



The Louisville Palace, formerly the United Artists Theater, was built in 1928. It is located on 4th Street, at the heart of the city's commercial district.  
*2005 photo by Lars Lawson*





Of course there are negative images as well, the vilest of which is slavery, but southern-inspired visions of languid days and steamy nights, of gentlemen and genteel ladies, broad-brimmed hats, mint juleps and a leisurely grace attest to an enviable elegance. Add crafty common sense honed to a fine-edged wisdom, political savvy and a poetic soul, and the South's culture stands as one truly unique.

It is a culture that has transcended regionalism to achieve worldwide status and acclaim. While many of its traits are readily apparent in its literature and emblematic images, its mores and traditions remain deep and complex. Such contradictory heroes as Tennessee Williams and Robert E. Lee have brandished and flourished southern passion.

Louisville is another of its contradictions. One of the South's truly great cities, it is actually closer to Canada than it is to Memphis, Tennessee. Located on the Kentucky-Indiana border, it has been called the northernmost southern city and the southernmost northern city. Its position between North and South made it pivotally important during the Civil War, when Abraham Lincoln was said to have remarked, "I may have God on my side, but I must have Kentucky."

Its loyalties have at times seemed decidedly divided. Opposing ideologies sometimes found themselves sharing not only the same city but also the same street.

Such was the case on Green Street, known as Louisville's Newspaper Row. Here, the pro-Union *Journal* resided appropriately on the north side of the street, and the pro-Confederate *Courier* was aptly ensconced on the south side. The two papers were merged under the leadership of Henry Watterson in 1868, and the *Courier-Journal* remains a symbol of Louisville's history as a meeting ground of north and south.

Before the Civil War, in the 1840s, conflicting philosophies found themselves in even closer confines when the Jefferson County Courthouse was the scene of both slave sales and abolitionist meetings.

Adding to Louisville's North/South identity dilemma, the city served as a vital supply center for the Union Army's military campaigns farther south during the Civil War. Thousands of former slaves sought haven in Louisville. Many of them enlisted in the Union Army.

One popular adage holds that Louisville joined the Confederacy after the war. Another claims that it was a Union city in 1865 and a Confederate city in 1895. Some historians maintain that it was a conversion of convenience. The city prospered by dealing with both sides during the Civil War and sought to maintain the allegiance of the old confederacy's markets. In addition, the majority of Louisville's postwar civic leaders had fought for the South, or at least held southern sympathies.

More sophisticated theories delve into the psychological aspects of the city's identity. They detail the construction and reconstruction of the community's collective memory after the Civil War. These identify two important factors. One was a Reconciliationist memory, which focused on things shared by white Union and Confederate veterans. Race was an obvious but important shared element. In addition, the veterans often felt a common sense of sacrifice and a desire for postwar economic recovery. Another component was a Lost Cause memory, which venerated the Confederacy. The hypothesis maintains that these two memories combined to overcome any pro-Union or emancipationist memory. [continued on page 18]



(Above) The Jefferson County Courthouse was designed in the Greek Revival style by Gideon Shryock, who had designed the capitol in Frankfort five years earlier. Construction began on the structure in 1837 and although first used by the city and county in 1842, it wasn't completed until 1860. Far too large for the city's needs at the time, the building signified influential Louisvillians' desire to have the seat of government moved to the city. The impressive structure did once serve as the state capitol when, in 1862, the legislature fled from advancing Confederate forces and convened in heavily fortified Louisville.

The Courthouse was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972.

*Audio-Visual Archives, Special Collections and Archives, University of Kentucky Libraries*



Advocates of this theory cite the media, civic organizations and community events at the time, such as a series of veterans' reunions hosted by Louisville between 1895 and 1906, as shaping opinion and nurturing both the Lost Cause and Reconciliationist memories. These memories, the scholars claim, were embraced by the emerging social climate in a city that was increasingly segregated, industrial and urban. Escalating class and racial divisions and labor unrest helped advance them.

Regardless of arguments naming Louisville a northern or southern city, one indubitable fact is that it is a river city. It owes its life to the Ohio River. At a length of 981 miles, the Ohio is longer than the Rhine or the Seine and one of the world's great waterways. The mighty river has but one natural impediment along its entire course, a 3-mile stretch of rumbling rapids known as the Falls of the Ohio.

In the days of flatboats and keelboats and especially after the advent of the steamboat, the Ohio was a principal route for the transportation of people and goods. It was a key artery in the nation's circulatory system. Until the construction of a canal with locks and a dam to circumnavigate the Falls of the Ohio, river traffic had to stop when it reached the rapids. Boats had to disgorge their cargo and passengers, skim over the falls and once again be loaded with goods and boarded by people. *[continued on page 20]*



(Opposite page) The Falls of the Ohio, the natural barrier that gave birth to Louisville, c. 1928  
*Kentucky Historical Society*

(Above top) Located on the northwest edge of the University of Louisville campus, the largest of Kentucky's Civil War monuments was erected by the Kentucky Women's Confederate Monument Association and donated to the city in 1895. Its inscriptions read: "Our Confederate Dead 1861-1865" and "Tribute to the rank and file of the armies of the south by the Ky. Women's Confederate Monument Association."

(Above bottom) Confederate War Monument  
*2005 photos by Lars Lawson*