teacher: The Life of Septima Clark*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
- Durham, Frank Dallas. "Opposition in process: The press, Highlander Folk School, and radical social change, 1932-1961." PhD diss., The University of Wisconsin - Madison, 1993.
- Egerton, John. *Shades of Gray: Dispatches from the Modern South*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991.
- Elliott, Aprele. "Ella Baker: Free Agent in the Civil Rights Movement." *Journal of Black Studies* 26, no. 5 (1996): 593-603.
- Frankenburg, Ruth. "Growing Up White: Feminism, Racism, and the Social Geography of Childhood." *Feminist Review* 45 (Summer, 1993): 51-84.
- Freeman, Sarah Wilkerson and Beverly Greene Bond, eds. *Tennessee Women: Their Lives and Times*, vol 1. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2009.
- Glen, John M. *Highlander: No Ordinary School*. 2nd edition. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1996.
- Gyant, LaVerne and Deborah F. Atwater. "Septima Clark's Rhetorical and Ethnic Legacy: Her Message of Citizenship in the Civil Rights Movement." *Journal of Black Studies* 26, no. 5 (May, 1996): 577-592.
- Hale, Jon N. "Early Pedagogical Influences on the Mississippi Freedom Schools: Myles Horton and Critical Education in the Deep South." *American Educational History Journal* 34, No. 2 (2007): 315-329.
- Horton, Aimee Isgrig. *The Highlander Folk School: A History of Its Major Programs, 1932-1961*. Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing Inc, 1989.
- Irons, Jenny. "The Shaping of Activist Recruitment and Participation: A Study of Women in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement." *Gender and Society* 12, no. 6 (1998): 692-709.
- Jacobs, Dale, ed. *The Myles Horton Reader: Education for Social Change*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003.

- Jordan, Amanda Shrader. "Faith In Action: The First Citizenship School on Johns Island, South Carolina." Master's thesis, East Tennessee State University, 2008.
- Lewis, Peirce K. "Axioms for Reading the Landscape: Some Guides to the American Scene." *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*, edited by D. W. Meinig. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Ling, Peter. "Local Leadership in the Early Civil Rights Movement: the South Carolina Citizenship Education program of the Highlander Folk School." *Journal of American Studies* 29, No. 3 (December, 1995): 399-422.
- Lovett, Bobby L. *The Civil Rights Movement in Tennessee: A Narrative History*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2005.
- MacLean, Kenneth Torquil. "Origins of the Southern Civil Rights Movement: Myles Horton and the Highlander Folk School." *The Phi Delta Kappan* 47, no. 9 (1966): 487-489.
- Massie-Legg, Alicia R. "Zilphia Horton, a Voice for Change." PhD thesis, University of Kentucky, 2014.
- Meinig, D. W. "Symbolic Landscapes: Some Idealizations of American Communities." *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*, edited by D. W. Meinig. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Meinig, D. W. "The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene." *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*, edited by D. W. Meinig. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Moye, Todd J. *Ella Baker: Community Organizer of the Civil Rights Movement*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2013.
- Murphy, Troy A. "Civil Society, the Highlander Folk School, and the Cultivation of Rhetorical Invention." *The Communication Review* 6 (2003): 1-22.
- Reynolds, William M., ed. *Forgotten Places: Critical Studies in Rural Education*. New York: Peter Lang, 2017.

- Ritterhouse, Jennifer. *Growing Up Jim Crow: How Black and White Southern Children Learned Race*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006.
- Roy, William G. *Reds, Whites, and Blues: Social Movements, Folk Music, and Race in the United States*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.
- Russell, Clare. "More Than Mrs. Robinson: Citizenship Schools in Lowcountry South Carolina and Savannah, Georgia, 1957-1970." PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 2010.
- Schneider, Stephen A. *You Can't Padlock an Idea: Rhetorical Education at the Highlander Folk School, 1932-1961*. Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2014.
- Thomas, Glyn H. "The Highlander Folk School: The Depression Years." *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (December, 1964): 358-371.
- Tilden, Freeman and R. Bruce Craig, ed. *Interpreting Our Heritage*. 4th edition. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007.
- Wills II, Ridley. "Highlander Folk School, Grundy County's 'Public Nuisance.'" *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 66, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 350-369.