

Chapter 2

Nashville: Jackson's Town 1820-1860

ANDREW JACKSON'S figure looms so large in the early nineteenth-century history of Nashville - not to say the history of the United States - that the story of his life completely dominates the chronicle of his adopted town in that time. He had ridden west from North Carolina in 1788, a tall, slender, twenty-one-year-old lawyer with blazing blue eyes and a thick crop of reddish hair, and from the day he arrived in Davidson County until he died here fifty-seven years later, he was a singular presence, a man too forceful and commanding to be denied, much less ignored.

If overcoming adversity is a mark of character, Jackson had met and exceeded the measure before he was old enough to shave. A few days before he was born in the Waxhaw settlement on the border of North and South Carolina in March 1767, his Scotch-Irish father died suddenly. He lost both of his brothers in the Revolutionary War. By the time he was fourteen, he had been wounded and captured in the war himself, suffered from smallpox in a Tory prison, and learned of the death of his mother from cholera after she had nursed wounded Continental Army soldiers on a prison ship in Charleston harbor. Passed among relatives for the remainder of the war, young Jackson bore the scars of his childhood openly. Even when he was a small boy, he had been regarded disdainfully as a wild, reckless; foul-mouthed bully with a trigger-quick temper and a fondness for bare-knuckle brawling; as a military veteran in his early teens, he showed few signs of having been tamed. He was exceedingly bright, but his schooling had been brief and fragmented, and he was more inclined to apply his intelligence to gambling, horse racing, and cockfighting than to other more widely encouraged pursuits of the mind.

When he was sixteen, he mustered enough interest and self-discipline to try his hand at teaching school, and a year or so later, stirred by the discovery of his ability to use words, he moved to Salisbury, North Carolina, to begin tutored preparation for a career in law. He was by then brimming with cocky self-assurance and obsessed with an ambition to make for himself a life of wealth and comfort. All the same, he still found time for rambunctious drinking sprees and randy escapades in the taverns of Salisbury; with fellow law student John McNairy and others, he made an impression in the town that lingered long after he was gone.

McNairy was a man with intimate ties in North Carolina politics, and he subsequently was elected by the North Carolina legislature to be judge of the Superior Court in the state's western district. In 1788, Jackson persuaded the new judge to hire him as his public prosecutor, and in the company of a few young lawyers of their acquaintance, the two men set out for the Cumberland. They stopped first in Jonesboro, staying long enough for several court appearances and for the volatile Jackson to engage in a pistol duel with another attorney. (Fortunately for both duelists, neither man was hurt.) Then, in October, Jackson and McNairy rode on to Nashville on the newly opened road across the mountains. The Cumberland settlements were almost nine years old by then, and their permanence was all but assured. Jackson and McNairy represented a new wave of westward migrants intent on converting land to wealth and power, and unlike the ones who had come before them, they had political influence, a knowledge of the law, and a relatively safe field in which to maneuver. For McNairy, those assets would bring modest wealth and a quiet career on the bench; for Jackson, they would lead to national and world prominence.

Jackson lost no time in establishing himself. By chance, he found lodging at the home of John Donelson's widow - she having returned to Nashville since the death of her husband - and the Donelson family's social connections were soon turned to his advantage. Jackson fared well in the legal realm, too, first as public prosecutor and then as attorney

general for the Mero District under Governor William Blount. Those positions, together with his active private practice, allowed him within a few years to accumulate substantial land holdings.

Another young lawyer and boarder at the widow Donelson's was John Overton, and the two men became fast friends. Overton's support and counsel would serve Jackson invaluable for thirty-five years. And there was someone else in Mrs. Donelson's home who would be of paramount importance to Andrew Jackson for the rest of his life: Rachel Donelson Robards, the widow's daughter. As a thirteen-year-old girl she had come to Nashville in the Cumberland flotilla with her parents; now she was a vivacious, dark-eyed, raven-haired woman and-for the moment - the wife of Lewis Robards of Kentucky. Her marriage was already on shaky ground when Jackson arrived, and his presence did nothing to shore it up. In 1791, after Robards and Rachel had separated and she had gone to stay with friends in Natchez, word circulated that he had divorced her. Jackson soon went to join her in Mississippi, and when they returned to Nashville, they announced that they were married. Two years later, it became known that Robards had only recently obtained the divorce. That news prompted Andrew and Rachel, with Overton's urging, to have a civil wedding ceremony performed in Nashville.

The complications of the marriage notwithstanding, Jackson found - as he apparently had anticipated - that his formal entry into one of Nashville's most prominent families solidified his social and political position in the community. He became a trustee of Davidson Academy; he represented Davidson County (with James Robertson, John McNairy, and two others) at the convention called to draft Tennessee's first constitution; he was the new state's first member of Congress, serving in the House of Representatives in 1796; and the following year he was elected by the Tennessee legislature to a seat in the United States Senate.

All the while, often in partnership with John Overton, he was acquiring property throughout the state, and like every canny land speculator" he had a knack for buying low and selling high. One especially fertile and appealing tract of about 500 acres located on the Cumberland twelve miles east of Nashville became his home plantation, Hermitage. He bought it for a little more than five dollars an acre.

But some of his financial transactions turned sour on him in the mid-1790s, and Jackson found himself strapped with heavy debts for several years. His preoccupation with personal financial problems may have been a factor in his decision to take a leave of absence from the Senate a few months after his election and then to resign his seat altogether. In any event, by the spring of 1798 he was back home in Tennessee, and soon thereafter he had secured an appointment to the state's Superior Court, a post which paid him a respectable salary, kept him well-connected politically, and left him time to look after his land and business interests.

In six years on the bench, while he looked the part of a wise and dignified judge in his flowing black gown, Jackson compiled a record that was adequate but undistinguished; one man described his opinions as "short, un-technical, un-learned, sometimes ungrammatical, and generally right." If his demeanor was satisfactory in court, however, it was at times injudicious elsewhere: He still had a penchant for finding trouble in his personal relationships. He quarreled with his old friend John McNairy and with the immensely popular Governor John Sevier. Jackson was a tempestuous man, blunt and abrasive, easily offended; he was a tangle of contradictions, by turns crude and charming, cold and compassionate, defiant and fiercely loyal. He was not a man to leave others indifferent to his personality; people seemed either to love him or to hate him.

One who hated him was Sevier, and the feeling was mutual. Jackson outmaneuvered him to win the office of major-general of the Tennessee militia in 1802; Sevier retaliated by getting the legislature to split the prestigious post into eastern and western commands; Sevier accused Jackson of "taking a trip to Natchez with another man's wife"; Jackson called Sevier "a base coward and poltroon" and challenged him to a duel. The wild and riotous affair

degenerated in to a show of swords and pistols that ended miraculously without injury to either party, and Jackson came away from it more feared than ever as a man not to be trifled with.

His notoriety had just begun. In 1804, he resigned his judgeship, built a two-story log house on the Hermitage land, and turned his attention to such interests as horse breeding, storekeeping, cotton production, whiskey-making, and trading in land and slaves. In 1805, he entertained Aaron Burr at the Hermitage, and some of his enemies suspected him of conspiring with Burr to plan a military invasion of Spanish-held Louisiana. And in 1806, after a quarrel over a horse race bet, he fought a sensational duel with Charles Dickinson, a renowned marksman. Jackson walked away from it with a bullet forever lodged near his heart. Dickinson was less fortunate; he was left bleeding to death on the ground.

For the next six years, Jackson's star seemed in eclipse as he kept himself occupied with personal matters of property and family. He had in Rachel not only a wife of long-suffering devotion but an excellent manager as well, and she helped him to increase the worth and productivity of their land. Though they were childless themselves, the Jacksons raised several of the children of their nieces and nephews; one boy, Andrew Jackson Donelson, remained close to the elder Jackson throughout his life, and another, christened Andrew Jackson Jr., was legally adopted. As he passed the age of forty, the mature Mr. Jackson caused some to wonder if his impulsive combativeness might perhaps be softening a bit. That must have been wishful thinking; he was in fact as keenly ambitious as ever and as much feared - by his enemies, his subordinates, his slaves, even at times by his friends and family. He may have been temporarily out of the center of battle, but all he lacked was a cause to fire his passions anew.

THE CAUSE WOULD BE WAR. When Congress declared war against Great Britain in the spring of 1812, Andrew Jackson could claim virtually no experience as a military leader. He was still a major-general of the Tennessee militia, but that post was more political and social than military; he had not directed men in any major battles or even spent much time in uniform.

Nevertheless, he stepped forward to seize prominence as a soldier, and looking back on his exploits, it seems almost as if the War of 1812 was made for him-and he for that war. The reckless bluster of his youth had given way to a controlled rage, a tightly disciplined view of men - of life - as objects to be prevailed against and systematically conquered. Jackson was intensely, reverently patriotic; he believed in sacrificial service for the good of his country, as he saw that good, and he had the magnetism, the energy, and the aggressiveness to inspire other men to follow him. There would be twentieth century soldiers (George Patton and Douglas MacArthur come quickly to mind.) who would find instruction and inspiration in Jackson more than a century after his sword had been sheathed.

His brief and brilliant military career has been told and retold so often that it would seem redundant to describe it here. It should be sufficient to say that between 1813 and 1818 he waged unrelenting war against the British and their allies the Creek Indians and the Spanish, throughout a vast triangular region stretching from north Alabama to New Orleans to the Florida peninsula. The men he enlisted and exhorted to follow him into battle - Tennessee volunteers, Louisiana free blacks, Mississippi Choctaw Indians, and others-admired him extravagantly, when they were not in total fear of him. He was tough, one of them said, as tough as hickory - and ever after, they regarded him reverently as "Old Hickory."

Even in the midst of war, Jackson seemed unable to avoid controversy and personal conflict. In Nashville in the spring of 1813, he served as a second for one of his officers, William Carroll, in a duel with another of his soldiers, Jesse Benton. In the exchange of shots, Carroll somehow managed to strike his opponent in the buttocks, and the embarrassment was such that Thomas Hart Benton, Jesse's brother and a colonel in Jackson's command, angrily blamed his general for the entire affair. Stung by the accusation, Jackson vowed to horsewhip Colonel Benton. A few days later,

on the Public Square in Nashville, the two men met by chance. The ensuing fight involved no less than seven men armed with guns, swords, knives, and sticks. Jackson was shot in the shoulder and almost bled to death. The speed and skill of several doctors (one of them being Boyd McNairy, brother of Judge John McNairy) saved his arm from amputation, but the bullet was left embedded in his flesh. The Bentons quickly left town for Missouri. (Thomas Hart Benton eventually was sent to the United States Senate from Missouri; he served with distinction in Washington - and there renewed his acquaintance with the gentleman from Tennessee.)

Before he had fully recovered from his gunshot wound, Jackson led his men into battle. They ruthlessly laid waste to the Creek Nation in Alabama, devastated a British invasion force at New Orleans in the most overwhelming victory ever won by an American fighting force, and drove the Seminole Indians into the swamps of Spanish-owned Florida. Along the way, Jackson was rewarded with the rank of major-general in the United States Army, and after the Battle of New Orleans he was swept up in a tidal wave of national praise and hero worship. He had driven his men relentlessly, obsessed with a determination to end British and Indian resistance to white American continental dominion finally and for all time. The nation's citizens had never known a more devoted general or one more in tune with their collective will. They showered him with admiration, and the gaunt, gray General, his cheeks hollow, his hair by then almost completely white, received their praise with composed formality. As he had been ready for war, he was ready for the fruits of victory.

In a nation so dependent upon military strength for its survival, it was perhaps inevitable that the choicest fruit for a war hero would be high political office. Jackson had already been a congressman and a senator. There was only one other position he could aim for: the presidency. After he had resigned his military rank and served briefly as territorial governor of Florida at President James Monroe's request, a small circle of politicians and strategists assembled around him in Nashville. They had one objective in mind: to make Old Hickory the first Westerner to be elected President of the United States.

CONSIDERING HOW EXUBERANTLY the rest of the nation poured its praise on Jackson, Nashville seemed to adjust to his celebrity reasonably well. It was not that he was taken in stride - no one took Andrew Jackson in stride - but rather that he was simply better known in his home community, remembered as a lawyer and a planter as well as a soldier, and the aura of mystery that followed him elsewhere was not so thick and impenetrable here.

And besides, the ascending prominence of the General was not the only development of importance to the people of Davidson County. Even as Jackson, by the force of his own personality, was beginning to reshape the mood and character of the country, steamboats and commerce and refinements from the East were reshaping the character of Nashville.

In the early 1820s, Nashville was humming with movement and activity. Shops and stores, inns and taverns, banks and public buildings had sprung up along with houses on the town's streets, and new structures were constantly being built. There were schools of several kinds. The Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists had churches, and the first Catholic mass was celebrated in 1821 for sixty Irish laborers who had come from Pittsburgh to help build the first bridge across the Cumberland. There was a library, open "every day to shareholders, citizens and strangers," and oil-burning street lamps glowed in the night. The Nashville Medical Society was organized with seven physicians as members, including Boyd McNairy and Felix Robertson, who was the society's founder and president. (The two men had studied medicine together in Philadelphia and come home to extend the prominence of their family names into a second generation.)

There were other "old faces" in town, people whose names had then been known on the Cumberland for three

or four decades and would be carried on without interruption late into the next century - such names as Hayes, Harding, Cockrill, Gower, Thompson, Trimble, Watkins, Foster. And there were many new faces that would be long remembered, Ralph E. W. Earl, a noted artist from the Northeast, who came to the Hermitage to paint Jackson's portrait and stayed to marry a niece of Rachel's and live out his life here; Washington Cooper, a Tennessean and a student of Earl's, who opened a studio in Nashville and earned a national reputation with his portraits; Wilkins Tannehill, a businessman and writer, who served twice as the town's mayor and was a national authority on the fraternal order of Masons; Henry M. Rutledge and his wife, Septima Sexta Middleton, both of whose fathers had signed the Declaration of Independence (her Latin name means Seventy-Six); John Shelby, a physician and businessman, who was to build three mansions east of the river and later to found a medical school.

The list steadily lengthened as the town spread out in all directions, The new bridge, opened at the northeast corner of the square in 1823 (The Victory Memorial Bridge is there now.), was a big improvement over the slow and undependable ferries, and it speeded development in the broad bottomland across the river, an area that soon would be called Edgefield. The courthouse was twenty years old by then, and there were lawyers on almost every block. Nashville had about it a look of modest charm and comfort, of permanence - and it was thriving.

What made it so, more than anything else - including the presence of General Jackson - was the steamboat that bore his name (It was owned by his close friend and fellow soldier, William Carroll.) and the others that followed it. Before they came, Nashville had operated in slow motion, its needed goods being poled upriver on barges and keelboats or packed over poor roads and trails by wagon. The steamboat stepped up the pace dramatically. It brought sugar and coffee, china and cutlery, plows and clothing and people - a stream of people - from New Orleans and Louisville and Pittsburgh; it carried back hides and cotton and tobacco to those markets, and soon it would carry iron products, for the heyday of the ore smelting furnaces on the Cumberland was at hand. When the General Jackson first reached Nashville, Knoxville was barred from the Mississippi by the Muscle Shoals and Memphis was nothing more than a muddy plain on the river bluffs, an expanse of wilderness that John Overton had bought from the Chickasaws, hoping to start a town there . The steamboat gave Nashville a head start in Tennessee and a fair start in the West.

There were shoals on the Cumberland, too - the Harpeth Shoals, thirty-eight miles below Nashville - and they took their toll in lives and cargo, but they were not as formidable as the Muscle Shoals. The river pilots learned how to negotiate them. They waited patiently for high water or impatiently hogged their boats across; one way or the other, they got through.

As early as 1825, no less than nine steamboats called regularly at Nashville, and the commercial and social interchange they made possible lifted the town literally out of the backwater and into the mainstream.

The riverboat also lifted Andrew Jackson. Call it perfect timing or simply good fortune - whatever, it was one more development that came along just when he needed it. He might never have been President without the steamboat; certainly it gave him better access to people all over the country, and it was those people who put him in office. At the Hermitage, he had a boat landing at his back door. And, with a fitting touch of symbolism, it was a steamer that took Jackson from the Hermitage on the first leg of his journey to Washington and the White House in 1829.

Before that happened, though, much preparation was necessary. The Jacksons had moved out of their log house into a grander Hermitage, something more in keeping with an aspirant to national office. Carroll had been elected governor in 1821 - the first of six two-year terms he would serve in that office - and with Overton, John H. Eaton, William B. Lewis, and Felix Grundy, he controlled the old Blount faction of Tennessee politics. That group also was the nucleus of Jackson's brain trust, the so-called Nashville Junto, and it induced the Tennessee legislature to nominate the General for

the presidency in 1822 and then to elect him to the United States Senate the following year. (In those days, the legislature rather than the electorate performed such tasks.)

Thus, twenty-six years after he had first served briefly in the Senate, Jackson went back-again, briefly- and he spent much of his time there seeking support for his presidential candidacy. He patched up his old quarrel with Thomas Hart Benton, impressed others with his mastery of the political process, and went into the 1824 election with a good chance to win.

Victory eluded him by the narrowest of margins. He actually won a plurality of the popular vote - a margin of 40,000 over John Quincy Adams, the second-place finisher among four candidates - but since no one had a majority of electoral votes, the House of Representatives had to choose the winner (each state delegation casting a single ballot), and the House finally picked Adams by a vote of thirteen to eleven.

Jackson accepted the defeat stoically at first, but on his way back to Nashville, he was already calculating strategy for a return match four years hence. He resigned his Senate seat, reconvened his Junto, and began making alliances with some of his oldest political enemies. That was the beginning of party politics in the United States, and the emerging coalition of Jacksonians would come to be known as the Democratic Party.

Three months after his painful loss in the House of Representatives, Jackson presided at a massive welcome in Nashville for the Marquis de Lafayette, the venerable French general who had been a hero of the American Revolution and was in 1825 making a triumphant return tour. Jackson was by then almost sixty years old, and Lafayette was ten years his senior. Together, the two old generals led a procession up Market Street to the Public Square, warmly receiving the ovations of the largest crowd ever assembled in the town. After Lafayette had stayed the night at the Boyd McNairy residence and attended a number of public fetes and receptions, he left by steamboat for Louisville. Jackson, rejuvenated by the cheers of the people and inspired by the old Frenchman's praise, stayed behind to resume his quest for the one remaining unmet goal of his life.

Nashville was a comfortable and secure base for a presidential aspirant, and particularly so for Jackson, who had grown with the town for nearly forty years. He must have been fond of the place, with its interesting blend of indigenous settlers and transplanted aristocrats, for he had a little of both in him, or liked to think he did. The languishing Cumberland College had a new president-Philip Lindsley, a Princeton graduate - and it was about to be renamed the University of Nashville and revitalized, and Jackson, as one of its trustees, heartily approved. All the same, he still liked a good horse race or a cockfight, still had an instinctive feel for the barroom and the barracks. Those elements were also part of Nashville's makeup, and they, too, must have pleased the General, though he had little time for them.

He only had time for his obsession. As 1828 drew closer, Jackson virtually declared war on President Adams, and Adams fought back savagely. The campaign was vicious and mean spirited, with both men and their supporters giving and receiving low blows.

Most wounded of all by the political meanness was Rachel. The complications concerning her first marriage were dragged out and twisted into tales of wanton immorality; she was ridiculed for smoking a pipe and for having grown fat; her religious piety was mocked. A younger Jackson no doubt would have responded with a sword or a pistol, but Old Hickory was beyond dueling; his only way to fight back effectively was with the ballots of the people.

More than four times as many Americans voted in 1828 as in 1824, and they turned Adams out of the White House and put Jackson in by a large margin. In Tennessee, the General got all but about 2,000 of the more than 46,000 votes cast.

The triumph gave him more pleasure than his victory at New Orleans, but it lasted only a few weeks. On December 17, Rachel suffered a heart attack, and on the twenty-second a second seizure killed her. Jackson was

unbelieving, then devastated. He buried her on Christmas Eve in the garden at the Hermitage and then retreated to the solitude of the big house to grieve for three weeks. Finally, in mid-January of 1829, he boarded a steamer and sailed downriver past Nashville, on his way to Washington. Near the town, he heard the sustained cheers of people bidding him farewell. The old man rose slowly, stepped out on the deck, and gravely bowed to the only sovereign he had ever publicly acknowledged, the people.

IN HIS EIGHT YEARS as the nation's seventh President, Andrew Jackson sustained his reputation as an advocate for ordinary citizens against aristocracy and privilege, and in doing so, he showed how delicate was the balance of conflicting forces in the national system of government - and in his own personality. He was a forceful, defiant, ruthless, calculating, inspirational, theatrical, thoroughly political President, a man whose virtues and vices always seemed slightly larger than life. He was the first chief executive to make a serious attempt to apply democratic principles of government - and one consequence was the emergence of a chaotic and unstable spoils system. He was a nationalist, favoring the Union over the concept of states' rights (It is interesting to speculate what he might have done in Lincoln's place.), yet on several occasions he refused to assert federal authority against acts of defiance by individual states. He championed the rights of the common man, but his equalitarian ideals did not extend far enough to embrace the rights of Indians or blacks in slavery.

Yet with all his contradictions, he retained an immense popularity with the masses of citizens. He won re-election easily in 1832 (Tennesseans gave him a victory margin of almost twenty-five to one, and in Davidson County he got about eighty percent of the vote). Jackson gave voice to what had been a silent and subjugated majority of white Americans; he was the cabin-born orphan boy who had scratched and clawed his way to national power, and they could identify with him and love him for it. Jacksonian Democracy extended the ideal of equality, if not the fact of it, from a few people to a great many. It would remain for other generations to make the ideal a reality for all Americans.

Jackson came home to the Hermitage in 1837, weary but unbowed. He had prevailed in getting Martin Van Buren elected as his successor, but at great personal cost: Hugh Lawson White, a Tennessean, had been the candidate of the new Whig Party, and White, in losing, had carried both Tennessee and Davidson County over Van Buren. If that were not insult enough to Jackson, Whigs in Nashville took the occasion of his retirement to build a strong opposition party, and some of its leading members were old friends and allies of the General. Most notable among them was John Bell, the congressman from Nashville. He had been elected Speaker of the House of Representatives in 1834, even though President Jackson had given his support to another Tennessean, James K. Polk. In a dramatic speech in Nashville in 1835, Bell had rejected Van Buren (and by implication, the Democratic Party and Jackson), and that was the end of Old Hickory's political dominance in Davidson County and Tennessee, as surely as it was gradually ending in the nation.

The Hermitage had been badly damaged by a fire in 1834, and he had ordered it restored immediately, for he was looking ahead to retirement. Right up to the end of his tenure in the White House, he kept command of the presidency with the same furious intensity he had brought to it in the beginning. Under the watchful eyes of his nephew and personal secretary, Andrew Jackson Donelson, and Donelson's wife Emily, the General worked most of the time, socialized little, slept hardly at all. When he came home to his plantation on the Cumberland, he was seventy years old, mentally sharp but physically infirm, too proud to talk of retirement - and yet too handicapped to rally the home forces for any more crusades.

Just as Jackson was noticeably changed in eight years, so was Nashville. The town's population had reached almost 7,000. There were a half-dozen churches and nearly as many banks; there was a "lunatic asylum," a penitentiary, and a masonic hall. The waterworks, first built in 1823 and then modified and expanded a decade later, gave people convenient access to the flowing Cumberland, still green and clear and pure enough to drink.

Dozens of doctors and lawyers and scores of merchants offered their goods and services. There was much sentiment for making Nashville the permanent capital of Tennessee. Stagecoaches came daily to the Public Square, and more steamboats docked at the foot of Broad Street. New buildings were everywhere, the most spectacular being Vauxhall Garden, a large hall for assemblies and dining, located on the Franklin turnpike south of town; a railway inside the hall moved guests about on cars propelled by hand cranks. And another marvel : The first telegram had arrived, sent by someone in Louisville to a local resident, Henry O'Reilly. What would they think of next!

Jackson came home in his autumn years to find Nashville in the midst of its own budding spring. Everything was changing - and much had happened in his absence. Volunteers had gone to war again, this time in Texas, and once more, Tennesseans had led the way. The legislature had been meeting in the courthouse in Nashville, and a new state constitution had been written there. John Overton had died, and so had Frederick Stump, Timothy Demonbreun, John Buchanan, John Rains, and all but a few of the founding settlers. (Charlotte Robertson, the "First Lady," would be the last of them to pass on; she would be ninety-three when she died in her daughter's Nashville home in 1843.) Local newspapers were beginning daily publication. A cholera epidemic had hit Nashville, claiming dozens of lives, and fires were a frequent threat, but in spite of the losses, steady growth continued.

Columbia's James K. Polk, a Jackson ally, came home from Congress to be elected governor. Felix Grundy, another of the General's closest associates, had moved from the United States Senate to President Van Buren's cabinet to serve as attorney general. Montgomery Bell, a wealthy and eccentric manufacturer of iron products, had freed fifty of his slaves in a ceremony at the Presbyterian Church on Spring Street and walked with them down to the wharf, where they departed on a journey to Liberia.

Perhaps the most astonishing development in Nashville during the years of Jackson's presidency concerned Sam Houston, another of the General's old friends and fellow soldiers. His early career had been remarkable for its diversity. A good student and an avid reader in his youth, he had run away from home at sixteen to live with Cherokees and then had fought against the Creeks at Horseshoe Bend. In Nashville after the war, he studied law , became a district attorney, and - among other side interests - acted on stage in an amateur theatrical company. He was a handsome man, six feet-six inches tall , a stylish dresser, and a favorite with the ladies. With Jackson's backing, he was elected twice to Congress, and in 1827, after riding from one polling place to another - wearing a white ruffled shirt, shining black trousers, a beaded red sash, embroidered silk stockings, and silver-buckled pumps - he was elected governor.

In January 1829, right after Jackson left for the White House, Houston married Eliza Allen of Gallatin. He was at the peak of his popularity, certain to be a candidate for re-election and likely to win, and some of his supporters dreamed of grooming him to be Jackson's successor as President in a few years.

Then came the stunning news: Not three months after the wedding, Eliza Allen left Houston and went home to her parents. Within a week, Houston had resigned as governor and slipped away from Nashville in disguise to live among his Cherokee friends in the West.

The cause of the breakup was not revealed. It stirred a whirlwind of rumors and gossip, but Houston would not explain. "If my character cannot stand the shock, let me lose it," he said. He vowed to punish "any wretch" who ever questioned "the purity of Mrs. Houston," and reaffirmed his love for her. And then he was gone. The most often-repeated explanation of Eliza Allen's separation from her husband was that she was repulsed by an unsightly and malodorous sore Houston had in his abdomen, a festering arrow wound that he had sustained at Horseshoe Bend fifteen years earlier. An additional revelation from Eliza herself, later in life, was to the effect that Houston was "insanely jealous and suspicious" of his nineteen-year-old bride, that he was cruel to her, and that he was "a demented man." Whatever the truth , the effect of their parting was traumatic, not only for the two principals but for Nashville and the

state.

Sam Houston would be heard from again. He lived for a while in drunken sorrow, and then took a Cherokee wife, and in 1832 he passed through Nashville once more, leading a delegation of Indians to Washington. President Jackson received him warmly there, and so did Senator Felix Grundy. The following year he was in Texas, rallying soldiers to a war for independence from Mexico, and not a few Nashvillians would answer the call, including Sterling Robertson, a grandson of James and Charlotte, and George C. Childress, a local newspaper editor, who in 1836 would distinguish himself as the author of the Texas Declaration of Independence. Houston would find glory too, first as president of the Texas republic, then as a United States Senator from the state of Texas, and finally as governor of the state. He also married again, to a woman from Alabama, and fathered eight children.

Having fought so hard to bind Texas to the Union, Houston could not abide the thought of secession, and when the Civil War broke out, he was turned out of the governor's office for refusing to join the Confederacy. Two years later he died of pneumonia, murmuring "Texas, Texas" with his last breath. That such a giant ever got away from Nashville was a great loss for the community and for Tennessee.

Jackson certainly could have used the counsel of the man who proudly called himself an adopted son of the Cherokees. The General had always favored resettlement of the Indians in the West - voluntarily, if possible, but if not, by force - and while he was still in the White House, minority faction of the nearly 17,000 Cherokees still living in the Southeast agreed to sell their people's land and move to a reservation in the West.

The Cherokees had developed an advanced standard of living, and most of them wanted to stay in the mountains of Tennessee, North Carolina, and Georgia; only a few left voluntarily. Finally, in 1838, when Jackson was living in retirement at the Hermitage, most of the 15,000 who remained were rounded up by army troops and forced to migrate. They passed through Nashville in the fall of that year, a pitiful train of trudging thousands, walking to Oklahoma territory on what would be known as the Trail of Tears. The previous year, members of the treaty party - the ones who had signed away their land - had passed in wagons through the town, and a journal kept by B. B. Cannon, the conductor of the party, noted that "Reese Star and other of the Emigrants visited General Jackson. who was in Nashville." But he was not called upon by any of those in the forced march, nor did he ever hear from any of the thousand or so who hid in the mountains to evade removal. The old General may never have known that about 4,000 of the dispossessed died of disease, starvation and exposure on the march west. He may not have wanted to know. He had closed the book on the Indians.

The rest of his accounts were about to be summed up, too, and some of them would not come out to suit him. Not until after the Civil War would the political rebellion against the Jacksonian Democrats be overcome in Davidson County. Even in 1844, when former Tennessee governor and Jackson protégé James K. Polk - "Young Hickory" - won the presidency in an upset, he failed to carry his home state and was defeated by a large margin in Davidson County. Most embarrassing of all. he lost the Hermitage precinct. Jackson could no longer strike fear in the hearts of politicians. The Whigs delighted in punishing him-they even brought their national convention to Nashville in 1840-and there was nothing he could do to retaliate. But the old soldier could at least take satisfaction in Polk's election and in the admission of Sam Houston's Texas to the Union, and those final victories allowed him to die in peace, though he suffered much from a complex of physical infirmities.

Late in his life, the General joined the Presbyterian Church (as Polk was to unite with the Methodists a few years later). and he pronounced himself ready to go and meet "my beloved wife ... when my God calls me to sleep with my fathers." Most of his dearest friends had preceded him- Overton was gone, and Ralph Earl, and so was Felix Grundy, the great trial lawyer and silver-tongued orator. Old Hickory was lonesome; there were no more challenges left for him, no

more battles worth the bother. On June 8, 1845, in his bedroom at the Hermitage, he quietly gave up the fight.

JAMES KNOX POLK was not groomed for the presidency, as Jackson was; he just happened to be in the right place when the call came. He had been elected governor of Tennessee in 1839 but then had lost two successive bids for reelection. His political career seemed finished, but then the aging General Jackson pushed him to a surprise nomination for the presidency, and Polk went on to recapture the White House for the Democrats in 1844. The Whigs ridiculed him as an obscure politician and a loser, but the quietly efficient Polk was actually well prepared to be President. He had studied law under Felix Grundy in Nashville, represented Maury County in the legislature, and spent fourteen years in Congress, the last four of them as Speaker of the House. (It was Jackson's support of Polk to be speaker over Congressman John Bell of Nashville that had contributed to the birth of the opposition Whig Party.)

In his one term in the White House, Polk presided over a nation eager to expand its borders: Texas was annexed, the War with Mexico was fought, the territories of California and Oregon were acquired. The notion that it was the "manifest destiny" of the United States to own all of the land from the Atlantic to the Pacific was widely supported throughout the country, and with President Polk actively pursuing that goal, Tennesseans were, if anything, the most eager combatants of all. "To Arms! To Arms!" a headline in the Nashville Union exhorted when war was declared on Mexico, and 30,000 men offered their services when Governor Aaron V. Brown asked for a volunteer force of 2,800. A million square miles of territory were added to the nation during Polk's tenure in office.

When Polk came home from Washington in the spring of 1849, he was ill and exhausted. He and his wife bought Felix Grundy's home on a hill near the new state capitol, then under construction, but they had hardly settled in before the ex-President fell victim to the intestinal ravages of cholera and died. (His widow, Sarah Childress Polk, would live on as the grand old lady of Polk Place for more than forty years, receiving callers of all political persuasions with grace and equanimity .)

Cholera had come often to Nashville, and it would return. W. F. Cooper, a local man, wrote to a friend three days after Polk's passing that "Fully two hundred deaths have occurred in the last fortnight - nearly half of them during the three last days. On Friday, there were 38 burials, on Saturday 41, and on Sunday about 15." The lack of effective embalming methods and the sheer number of bodies made speedy burial a necessity. When bodies had to be sent elsewhere for burial, it was not uncommon to store them in barrels of whiskey.

Nashville was not an especially healthy place in those years. Coal, shipped in on the river and sold for about fifteen cents a bushel, was the principal fuel for homes and industries, and smoke from the fires hung in the air of the river basin like a foul cloud. Furthermore, summers in the town were still and humid, and winters were damp. Other diseases besides cholera would add to the inability of local doctors to establish and maintain good health in the community for decades to come.

But it would take more than a cholera epidemic to slow the expansion of Nashville and Davidson County. In the 1850 census, the town counted 10,165 residents; in truth, it was a town no more, but a small city, and it would soon be a large one. Davidson County's population had grown even more impressively, to a total of almost 39,000, and soon it would be organized into twenty-five civil districts, Nashville being only one of them. The others would constitute a network of country communities built around churches, stores, mills, ferries, and crossroads. The names of those communities are now a mixture of the familiar and the forgotten: McWhirtersville, Donelson, Glen Cliff, Mount View, Couchville, Hermitage, Paragon Mills, Hillsboro, Belle View, Madison, Goodlettsville, Edgefield, White's Creek, Antioch, Ridge Post, Cool Spring, For nearly twenty years prior to the Civil War, District Two (Donelson) would have the only college in the county outside of Nashville: Franklin College.

The focal point of these rural jurisdictions, the center to which everything gravitated, was Nashville. It was, in fact, the center of Tennessee, having been designated as the permanent state capitol. Turnpikes radiated in all directions from the city. More than fifty steamboats called regularly at the wharf; America, the fastest of them, could make the run from New Orleans in less than six days, and the largest boat, the Nashville, was an elegant colossus of 397 tons. A new 700-foot suspension bridge spanned the Cumberland from the southeast corner of the Public Square to Edgefield on the east bank, and it stood 110 feet above the river - high enough to let the big new steamboats pass. The legislature, falling in line with the nation's "iron horse fever," had authorized construction of a railroad between Nashville and Chattanooga.

The decade between 1845 and 1855 was a golden age for Nashville, an exciting time crammed with mechanical innovations, major construction projects, far-reaching institutional developments, and an ever-broadening sea of new faces. The city built a plant to manufacture gas from coal and gas street lights and store lights soon followed. A sparkling new theater, the Adelphi, was opened on what is now Fourth Avenue, and Jenny Lind came to sing there, and out-of-town companies brought in productions of grand opera and Shakespeare. Daguerreotype photographs had made their appearance, and there was an attractive botanical garden in the city, and William T. Berry's bookstore was widely regarded as the best in the West. Nashville's several newspapers received copy from the North and East via telegraph, and church publishing houses had begun to produce journals and other religious materials for an expanding market. Plans were being made for a public school system, and both the Nashville Female Academy and the University of Nashville appeared to be flourishing, the latter having opened a medical school.

The great love of Andrew Jackson - horse racing - had not been forgotten either. For more than a decade, Nashville had been recognized as a premier racing city. It had four tracks, one on each side of town, and they competed avidly for purses, crowds, and prestige. The richest horse race in the world, to that time, took place in 1843 at the Nashville Race Track (now the site of Metro Center); the race was called the Peyton Stakes, and the winner, a stout-hearted chestnut filly named Peytona, went on to win a celebrated match race in New York two years later. That one was billed as the race of the century.

Horses had something to do with the growth of plantations around Nashville, particularly Belle Meade, which under William Giles Harding's direction became a renowned thoroughbred nursery. The mansion at Belle Meade was one of several handsome country homes and estates - Belmont, Two Rivers, Clover Bottom, and Riverwood were others - that gave Nashville a reputation for elaborate hospitality among the well-to-do.

Another example of purebred stock raising - and a reminder that for all its new-city sophistication, Davidson County remained a predominantly rural and agricultural entity - was afforded by the story of Mark Robertson Cockrill. A son of James Robertson's sister and her husband, he achieved singular success as a breeder of short-horn cattle and fine sheep. Before he was twenty, he had gone to Washington to buy ten Merino sheep from a Spanish diplomat who had made known his interest in selling them. Cockrill drove the sheep home overland in 1814; thirty-seven years later, at the great Crystal Palace Exposition in London, his display of wool was judged to be the best in the world.

All in all, these notable individual accomplishments and community developments added to the luster of the first city on the Cumberland. In seventy years, it had become a diverse and substantial place. Five groups of professional people and the institutions they represented were particularly important to Nashville's growing sense of permanence, and in the decades of the 1840s and the 1850s their contributions did much to shape the character of the city. The five were interrelated in many ways, and together they formed the base upon which much of modern Nashville is built.

THE FIRST GROUP was made up of the architects who designed Nashville's structures - and the engineers, craftsmen, and laborers who built them. There were several architects in the city by 1845, and others came on occasion

from outside the state to help shape the face of the city, but two men above all others left a lasting imprint: William F. Strickland and Adolphus Heiman.

When the state legislature finally decided in 1843 that Nashville would be the permanent seat of Tennessee government, a national search was begun for an architect to design a capitol building. William Strickland of Philadelphia, once an apprentice to the designer of the national capitol, was chosen for the job, and in 1845, he moved here to supervise the construction. Before he died nine years later - with the Tennessee Capitol still unfinished Strickland had designed several other structures, including the Downtown Presbyterian Church, but it was the capitol that would be his masterwork. The Greek-revival structure on what was known as Cedar Knob, the highest hill in the city, was built of limestone quarried a few blocks from the site. Penitentiary inmates and slave laborers did the back-breaking work. The capitol stands now as a monument to the sweat and genius of its builders, and Strickland left his body as his signature in the building: He is buried in a vault in one of its walls.

Adolphus Heiman, a Prussian immigrant, settled in Nashville in 1841 and quickly established himself as a creative man of exceptional talent. He designed the state mental hospital, the main building of the University of Nashville, and the suspension bridge across the Cumberland, all reflecting a Gothic style that was highly popular at the time. When construction on the bridge was not done according to Heiman's specifications, he resigned from the project in protest, and in 1855, after the bridge had been in use just five years, his unheeded warning bore tragic results: A portion of the bridge collapsed, killing one person and injuring several others. Heiman was a prolific designer of Nashville structures for twenty years before he died fighting for the Confederacy in 1862.

With hardwood timber floated to Nashville from the upper Cumberland, with limestone quarried in Middle Tennessee and iron products made in the furnaces of the area, with bricks that had been manufactured locally since 1790, the architects and builders of the mid-nineteenth century gave Nashville much of its proportion, its shape, and its personality.

A second group of significant leaders in that time were the clergyman and the institutions in their care. Since about 1800, when survival had ceased to be the only preoccupation of the settlers, churches had been growing in influence and importance. Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists led the way, to be followed later by Episcopalians, Catholics, Jews, and others. The Presbyterians were closely associated with the University of Nashville and other educational ventures; their leading clergymen were also teachers, and vice versa : Thomas Craighead, William Hume, Philip Lindsley, Obediah Jennings, and John Todd Edgar, the men who institutionalized the Presbyterian faith in Nashville, were also associated with Cumberland College and the University of Nashville. The Methodists, more hierarchical in their structure, looked mainly to one man - William McKendree, the bishop of their church west of the Blue Ridge Mountains - as the founder of Methodism locally. The Baptists honored James Whitsett as their pioneer preacher on the Cumberland, and another early Baptist preacher, Philip Fall, became the leader of a Disciples of Christ faction that split off to form Spring Street Christian Church.

In their early years, the churches were activist institutions. They staged public debates on theology; they summarily excommunicated those who wavered in the faith or wandered from it; they thought little of the notion of separation of church and state, ceremoniously inaugurating governors and sending men to war from their sanctuaries. They also split on occasion into separate bodies - the Cumberland Presbyterians from their mother church as early as 1810, the Disciples of Christ from the Baptists in 1828, the Jewish congregation into three separate synagogues after mid-century, the Church of Christ from the Disciples of Christ after the Civil War - and of course, Southern churches from Northern ones and whites from blacks.

Many of the first Nashville churches were clustered along Spring Street, so many that its present name - Church

Street - must have been inevitable. As visible and influential as they were, however, the churches did not have large memberships. As late as the mid-1830s, only the Methodist churches of Davidson County had as many as a thousand members, and all the others combined had fewer than a thousand. There was one small Methodist church for blacks in the 1830s, but customarily the blacks attended the same institutions as the whites; the first Baptist church for blacks was not established until 1848. Fifteen years before that, blacks outnumbered whites in both the Baptist and Methodist churches on Spring Street. And although white males were the leaders of all the churches, females were as noticeably predominant in the congregations as they were subordinate in virtually all dimensions of public life at large.

As surely as the architects and builders defined Nashville's early physical appearance, the clergymen shaped its spiritual character; even the politicians, who operated in another realm, took care to seek the sanctions of the faith.

Physicians made up the third category of professional men whose influence was so important to the early development of Nashville. Beginning with James White and John Sappington in the 1780s and running through the long and distinguished career of Felix Robertson from 1806 to 1865, Nashville was seldom without a cadre of notable doctors. John Berrien Lindsley, son of the University of Nashville's president, organized the university's medical school in 1850, and within five years it had more students and more graduates than all but three medical schools in the nation. Paul F. Eve, William K. Bowling and William T. Briggs, three eminent members of its faculty, were each to serve a term as president of the American Medical Association, and in 1857, the AMA held its national convention in the city.

The early tradition of eminence in the field of medicine would continue in Nashville into the twentieth century. (Since 1900, five more Nashville physicians have been elected to the presidency of the AMA; of all American cities, only Philadelphia has ever had as many.) Of more importance to the city in the 1850s, however, was the fact that three dozen or more physicians were on hand to struggle against epidemics, to press for higher standards of community health, and to train future doctors for the city, state, and nation.

There was a fourth group of professionals whose efforts were extraordinarily important to Nashville: the educators. Their work had begun with Thomas Craighead. After his academy had faltered in his later years, Philip Lindsley came, and from 1826 to 1850 he struggled to put the University of Nashville on its feet. He wanted to make the institution into an eminent center of learning, one of the few in the country, and to that end he ran a rigorous program, too rigorous for the taste of many. Lindsley was a learned and eloquent man, and he attracted some outstanding scholars to the school (most notably Gerard Troost, a German geologist), but Nashville apparently was not ready for such scholarship: The University of Nashville at midcentury was poorly supported financially, and its enrollment was small; furthermore, several religious denominations had formed competing institutions; and worst of all, elementary and secondary education in the city had never been developed for the children of rank-and-file citizens. Ironically there may have been more illiteracy in Nashville in 1850 than there had been when the Cumberland Compact was signed seventy years earlier.

Still, Philip Lindsley had laid a foundation for general education to begin, and belatedly, in 1852, a system of public schools was authorized by the city board of aldermen to supplement the network of private schools then in existence. Alfred Hume, a son of the Presbyterian clergyman William Hume, was subsequently chosen to be the first superintendent, and Francis B. Fogg, a local attorney, was elected president of the board of education. (Fogg's wife, Mary Middleton Rutledge, granddaughter of the Middleton and Rutledge men who had signed the Declaration of Independence, may have been Nashville's first author of note; she wrote seven books of fiction, poetry, and religious discourse.)

In 1855, after Alfred Hume had died suddenly, the first public school was opened on Broad Street and named for him. (Later, a school was named for Fogg, and in 1912 the two names were combined in a high school - Hume-Fogg -

that still operates at the corner of Eighth and Broad.) Joshua F. Pearl was appointed superintendent after Hume's death, and served in that capacity until the outbreak of the Civil War. By 1860, Nashville had four public schools. One of them, Trimble School in South Nashville, actually had opened three years before Hume, when South Nashville was still an independent town. After the Civil War, Trimble apparently became Nashville's first public school for blacks. Fifty years before the city established public schools, the state founded Robertson Academy on the Franklin turnpike south of Nashville. It has operated as a public school since 1806.

(An interesting footnote to the evolution of education in Nashville was recorded in the will of Montgomery Bell, the wealthy and reclusive industrialist who died in 1855. He left \$20,000 to the University of Nashville "for the support of an Academy or school to be called the Montgomery Bell Academy forever for the education of children who are not able to support and educate themselves and whose parents are not able to do so.")

Finally, the fifth corps of professionals to make an indelible mark on Nashville was the legal fraternity. Lawyers had come early and often to the frontier settlement, and in countless ways they influenced the shape and direction of its development. Nashville attorneys dominated local and state politics-and in the cases of Jackson and Polk, national politics as well. The decision of the state legislature to make Nashville the permanent state capital of Tennessee elevated the importance of the legal profession in the city to an even higher plane; it meant that not just the legislature but the courts, the governor's office, and the state bureaucracy would be concentrated here, and lawyers were necessary to those endeavors.

The presence of state government and the swarming cliques of attorneys and politicians made Nashville a magnet for an interesting and diverse mixture of new people who might not have come here otherwise. A new state constitution was written here in 1834, and that was the beginning of the city's importance as a convention center for government, politics, and the professions. Nashville's newspapers were given added visibility and attention because of the government's presence. And through the decades, the government's role as an employer - of lawyers, among others - would expand steadily and become the foundation of the local economy. The professional men of Nashville in the middle of the nineteenth century dominated life in the community as completely as the Long Hunters and the pioneers and the land speculators had in the 1780s. Unlike the first settlers, however, their impact would be permanent, as permanent as the city itself. More than a century later, the architects, preachers, doctors, and educators - and most especially, the lawyers - would still be influential out of all proportion to their numbers.

BUT THE PROFESSIONAL MEN and their institutions were not flawless. The legislature at mid-century was not noted as a fount of wisdom, nor were the schools and churches renowned for their all-embracing benevolence. Public health in the city remained generally poor; beggars roamed the streets; dilapidated shantytowns grew in a festering ring around the city's core. Intellectual sophistication often clashed with the stubborn spirit of frontier individualism. Religious intolerance was commonplace, not only among denominations but within them. Nashville had its share of dishonest lawyers, fake preachers, suspicious farmers, greedy merchants, and pretentious scholars; it had, as well, some fugitives from justice and some otherwise respectable citizens who assumed themselves to be above the law. One historian of the period, writing on Nashville's cultural life, characterized the city in 1850 as having "much unwarrantable pretension" and a "tendency to boast and to exaggerate." Pretension - or at least cockiness - must have been almost irresistible for the mixture of people who in three generations had built a city on a wilderness bluff.

However one chose to explain it -as hostility to authority, suspicion of outsiders, perpetuation of unfair advantage, survival of the fittest , or simply the way things were - it was possible to see in Nashville in the 1850s (as in the nation at large) a complex series of fissures and faults running through the fabric of the community . The divisions cut in every direction, some deeper than others: between town and country, rich and poor, church and un-church,

educated and uneducated, Democrat and Whig, Irish and German and Anglo-Saxon. They divided slaves from free blacks, whites from all blacks, abolitionists from advocates of the "peculiar institution." They separated river men from railroad men, Catholics from Protestants, Christians from Jews.

In 1860, on the eve of the Civil War, the population of Nashville reached 17,000. Sixteen percent of those people were foreign-born whites, recent immigrants, the vast majority being Irish or German. Another twenty-three percent were blacks, and of them, roughly 700 were free and 3,200 were slaves. These combined totals, making up about two-fifths of the overall population, represented in the main an underclass of "different" people whose assigned role it was to make life easier for the ruling majority of established white citizens.

For the foreign-born whites - most of whom were young males and many of whom were unskilled and illiterate - living conditions were generally poor. The Irish in particular were hard-pressed. The Germans, among whom there were a good many merchants and craftsmen, found more opportunities open to them; some of them were later to build the homes and churches and business establishments that made North Nashville a showplace after the Civil War. For all of the immigrants, even those in the laboring underclass, there was always hope of finding a way up and out of the confining grip of poverty.

But for the blacks - even the free blacks - there was no way out. In an atmosphere of growing national discord over slavery, blacks in Davidson County, as elsewhere, found themselves ever more rigidly bound to the whites under whom they lived and worked. Slavery in the cities of the South was generally less harsh and oppressive than in the rural countryside, and Nashville was no exception - slaves could sometimes learn a skill, hire themselves out, have some freedom of movement - but they could also be sold or traded, and they frequently were. Free blacks were not much better off; beginning in 1834, when the new state constitution took away their right to vote, the difference between slavery and freedom quickly became even more meaningless for free blacks. In 1856, a decision of the United States Supreme Court effectively removed from all blacks whatever civil rights and citizenship rights they might have had, and from then until the end of the Civil War, they lived in a state of constant uncertainty and danger. Also in 1856, rumors of a slave insurrection in Davidson County led to the banning of all assemblies of blacks and to a series of other repressive measures.

As early as 1850, delegates from several Southern states had met in Nashville and discussed the prospect of a united defense of slavery, but not until the Civil War had actually begun did the voters of Nashville approve of Tennessee's secession from the Union. The city had a good many citizens who vigorously opposed secession (but few who openly opposed slavery). Shortly before the Confederates fired on Fort Sumter and the Civil War began, a referendum in Nashville calling for Tennessee's withdrawal from the Union failed by a narrow margin in another vote after Fort Sumter, secession was overwhelmingly approved.

All of the other divisions among Nashvillians in 1860 - over religion, social class, occupation, politics, and other matters - were minor compared to the issue of slavery. Somewhere along the way, Nashville had ceased to be a Western city in the national scheme of things; it had become Southern, in both fact and feeling, and it lay at the very edge of the fault line along which the nation would soon be divided.

The time when the village on the Cumberland had been a beckoning land for fortune seekers had long since passed. The seekers had come, and a few of them had found fortunes, and they and the less fortunate together had built a city. It had kept its gates open for more than half a century, attracting thousands of newcomers and even sending restless soldiers of fortune on to the next horizon. Sam Houston and Sterling Robertson and George C. Childress were among that restless breed, but there were others: Peter H. Burnett, a Nashvillian who pioneered in the far West and became the first governor of California; William Walker, who became president of Nicaragua and was put to death y a

firing squad in Honduras; and C. Roberdeau Wheat, a local preacher's son who fought in revolutions in Central America and Italy and died leading the Louisiana Tigers against Union forces in the Civil War.

Nashville had drawn adventurers to it and sent others out in search of new adventures. It had been an open city for all its years of existence. Now it was about to become a garrison, a battleground, and it would be profoundly changed by the experience.

On December 13, 1850, a steamboat called at the Nashville wharf to deliver a locomotive engine to the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad. The symbolism of that transaction was filled with irony - a steamboat had brought to town the instrument of its own eventual destruction - but it would be years before the significance of it would be fully understood. Before the steamboat and the train could wage their battle for survival, the South and the North had to fight theirs, and the Nashville railroad would play an important role.

The train made its first trip, an eleven-mile run to Antioch, in 1851; three years later, the line was opened to Chattanooga. Then, in 1859, a line was opened between Louisville and Nashville. It was finished just in time for the Union Army to take it over. The dreaded day of civil war had finally arrived for Nashville and the nation.