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Untangling the 19th-Century Roots of Southern Illinois' Egyptian Regional Identity

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Abstract
Southern Illinois has been known as "Egypt" or "Little Egypt" for nearly 200 years. In popular culture, the name "Egypt" evokes images of gold, mummies, exploration, and human achievement, but to 19th-century Americans its biblically linked allusions conjured up darker impressions. This article pinpoints the origins of an Egyptian identity in Southern Illinois and its evolution to reflect the negative qualities of moral degeneracy and ignorance caused by the antebellum moral, religious, and ethical arguments surrounding the issues of slavery and white supremacy. Throughout the turbulent 19th century, Egyptian Illinoisans strengthened their regional cohesiveness in spite of and in response to political and social upheavals and retained a shared group identity even as they clashed with waves of multicultural immigration. This article uses an interdisciplinary approach to elucidate these trends by intertwining concepts in Egyptology, American history, theology, political science, and reception studies.

The residents of the southern third of the state of Illinois have an affiliation with ancient Egypt that they have drawn upon for nearly two centuries.[1] This is reflected in the appellation for the region, "Egypt" or "Little Egypt," in addition to the establishment of cities and towns with names such as Cairo, Karnak, Thebes, and Lake of Egypt. Today, pyramid iconography and other Egyptian motifs continue to be used in local business branding, but the rich background for this affiliation as well as the wider historical, theological, and Egyptological influences have largely been forgotten.[2] The precise date and reason for adopting an affiliation with the civilization of the ancient Egyptians is unclear; there has never been any measurable influx of Egyptian immigrants into the region. The earliest print sources equating Southern Illinois with Egypt date from the 1840s, although oral histories recall use of the term in the 1830s.[3] The colloquial usage of "Egypt" and "Egyptian Illinois" in reference to Southern Illinois became prominent in print news both inside and outside the region during the cultural and political turmoil of the pre-Civil War 1850s. It was at this point in time that the image of a prosperous agricultural land filled with generous people began to shift. Egypt became emblematic of the side of the political divide that stubbornly supported the continuation of American chattel slavery and had rejected progress.[4] Both proslavery proponents and abolitionists utilized the concept of a mighty Egypt to further their ideologies. The overarching narrative from those writing outside the region looking inwards is one of "darkness" and "ignorance" as well as moral and ethical bankruptcy. Even after the Civil War ended

and the slavery question was ostensibly settled, Southern Illinoisans held fast to, and, in many ways, solidified a distinct Egyptian identity. Over subsequent decades, this Egyptian Illinoisan identity withstood waves of immigrants from Central, Southern, and Eastern Europe, labor massacres, racial violence, and pervasive poverty to be the source of regional pride and shared cultural heritage that it is today.

Political geographer Anssi Paasi, researching regional identity in Finland, categorized a region not as a place but a "historically continuous process whose *institutionalization*"[5] consisted of four developmental stages: "the assumption of a territorial shape, the formation of a conceptual (symbolic) shape, the formation of institutional shape and establishment as an entity in the regional system and social consciousness of the society."[6] Building upon Paasi's framework, this article explores the origin and expressions of Southern Illinois' Egyptian identity.[7] It further shows how biblically inspired notions of the might of Egypt that initially served as positive associations with abundance and generosity were appropriated by groups with diverse perspectives such as proslavery advocates, Southern sympathizers, pro-Union supporters, and abolitionist organizations within the region and took on a darker, more insidious tone. Despite the dynamic positive and negative connotations these associations carried, Egyptian Illinoisans reconciled these disparate ideologies to create and cultivate a long-lasting distinct regional identity.[8]

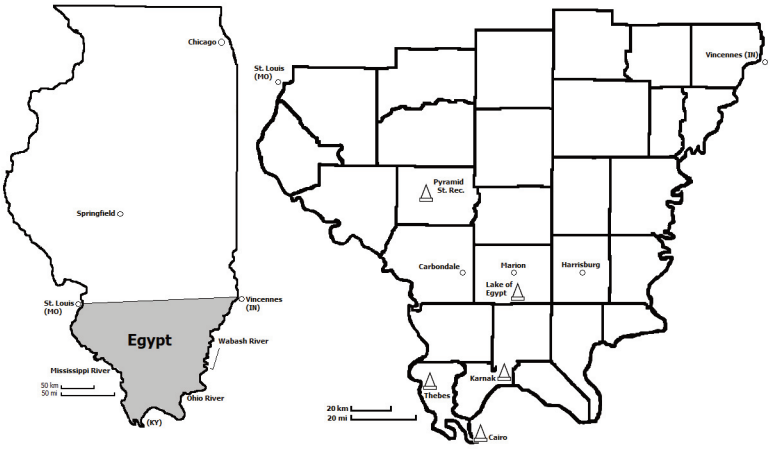

Figure 1: Outline of Illinois and detail of the Egypt region (drawn by Joseph Davidson).

Territory: An Amorphous Definition

Paasi's first stage in his theoretical framework for regional identity requires that the physical geography of a region be defined. To this point, Southern Illinois has been crafted largely by its natural boundaries. Southern Illinois is vaguely triangular in shape, with riverine boundaries to the west, south, and east. The natural borders of the Wabash, Ohio, and Mississippi rivers carve out the perimeter; the relatively flat areas of central and northern Illinois are divided from Southern Illinois due to the repeated advancing and receding of glaciers from 300,000 to 30,000 years ago.[9] Only Southern Illinois and Illinois' extreme northern portion were not shaped by the ebb and flow of glacial activity.[10] Consequently, the topography of Southern Illinois is hilly and forested and contains countless geologic features. Although the exact location of the northern horizontal border of the region varies from account to account, as does the number of counties included, its western terminus begins near St. Louis, Missouri, and its eastern point stretches towards Vincennes, Indiana (Fig. 1).[11] The journalist, humorist, and Southern Illinois native H. Allen Smith defined Southern Illinois in this fashion: "if you take a map of Illinois and draw a line east and west from Vincennes, Indiana, to St. Louis, Missouri, all that part of the state to the south of the line, with the Wabash River on the east, the Ohio on the south, and the Mississippi on the west, is called Egypt or, sometimes, Little Egypt."[12] The number of counties included typically ranges from eleven to thirty-five.[13] A 2020 State of Illinois report designates the following twenty-seven counties as the southern region of the state: "Alexander, Bond, Clinton, Edwards, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Madison, Marion, Massac, Monroe, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Randolph, Saline, St. Clair, Union, Wabash, Washington, Wayne, White, Williamson."[14] Along with a dispute regarding the exact counties included in the region, there is also a debate about whether "southern Illinois" or "Southern Illinois" is the correct capitalization.[15] In addition, the distinction between northern Illinois and the rest of the state can be observed in the somewhat contentious use of the term "Downstate" to refer to nearly any city or town

south of Chicago.[16]

Similarly, discrepancies continue to exist as to whether the proper nickname of the region is "Egypt" or "Little Egypt."[17] In the early 20th century, "Little Egypt" began replacing "Egypt" in print sources, to the consternation of many Southern Illinoisans.[18] By the mid-20th century, the use of "Little Egypt" in publications had surpassed "Egypt" and is the most frequently encountered form in business and promotional names today. The debate, however, was still raging according to a 1934 *St. Louis Daily Globe Democrat* article that states unequivocally, "Southern Illinois was never dedicated 'Little Egypt[,]' an error in to which there seems to be a tendency to fall of late."[19] This tension was still palpable in the first edition of *Egyptian Key* magazine, published in April 1943. In its "Egyptorials" section, the complaint is made and the challenge set down that:

> … every one [sic] make a decided effort to correct any speaker or writer who uses the term "Little Egypt." There is a psychological difference. For many years Egyptians have been bothered with their own limitations. The time has come to throw these out of the window. Egypt is here, is here to be a mighty force in Illinois. It is not little.[20]

According to the director of the General John A. Logan Museum in Murphysboro, Illinois, P. Michael Jones, whether or not a Civil War historian uses "Egypt" or "Little Egypt" in chronologically appropriate ways has become a litmus test as to whether or not a scholar has "done enough homework on this subject."[21]

Historian Edward Callary states that the region was called "Egypt" prior to the establishment of city and town names such as Karnak, Thebes, Lake of Egypt, Goshen, New Memphis, and Pharaoh's Gardens, with only Cairo predating the regional label by the time of the city's founding in 1818.[22] Despite the area's complicated history of discrimination and racially motivated violence toward African-descended peoples,[23] several towns were named after ancient African sites in Egypt and Sudan.[24] It is not known whether concepts of the race and color of the ancient Egyptians were of any consideration in the naming practices of the early settlers of the region.[25]

The dualities of "Egypt" and "Little Egypt" and "southern Illinois" and "Southern Illinois" further link the Egypts of North Africa and southern Illinois by invoking the idea of Egypt as a land of dichotomies. These dichotomies were both geographic and cultural, alluding to the Two Lands of Upper and Lower Egypt, the Red Land and the Black Land, and the historic dialectical and cultural differences of the peoples of Upper and Lower Egypt. In a similar fashion, southern and northern Illinois reflect geographic, cultural, and linguistic differences. Southern Illinois is a region culturally and geographically distinct from the remainder of the state, and, in time, became its own "regional folk group with an identity based on a shared history and expressed through distinct folklife traditions."[26] Despite historical accounts like that of Southern Illinois attorney Milo Erwin stating that "when our fathers came here, they found these vast, silent, virgin plains unclaimed, untouched, untilled, hedgeless, free to all,"[27] the white European and early American settlers moving westward were not simply expanding into an open, uninhabited land. The knowledge of prior Indigenous habitation was largely omitted as Erwin and others continued to wax poetic about the early European settlers of the region. These nostalgic works negotiated the identity struggle of Americans to ally themselves with an ancient and established past while also situating themselves as the progenitors of an unwritten rose-colored future. Erwin opined:

> When they came here they found no monuments of past greatness; no Coliseum lay in a pile of ruins; no Obelisk of Sesotris pointed its alabaster finger to the eternal source of light; no Pyramids frowned down upon them; no battle-scars were seen. There were no towering evergreens, Oriental bowers, or statuary. . . It was a new land. Her greatness was all in the future—her history yet to be made and written, except where it had been written by Nature's legible hand.[28]

Concepts of Egypt in the Age of Westward Expansion

Paasi's second stage in the development of regional identity consists of developing a conceptual or symbolic shape. While the specific geography of the region helped originate a connection with Egypt, the link between Southern Illinois and Egypt developed

through the attempt to fuse concepts of a grand and mythic past with the settlement of a "new" land. The features of the land, in part, assisted, but the idea of Egypt and what Egyptian civilization meant to explorers and settlers crafted a symbolic shape to the region.[29] This process was not unique to Southern Illinois, as, in fact, it is a widespread and long-lasting American trend, but instead of a tie to Greece or Rome (under the moniker of "Classical Civilization"), Southern Illinois became associated with Egypt. The landscape and its features, natural and manmade, helped solidify this connection. Situated along the Mississippi River are the remains of Cahokia Mounds, a Mississippian settlement with a population that outnumbered London by 1250 CE and was the largest prehistoric settlement site north of Mexico.[30] The site is made up of at least 120 mounds and once covered around 4,000 acres. The base of Monks Mound, so named for a nearby early 19th century Trappist site, was "the largest prehistoric earthen construction in the Americas, containing an estimated 22 million cubic feet of earth. The base covers more than 14 acres, and it rises to a height of 100 feet."[31] Henry Marie Brackenridge, author of the first published account of the mounds at Cahokia in the early 19th century, described Monks Mound as being a "most stupendous pile of earth, and were it not for the strongest proof, no one would believe it the work of hands."[32] Brackenridge later went on to write that this large mound "might claim a page with the pyramids of Egypt."[33] Literary comparisons, such as Brackenridge's, between ancient Indigenous American ruins and landscape with that of Egypt and the Near East is a well-contested Orientalist device used by early explorers and settlers in the United States during the period of westward expansion (c. 1801–1861). Historian Jacob Rama Berman covers this topic extensively in *American Arabesque: Arabs, Islam, and the 19th-Century Imaginary* (2012), as does Richard V. Francaviglia in *Go East, Young Man: Imagining the American West as the Orient* (2011).[34] Wagon trains and railroads spread settlers and their old and new ideas westward where they mixed and mingled in frontier spaces. Although temporally removed from this wave of westward expansion, a 20th-century short-line railroad in Southern Illinois, the Crab Orchard and Egyptian Railroad (COER), still displays a pyramid motif on its depot (Fig. 2).

Aside from correlations with rivers and pyramids,

Figure 2: Crab Orchard and Egyptian Railroad Depot artwork, Marion, Illinois (photo by Stacy Davidson).

various territories within the United States were equated with Egypt primarily for their transportation capabilities, agricultural abundance, and availability of goods. Cairo, Illinois, established and named by Baltimore merchant John G. Comegys after Cairo, Egypt, in 1818, held promise as a transportation hub due to its proximity to the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. However, as Fred Ash noted, the area was "little more than a cradle of black muck anchored by the tangled roots of giant trees."[35] Geographic features, such as mighty rivers, need not have had anything to do with naming conventions. Jonathan Friedlander investigated four of the two dozen or so towns that had been named "Cairo" in the United States in "Greetings from Cairo, USA."[36] Most of these settlements are located in the East and Midwest, with only two west of the Rockies.[37] This is a curious observation, seeing as many explorers equated sites in the Western wilderness with Egyptian themes, such as the Spanish description of the "pyramids" of southern Utah, explorer John Charles Frémont's naming of Pyramid Lake in Nevada, [38] and several features of the Grand Canyon being named after Egyptian gods and monuments.

Like the Nile in Egypt which deposited rich silt during the annual flooding making the land prosperous agriculturally, areas with an abundance of vegetation and ease of growing crops became associated with the name "Egypt." Around forty cities and towns in the United States were named "Egypt." Each one, according to place-name historian Edward Callary, alluded to the vegetal abundance of Egypt as recounted in the Genesis 42 account of Joseph and his brothers.[39] It is this association of "going down to Egypt for food rations" that seems the most likely source of Southern Illinois' initial adoption of an Egyptian association. Specific place names such as Karnak and Thebes were established after the regional name of "Egypt" had already taken hold.[40] It should be remembered that even though Napoleon had been in Egypt at the turn of the century and is credited with the "opening of Egypt" for the West, the common frame of reference regarding Egypt for most Americans was the Bible. Several points of origin exist for the connection of Southern Illinois with an abundance and fertile Egypt, reinforcing the well-known tale of Joseph's brothers going down to Egypt for grain. Although the dates vary, the earliest and most-repeated dates align with a severe climatological event such as drought, blizzard, or large-scale crop failure that took place in the early 1830s. At the time, the population in Illinois was around 157,445.[41] The *Alton Telegraph* published an account reaffirming this connection to the Genesis narrative:

> In 1831 and 1833, the crop of Corn having failed in Northern Illinois, the inhabitants were obliged to resort to their Southern neighbors in order to obtain the needful supply– "hence, to go South to purchase Corn, was to go into Egypt." —Such being the case, it is clear that this name, instead of being a term of reproach, is rather one of honor, and is synanimous [*sic*] with abundance and liberality. We hope Southern Illinois will always be entitled to bear it, by the richness of her productions, and her willingness to administer to the needs of others.[42]

The tone of this short piece insinuated that, by that date, the nature of Southern Illinois' association with Egypt had already begun to turn away from the positive connections of a fertile and beneficial land to something more pejorative.

Dark Egypt: The Confluence of Interaction and Experience

Despite these positive associations with fertility and abundance, a more sinister connection with Egypt influenced by Biblical theology and the issue of slavery became dominant, as evinced by these mid-20th-century descriptions:

> EGYPT—a sobriquet applied to the southern portion of the State of Illinois—a figurative allusion to the Egyptian darkness of ignorance and immorality that was anciently credited to this section.[43]

> Born and bred in poverty, Egyptians are reconciled to their narrow lives.[44]

According to Paasi's theoretical framework of regional identity, it is important to note that "a locale is essentially a setting for *interaction*, a place is essentially a product of *experience*, both being continually changing."[45] Several disparate groups were each weaving their own interpretations about ancient Egypt into their origin stories. Timothy

Champion stresses that it was in the 1820s–1830s when three distinct populations each looked to ancient Egypt as progenitor for their way of life: whites, Blacks, and Native Americans.[46] Yet positive associations of Egypt and points of pride were not to last in Southern Illinois. It was into this milieu of conflicting religious and political views that Southern Illinois' Egyptian identity began to embody negative qualities. Its evolution mirrored the changes in the reception of Egypt when "as early as the 1830s, some intellectuals had begun to equate the Orient with both the enslavement of blacks and the oppression of women in America."[47] At the same time,–contemporary newspaper articles reflected shifting attitudes about Egypt, Illinois, from a positive association with abundance and fertile farmland to that of an ignorant, proslavery, morally degenerate populace. This repeated barrage accelerated during the decade leading up to the Civil War and did not abate once that war was over. The Egyptian Illinoisans' seemingly paradoxical personality echoed the multifaceted and complex way in which the concept of Egypt was being negotiated in the 19th century.[48]

There was a schism in 19th-century American thought concerning ancient Egypt that accompanied America's changing views about what kind of country it should be:

> Egypt as a land of secular empire, utilized as a sign of America's imperial power; and Egypt as a land of religious despotism, utilized as a sign of America's sacred covenant with the Judeo-Christian God… the competing, conflictual, and often conciliatory identities of these two Egypts—one scriptural, oppressive and evil, one profane, worldly and redeemable—took on especially sharp meanings: Egypt the wicked enemy of an angry Jehovah, and Egypt the imperial home of God's chosen people.[49]

Aside from the Joseph narrative in Genesis, Exodus deals largely with the struggle of Moses to bring his people out of slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land. Egypt and Pharaoh are the antagonists of this narrative as there is little sympathy for the plagues the Egyptians and their livestock suffered due to the Pharaoh's refusal to let the Hebrews go. God purposefully hardened Pharaoh's heart, denying him the free will to change his own mind in response to the petitions of Moses.[50] Likewise, the battle for the heart of the nation, whether that be proslavery or antislavery, was couched in Biblical terms, and those on both sides were quick to invoke scriptural precedents for their positions. Southern Illinoisans, with a proslavery, segregationist, Southern-sympathizing majority, were on the front lines of the theological and ideological battles.

Proponents of racial segregation and those holding proslavery views relied on scriptural references for support as well as pseudo-scientific theories such as phrenology.[51] Conversely, historian Cain Hope Felder countered, "the Bible contains no narratives in which the original intent was to negate the full humanity of black people or view blacks in an unfavorable way. Such negative attitudes about black people are entirely postbiblical."[52] Genesis 4:15 has been used to prove the inferiority and venal nature of Africans and African-descended people.[53] The mark of Cain, although unspecified in the text and placed there for protection rather than punishment,[54] has been interpreted to mean blackness of the skin since at least the 12th century in Europe.[55] Through complex machinations, Cain became linked to Ham, Noah's son, the father of Canaan. For seeing his father's nakedness Noah cursed him: "the lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers."[56] Aside from the curse of slavery, no mention is made of Ham's physical description, although his name later appears in a list of descendants with names equating to historical regions in north Africa and western Asia.[57]

In addition to biblical references, scientists, anthropologists, and Egyptologists all contributed toward what they believed would be a solid scientific framework for white supremacy and segregation. During the 1850s, J. C. Nott and George R. Gliddon, a proslavery physician and a proslavery Egyptologist, respectively, published their volume *Types of Mankind*, in which they used the now discredited pseudo-science of phrenology to compare skull types. They also identified ancient Egyptians as having belonged to the white race and wholly rejected an African origin for the Egyptians: "At any rate, they are not, and never were, Africans, still less Negroes."[58] Quoting, at length, Samuel George Morton's 1844 work *Crania Ægyptiaca*, Nott and Gliddon emphasized that Egypt had no African origin:

> The African theories are based upon no critical examination of early history—are founded on no Scriptural authority for early migrations—are supported by no monumental evidence, or hieroglyphical data, and cannot be borne out or admitted by practical common sense. For civilization, that never came *northward* out of benighted Africa, (but from the Deluge to the present moment has been only partially carried into it—to sink into utter oblivion among the barbarous races whom Providence created to inhabit the Ethiopian and Nigritian territories of that vast continent,) *could* not spring from Negroes, or from Berbers, and *never* did.[59]

No research has yet been uncovered that suggests that Nott and Glidden's work was purposefully used contemporaneously by politicians or publishers in Southern Illinois to advance their position, but the ideals and beliefs exhibited by Nott and Glidden would have been recognizable to Southern Illinoisans. Naturally, authors working with the subject matter were influenced by the world around them and the society in which they lived. By positioning Egypt as a white society with an enslaved Black underclass, they created a historical framework in which to ground the origins of American society in an antiquated past. Early French explorers and settlers had also done the same for southern Illinois by equating Cahokia Mounds with the pyramids of Egypt and the Mississippi with the Nile. As Robert Young states: "Here, then, was an ancient historical precedent for a white society with black slaves: Morton, Nott and Gliddon, deployed their account of Egypt to justify the natural place of 'negroes' in their own Southern society, and argue for the everlasting nature of racial social relations."[60] With Nott and Glidden's preoccupation regarding racial mixing and how Egyptian civilization "declined" the more they "interbred" with other races,[61] a clear parallel could be drawn between this and a similar preoccupation of contemporary white Americans with the racial mixtures of enslaved peoples and the law of hypodescent. In fact, some argue that "*Types* did more in the half century it was in print to promote theories of biological racialization and racialized Egyptology than any other single text in either of its fields."[62] Southern Illinois would find itself particularly affected by the rising tensions between proslavery and antislavery forces due to its geographic position between two slave states and its conflicting allegiances to the Union and to Southern cultural values.

From the opposing viewpoint, abolitionists and free and enslaved peoples also looked to biblical teachings and antiquity but received very different guidance from them than the proslavery white supremacists. The same Exodus narrative through which proslavery Americans might see themselves as powerful and rooted in an ancient, divinely ordained tradition could also allow enslaved people to view themselves as a descendants of the Israelites whom God brought out of bondage.[63] The abolitionist David Walker, the son of a free woman and an enslaved man, readily compared the plight of enslaved Africans with that of the Israelites in his 1830 *Appeal*; the introduction stated:

> Let them remember, that though our cruel oppressors and murderers, may (if possible) treat us more cruel, as Pharoah [*sic*] did the children of Israel, yet the God of the Etheopeans [*sic*], has been pleased to hear our moans in consequence of oppression; and the day of our redemption from abject wretchedness draweth near. . .[64]

An abolitionist position carried great risk for an Egyptian Illinoisan as it did for many of like conviction throughout the United States. Such risk took many forms, the most extreme of which resulted in loss of life. In 1837, a proslavery mob murdered Elijah Lovejoy, the publisher of an abolitionist newspaper in Alton, Illinois. Lovejoy had come to see slavery as "one of the greatest moral and political evils that could possibly be inflicted on any people."[65] There had been repeated attempts to destroy his printing equipment and publications, but he simply replaced the equipment and kept printing until his death. After he became a martyr to the abolitionist cause, few Southern Illinoisans would openly support that position in the region.[66] News traveled far for those who did. The story of "Egyptian"-born preacher Jasper L. Doubthill's dedication to abolition reached across the Atlantic and was reprinted in August of 1862 in the UK newspaper the *Birmingham Daily Post* on account of his having "undertaken to bear a free gospel, and a

gospel of freedom, in that region. He has had much persecution, especially because of the antislavery character of his preaching, but he has gone on."[67] Protestant Christians formed some of the earliest opposition to slavery in Southern Illinois, suffered threats and violence, and risked exile.[68] The African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church and antislavery societies were quite active in the region. The names of nearly 400 antislavery activists have been noted in twenty out of twenty-eight counties in Southern Illinois.[69] It should be stated explicitly, however, that a commitment to abolition did not equal a belief in racial equality or integration. In fact, "the most vocal antislavery advocates were also the most negrophobic white supremacists in the state."[70]

Southern Illinois was a microcosm of the theological and political proslavery and antislavery tensions the United States was grappling with leading up to the Civil War. By 1860, the population of Illinois had reached around 1.7 million with 7,628 free Blacks and no recorded enslaved people.[71] The population of Southern Illinois varied by county with the largest number of residents recorded in St. Clair Co.—37,694 people (including 525 free Blacks, or 1.4% of the county's population) on the 1860 U.S. Federal Census; Hardin County listed the lowest number of inhabitants at 3,759 on the same U.S. Federal Census along with 55 free Blacks (1.5% of the county's population).[72] As is noted, the population of free Blacks in Southern Illinois was never large, yet significant attention was placed on them in terms of legal restrictions and social exclusion. As Paul Finkelman writes in "Slavery, the 'More Perfect' Union, and the Prairie State," Illinois' legal history on slavery and civil rights was, up until the mid-19th century, "unique among all the free states."[73] Although admitted as a free state to the Union in 1818, legal decisions in Illinois regarding the status of African-descended peoples more closely allied with those of its surrounding proslavery Border States; the institution of slavery continued to be practiced in Illinois in some form until 1848.[74] Illinois was known for having the weakest protections for fugitives seeking freedom of any of the Old Northwest states.[75] In the three major areas in which cases were addressed—interstate transit of enslaved peoples, the kidnapping of free peoples to sell into bondage, and the enforcement of fugitive slave laws—Finkelman concluded that Illinois sided with its proslavery neighbors because of a tradition of acting upon Southern sympathies due to the demographic makeup of the region along with a "profound Negrophobia."[76] The atmosphere was not as clear-cut as the law suggested. Within the boundaries of Egypt, Illinois, there was support for and against remaining in the Union and support for and against slavery. There was both an Underground Railroad[77] and a tradition of slave stealing and capturing free Blacks to sell into slavery.[78] The expectation of freedom or re-enslavement depended on where in Illinois a freedom seeker was found: court documents from the mid-19th century revealed that all freedom seekers who had been apprehended in the southern part of the state were returned to their enslavers with or without trial, while those who managed to travel as far as Chicago were more likely to be protected by the community.[79]

The Underground Railroad in Egypt was particularly active in Eden, Cairo, and Alton, as well as selected sites in Washington, Bond, Marion, and Clinton Counties; the conductors were "men and women, black and white, with different religious affiliations, occupations, and places of nativity. Their strong convictions that slavery was immoral gave them the courage to operate the Underground Railroad in the hostile regions of Egypt."[80] Despite the passage of laws aimed at halting the slave stealing and kidnapping, perpetrators were rarely prosecuted. Darrell Dexter explains that the "names of kidnappers living in most counties in Egypt. . . were well known to the citizens and their illegal activities were common knowledge,"[81] while Cheryl Janifer LaRoche writes that "anyone willing to facilitate escapes in this section of Illinois faced bitter animosity."[82]

The "darkness" of the Egyptians—that is, the three-day plague of darkness God visited upon the biblical Egyptians—alluded to a moral darkness.[83] This moral darkness is exemplified in numerous contemporary print accounts equating proslavery advocates with darkness and ignorance, a taint that Egyptian Illinoisans were still attempting to refute nearly 100 years later. In the 1856 newspaper article "Modern Political Egypts," Missouri, Southern Illinois, Southern Indiana, and Ohio are highlighted; Southern Illinoisans are described as:

> Too poor to own slaves in a slave State, they still regard the institution as from Heaven, and they would vote to re-open the slave trade and establish the traffic in Illinois,

> unanimously. Their public roads are now daily used by the slave-drivers for the travel of their human chattels from Kentucky and Virginia to Missouri, and with just as much security of property to the masters as in Arkansas or Texas. Politically, they vote one way and all the time.[84]

A similar categorization of Egyptian Illinois as ignorant, dark, and unredeemable can be read in other newspapers outside the region. The *New Hampshire Statesman* in November 1858 cited the *Cincinnati Times* in its analysis of midterm election results which indicated a landslide for the Democrat Stephan A. Douglas, stating "the darkness must be so dense in that vicinity that it can be sliced off with a knife."[85]

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Southern Illinois was no longer known as a land of abundance like the Egypt of Genesis 42. The narrative had become more complex and polarized, with a demarcation clearly drawn between those who believed Egypt represented the pinnacle of a white society with a perpetual Black underclass and those who believed their deliverance from enslavement in Egypt was at hand. Although the region, as a whole, expressed Southern sympathies, Egyptian Illinoisans did not respond to the American crisis monolithically.

Egypt, Illinois' "Intermediate Period"

Egypt, Illinois was, like its namesake, a land divided. Its antebellum and Civil War periods share similarities with ancient Egypt's Intermediate Periods. [86] Although the region and its people were vilified in print for their Southern sympathies, proslavery opinions, and moral degeneracy, this was not a unified stance among Southern Illinoisans. The population was not homogenous in its ideals or activities, and despite anti-settlement laws and pressure from residents, there was a history of free Black settlements and an active Underground Railroad in Southern Illinois. Ongoing archaeological excavations in Miller Grove, Illinois, combined with archival research have begun to uncover the forgotten history of this free Black settlement and its role in the Underground Railroad.[87] Outside of the handful of free Black settlements, a vocal minority of whites in Southern Illinois supported abolition, and outsiders (Black abolitionists in the Northeast, for example) contributed to, wrote about, and campaigned on behalf of these activities.[88] These proslavery and antislavery tensions eventually reached an impasse, and, with the outbreak of the Civil War, Egyptian Illinoisans were required to choose a position: either side with the Union and the North or remain true to a Southern heritage and secede. With strong Southern connections both in terms of heritage as well as continued familial relationships, it was inevitable that some Southern Illinoisans would ally themselves with the secessionist cause and with their Union proslavery border neighbors of Kentucky and Missouri: "a unified pro-Confederate southern Illinois, southeast Missouri, and western Kentucky was not impossible to conceive."[89] There were calls for secession in the spring of 1861 in Egypt, Illinois. Although the descriptions vary,[90] the *Dallas Daily Herald* (reprinting from the *Marion Intelligencer*) published an accounting of the Southern sympathizers who met in Marion, Illinois, on 6 March 1861:

> We are not in favor of agitating a dissolution of the Union, but every day that passes and every mail that comes to hand convinces us of the impracticability of a compromise between the two sections of this country—the Republicans, with few exceptions, insisting upon a course that would subject fifteen States of this Union to the state of abject slavery, which they will never submit to and which thousands in the North will never permit. We are for the Union from the ground up, but if she splits on the issues now before the people we are for the South—the formation of a new State, to be called "Egypt," and attaching ourselves to the Southern Confederacy. We want to belong to a government ruled by "white" men—not by those who would reduce themselves to the level of a negro. Hurrah! for the State of "Egypt" and the Southern Confederacy—no affiliations with the negro-equalizing cohorts of the North—[91]

Although John A. Logan was credited with relieving the tension and quelling the rebellion, his wife, Mary Simmerson Cunningham Logan, recounted her part in his success in a rare first person account by a female author from Southern Illinois in her lengthy tome *Reminiscences of a Soldier's Wife: An Autobiography* (1913).[92] Mrs. Logan wrote that

"almost every household was divided in sentiment."[93] Her own brother, in fact, had already run off to join the Confederate cause. In her recollection of the days surrounding Logan's address in Marion's town square, she described a desperate scene with its drunk, disorderly, and impatient throng, a missed train, and riding alone at night to Carbondale to meet her husband when he finally arrived. When he reached Marion, Logan's eloquent way of speaking was successful in swaying the crowd, with many volunteering for the war on the side of the Union. But this Congressional representative and trusted local could not win over all present, and he placed his faith in his wife to assist him on the ground in Southern Illinois. Mrs. Logan recalled that "he would not trust any one [sic] else to send or receive the dispatches he was constantly sending and receiving from the governor and adjutant-general of the State, who was at Springfield, the capital of the State, and the Secretary of War, at Washington D.C."[94]

Although not all supported Logan and his allegiance to the Union, promoting a secessionist cause and opposing Lincoln did not result in an exodus of young men to join the Confederates, and, in fact, Egypt, Illinois, volunteered for Illinois regiments in the Union Army in strong numbers.[95] One colorful account exemplified the dualities of being an Egyptian Union soldier:

> Lieutenant C.E. Lippincott of the 33rd Illinois… punched his sword between the ribs of an enemy officer. The enemy soldier, still alive, cried: "Shoot the damned Yankee!" "Born in Egypt," Lippincott wrote, "I could not stand the insult—so I wheeled and dropped one bullet from his own pistol—just under his shoulder blade."[96]

Northern newspapers, which had much maligned the region for years for its political leanings and allegations of voter fraud, began printing support for Southern Illinois; an 1864 *Chicago Tribune* article noted the changing political allegiances of the region stating, "Egypt is revolutionized. Northern and Southern Illinois clasp hands for the Union and the Constitution."[97]

During the Civil War, there was no more well-known son of Egypt than soldier and politician General John A. Logan.[98] His biography was complex and dynamic, from his early days as a member of a Southern family with overtly racist views, his promotion of the 1853 Illinois Black Codes, and his staunch support of enforcing the Fugitive Slave Laws,[99] to choosing to uphold the Union during the Civil War, putting down a secessionist rebellion in Marion, Illinois,[100] and, due to his Civil War experience, changing his mind and heart about the plight of African-descended people in the United States, ultimately becoming an ally to the people he once hated.[101] At his death in 1886, the national press reinforced the standard tropes about Egypt, Illinois, "the darkest corner of any free State":

> In all the Western States forty years ago there was no place so hopelessly non-progressive, so given over to ignorant prejudices, and so utterly divorced from all sympathy with progress, as Southern Illinois. It was a district which rightly merited the name of "Egypt," by which it had been familiarly known for a quarter of a century before the Civil War. The population was largely made up of "poor whites" from the South, refugees who carried their prejudices with them, but took little else beside poverty and ignorance. . .He had overcome all obstacles, all the disadvantages of a defective education, all his early prejudices, all the narrow limitations of his early environment, and had won his way to success by the sheer force of his character and by honorable means.[102]

Even in Logan's obituary, there was a need to reinforce and plainly state the universally understood qualities of Egypt, Illinois, such as ignorance, prejudice, poverty, poor education, and narrow-mindedness in order to truly praise the man and to show how far he had come. Instead of rejecting an affiliation with Egypt and thereby distancing themselves from the recent turmoil, Southern Illinoisans instead reaffirmed and rededicated their "Egyptian-ness" by focusing on their settler history and reclaiming their Egyptian heritage.

Institutionalization: Solidifying an Egyptian Identity

After the Civil War, there was an increased interest by long-time residents of Southern Illinois to

establish a canonical origin story for their settlement of the region, in part to counteract pervasive negative stereotypes as exemplified in the following quotes:

> These Egyptians betray their Southern ancestry in a number of ways: in their speech, in their friendliness, in their easy-going ways, in their clannishness, in their racial prejudices (particularly against Negroes), and in their love of oratory, whether it be on the political stump or in the pulpit.[103]

> Egypt, was a benighted region, where the men made and drank their own sour mash, the women chewed "Granger Twist" tobacco, and the young people found their chief enjoyment in cock-fights, dog-fights and fist-fights.[104]

By 1870, the population of the state had increased substantially, to around 2.6 million with 28,762 free Black residents.[105] This increase in the population combined with the influx of immigrants from Europe and elsewhere heightened tensions. Although the first white Europeans to settle in southern Illinois were the French who brought African-descended enslaved peoples with them,[106] the bulk of the region's population was composed of white settlers who had come from Appalachia.[107] These settlers were overwhelmingly described as being poor white Southerners who hailed from the states of Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. In an 1856 newspaper account, the inhabitants of Southern Illinois are described as "the 'poor white folks,' too poor to own n—, from Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and North Carolina, and they transplanted into Illinois all their ignorance, shiftlessness, school house-hating, tobacco-grinding, whisky-drinking habits."[108] An article by the *Boston Liberator* recalling the murder of abolitionist and publisher Elijah Lovejoy fifteen years earlier called Egypt, Illinois, a "hot-bed of degraded, ignorant barbarians."[109] Paul M. Angle described the residents of Williamson County as "… undisciplined by education. Their superstitions were many and strong, their prejudices deep and unyielding… Almost without exception they were hot-blooded, proud, obstinate, jealous of family honor, and quick to resent an insult."[110] Southern Illinois was described as "a hilly and poverty-stricken appendage to a great prairie state. . . its backwardness was not quaint; its feuds were not romantic, but troublesome instances of lawlessness."[111] There is little trace, in these accounts, of an agricultural paradise with mighty rivers for transportation; this Egypt had been lost along the way.

In order to reclaim the more positive qualities of their Egyptian identity, Southern Illinoisans looked to a mythic past and forward into an optimistic future, distancing themselves from the worst accusations of their character while also accepting modified, more tempered aspects of these critiques into a communal source of pride. There was an effort to crystallize the origin story of Egypt, Illinois, into one cohesive narrative blending the disparate strains that coexisted in the oral history of the region. According to Paasi's framework, it is during this period that the region of Egypt, Illinois, became "institutionalized," which he defines as:

> a process during which some time-space specific level of spatial structure becomes an established entity which is identified in different spheres of social action and consciousness and which is continually reproduced in individual and institutional practices (cultural, legal, educational, economic, political, etc.).[112]

Documentation, proof, and the collection of oral accounts were sought out and collected. Print sources attempted to pinpoint the precise origins of the Egyptian connection to Southern Illinois from the personal accounts of elderly white men, such as Judge Duff[113] and S. L. Dwight,[114] telling first- and second-hand family stories in the late 19th century to "old-timer" Aaron Lewis. Lewis recalled a cold snap one August day in 1863 being the source of the name— although that climatic event, in fact, predated him by at least 30 years.[115] Paasi's concept allows for a multiplicity of meanings and experiences an individual can have within a region and stresses the importance of understanding who holds the means of communication and authority in a community. Most of the people who wrote memoirs or local histories or who appeared in these 19th-century newspaper articles were older white men, often holding jobs in high esteem, such as lawyers, doctors, or judges, who had generational ties to the region. Paasi clarifies, "the groups which

dominate communication obviously also dominate the reproduction of consciousness and ideas concerning the nature of the socio-spatial reality."[116] At the same time, influxes of immigrants came to the region to seek land and wealth, increasing the tension between the new Egyptians who hailed from various central, southern, and eastern European regions and those who had been living in the region for generations.[117] These immigrants largely came to work in the coal mines, but their differing languages, religions, cultures, and foodways inhibited their integration into local communities. Folklorists Charles Neely and John Webster Spargo wrote: "they lose their folk heritage without acquiring the folk heritage of the English-speaking Egyptians. They become as a result rootless individuals . . . restless and maladjusted."[118] Although this tension between old-timers and newcomers was palpable, businessmen capitalized on the area's natural bounty of crops and coal, purposefully using the Egyptian reputation to draw settlers and miners to the region. In 1890, H.R. Mitchell launched a glowing promotional campaign for Egypt, Illinois, in his article "Booming Egypt," claiming that Southern Illinois had "coal enough to supply the world for two centuries," mineral riches to "last 100,000 years," and to "go to Egypt, young man."[119] The Southern Illinois Press Association, as Mitchell wrote, had recently been formed and it was their duty to highlight an overlooked and fruitful region "more worthy of a boom than Kansas, South Dakota, or Southern California. Advertise for it and get it."[120]

With this renewed zeal to create an "origin story," promote economic growth, and encourage settlement, Egyptian Illinoisans sought to reclaim a narrative that had long since served to denigrate and belittle them. By producing their own articles, narratives, and business propositions, they shifted the focus away from the accounts of authors and journalists in the North and East towards the image they themselves wanted to show the world. It was during this period after the Civil War that Egyptian Illinoisans found value in telling and recording their own histories.

A Proud Egyptian Heritage

"Memory," it has been written, "is the thin line between restoration and innovation."[121] The complex background for Southern Illinois' "Egyptian" affiliation, as well as its wider historical, theological, and Egyptological influences, has largely been forgotten by its residents—which, in effect, suggests the attainment of the fourth stage of Paasi's framework for regional identity, "the establishment of an entity in the regional system and social consciousness of the society."[122] Whether or not an Egyptian Illinoisan identity weighs heavily in the minds of the current residents, the spatial, geographic, political, cultural, and economic forces that created the region over time affects the sense of the individual, the community, and regional identity. The Egyptian identity of Southern Illinoisans still exists and exerts influence upon Southern Illinois to this day. Somewhat distanced from the "Egyptian darkness" of generational violence,[123] mine massacres,[124] organized crime,[125] Ku Klux Klan (KKK) control,[126] lynchings,[127] and sundown towns[128] of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Southern Illinois today takes pride in its Egyptian heritage by continuing to utilize Egyptian motifs, words, and images.[129] Most notably, Southern Illinois contains the only Egyptian Revival federal medical complex in the United States, the Marion Veterans Administration (V.A.) Medical Center (Fig. 3), a design decision that was purposefully made to highlight the Egyptian identity of the region.[130]

In terms of remembrance and active engagement with the past, a quasquicentennial coin commemorating the 125th anniversary of the founding of Williamson County included not one but four prominently displayed pyramids (Fig. 4), and the town square in Marion, Illinois, once the site of the 1861 near-rebellion, now contains a memorial plaque and a mural with a Nefertiti-inspired bust emphasizing local arts (Figs. 5 and 6).

Jan Assmann wrote, "the collective 'we' identity does not exist outside of the individuals who constitute and represent it. 'We' is a matter of individual knowledge and awareness."[131] In a similar fashion to the Egyptianizing architecture of earlier eras, Southern Illinois draws upon an American interpretation of Egyptian ideological values which evokes the past, creates something distinct, and reinforces its sense of regional identity. The willingness of Southern Illinoisans to continue to adopt and adapt Egyptian place names, motifs, and business branding exemplifies the depth and strength of their connection to their "Egyptian" roots.

Martin Bommas highlighted four main components of cultural memory theory in the work

Figure 3: Exterior of the main building of the Marion Veterans Administration Medical Center, Marion, Illinois (photo by Stacy Davidson).

Figure 4: Quasquicentennial commemorative coin, marking the 125th anniversary of the founding of Williamson County, Illinois; obverse and reverse. Author's personal collection (photo by Stacy Davidson).

Figure 5: Marker commemorating John A. Logan's speech, Tower Square, Marion, Illinois (photo by Stacy Davidson).

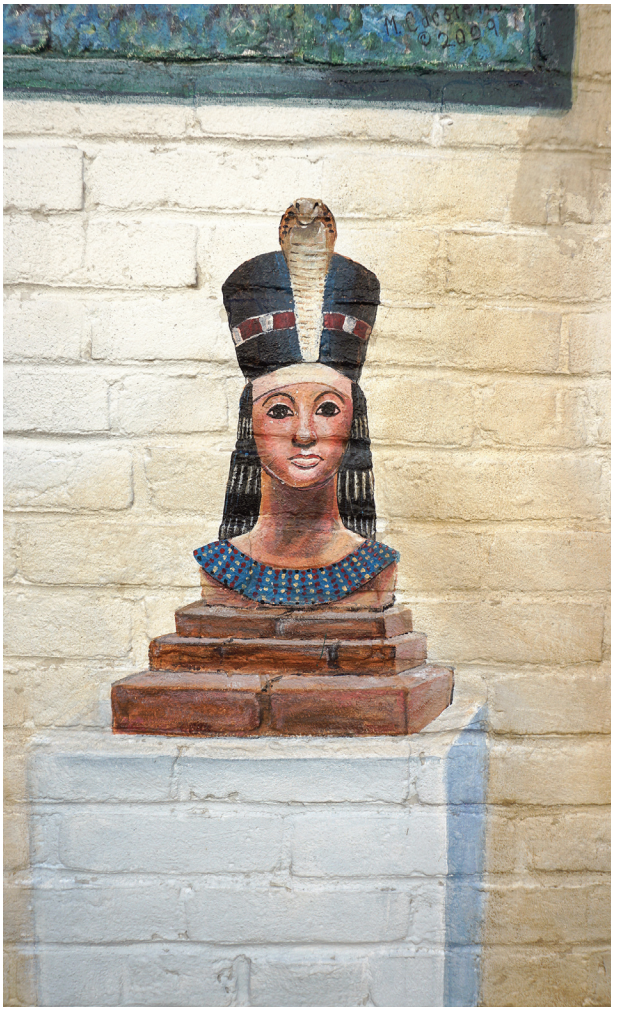

Figure 6: Detail of Nefertiti-inspired bust, Little Egypt Arts Association mural, Tower Square, Marion, Illinois (photo by Stacy Davidson).

of Jan Assmann: "rewriting history as an act of legitimization, eliminating uncomfortable events in the past, orchestrating forgetting to secure the cultural unity of the country, and inventing history."[132] These components, along with Paasi's concept of the region as a "human and social category" which is "continually reproduced and gradually transformed in individual and institutional practices,"[133] could also be applied to enhance understanding of the enduring cultural identity of Southern Illinoisans as "Egyptians." From the earliest European settlement and its attempts at connecting Cahokia Mounds and the mighty Mississippi to the ancient pyramids of Egypt and its life-giving Nile, to the erasure of the region's divisive history of slavery and racial violence, whether deliberately or organically, the connection between Egypt, Illinois, and the Egypt of its namesake was tenuous, at best. It was a strong enough connection, however, to withstand not only the tensions over slavery, secession, and the Civil War, but also the influx of settlers from the American East and Europe seeking prosperity in the coal mines. Paasi's framework explains the formation and persistence of a regional identity and elucidates the nature of a region not solely as a geographic area but as

"processes that affect and are affected by changes in spatial structures over time."[134] Egypt (or Little Egypt), Illinois is a case in point. For the last two centuries, Southern Illinoisans reimagined and recentered what it meant to be "Egyptian," building upon a longstanding American tradition of repurposing and innovating concepts, motifs, and feelings about the ancient past to formulate, affirm, and strengthen a sense of collective regional identity.

Dedication

Dedicated to the *ka* of my Grandpa, John T. Davidson, True of Voice, whose transfer to the nation's only Egyptian Revival-style Veterans Administration hospital complex set everything in motion.

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Notes

1 This article is the first publication in a larger body of research on Egypt, Illinois, that is being undertaken through the assistance of a Mellon/ACLS Community College Faculty Fellowship. "We Are For Egypt" integrates underrepresented voices into an inclusive history of the region, generates a handbook for educators to incorporate local history into their curricula, and produces musical recordings that bridge the past and present artistic heritage of Egyptian Illinois.

2 See the Little Egypt Veterinary Clinic (littleegyptvet.com), Egyptian Exterminating, Inc. (egyptianext.com), and the General John A. Logan Museum (loganmuseum.org) for three current businesses/organizations using pyramids in their logos.

3 *Alton Telegraph* 1841, 2.

4 It should be noted that the origin of slavery in the "Free State" of Illinois was not a "colonial imposition" as it was in other areas of the early United States but began with the blending of an existing system of Indigenous slavery with the French and their African slaves. Heerman 2018, 20. See also Ekberg 2007.

5 Paasi 1986, 105. Paasi's emphasis.

6 Paasi 1986, 105.

7 In this article, the use of the word "identity" refers to a sense of regional distinctiveness and shared history contained within a defined geographic area. It does not refer to a racial or ethnic designation. As Sheldon Stryker and Peter Burke clarified in "The Past, Present, and Future of an Identity Theory," the definition of "identity" is variable even among social scientists (Stryker and Burke 2000, 284). See also Hogg et al. 1995, 256; Stets and Burke 2000, 225; and Terlouw 2012, 709–711 on regional identities.

8 Kees Terlouw (2012, 709) identified the concept of "traditional regional identities" as one which took generations to develop and was born of

conflict. Although Terlouw's research focused on areas of Northern Europe, the application of this approach to the formation of a strong regional identity built from conflict over time fits well with the circumstances of the settlement of Southern Illinois, its peoples, its relationship to the state of Illinois as a whole as well as the Union more broadly, and the longevity of a distinctive Southern Illinoisan regional identity as "Egyptians."

9 Illinois State Museum n.d.

10 Briscoe 2019. See also Willman and Frye 1980, 2–3.

11 The number of counties included typically ranges from 11 to 35. See Callary 2009, 106; Dexter 2011, 14; Cross 1951, 160; State of Illinois Coronavirus Response 2020.

12 Smith 1947, 13.

13 See Callary 2009, 106; Dexter 2011, 14; Cross 1951, 160.

14 State of Illinois Coronavirus Response 2020.

15 Throughout this article, "Southern Illinois" is used when referring to the region as a cultural entity; "southern Illinois" is used as a geographic descriptor.

16 See Sublett 2016, 300–328.

17 P. Michael Jones, personal correspondence, 15 July 2019.

18 See *Independence Daily Reporter* 1906, 4; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* 1911, 4; and *St. Joseph Daily Press* 1915, 3, for print references to "Little Egypt." See *The St. Louis Star and Times* 1915, 9, for the usage of "Egypt" and "Little Egypt" in the same article.

19 Collier 1934, 20.

20 Anonymous 1943, 40.

21 P. Michael Jones, personal correspondence, 15 July 2019.

22 Callary 2009, 54, 106, 142, 183, 275. Some of these townships remain unincorporated, have been annexed by surrounding towns, or are currently abandoned. Historian George Stewart (1945, 239) concurred with Cairo's influence on the region, stating: "Because of Cairo (pronounced Kay-ro or CARE-oh) all Southern Illinois came to be known as the Land of Egypt, or merely Egypt, and its inhabitants are Egyptians even to this day."

23 See Jaffe 2019 and Loewen 2018, for Anna, IL, as a sundown town. See also *The Cleveland Herald* 1853, Angle 1975, Campney 2014, Dexter 2011, Gertz 1963, Hall 1953, and Jaffe 2020 for laws excluding African-American settlement, racially motivated crimes, lynching, and Ku Klux Klan presence in Southern Illinois. Erwin (1876, 24) lists 1820 as when "Wadkins and his negro—the first one in the county" came to settle in Williamson County, Illinois.

24 Callary 2009, 95. The majority of the African-inspired names in southern Illinois come from Egypt, although Dongola, Illinois, was named for a Sudanese settlement.

25 The primary and secondary sources cited in this paper contain a wide variety of terms that have historically been used to separate peoples from one another by categorizing them according to racial and ethnic terms. It should be noted that race is an invented and evolving fluid social construct with real socio-economic impacts and, for historically marginalized individuals, carries with it a pervasive threat of violence or exclusion. Most of the 19th- century primary texts consulted in this article do not conform to scientifically and sociologically acceptable contemporary understandings of race as a social construct. The author has chosen to redact particularly offensive words used in print and has noted when this has been done. The word "Black" has been capitalized to reflect a recent change in publication style; "African-descended peoples" or "of African descent" has also been used in this article. The word "white" has not been capitalized. A definition of whiteness is outside the scope of this article, but when it appears here, it generally refers to people settling into Southern Illinois whose origins come from a French, Scottish, English, or German background. These definitions are necessary, as there is a long and pervasive history in Egyptology of attempting to racially categorize the ancient Egyptians. This became important to early Egyptologists and historians, particularly with the emergence of scientific fields, and this practice of racializing ancient peoples continues, in some form, to the present day. References for these go beyond the current

scope of this study, but see Breasted 1916, 130, for his description of northern Africans as belonging to a southern branch of the "Great White Race." For Egypt in an African context, see Exell 2011. For Biblical views of the race of the ancient Egyptians, see Copher 1991, 152.

26 Coggeshall 1990, 103.

27 Erwin 1876, 3.

28 Erwin 1876, 7.

29 See Paasi 1986, 124–129, for his discussion of the adoption and development of a regional symbolic shape.

30 Cahokia Mounds Museum Society n.d.; Illinois Department of Natural Resources n.d.

31 Illinois Department of Natural Resources n.d.

32 Hammes 1981, 149.

33 Hammes 1981, 151.

34 For example, see chapter 2: "Pentimento Geographies," in Berman 2012, 70–108. See also Francaviglia 2011.

35 Ash 2007, 8.

36 Friedlander 2020, 6–15.

37 Friedlander 2020, 11.

38 Francaviglia 2011, 65–66.

39 Callary 2009, 106.

40 Karnak was established in 1905 (Callary 2009, 183), and Thebes c.1835 (Callary 2009, 345).

41 Weiner 2013, 237.

42 *Alton Telegraph* 1849, 2.

43 Smith 1947, 134.

44 Neely and Spargo 1938, 9.

45 Paasi 1986, 113. The emphasis is Paasi's.

46 Champion 2003, 168.

47 Francaviglia 2011, 19.

48 A full accounting of the reception of Egypt in the 19th century is beyond the scope of this article, but many references exist, such as Hornung 2001; Curl 2005; Dobson 2020; Dobson and Tonks 2020.

49 Trafton 2004, 18.

50 "But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that I may multiply My signs and marvels in the land of Egypt. When Pharaoh does not heed you, I will lay My hand upon Egypt and deliver My ranks, My people the Israelites, from the land of Egypt with extraordinary chastisements" (Exodus 7:3–5; Jewish Publication Society 1999, 124–125).

51 For example, the mark of Cain or the Bible's many references to slavery.

52 Felder 1991, 127.

53 Genesis 4:15; Jewish Publication Society 1999, 8.

54 "The Lord said to him, 'I promise, if anyone kills Cain, sevenfold vengeance shall be taken on him.' And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest anyone who met him should kill him" (Genesis 4:15; Jewish Publication Society 1999, 8).

55 Copher 1991, 149. Copher also gives extra-Biblical Jewish texts as support for Ham's blackness, according to the Babylonian Talmud: "Our Rabbis taught: 'Three copulated in the ark, and they were all punished—the dog, the raven, and Ham. The dog was doomed to be tied, the raven expectorates, and Ham was smitten in his skin'" (Copher 1991, 147). He also notes the *Midrash Rabbah, Genesis* states "R. Hiyya said: 'Ham and the dog copulated in the Ark, therefore Ham came forth black-skinned while the dog publicly exposes his copulation'" (Copher 1991, 148). See Felder 1991, 129–132, for the curse of Ham.

56 Genesis 9:25, Jewish Publication Society 1999, 17.

57 Genesis 10:6, Jewish Publication Society 1999, 17.

58 Nott and Gliddon 1854, xxxvii.

59 Nott and Gliddon 1854, 213.

60 Young 1994, 19.

61 See, for example, Nott and Gliddon 1854, 225–226.

62 Trafton 2004, 47.

63 Historian David T. Shannon extracted five common themes from the Exodus account typically included in antebellum slave sermons: "Pharaoh's Evil Deed in Holding Israel in Bondage, God's Reaction to Pharaoh's Evil, Call of Moses, Consequences upon Pharaoh If He Refuses to Let the People Go, and God's Act of Deliverance." Along with a retelling of the Exodus narrative, there were many other elements that needed to be included in such a sermon, particularly that of several "disclaimers" that the account of a slave revolt and liberation

was sequestered in the historic past (Shannon 1991, 105).

64 Walker 1830, title page verso.

65 Dexter 2011, 218.

66 Dexter 2011, 221.

67 *Birmingham Daily Post* 1862, 5.

68 Dexter 2011, 224–225.

69 LaRoche 2014, 55.

70 Dexter 2011, 193. See Dexter 2011, 193–226, for a detailed listing of the Christian denominations engaged in antislavery work in Southern Illinois.

71 Weiner 2013, 237.

72 Dexter 2011, 465 and 463.

73 Finkelman 1987, 250.

74 Finkelman 1987, 249.

75 Weiner 2013, 53.

76 Finkelman 1987, 249.

77 See Dexter 2011, 304–335 for more on the Underground Railroad. See also LaRoche 2014.

78 See Dexter 2011, 336–368 for more on kidnapping and slave stealing in Southern Illinois.

79 Finkelman 1987, 267.

80 Dexter 2011, 305.

81 Dexter 2011, 352.

82 LaRoche 2014, 56.

83 Exodus 10: 21–23 (Jewish Publication Society 1999, 133) and *The New York Times* 1876, 4.

84 *The Daily Cleveland Herald* 1856. Missouri's Egypt is also described as having "neither public highways, school houses, meeting houses, or newspapers, and most of them never saw a bank-note in their lives" (*The Daily Cleveland Herald* 1856).

85 *New Hampshire Statesman* 1858.

86 "Kingdoms" and "intermediate periods" are terms used in the customary divisions of ancient Egyptian chronology. Formerly dismissed as "Dark Ages," intermediate periods in ancient Egypt, although fraught with political and civil unrest and upheaval, were also periods of cultural and technological advances. A comparison can be made between the period of the U.S. Civil War in Southern Illinois with the concept of an ancient Egyptian intermediate period. In addition, ancient Egypt was considered to be a "land of dualities" due to geographic and environmental factors, such as the separation between "Upper and Lower Egypt" [South and North] and the fertile Nile plain vs. the barren desert. The sense of a North/South division is also palpable to the residents of Illinois, past and present.

87 See LaRoche 2014 (chapter 2), and Sharp et al. 2021.

88 LaRoche 2014, 49–52.

89 Cross 1951, 169. Two newspapers in Southern Illinois printed secessionist articles (Hicken 1991, 12).

90 Erwin (1876, 254–257) describes the meeting and resolutions as having taken place in April 1861, but the *Dallas Daily Herald* printed an accounting of a secessionist manifesto from a *Marion Intelligencer* article on 6 March 1861.

91 *Dallas Daily Herald* 1861, 1. Accounts of the "rebellion" vary widely in print accounts, and further research on this event is forthcoming.

92 Logan 1913, 93–100.

93 Logan 1913, 89.

94 Logan 1913, 100.

95 Cross 1951, 167. Mounds City National Cemetery contains the graves of Union and Confederate Civil War soldiers from Illinois along with veteran Illinoisans who died in subsequent wars. A monument on site was dedicated in 2006 by several Confederate-allied groups in honor of Confederate dead in the cemetery. The shape that was chosen for this monument was the Egyptian obelisk (author visit, 19 May 2022).

96 Hicken 1991, 15–16.

97 *Chicago Tribune* 1864, 2.

98 Logan is the namesake of the General John A. Logan Museum in Murphysboro, IL, and the John A. Logan Community College in Carterville, IL; he is also one of the men credited with establishing Memorial Day as a holiday in 1868. See < loganmuseum.org > (the logo is the portrait of Logan inside a pyramid frame) and < jalc.edu >. For the text of Logan's General Orders No. 11 (May 5, 1868), see John A. Logan College n.d.

[99] For the Illinois Black Codes, see *The Cleveland Herald* 1853; Gertz 1963; and Dexter 2011, 386–394.

[100] Although his effectiveness has been questioned; see Russell 2012, viii.

[101] General John A. Logan Museum n.d. and *Daily Evening Bulletin* 1886.

[102] *Daily Evening Bulletin* 1886.

[103] Neely and Spargo 1938, 6.

[104] Harker 1921, 41.

[105] Weiner 2013, 237.

[106] Dexter 2011, 24–27.

[107] See Erwin 1876, 26; Neely and Spargo 1938, 4; and Russell 2012, vii.

[108] *The Daily Cleveland Herald* 1856. The redaction of the racial slur targeted at African-descended peoples is the choice of the author; the newspaper ran the word in its entirety.

[109] *The Liberator* 1853, 1.

[110] Angle 1975, 72–73.

[111] Neely and Spargo 1938, 129.

[112] Paasi 1986, 110.

[113] Judge Duff recalls the "Winter of Deep Snow," but he was unsure of the year (*New York Times* 1871, 2).

[114] *The New York Times* 1885, 4. Dwight goes on to say: "The 'thick darkness' and the extreme ignorance never did exist here."

[115] *Decatur Herald* 1930, 5. He also anachronistically called it "Little Egypt" instead of "Egypt."

[116] Paasi 1986, 114. Historian Michael C. Batinski attempts to bring a voice to the voiceless in *Forgetting and the Forgotten: A Thousand Years of Contested Histories in the Heartland* (Carbondale: SIU Press, 2021), but this work, which focuses on the development of a shared sense of identity and purposeful omissions from the historical narrative of marginalized groups such as Native Americans and African Americans, does not consider the "Egyptian-ness" of Southern Illinois to have been a significant factor in the creation of its regional identity. "Egypt" and "Little Egypt" do not feature in the book.

[117] See Coggeshall 1990 for a detailed account of Southern Illinoisan settlers of Polish, Italian, Slovakian immigrants and their struggles at integration.

[118] Neely and Spargo 1938, 6.

[119] Mitchell 1890, 12.

[120] Mitchell 1890, 12. Despite Mitchell's hopes, the boom he was hoping for did not succeed in making the inhabitants of the region wealthy, and, in fact, Mitchell's entire premise is contradicted by Neely: "there has been no lack of boosters in the towns, with ambitious schemes to put Egypt on the map, but somehow their schemes have been barren in results" (Neely and Spargo 1938, 9).

[121] Nadali 2020, 219.

[122] Paasi 1986, 105.

[123] For the Williamson County Vendetta, see Burr 1875, 1; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* 1875, 1; and Erwin 1876, 112–230.

[124] For the mine massacres, see *The New York Times* 1922, 1, and Angle 1975.

[125] For Charlie Birger, see Angle 1975 and DeNeal 1981.

[126] For KKK activity in Southern Illinois, see Ayabe 2009 and Burr 1875.

[127] For lynchings, see Campney 2014 and McDermott 1999.

[128] For Sundown towsns, see Loewen 2018 and Jaffe 2019.

[129] Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois, has a saluki dog mascot and a student newspaper called the *Daily Egyptian*. Several sculptures and monuments on campus such as the King Tut pyramid and two separate saluki bronze statues evoke an Egyptian connection.

[130] See the National Register of Historic Places (2012) for a full description of the unique design and Egyptian Revival elements such as "terra cotta pilasters with polychrome lotus capitals, polychrome cavetto cornices, sun disks, and a pyramidal roof" that were specifically chosen by order of the then head of the Veterans Administration, Brigadier General Frank T. Hines, to reflect the area's Egyptian or Little Egyptian identity. A dedication plaque contained imagery of a pyramid, sphinx, coal mines, oil wells, and orchards. Although a complete accounting of Egyptianizing

architecture in the United States falls outside the scope of this paper, a useful reference is Fazzini and McKercher 2003.

131 Assmann 2011, 112.

132 Bommas 2016, 167–168.

133 Paasi 1986, 110.

134 Paasi 1986, 110.