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Well Calculated and Intended to Deceive: Counterfeiting and Policing along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers during the Mid-Nineteenth Century

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WELL CALCULATED AND INTENDED TO DECEIVE: COUNTERFEITING AND POLICING ALONG THE OHIO AND MISSISSIPPI RIVERS DURING THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY

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by

Joseph Carlos Marin

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To; Dean John F. Stack
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This dissertation, written by Joseph Carlos Marin, and entitled Well Calculated and Intended to Deceive: Counterfeiting and Policing Along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers During the Mid-Nineteenth Century, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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Florida International University, 2020

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents, who encouraged me from the beginning, my brothers who helped make this journey fly by, and to the friends and colleagues I met along the way. Lastly, I'd like to dedicate this work to my wife and son, both of whom encouraged me more than they will ever know.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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During the first half of the nineteenth century, the United States lacked a national currency and individual states chartered banks that issued much needed and sought after paper currency into their local economies. Counterfeiters, men and women who created and passed fake currency, exploited the bewildering array of paper money and the chaotic financial world of the nineteenth century United States to obtain goods through illegitimate means. Historians have already explored the presence of counterfeiting in the colonial United States and in the New England States, including its existence along the nation's border with Canada during the nineteenth century. This dissertation argues that counterfeiters operated along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and their presence reveals insights into the region's counterfeiting underworld, the urban and rural efforts to deter counterfeiting, the power of nineteenth-century U.S. cities, and the infrastructural power of the American state. Through newspapers, penitentiary reports, judicial records, pardons, and criminal confessionals, the dissertation argues that the counterfeiting networks found along the Ohio and Mississippi rivers from the 1840s, until the outbreak

of the American Civil War in 1861, rivaled the scope and scale of counterfeiting found in the New England States. The dissertation also reveals the previously unknown efforts of the urban and rural communities along the rivers to police counterfeiting through judicial and vigilante means. In particular, the dissertation argues that the professional police forces in Cincinnati and New Orleans allowed the state to effectively police counterfeiting in the region. In turn, the lack of counterfeiting's consistent punishment in the rural areas along the Mississippi River resulted in the use of violence and vigilantism to rid the area of counterfeiting. Through its reconstruction of counterfeiting and policing along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, the dissertation argues that counterfeiters participated in an underground capitalist economy that knit the North, Midwest, and South into a shadow economy that urban police and rural vigilantes attempted to destroy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

I. INTRODUCTION
Well Calculated and Intended to Deceive: Counterfeiting and Policing Along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers 1

II. CHAPTER ONE
The Queen City Police and Counterfeiting in the Early 1850s 35

III. CHAPTER TWO
The Detection of Counterfeiters: Counterfeiting and Policing along the Ohio River During the Late 1850s 87

IV. CHAPTER THREE
Wholesale Outrage and Retributive Justice: Responses to Counterfeiting in the Deep South 119

V. CHAPTER FOUR
The Crescent City Counterfeiters: Counterfeiting and its Punishment in New Orleans 162

VI. CONCLUSION 208

BIBLIOGRAPHY 222

VITA 230

I. INTRODUCTION

Well Calculated and Intended to Deceive: Counterfeiting and Policing Along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers

In January 1844, New Orleans police arrested Bill Nesbitt in a coffee house and found sixty thousand dollars worth of counterfeit money in his room.[1] In the trunk, the officers found counterfeit ten-dollar bills on the State Bank of Missouri and the Northern Bank of Kentucky, two-dollar bills on the Hamilton Bank of Ohio, located near Cincinnati, two-dollar bills on the First Municipality Bank of New Orleans, and one-dollar bills on the City Bank of New Orleans and the Bank of Louisville.[2] The police gathered the counterfeit money for evidence in the upcoming trial of Bill Nesbitt and his two accomplices, Henry Barvec and Vincent Clark. While the counterfeit money provided a New Orleans court with key evidence of the men's guilt, the state gained additional insight into the counterfeiting operation from Clark, who turned state's witness and testified against his partners in court. With Clark's testimony and the captured counterfeit money as evidence, the court convicted the men of counterfeiting. The court sentenced Barvec and Nesbitt to prison, while Louisiana's Attorney General rewarded Clark for his testimony by releasing him from prison. Clark left the courtroom free to

[1] "Counterfeiters," *Democratic Standard*, February 13 1844. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83035312/1844-02-13/ed-1/seq-1/).

[2] "Money Market, *The New York Herald*, February 4 1844. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1844-02-04/ed-1/seq-3/).

pursue whatever new ventures his heart desired.[3] It turned out that Clark desired to return to New Orleans' counterfeiting underworld. Barely nine months passed before New Orleans police once again arrested Vincent Clark and found a large quantity of counterfeit bank bills and bonds in his possession. Before the state could try Clark for his crimes, he passed away and Louisiana closed its case.[4]

Ten years later, in the fall of 1854, Cincinnati police travelled to Madison, Indiana, a small town on the Ohio River, where they arrested William Haydon, his wife Mary Jane, and their partner, William Boyd, on suspicion of counterfeiting.[5] When the police searched the Haydon's property, they found counterfeit twenty-dollar bills on the Bank of Tennessee, counterfeit ten-dollar bills on the Southern Bank of Kentucky, and counterfeit one-dollar bills on the Farmers' Bank of Kentucky.[6] The police also found on the Haydon's property a key piece of evidence for making counterfeit money: the banknote plates needed to create the fake one and ten-dollar bills on the Southern Bank of Kentucky. The officers noted the high quality of the counterfeit notes on the Southern Bank of Kentucky, which the group achieved by using the plate to create nearly identical

[3] "Commercial and Money Matters," *New York Daily Tribune*, October 14, 1844. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030213/1844-10-14/ed-1/seq-2/).

[4] Ibid.

[5] "Descent Upon a Gang of Counterfeiters by Cincinnati Officers," *Eaton Democrat*, November 2, 1854. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84028570/1854-11-02/ed-1/seq-2/).

[6] Ibid.

notes.[7] The police's discovery and likely destruction of the plates allowed them to put a permanent end to this particular group of counterfeiters.

Although the above examples occurred years and thousands of miles apart, the extensive economic, geographical, and policing changes that characterized the nineteenth-century United States created ideal conditions for counterfeiting to take hold across the nation during the first sixty five years of the nineteenth century. When the charter for the Second Bank of the United States expired in 1836, the federal government, in regards to the nation's currency supply, effectively ceded its role in the nation's banking system to the states. As a result, states rushed to fill the void by chartering their own banks and granting them the right to create and issue paper currency into their economies.[8] In 1837, the United States Supreme Court upheld the right for state banks to

[7] "Descent Upon a Gang of Counterfeiters by Cincinnati Officers," *Eaton Democrat*, November 2, 1854. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84028570/1854-11-02/ed-1/seq-2/).

[8] Hoffman, Susan. *Politics and Banking: Ideas, Public Policy, and the Creation of Financial Institutions*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, pg. 71. For an overview of state banking during the nineteenth-century United States see: Howard, Bodenhorn. *State Banking in Early America: A New Economic History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. Bodenhorn explores the regional differences in the United State's banking structures in order to explore the connections between financial and economic development. In regards to banking in the South, Bodenhorn notes that small denomination banknotes were important in a specie short, heavily commercialized economy. Bodenhorn also notes that banks in the South and West invested heavily public works projects like roads, canals, and dams. Finally, unlike banks in the North, some southern states heavily regulated their banks. Bodenhorn concludes that there was no universal banking policies that a region in the United States could follow that would guarantee economic success. Rather, state's needed to adopt flexible banking policies that reduced the risk of potential harm on its people. While Bodenhorn concludes that a unifying economic police did not guarantee success in the nineteenth-century United States, he notes in *A History of Banking in Antebellum America: Financial Markets and Economic Development in an Era of Nation Building*, the importance of banks as vanguards of economic growth and development. Bodenhorn believes that through banknotes and credit, banks acted as intermediaries between savers and investors that pushed the economy to grow and that the majority of banks were beneficial to the development of the United State's economy during the nineteenth century. Bodenhorn notes that the states that had more banks and other financial institutions experienced quicker economic growth than the states that lacked these institutions. See: Bodenhorn, Howard. *A History of Banking in Antebellum America: Financial Markets and Economic Development in an Era of Nation Building*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2000. In *Banking in the American South, from the Age of Jackson to the Reconstruction*, Larry Schweikart argues that banks in the South followed one of two broader patterns of economic development. Some banks in the South followed free

issue their own paper currencies and state's chartered banks *en masse*.[9] In exchange for banking privileges, chartered banks agreed to provide states with access to lines of credit and/or they agreed to help finance the construction of projects such roads, canals, and dams.[10] State banks issued lines of credit to corporations, entrepreneurs, farmers, and everyday people. Bank's roles in issuing paper money, providing lines of credit, and financing public works projects, contributed to the growth of capitalism across the United States during the nineteenth century. Paper currency knit the Deep South to the commercial markets in the Midwest and to banks in the Northeast. Roads, canals, and an increasingly expansive rail system carried goods from the South to markets across the United States. The explosion of state banknotes, when combined with American's increasing ease in conducting businesses with strangers and the proliferation of travel

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market concepts while others fell under high levels of state control and planning. Schweikart believes that by looking at how and why the Old South (Georgia, Louisiana, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina) generally allowed free competition while the New South (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, and Mississippi) favored tighter state control over their banks, can help explain some of the political mysteries of the period. One of the "political mysteries" that Schweikart attempts to address is to explain why the Democrats of the period who supported the "common man" favored banking policies that stunted the common man's access to social and economic success. See: Schweikart, Larry. *Banking in the American South, from the Age of Jackson to the Reconstruction*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 1987.

[9] Hammond, Bray. *Banks and Politics in America: From the Revolution to the Civil War*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957, pg. 567

[10] For example, the 1833 charter for the Citizens' Bank of Louisiana specified that the bank must provide Louisiana access to lines of credit in the amount of five hundred thousand dollars. The charter also granted the bank the right to establish a railroad north of New Orleans. See: Brusle, G.: *The Charter of the Citizens' Bank of Louisiana, Conferred by the Legislature of Louisiana, and Approved April 1, 1833*, New Orleans, 1836. Obtained from the Historic New Orleans Collection. Banking charters also provided states with an additional instrument though which to police its economy for the public good. See: Novak, William J. *The People's Welfare: Law and Regulation in Nineteenth Century America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996. By providing banks with a variety of privileges, issuing credit to the state, financing and then profiting from public works projects through tolls, and printing money, bank charters also directly and indirectly set the rules for who could control, and participate in, large sectors of the United States economy. See: North, Douglas C., John Joseph Wallis, and Barry R. Weingast: *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

across the country on roads, rail and steamboats, contributed to counterfeiting's heyday in the United States during the first sixty five years of the nineteenth century.

At the same time that the maturation of capitalism across the United States during the nineteenth century set the economic stage for counterfeiting to take root across the country, the nation's westward expansion provided counterfeiters with new territory to establish their operations.[11] By the late 1830s, the United States completed the removal of the Cherokee and Creek from the southwest and opened the areas for agrarian settlement.[12] The opening of land in the western United States resulted in a mass migration of Americans who left the east for the Deep South in the hopes of starting anew by buying cheap land and purchasing slaves on credit with the goal of participating in the growing and lucrative cotton economy. Other Americans, however, travelled to the Deep South to establish small businesses to support the growing cotton economy, while others sought to reinvent their identities in the expanding regions.

Although many nineteenth-century Americans moved to the Midwest and Deep South in the fulfillment of Thomas Jefferson's yeoman farmer ideal, others flocked to the growing urban centers found in the two regions in the pursuit of new economic

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[11] The dissertation situates capitalism within its commercial and financial worlds, rather than looking at the capitalism of labor. Its references to capitalism should be understood as such. The dissertation's attempts to label each region's version of capitalism, however, does not ignore the fact that the geographical and political borders of the United States did not limit the influence of a regions version of capitalism.

[12] While there are multiple works that examine the intricate and violent histories of the United State's interactions with the Creek and Cherokee, some works that provide a general history of the subject are: Conley, Robert J. *The Cherokee Nation: A History*. University of New Mexico Press, 2005. Hudson, Angela. *Creek Paths and Federal Roads: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves and the Making of the American South*. Raleigh: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010. Frank, Andrew K. *Creeks and Southerners: Biculturalism on the Early American Frontier*. Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2005. Green, Michael D. *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crises*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982. Saunt, Claudio. *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians*, 1733-1816. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

opportunities. Some cities, like Cincinnati, grew from frontier outposts to sprawling urban centers, acting as a beacon for both Americans from the east who wished to find a fresh start in the west and for newly arrived European immigrants.[13] Cincinnati's swelling population and its location on the Ohio River meant that during the first half of the nineteenth century, prior to the rise of Chicago, the city acted as one of the United Sates' most important commercial centers in the Midwest.[14] Cincinnati's markets imported produce and goods from the interior of the United States and shipped them south on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to New Orleans and the Atlantic port cities.[15] Cincinnati's role as a major stopping point for both goods and people meant that all types of local, state, and international currencies circulated in the city alongside the strangers and visitors that characterized a typical nineteenth-century city.[16]

As Cincinnati's commercial standing grew during the early nineteenth century, so too did its banking industry, which made the city an ideal location for the counterfeiters

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[13] Aaron, Daniel. *Cincinnati, Queen City of the West, 1819-1839*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992, pgs. 7-8

[14] Cronin, William. *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1991, pgs.228-229

[15] For a detailed early account of Cincinnati's trade along the Ohio River and the city's importance as a commercial hub, as well as a general history of the city, see "Chapter Thirty Five: Commerce and Navigation" found in: Ford, Henry and Ford, Kate B. *History of Cincinnati with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches*. Cleveland: L.A. Williams and Co., 1881 pg. 348. In the chapter, the Fords' note the importance of trade between Cincinnati and New Orleans, Cincinnati's role as a regional commercial center by acting as the end point for goods from the interior such as flour from Ohio, cast iron from Pennsylvania and Virginia, cotton, tobacco, and saltpetre from Kentucky and Tennessee. Goods from New Orleans also made their way to Cincinnati via steamboat. From New Orleans, Cincinnati imported molasses, cotton, and salted hides. Interestingly, the Fords' noted that Cincinnati occasionally acted as a shipyard, building ships that travelled down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and made their way across the Atlantic Ocean.

[16] Salafia, Mathew. *Slavery's Borderland: Freedom and Bondage Along the Ohio River*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, pg. 114

who immigrated west as well.[17] The proliferation of banks in Cincinnati, along with the presence of banknote brokers who bought and sold paper notes, and the engraving firms that designed and produced a bank's notes, provided the region's counterfeiters with access to equipment and supplies that would be hard to obtain in the surrounding rural areas on the Ohio River. Furthermore, Cincinnati's engraving firms could also inadvertently provide counterfeiters with engravers who could design note impressions on the steel and copper plates used to create a counterfeit banknote. Cincinnati's banking industry in the 1840s and 1850s meant that people in the city encountered a wide variety of paper notes from as far away as New York and Louisiana and would not look too closely at notes that originated from other parts of the United States. The location of Cincinnati's financial institutions and their currencies, clustered together in the city's urban center, provided counterfeiters with a space where counterfeit money could enter the local economy undetected.[18] As Cincinnati's commercial and financial standing grew alongside its population, counterfeiters found that the city provided them with plenty of advantages to aid their illicit businesses.

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[17] Soon after Ohio achieved statehood in 1803, the Miami Exporting Company acted as Cincinnati's first bank. In 1812, the state established the Farmers' and Mechanics' Bank in the city, followed by the Bank of Cincinnati in 1814 and the John H. Piatt and Company's Bank in 1817. In early 1817, the Second Bank of the United States opened a branch in Cincinnati and dominated Cincinnati's banking scene until the state chartered additional banks for Cincinnati during the 1830s and 1840s. Finally, during the 1850s, in addition to the six incorporated banks that called Cincinnati home, the city contained quite a few private banks and brokerage firms. Also by the mid-1850s, Cincinnati housed three engraving firms that specialized in creating bank notes. See Chapter Thirty-Six: Banking-Finance-Insurance in: Ford and Ford. *History of Cincinnati with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches* and Reilly, W.W. and Company's. *Ohio State Business Directory containing the Mercantile Firms, Manufacturing Establishments, Mechanics, Professional Men, Together with the Banking Institutions, Post Offices, and all other Miscellaneous Departments Which Contribute to the Wealth and Prosperity of the State for 1853-1854*. Cincinnati: Morgan and Overend Printers, 1853.

[18] Ford and Ford. *History of Cincinnati with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches*, pg. 360

By the 1850s, Cincinnati's population made the city the sixth largest in the United States, ranking it just behind New Orleans, which also benefitted from the nation's westward expansion.[19] While Cincinnati's population and commercial standing increased throughout the nineteenth century, New Orleans further entrenched its position as the South's primary commercial center when the cotton economy took off across the Deep South during the mid-nineteenth century. Goods from both the interior of the United States, the Atlantic, and the Caribbean arrived at the Crescent City before departing for ports around the Atlantic Ocean or along the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers.[20] Steamships began and ended their journeys at New Orleans, bringing passengers from across the United States, and the world, into the city.[21] More importantly, several prominent banks established their primary branches in New Orleans.[22] By the mid-1850s, banks such as the Louisiana State Bank and Bank of Louisiana existed alongside the Mechanics and Traders' Bank and the Citizen's Bank, all of which were found within a short walk of each other along "Exchange Alley" in New Orleans. A branch of the United States mint also called the city home, giving counterfeiters potential access to molds for coining.[23] The currency and credit of New Orleans' financial institutions travelled far beyond the

[19] United States Census Bureau, Population of 100 Largest U.S. Cities: 1850. Obtained from (https://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab08.txt).

[20] Smith, Thomas Ruys. *Southern Queen: New Orleans in the Nineteenth Century*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011, pg. 51

[21] Smith: *Southern Queen*, pg. 54

[22] Norman, Benjamin Moore, and Millard Fillmore. *Norman's plan of New Orleans & environs*. New Orleans, La.?: B.M. Norman, 1854, Map. Obtained from (https://www.loc.gov/item/2012593335/).

[23] Ibid.

city, across the South and up the Mississippi River, meaning the city's notes were a familiar sight throughout the Deep South and Midwest.[24] New Orleans' extensive population of people from all around the world, the variety of currency found in the city, and its proximity to the Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico provided counterfeiters with operational advantages not found in many parts of the United States, let alone in the Deep South.[25]

As Cincinnati and New Orleans' populations grew throughout the nineteenth century, they encountered a problem that confronted the other growing urban centers across the United States: how to police and control their increasing populations. The rapid growth of cities across the United States during the nineteenth century fostered the conditions for crime and disorder that overwhelmed the limited capabilities of the loosely organized municipal police and made cities ideal locations for counterfeiters to establish their operations. Before the populations of cities exploded in the mid-nineteenth century, most cities across the United States contained a few constables and/or a day and night watch whose purposes were to prevent crime while performing other civil obligations.[26] When un-organized municipal police failed to curb the crime and disorder that characterized the nation's mid-nineteenth century cities, municipal governments across

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[24] Schweikart, Larry. *Banking in the American South,* pgs. 256-257

[25] For a general history of Louisiana's banking system see Caldwell, Stephen A.: *A Banking History of Louisiana*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1935. Caldwell argues that from 1835 to 1842, New Orleans's banking capital exceeded that of New York. He notes that while the city took advantage of its position at the mouth of the Mississippi River to import goods from across the nation, it failed to export many goods back up the Mississippi River. New Orleans' failure to export goods up the Mississippi helped contribute to its failure to compete financially with New York long-term.

[26] Johnson, David R. *Policing the Urban Underworld: The Impact of Crime on the Development of the American Police, 1800-1887*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979, pgs. 10-13

the United States established professional police forces that replaced the ineffective constable and watchmen systems.[27] By the 1850s, most cities in the Midwest and Northeast contained organized police forces that set about preventing and detecting crime.[28] The newly professionalized urban police earned a salary rather then relying on fees obtained through the return of stolen property and goods, wore uniforms, and adopted military style chains of command and organization.[29] Although cities contained professional police forces that patrolled their jurisdictions, urban police rarely worked together or pursued criminals beyond their municipalities.

The establishment and development of urban police in the northern United States offers a glimpse at one of the ways that slavery indirectly influenced the growth of northern cities. While the urban centers in the North built their police departments in the 1850s, it is possible that southern cities influenced the creation of their police. Due to the

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[27] For a general history of policing the nineteenth-century United States see Johnson, David R. *Policing the Urban Underworld: The Impact of Crime on the Development of the American Police, 1800-1887*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979 and Richardson, James F. *Urban Police in the United States*. New York: Kennikat Press, 1974. Both Johnson and Richardson trace the evolution of United States police from an unorganized group of constables into the force that resembles our modern police in mid-nineteenth century cities.

[28] Cincinnati's efforts to establish its own police mostly followed the trajectories of the other urban centers across the United States. Between 1803 and the 1830s, Cincinnati mostly relied on night watchmen whose primary responsibility, other than arresting anyone caught committing a crime, was lighting and maintaining the city's gas lamps. In the 1830s, Cincinnati reorganized its night watch into a force of twenty people, established a watch house at the center of the city, and levied taxes to help fund its police.[28] While Cincinnati's police evolved into a slightly more powerful version of its earlier incarnation, the pro-slavery riots that erupted in Cincinnati during the 1830s exposed the weakness of the police that led to its reorganization. By the 1850s, Cincinnati paid its police a salary and organized them into a military style chain of command, but its police did not adopt uniforms until the 1860s. As the dissertation shows, however, Cincinnati' efforts to police counterfeiting in the city and throughout the Ohio River Valley was out of step with the rest of the region. For a general history of Cincinnati's police see: Roe, George M. *Our Police: A History of the Cincinnati Police Force, from the Earliest Period Until the Present Day*, Cincinnati, 1890.

[29] Richardson. *Urban Police in the United States*, pgs. 36-37 and Johnson. *Policing the Urban Underworld*, pgs. 38-39

presence of slavery and a greater need to maintain social order, southern cities such as Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, and New Orleans contained organized and well-armed police before the cities in other parts of the United States.[30] In New Orleans, police wore uniforms, carried weapons, and earned a salary form the city years before their counterparts in the North. Due to its extensive slave population, New Orleans' municipal government believed that the city needed an organized and armed police force to control its large population of enslaved while also protecting the city's social order.[31] The presence of organized and armed police in the southern cities during the 1830s and 1840s meant that the South contained the blueprint for modern police years before the other cities in the United States.

The development of urban police in the United States during the nineteenth century, however, ignores the large swath of the county's population who resided in the rural areas that linked the cities and small towns together. While the nation's urban centers developed powerful police forces that could deter counterfeiting, the surrounding rural areas were left to police the crime themselves, ask for help to combat the counterfeiters, or let them operate freely in their midst. Many small towns in the northeastern United States during the nineteenth century adopted a laissez-faire attitude towards their local counterfeiters, viewing their creations as a kind of public good.[32] In other examples, counterfeiters in the New England states circumvented the law by

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[30] Rousey, Dennis. *Policing the Southern City: New Orleans 1805-1889*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996.

[31] Rousey. *Policing the Southern City*, pg. 13

[32] Mihm, Stephen. *A Nation of Counterfeiters: Capitalists, Con-Men, and the Making of the United States.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007, pg. 158

winning local elections as sheriffs. Still other counterfeiting gangs in the northeast were powerful enough to ignore the piecemeal policing that characterized the region's rural and small towns. The lack of cooperation that characterized the nation's urban police could be found in the rural areas as well, meaning that the nation's hinterlands and geographical borders offered counterfeiters prime locations to establish their operations.[33]

In particular, the northeastern United States provided counterfeiters ideal operating conditions and in addition to settling in the region's rural areas, many counterfeiters operated in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and along the border with Canada.[34] The sprawling populations of the cities provided counterfeiters with cover to conduct their operations. Boston and New York contained thriving commercial centers through which goods, people, and currencies from around the United States and the world flowed. Philadelphia housed the Bank of the United States, firms that bought and sold

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[33] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 159

[34] Lynn Glasser's *Counterfeiting in America* provides a general survey of counterfeiting from the colonial period, through the creation of the Secret Service and its efforts to deter the counterfeiting of the newly printed "Greenbacks" following the Civil War. Dr. Glasser continues his study of counterfeiting into the twentieth century, where he explores counterfeiting during World War Two and the Cold War era. Taking a more specific approach, Kenneth Scott's *Counterfeiting in Colonial America* discusses how counterfeiting functioned in the British colonies and during the early republic era of the United States, stopping short of exploring counterfeiting's heyday during the first half of the nineteenth century. Stephen Mihm's *A Nation of Counterfeiters* provides key insights and observations into the nineteenth-century counterfeiters who operated in the New England States, along the United States' Canadian border and in the financial centers of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia throughout the nineteenth century. Dr. Mihm primarily focuses on how counterfeiting brought questions about the integrity of the nation's banking system to the forefront of the United States. In *Illegal Tender: Counterfeiting and the Secret Service in Nineteenth Century America*, David R. Johnson explores the social world and money market of counterfeiting in the northeastern and Midwestern United States before looking at the origin and evolution of the Secret Service and its efforts to stop counterfeiting. Johnson shows how the government's efforts to police counterfeiting resulted in unintended expansions of federal power. See, Glaser, Lynn. *Counterfeiting in America; The History of an American Way to Wealth*. Potter, 1968. Mihm, Stephen. *A Nation of Counterfeiters: Capitalists, Con-Men, and the Making of the United States*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007. Scott, Kenneth. *Counterfeiting in Colonial America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000. Johnson, David R. *Illegal Tender: Counterfeiting and the Secret Service in Nineteenth Century America*. Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1995

banknotes, and engravers willing to work as counterfeiters on the side.[35] The northeastern United States contained a robust banking system that housed several prominent banks whose currencies offered the region's counterfeiters an array of options for counterfeiting. The nearness of the Canadian border provided counterfeiters with an escape hatch through which to evade the few local law enforcement officers who attempted to put a stop to their operations. The northeastern United States acted as a haven and beacon for many counterfeiters during the nineteenth century.

The tolerance afforded to counterfeiting in the northeast resulted from the darker side of the consequences of capitalism. In particular, the proliferation of state banks and the deskilling and industrialization of banknote engraving during the mid-nineteenth century created a proliferation of banknotes that the nation's unemployed engravers counterfeited in exchange for payment.[36] Additionally, as individual states chartered more and more banks to aid economic growth and development, some banks, intentionally and unintentionally failed to fulfill their charters. While most state banks in the United States set out fulfill the requirements of their charters, others known as wildcat banks engaged in get rich schemes that undermined the public's confidence in the nation's banking system.[37] Wildcat banks operated for a short period of time, usually just long enough to exchange their paper notes for specie. After they exchanged all of their notes for specie, the owners closed the bank and fled the area with the specie while

[35] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 278

[36] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pgs. 280-281

[37] McShane. Patricia M. *Wildcat Banking Practices and the Development of State Bank Supervision*. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1970.

leaving their bank's worthless paper money behind.[38] Still other Americans found themselves in possession of worthless banknotes after a bank went bust during one of the financial panics that occurred during the nineteenth in the United States. Through their creations, the counterfeiters of high quality counterfeit notes exposed the fuzzy line between nineteenth century counterfeiter and unscrupulous banker.

Out of work engravers further blurred the lines between banking and counterfeiting by contributing to the difficulty in distinguishing real banknotes from high quality counterfeit notes that resulted from the process involved in creating banknotes during the nineteenth century. When banks wanted to create their notes, they engaged the services of one of the nation's engraving firms. If the firm accepted the bank's proposal, the bank then sent a representative to the firm with sketches of the note's design. Once the firm established that the proposed design was an original one, an engraver in the firm then etched a steel plate with the design. The firm then printed the notes and shipped them to the bank.[39] When banks wanted to print more notes, they contacted the engraving firm who selected the bank's plates from a secure room and printed off the requested amount of notes. By the 1850s, advancement in engraving technology helped both legitimate bankers and counterfeiters produce large quantities of different notes by changing the dies used on the plate. Prior to the creation of individual dies, engraving

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[38] Murphy, Sharon Ann. *Other People's Money: How Banking Worked in the Early American Republic*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017, pgs. 117-119

[39] Wilbur, Edwin J, Alfred H. Guernsey, and Edward P. Eastman. *A Treatise On Counterfeit, Altered, And Spurious Bank Notes: With Unerring Rules for Detection of Frauds In the Same. Illustrated With Original Steel, Copper, And Wood Plate Engravings ... Together With a History of Ancient Money, Continental Currency, Banks, Banking, Bank of England, Our American Bank-note Companies, And Other Valuable Information As to Money*. Poughkeepsie, N.Y.: Pub. for the authors, 1865, pgs. 8-13 Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library (https://www.hathitrust.org).

firms created their plates so that each plate bore the entirety of the bill, all on a single plate. By the 1850s, however, engraving firms designed metal dies for each piece of the bill, its denomination, name, border, and the scenes found on the bill. The firm then employed different combinations of dies to create different banknotes.[40] While dies acted as a deterrent against counterfeiting, their proliferation meant that counterfeiters could purchase some of the excess dies, obtain the other equipment needed to make a banknote, and then use the dies and equipment to create a wide variety of counterfeit notes that looked exactly like their legitimate counterparts.[41] Skilled engravers who knew how to obtain the dies and how to engrave banknote plates were highly sought after commodities and their skills and knowledge contributed to the rise of counterfeit banknote across the United States.

The explosion of banks and banknotes across the United States during the 1840s and 1850s, coupled with the deskilling of engraving through the proliferation of dies, and the bankruptcy of several engraving firms, created perfect conditions for counterfeiting. When engraving firms went out of business, their plates and dies ended up in the hands of counterfeiters, either through auction or by simply being lost.[42] One key reason that counterfeiters targeted engraving firms derived from the fact that many firms worked with multiple banks, which meant they possessed a variety of bank plates within their

[40] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 262

[41] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pgs. 262-271

[42] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 271

premises.[43] When the firm went out of business, counterfeiters could then expect to obtain a variety of banknote plates that allowed them to create copies of banknotes across the nation. Just as important, bankrupt firms also provided counterfeiters with out of work engravers who resorted to counterfeiting in an effort to make money.[44]

The need for engravers, banknote plates, and the equipment to create counterfeit money meant that counterfeiters worked in a specialized and technically complex field. Rather than crudely changing a counterfeit note's denomination or its location, a process known as "raising," skilled counterfeiters across the United States obtained the tools, technology, and personnel that allowed them to create high-quality counterfeit banknotes indistinguishable from their real counterparts.[45] In order to create a high-quality note, counterfeiters hired an engraver who etched the note's design onto a steel plate.[46] Next, after the counterfeiter attached the plate to a printing press, they filled up the plate with ink and ran banknote paper through a heavy press. When the plate pressed against the paper, the ink was left behind, which resulted in the creation of the counterfeit note.[47] The

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[43] Wilbur, Edwin J, Alfred H. Guernsey, and Edward P. Eastman. *A Treatise On Counterfeit, Altered, And Spurious Bank Notes: With Unerring Rules for Detection of Frauds In the Same. Illustrated With Original Steel, Copper, And Wood Plate Engravings ... Together With a History of Ancient Money, Continental Currency, Banks, Banking, Bank of England, Our American Bank-note Companies, And Other Valuable Information As to Money*. Poughkeepsie, N.Y.: Pub. for the authors, 1865. Obtained from HathiTrust (https://www.hathitrust.org).

[44] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pgs. 294-295

[45] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 8

[46] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 264

[47] Wilbur, Edwin J, Alfred H. Guernsey, and Edward P. Eastman. *A Treatise On Counterfeit, Altered, And Spurious Bank Notes: With Unerring Rules for Detection of Frauds In the Same. Illustrated With Original Steel, Copper, And Wood Plate Engravings ... Together With a History of Ancient Money, Continental Currency, Banks, Banking, Bank of England, Our American Bank-note Companies, And Other Valuable Information As to Money*. Poughkeepsie, N.Y.: Pub. for the authors, 1865, pgs. 8-13 Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library (https://www.hathitrust.org).

wide variety of banks and engraving firms in Cincinnati and New Orleans made the cities attractive locations for counterfeiters from across the United States.

In a manner that mimicked the legitimate supply chains forged by nineteenth century capitalism, counterfeiters relied on an informal network of associates to spread their creations far beyond their point of origin. After the counterfeiter printed the fake money in bulk, they sold uncut sheets of counterfeit money to dealers and distributors of the fake currency.[48] In turn, dealers cut the sheets and sold the counterfeit currency individually to "shovers," the men and women who actually attempted to pass the counterfeit money off as legitimate and who made up the lowest level of the network.[49] Through its organization, a counterfeiting network spread the blame far from the initial counterfeiter and engraver, which is one of the reasons why nineteenth-century police frequently arrested shovers and dealers of counterfeit money, rather than the actual counterfeiter or engraver.

Nineteenth-century newspapers primarily used the term "counterfeiter" as a description for anyone caught with counterfeit money regardless of whether the individual actually made the counterfeit money or not. For example, a newspaper might carry the headline "Important Arrest of Counterfeiters at Cincinnati" even if the police failed to find any counterfeiting equipment in their possession.[50] Newspapers may have

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[48] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pgs. 218-219

[49] Pickering, George Burnham. *Three* Ye*ars with Counterfeiters, Smugglers, and Boodle Carriers; with Accurate Portraits of the Prominent Members of the Detective Force in the Secret Service*. Boston: John P. Dale and Company, 1875.

[50] "Important Arrest of Counterfeiters at Cincinnati," *The New York Herald*, July 30, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1853-07-30/ed-1/seq-8/).

taken their cues from local law enforcement, which arrested those who "passed" counterfeit money during everyday business transactions and those who possessed counterfeit money on their person or property, as well as those who dealt counterfeit money wholesale. Far more rare, although more impactful, where the actual counterfeiters themselves, men and women who possessed the technical skills, knowledge, and equipment needed to make fake currency.[51] The terms "shoving," "uttering," and "passing" are terms used by both mid-nineteenth century sources and the dissertation to describe people who knowingly and unknowingly used counterfeit money during their everyday lives. The dissertation also adopts a similar strategy in its use of the term "counterfeiter" as shorthand to describe anyone involved in some aspect of counterfeiting, whether that role involved creating the money, selling it, passing it during a business transaction, or some combination of the three.

The blurred line that separated the counterfeiter from the shady banker, the worthless banknote on a wildcat bank from a high-quality counterfeit, meant that some places in the United States, in particular the northeast, tolerated counterfeiting. For some communities in the northeast, counterfeiters appeared to be hardly any different from an unscrupulous banker. An undetectable counterfeit bill, however, carried more value than a broken banknote and in doing so, counterfeiters provided the area with a public good:

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[51] I use the term counterfeiter throughout the dissertation to describe those who created the counterfeit currency and as a term to describe the large groups of criminals that police arrested involved in some aspect of counterfeiting. For example, in Chapter One I refer to a group of people arrested at the home of Samuel Towner as "counterfeiters" even though pardon records indicate the arrested men sold counterfeit money and passed it into Cincinnati's economy and were not involved in its creation.

currency.[52] By providing local communities with highly sought after currency, northeastern counterfeiters appeared as self-made entrepreneurs, who won over their communities and operated beyond the limited capacities of local police. If counterfeiters in the northeast failed to win over, or intimidate, local police, they exploited the nation's border with Canada to evade the police.[53] In addition to fleeing to Canada, northeastern counterfeiters also fled into another city or state, thereby losing the police who decided not to pursue them across state and municipal borders.[54] Other police were either incapable, or unwilling, to pursue and arrest local counterfeiters and allowed them to operate in their jurisdictions. The combination of a wide proliferation of banknotes circulating around the United States, the deskilling of engraving, the rise of cities across the country, and loosely organized local police, meant that counterfeiting operated at its zenith in the United States during the first sixty years of the nineteenth century.

So what changed? As with many aspects of the United States during the nineteenth century, free vs. slave labor, North vs. South, sectionalism vs. nationalism, the Civil War acted as the catalyst that ended the heyday of counterfeiting in the United State. Prior to the Civil War, the federal government left individual states to craft their own responses to counterfeiting. As the Civil War engulfed the United States, the federal government found itself in need of a way to finance the war and it set out to reclaim its position in the nation's money supply. In 1862, the United States Congress passed the Legal Tender Act of 1862, which gave the federal government the authority to issue

[52] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 168

[53] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 78

[54] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 81

paper notes in payment of its obligations.[55] A year later, the U.S. Congress passed the National Banking Act of 1863, which made the government the sole provider of currency and drove state banknotes out of existence.[56] At the same time that the government created a national currency to finance the war, the federal government sought to reassure its citizens that the United States would triumph over the Confederacy, thus surviving the war intact. The creation of the greenback, the modern United States dollar, simultaneously solved both of the nation's finance and confidence problems. The United States government issued the greenback as legal tender and used the first issue as a bond, promising those who invested in the new national currency that they could redeem the notes in five years.[57] Thus, the greenback financed the war and forced Americans to invest in a future outcome in which the United States triumphed over the Confederacy.

In order to get American's to invest in the greenback, and by extension into the nation's future, the federal government needed to protect the currency from counterfeiting.[58] Prior to the Civil War, the government largely left the policing of money to individual states. With the sovereignty and authority of the United States government underwriting the greenback, however, the government recognized that the bills' soundness as a currency also made it an attractive target for counterfeiting.[59] In

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[55] Hammond, Bray. *Sovereignty and an Empty Purse: Banks and Politics in the Civil War*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1970. In particular, Chapter Six: "Making Paper Legal Tender" extensively details the Congressional debates regarding the government's constitutional authority, or lack thereof, in issuing its own paper currency.

[56] Hammond. *Sovereignty and an Empty Purse*, pgs. 339-340

[57] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pgs. 318-319

[58] Johnson. *Illegal Tender*, pg. xv

[59] Johnson. *Illegal Tender*, pg. 66

order to protect the integrity of the greenback, and by extension its sovereignty, the federal government tasked the newly formed Secret Service with arresting those who would try and counterfeit the bill.[60] Although it took several years for the Secret Service to evolve into an effective federal law enforcement agency, one that wielded the newly expanded powers of the government, it eradicated counterfeiting across the United States by the end of the nineteenth century.[61] By the start of the twentieth century, Americans no longer needed to worry about the integrity of their currency as counterfeiting largely disappeared from the public's consciousness.

Through the above framework we see how and why counterfeiting flourished in the northeastern United States and why historians have focused their projects on that region, largely ignoring the Midwest and Deep South's experiences with the crime.[62] The primary mistake, however, is the assumption that counterfeiting, and even capitalism, in the northeast is representative of how it worked in other regions of the United States during the mid-nineteenth century.[63] Moving beyond the study of

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[60] Johnson. *Illegal Tender*, pg. 67

[61] Johnson. *Illegal Tender*, pg. xvii

[62] In *Illegal Tender*, David Johnson argues that Nauvoo, Illinois and St. Louis, Missouri were the only areas in the West that contained counterfeiting "production center(s)." Johnson also argues that the region's few engravers served quite a few different counterfeiting gangs and led chaotic lives, thus counterfeiting was limited throughout the region. See: Johnson, David R. *Illegal Tender: Counterfeiting and the Secret Service in Nineteenth Century America*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995, pg. 47. In *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, Mihm believes that the well-organized police forces in the urban South, coupled with the presence of slave patrols and well-armed local militias, deterred counterfeiters from operating in the region. See: Mihm, Stephen. *A Nation of Counterfeiters: Capitalists, Con Men, and the Making of the United States*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007, pg. 199.

[63] The study of counterfeiting in and along the Deep South, via the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, reveals additional aspects of the South's capitalist system. One of the ways to gauge capitalism's dominance across the United States and its penetration into local communities is through the evolution of American's acceptance of paper money as representations of abstract wealth during the nineteenth century. American's

counterfeiting, other historians of the various branches of American history, economic, political, cultural, have started to offer a corrective to the notion that the New England states should act as a model from which to base our understandings of the other regions of the United States.[64] Some historians of capitalism argue against taking the lessons from the industrial and commercial capitalism found in the northeast and applying them to other portions of the United States. In many ways, the industrial and commercial version of capitalism that emerged in the northeastern United States, and some even argue the larger systems of capitalism and industrialization, were anomalies, especially

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frequent and continued use of bank notes to facilitate economic transactions, rather than relying solely on specie, reveals a familiarity and ease with one of the key manifestations of capitalism: paper currency. The presence of counterfeit money indicates that capitalism became so thoroughly entrenched in local communities, that its presence fostered the emergence of a dark mirror: counterfeiting. Therefore, the presence of counterfeit banknotes and fake coins reveals just how entrenched capitalism was in the Deep South by the mid-nineteenth century. The Ohio and Mississippi River economies also offer key places to study the "crises and cultural conflicts" that characterize some of the literature in the New Histories of Capitalism. For literature that explores the South's place in capitalism see: Baptist, Edward E. "Toxic Debt, Liar Loans, Collateralized and Securitized Human Beings and the Panic of 1837," in *Capitalism Takes Command: The Social Transformation of Nineteenth Century America*. ed. Michael Zakim and Gary Kornblith. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012. Beckert, Sven. *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014. Johnson, Walter. *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013. Rothman, Joshua. *Flush Times and Fever Dreams: A Story of Capitalism and Slavery in the Age of Jackson*. University of Georgia Press, 2012.

[64] Rothman, Joshua D. *Flush Times and Fever Dreams: A Story of Capitalism and Slavery in the Age of Jackson*. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2012, pg. 13. Rothman argues historians tend to view the economic landscape of the southwestern United States during the nineteenth century as one far removed from the industrial Northeast. As such, we tend to make the "industrial centers of the Northeast as the quintessential places for understanding the antebellum age, and particularly for understanding the transformations wrought by the ongoing advance of capitalism." For a look at how capitalism, through its credit networks and supply chains linked the Deep South to the global economy and the linkages between slavery and capitalism see: Beckert, Sven. *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014. Johnson, Walter. *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013. For a look at the ways plantation enterprises contained the ethos of nineteenth century capitalism see: Beckert, Sven and Seth Rockman: *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. Einhorn, Robin. *American Taxation, American Slavery*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006. Follett, Richard. *The Sugar Masters: Planters and Slaves in Louisiana's Cane World, 1820-1860*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005.

when we define industrialization as European industrialization.[65] By extension, framing the industrial capitalism of the northeast as the ideal, or as the "control," from which to make our comparisons, masks the fact that the rest of the United States looked economically different from that region.[66] Therefore, a focus on counterfeiting in the Midwest and Deep South explores the crime in the two regions that set the stage for the key political arguments that led to the Civil War and the forging of an American identity.[67]

Counterfeiting, however, is just one part of the story. Exploring how Cincinnati and New Orleans police responded to counterfeiting, shows how two municipal police departments deterred counterfeiting in the Midwest and Deep South. Historians of policing rarely focus on how urban police in the nineteenth-century United States attempted to deter a particular crime.[68] By focusing on the police's efforts to fight

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[65] See: Pomeranz, Kenneth. *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

[66] For example, in *Enterprising Elite: The Boston Associates and the World They Made*, Robert Dalzell argues that other than Great Britain, nineteenth century Massachusetts was the most thoroughly industrialized part of the world. It stands to reason, therefore, that Massachusetts' economic world was different than those found in other parts of the United States. Dalzell, Robert. *Enterprising Elite: The Boston Associated and the World They Made*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987.

[67] Grant, Susan-Mary. *North Over South: Northern Nationalism and American Identity in the Antebellum Era*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000, pg. 8

[68] Monkkonen, Eric H. "From Cop History to Social History: The Significance of the Police in American History." *Journal of Social History* 15, no. 4 (1982): 575-91. From JSTOR (www.jstor.org/stable/3787410). In the article, Monkkonen calls for further research into the decline of violent crime in the United States during the nineteenth century, for more comparative work between United States police and other civil institutions like fire departments, and for the collection of more nineteenth century crime data. Additionally, in "Urban Police and Crime in in Nineteenth Century America," Roger Lane notes that many works that examine the United States police fail to consider the other part of the equation: the control and deterrence of crime. See: Lane, Roger. "Urban Police and Crime in Nineteenth-Century America." *Crime and Justice* 2 (1980): 1-43. Obtained from JSTOR (www.jstor.org/stable/1147411). Furthermore, the historians of policing in the United States tend to focus on the institutional histories of the police by examining the growth of urban policing from an informal group of watchmen into an organized and uniformed police throughout the nineteenth century. Or they seek

counterfeiting, the dissertation demonstrates how nineteenth-century municipal police fought counterfeiting through undercover operations and by relying on informants who traded information in exchange for a lesser sentence. Cincinnati and New Orleans' use of undercover operations and their reliance on informants to crack their counterfeiting networks hints at a complexity in their policing methods that previous histories of policing in the United States overlook. The dissertation brings to light Cincinnati and New Orleans' efforts to deter the crime with as much effort, or more, than the police in the northeastern United States. Lastly, by bringing to light official state numbers relating to counterfeiting, we see a rare look at the frequency of the crime before the Civil War that can help explain the degree of its decline following the establishment of the Secret Service.

Furthermore, the histories of urban police primarily focus on the establishment and growth of police in Boston, New York and Philadelphia during the nineteenth century, meaning that examinations of municipal police outside of the northeastern United States prior to the Civil War are rare.[69] Both Cincinnati and New Orleans police

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to explain the nineteenth century police's roles in the policing of labor by exploring how urban police either aided the interests of the nation's upper class by breaking strikes or the police acted to protect the workingman from corporate retaliation. A look at the institutional growth of nineteenth century urban police in the United States can be seen in: Johnson, David. *Policing the Urban Underworld: The Impact of Crime on the Development of the American Police, 1800-1887*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press and Richardson, James F. *Urban Police in the United States*. New York: Kennikat Press, 1974. For an argument that urban police acted as a tool to control the working class, see: Harring, Sidney L. *Policing a Class Society: The Experience of American Cities, 1865-1915*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1983. For an argument that America police served the interests of the working class, see: Johnson, Bruce C. "Taking Care of Labor: The Police in American Politics." *Theory and Society* 3, no. 1 (1976): 89-117. Obtained from JSTOR (www.jstor.org/stable/656941).

[69] See: Lane, Roger. *Policing the City: Boston, 1822-1855*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967. Monkkonen, Eric. *Police in Urban America, 1860-1920*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. Richardson, James F. *The New York Police, Colonial Times to 1901*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970.

offer a chance to study how municipal police carried out their duties along and within the system of slavery. Furthermore, while historians have explored the growth and professionalization of the New Orleans police and judicial system, it is usually within the context of policing slavery in the Crescent City.[70] By looking at how New Orleans' police and judicial establishments responded to counterfeiting, we gain insight into the ways that the city policed urban whites in the nineteenth century and not just the slaves. Through the following chapters, the dissertation's reframes our understanding of the policing of counterfeiting from a story of inept local police unsuccessfully fighting counterfeiting, to one about the significant and extensive efforts of urban police along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers actively fighting counterfeiting rather than passively allowing its practice within their jurisdictions.[71]

Therefore, the arguments that the well-policed urban and rural areas of the Deep South deterred counterfeiting and that we should look elsewhere to study the crime actually offers a fascinating counterpoint to the lackadaisical responses to counterfeiting found in the northeastern United States. The study of counterfeiting and law enforcement along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, in particular its presence in Cincinnati and New Orleans, during the mid-nineteenth century offers a window into looking at the challenges of policing an early form of organized crime through both legal and extra-legal means. Along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, urban police pursued counterfeiters across local and state jurisdictions, expending significant amounts of time and resources

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[70] Rousey, Dennis. *Policing the Southern City: New Orleans 1805-1889*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996.

[71] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pgs. 145 and 159

in their efforts to bring counterfeiters to justice.[72] In addition to pursuing counterfeiters across Ohio and throughout the Ohio River Valley, Cincinnati police implemented undercover operations designed to infiltrate local counterfeiting gangs, obtain clear evidence of their guilt, and then arrest the men and women, bringing them before a judge who sentenced them to the Ohio penitentiary. In New Orleans, the city's courts sentenced counterfeiters to years in the state penitentiary after which few returned to the city's counterfeiting underworld. Far from a whimsical story of the state tolerating counterfeiters, the dissertation establishes that Cincinnati and New Orleans police departments went to significant lengths to combat and deter the crime within and beyond their jurisdictions, revealing major differences between the policing of counterfeiting in the northeast and the responses to its presence in the Midwest and Deep South.

The efforts of Cincinnati and New Orleans to police counterfeiting through their police also reveals that law enforcement functioned as a tool for nineteenth century cities to pull the surrounding rural communities into their orbits. Nineteenth-century urban historians have thoroughly established the ways that cities connected economically to their surrounding hinterlands and pulled them into their spheres of influence.[73] The policing of counterfeiting reveals another way that U.S. cities reached into the surrounding countryside to exert their influence and control. While the economic links

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[72] One of the key expansions of policing power in Cincinnati, and one that greatly aided the city's officers in their fight against counterfeiting, occurred in the 1850s when Cincinnati imbued its officers with the power to arrest a criminal anywhere in Ohio. Williams, William: *Laws and General Ordinances of the City of Cincinnati, Containing the Laws of the State Relating to the Government of the City; All he General Ordinances of the City in Force, December 20, 1854; and the Rules and Regulations of the City Infirmary Commercial Hospital, and House of Refuge*, Cincinnati, 1854, pg. 112. Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uiug.30112106644534).

[73] See: Cronin, William. *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1991.

between urban and rural spaces could remain invisible to those affected by them, uniformed police offered a stark example of a rural area's dependency on the city and its reach into their lives. Throughout the 1850s, Cincinnati police not only arrested counterfeiters in the small towns and rural areas that orbited the city, they arrested counterfeiters in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, and western Virginia. In Louisiana, New Orleans police travelled across the state to arrest counterfeiters in the bayous, rivers, and small towns found near the city. By adding the role of the police back into the study of counterfeiting, I show how urban police in the nineteenth-century United States acted as another tool, in addition to the economic, that linked urban and rural spaces together.

In addition to linking urban and rural spaces together, nineteenth-century municipal police are also one of the key pieces of studying the power of the American state during the mid-nineteenth century. Historians who argue about whether the United States has operated as a strong or weak state believe that one of the ways to answer that question is to study the strength of its infrastructural power.[74] Infrastructural power refers to the capacity of the state to "penetrate civil society and implement policies throughout a given territory."[75] State officials in particular, such as police, judges, and grand juries, embody the infrastructural power of the American state and make for key subjects in the study of its formation and reach.[76] Additionally, theorists believe that "to try and gauge the power of the American state…by looking at the national center of

[74] Novak, William J. "The Myth of the 'Weak' American State." *The American Historical Review*, vol. 113, no. 3, 2008, pp. 752–772. *JSTOR*, (www.jstor.org/stable/30223051)

[75] Novak. "*The Myth of the 'Weak' American State*," pg. 763

[76] Novak. "*The Myth of the 'Weak' American State*," pg. 765

federal bureaucracy, is to miss where much of the action is, at the state and local level."[77] The development of the American government in the late eighteenth century on the periphery of the European metropole meant that since its inception, the federal government needed to develop effective mechanisms for policing an ever expanding and diverse territory.[78] Therefore, the study of how representations of the state, in the form of state laws and municipal police, carried out its power on the periphery and within its geographical borderlands, offers an important window through which to study the power of the nineteenth-century American state. The expansion of the United States into the Midwest and Deep South during the nineteenth century means that they fit the above model, while police and state laws offer key subjects through which to gauge the scope and reach of the infrastructural power of the American state.[79] Thus, by looking at how the infrastructural power of the American state penetrated and impacted the civil societies on its periphery, the dissertation's examination of the state's efforts to police

[77] Novak. "*The Myth of the 'Weak' American State*," pg. 766

[78] Ibid.

[79] The nation's banking system also offers a way for historians to study the infrastructural power of individual states. Many states in the South and West chartered banks that were entirely state owned. Therefore, state-owned banks and their policies reveal some of the ways that the state penetrated civil society. Furthermore, state lines did not limit the circulation of a bank's currency and its credit could also travel far beyond the bank's origin, which means that through state banks we can also see how bank's infrastructural powers crossed political boundaries as well. For a discussion on the differences in the regional banking systems of the United States and about the heavy state presence in southern and western banks see: Bodenhorn, Howard. *A History of Banking in Antebellum America: Financial Markets and Economic Development in an Era of Nation Building*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Caldwell, Stephen A. *A Banking History of Louisiana*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1935. Reprint 1980. Green, George D. *Finance and Economic Development in the Old South: Louisiana Banking, 1804-1861*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972. Hammond, Bray. *Banks and Politics in America; from Revolution to the Civil War*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957. Hoffman, Susan. *Politics and Banking: Ideas, Public Policy, and the Creation of Financial Institutions*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Murphy, Sharon Ann. *Other People's Money: How Banking Worked in the Early American Republic*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017. Schweikart, Larry *Banking in the American South: From the Age of Jackson to Reconstruction*. Louisiana State University Press, 1987.

counterfeiting, through its law enforcement and judicial systems, in the Ohio and Mississippi River Valleys, contributes evidence to the argument that the American state has historically been more powerful than we realized.

The municipal policing of counterfeiting reveals more than the hidden power of the American state, it also shows the underground links that knit the separate sections of the United States together during a time when slavery threatened to tear the country apart. Historians of the nineteenth-century United States, whether economic, political, or social, tend to establish the Ohio River as a border that separated the free and slave states, and their economies, from each other. Just as nineteenth-century banking policies crossed the borders of the United State's industrial and slave economies and connected the two systems, so did counterfeiting. Borderland theory reveals that a nation's borders act less as barriers whose functions are to separate spaces from each other. Instead, borderlands operate more as places where people, ideas, goods, and money mix to form something different from their two originators.[80] Both the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers functioned as geographical borderlands in the United States that attracted the nation's counterfeiters.[81] As such, an in-depth study of counterfeiting in the United States' interior borders illuminates our understanding of how counterfeiters navigated the nation's messy internal borders, how they attempted to exploit these places for their own gain and freedom of movement, and how illicit goods traversed the Ohio and Mississippi

[80] Salafia, Matthew. *Slavery's Borderland*, pg. 2

[81] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 159

rivers, connecting the nation's regions and economic systems together into a cohesive, underground criminal economy.[82]

Trying to separate those who knowingly participated in the nation's illicit counterfeiting economy from those who were innocently caught in its reach pervade the histories of counterfeiting and warps our understanding of its impact on the United States. Taking a closer look at counterfeiting along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers reveals that many of the region's counterfeiters, through their actions, knew they were engaging in a criminal act. While it is plausible that a person who passed a counterfeit note may have done so unwillingly, state laws, like those found in Louisiana, addressed this possibility by establishing that police needed to find at least five similar counterfeit bills or coins in a person's possession.[83] The difficulty in separating the innocent from the guilty and in reconstructing the two region's counterfeiting underworlds also explains the sources used in the dissertation. Nineteenth-century newspapers provided a wealth of data such as the names and locations of those involved in counterfeiting and the outcomes, if any, of their trials. Newspapers, however, can also inflate the numbers of people involved in counterfeiting. In order to gain a clearer understanding of those involved in counterfeiting, I attempted to corroborate as many newspaper accounts as possible with judicial records, penitentiary lists, and pardon records. State and federal pardon

[82] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pgs. 198-199. The dissertation also shows how the different components of the region's social, economic, and political worlds, combined together in a system that characterized the larger tensions of the United States. Following the Civil War, that system fell apart, and as such this dissertation provides a rich description of a previously unseen component of the Ohio and Mississippi River Valleys: its underworld. In doing so, the shows how the Ohio and Mississippi River Valleys fit within the larger economic system of the United States. See: Lipartito, Kenneth. Reassembling the Economic: New Departures in Historical Materialism, *The American Historical Review*, Volume 121, Issue 1 February 2016, pgs. 101-139.

[83] The Revised Statutes of the State of Louisiana 1856, pgs. 140-142

applications provide important information about convicted counterfeiters, their partners, if they acted as state's witnesses, and, more importantly, the reasons for why the state decided to cut their sentences short. Lastly, criminal confessionals helped fill in important parts of the story of counterfeiting in the Ohio and Mississippi River Valleys during the mid-nineteenth century.[84] By combining the information gleaned from newspaper accounts, judicial records, and criminal confessionals, a clearer picture of the U.S. counterfeiting underworld emerges that can help separate innocent passers of counterfeit money from those who sought to purchase everyday goods with fake currency.

The sources used in this study of counterfeiting in the nineteenth-century United States, however, reveals two paradoxes that can stifle our efforts to better understand the extent of the United States' counterfeiting underworld. First, how could we tell if an arrested counterfeiter returned to the crime if they, and their creations, were so good as to avoid notice? Which leads to paradox number two: if a counterfeit note was perfectly created to such a degree that a person could not tell a difference between the real note and its fake counterpart, then how can we gain an accurate picture of counterfeiting in the United States? In regards to the first question, the methodology of this dissertation was to generate a master list of counterfeiters from newspapers, judicial sources, prison records, and pardon applications. After I created the list, I ran the names through databases like the Library of Congress's *Chronicling America* newspaper database to try and locate counterfeiters across time and space. While the searches were an inexact science, I

[84] Pitts, J.R.S. *The Life and Career of Jas. Copeland, the Great Southern Land Pirate, who was Executed at August, Miss., October 30, 1857, Together with the Exploits of the Wages Clan, in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, and the West Generally, as Related by Copeland Previous to his Death, to J.R.S. Pitts, Sheriff of Perry County, Mississippi*. New Orleans: E.C. Wharton, 1858.

believe that I covered an extensive volume of records that would reveal if at least a few of these people returned to counterfeiting. In answer to the second paradox, the dissertation is not concerned with trying to establish the impacts of counterfeit currency on state budgets, or on local, state, and national economies, and those who do focus on such questions largely miss the point.[85] Rather, the dissertation's view on the presence of counterfeit notes is that any presence of counterfeit currency is a lot when none should exist in the first place.

With the above clarification in mind, let us return to the arrests of Barvec, Clark, and Nesbitt in New Orleans in the 1840s and the capture of the Haydons and Boyd in Indiana in the 1850s that opened the introduction. Both groups provide a glimpse into the removal of a single piece of a counterfeiting network, the sellers of counterfeit money, which meant that despite the setback, the larger network continued to operate. In Chapter One: The Queen City Police and Counterfeiting in the Early 1850s, the dissertation

[85] In "Nothings into Something," Robert Mensel lays out an argument about the extensiveness of counterfeiting in the nineteenth century United States. Mensel asserts that the "extent of counterfeiting, as an empirical matter, is a critical element in the historiographical argument about its significance." First, Mensel takes issue with Lynn Glasser's title of counterfeiting as "An American Way to Wealth," and argues that if true then counterfeiting "must have been quite pervasive." Next Mensel uses evidence from a counterfeiter's arrest in *Niles Weekly Register* to note that the paper reported the police found in the counterfeiter's possession twenty to twenty counterfeit notes. Mensel draws the conclusion that since the *Weekly Register* believed twenty to twenty five counterfeits to be a "large number," then historians "might reasonably be accused of overstating the problem. Mensel's last point is to take issue with the "tone of the modern historiography of counterfeiting," which "partakes entirely too much of the gleeful tone" found in nineteenth century sources reporting on counterfeiting. Mensel believes that "literary convention appears to have become conflated with fact." Other than Mensel's concern with the "tone" of the historiography of counterfeiting, which seems to be a personal preference rather than adding any significant and constructive criticism about counterfeiting's historiography, Mensel fundamentally misreads and mischaracterizes the *Niles Weekly Register's* point about finding twenty to twenty five counterfeit notes in a counterfeiter's possession, which undermines a key point of his argument. While the *Register* did report that police found twenty to twenty-five counterfeits in his possession, they actually note that he had a large "assortment" of counterfeit bills in his possession, thus referencing the variety of denominations on different banks in his possession, not the actual amount of counterfeit notes. Mensel, Robert E. "Nothings into Something: Intrinsic Value and Counterfeit Money in Antebellum Law and Culture," Ohio Northern University Law Review, 37, no. 1 (2011): pgs. 111-144

explains why Cincinnati attracted counterfeiters to the Ohio River Valley and reveals how counterfeiting worked in Cincinnati and along the Ohio River. The chapter then reconstructs the entire structure and scope of a single counterfeiting network, the Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeiters, to show how it impacted the region and how Cincinnati police dismantled the network. In Chapter Two: The Detection of Counterfeiters: Counterfeiting and Policing along the Ohio River During the Late 1850s, I reveal that the expanded powers of the Cincinnati police aided the department's efforts to fight counterfeiting in both southern Ohio and throughout the Ohio River Valley, into Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, and Virginia. By policing counterfeiting throughout the Ohio River Valley, Cincinnati's police functioned as an important tool that penetrated state borders and pulled the surrounding region into the city's orbit. Chapter Three: Wholesale Outrage and Retributive Justice: Responses to Counterfeiting in the Deep South shifts the story away from the Ohio River Valley towards the Deep South and focuses on rural and vigilante responses to counterfeiting along the Mississippi River during the 1840s. The chapter contextualizes southern responses to counterfeiting during the 1840s by showing that many rural southerners attempted to connect the region's counterfeiters to the mythical "Murrell" gang that instigated mass hysteria in rural Mississippi during the late 1830s. Despite the region's violent responses to counterfeiting, the rural areas along the Mississippi River only resorted to violence as a last resort, when local police and judicial systems, tools of the state designed to establish structure in the form of law and order, failed to punish the region's counterfeiters. In Chapter Four: The Crescent City Counterfeiters: Counterfeiting and its Punishment in New Orleans, explores how New Orleans' police and judicial system punished counterfeiting between 1846 and 1861 that

contrasts sharply with nearby rural Mississippi and provides a rare look into the city's counterfeiting underworld.

The dissertation's conclusion argues that the Midwest and Deep South's counterfeiting underworlds during the mid-nineteenth century offers a key place and time through which to study key pieces of American history. By studying counterfeiting and policing together, we also see how municipal police and judicial departments doggedly pursued and punished counterfeiting throughout the two river valleys that contrasts sharply with the crime's de facto acceptance in other parts of the United States. It also reveals how two nineteenth-century cities used their police to regulate crime in nearby towns that further pulled the surrounding hinterlands under the city's influence. Lastly, the efforts of Ohio and Louisiana to deter counterfeiting in the Ohio and Mississippi River Valleys provides evidence of the power of the American state during the nineteenth century.

II. CHAPTER ONE

The Queen City Police and Counterfeiting in the Early 1850s

Beginning in the 1840s and lasting through the Civil War, Hamilton County, Ohio, home to Cincinnati, the state's largest urban center, made an ideal location for the region's counterfeiters. By the 1850s, Cincinnati's banking situation had stabilized and six banks either established their headquarters or a branch in the city.[1] The proliferation of banks in Cincinnati, each issuing its own currency, offered the region's counterfeiters multiple targets for the basis of a counterfeit note. In addition to several banks, Cincinnati also contained a variety of engraving firms, three of which specialized in engraving banknotes.[2] Cincinnati's engraving firms gave the region's counterfeiters access to banknote plates, the equipment and supplies for making banknotes, while also potentially supplying the area's counterfeiters with the most important asset: unemployed engravers who desperately needed work, regardless of whether a firm or a counterfeiting network paid them for their talents.[3] Cincinnati's collection of banking and engraving firms

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[1] Reilly, W.W. and Company's: *Ohio State Business Directory containing the Mercantile Firms, Manufacturing Establishments, Mechanics, Professional Men, Together with the Banking Institutions, Post Offices, and all other Miscellaneous Departments Which Contribute to the Wealth and Prosperity of the State for 1853-1854*, Cincinnati, Morgan and Overend Printers, 1853, pgs. 422-424. From HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015036677246).

[2] Reilly, W.W. and Company's. *Ohio State Business Directory,* pg. 54. From HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015036677246).

[3] In addition to the engraving firms that specialized in making banking notes, Cincinnati also housed two other engraving firms that specialized in metal engraving. Eight wood engraving firms existed alongside the banknote and metal engravers in Cincinnati during the 1850s as well. Lastly, the city housed an engraving firm that specialized in creating seals for documents and a company that manufactured seal presses. See: Reilly, W.W. and Company's: *Ohio State Business Directory containing the Mercantile Firms, Manufacturing Establishments, Mechanics, Professional Men, Together with the Banking Institutions, Post Offices, and all other Miscellaneous Departments Which Contribute to the Wealth and*

provided counterfeiters with crucial access to material and personal missing from the surrounding rural areas that made the city a popular destination for counterfeiters.

While Cincinnati's banks and firms provided counterfeiters with the necessary material and personal to establish their operations, other financial actors, such as the city's exchange brokers, also inadvertently helped camouflage the presence of counterfeit money in the city.[4] In the nineteenth-century United States, exchange brokers bought and sold the various banknotes that circulated across the United States. The presence of brokerage and engraving firms, and banks, when coupled with Cincinnati's function as an important commercial center on the Ohio River, meant that Cincinnati contained banknotes from across the United States. The wide variety of banknotes in Cincinnati facilitated the daily economic transactions that took place along the city's wharf, while the buyers and sellers in the Cincinnati's public markets exchanged banknotes for goods and services.[5] By the mid-nineteenth century, Cincinnati's financial and commercial worlds made the city an ideal location for counterfeiters to set up their operations.

On the surface, Cincinnati's counterfeiting underworld contained similarities to its northeastern counterpart. Important distinctions, however, characterized counterfeiting in

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Prosperity of the State for 1853-1854, Cincinnati, Morgan and Overend Printers, 1853, pgs. 221 and 422-424. From HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015036677246). By the mid-nineteenth century, many engraving firms across the United States absorbed their competitors and pooled their equipment together, thus creating more opportunities for counterfeiters to obtain cast off equipment or to come across an unemployed engraver. The industrialization of engraving also contributed to a higher number of unemployed engravers. See: Mihm, Stephen. *A Nation of Counterfeiters: Capitalists, Con Men, and the Making of the United States*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007, pgs. 284 and 294-295.

[4] Reilly, W.W. and Company's: *Ohio State Business Directory,* pg. 54. From HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015036677246).

[5] Ford, Henry and Ford, Kate B. *History of Cincinnati with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches*. Cleveland: L.A. Williams and Co., 1881, Chapter Thirty Four-Markets.

the Queen City that sheds light on both of the region's legitimate and illicit economies. The structure of Cincinnati's counterfeiting underworld mirrored those found in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. The city contained counterfeiters who created both fake banknotes and forged false coins. Dealers and distributors of counterfeit currency also called Cincinnati home and they spread the fake currency in both Cincinnati and throughout the Ohio River Valley. For the men and women who bought goods with counterfeit money, also known as shovers, Cincinnati's public markets offered myriad opportunities to pass the money undetected into the city's commercial economy. From a structural standpoint, Cincinnati's counterfeiting underworld operated in a similar way as those found across the United States during the nineteenth century.

Cincinnati's counterfeiters, however, are just one part of a larger story about counterfeiting in the Ohio River during the 1840s and 1850s. Equally important to Cincinnati's counterfeiting underworld are the police who made every effort to deter counterfeiting in the Queen City during the mid-nineteenth century. During the late 1840s and 1850s, Cincinnati police largely encountered, and arrested, small groups of counterfeiters who created both fake and coins. Through Cincinnati's arrests of smaller organized groups of counterfeiters, the quirks of the city's counterfeiting underworld emerges, such as a preference for counterfeiting coin at a time when other counterfeiters in the United States prioritized creating counterfeit banknotes. In 1853, however, Cincinnati police arrested and dismantled a group of counterfeiters whose operations spanned the state of Ohio and who largely counterfeited the notes on Ohio's State Stock Banks. Cincinnati's policing of counterfeiting in Cincinnati and throughout the Ohio River Valley shows how the Queen City pulled the surrounding hinterlands into its orbit

and offers a counter-example of how other places in the United States approached counterfeiting, one that sharply contrasts with the de facto acceptance of counterfeiting found in the northeastern United States. Lastly, and more importantly, by focusing on Cincinnati's efforts to police counterfeiting in the region, through its police and other civil servants, those who represented the power of the state, the infrastructural power of Ohio is revealed. Showing Ohio's infrastructural power demonstrates the state's capacity to safeguard the regional markets by deterring counterfeiting and in doing so, it reveals a more nuanced story of the Ohio River borderlands during the mid-nineteenth century.

With headlines that read "Arrest of an Extensive Gang of Counterfeiters," and "Counterfeiting on a Large Scale in Ohio, Implication of Well-Known Citizens," it is easy to arrive at the conclusion that counterfeiters operated in Cincinnati and southern Ohio with impunity.[6] A close examination of Ohio state documents reporting on crime in Ohio during the late 1840s and early 1850s, however, reveals a more nuanced picture. For example, in 1852, the state of Ohio convicted twenty-three people for passing a counterfeit or forged note.[7] The state convicted three people for passing base coin, two people for selling counterfeit money, and three people for possessing counterfeit money.[8] Additionally, Ohio overturned five convictions for attempting to pass counterfeit money

[6] "Arrest of an Extensive Gang of Counterfeiters," *The Daily Union*, July 29, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82003410/1853-07-29/ed-1/seq-3/). "Counterfeiting on a Large Scale in Ohio, Implication of Well-Known Citizens," *Washington Sentinel*, February 18, 1855. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84020104/1855-02-18/ed-1/seq-3/).

[7] Ohio. Attorney General's Office. *Appendix to the Report of the Attorney General*, pgs. 171-172. Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.35112102440593).

[8] Ohio. Attorney General's Office. *Appendix to the Report of the Attorney General*, pg. 173. Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.35112102440593).

due to writ of error, acquitted eleven people for crimes relating to counterfeiting, and refused to bring charges against another eighteen people.[9] The conviction and acquittal rates reveal that while counterfeiting occurred across Ohio in the 1840s and 1850s, it was not a crime that went unpunished, nor was it as prevalent as nineteenth-century newspapers made it appear to be, at least from an official perspective.

The clearest picture of Ohio's counterfeiting underworld emerges in 1853, when the Ohio courts that reported their crime statistics can be combined with reports from Ohio's penitentiary. In 1853, Ohio convicted twenty-five people for crimes relating to counterfeiting.[10] The state convicted for a range of crimes such as passing counterfeit money, selling counterfeit money, having counterfeit money in their possession, and possessing counterfeiting instruments.[11] For 1853, Ohio acquitted eleven people and refused to press charges against another sixteen for various counterfeiting crimes.[12] According to the report, Ohio still waited to indict another twenty-nine people for charges relating to counterfeiting.[13] In addition to the court records for counterfeiting, Ohio's penitentiary reported that it accepted twenty-five convicts into the state penitentiary for counterfeiting.[14] The state's counterfeiting statistics for 1853 indicates that quite a few

[9] Ohio. Attorney General's Office. *Appendix to the Report of the Attorney General*, pgs. 173-178. Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.35112102440593).

[10] Ohio. Attorney General's Office. *Appendix to the Report of the Attorney General*, pgs. 197-198. Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.35112102440593).

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ohio. Attorney General's Office. *Appendix to the Report of the Attorney General*, pgs. 200-203. Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.35112102440593).

[13] Ohio. Attorney General's Office. *Appendix to the Report of the Attorney General,* pgs. 215-216. Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.35112102440593).

[14] Ohio. Attorney General's Office. *Appendix to the Report of the Attorney General*, pg. 485. Obtained

people entangled themselves in Ohio's counterfeiting underworld, but not on the scale of hundreds or thousands that peppered newspaper accounts. Furthermore, the statistics indicate that arrested counterfeiters stood a decent chance of avoiding punishment for their crimes, offering a possible answer as to why Cincinnati police repeatedly arrested the same people on charges relating to counterfeiting during the 1840s and 1850s.

The 1853 penitentiary report also contains a complete list of the total number of crimes committed by the convicts that resided in the state penitentiary that gives an indication of where counterfeiting ranked in regards to other crimes committed across Ohio during the past few years. In 1853, Ohio's penitentiary held thirty-five people for passing counterfeit notes, five people for having counterfeit bank notes in their possession, and two people for keeping counterfeit equipment.[15] The penitentiary also held three people each convicted on a charge of selling counterfeit money, helping pass counterfeit money, and attempting to pass counterfeit money.[16] In addition to the people who passed counterfeit bank notes, the penitentiary contained eight people convicted on charges of passing counterfeit coin.[17] In total, Ohio's penitentiary housed 532 convicts and of those, fifty-three of the convicts received sentences related to counterfeiting. The most popular conviction related to counterfeiting, passing counterfeit notes, meant that twenty-four convicts in the penitentiary were there for that crime. In terms of numbers of people convicted for a single crime, passing counterfeit money was tied for fifth. Ninety-

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from HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.35112102440593).

[15] Ohio. Attorney General's Office. *Appendix to the Report of the Attorney General,* pg. 482. Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.35112102440593).

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

six convicts resided in the prison for grand larceny, seventy-eight for burglary, fifty-one for horse stealing, forty for burglary and larceny, twenty-nine people were there for a second degree murder conviction, and then twenty-four convicts passed counterfeit notes while another twenty-four were in the penitentiary for rape.[18] When counterfeiting related crimes are combined into a single number, one that takes into account those who were in the penitentiary for passing counterfeit money, dealing counterfeit money, and having instruments for counterfeiting, then ten percent of Ohio's penitentiary convicts were there for counterfeiting.

Arrested counterfeiters, however, are just one method to show how frequently the crime occurred in Ohio. State documents for Ohio during the 1840s and 1850s also offer a glimpse into the amount of counterfeit currency that appeared in Ohio's state budget. Evidence from Ohio's General Assembly Reports reveal that for 1849, Ohio's treasury contained about nine hundred dollars worth of counterfeit currency.[19] During the same year, Ohio's Treasury took in two and half million dollars in revenue through taxes, dividends, and the selling of land, thus revealing that counterfeit currency made up a fraction of Ohio's revenue in 1849.[20] It is likely that Ohio unknowingly accepted the money during everyday transactions and only discovered the counterfeit money after the fact, hence its presence in the state documents. Two additional reports also support an

[18] Ohio. Attorney General's Office. *Appendix to the Report of the Attorney General,* pg. 482. Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.35112102440593).

[19] Ohio. General Assembly. "Special Report of the Treasurer of State," *Documents Including Messages and other Communications Made to the Forty Eighth General Assembly of the State of Ohio*, Vol. 14, Part 1, Columbus, 1850, pgs. 130-131.

[20] Ohio. General Assembly. "Special Report of the Treasurer of State," *Documents Including Messages and other Communications Made to the Forty Eighth General Assembly of the State of Ohio*, Vol. 14, Part 1, Columbus, 1850, pgs. 9-10.

argument that counterfeit currency made up a small portion of the currency in Ohio's treasury during the 1840s and 1850s. In 1854 the president of Cincinnati's Commercial Bank reported that of the seventy five thousand dollars in his bank, seven hundred and forty three dollars was counterfeit.[21] In 1859, the report from Ohio's comptroller noted that his office burned and destroyed close to fourteen hundred dollars worth of counterfeit and broken banknotes out of the one hundred and thirty six thousand dollars in Ohio's general revenue fund.[22] The above evidence suggests that while Ohio's encounters with counterfeiting fluctuated from year to year, counterfeit money made up a fractional portion of Ohio's economy. From an official capacity, Ohio's legislatures and appointed officials appeared to accept the presence of counterfeit money as the cost of conducting business. Local police, however, refused to accept counterfeiting as a matter of course and took great pains to combat it wherever they encountered the crime. Ohio's police may have had the better perspective on the dangers of counterfeiting. It is within the realm of possibility that the Ohio General Assembly's records failed to account for all of the high quality counterfeit money the state took in during a given year. After all the paradox for Ohio and for the rest of the United States was how could an individual distinguish between a well-designed counterfeit and a genuine banknote?

Ohio's penitentiary statistics provide a clear view of where counterfeiting ranked amongst Ohio's other crimes and the number of people in prison for counterfeiting.

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[21] Ohio. General Assembly. "Appendix to Annual Report of Auditor of State, Series of Reports, Made on the Ohio State Stock Banks," *Annual Reports Made to the Governor of Ohio, for year 1854*, Columbus, Statesman Steam Press, 1855, pg. 426

[22] Nevins, Richard. "Report of the Comptroller," *Annual Reports Made to the Governor of the State of Ohio*, for year 1859, Part 1, Columbus, 1860, pgs. 427-428

While the convicts in the prison came from all over Ohio, evidences exists that provides a better understanding into an individual county's numbers that detail its convictions and acquittals for crimes relating to counterfeiting. When held in comparison to Ohio's other counties, the county statistics relating to counterfeiting place Hamilton County and Cincinnati as a primary node in the Ohio River counterfeiting underworld. 1852 county reports reveal that of the twenty-three people convicted of passing counterfeit money in 1852, Cincinnati courts convicted eleven of them.[23] Furthermore, for the two years that break down crime in Ohio counties during 1852 and 1853, the majority of counterfeiting crimes occurred in Hamilton County, indicating Cincinnati's status as a counterfeiting center on the Ohio River during the mid-nineteenth century.

Statewide crime statistics reveal counterfeiting's prevalence in Hamilton County, Ohio, and newspaper accounts provide specific details about Cincinnati's counterfeiting underworld that illuminates our understanding of the region's capitalist and underground economies. One key encounter between Cincinnati police and the city's counterfeiters occurred in the summer of 1852, when the police arrested Louis and Sarah Slate (Sleight), John Frisby, Milton Parker and John Collins for counterfeiting.[24] During the trial that followed, Cincinnati's judicial system relied on testimony provided by John Collins in order to obtain convictions against Louis and Sarah Sleight, John Frisby, and Milton Parker. If Collins turned state's witness in an effort to avoid jail time, then the

[23] Ohio. Attorney General's Office. *Appendix to the Report of the Attorney General, Statistics of Crime*, pgs. 171-172.Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.35112102440593).

[24] "Conviction of Counterfeiters," *The Daily Dispatch*, June 30, 1852. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024738/1852-06-30/ed-1/seq-3/).

court quickly dashed his hopes for leniency. After the trial of the other counterfeiters ended, the Cincinnati police arrested Collins and charged him with dealing counterfeit money.[25] The arrests of the Sleights and John Frisby illuminates the interconnectedness of some of Cincinnati's early counterfeiters and how close personal relationships helped forge business connections, even in the underworld. Sarah Slate's maiden name, Frisby made her the sister of John Frisby, which meant that it is possible that the marriage between Louis and Sarah helped solidify a working partnership between Louis and John Frisby. The marriage may have served to strengthen the men's criminal partnership, as the partnership survived its troubles in Cincinnati in 1852 and reemerged four years later, when in 1856, Louis and Sara Sleight and John Frisby partnered with Nelson Driggs to print banknotes in Nauvoo, Illinois.[26] Nine years later, in 1865, the Sleights still worked with Frisby in Nauvoo when the group caught the attention of the Secret Service, who arrested them for counterfeiting.[27] The length of time that the Sleights and Frisby worked together in their counterfeiting partnership, thirteen years, reveals the importance of the dual roles that familiarity and trust played in establishing long-lasting criminal partnerships in the counterfeiting underworld. Furthermore, the Sleights and Frisby's counterfeiting arrangement survived geographical spacing as well, moving from Cincinnati, to Nauvoo, Illinois. The marriage between Lewis and Sarah Sleight, and Sarah's relationship with her brother John Frisby, reveals the roles that familiar

[25] "Conviction of Counterfeiters," *The Daily Dispatch*, June 30, 1852. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024738/1852-06-30/ed-1/seq-3/).

[26] Johnson, David. *Illegal Tender: Counterfeiting and the Secret Service in Nineteenth-Century America*. Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1995, pg. 50

[27] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 351-352

relationships played in forging business partnerships in the region's counterfeiting underworld that survived both time and space.[28] The Sleight's marriage functioned as an inverness of a similar process that occurred within capitalisms' legitimate side that also helped forge business ties across the United States during the nineteenth century.

Additionally, the arrests of the Sleights, John Frisby, and Milton Parker reveals that despite prior convictions, or encounters with law enforcement, some of Cincinnati's counterfeiters found their way back into the region's underworld. As discussed above, the Sleights and Frisby resurfaced in connection to counterfeiting in 1856 and the Secret Service arrested the trio in 1865. The other member of the group, Milton Parker, also returned to counterfeiting following his arrest in 1852. Just a year after Cincinnati's Court of Common Pleas convicted Milton Parker in 1852 for his involvement in the counterfeiting operation, Ohio's governor pardoned Parker in the summer of 1853.[29] Within just a few weeks, Cincinnati police arrested Parker on July 26, 1853 in Cincinnati in connection with a large counterfeiting network, the Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeiters.[30]

Milton Parker, Lewis and Sarah Sleight, and John Frisby provide clear examples of recidivism among counterfeiters along the Ohio River. Other counterfeiters in the region also returned to the crime following their arrests in Ohio. In 1853, when

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[28] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 171

[29] *Documents and other Communications Made to the Fifty-First General Assembly of the State of Ohio*, Vol. 18, Part 1, 1854 pg. 470. Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/osu.32435072553134).

[30] "Great Den of Counterfeiters Broke Up," *Nashville Union and American*, August 3, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85038518/1853-08-03/ed-1/seq-3/).

Cincinnati police arrested Milton Parker, they also arrested William McGreary and Lewis Dolman, who had also returned to counterfeiting following previous encounters with local police.[31] Other counterfeiters in Cincinnati returned to the city's counterfeiting underworld and repeatedly clashed with Cincinnati's police. Eleven years after Cincinnati police arrested James Fields for counterfeiting in 1848, the police once again arrested Fields, this time at Rising Sun, Indiana for counterfeiting gold dollars and banknotes.[32] In 1859 Cincinnati police arrested John Johnson for passing counterfeit half-dollars.[33] While Johnson somehow managed to avoid a lengthy prison sentence, he failed to stay away from the counterfeiting underworld and four months later, police once again arrested Johnson for counterfeiting.[34] Following Johnson's second arrest, he appeared to move to Ohio's Butler County, where local authorities once again arrested Johnson and sent him to prison. Less than two years later, however, Johnson escaped the prison and headed to Wheeling Virginia where he attempted to hideout with his family. Local authorities recaptured Johnson shortly after his arrival, before he returned to

[31] For the arrest of William McGreary in 1851 in Cleveland, see: "Arrest of Counterfeiters at Cleveland, Ohio," *The New York Herald*, August 4, 1851. For Lewis Dolman's arrest see: "Forty Thousand Dollars Counterfeit Money," *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, August 6, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov).

[32] Dayton Daily Empire, July, 27, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85026002/1859-07-27/ed-1/seq-1/).

[33] "Counterfeiters Arrested," Cleveland Morning Leader, April 27, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83035143/1859-04-27/ed-1/seq-2/).

[34] "Arrests of Counterfeiters," Richmond Enquirer, August 19, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024735/1859-08-19/ed-1/seq-2/).

counterfeiting, and escorted him back to prison.[35] On the surface, it appears that Cincinnati's counterfeiters willfully subverted the authority of the state and continued to evade punishment for their crimes. Yet, Cincinnati police continued to arrest the counterfeiters, revealing their willingness to try and protect the city's economic world from counterfeiting.

Cincinnati's coin forgers posed one such threat to the city's economic world and the threads of policing, recidivism, and counterfeiting link together in an 1848 case in which Cincinnati police learned that a "money manufactury" operated along Cincinnati's Miami Canal.[36] The Cincinnati police travelled to a house on Cincinnati's Baum Street, surrounded the residence, and then entered the counterfeiting site. The police arrested a man named James Fields, searched the property for evidence of counterfeiting, and found dies, crucibles, and chemicals used to create counterfeit money. The police also found two hundred dollars worth of counterfeit money in addition to finding counterfeit American quarter and half-dollar coins, counterfeit Spanish quarters, and counterfeit franc pieces. Fields used the dies, chemicals, and crucibles obtained by police to create both fake coins and counterfeit banknotes. As such, the confiscated tools provide evidence that Fields created high quality counterfeit notes and coins that could pass undetected into Cincinnati's commercial economy. At least one newspaper speculated on the scope of Fields' operations by comparing it to the United States Mint found at

[35] "Arrest of a Suspected Counterfeiter," Daily Intelligencer, March 1, 1861. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026845/1861-03-01/ed-1/seq-3/).

[36] "Important Arrest," *The New York Herald*, October 8, 1848. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1848-10-08/ed-1/seq-4/).

Dahlonega, Georgia.[37] Fields' removal from Cincinnati's counterfeiting underworld eliminated a major source of counterfeit currency from the city that in turn shows how Cincinnati's police provided the state of Ohio with a tool to regulate the integrity of its business transactions for the public's welfare.

Fields' arrest for counterfeiting in 1848 reveals that Cincinnati's commercial economy contained a demand for specie that continued into 1852, when police arrested William Simmons, Francis Bailey, and Pauline Mitchell, Bailey's wife, for counterfeiting coin with the intent to sell. Their arrests provide further evidence of Cincinnati's appetite for counterfeit specie and shows that a sizable market for counterfeit coins still existed in Cincinnati's underground economy in the 1850s.[38] In 1852, Cincinnati police arrested Francis Bailey as the coiner poured liquid metal into coin molds. The officers also arrested Pauline Mitchell, Bailey's wife, who confessed that she assisted Bailey in making the counterfeit coin. After they removed Bailey and Mitchell from the scene, the police searched the room and found evidence of a sizable counterfeiting operation.[39] Perhaps in recognition of the nation's patchwork laws against counterfeiting, and in an effort to avoid punishment, Bailey argued that it was legal to create counterfeit coin as long as he did not attempt to pass the coins off as genuine. The Cincinnati police failed to

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[37] "Important Arrest," *The New York Herald*, October 8, 1848. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1848-10-08/ed-1/seq-4/).

[38] David Johnson provides a potential explanation for the prevalence of coiners in Cincinnati. Johnson argues that "coin manufacturing was easy." A coiner "made a mold from a genuine coin, poured melted base alloy into the mold, and filed the rough edges of the coin, which was then plated using a battery." According to Johnson, materials for coining did not cost very much, a partner was not needed, and a skilled coiner could make "fifty to several hundred dollars" a week. The only barrier to coining appeared to be the knowledge needed regarding plating techniques. See: Johnson, David R. *Illegal Tender*, pg. 49

[39] "Counterfeiters Arrested in Cincinnati," The New York Herald, July 25, 1852, no. 7,196, pg. 3

accept Bailey's argument and escorted the counterfeiter to the city jail. Following Bailey's arrest, the police also arrested William Simmons at one of Cincinnati's hotels, after Bailey revealed to the Cincinnati officers that he planned to sell the coins to Simmons.[40] Through Bailey, Mitchell, and Simmons' arrests, the Cincinnati police removed two coin forgers and a counterfeiter dealer and distributor from Cincinnati's counterfeiting underworld, further underscoring the police's role in safeguarding Cincinnati's commercial economy from counterfeiting.

The trio's arrests, however, also provides a glimpse into the region's market rate for counterfeit coins while highlighting the unforgiving nature of gambling on turning state's witness in an attempt to secure a lighter prison sentence. During their examination, Francis Bailey and Pauline Mitchell provided the courtroom with evidence against William Simmons. The two counterfeiters claimed that Simmons approached Bailey with a proposal to create counterfeit dimes and Simmons would pay Bailey one genuine dollar for every three dollars worth of counterfeits. Likely in an effort to imply that they would not have counterfeited the coins without Simmons, both Bailey and Mitchell claimed that Simmons went to great lengths to entice Bailey into forging the counterfeit coins. They claimed that Simmons informed Bailey that there was little danger of being caught as he made the counterfeit coin and that the real risk lay with the one who attempted to pass the counterfeit coins into circulation.[41] Bailey and Mitchell's efforts to downplay their roles in the coining venture failed as the court kept the two for a trial.

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[40] "Counterfeiters Arrested in Cincinnati," The New York Herald, July 25, 1852, no. 7,196, pg. 3

[41] "Counterfeiters Arrested in Cincinnati," *The New York Herald*, July 25, 1852. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov).

The judge set their bond at one thousand dollars apiece and when they failed to post bail, the court committed the two to confinement until their trial. Despite Simmons' prominent, and alleged, role as the instigator who approached Bailey with the request to counterfeit the coins, the court set Simmons' bail at five hundred dollars.[42]

The arrests of James Fields in 1848 and William Simmons, Francis Bailey, and Pauline Mitchell in 1852, provides clear evidence of the prevalence of counterfeit coin in Ohio's counterfeiting underworld, indicating that it differed from the counterfeiting underworlds found along the United States' east coast by the 1850s. Historically, coin counterfeiters in the United States, such as those who operated in the 1820s, found a ready market for their products as many Americans distrusted the paper money issued by their local banks.[43] By the 1850s, however, the banking situation in the United States largely stabilized, with several state banks having been in operation for a few decades.[44] The stabilization of U.S. banks and their currencies meant that counterfeit banknotes made for attractive targets for counterfeiting and by the 1850s, the counterfeiting markets in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia primarily dealt in counterfeit bank notes and not fake coins.[45] In the counterfeiting underworlds of the nation's financial centers, the shovers could pass counterfeit banknotes with less chance of detection than they could

[42] "Counterfeiters Arrested in Cincinnati," *The New York Herald*, July 25, 1852. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov).

[43] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 170 and Murphy. *Other People's Money*, pg. 106

[44] For example, Ohio chartered the Commercial Bank and the Franklin Bank in the 1830s, and both banks still existed in Cincinnati twenty years later. See: Ford, Henry and Ford, Kate B. *History of Cincinnati with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches*. Cleveland: L.A. Williams and Co., 1881, pgs. 359-360

[45] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pgs. 216-220

fake coins, and in higher amounts too.[46] Questions of profit also influenced the New England dealers of counterfeit money who could package and sell counterfeit notes at a higher volume than they could counterfeit coins. Perhaps the more established commercial worlds of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia felt at ease dealing with counterfeit banknotes, while the nation's river economies in the Midwest and South preferred the perception of economic stability represented in hard specie. According to Francis Bailey's testimony, his buyer, William Simmons, expected to find a ready market for the forged coins.[47] The counterfeiter's decisions to forge counterfeit coin shows that a fairly robust market for counterfeit specie still existed in Cincinnati by 1852.

Further evidence revealing the demand for specie in Cincinnati, regardless of its origin, can be seen in Fields and Lowell's coining operation from 1848. When Cincinnati police arrested Fields and Lowell, they found counterfeit Spanish and franc coins, a decision that on the surface seems odd. During the nineteenth century, however, specie availability fluctuated wildly across the United States, which resulted in its high demand across the nation. One such shortage and demand occurred during the presidency of

[46] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pgs. 212-235

[47] Many factors contributed to the price of a counterfeit banknote. If a person wanted to buy a counterfeit note on a reputable bank, then that note cost more. If they wanted to buy a fake note made of genuine bank paper, then that too added to the note's cost. The denomination of a counterfeit note also affected its sale price. But when compared to other market exchange rates for counterfeit banknotes, then Bailey appeared to make less profit for more work. For example, during the summer of 1853, Cincinnati police arrested a few counterfeiters who provide insight into the city's counterfeit market. In July 1853, William Chapman wanted to buy two hundred dollars worth of counterfeit notes from Joseph Damuer. Damuer worked as a counterfeit note dealer in Cincinnati and Chapman wanted counterfeit ones and fives on the Northern Bank of Kentucky. Chapman offered to pay Damuer twenty cents on the dollar. Source: "Steamboat and River News," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, July 29, 1853, vol. 6, no. 124, pg. 2. Two months later, Mathew Cummins, a member of the Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeiting network, offered to sell Paxton, an undercover Cincinnati police officer, five hundred dollars in counterfeit notes at twenty-five cents on the dollar. Source: "Another Haul of Cincinnati Counterfeiters," *The New York Herald*, September 20, 1853, no. 7,570, pg. 8. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov).

Andrew Jackson in 1836, when the government required that land purchased from the United States could only be paid for in gold or silver, which meant that specie largely disappeared from circulation and into the government treasury.[48] In order to compensate for the lack of specie in their local economies, people across the United States minted cheap coins and tokens and used them conduct their business.[49] By the 1850s, in addition to fractional coins and tokens, foreign coins also made up a large portion of the nation's hard money, which explains Fields' decision to counterfeit franc coins in 1848 that in turn helped meet Cincinnati's demand for specie.[50]

Despite the additional scrutiny that accompanied the payment for goods with specie, if Cincinnati's coin counterfeiters created high quality counterfeit coins, then they stood a good chance of passing undetected in Cincinnati's local economy. Unlike the counterfeit banknote detectors that provided their owners with detailed descriptions about how to differentiate counterfeit banknotes from their genuine counterparts, counterfeit coin detectors supplied their users with far less information about forged coins, making them more difficult to use. A glance at *Dye's Gold and Silver Coin Chart Manual*, issued in 1851, revels that it only contained a facsimile of the coin and lacked any further information that might aid in the detection of counterfeit coins such as a coin's weight, its value at full weight, etc.[51] Three years later, the 1854 edition of *Dye's Gold and Silver*

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[48] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 191

[49] Ibid.

[50] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 245

[51] Dye, John S.: *Dye's Gold and Silver Coin Chart Manual Containing Fac-Similes of Nearly 900 Coins*, New York and Cincinnati, 1851, pg. 1. Obtained from the Internet Archive (http://archive.org/details/dyesgoldsilverco0000dyej_n8r1).

Coin Chart Manual still lacked descriptive information about the coins found within its pages.[52] If Cincinnati's storeowners wanted a coin chart manual that provided more information in their efforts to detect counterfeit coins, then turned to *Paddock's Gold and Silver Coin Chart Manual*. In addition to providing its users with facsimiles of coins issued in the United and from countries across the world, *Paddock's Gold and Silver Coin Chart Manual* listed a coin's expected weight, fineness, and value per weight.[53] The expected weight of coin and its value per weight helped people determine if a coin was merely gold or silver on the outside, while filled with a lesser metal on the inside. Paddock's *Manual* also instructed its readers on how to assess a coins value after it had been clipped or possibly cut to make change in an earlier transaction.[54] If an owner of a coin manual wished to consult its imagery in an effort to tell the difference between a counterfeit and genuine coin at a glance, like one could do with a counterfeit banknote detector, then they were in trouble. If a business owner recognized too late that they now possessed counterfeit coins, however, they could still try and pass them to an unsuspecting customer.[55]

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[52] Dye, John S.: *Dye's Gold and Silver Coin Chart Manual Containing Fac-Similes of Nearly 900 Coins*, New York and Cincinnati, 1851, pg. 1. Obtained from the Internet Archive (http://archive.org/details/dyesgoldsilverco0000dyej_n8r1).

[53] Paddock, William: *Paddock's Gold and Silver Coin Chart Manual, Containing Fac-Similies of all the Various Pieces of Ancient and Modern Times*, Cincinnati, 1850?, pg. 2. Obtained from the Internet Archive (http://archive.org/details/paddocksgoldsilv0000padd).

[54] Ibid.

[55] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 233

In an effort to further increase the possibility of successfully passing counterfeit coins, and demonstrating their technical expertise, Cincinnati's counterfeiters built batteries that galvanized their coins.[56] When Cincinnati police arrested Fields in 1848, they uncovered a battery used to galvanize their coins.[57] In 1853, Cincinnati police searched a counterfeiter's home and found a galvanic battery for coining on the property.[58] In 1857, Cincinnati police arrested George Williams, who worked as a butcher across the Ohio River in Newport, Kentucky, a travelling salesman named John Amos who lived in Cincinnati, a carpenter named Crail, and a farmer named McCormick who owned a farm near Cincinnati, for counterfeiting various denominations of coin.[59] When the police searched George Williams' property in Newport, they found the equipment needed to make counterfeit coins such as dies, molds, and coins in various

[56] It is difficult to determine the kinds of batteries Cincinnati counterfeiters used to galvanize their counterfeit coins. Nineteenth-century newspapers in the United States typically used the term "galvanic" to describe any kind of battery found by the police at counterfeit production centers. Newspapers also used the term "galvanic" as a general descriptor of batteries due to nineteenth-century batteries existing in a wide array of designs that consisted of a variety of material. For a look into the variety of galvanic batteries that existed in the United States during the antebellum period see Cahoon, N. Corey and Heise, George W. *The Primary Battery: Vol. 1*. (John Wiley and Sons, Inc. 1971). For an extensive examination of the history of the battery in both the United States and Europe see: Schlesinger, Henry: *The Battery: How Portable Power Sparked a Technological Revolution*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2010 and Cahoon, N. Corey and Heise, George W.: *The Primary Battery: Vol. 1*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc. 1971. The antebellum battery race resulted in hundreds of different variant batteries, each with its own level of efficiency and power output. In all likelihood, Cincinnati provided counterfeiters with accessibility to many of the base ingredients needed to create a basic battery.

[57] "Important Arrest," *The New York Herald*, October 8, 1848. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1848-10-08/ed-1/seq-4/).

[58] "Great Den of Counterfeiters Broke Up," *Nashville Union and American*, August 3, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85038518/1853-08-03/ed-1/seq-3/).

[59] "Counterfeiters Arrested at Cincinnati," Evening Star, November 23, 1857. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site ((https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1857-11-23/ed-1/seq-2/)

stages of production. The police also uncovered a galvanic battery among Williams' counterfeiting equipment.[60] Barely two months later, in January 1858, the Cincinnati police raided the Kentucky Hotel in Cincinnati and arrested its proprietor, a man named Jonathan Ketchum. The police found between two to three thousand dollars worth of counterfeit notes, several counterfeit coins, and a galvanic battery.[61]

The Cincinnati counterfeiters who used batteries in their operations underscores the technical complexity of the counterfeiting operations found in Cincinnati while also reinforcing that several counterfeiters, not just the distributors and shovers, established counterfeiting operations near the Upper South. Cincinnati's capacity as the major commercial center on the Ohio River provided the region's counterfeiters with access to the components needed to create a battery and access to the other tools needed to forge coins. Rural counterfeiters likely found it difficult to obtain the material needed to make a battery, thus providing one possible explanation as to why counterfeiters tended to operate in Cincinnati and Hamilton County. Similar to other counterfeiters who exploited Cincinnati's banking infrastructure, the banks, the engravers, and note brokers, counterfeiters who specialized in coin likely exploited the city's expansive commercial economy to obtain their materials. Finally, just like the counterfeiters who marked their notes so that they appeared well worn which meant that someone had accepted them in a past transaction, those who counterfeited coin galvanized their creations to hide imperfections.

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[60] "Great Haul of Counterfeiters," *Holmes County Republican*, November 26, 1857. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84028820/1857-11-26/ed-1/seq-3/)

[61] *Daily Nashville Patriot*, January 16, 1858. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84028820/1857-11-26/ed-1/seq-3/).

Cincinnati's arrests of the above coin counterfeiters also points to one of the ways that Cincinnati's police differed from other nineteenth-century municipal police departments in the late 1840s and 1850s. Many other nineteenth-century law enforcement agencies that relied on paying their officers through fees based on the return of stolen property meant that their officers quickly moved on from one arrest in order to make another arrest, and more money, as fast as possible.[62] In the late 1840s, prior to the sweeping changes that provided Ohio police with a higher salary and more power, Cincinnati police, at least in regards to counterfeiting, devoted significant time towards crime detection, a time consuming process that resulted in no monetary reward to supplement an officer's income. Cincinnati police arrested Fields and then spent two days looking for his partner in the city before they arrested him near the Ohio River. In regards to George Williams, the Cincinnati police arrested him at his stall in the Cincinnati market place and discovered that his wife kept the counterfeit money at their stand.[63] The police were not content with the arrests of the Williams' and they travelled across the Ohio River to their farm in Newport, Kentucky and obtained additional evidence of their guilt in the form of molds, metal bars, the battery, and resin used to rough up the coins to indicate past usage.[64] Other nineteenth police departments that had yet to shift from the fee system to a salaried policeman would have likely remained content with the arrest of either James Fields or George Williams without discovering the rest of the counterfeit

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[62] Richardson, James F. *Urban Police in the United States*. New York: Kennikat Press, 1974, pg. 32

[63] "Great Haul of Counterfeiters," *Holmes County Republican*, November 26, 1857. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84028820/1857-11-26/ed-1/seq-3/)

[64] Ibid.

network and/or important evidence of their guilt.[65] Even if clues and evidence remained to indicate that a larger counterfeiting organization existed, many nineteenth-century police departments found little motive, and most importantly little profit, in pursuing well organized, and technically sophisticated criminal enterprises like counterfeiting.[66] In regards to counterfeiting, Cincinnati's police expended lengthy time and effort towards exhausting all its leads about a counterfeiting operation in an effort to remove its players from counterfeiting that in turn inflicted maximum impact on the city's underworld.

A key strategy of the Cincinnati police's efforts to crack the city's counterfeiting underworld involved the police visiting the nearby rural towns and arresting their counterfeiters, an action that also provided the city with an additional method, other than commercial, through which to pull the surrounding areas into its orbit. In 1851, Cincinnati police travelled across southern Ohio to the town of West Union in pursuit of a group of counterfeiters. At West Union, the police arrested two people for counterfeiting and found four thousand dollars in counterfeit notes and the bank plates to create counterfeit notes on the State Stock Bank of Ohio and the Northern Bank of Kentucky.[67] In 1852, the police travelled north to Mt. Caramel, Ohio to arrest Robert Neal, who used his steel engraving and printing shop to create counterfeit money on the

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[65] A point made in David Johnson's book *Policing the Urban Underworld*. Johnson argues that a variety of factors, such as the American beliefs in individual freedom and decentralized authority represented by the prevailing attitude of republicanism coupled with the fear of a centralized, and powerful, police force, stunted the growth of nineteenth century law enforcement. See: Johnson, David. *Policing the Urban Underworld: The Impact of Crime on the Development of the American Police, 1800-1887*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pgs. 9 and 48.

[66] Johnson. *Policing the Urban Underworld*, pg. 43

[67] "Counterfeiters," *The Portsmouth Inquirer*, September 1, 1851. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85026203/1851-09-01/ed-1/seq-2/).

State Bank of Ohio, the State Bank of Indiana, and the Northern Bank of Kentucky.[68] While Neal escaped, the officers put an end to a counterfeiting operation that allegedly printed the majority of the fake bills on the State Banks of Ohio and Indiana and the Northern Bank of Kentucky found along the Ohio River during the past two years.[69] In 1853, Cincinnati police visited Darrtown and Hamilton, Ohio, located just north of the city and arrested a group of counterfeit distributors who dealt in counterfeit money on the Ohio State Stock Bank.[70] In 1857, Cincinnati police arrested a counterfeiter named McCormick, who worked with John Amous and the coiner George Williams, in the rural town of Miamitown, Ohio.[71]

Cincinnati police, however, also crossed the Ohio River to arrest counterfeiters in nearby northern Kentucky that reveals one of the ways the city's influence penetrated the Ohio River and nearby state boundaries. In 1852 Cincinnati and Covington police arrested Rinaldo Baxter and found thousands of dollars worth of counterfeit money in his possession.[72] In 1853, Cincinnati police arrested James Jones in Covington and found

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[68] "Extensive Counterfeiting Operations," *Megis County Telegraph*, February 10, 1852. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85038183/1852-02-10/ed-1/seq-2/).

[69] Ibid.

[70] "Another Haul of Cincinnati Counterfeiters," *The New York Herald*, September 20, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1853-09-20/ed-1/seq-8/).

[71] "Great Haul of Counterfeiters," *Holmes County Republican*, November 26, 1857. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84028820/1857-11-26/ed-1/seq-3/).

[72] "The Counterfeiter's Arrest," *Washington Sentinel*, November 9, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84020104/1853-11-09/ed-1/seq-3/).

counterfeit tools and fifteen hundred dollars in counterfeit money in his possession.[73] During the same year, the Cincinnati police visited the Washington House in Covington and arrested George Kingsley for counterfeiting. The police found thousands of dollars in counterfeit money in Kingsley's room.[74] At the end of 1853, Cincinnati police and sheriffs from Campbell and Kenton Counties, which contain the towns of Newport and Covington respectively, travelled to the small town of California, Kentucky on the Ohio River where they arrested two men for counterfeiting. The officers escorted the men from California to Newport, Kentucky where the mayor committed the two shovers to jail in order to await future examination.[75] Finally, recall that Cincinnati police visited the farm of George Williams in Newport and obtained several pieces of evidence regarding his role as a counterfeiter of coin.[76] The several examples of Cincinnati both policing northern Kentucky and also receiving aid from Kentucky's law enforcement, reveals one of the unknown ways that Cincinnati connected with nearby slaveholding Kentucky, demonstrating the interconnectedness between the nation's free and slave states that often disappears when the Ohio River is framed through a sectional perspective. Lastly, the examples provide evidence that Kentucky appeared to be a willing participant in

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[73] *The Daily Dispatch*, September 16, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024738/1853-09-16/ed-1/seq-1/).

[74] "Important Arrest," *Des Moines Courier*, September 29, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86081965/1853-09-29/ed-1/seq-2/).

[75] "Counterfeiters Arrested," *The New York Herald*, December 4, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov).

[76] "Great Haul of Counterfeiters," *Holmes County Republican*, November 26, 1857. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84028820/1857-11-26/ed-1/seq-3/)

Cincinnati's efforts to ride counterfeiting within its borders, thereby revealing how Ohio law enforcement acted to regulate northern Kentucky's local commerce.

Cincinnati's police frequently travelled to the small towns that ringed the city as they provided the region's counterfeiters with several advantages. First, counterfeiters across the United States often sought to establish pieces of their operations in out of the way places not visited by local law enforcement that also offered counterfeiters a kind of anonymity.[77] Second, in a contrast to Cincinnati's municipal police, many small-town law enforcement agencies lacked the resources, manpower, and desire to fight counterfeiting in their towns.[78] As long as the counterfeiters spread their money elsewhere, or paid their bonds to their local government following their arrests, then local law enforcement often left the counterfeiters alone.[79] Finally, many small towns lacked the paper currency needed to facilitate the economic transactions necessary to the capitalist market system and counterfeiters provided towns with a product that was much in demand.[80] Cincinnati police, however, negated the above advantages when they travelled to the small towns and arrested their counterfeiters. Unlike the small New England towns, that gratefully accepted counterfeiters in their midst because they provided highly sought after currency, the small towns that ringed Cincinnati provided no

[77] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 165

[78] Johnson. *Illegal Tender*, pg. 36

[79] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 279

[80] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pgs. 159-160

resistance to the police when they arrested and then removed the counterfeiters who operated within their jurisdiction.[81]

The above examples also illustrate the seriousness with which Cincinnati police pursed counterfeiters throughout the Ohio River Valley in an effort to deter counterfeiting in the region. Unlike rural New England police that were overwhelmed by the counterfeiting gangs who operated in their midst, Cincinnati's policing of counterfeiting suggests that the New England model of policing and counterfeiting does not apply to Cincinnati or the small towns that ringed the city during the 1840s and 1850s.[82] Furthermore, during the early 1850s, Cincinnati police started travelling beyond Ohio to dismantle pieces of the region's counterfeiting underworld. In 1853, the police travelled to New Brighton, Pennsylvania, located on the state's border with Ohio, to obtain banknote plates that counterfeited the notes of the Ohio State Stock Bank.[83] When Robert Neal escaped the Cincinnati police from Mount Caramel in 1852 they followed his trail to New York City where they learned that he boarded a ship bound for Europe.[84] The police's pursuit of Neal to New York and their capture of banknote plates in Pennsylvania reveals that Cincinnati police started travelling significant distances to arrest counterfeiters, a trend that increased during the late 1850s.

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[81] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pgs. 158-159

[82] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 159

[83] *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, December 15, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86092535/1853-12-15/ed-1/seq-2/).

[84] "Extensive Counterfeiting Operations," *Megis County Telegraph*, February 10, 1852. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85038183/1852-02-10/ed-1/seq-2/).

Cincinnati's resolve in pursuing and arresting counterfeiters in the early 1850s culminated in 1853, when they encountered the Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeiters, a group whose members and operations spanned the state of Ohio. The Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeiters created high-quality counterfeit notes and introduced a high volume of fake currency into Ohio's local economy during 1853. The consequences of the volume and quality of the counterfeit currency forced the state of Ohio to alter the designs of the bank's bills. Finally, the Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeiting network shows that Cincinnati's relationship with the nearby Covington police was more reciprocal than it first appeared. During the course of the arrests, Covington police aided Cincinnati by arresting members of the network in Cleveland and aiding in the recovery of the stolen bank plates in Pennsylvania.

It is unclear exactly how Cincinnati police learned about the Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeiter's operations in the city, but on July 26, 1853 a group of Cincinnati police boarded an omnibus and travelled to the residence of a man named Samuel Towner.[85] When the police arrived, they captured and arrested Samuel Towner, Milton Parker, Lewis Dolman, Quincey Hurschley, and William H. McGreary.[86] When the police searched Towner's property, they obtained evidence of a large-scale counterfeiting network and distribution center, one that used Cincinnati as a focal point to disperse counterfeit money into southern Ohio. During their search, Cincinnati police found between thirty to forty thousand dollars worth of counterfeit bills hidden on the property.

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[85] "Important News-Arrest of a Gang of Counterfeiters," *Loudon Free Press*, August 12, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86053481/1853-08-12/ed-1/seq-2/).

[86] Ibid.

The counterfeit money consisted of ones, threes and fives on the Dayton branch of the State Stock Bank of Ohio along with various denominations of counterfeit money. The police also found counterfeit coins and the materials needed to make them, the stamps needed to alter the bank's bills, parts of presses, and other counterfeiting equipment, in a stable attached to the house.[87] They discovered counterfeit notes signed, cut, and bundled into packages, each of which contained one thousand dollars worth of counterfeit notes, likely meant for distribution into the city.[88]

By 1853, Cincinnati police discovered the components of a well-organized gang of counterfeiters whose operations spanned the state of Ohio. Subsequent newspaper accounts, judicial records, and pardon applications reveal that Samuel Towner and William McGreary sold the counterfeit money to the city's shovers, while Lewis Dolman passed the money into Cincinnati's commercial economy. Another man arrested at Towner's home, Milton Parker, appeared to be one of the primary counterfeiters of the gang who allegedly forged the signatures of the bank's notes.[89] In order to acquire the bank note plates, William Kelly, the other suspected leader and counterfeiter of the gang, convinced a Cincinnati engraver named Ransel Lamb to steal the Ohio State Stock bank

[87] "Important News-Arrest of a Gang of Counterfeiters," *Loudon Free Press*, August 12, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86053481/1853-08-12/ed-1/seq-2/).

[88] "Great Den of Counterfeiters Broke Up-An Arrest of the Counterfeiters," *Nashville Union and American*, August 3, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85038518/1853-08-03/ed-1/seq-3/).

[89] "State Stock Bank Forgeries-Arrest of One of the Supposed Forgers," *The New York Herald*, August 29, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1853-08-29/ed-1/seq-2/).

plates from his place of employment.[90] For the past twelve years, Lamb worked as an engraver and foreman at Rawdon, Wright, Hatch, and Edison, an engraving firm located in Cincinnati responsible for engraving and printing the banknotes of the Ohio State Stock Banks.[91] After meeting with Kelly, Lamb agreed to his offer, stole the bank plates from the engraving firm, and sold them to the gang.[92] Over the course of their investigation, the auditor of the state's office and the Cincinnati police learned of Lamb's involvement in the counterfeiting network and arrested the engraver, who turned state's witness to provide information about the counterfeiters.[93] Through the arrests of the above counterfeiters, Cincinnati police arrested the counterfeiters and engravers, the distributors, and the shovers of counterfeit money. In other words, they captured people

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[90] Ohio. General Assembly. *Documents Including Messages and other Communications made to the Governor and General Assembly of the State of Ohio, Report on Pardons*. Columbus: Statesman Steam Press, 1856 pgs. 73-74. Although an interesting story emerges years later, in 1861, in which one newspaper speculated that Sarah Sleight, wife of Lewis Sleight, and one of Parker's former accomplices, was the person who convinced Ransel Lamb to aid the counterfeiters. See: "Lewis Slate Again in Limbo," *Cincinnati Daily Press*, September 30, 1861. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84028745/1861-09-30/ed-1/seq-3/)

[91] Ohio. General Assembly. *Documents, Including Messages and Other Communications Made to the Fifty-First General Assembly of the State of Ohio*, vol. 18, Part 1. Columbus: Osgood, Blake, and Knapp Printers, 1854, pg. 319

[92] But why would an accomplished engraver like Lamb agree to sell the plates to Parker in the first place? An article found in the *Cincinnati Commercial* provides a possible clue to the answer. Following Lamb's arrest, the paper noted that a few months ago, Lamb recently left the engraving firm and visited New York City. When Lamb returned to Cincinnati, he deposited a "considerable sum of money" in a Cincinnati bank. The article appears to insinuate that while in New York City, an unknown party paid Lamb to obtain the bank note plates and sell them to Milton Parker. If true, Lamb provides evidence that someone, or a group of people, financed the Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeiters from New York City. "State Stock Bank Forgeries-Arrest of One of the Supposed Forgers," *The New York Herald*, August 29, 1853, vol. 7553, pg. 2

[93] "State Stock Bank Forgeries-Arrest of One of the Supposed Forgers," *The New York Herald*, August 29, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1853-08-29/ed-1/seq-2/). Ohio. General Assembly. *Documents, Including Messages and Other Communications Made to the Fifty-First General Assembly of the State of Ohio*, vol. 18, Part 1. Columbus: Osgood, Blake, and Knapp Printers, 1854, pg. 319

who operated at all levels of a counterfeiting operation, putting a permanent end to this group's counterfeit activities.

Despite, the above arrests, Cincinnati police continued searching the surrounding region for the distributors of the counterfeit money, in doing so they continued fortifying the links between Cincinnati's urban center and its rural hinterlands. Following the arrests of Ransel Lamb and the counterfeiters at Towner's home, Cincinnati police sent Edward Paxton undercover to purchase notes from suspected counterfeit dealers. During the course of his undercover activities, Paxton purchased counterfeit notes from thirteen different sources throughout southern Ohio in "retired, out of the way places."[94] Through Paxton's efforts, police arrested Moses Mann, Thomas McGehan, and Samuel Stoddard in Hamilton, a small town north of Cincinnati. The Cincinnati police also arrested William Marshall, a "man of wealth," in the village of Darrtown, located a few miles north of Hamilton.[95] When police searched Marshall's home, they found counterfeit money on the Ohio State Stock Bank, the same counterfeit bills found at Samuel Towner's residence in Cincinnati. Through their efforts to arrest the dealers of the Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeit money, Cincinnati police travelled to the small towns that ringed the city and arrested the men. The police's efforts provide an additional way, other than economic and commercial, in which the urban center of Cincinnati fostered links with the surrounding towns that in effect placed these towns under the city's control.

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[94] "Another Haul of Cincinnati Counterfeiters," *The New York Herald*, September 20, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1853-09-20/ed-1/seq-8/).

[95] Ibid.

The Cincinnati police's resolve towards putting an end to the counterfeiting network impacted more than the small towns in Ohio that ringed the city, it also drew nearby Covington, Kentucky under the city's reach as well. In September 1853, the two police departments arrested James Jones and George Kingsley in Covington. The police arrested Jones and found counterfeit tools and fifteen hundred dollars in counterfeit notes on the Ohio State Bank in his possession.[96] According to subsequent accounts, one newspaper noted that Jones worked as an "accomplished" pressman who helped counterfeit the designs of the Ohio State Stock Bank notes.[97] According to the *Cincinnati Gazette*, Cincinnati and Covington police arrested George Kingsley in Covington after the landlord of the Washington House informed the police that he was uneasy about the number of people visiting Kingsley in his room. When the Covington police arrived at Kingsley's room, they searched the room they found three thousand dollars in counterfeit fifty-dollar bills on the Ripley branch of the Ohio State Stock Bank.[98] When Cincinnati police arrested suspected counterfeiters across the Ohio River in Covington, it suggests that the city's police could claim jurisdiction in Covington, revealing the porousness of the border between Ohio and Kentucky.[99] Cincinnati and Covington's combined efforts

[96] *The Daily Dispatch*, September 16, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024738/1853-09-16/ed-1/seq-1/).

[97] Ibid.

[98] "Important Arrest," *Des Moines Courier*, September 29, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86081965/1853-09-29/ed-1/seq-2/).

[99] Another potential reason for their cooperation derived from Kentucky's jurisdiction over the Ohio River. If Ohio police captured a counterfeiter on the Ohio River, then they would likely need to appeal to Kentucky's police if they wanted to try the criminal in Ohio rather than Kentucky. In 1824, Kentucky's legislature wanted to capitalize on the economic importance of the Ohio River. Kentucky's courts argued that since Virginia ceded only the land north of the river, then the river still lay within Kentucky's jurisdiction. Kentucky's claim of jurisdiction over the Ohio River also resulted from the state's efforts to

to arrest the Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeiting network suggests that the two police departments viewed the problem as one that went beyond state borders and pooled their resources together to fight the crime.

The arrests of Jones and Kingsley led Cincinnati and Covington police to the final member of the Ohio State Stock Banking network, a man named Rinaldo Baxter who knew the location of the bank plates used to create the counterfeit notes. Many nineteenth-century police departments relied on informants to provide them with information about the underworld in exchange for money or immunity, and it is possible that George Kingsley or James Jones attempted such a strategy.[100] In 1861, however, James Jones' pardon application fails to mention if Jones provided information to the state, a clarification that appears in the pardon applications of Ransel Lamb and Rinaldo Baxter. [101] Nonetheless, it was likely James Jones who provided Cincinnati and Covington police with information detailing the final portion of the Ohio State Stock

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try and hold steamboat captains accountable for any enslaved who escaped off their ships while on the Ohio River. See: Salafia, Matthew. *Slavery's Borderland: Freedom and Bondage Along the Ohio River*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, pg. 125.

[100] Richardson, James F. *Urban Police in the United States*. New York: Kennikat Press, 1974, pg. 32. Following the arrest of Rinaldo Baxter, newspapers noted that Cincinnati and Covington police obtained their information from a man, possibly either Kingsley or Jones, arrested in Covington a few weeks ago for counterfeiting. Allegedly, the police's informant held one thousand dollars worth of counterfeit money in his possession at the time of his arrest. While the police found three hundred and fifty dollars in Jones' possession, they found fifteen hundred dollars worth of counterfeit money in Kingsley's possession. See: The Counterfeiter's Arrest," *Washington Sentinel*, November 9, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84020104/1853-11-09/ed-1/seq-3/). "Arrest of a Counterfeiter," *The Daily Dispatch*, September 17, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024738/1853-09-17/ed-1/seq-1/).

[101] Ohio. General Assembly. Senate. *The Journal of the Senate of the State of Ohio, for the Regular Session of the Fifty Fifth General Assembly*, Commencing on Monday, January 6, 1862 Vol. 58. Columbus, 1862, pg. 54. Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.35112104886959) and Ohio. General Assembly. *Documents, Including Messages and Other Communications made to the Governor and General Assembly of the State of Ohio*, vol. 20, part 1, Columbus, Statesman Steam Press, 1856, pgs. 73-74 and 77-78

Bank network. When the police arrested Jones, they found a book in his room that contained the various locations of hidden bank plates along with "the names and residences of a good many people engaged in the business," which likely included Rinaldo Baxter.[102] The police's possible use of the book to locate other members of the counterfeiting network means that while James Jones provided police with key information about the group's illicit activities, he did so unwilling. Jones' inadvertent aid to the police could explain why his pardon application does not mention that he acted as an informant to the state, as it was not a formal arrangement.

Cincinnati and Covington's entanglements with Rinaldo Baxter and the Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeiters further reveal the recidivism of the Ohio River Valley counterfeiters and the difficulties of policing counterfeiting in the region. A year earlier, in 1852, the two police agencies arrested Baxter in Covington for counterfeiting and found close to eighty thousand dollars worth of counterfeit money in his possession. [103] The officers escorted Baxter before a Covington court where a judge initially set his bail at two thousand dollars before reducing it to four hundred dollars. Baxter paid his lowered bail, walked out of the court and fled Covington.[104] Cincinnati and Covington police lost track of Baxter for a year, before learning of his location near Cleveland in 1853. Other members of the network had also been arrested in the past for crimes

[102] "Important Discovery," *Spirit of the Times*, November 1, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84028880/1853-11-01/ed-1/seq-1/)

[103] "The Counterfeiter's Arrest," *Washington Sentinel*, November 9, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84020104/1853-11-09/ed-1/seq-3/).

[104] Ibid.

relating to counterfeiting. In 1851 police arrested William McGreary at a Cleveland hotel for passing counterfeit five-dollar bills on the Thames Bank, found in Connecticut.[105] In March 1852, the Cuyahoga County Court of Common Please convicted McGreary for passing counterfeit banknotes and sentenced him to five years imprisonment in the Ohio state penitentiary.[106] Barely a year later, the Ohio penitentiary administrators recommended that the state pardon McGreary. On May 25, 1853, the state issued a pardon for McGreary on the condition that he would leave the state of Ohio for five years. Instead of leaving Ohio, McGreary travelled south to Cincinnati where Cincinnati police arrested his at Samuel Towner's home in 1853.[107] In addition to their arrest of William McGreary, Cincinnati police also arrested Milton Parker in the summer of 1853 at Samuel Towner's house.[108] The police likely recognized Parker from their earlier encounter in 1852, when they arrested Parker, alongside Lewis and Sara Sleight, and John Frisby, for dealing counterfeit money in Cincinnati.[109] Finally, at least one member of the Ohio State Stock Bank network escaped from prison and returned to the region's counterfeiting underworld. At Samuel Towner's Cincinnati home, the police arrested

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[105] "Arrest of Counterfeiters at Cleveland, Ohio," *The New York Herald*, August 4, 1851. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1851-08-04/ed-1/seq-8/).

[106] *Documents and other Communications Made to the Fifty-First General Assembly of the State of Ohio*, Vol. 18, Part 1, pg. 468

[107] "Important News-Arrest of a Gang of Counterfeiters," *Loudon Free Press*, August 12, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86053481/1853-08-12/ed-1/seq-2/).

[108] Ibid.

[109] "Conviction of Counterfeiters," *The Daily Dispatch*, June 30, 1852. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024738/1852-06-30/ed-1/seq-3/).

Lewis Dolman, an escaped convict from the Jeffersonville, Indiana penitentiary recently convicted on charges of counterfeiting.[110] Following his escape from Indiana, Dolman travelled north along the Ohio River to Cincinnati and joined the counterfeiting operation in Cincinnati with little apparent trouble. The movements and relationships of the formerly convicted counterfeiters provides a glimpse into a counterfeiting underworld that spanned the Ohio River, connecting northern Kentucky, southern Indiana, and Ohio into a rough confederation who worked together create, distribute, and pass, counterfeit money throughout the Ohio River Valley. In turn, the Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeiters shows the various ways that the region's counterfeiting underworld spanned the nation's borders between capitalism and slavery and knit the two regions together.[111]

By the end of 1853, Cincinnati and Covington police had arrested most of the primary members of the Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeiting network and obtained the plates used to counterfeit the Ohio State Stock Bank's bills. William Kelly, the man who convinced Ransel Lamb to steal the banknote plates, however, remained at large.[112] Back in September 1853, the Cincinnati criminal court indicted Kelly for his role in the

[110] "Forty Thousand Dollars Counterfeit Money," *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, August 6, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86092535/1853-08-06/ed-1/seq-2/).

[111] Mihm, *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pgs. 47, 61, 64

[112] Ohio. General Assembly. *Documents Including Messages and other Communications made to the Governor and General Assembly of the State of Ohio, Report on Pardons*. Columbus: Statesman Steam Press, 1856 pgs. 73-74

counterfeiting operation and police had been looking for him ever since.[113] It took two months before Cincinnati police arrested Kelly at tavern in Aurora, Indiana. After months of searching and arrests, Cincinnati police finally captured the last major member of the Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeiting network and put an end to group.[114]

The convictions of key members of the Ohio State Stock Bank network reveals that Ohio sought to send a strong message to those counterfeiters who would create counterfeit money on the state's banks. In Ohio, a conviction for knowingly passing counterfeit money carried a penalty of one to five years in the state penitentiary.[115] A conviction for dealing counterfeit notes carried a penalty of three to fifteen years in the Ohio penitentiary.[116] If convicted of engraving a bank plate for the purposes of counterfeiting, a prisoner also faced three to fifteen years in prison.[117] Finally, a forgery conviction carried a penalty of three to twenty years in the Ohio penitentiary.[118] As the penalties for counterfeiting and forgery make clear, the members of the Ohio State Stock

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[113] "Arrest of a Counterfeiter," *Washington Sentinel*, November 20, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84020104/1853-11-20/ed-1/seq-3/).

[114] Ibid.

[115] Curwen, Maskell E. *The Statutes of the State of Ohio of a General Nature, in Force at the Present Time with Notes and References to the Judicial Decisions Thereon*. Cincinnati: C.A. Morgan and Company, 1854, pg. 374. From HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.35112104886959).

[116] Curwen, Maskell E." *The Statutes of the State of Ohio of a General Nature, in Force at the Present Time with Notes and References to the Judicial Decisions Thereon*, Cincinnati, C.A. Morgan and Company, 1854, pg. 373. From HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.35112104886959).

[117] Curwen, Maskell E." *The Statutes of the State of Ohio of a General Nature, in Force at the Present Time with Notes and References to the Judicial Decisions Thereon*, Cincinnati, C.A. Morgan and Company, 1854, pg. 374. From HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.35112104886959).

[118] Curwen, Maskell E." *The Statutes of the State of Ohio of a General Nature, in Force at the Present Time with Notes and References to the Judicial Decisions Thereon*, Cincinnati, C.A. Morgan and Company, 1854, pg. 370. From HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.35112104886959).

Bank counterfeiting network faced serious prison time for their roles in spreading counterfeit money across Ohio. Although police arrested several people in connection to the counterfeiting network, the Ohio judicial system only punished a handful of the counterfeiters, revealing the difficulties in both obtaining a conviction for counterfeiting and bringing a suspect before a court of law. In December 1853, the Hamilton County criminal court convicted James Jones on a charge of aiding and abetting forgery. The court sentenced Jones to ten years in the Ohio Penitentiary.[119] For "aiding and abetting the forgery" of the Ohio State Stock Bank notes, the Hamilton County criminal court sentenced James (William) Kelly to ten years in the Ohio penitentiary.[120] The Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas convicted both Milton Parker and William McGreary of having counterfeit banknotes in their possession for the purpose of bartering and selling the notes and sentenced Parker and McGreary to ten years in the Ohio penitentiary.[121] The Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas convicted Lewis Dolman of having counterfeit bank bills in his possession with intent to pass and sentenced him to ten years in the state penitentiary.[122] The convictions and prison sentences for the Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeiters reveals that Hamilton County sought to punish those counterfeiters

[119] Ohio. General Assembly. Senate. *The Journal of the Senate of the State of Ohio, for the Regular Session of the Fifty Fifth General Assembly*, Commencing on Monday, January 6, 1862 Vol. 58. Columbus, 1862, pg. 54. Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.35112104886959).

[120] Ohio. General Assembly. Senate. *The Journal of the Senate of the State of Ohio, being the First Session of the Fifty Third General Assembly*, Commencing on Monday, January 4, 1858 Vol. 54. Columbus, 1858, pgs. 153-154. Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/chi.78242714).

[121] Nevins, Richard. *Message and Reports to the General Assembly and Governor of the State of Ohio*, Part One. Columbus, 1863, pg. 36. Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/osu.32435072552821).

[122] Nevins, Richard: *Message and Reports to the General Assembly and Governor of the State of Ohio*, Part One. Columbus, 1863, pg. 27. Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/osu.32435072552821).

who appeared within its courts, a trend that is evident in the report conviction and acquittal rates for the county during the early 1850s.[123]

The convictions of the Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeiters, however, also reveals that Ohio wanted to reward those who aided their efforts to put an end to counterfeiting in the region. Ransel Lamb, the engraver who provided the counterfeiters with the bank plates that allowed the group to circulate high quality counterfeit notes, only received a three-year sentence to the penitentiary for his role in the affair.[124] Perhaps in an effort to convince the court of his sincerity, Lamb admitted to his role in the counterfeiting network despite the state's inability to connect him to the counterfeiters, and agreed to provide the state with information about the operation.[125] Thus, the shortened sentence resulted from Lamb's testimony on behalf of the state, testimony that provided prosecutors with key information about the network. Indeed, Ohio's Attorney General credited Lamb with providing the prosecution with information that assisted in the recovery of the spurious paper and led to the convictions of "other and

[123] In 1852, Hamilton County convicted ten people for uttering counterfeit money, issued a nolle prosequi for four people, and acquitted just one person of the crime. The court convicted one person of uttering a forged note and acquitted none. The Hamilton County court convicted three people for having counterfeit money in their possession and acquitted two people of the crime on grounds of insanity. Between January and November 1853, Hamilton County convicted five people for uttering counterfeit money, acquitted one person, and issued a nolle prosequi in the one remaining case for uttering counterfeit money. Hamilton County convicted two people for having counterfeit money in their possession and acquitted three others. The county also issued a nolle prosequi in a case of counterfeiting, uttering counterfeit money, and "putting off" counterfeit coin. See: Ohio. General Assembly. *Documents, Including Messages and Other Communications Made to the Fifty-First General Assembly of the State of Ohio*, vol. 18, Part 1. Columbus: Osgood, Blake, and Knapp Printers, 1854, pgs. 171-179 and 197-203.

[124] *Daily Evening Star*, December 28, 1853. From the Library of Congress, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045461/1853-12-28/ed-1/seq-1/).

[125] *Documents, Including Messages and Other Communications made to the Governor and General Assembly of the State of Ohio*, Vol. 20, Part 1. Columbus, Statesman Steam Press, 1856, pgs. 73-74

more dangerous people."[126] Lamb's gambit paid off. Not only did the state sentence him to three years in the state penitentiary, far less than the ten years the state sent his counterparts to prison, Ohio also pardoned Lamb in 1855, after he served about half of his sentence.[127]

Rinaldo Baxter also turned state's evidence that resulted in both a shortened prison sentence and a state pardon. In June 1854, The Portage County Court of Common Pleas sentenced Baxter to three years imprisonment for selling counterfeit bank notes. The state of Ohio, however, pardoned Baxter barely a year into his sentence. Baxter's pardon application reveals that the shortened sentence and pardon resulted from the information that he provided the Cincinnati police in regards to the location of the Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeit banknote plates. Baxter's pardon application noted that Cincinnati police told Baxter that if he cooperated with their investigation by providing them with information regarding the location of the stolen bank plates, then the police would not testify against him during the trail.[128] The police assured Baxter that if the information proved accurate then they would not bring the stolen plates as evidence against him during his trial.[129] Baxter relented and provided them with information regarding the location of the stolen bank plates. Following Baxter's capture in November 1853, a group of offices left Ravenna and travelled to New Brighton, Pennsylvania, a

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[126] *Documents, Including Messages and Other Communications made to the Governor and General Assembly of the State of Ohio*, Vol. 20, Part 1. Columbus, Statesman Steam Press, 1856, pgs. 73-74

[127] Ibid.

[128] Ohio. General Assembly. *Documents, Including Messages and Other Communications made to the Governor and General Assembly of the State of Ohio*, vol. 20, part 1, Columbus, Statesman Steam Press, 1856, pgs. 77-78

[129] Ibid.

small port town on the Ohio River. When the police arrived at New Brighton, they discovered banknote plates engraved with the five and ten-dollar denominations of the bills of the Ohio State Stock Bank.[130] One newspaper described the plates as so "accurately engraved" that their counterfeits deceived "even the best judges" of money during the past year.[131] Furthermore, the paper speculated that the excellent design of the counterfeit money, coupled with the extent of the counterfeiting network, caused "considerable losses to the business community."[132] Thus, through Baxter's cooperation, Ohio and Kentucky law enforcement agencies finally destroyed the counterfeiting network that flooded their economies with counterfeit Ohio State Stock Bank notes during the past few years and put an end to Baxter's career as a counterfeiter, at least in Ohio.[133]

The Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeiting ring offers several insights into how counterfeiting worked in and around Cincinnati, across the state of Ohio, and along the Ohio River during the 1850s, and the lengthy amount of time it took Ohio and Kentucky law enforcement to put an end to the gang. From the initial arrests at Samuel Towner's

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[130] *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, December 15, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86092535/1853-12-15/ed-1/seq-2/).

[131] "Counterfeit Bank Plates Discovered," *Portage Sentinel*, December 14, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83035101/1853-12-14/ed-1/seq-2/).

[132] Ibid.

[133] Three years later, on October 7, 1856, the *Hillsdale Standard*, a Michigan newspaper, reported that a Michigan court convicted Rinaldo Baxter for having counterfeit money in his possession with the intent of passing the fake money into circulation. The Michigan court sentenced Baxter to five years in the state penitentiary. Source: *The Hillsdale Standard*, October 7, 1856. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85033637/1856-10-07/ed-1/seq-3/).

home in Cincinnati in the summer of 1853, to Ravenna's Court of Common Pleas conviction of Baxter in June 1854 for dealing in counterfeit money, close to a year passed before the Kentucky and Ohio law enforcement agencies completely destroyed the Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeiting ring and placed several of its prominent members in jail.[134] The geographical extent of the counterfeiting group reveals that they operated either within small port towns and cities located along the Ohio River, or in the smaller towns and wooded areas on the outskirts of Ohio's large urban centers. Finally, if we plot the known locations of the gang on a map, it becomes clear that the gang used the Ohio River to transport their counterfeit money from northern Ohio and Pennsylvania down to Cincinnati. The Cincinnati and Covington police found the Ohio State Stock Bank plates at New Brighton, Pennsylvania, indicating that the counterfeiters created the counterfeit bills in the small river town. Next, the counterfeiters likely shipped the money south on the steamboats whose passengers knowingly, and unknowingly, spread the money as they travelled down the Ohio River.[135] Furthermore, the charges of dealing in counterfeit money brought against Milton Parker and William McGreary in Cincinnati indicate that the men obtained the shipments of counterfeit money from the ships that travelled the Ohio River and sold the money to Cincinnati's counterfeit dealers, as represented in the arrests of Marshall and the other dealers who operated in Cincinnati's

[134] Well after Rinaldo Baxter's counterfeiting career ended, Ravenna citizens continued to find Baxter's counterfeits in the town. In early August 1880, a man went down to the cellar of his house and opened his potato bin. After rummaging around the bin, the man found a book filled with $500 in counterfeit paper money. The book held counterfeit $2s on the Seneca County Bank and counterfeit $10s on the Ohio State Stock Bank. In 1853, Rinaldo Baxter lived in that particular house and he left the book behind following his arrest for counterfeiting. Source: "Counterfeit Money Found," *The Democratic Press*, August 12, 1880. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83035083/1880-08-12/ed-1/seq-3/).

[135] Mihm, *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 226

hinterlands.[136] In turn, Lewis Dolman's charge of uttering counterfeit money in Cincinnati reveals that the gang started passing the money in Cincinnati before it likely radiated outward across Ohio and along the Ohio River.

In addition to offering the group key avenues for spreading counterfeit money, Cincinnati and other towns on the Ohio River offered the Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeiting network advantages not found in the interiors of Ohio and Kentucky. Rinaldo Baxter successfully exploited the Ohio River border to escape from jail in Covington, Kentucky and disappeared from view for over a year. William Marshall also successfully escaped Cincinnati law enforcement, avoided going to trial for his role in the counterfeiting network, and vanished. The constant activity of places like Cincinnati and Covington Kentucky, the arrival and departure of steamboats everyday, the influx of new faces, and the departure of familiar ones, the arrival of passengers and their money from other states, created a bustling and chaotic environment. That meant that if a counterfeiter successfully avoided capture, or successfully escaped from law enforcement, then port towns and river cities offered the escaped prisoner boundless opportunities to blend in and make good on their escape.[137] They could then board a steamship bound for other port towns along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to start their criminal activities anew, especially during a period of time when law enforcement

[136] In *Illegal Tender*, David Johnson argues that during the nineteenth century, Cincinnati functioned as a distribution center for counterfeit notes into the nearby region. Johnson errs, however, in noting that Cincinnati only functioned as a distribution center and not as an actual hub for the region's counterfeiters. Johnson. *Illegal Tender*, pg. 48

[137] Mihm, *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 159

agencies rarely shared information or cooperated together.[138] The lack of cooperation among nineteenth century police makes the relationship between the Cincinnati and Covington police all the more unusual.

Furthermore, several intriguing clues emerge about the network's sophistication and the makeup of its members, offering historians a glimpse into the social aspects of Cincinnati's counterfeiting underworld. While the locations of the arrests point to the possibility that the network used the Ohio River to circulate its counterfeit money, at least one of the men arrested at Samuel Towner's home, Quincey Hurschey, worked for a local railroad company. Police learned that Hurschey worked as a large "subcontractor" for the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad Company meaning that it is quite possible that Hurschey's job on the railroad provided the group with another avenue to spread its counterfeit currency. [139] It also appears that the group utilized other rail lines to spread their counterfeit money, as reported in Washington D.C.'s *Weekly National Intelligencer*. The *Intelligencer* argued that a group of "recently arrested" counterfeiters were responsible for the "immense quantities" of counterfeits, which included counterfeit notes on the State Stock Bank of Ohio, found along the Ohio and Pennsylvania railroads.[140] Thus, in addition to acting as a stop for the steamships that travelled the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, Cincinnati's role as a hub for several of the region's rail lines offered local

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[138] Mihm, *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 159

[139] "The Latest News," *The Daily Dispatch*, July 29, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024738/1853-07-29/ed-1/seq-3/).

[140] "Counterfeit Notes in Circulation," *Weekly National Intelligencer*, August 6, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86092535/1853-08-06/ed-1/seq-2/).

counterfeiters another potential avenue, besides the Ohio River, to distribute their counterfeit money across the Midwest and South.[141]

It is also possible that the Ohio penitentiary inadvertently played a role in the formation of the plot to counterfeit the notes of the Ohio State Stock banks. Circumstantial evidence indicates that William McGreary and Milton Parker, despite the penitentiary's requirements governing inmate silence, found time to exchange information about their counterfeiting experiences while they served their prison sentences in the Ohio penitentiary.[142] Both men served their prison sentences during the same time and the state pardoned both men within a few months of each other. Yet, within a short amount of time, both McGreary and Parker found their way to Towner's

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[141] Counterfeiters in Ohio and across the South employed railroads to help spread counterfeit currency. The February 18, 1855 *Washington Sentinel* carried a story from the *Cincinnati Gazette* published in October 1854. The *Gazette* noted that police arrested John Young, a wholesale dealer of counterfeit money. Young, possibly in an effort to avoid jail time, informed the authorities that some of Cincinnati's most "well known citizens," had established another counterfeiting ring in Cincinnati. Young's information led the police to a water station house that serviced the trains of the Lebanon, Mason, and Monroe Railroad, a local line that connected Cincinnati to the small towns north of the city. When the police searched the water station, they found close to thirty thousand dollars in counterfeit money on the Northern Bank of Kentucky, the Bank of Kentucky, the State Bank of Ohio, the State Bank of Indiana, and money on banks in Virginia, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, and New York. Police also found boxes full of uncut sheets of money nearly ready for distribution and the bank plates needed to counterfeit the ones of the Northern Bank of Kentucky and the twos of the State Bank of Indiana. The November 3, 1854 edition of the *Washington Sentinel* reported that Virginia police arrested Hezekiah Hudson on a local train. When the police searched Hudson, they found ten thousand dollars worth of counterfeit money on various North Carolina banks. On August 24, 1860, the *Memphis Daily Appeal* reported that local police arrested a doctor named for dealing counterfeit money. The doctor lived along the Memphis and Ohio Railroad. Finally, the *Wilmington Journal*, published in North Carolina, noted in its November 16, 1855 issue that the executives of the Wilmington and Raleigh Railroad Company submitted a report to their stockholders noting that the company accepted over one hundred and thirty dollars worth of counterfeit money over the past few months. The paper also contained a report from the Wilmington and Weldon railroad that reported the company accepted close to six hundred dollars in counterfeit money over the course of its earnings during the year 1855. Two years later, on November 25, 1857 the *Weekly North Carolina Standard* noted that the Wilmington and Weldon railroad accepted more than nine hundred dollars worth of counterfeit money over the course of its annual earnings. Obtained from the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov).

[142] One of the duties of the penitentiary's "Assistant Keepers," notes that they were to make sure that the convicts labored "diligently, in order and in silence." Ohio. General Assembly. *Documents Including Messages and Other Communications Made to the Fiftieth General Assembly of the State of Ohio*, pg. 220

Cincinnati home shortly after the state released them from prison and reinserted themselves into Ohio's counterfeiting underworld.[143] The apparent ease in which both McGreary and Parker returned to counterfeiting, and also found others to work with on a larger counterfeiting operation, indicates that Cincinnati's counterfeiters knew each other and were willing to work together despite prior convictions for counterfeiting.

Additionally, the counterfeiting network reveals that the region's questions and concerns about the stability of the nation's money supply mirrored those found across the United States. Several United States newspapers used the Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeiting network as proof that both the state of Ohio and the rest of the United States needed to improve the quality of its paper money in order to avoid counterfeiting. Following the arrest of the Samuel Towner branch of the network in Cincinnati, the *Cincinnati Inquirer* blamed the poor engraving and design of the region's bank bills for the presence of so much counterfeit money in the city.[144] The paper reasoned that counterfeiters targeted the bills of the Ohio State Stock Bank due to their "coarse and unskillful" designs and argued that the banks that designed and circulated poorly engraved bills assisted the counterfeiter and acted as a party to their crimes.[145] The *Inquirer's* editorial made explicit its convictions that some banks and their owners acted

[143] Towner also returned to counterfeiting following the destruction of the Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeiting network in 1853. On December 25, 1865, the *Daily Ohio Statesman* reported that the Licking County, Ohio, Court of Common Pleas sentenced Samuel D. Towner to five years in prison at the state penitentiary for possessing counterfeit Treasury notes. "Convicts from Licking County," *The Daily Ohio Statesman*, December 25, 1865. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84028645/1865-12-25/ed-1/seq-2/).

[144] "Counterfeit Money," *The Ohio Union*, August 10, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83035172/1853-08-10/ed-1/seq-2/).

[145] Ibid.

as little more than counterfeiters themselves, thus connecting the legitimate side of Cincinnati's capitalist economy, its banks and banknotes to its shadowy counterpart, the counterfeiters and their fake notes.[146] The editorial makes clear that 1850s Cincinnati wrestled with similar questions in regards to banking and counterfeiting that took place across the United States during the mid-nineteenth century, showing that questions about banknotes and counterfeiting worried Cincinnati as much as it die the nation's financial centers in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia.

Other nineteenth-century newspapers contained articles that advocated for changes in the nation's banking practices in order to deter counterfeiting. Thompsons's *Autographical Detector* states, "all false systems of banking, whether practiced by individuals or authorized by State Legislatures" acted as one of the reasons for their publication.[147] The *Detector* believed that banks should cover the costs of their note circulation in an effort to protect the public from counterfeits.[148] Ironton, Ohio's*, Spirit of the Times* believed that poorly designed bank notes made banks parties to counterfeiting and the paper's editors offered a series of suggestions that addressed the nation's counterfeiting problem and would aid in its decline.[149] The paper's suggestions

[146] "Counterfeit Money," *The Ohio Union*, August 10, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83035172/1853-08-10/ed-1/seq-2/).

[147] Thompson: *The Autographical Counterfeit Detector, Companion to The Bank Note Reporter*, William W. Lee, New York, Fourth Edition, 1852, pg. 55. Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc2.ark:/13960/t52f7mj11).

[148] Ibid.

[149] The editors argued that the United States should require banks to have a separate and unique plate for each of the bills it circulates. Second, the *Times* believed that the United States should force banks to use plates that could not be duplicated by a machine. Third, the *Times* wrote that the nation needed a law that forbade banks from reissuing a note. Finally, the paper believed that the United States should require banks

appear reasonable and easy to adopt, which further underscores its editor's beliefs that the failure of the nation's banks to act against counterfeiting meant they bore some responsibility for the proliferation of counterfeit money. Finally, the paper's stance suggests that its readers and local communities possibly believed that counterfeiting and counterfeit notes hurt the public and local economies more than the banks.[150] After all, the counterfeit note more often ended up in the hands and/or register of local businesses rather than in the vaults of the bank.

As noted throughout this chapter, several United States newspapers lamented the high quality of the counterfeit Ohio State Stock Bank notes and counterfeit detectors provide evidence of their quality. In regards to the counterfeit tens of the Ohio State Stock Bank's Dayton Branch, a counterfeit detector informed its readers to look at the bill's imagery from the genuine note and compare it to the counterfeit.[151] The detector informed its readers that the lines "forming the mountain run lengthwise, nearly on a parallel with the top of the cars" on the genuine note while on the counterfeit, the lines were "almost perpendicular."[152] The detector also wanted its readers to note that the wreath on top of the woman in the genuine note "nearly touch the border of the top of the note" while the wreath in the counterfeit lay "at a greater distance from the border" of the

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to exchange a good note for every counterfeit note brought to its attention. See: "Counterfeit Bank Notes," *Spirit of the Times*, August 16, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84028880/1853-08-16/ed-1/seq-2/).

[150] "Ibid.

[151] Lord, Thomas: *Lord's Pictorial Safety Guard, Containing Illustrations of the all Principal Counterfeit Bank Notes in the United States up to this Date, and Contrasting them with Fac-similes of the Genuine*, 1854, pg. 17

[152] Ibid.

top of the note.[153] With such vague descriptions and images to guide them, it is easy to understand American's frustrations with the regions counterfeit detectors. One newspaper likely contributed to American's frustrations with counterfeiter detectors when it speculated that certain counterfeit detectors aided the Ohio State Stock Bank's counterfeiters in their creation of high quality counterfeit notes.[154]

Indeed, the Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeiters created such a high-volume of quality counterfeit notes, that they forced Ohio to alter the designs of the bank's bills. On December 23, 1853, Ohio's state auditor submitted his report to Ohio's General Assembly in which he summarized the impacts of the counterfeit notes on the state's stock banks.[155] The report notes that an uncertain number of counterfeit notes "annoyed and startled" Ohio's business community and described the notes as being printed from the genuine engraving plate and filled with forged signatures.[156] According to the *Cincinnati Commercial*, published in the *New York Herald*, the state entrusted a Cincinnati engraving firm, Rawdon Wright, Hatch, and Edison, to create the bank's

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[153] Lord, Thomas: *Lord's Pictorial Safety Guard, Containing Illustrations of the all Principal Counterfeit Bank Notes in the United States up to this Date, and Contrasting them with Fac-similes of the Genuine*, 1854, pg. 17

[154] "Counterfeit Money," *The Ohio Union*, August 10, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83035172/1853-08-10/ed-1/seq-2/)

[155] *Documents, Including Messages and Other Communications Made to the Fifty-First General Assembly of the State of Ohio*, vol. 18, part one, Columbus, Osgood, Blake, and Knapp Printers, 1854, pg. 54. Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library (https://www.hathitrust.org)

[156] *Documents, Including Messages and Other Communications Made to the Fifty-First General Assembly of the State of Ohio*, vol. 18, part one, Columbus, Osgood, Blake, and Knapp Printers, 1854, pg. 319. Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library (https://www.hathitrust.org)

notes.[157] One of the company's engravers, Ransel Lamb, confessed to Cincinnati police that he stole the plates and started the process of counterfeiting the state stock bank's notes.[158] The report revealed that, "as a consequence of this fraud it has been found necessary to abandon the use of the banknote plate heretofore in use."[159] In order to re-instill the public's confidence into the Ohio Stat Stock Bank's notes, the new plates would consist of "such a design and artistic execution" that would "discourage all attempts to counterfeit" the new notes.[160] Thus, not only did the counterfeiting network interfere with Ohio's local economies, the men created and circulated enough high quality counterfeit currency that it forced the state of Ohio to alter its banking policies and to design new currency for the state's stock banks.

Ohio's state auditor report weaves together the threads of the Ohio State Stock Bank counterfeiting network into a single cohesive strand about counterfeiting and policing in Cincinnati in 1853. The report demonstrates that, in the above case, a counterfeiting network created and circulated enough high quality notes that it forced Ohio to adopt new designs for the Ohio State Stock Bank's bills. Ohio's legislature felt the need to introduce new bank bills in order to instill public confidence in the bank's notes, the state's business community was startled and annoyed, which indicates that they found the notes a nuisance rather than a serious threat to their businesses. The business

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[157] "State Stock Bank Forgeries-Arrest of One of the Supposed Forgers," *The New York Herald*, August 29, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1853-08-29/ed-1/seq-2/).

[158] *Documents, Including Messages and Other Communications Made to the Fifty-First General Assembly of the State of Ohio*, vol. 18, part one, Columbus, Osgood, Blake, and Knapp Printers, 1854, pg. 319, Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library (https://www.hathitrust.org)

[159] Ibid.

[160] Ibid.

community's annoyance at the presence of the counterfeit bills, however, reveals that it took the presence of counterfeit money as a matter of course of doing business in Cincinnati. The report shows that Ohio's legislature agreed with the state's newspapers that called for a better-designed bank plate deter the region's counterfeiters.

For Cincinnati, the late 1840s and early 1850s brought its police into contact with several prominent counterfeiters and their networks. The encounters between counterfeiters and police in Cincinnati reveal both the intricacies and scope of the Ohio River Valley's counterfeiting underworld and the extensive efforts of Cincinnati's police to put an end to counterfeiting in the region. Through the department's efforts to police counterfeiting in the 1840s and 1850s, we see how Cincinnati's police fostered links between the city and its rural hinterlands, even reaching across the Ohio River into Kentucky's that forged an additional link between Kentucky's hinterlands and Ohio's primary urban center. The presence of a sizable market for counterfeit coin in Cincinnati demonstrates the differences of the city's counterfeiting underworld from its East Coast counterparts. Cincinnati's police devoted significant time and effort towards successfully destroying a major counterfeiting ring, the Ohio State Stock Bank network, and the state sentenced many of its main actors to prison, showing that the region's police could devote significant resources to fighting counterfeiting. Despite the department's arrests of prominent counterfeiters such as Lewis and Sarah Sleight, John Frisby, Milton Parker, Lewis Dolman, and William Kelly, many of them returned to the region's counterfeiting underworld, revealing the powerful draw of counterfeiting in Cincinnati. Yet, Cincinnati police, with occasional assistance from their Kentucky counterparts, built cases against key counterfeiters in order to secure their convictions in Ohio's courts in an effort to

safeguard and regulate the region's commerce. Lastly, the actions of the Cincinnati police in 1840s and 1850s illuminates the growth and expansion of counterfeiting and policing in the city, a process that continued during the late 1850s, when Cincinnati police expanded their reach into Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, and western Virginia.

III. CHAPTER TWO

The Detection of Counterfeiters: Counterfeiting and Policing along the Ohio River During the Late 1850s

Cincinnati's effort at fighting counterfeiting during the early 1850s provides a look into the counterfeiting underworld of the Ohio River. It shows how the region's counterfeiters operated, the market in Cincinnati for counterfeit coin, and the partnerships that the region's counterfeiters forged with each other in an effort to mask their illegal operations from police. Unlike the police in other parts of the United States, however, Cincinnati's police undertook extensive efforts to put an end to the region's counterfeiting underworld. While the police arrested several counterfeiters in the nearby rural towns in Ohio and northern Kentucky during the early 1850s, the department further expanded its geographical efforts to deter counterfeiting throughout the decade, reaching into southwestern Indiana, Illinois, and even western Virginia, in their pursuit of the region's counterfeiters. The department further refined the tactics it employed to crack the region's counterfeiting underworld, occasionally placing officers undercover in an effort to ascertain the makeup of a network. Just as Cincinnati's police ramped up its efforts to deter counterfeiting, the region's counterfeiters utilized increasingly sophisticated methods to create and pass counterfeit money undetected into the Ohio River economy. At the same time that slavery threatened to tear the United States apart along the Ohio River, the policing of counterfeiting in the region on the eve of the Civil War illuminates how both police and counterfeiting knit the area together. As Cincinnati

policed counterfeiting throughout the Ohio River Valley during the 1850s, it reveals how one group of municipal police in Ohio carried out the authority of the state to help regulate and protect local economies from counterfeiting.

During the second half of the 1850s, Cincinnati police expanded the scope of their efforts to rid the area of counterfeiting by shifting their attention west to nearby rural Indiana. While southern Indiana dealt with counterfeiting at a much lower rate than nearby Cincinnati, it still needed help in arresting and removing the local counterfeiters that operated in the region. By the 1850s, Indiana's sheriffs and deputies had built a reputation of being poorly qualified for their jobs.[1] In 1852, Indiana's legislature passed laws legalizing the creation of private vigilante groups to help supplement weak policing in the state's efforts to deter serious crime.[2] Within the framework of weak and ineffective policing, it is clear why some Indiana officials requested Cincinnati's help in capturing the counterfeiters who operated in their small towns. Through its policing of counterfeiting in western Indiana, Cincinnati pulled the region further into its orbit that in turn demonstrates the interconnectedness of the Ohio River Valley during the late 1850s. Through the policing of counterfeiting, borders, the political border of the state lines, the municipal borders that separated cities and towns, and the geographical border of the Ohio River, vanish, which in turn provides an alternative perspective on the region that often appears fragmented and separated in the histories of the United States. The policing of counterfeiting also reveals the power and scope of Ohio's reach throughout the Ohio

[1] Smith, O.H. *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches*. Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach, Keys and Company. 1858, pg. 6

[2] Bodenhamer, David J. *The Pursuit of Justice: Crime and Law in Antebellum Indiana*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1986, pg. 59

River Valley. In turn, Ohio's efforts to police counterfeiting throughout the region shows that the state helped protect key the economic transactions that undergirded the nation's capitalist system from counterfeiting. The late 1850s continue showing how Cincinnati's law enforcement forged links between the region's largest urban center and the rural portions of the Ohio Rive Valley.

In Indiana, Cincinnati police arrested counterfeiters who operated in the central and western portion of the state, near the city of Indianapolis, showing the expansion of Cincinnati's power into Indiana. In August 1857, Cincinnati police arrested five dealers of counterfeit money in Bartholomew, Decatur, Delaware, and Rush counties in Indiana.[3] The location of the above counties are important as two of them lay close to Indianapolis, indicating that even Indiana's capitol lacked the capabilities, or desire, to police counterfeiting in the state. The men's social statues, four of the arrested counterfeiters worked as doctors in the region, one of whom the paper described as being "respectably connected," could have played a role in deterring the local police from arresting the dealers.[4] After they arrested the men, the police also obtained a large quantity of counterfeit banknotes on various banks across the United States in addition to a large amount of counterfeit coin.[5] One newspaper indicated that the police were watching the

[3] "Arrests of a Gang of Dealers in Counterfeit Bank Notes and Bogus Coin in Rush, Bartholomew, Decatur, and Delaware Counties," Mineral Point Tribune, August 25, 1857. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85033189/1857-08-25/ed-1/seq-2/)

[4] Ibid.

[5] "Arrests of a Gang of Dealers in Counterfeit Bank Notes and Bogus Coin in Rush, Bartholomew, Decatur, and Delaware Counties," Mineral Point Tribune, August 25, 1857. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85033189/1857-08-25/ed-1/seq-2/)

men for sometime as they surprised one of the men before he could hide or destroy the counterfeiting equipment and that he "never dreamed he was under suspicion."[6] The above arrests indicate that both urban and rural Indiana law enforcement lacked the capabilities of arresting the well-connected counterfeiters in the state and that Cincinnati police stepped in to accomplish the task. In doing so, Cincinnati police helped safeguard the region's economic transactions from counterfeiting, providing a glimpse into Ohio's capabilities of policing the region.

Despite the above arrests, counterfeiters still operated in some of the same Indiana counties and Cincinnati police returned to the region just a year later to arrest more of the local counterfeiters. Perhaps in an effort to ensure a longer lasting impact, rather than simply arresting the suspected counterfeiters, the Cincinnati police implemented a complex undercover operation in order to try and obtain a clearer picture of the gang's activities and the scope of its operations. Allegedly, the gang of counterfeiters operated in Indiana for the better part of the past year, revealing the incapacity of Indiana's rural police to stop the gang. By 1858, local officials reached their breaking point when the counterfeiters escalated their operations to a "wholesale" level.[7] One possible explanation for the police's failure to deter the counterfeiters emerges in a local newspaper article that described the gang as a mixture of counterfeiters and "men of fair

[6] "The Counterfeiters," The Evansville Daily Journal, August 5, 1857. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015672/1857-08-05/ed-1/seq-1/)

[7] "The Detection of a Gang of Thieves," *The Evansville Daily Journal*, August 9, 1858. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015672/1858-08-09/ed-1/seq-2/).

character."[8] The "men of fair" character description is important as it implies that some of the criminals could be well connected politically. By the mid-nineteenth century, many municipal departments across the United States placed their police under the bipartisan authority of city boards that consisted of elected officials in an effort to remove them from the control of a single politician.[9] Prior to a group of elected officials overseeing the makeup of their police, many places allowed a single official, such as the mayor, to hire police that effectively made policing a patronage job, one that elected officials handed out to their followers as a reward for their support.[10] By placing police under the control of a board of elected officials, municipal governments attempted to limit the power that a single person held over the police.[11] While the above process occurred in the nation's cities, it is possible that a single elected official in a rural town, like those found in Indiana, still appointed their police. As such, if the "men of fair character" involved in the counterfeiting gang helped some of the Indiana police obtain their jobs, then the fear of losing that job could act as a deterrent to keep local police from arresting the counterfeiters. Thus, rural Indiana provides a look at inability of Indiana's civil servants to employ their state's power to put a stop to counterfeiting. Furthermore, when local police actually apprehended one of the gang members, the gang

[8] "The Detection of a Gang of Thieves," *The Evansville Daily Journal*, August 9, 1858. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015672/1858-08-09/ed-1/seq-2/).

[9] Lane, Roger. "Urban Police and Crime in Nineteenth-Century America." *Crime and Justice* 2 (1980): 1-43. Obtained from JSTOR (www.jstor.org/stable/1147411), pg.12

[10] Richardson, James F. *Urban Police in the United States*. New York: Kennikat Press, 1974, pg. 28

[11] Richardson. *Urban Police in the United States*, pg. 37

used its numbers to help the captured member avoid punishment.[12] The two examples of Cincinnati police arresting counterfeiters in southwestern Indiana indicate that in regards to counterfeiting, rural Indiana's police acted in a similar manner as the rural police in the New England states, as both were helpless to put an end to the counterfeiting operations in their midst.

Revealing the local police's lack of power over the gang of counterfeiters and their fear of reprisals, Decatur's sheriff travelled to Cincinnati and asked for the department to arrest the counterfeiters. After the sheriff presented his case to Cincinnati's police, they agreed to send one of their officers, a man named Gardiner, to infiltrate the gang. The detectives ordered Gardiner to act as a "pretend accomplice" of the gang in order to gain their trust so that the police could obtain evidence of their activities that would allow them to arrest the criminals.[13] Shortly after the meeting, Gardiner travelled to Decatur County and adopted his assumed identity of rogue and counterfeiter. In order to gain the counterfeiters' trust, Gardiner crafted an identity of a counterfeiter on the run from law enforcement. Gardiner informed the Indiana counterfeiters that he and a former partner worked in the region's counterfeiting underworld before they ran afoul of the police. Gardiner confessed to the Indiana counterfeiters that while he successfully avoided capture, the police arrested his partner.[14]

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[12] Mihm, Stephen. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*: *Capitalists, Con Men, and the Making of the United States*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007, pg. 279

[13] "The Detection of a Gang of Thieves," *The Evansville Daily Journal*, August 9, 1858. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015672/1858-08-09/ed-1/seq-2/).

[14] Ibid.

Within a short amount of time, Cincinnati's police had met the sheriff's request and laid the groundwork for the gang's arrest.

Revealing the increasing sophistication of the Cincinnati police and the innovative ways they fought counterfeiting in the region, the police wrote fictional letters to Gardiner that bolstered his credibility as a fellow criminal and counterfeiter. The Cincinnati police postmarked the letters from Cincinnati and adopted the persona of a fellow counterfeiter and co-conspirator.[15] When Gardiner received the letters in Decatur, he showed the other counterfeiters the letters in an effort to further ingratiate his position within the gang. The Cincinnati postmark lent Gardiner's letters an air of credibility and the Decatur gang believed Gardiner's claims that he was a fellow counterfeiter.[16] The credibility that Cincinnati's postmark granted Gardiner's letters indicates that the city's counterfeiting underworld held sway in nearby rural Indiana. The letters from Cincinnati's "counterfeiters" helped Gardiner's efforts to pass as a criminal in an inverse of the process that played out when shovers of counterfeit money tried to pass as ordinary people when they bought goods with fake money. Both the undercover officer and the passer employed tools to establish parts of their identities that helped them achieve their respective goals.

The letters successfully established Gardiner's position in the Decatur gang and the undercover officer spent several days observing the group and gathering evidence of their operations. Over the course of his investigation, Gardiner learned about the gang's

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[15] "The Detection of a Gang of Thieves," *The Evansville Daily Journal*, August 9, 1858. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015672/1858-08-09/ed-1/seq-2/).

[16] Ibid.

counterfeiting operations, how they manufactured the counterfeit coins, and their methods for inserting the counterfeit money into the local economy. After Gardiner obtained enough evidence of their guilt, Decatur's sheriff captured five members of the gang and took them into custody.[17] Gardiner obtained enough evidence of the men's guilt, and testified in court about the counterfeiter's activities, that an Indiana court decided to hold the men for trial. The court set their bail at five hundred dollars apiece and officials escorted the men from the courthouse and to the local jail.[18] Through their operation, the Cincinnati police successfully removed the gang from operating in, and undermining, the region's economy.

In addition to stopping the counterfeiting of the southwestern Indiana counterfeiters, thereby removing a source of counterfeit money from the region, the actions of the Cincinnati police aided Indiana's efforts to attract immigrants to the region. Prior to the removal of the counterfeiters, Indiana newspapers believed that the region's counterfeiters, their extensive numbers and their abilities to avoid punishment, gave the region a bad reputation.[19] As such, the counterfeiter's damaged Indiana's "character and interests."[20] In doing so, the Indiana counterfeiters deterred "respectable and honest immigrants" from settling in the area, as "no person will entrust property within the range

[17] "The Detection of a Gang of Thieves," *The Evansville Daily Journal*, August 9, 1858. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015672/1858-08-09/ed-1/seq-2/).

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

of their depredations."[21] The newspaper's use of the terms "respectable and honest" to describe the type of immigrants it wished to attract, sounds similar to the language used to describe the legitimate aspects of nineteenth century capitalism. Furthermore, the paper's anxiety over the fear that people would not entrust their property while the counterfeiters operated in the region unpunished, also reveals a desire to settle the region according to the ethos of capitalism. Since property underlay the foundation of capitalism, if a region could not safeguard it from criminals, then it could not lay the groundwork to protect one of capitalism's basic tenets. Therefore, by removing the local counterfeiters, Cincinnati police served the booster aspirations of Indiana by making the region attractive for prospective immigrants and their property. In doing so, Cincinnati police laid the groundwork for key tenets of capitalism to take hold in the region. In effect, the state of Ohio, through the Cincinnati police, regulated Indiana's public welfare by removing the region's counterfeiters that in turn helped protect the integrity of the local capitalist economy that further shows the wielding of state power throughout the region.

After removing the counterfeiters in southwestern Indiana in 1857 and 1858, Cincinnati police turned its attention to policing the crime closer to the city, applying the tactics from their Indiana operations towards Ohio's counterfeiters. In 1859, the nearby town of Oxford, Ohio requested Cincinnati's help in arresting a local group of counterfeiters and criminals who operated with impunity in the town. Cincinnati sent one of its officers, described by one newspaper as "one of the sharpest and most skillful rogue

[21] "The Detection of a Gang of Thieves," *The Evansville Daily Journal*, August 9, 1858. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015672/1858-08-09/ed-1/seq-2/).

catchers in the West" to aid the town's efforts to arrest the counterfeiters and criminals.[22] Demonstrating that they learned valuable lessons from the policing of counterfeiting in southwest Indiana, the Cincinnati police implemented a similar undercover operation to catch the Oxford counterfeiters. The police once again tasked Gardiner with infiltrating the gang in order to bring it down from the inside. Gardiner agreed to capture the Oxford criminals, adopted a fake identity, and travelled to Oxford to carry out to planned undercover operation.[23] In an effort to further establish Gardiner's fictional identity, the Cincinnati police sent Gardiner letters from his "wife" in St. Louis who wrote that police had searched their home and were looking for him.[24] Once again, the letters served to solidify Gardiner's identity and standing with the counterfeiters and he infiltrated the criminal group. After he arrived at Oxford and infiltrated the gang, Gardiner "learned many of their secrets," and obtained clear evidence of the men's guilt.[25] Gardiner's information allowed the Cincinnati police to arrest and charge two of its members with counterfeiting, one of whom offered to provide additional evidence of the gang's activities in an effort to obtain a reduced sentence.[26] The undercover operation allowed the Cincinnati police to infiltrate the gang, break its operations in the town of Oxford, and

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[22] "Rogues in Limbo-Success of a Cincinnati Detective*," The Daily Press*, May 23, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88077413/1859-05-23/ed-1/seq-2/)

[23] Ibid.

[24] "Rogues in Limbo-Success of a Cincinnati Detective*," The Daily Press*, May 23, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88077413/1859-05-23/ed-1/seq-2/)

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

remove them from the region. The police's efforts to rid a nearby town of its criminal element provides further evidence of the ways that Cincinnati's municipal police wielded the city's influence over the surrounding countryside. Oxford's request for help from the Cincinnati in 1859 reveals that the small towns surrounding Cincinnati turned to the city for help, indicating their belief in the power of its police to solve the towns' problems with its criminals.

The similarities between the Oxford case in 1859 and the Indiana cases from 1857 and 1858 reveal that Cincinnati's police adopted and refined successful techniques that helped rid the region of its counterfeiters. The three cases show that Cincinnati police supplemented and outright supplanted local law enforcement when they were incapable of dealing with local counterfeiters. Additionally, the people in all three cases willingly allowed Cincinnati's police to operate within their jurisdictions in order to bring an end to groups of counterfeiters who operated with impunity. The three cases show that Cincinnati police implemented several lengthy and organizationally complex undercover operations to successfully infiltrate the region's counterfeiting networks and destroy them from within. The police's success in destroying local counterfeiting operations helped to further pull the region into Cincinnati's influence that also safeguarded the local economies of the surrounding towns from counterfeiting. The small town's requests for help in dealing with their counterfeiters and criminals further shows the contrasts between the policing of counterfeiting along the Ohio River and its de facto acceptance in other parts of the United States.

Furthermore, the previous two cases also reveals that as the Cincinnati police refined their techniques fighting counterfeiting in southern Ohio during the early 1850s,

the department expanded the geographical scope of its efforts in to the west. Previous counterfeiting cases in Cincinnati show that the department arrested counterfeiters in other Ohio cities and towns such as Cleveland, Ravenna, and Darrtown. The cases from the early 1850s also showed that Cincinnati policed rural counterfeiters in northern Kentucky and travelled to western Pennsylvania to capture counterfeit bank plates. The Indiana cases show, however, that by 1857, Cincinnati police felt equally comfortable pursing counterfeiters westward, into Indiana. The department's westward expansion into Indiana shows that the region turned to Cincinnati, rather than Indianapolis, for aid in dealing with their counterfeiters. Rural Indiana's request to Cincinnati for help fighting counterfeiting provides a look at the interconnectedness of the region, revealing some of the hidden links between southern Indiana and Ohio. Through Cincinnati's policing of counterfeiting in southern Indiana, Ohio's strong state power penetrated into its western neighbor that in turn further reveals the power and reach of Cincinnati, and by extension Ohio, throughout the Ohio River Valley

Additionally, the department's undercover police work in southern Indiana and Ohio hints at the important role that trust played in the department's efforts to rid the Ohio River Valley of counterfeiting. Cincinnati police trusted in Gardiner's abilities to carry out multiple intricate and complex law enforcement operations designed to entrap and arrest the region's counterfeiters. In turn, Gardiner trusted in the department's capabilities to create compelling evidence that would establish crucial components of a criminal identity that limited the dangers of infiltrating the counterfeiting gangs. By enacting successful undercover operations in Indiana during the 1850s, Cincinnati police sought to remove counterfeiters from that area, possibly in recognition of the fact that the

structure of the region's commercial economy meant that any counterfeit money created in southern Indiana would likely find its way into Cincinnati. Thus, the Cincinnati police's multiple undercover operations throughout the region years apart reveals the department's desire to police and deter counterfeiting in both Ohio and Indiana. In order to successfully carry out their operations, however, Cincinnati police relied on and trusted each other to an extent rarely seen in other nineteenth-century police departments.

At the same time that Cincinnati police developed more professional and sophisticated techniques to police counterfeiting in the region, many counterfeiters along the Ohio River crafted equally creative responses to avoid detection and capture from the police. While Cincinnati police arrested quite a few counterfeiters in 1859, one family of counterfeiters, Indiana's Johnson family, plagued Cincinnati and the Ohio River Valley with their high quality counterfeit notes and an innovative counterfeiting operation headquartered on a small ship that travelled the Ohio River. By the late 1850s, at least three members of the family, John Johnson and his two sons Ira and Elijah, worked as counterfeiters along the Ohio River Valley. The three counterfeiters operated along the Ohio River, from Rising Sun, Indiana to Parkersburg and Wheeling, Virginia and by the mid-1860s, they shifted west, towards Indianapolis, where they worked with a loose confederation of counterfeiters that included Louis Sleight and John Frisby.[27] As Cincinnati's encounters with the Johnsons span several years, their efforts to try and

[27] "The St. Louis Counterfeiters," *Cleveland Morning Leader*, August 9, 1864. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83035143/1864-08-09/ed-1/seq-2/). The Johnson family of counterfeiters appears sporadically in the secondary literature. But as far as I can tell, the fullest account of the family's operations exists in these pages. See: Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 352 and Johnson. *Illegal Tender*, pg. 48

arrest the family showcases the seriousness of counterfeiting along the Ohio River, as well as Cincinnati's resolve to rid the city and the Ohio River Valley of counterfeiting.

Cincinnati's first encounter with the Johnson family in 1859 demonstrates that city's continued demand for specie, regardless of its origin, two years after the United States Congress banned the circulation of foreign coins.[28] As such, the coin forgers in Cincinnati reveal that they expected to find a ready market for their products that in turn provides evidence that Cincinnati's economy still dealt in foreign specie. While foreign coins may have largely disappeared from circulation in the United States by 1857, Cincinnati's demand for counterfeit specie indicates reveals that foreign coins still circulated along the Ohio River Valley.[29] In 1859, Cincinnati police attempted to put a dent in the supply of the region's counterfeit coins by arresting John Johnson and Frederick Hendricks. When the police searched the men's residence in Cincinnati, they found counterfeit gold pieces, counterfeit five-franc pieces, fake half-dollars, and a "counterfeiter's kit of tools."[30] When the police captured Hendricks as he attempted to flee to St. Louis via train, they found close to one thousand dollars worth of counterfeit coin in his possession.[31] It appears that Cincinnati's appetite for foreign specie remained

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[28] Murphy, Sharon Ann. *Other People's Money: How Banking Worked in the Early American Republic*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017, pg. 129

[29] Murphy. *Other People's Money*, pg. 130

[30] "Counterfeiters Arrested," Cleveland Morning Leader, April 27, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83035143/1859-04-27/ed-1/seq-2/).

[31] "Arrest and Examination of Counterfeiters," *The Daily Press*, April 26, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88077413/1859-04-26/ed-1/seq-2/).

strong throughout the 1850s, revealing one of the quirks of the region's counterfeiting underworld.

Taking a closer look at John Johnsons' arrest in 1859 reveals interesting parallels to the arrest of James Fields in Cincinnati eleven years ago in 1848 that indicates the two men likely knew each other and forged a working relationship in the region's counterfeiting underworld. In regards to their illicit business practices, both Fields and Johnson counterfeited French coins, indicating that both men expected to find a ready market for the coins in Cincinnati's commercial economy in the late 1840s and 1850s.[32] Another connection between the two men emerges in the locations of their arrests. When Cincinnati police arrested James Fields in 1848, they found the counterfeiter at a house on Cincinnati's Baum Street.[33] When Cincinnati police arrested John Johnson in 1859, they also found his counterfeiting operation at a house on Baum Street. A map of Cincinnati from 1855 reveals that Baum Street was not a long, or large, street, it appeared to consist of a free hundred feet before it ended. The close proximities of the two men's arrests suggest that Fields may have informed Johnson where to set up his operation in Cincinnati. The clearest connection between the men, however, results from the fact that both men resided in Rising Sun, Indiana in 1859.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the small town of Rising Sun, Indiana, located on the Ohio River attracted several prominent counterfeiters and reveals that some of the

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[32] "Arrest and Examination of Counterfeiters," *The Daily Press*, April 26, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88077413/1859-04-26/ed-1/seq-2/).

[33] "Important Arrest," *The New York Herald*, October 8, 1848. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1848-10-08/ed-1/seq-4/).

regions counterfeiters may have started shifting their operations to nearby towns in an effort to avoid Cincinnati's police. For example, Daniel Brown, one of the nation's most prominent counterfeiters in the first half of the nineteenth century, built a home at Rising Sun.[34] Both the Johnson family and James Fields lived in the small town of Rising Sun, Indiana, by 1859 and at least one Chicago newspaper speculated that Fields and the Johnson family worked together to pass counterfeit money in the Ohio River Valley.[35] Just four months after the Cincinnati police arrested John Johnson for counterfeiting in 1859, the city's police travelled to Rising Sun and arrested James Fields who worked as a "wholesale dealer" in both bogus coins and counterfeit notes.[36] Lastly, in 1860 Cincinnati police arrested Nelson Driggs in Rising Sun, after he fled Cincinnati in a failed attempt to set up a counterfeiting operation in the city.[37] With the Cincinnati police going to significant lengths to deter counterfeiting in both their city and the surrounding areas, it is not surprising that the region's counterfeiters would attempt to relocate their operations to a small town like Rising Sun. Indeed, Rising Sun provided some of the advantages for counterfeiting found in Cincinnati: access to the Ohio River to spread counterfeit money, the option to escape the area via a ship on the Ohio River, and the town lacked a police force that could match Cincinnati's abilities to pursue and arrest

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[34] Mihm, *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 164

[35] "Important Arrest of Counterfeiters," *The Press and Tribune*, August 16, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82014511/1859-08-16/ed-1/seq-2/).

[36] *Dayton Daily Empire*, July 27, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85026002/1859-07-27/ed-1/seq-1/).

[37] "Arrest of the Noted Counterfeiter Nelson Driggs," *The Spirit of Democracy*, April 11, 1860. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85038115/1860-04-11/ed-1/seq-2/).

counterfeiting. The Cincinnati police, however, negated the advantages of trying to relocate a counterfeiting operation to Rising Sun by travelling to the town and arresting its counterfeiters.

Perhaps recognizing the extensive efforts that Cincinnati undertook to police counterfeiting throughout the Ohio River Valley, the Johnson family attempted to create an innovative counterfeiting operation to avoid the Cincinnati police. Following Fields' arrest at Rising Sun in 1859, Cincinnati placed the Johnson family under surveillance, watching the family for evidence of counterfeiting.[38] While the detectives observed and charted the family's movements and they noticed that Ira Johnson, John Johnson's son, made frequent trips between Cincinnati and Covington, Kentucky.[39] Two Cincinnati detectives followed Ira on his next trip across the Ohio River, where they learned that Ira recently purchased a flatboat and stored it in Covington. The detectives believed that the Johnsons planned to use the boat to simultaneously trade along the Ohio River and pass their counterfeit money into the river's small towns.[40] Before the Cincinnati police could arrest the Johnsons, the counterfeiters left Covington on their boat and travelled south on the Ohio River. In order to put a stop to the family's counterfeiting operation, the

[38] "Important Arrest of Counterfeiters," *The Press and Tribune*, August 16, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82014511/1859-08-16/ed-1/seq-2/).

[39] Ibid.

[40] "Pursuit and Arrest of Three Notorious Counterfeiters," *Memphis Daily Appeal*, August 19, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045160/1859-08-19/ed-1/seq-2/).

Cincinnati police obtained their own ship and pursued the counterfeiters down the Ohio River.[41]

The Johnsons' plan to pose as traders and pass counterfeit money along the Ohio River encompasses some of the key reasons as to why counterfeiters chose to operate in the Ohio River Valley during the late 1850s. Furthermore, their mobile counterfeiting operation hints at the Johnson's counterfeiting skills and ingenuity in their efforts to pass counterfeit money along the Ohio River undetected. In the short amount of time that separated the Johnsons flight from Covington and the police's pursuit of the counterfeiters, the men successfully passed counterfeit money in several rural communities along the Ohio River, revealing their skills as shovers of counterfeit money the high-quality of their fake money.[42] Using a ship to travel and pass counterfeit money simultaneously allowed the men to pass more counterfeit money across a larger geographical area while also leaving the area before people realized that the notes they obtained from trading with the Johnsons were counterfeit. After pursuing the counterfeiters down the river, Cincinnati police finally caught up to the family near Louisville, Kentucky and arrested the men before they could continue passing money along the river.[43] When the police searched the ship, they found one and two-dollar notes on the Bank of Kentucky, threes on the Southern Bank of Kentucky, and spurious gold

[41] "Pursuit and Arrest of Three Notorious Counterfeiters," *Memphis Daily Appeal*, August 19, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045160/1859-08-19/ed-1/seq-2/).

[42] "Important Arrest of Counterfeiters," *The Press and Tribune*, August 16, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82014511/1859-08-16/ed-1/seq-2/).

[43] Ibid.

dollars that totaled close to six thousand dollars worth of counterfeit currency.[44] The detectives also found the equipment to create counterfeit money such as a banknote press, engraving tools, ink, the materials needed to print the colored backs of the notes, and a large amount of banknote paper.[45] More importantly, the officers found bank plates, used to create counterfeit money, onboard the boat.[46] All of the confiscated evidence indicates that the Johnson's ship functioned as a mobile counterfeiting operation, one that travelled along the Ohio River and passed low denomination counterfeit bills and coin into the Ohio River economy. After the detectives apprehended the counterfeiters, they escorted the Johnsons across the Ohio River, to Jeffersonville, Indiana. The Jeffersonville court examined the charges against the counterfeiters, determined that enough evidence existed to conduct a trial, and set their bail at two thousand dollars a piece.[47] When the Johnsons failed to post bail, the officers took the men to prison.[48] While the Johnson's waited for their trial, two of the detectives travelled to their house at Rising Sun in an effort to locate the other bank plates that the counterfeiters used for the counterfeiting operation. The detective's search, however, turned up empty and the officers failed to locate the plates.[49]

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[44] "A Large Haul of Counterfeiters, *The Evansville Daily Journal*, August 16, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015672/1859-08-16/ed-1/seq-2/).

[45] Ibid.

[46] "Important Arrest of Counterfeiters," *The Press and Tribune*, August 16, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82014511/1859-08-16/ed-1/seq-2/).

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

[49] "The Gang on a Trading Boat on the Ohio River," *The New York Herald*, August 17, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1859-08-17/ed-1/seq-3/).

A closer look at the Johnson counterfeiters reveals that each member of the family occupied an important role in the mobile operation. First, John Johnson helped plan the mobile counterfeiting operation and engraved the bank plates with the designs of the counterfeit notes. More importantly, John Johnson's occupation as an engraver provided the counterfeiters with crucial knowledge needed to purchase the supplies and equipment for counterfeit notes, such as the engraving tools and ink found on their boat. Johnson's career as an engraver also provide the family with knowledge of how to engrave the banknote plates that the Cincinnati police found onboard their ship. The capture of John Johnson removed an important asset to the region's counterfeiting underworld, a man who knew how to engrave banknote plates and who planned and participated in an innovative mobile counterfeiting operation. Furthermore, John Johnson also knew the local market for counterfeit currency as prior to his arrest in 1859, Johnson went to prison in the Jeffersonville, Indiana, penitentiary for counterfeiting.[50] An informative, though likely exaggerated, estimation of John Johnson's activities as a counterfeiter emerges in a local paper that speculated Johnson was one of, if not the most, extensive counterfeiters operating in the west.[51] While John Johnson engraved the banknote plates and supplied the necessary information about the region's counterfeiting market, his son Ira worked as the gang's forger, the man who created the fake signatures found on the counterfeit bills. Allegedly, Ira forged high-quality signatures, signing the counterfeit money with "great

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[50] "Arrest of Counterfeiters," *Richmond Enquirer*, August 19, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024735/1859-08-19/ed-1/seq-2/).

[51] Ibid.

skill" that aided the gang's efforts to pass their counterfeit money along the rural Ohio River Valley.[52] With John Johnson engraving the bills, obtaining the necessary supplies, and implementing his knowledge of the region's counterfeiting underworld, and Ira Johnson's skill in forging the signatures found on the bank notes, the two created a formidable team. John Johnson's other son, Elijah also provided the operation with vague "valuable services" to the counterfeiting operation.[53] While Elijah's role in the operation is unclear, it is possible that he played a role in passing the counterfeit money, as the Secret Service arrested him for that particular crime in1865, when he tried to pass counterfeit treasury notes.[54]

The Johnsons' mobile counterfeiting operation reveals one of the ways that the region's counterfeiters evolved in response to Cincinnati's powerful police force. A mobile operation allowed the Johnsons to create counterfeit bank notes on their ship, far from the attention of the Cincinnati police. Rather than running their operation in a fixed location that left them open to discovery, if the police wanted to raid the Johnsons' mobile operation then they had to go to more extensive efforts to destroy the counterfeiter's operation. The mobile counterfeiting operation would have likely been quite successful in other parts of the United States, as a lack of cooperation plagued

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[52] "Arrest of Counterfeiters," *Richmond Enquirer*, August 19, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024735/1859-08-19/ed-1/seq-2/).

[53] "Pursuit and Arrest of Three Notorious Counterfeiters," *Memphis Daily Appeal*, August 19, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045160/1859-08-19/ed-1/seq-2/).

[54] *Pardons for Making of Passing Counterfeit Money, Forgery, and Perjury, United States House of Representatives*, Fortieth Congress, Second Session, Executive Document no. 179, February 19, 1869, pg. 37. Obtained from Hein Online (https://heinonline.org/HOL/Welcome).

United States law enforcement until the late nineteenth century.[55] As such, the Johnsons' counterfeiting operation on a ship allowed the men to traverse the multiple state, municipal, and political boundaries found throughout the Ohio River Valley that attracted counterfeiters to the region.[56] The family's strategy of creating the money on board a ship, and then passing it as they traded down the Ohio River was quite innovative, and shows that the small trading boats that travelled the Ohio River offered counterfeiters key opportunities to pass fake currency.

Additionally, unless rural police suspected the Johnsons of passing counterfeit notes prior to their arrival in the town, then they would have little reason to search their ship for evidence of counterfeiting. Recall, that Cincinnati's police only discovered the operation after they placed the Johnsons under surveillance, a process likely beyond the scope of rural police. Furthermore, lack of communication made it difficult for one town to warn their neighbors downriver of the Johnsons' illicit activities. Therefore, by counterfeiting the notes on board the ship, the Johnsons attempted to limit the number of people who could both discover and put a stop to their counterfeiting operation. By establishing their operation on a ship, the Johnsons' attempted to solve one of the major problems that confronted counterfeiters across the United States: where to establish their operations. While the Johnson's addressed the question of location through a fairly unique approach, other nineteenth-century counterfeiters established their operations in

[55] Monkkonen, Eric H. "History of Urban Police." *Crime and Justice*15 (1992): 547-80. Obtained from JSTOR (www.jstor.org/stable/1147625), pgs. 556-557

[56] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 164

out of the way and unlikely places, such as caves, in order to avoid unwanted attention.[57] By counterfeiting and dealing the notes from a ship, the Johnson counterfeiters attempted to minimize the risk of discovery either by police or unwanted people passing by.

Furthermore, the Johnsons' decision to pose as traders and use their boat as a mobile trading operation reveals a creative solution to the problem of passing a high volume of counterfeit notes undetected within a short period of time. Given the difficulty that both nineteenth-century police and business owners faced in attempting to trace a counterfeit note back to its original source, it would be next to impossible for them to trace a counterfeit note to a mobile operation on a boat that travelled the Ohio River. Not only did the Johnsons create their counterfeit money on board the ship, all they needed to do to pass it on to people was to have it ready to go during their business transactions. At least one paper believed that the Johnsons' planned to pass their counterfeit money "under the pretense of trading."[58] The Johnsons' knew that their best chance for passing a large amount of counterfeit money in a short period of time involved exploiting legitimate business transactions.

The Johnsons' use of low denomination counterfeit bills further reveals that the region's counterfeiters made pragmatic choices in regards to the notes they counterfeited that also provides insights into the rural Ohio River economies. The Johnsons believed that they could pass low denomination counterfeit notes along the Ohio River more easily than trying to pass a higher denomination counterfeit bank note. Lower denomination

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[57] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 157

[58] "A Large Haul of Counterfeiters, *The Evansville Daily Journal*, August 16, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015672/1859-08-16/ed-1/seq-2/).

notes attracted less attention during a business transaction and also allowed the Johnsons to pass multiple counterfeit notes when they made change during their transactions. Finally, the Johnsons' choice to counterfeit bills on the Bank of Kentucky and the Southern Bank of Kentucky indicates that people who lived and worked along the Ohio River recognized those banknotes and preferred them in their business dealings. All of the Johnsons' decisions in regards to their mobile counterfeiting operations point to the fact that the men understood the counterfeit economies along the Ohio River, crafted their notes accordingly, and built an operation designed to deter the police from noticing and stopping their operation.

That the Cincinnati police expended the time and effort to pursue and arrest the Johnson family down the Ohio illustrates the continued growth of the Cincinnati police, the application of lessons learned from its previous encounters with the region's counterfeiters, and Ohio's abilities to regulate the local economies found on the Ohio River. Rather than allow the Johnsons to pass their counterfeit money well beyond the city of Cincinnati, the city's police obtained their own ship and pursued the counterfeiters hundreds of miles down the Ohio River, further demonstrating the seriousness and reach of their efforts to rid the region of counterfeiting. The police's efforts to pursue the Johnsons down the Ohio River, despite the fact that the counterfeiters passed notes well beyond Cincinnati's boundaries, hints at possibility that the police understood the interconnectedness of the rural and urban economies along the Ohio River. After all, if the Johnsons successfully passed their counterfeit notes into a nearby rural town, then Cincinnati's role as a commercial center on the Ohio River made it was possible, even likely that the note would make its way into Cincinnati's commercial economy. Thus,

Cincinnati's extensive efforts to pursue the Johnson counterfeiters down the Ohio River resulted in their removal from the region's counterfeiting underworld that in turn served the economic interests of the rural and urban communities along the Ohio River.

Despite their arrests and an appearance before a Jeffersonville, Indiana court for counterfeiting in 1859, the Johnsons returned to counterfeiting within a matter of months. In the summer of 1860, Cincinnati police noticed that a high quantity of counterfeit Bank of Kentucky ten-dollar notes circulated in the city. Given the bank's stature as a state bank, and the low denomination of the bills, the counterfeit ten-dollar bills easily infiltrated Cincinnati's economy. Cincinnati police needed to quickly figure out where the bills were being produced before more of the counterfeit currency entered the region's economy. In an effort to determine the source of the counterfeit money, Cincinnati police once again placed one of their officers undercover in Cincinnati's counterfeiting underworld. Within a short amount of time, the undercover officer successfully infiltrated the counterfeiting network and revealed in a coded letter that the majority, if not all, of the counterfeit Bank of Kentucky money originated from a rural area close to Parkersburg, Virginia.[59] After learning the source of the counterfeit money, Cincinnati police travelled to Parkersburg and arrested the group responsible for creating the fake currency, which included a familiar face: Ira Johnson.[60] Just a few months later, in October 1860, police arrested John Johnson when he passed counterfeit money in

[59] Hinting at the gang's reach east, the letter also revealed that the Parkersburg counterfeiters sent their fake currency east, to Pittsburgh. "Important Arrest of Counterfeiters," *The Lansing State Republican*, August 1, 1860. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016318/1860-08-01/ed-1/seq-1/).

[60] "A Nest of Counterfeiters Broken up—Important Arrests Made—Plates, Material and Tools Secured," *Pomeroy Weekly Telegraph*, July 31, 1860. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85038184/1860-07-31/ed-1/seq-1/).

Butler County, Ohio. Johnson escaped Butler's jail and made his way to his extended family in Wheeling, Virginia. Butler officials sent a letter to Wheeling's local government urging them to be on the lookout for Johnson. After they received the letter, local police arrested Johnson and escorted him to Wheeling's jail.[61]

Both John and Ira Johnson's reappearances throughout the Ohio River Valley helps reconstruct the movements of the counterfeiters to reveal that they operated within a limited geographical area that also betrays how they viewed the region's police. In terms of their geographical reach, the Johnson's operated in the states that bordered the Ohio River. The family lived for a time in Rising Sun, Indiana, before finding their way into Cincinnati's counterfeiting underworld. The Johnson's travelled as far south as Louisville, Kentucky in their efforts to pass counterfeit money along the rural Ohio River. Lastly, the family operated in western Virginia and also attempted to evade capture from police in that state as well. Perhaps the Johnsons' believed that once they left an area, the Cincinnati police would leave them alone, a tactic United States counterfeiter's commonly employed in their efforts to frustrate local law enforcement. Furthermore, if the Johnsons' believed they could exploit the region's various boundaries to escape the Cincinnati police, by contrast they believed that the region's rural police lacked the capabilities to put an end to their counterfeiting operation. The extensive and repeated efforts by Cincinnati police to arrest and remove the men from the region, highlights the relative weakness of the surrounding rural police; a weakness that was on display when southwestern Indiana turned to Cincinnati for help in dealing with their

[61] "Arrest of a Suspected Counterfeiter," Daily Intelligencer, March 1, 1861. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026845/1861-03-01/ed-1/seq-3/).

local counterfeiters. The Ohio River Valley counterfeiters, however, often realized too late that Cincinnati's police operated differently than the urban and rural police who operated across the United States, as the department pursed and arrested counterfeiters in Indiana, Kentucky, and western Virginia.

While the Cincinnati police arrested counterfeiters in Indiana, Kentucky, and Virginia, the department furthered the scope of its operations and its reach in 1859 when they arrested a group of counterfeiters in Illinois who planned to pass counterfeit bills on New Orleans' Canal Bank along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Other than demonstrating the increased reach of the Cincinnati police, the Canal Bank counterfeiting network illustrates one of the connections between the Ohio and Mississippi River counterfeiting underworlds. The illicit connections between the Ohio and Mississippi counterfeiting underworlds demonstrates one of the ways that the region's illicit economy followed the path of the nation's capitalist system. The Canal Bank counterfeiters further reveal the illicit connections between the Ohio and Mississippi River counterfeiters by fostering connections with counterfeiters in Memphis and St. Louis. The Cincinnati police first encountered the counterfeiters in late 1859, when a Cincinnati detective arrested one of its members on a train in Illinois.[62] After the detective interrogated the counterfeiter, he pursed the man's partners into Missouri, where he arrested the alleged leader of the counterfeiters. In the man's possession, the detective found close to two thousand dollars in counterfeit tens on the Canal Bank of New Orleans. One paper described the counterfeit tens as "most admirably executed" that "deceived some of the

[62] "Discovery of a Quarter of a Million Dollars in Counterfeit Bank Notes," *The Penny Press*, December 1, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85025750/1859-12-01/ed-1/seq-3/).

very best judges."[63] The detective also found papers in the man's possession that indicated that the group specialized in counterfeiting, dealing, and passing counterfeit tens on the Canal Bank of New Orleans. The confiscated papers also claimed that the counterfeiters created a quarter of a million dollars worth of the counterfeit notes in Indiana and meant to "circulate it simultaneously" throughout the west and south.[64] In order to effectively distribute the money across the region, the counterfeiters planned to pass the money in Cincinnati, New Orleans, and St. Louis.[65] The papers claimed that a group of men left Cairo, Illinois, bound for New Orleans with plans to pass the counterfeit money south as they travelled on the Mississippi River.[66] The counterfeiters planned to sell and pass the counterfeit money into their respective cities at the same time in order to pass as much of the fake money into circulation before police realized what was happening in their cities.[67]

Through the Canal Bank counterfeiters, the links between the counterfeiting underworlds found along the Upper South and the Deep South are revealed. The Cincinnati police's arrest of the counterfeiters in Illinois and Missouri shows the

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[63] "Large Haul of Counterfeit Money," *The Press and Tribune*, December 3, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82014511/1859-12-02/ed-1/seq-1/).

[64] "Discovery of a Quarter of a Million Dollars in Counterfeit Bank Notes," *The Penny Press*, December 1, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85025750/1859-12-01/ed-1/seq-3/).

[65] Ibid.

[66] "Counterfeiters," *The Athens Post*, December 9, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024443/1859-12-09/ed-1/seq-1/).

[67] "Discovery of a Quarter of a Million Dollars in Counterfeit Bank Notes," *The Penny Press*, December 1, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85025750/1859-12-01/ed-1/seq-3/).

expansion of Cincinnati's reach into other parts of the nation. The Canal Bank counterfeiters targeted key cities in the region's commercial economy, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and New Orleans, in which to pass their counterfeit notes. By passing their counterfeit notes in the region's major urban centers, the Canal Bank counterfeiters insured that the notes would circulate far and wide from the original distribution point. Cincinnati, St. Louis, and New Orleans functioned as a major import and export centers in the Ohio and Mississippi River commercial economies, pulling different regional markets into their influence that connected to the nation's larger capitalist system. Therefore, by passing the money in Cincinnati, the counterfeit currency entered into Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky and Virginia. Passing counterfeit money in St. Louis meant that it could circulate into the nation's frontier economies in the West. Finally, New Orleans offered the possibility of the money circulating throughout the Deep South, into Mississippi, Tennessee, and Texas. While circulation into Texas may appear farfetched, the *Dallas Herald* warned its readers to be on the lookout for counterfeit tens on the Canal Bank of New Orleans, indicating the possibility that the counterfeit currency could circulate deep into Texas. The *Herald* specifically noted that the information regarding the counterfeit notes originated from a counterfeiter arrested in Cincinnati who also possessed papers revealing that men left Cairo, Illinois with a large amount of counterfeit money meant for circulation throughout the South.[68] When taken together, the articles about the Canal Bank counterfeiters reveal that communities from central Texas, to southern Ohio, from southern Louisiana, to western Tennessee, people across the

[68] Dallas Herald, January 4, 1860. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84022278/1860-01-04/ed-1/seq-2/)

United States worried about finding the counterfeit money in their local economies. Thus, the Cincinnati police's discovery of the Canal Bank counterfeiters demonstrates that their efforts to fight counterfeiting along the Ohio River Valley contained the potential to impact other communities far beyond Cincinnati, such as Dallas in the west and Memphis and New Orleans in the Deep South.

Furthermore, the Canal Bank network underscores the importance of counterfeiting the notes of a reputable bank, one that held regional credibility and whose notes would not be out of place in the rural and urban communities along the two rivers. Across the South, New Orleans' banks carried an air of stability not found in many banks across the South and circulated across the nation.[69] The Canal Bank's location in New Orleans, the South's major financial center, meant that people across the South, and along the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, likely recognized the name of the bank, if not its bills. Furthermore, the counterfeiters not only relied on New Orleans' financial reputation to give their notes credibility, they also created high quality counterfeit notes that helped ensure their passage into the local river economies. Given the papers vague descriptions of the counterfeit Canal Bank notes, they noted that the word "ten" was a slightly lighter shade in the counterfeit, that a "flourish" existed between the words "Canal Bank," and that a line connected the two "lls" found in the word "dollar," their high quality likely

[69] Green, George D. *Finance and Economic Development in the Old South: Louisiana Banking, 1804-1861*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972, pgs. 76-77

ensured that people refused the genuine bills of the Canal Bank as often as they accepted its counterfeits.[70]

Cincinnati's efforts to deter and eliminate counterfeiting along the Ohio River, across the state of Ohio, and even across other state's borders, rivals in scope, and exceeds in complexity, the efforts of other nineteenth-century police departments. While it is of little surprise that the nation's financial centers of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, paid special attention to the nation's financial criminals, it was the city of Cincinnati, a place not known for its financial complexity, that housed one of the nation's most sophisticated anti-counterfeiting operations during the mid-nineteenth century. For the Cincinnati police, the late 1850s and early 1860s brought an end to many of the prominent counterfeiters and networks that operated near Cincinnati. Cincinnati's police travelled into western and southern Indiana to arrest the region's rural counterfeiters when local police were unable to put an end to their activities. The police refined and implemented their undercover operations with great success, infiltrating the counterfeiting networks in rural Indiana, Ohio, and western Virginia. The department expanded the scope of its powers into central Illinois, where it arrested members of the Canal Bank counterfeiters who planned to pass thousands of dollars of counterfeit money along the Mississippi River and into the South. Cincinnati police's discovery of the Canal Bank counterfeiters reveals a connection between the Ohio River counterfeiters and the Mississippi River counterfeiting underworld that provides a clue into the expansiveness of both underworlds. After all, just as the legitimate side of the United

[70] "Large Haul of Counterfeit Money," The Press and Tribune, December 3, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82014511/1859-12-03/ed-1/seq-2/)

States' capitalist economy knit the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers together, so too did its underground counterpart. Given that both the nation's capitalist and slave economies spread westward, it makes sense that equally sophisticated underground economies followed their progression across the United States. Counterfeiting in the South, however, carried far more dangerous consequences than it did in New England and Cincinnati, consequences that occasionally turned deadly.

IV. CHAPTER THREE

Wholesale Outrage and Retributive Justice: Responses to Counterfeiting in the Deep South

Perhaps it is no surprise that given their operations along the borders of the nation's capitalist and slave economies the region's counterfeiters entangled themselves in more than the economic politics of the United States. Occasionally, the region's counterfeiters found themselves involved in the preeminent issue that the United States had grappled with since its very inception: slavery. In an effort to exert their control over the enslaved, southern cities and rural areas established powerful police forces that should have made them powerful tools in the region's efforts to fight counterfeiting. A close examination of counterfeiting along the rural areas of the Mississippi River, however, indicate that local police were either too ill-equipped to deal with counterfeiting or devoted most of their time towards policing the enslaved. The local judicial system's inabilities to effectively punish counterfeiting in the region forced some rural southerners to take matters into their own hands. In an effort to put a permanent end to counterfeiting in their midst, some rural areas on the Mississippi resorted to killing counterfeiters that served as a warning to other counterfeiters who may have thought about setting up their operations in the rural Deep South. While the rural vigilantes along the Mississippi River employed different methods than Cincinnati's municipal police to deter counterfeiting, the vigilante's still pursued a similar goal: the removal of counterfeiting from the region that in turn safeguarded the integrity of local economic transactions. By protecting the integrity of the local economy from counterfeiting, the vigilante's actions served the

public good and safeguarded the economic interests of the nineteenth-century American state.

The exploration of the rural Mississippi River Valley's responses to counterfeiting provides a look at how rural communities in the Deep South attempted to deter counterfeiting in one of the United States' prominent geographical borders. In addition to closely examining counterfeiting in the geographical borders of the United States, counterfeiting along the rural Mississippi River in the Deep South reveals how rural communities in the region responded to the crime when they lacked the option to call on a well-organized police force. In doing so, we can then compare and contextualize the rural Deep South's responses to counterfeiting that provides a more nuanced picture of counterfeiting's acceptance or deterrence across the United States during the nineteenth century. Furthermore, looking at how the rural areas along the Mississippi River responded to counterfeiting also helps further our understanding of how counterfeiting worked in the different regions of the United States, not just in the commercial northeast and in the free states of the Midwest. Lastly, the exploration of rural counterfeiting on the Mississippi River sheds light on how some rural communities in the Deep South supplemented weak judicial institutions by resorting to punishing counterfeiting through vigilantism and violence. The chapter contextualizes the region's responses to counterfeiting in the 1840s by showing that they contain echoes and connections to the region's earlier responses to the Murrell gang of criminals, whose alleged presence throughout the Mississippi River Valley in the late 1830s, ignited a violent response against the region's criminals and against a group of gamblers in Vicksburg, Mississippi. In revealing the connections between the region's violent responses to the Murrell gang

and Vicksburg gamblers in the 1830s, to the region's responses to counterfeiting in the 1840s, the chapter argues that they can be contextualized as the Deep South's efforts to safeguard the integrity of key pieces of the region's capitalist system. The Murrell gang allegedly planned to organize a slave revolt to hide the gang's efforts to rob the region's banks, Vicksburg's gamblers obtained wealth through speculation and enticed other young men to get rich quick that led to financial ruin, and the region's counterfeiters acted to undermined the very paper currency that facilitated the region's economy. Lastly, while on the surface it appears that the region responded violently to counterfeiting, a deeper look reveals that those responses often resulted from instances when counterfeiters participated in slave and horse stealing, or when they consistently avoided punishment for their crimes. As such, the region's responses to counterfeiting unconnected to other crimes paints a picture of a region that held more in common with the Midwest and East Coast United States, in terms of policing counterfeiting, than was previously known.

The study of counterfeiting and vigilante policing helps provide additional insight into the commercial and financial world of the rural Mississippi River that is missed by other works that focus on the chaotic nature of the region following the removal of the Creek and Cherokee during the 1830s. Works that typically focus on the financial world of the Deep South and on the Mississippi River tend to examine the role of credit and paper currency in the acquisition of land and slaves and how some people believed that they could find a new start in the region.[1] The works that look at the southwestern United

[1] Regarding the rise of the southwestern United States and its links to a global cotton economy that facilitated the growth of global capitalism see: Beckert, Sven. *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014. For a look at how nineteenth-century southerners viewed the region as the

States examine how the acquisition of land and slaves in the Deep South to produce cotton integrated the region into a global market that in turn was reinvested in the area through the availability of more credit that could be used to buy land, slaves, and cotton. The region's links to a global economy, however, also carried dire consequences, as seen in the panic of 1837 when many planters defaulted on their debts.[2] The macro focus on the Deep South levels the experiences of an entire region into a story that focus on the experiences of slave owners and would-be slave owners and cotton farmers that leaves out the stories of other people who settled in the region. While the encompassing land rush in the 1830s called to the Deep South those who wished to make money from cotton and the enslaved, it also called counterfeiters to the area as well. Counterfeiters likely found the chaotic financial conditions in the newly opened Deep South ideal, as currency from all over the United States, and possibly the world, facilitated the region's economic transactions.[3] Therefore, by looking at counterfeiting and the region's attempts to police it, often through vigilante methods, we also gain a better understanding of the other people who populated the region, beyond slave owners.

Additionally, the focus on counterfeiting and policing in the Mississippi River Valley, results from the fact that it was one of the few regions in the Deep South, other

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key to the preservation of slavery and the role of credit in this process see: Johnson, Walter. *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013. The story of how some men believed they could reinvent themselves in the American southwest, and the deadly consequences that it carried for the region see: Rothman, Josh. *Flush Times and Fever Dreams: A Story of Capitalism and Slavery in the Age of Jackson*. Athens: University Press, 2012

[2] Baptist, Edward E. "Toxic Debt, Liar Loans, Collateralized and Securitized Human Beings and the Panic of 1837," in *Capitalism Takes Command: The Social Transformation of Nineteenth Century America*. ed. Michael Zakim and Gary Kornblith. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.

[3] Johnson. *River of Dark Dreams*, pg. 37

than New Orleans, where counterfeiters congregated, albeit in far fewer numbers than found in the nation's urban centers. The majority of the evidence for counterfeiting in the South during the nineteenth century indicates that counterfeiters avoided establishing major counterfeiting production sites in the South's interior. One possible explanation for the lack of counterfeit production sites in the South could be attributed to region's constant policing of slavery and its continuous scrutiny of outsiders.[4] After demonstrating the extent and presence of counterfeiting networks along the Ohio River, however, it is clear that counterfeiters did not need to establish production sites in the South to either circulate money in the region or to make money through the selling and/or passing of counterfeit notes. If anything, the South's financial system, one that favored the circulation of lower denomination notes and lacked specie as a viable circulating medium, offered counterfeiters ideal opportunities to pass counterfeit notes and an even greater incentive for counterfeiters to forge coin in a specie starved economy.[5] The South made for an excellent environment to circulate counterfeit notes and its reliance on, and connections to, the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers for trade meant that counterfeiters did not need to establish their operations in the South to be able to circulate their notes in the region.

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[4] A point Mihm makes in *A Nation of Counterfeiters*. Mihm notes "the reluctance of counterfeiters to site themselves in the slave states probably had something to do with the history of vigilante violence directed at 'land pirates,' gamblers, and other outsiders in the 1830s." Mihm also notes "it may also reflect the far greater resources dedicated to maintaining social control in the region. See: Mihm, Stephen. *A Nation of Counterfeiters: Capitalists, Con Men, and the Making of the United Stats*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007 pg. 199

[5] See Bodenhorn, Howard. *State Banking in Early America: A New Economic History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. Pg. 220. Bodenhorn argues that in the South, "small denomination notes were vital in a specie short, but heavily commercialized economy." Counterfeiters often focused their operations on creating fake low denomination notes as (high quality) lower valued notes faced decreased suspicion about their authenticity.

Counterfeiters did, however, congregate along the Mississippi River in the Deep South as it provided them with key advantages to set up a counterfeiting operation that were missing from the South's interior. For example, trade along the Mississippi River offered counterfeiters commercial cover to pass counterfeit notes. River trade, coupled with the presence of various banknotes from across the nation, provided counterfeiters with countless opportunities to pass their fake notes, opportunities lacking in the South's interior rural economies. The steamboats that travelled the Mississippi River offered counterfeiters important opportunities to escape police pursuit and helped reestablish their operations in other regions of the United States. Lastly, while the Deep South contained both organized police and quasi-police in the form of the various slave patrols that operated throughout the South, southern police were primarily concerned with the policing of slavery, not with trying to pursue and arrest the counterfeiters when they fled on the Mississippi River.[6]

Furthermore, the Mississippi River economy not only acted as the end point for the region's internal commerce (i.e. bringing cotton from a plantation and loading it onto ships bound for New Orleans), but it also carried goods from the nation's urban centers to the rural river towns, meaning that it simultaneously functioned as a starting point for the South's internal commerce as well.[7] The structure of the Mississippi River economy followed a fairly straightforward path that illuminates the countless opportunities for counterfeit money to enter it undetected. The trading ships that travelled on the river

[6] Rousey, Dennis. *Policing the Southern City: New Orleans, 1805-1889*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996

[7] Smith, Thomas Ruys. *Southern Queen: New Orleans in the Nineteenth Century.* London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011, pg. 51

offloaded their wares into the region's cities and towns, where their residents purchased the goods with coin and paper currency, and occasionally with counterfeit money. If a storeowner found out they received counterfeit money after the fact, they could either destroy the money and realize a loss of profit or pass the counterfeit money to the next customer, which then reinserted the counterfeit money into the local economy.[8] In turn, that person either passed the counterfeit money along in a future business transaction in the town/city/countryside or figured out that it was a fake note and possibly tried to redeem it at a local bank. Either way, the basic economic transactions begun along the river communities facilitated the insertion of counterfeit notes into the South's rural and urban economies. The structure of the Mississippi River economy meant that it offered countless opportunities for counterfeit money to enter the Deep South, while also ensuring its continuous circulation until someone recognized that a note was counterfeit.

Before continuing, it is important to explain a few arguments and terminologies that appear in the next two chapters. First, this chapter does not claim that counterfeiters in the Deep South made concentrated efforts to buy slaves and land with counterfeit money that in turn provided them with the social and political privileges that accompanied the ownership of land and slaves in the South. The purchase of land and slaves conferred on the buyer economic, political, and social clout that invited close scrutiny of the transaction; hardly the ideal circumstances to pass a counterfeit note. Few

[8] In *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, Mihm talks extensively about the passing of counterfeit notes in the New England states, but these strategies could easily occur along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers as well. Mihm noted that some businessmen in New England intentionally passed counterfeit notes to their customers in an effort to rid themselves of the "bad" money in exchange for the "good." For more on the passing, and detecting, of counterfeit notes see *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, in particular the chapter "Passing and Detecting."

examples exist of a person knowingly buying either slaves or land with counterfeit money, although it occurred sporadically across the region during the nineteenth century.[9] Rather, the region's economic, political, and social foundations in the enslaved economy provided its citizens with key incentives to heavily police their communities through both state sanctioned and vigilante methods in regards to slavery, but not counterfeiting. Therefore, the hyper-policing in the South, when coupled with the role of violence in white male southerner's understanding of honor, produced occasionally violent responses to counterfeiting in ways not seen in the North.

Finally, while not a main point of the work, it is important to note that by looking at counterfeiting along the South's borders and in New Orleans, counterfeiting provides a glimpse into the ways that non-planters participated in the United State's larger capitalist market system. One of the key arguments of Stephen Mihm's work is that counterfeiting worked as kind of shadow capitalism that provided the nation's communities, especially its rural ones, with access too much needed and highly sought after paper money.[10] In turn, paper money facilitated basic economic exchanges that allowed rural and other communities to participate in the nation's emerging capitalist system. Therefore, the

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[9] Examples of counterfeit money being used to purchase land are discussed later in this chapter. Concrete evidence linking the buying of slaves with counterfeit money, however, is scarce. In 1852, however, one case emerges that links counterfeiting and abolitionism. In 1852, New York convicted William Johnson for passing counterfeit notes and sentenced him to the penitentiary for three years. Johnson acted as the secretary of the Vigilance Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society and his conviction caused a stir in Louisiana. One paper wondered "How many slaves have been spirited away by means of counterfeit money we have no means of knowing." Other than open speculation, no hard evidence exists in which Johnson purchased the freedom of slaves with counterfeit money. "The Under-Ground Railroad—Its Conductor in Prison," *The Planters' Banner*, June 19, 1852. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86053688/1852-06-19/ed-1/seq-2/).

[10] See: Fabian, Ann: *Card Sharps and Bucket Shops: Gambling in Nineteenth Century America*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Ann Fabian makes a similar argument in regards to the rise of bucket shops in the rural United States. Fabian argues that "bucket shops" offered rural famers and businessmen access to Chicago's emerging futures markets on a lower scale.

study of counterfeiting provides a counterintuitive glimpse into the ways that non-plantation, and non-slave owning, southerners participated in capitalism during the nineteenth century.

Furthermore, for the purpose of clarity, the next two chapters of the dissertation uses the term "southerner" as a general description for white males in the South. The reliance on the general term "southerner" does not advance a claim that counterfeiting only impacted white males or that white women and people of color's thoughts about counterfeiting are unimportant. As will be seen in New Orleans, groups of women both successfully counterfeited their own currency and passed counterfeit money into New Orleans' market economy, actions that often confused their male counterparts. Rather, the use of the term in the work is with the understanding that white males created the primary bulk of the evidence found in the work that they meant for other white males to consume.

Lastly, before exploring responses to counterfeiting along the Mississippi River and in parts of the rural South, one final point regarding the sources found in this, and the other, chapters must be made. The earlier chapters of the work relied on newspaper accounts, judicial sources, and state crime statistics, to gain a better understanding of the Ohio River's counterfeiting underworld. In order to reconstruct counterfeiting in the rural Mississippi River Valley, however, this chapter is primarily reliant on newspaper accounts that reported on the region. When treated with caution, nineteenth-century newspapers provide a key window through which to view a local community's responses to counterfeiting that in turn sheds light on its values and priorities. Nineteenth-century newspapers, however, fiercely competed for readers and in order to increase circulation numbers, many papers exaggerated the seriousness and extent of a particular

counterfeiting incident. Therefore, when possible, the chapter consults multiple stories of a single event in an effort to corroborate the information with as many sources as possible. Newspaper accounts of counterfeiting, however, are still valuable even without evidence corroborating every part of their accuracy. While the "data" (the names, places, and other pieces of information) are important, the primary value of the newspaper stories reporting on counterfeiting in the rural South are the details that they inadvertently reveal in their stories; details that shed light on how and why rural white male southerners reacted towards counterfeiting in ways not seen in other parts of the United States.

In order to contextualize southern responses to counterfeiting, along the Mississippi River, it is important to understand the region's uneasy history with counterfeiting. When the United States government removed the Creek and Cherokee from the southwestern United States in 1836 and 1838, the resulting land boom and speculation frenzy offered counterfeiters a unique opportunity to purchase rich cotton land with fake money.[11] Additionally, the land boom and speculation in the newly opened Native American territory offered counterfeiters and shovers a golden opportunity to purchase the keys to political, social, and economic status in the South: land and slaves. When the United States government opened its auctions for the Creek and Cherokee lands, counterfeit notes appeared in the economic chaos that characterized the frenzy of the land sales.[12] In May 1834, the *Congressional Globe* reported that someone either knowingly or unknowingly used a counterfeit one hundred-dollar bill on the Bank

[11] Green, Michael. *The Politics of Indian Removal*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982, pg. 127 and Conley, Robert J. *The Cherokee Nation: A History*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005, pg. 155

[12] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 159

of the United States to purchase land from Uriah Mitchell, who worked as the receiver of public money for the land in the Cahawba land district in Alabama. [13]

During the nineteenth century, counterfeiters frequently targeted the currency of the Second Bank of the United States due to its stability and its recognition by Americans as a stable financial institution in the United States regardless of where Americans lived in the nation.[14] The steadier the banking institution, the more likely people accepted its notes as genuine, which in turn attracted counterfeits of the bank's notes.[15] The stability of the Second Bank of the United States lends credit to the argument that Mitchell accepted the counterfeit hundred-dollar as a genuine note and in turn, sold its owner Creek land. Bank of the United States currency offered the appearance of stability in a place, Alabama, and time, 1830s, when both land speculation and the proliferation of a variety of bank notes created a financial atmosphere of instability and chaos, in which a person could easily pass counterfeit notes unnoticed. Additionally, following the removal of the Cherokee in 1838, United States officials realized that an individual or a group of people purchased some of the former Cherokee lands with counterfeit money.[16] Therefore, the chaotic and quick land speculation deals that characterized the buying and selling of the former Native American lands in the Deep South made it extremely difficult, if not outright impossible, for United States officials to determine both the source of the fake notes and to connect the notes to the land that the government sold in

[13] Francis Blair and John Rives, "In the Senate," *The Congressional Globe*, May 10, 1834, pg. 363

[14] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 102

[15] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 221

[16] Thomas Loring, "Comptroller's Report," *The North Carolina Standard*, January 22, 1840, vol. 6, no. 273, pg. 1

exchange for the note. The use of counterfeit currency to purchase Native American lands in the Deep South shows that the threat of someone buying land, and by extension status, though illegal means could be a pressing concern to white southerners.

With the removal of the Creek in 1836 and the Cherokee in 1838, the South continued its westward expansion towards the Mississippi River, and counterfeiters followed the nation's expanding western borders. In 1835, southerners who lived in Memphis, Tennessee voiced concerns about counterfeiters who operated in the Arkansas Territory, on the other side of the Mississippi River. One of the concerned citizens, a man named Charles McLean, wrote a letter to Elijah Hayward, the Commissioner of the General Land Office, in which McLean described a situation where several prominent citizens of Memphis were concerned about a "law-less band of freebooters" who paid for their purchases in counterfeit notes and squatted on the public lands in Arkansas.[17] McLean and other citizens argued that the group of counterfeiters threatened the integrity of the Mississippi River trade, all the way up to its junction with the Ohio River and into the states of Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois.[18] McClean's letter specifically demonstrates that some people in the region recognized that counterfeiting contained the potential to undermine a key portion of the nation's capitalist economy, and the state needed to act in order to protect the region from counterfeiting. Lastly, when Charles McLean's specifically mentioned that the citizens of Memphis were "in perpetual fear of losing our Slaves" to the counterfeiters across the river, he further reveals one of the ways

[17] Carter, Clarence. *The Territorial Papers of the United States: The Territory of Arkansas 1829-1836*. Washington: The Government Printing Office, 1954, pg. 1059

[18] Ibid.

that counterfeiters and their currencies threatened a key foundation of southern capitalism, the region's control over the enslaved.[19]

The linkages between counterfeiting and slave stealing in McLean's letter indicate that the counties in Mississippi remembered the fallout from a region wide mass hysteria incited by an 1835 pamphlet written by a man named Virgil Stewart. Stewart's pamphlet claimed that a group of criminals belonging to a gang ran by John Murrell planned to incite a slave rebellion on Christmas day in 1835 in order to mask several planned bank robberies.[20] After two women allegedly heard the enslaved talking about the plot, a group of planters sought to stop the insurrection before it could happen and searched for members of the gang.[21] When the planters interrogated the slaves, they obtained information that implicated two white men in the plot who planned to aid their insurrection.[22] In an effort to circumvent the alleged planned rebellion, the region's planting class executed all the suspected members of the alleged plot and believed they had avoided a terrible fate. In reality, Stewart over emphasized the group's organization and reach and the men planned no such insurrection. The Mississippi River Valley, however, remained on high alert for any perceived slave insurrection.[23] At the same time, nearby Vicksburg worried about the poor white men who made money gambling rather than through "traditional" means and viewed these men as the perpetrators of "all

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[19] Clarence Carter, *The Territorial Papers of the United States*, pg. 1059

[20] Rothman. *Flush Times and Fever Dreams*, pg. 73

[21] Rothman. *Flush Times and Fever Dreams*, pgs. 91-92

[22] Rothman. *Flush Times and Fever Dreams*, pgs. 119-127

[23] Rothman. *Flush Times and Fever Dreams*, pg. 131

of the disturbances and crime" that plagued the city.[24] The combined fears of a slave insurrection that contained the participation of poor whites, who may or may not have been professional gamblers, held sway over the region's imagination for several years. As such, the region responded quickly and violently to assert its control over both the enslaved and the region's economy system. By targeting the gamblers, southerners in the Deep South also sought to reinforce the importance of obtaining wealth through hard work and discipline, two key parts of nineteenth-century capitalism's ethos. In doing so, the violent responses served to protect the parts of the local capitalist system from thieves and gamblers that reveals the region's vested interest in the nation's expanding capitalist system.

McLean's letter, however, does not specifically mention if the counterfeiters near Memphis were members of the "Murrell Gang."[25] There are clues in his letter, however, that McLean left open the possibility that the gang near Memphis was affiliated with, or a part of, the Murrell syndicate. In McLean's letter, the strongest piece of evidence linking

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[24] Rothman. *Flush Times and Fever Dreams*, pg. 162

[25] See Rothman, Josh: *Flush Times, Fever Dreams: A Story of Capitalism and Slavery in the Age of Jackson*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010. John Murrell was affiliated with at least a "dozen or so" criminals in the Arkansas borderlands. The size of the gang, however, was distorted by the reports of Virgil Stewart, the man who captured John Murrell. A Tennessee slave owner named John Henning hired Stewart to find the slaves Murrell stole from his farm in Tennessee. Stewart tracked down Murrell, rode with him to Arkansas, and attempted to locate Henning's stolen slaves. When Stewart realized the slaves were not in Arkansas, he returned to Tennessee and had Murrell arrested. In order to gain fame and honor from his exploits, Stewart claimed Murrell was the leader of a large, complex criminal syndicate of horse thieves, slave stealers, counterfeiters, and murderers who operated along the Mississippi River. Stewart claimed in his autobiography of the incident, that Murrell revealed to him two tiers of criminals in his confederacy. There was a "Grand Council" of four hundred members who planned the strategies and "the strikers" who numbered "near six hundred and fifty" who acted on the guidance of the Grand Council. See: Howard, H.R. *The History of Virgil Stewart and his Adventure in Capturing and Exposing the Great "Western Land Pirate" and His Gang in Connexion with the Evidence; Also of the Trials, Confessions, and Execution of A Number of Murrell Associates in the State of Mississippi in 1835 and the Execution of Five Professional Gamblers by the Citizens of Vicksburg, on the 6th of July, 1835*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1839, page 54

this group of counterfeiters to the gang emerges when he wrote that a Tennessee court recently sentenced one of the criminals from Arkansas to ten years imprisonment in the Tennessee state penitentiary for slave stealing.[26] McLean is almost certainly talking about John Murrell, the alleged leader of the Murrell gang whom in 1834 a Madison, Tennessee court tried and found guilty of slave stealing.[27] Whether McLean's counterfeiters were associated with the Murrell gang or not, the counterfeiters' theft of slaves troubled those who lived across the Mississippi River. Newspaper references to the specter of the Murrell gang constantly reminded their readers to be extra vigilant over their enslaved, lest their lack of control over the slaves, their property, lead to a violent rebellion that threatened the southern social order.

During the mid-1830s, southerners continued linking counterfeiters to both slave stealing and to the Murrell gang, showing how the region used the specter of the criminals to protect key parts of the region's capitalist system. Less than a month after McLean wrote his letter, the *Southern Recorder* reported in August 1835 that members of the Murrell gang threatened to incite a slave insurrection in Vicksburg, Mississippi and that Murrell was involved in passing counterfeit notes in Tennessee.[28] Six months after McLean's letter, the *Federal Union* wrote that people in Little Rock, Arkansas executed Jon Tipton, an alleged member of the gang.[29] The paper described Tipton as slave stealer involved in the "passing of counterfeit currency" and "one of the most audacious rascals

[26] Carter, *The Territorial Papers of the United States,* pg. 1059

[27] Grieve and Orme, "State Sovereignty," *The Southern Recorder*, no. 30, vol. 16, pg. 3

[28] Ibid.

[29] John A. Cuthbert, "More Executions of the Murel Bandits," *The Federal Union*, December 25, 1835, vol. 6, no. 26, pg. 3

of the Murrell gang."[30] For Little Rock's citizens, violence provided the appropriate deterrent to counterfeiting and slave stealing, not the muted justice found in the state's courtroom. Indeed, it appeared to southerners along the Mississippi River that members of the Murrell gang operated throughout the South and that the gang of counterfeiters, slave stealers, and horse thieves threatened to topple southerner's rigid control over the enslaved; control southerners employed to maintain their hold over their communities. Southerners believed slave stealers threatened the foundations of profit on which the system of slavery rested and in doing so they also threatened the integrity of the capitalist system itself.[31] By consistently liking counterfeiters to slave stealers, southerners demonstrated the seriousness of the threat that counterfeiting posed to the social and economic foundations of their way of life. Along the Mississippi River, therefore, counterfeiters needed to be dealt with quickly in order to protect the Deep South's social and economic worlds.

In 1838, southern newspapers continued linking counterfeiters to slave stealing. On August 7, 1838 the *Federal Union* exposed the dangerous link between the two illicit professions when it published the confession of a counterfeiter named William Clark who the state planned to execute for the crime of stealing the enslaved from a plantation.[32] The *Federal Union* published the confession to "throw some light on the mysterious

[30] John A. Cuthbert, "More Executions of the Murel Bandits," *The Federal Union*, December 25, 1835, vol. 6, no. 26, pg. 3

[31] Rothman, *River of Dark Dreams*, pg. 34

[32] Park and Rogers, "Villainy Disclosed," *Federal Union*, August 7, 1838, vol. 9, no. 7, pg. 3

disappearance" of slaves in Mississippi.[33] The *Federal Union* noted "an extended and well organized gang" practiced "their feats of villainy upon the property of the community."[34] Clark and his confederates kidnapped slaves in Mobile, Alabama and took them to Houston, Texas where they sold the enslaved to new masters. The men who bought the slaves in Houston were brothers who went by the last name Elliott. Clark reported that the Elliot's were "involved in counterfeiting" and that he possessed the plates that the Elliot's used to counterfeit bank notes on New Orleans banks.[35] It is evident in the language that prefaced Clark's confession that the *Federal Union*'s editors believed that counterfeiters threatened the property, in the form of the enslaved, of southerners throughout the South, especially in Mississippi. Therefore, the paper's publication of Clark's confession allowed southerners to see the state establish and then reassert control over a narrative in which southern males mastered both their fate, and more importantly, their property, the enslaved. Additionally, the paper also published the confession as a warning to counterfeiters and slave stealers of the consequences of their actions. In the South, execution awaited the practitioners of counterfeiting and slave stealing. For southerners, Clark's execution meant the removal of a counterfeiter and slave stealer from their midst and reasserted the state's ability to regulate and protect the region's economy from a serious threat.

It appears, however, that the executions and imprisonments of individual counterfeiters failed to serve as an adequate warning to the future counterfeiters who

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[33] Park and Rogers, "Villainy Disclosed," *Federal Union*, August 7, 1838, vol. 9, no. 7, pg. 3

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

operated along the Mississippi River and in rural parts of the Deep South during the 1840s. In 1841, six years after McLean's letter, and three years after Clark's confession, counterfeiters still operated along the Mississippi River. Indeed, the following example demonstrates that violence still played an important role in southern reactions to counterfeiting. Additionally, the example shows that the region's judicial system faced difficulties in effectively punishing the counterfeiters who operated in the newly incorporated frontier territory of Arkansas. The lack of punishment for counterfeiting offers one possibly explanation for the region's use of violence towards their local counterfeiters. Finally, the incident recounted below reveals that southerners continued to link the crimes of counterfeiting and slave stealing together, showing how the region's economic system shaped southerners perceptions of counterfeiting in ways not seen along the Ohio River and in the northeast United States.

In August 1841, New Orleans newspapers obtained information about the killing of a group of counterfeiters on the Mississippi River from the captain of a steamship that recently arrived in the city. The captain informed the Picayune's reporters that a group of people from Phillips County, Arkansas and Coahoma County, Mississippi, worked together to destroy a gang of "counterfeiters and horse thieves" who operated along both sides of the Mississippi River. [36] The counterfeiters and criminals allegedly operated in the region for quite some time and did not fear retaliation from the local police and judicial system. Fed up with the group's defiant acts, a group of people from Arkansas and Mississippi decided to permanently remove the counterfeiters from the region. The

[36]"Lynch Law in Arkansas-Nine Men Executed without Trial," *New York Tribune*, August 25, 1841. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030212/1841-08-25/ed-1/seq-2/).

men organized into a group, armed themselves, and then set out on a ship down the Mississippi River to capture the counterfeiters. The captain revealed that after a few days, the group captured twenty-seven counterfeiters and took the men to a secluded spot on the Mississippi River. Next, the vigilantes bound the men's hands and feet together and drowned them in the river. The captain claimed that he met the armed vigilantes shortly after they executed the counterfeiters and that they were in pursuit of a man named Marian (Marion) Wright. Finally, the captain noted that as he travelled downriver towards New Orleans, several people informed him that they had seen seven or eight bodies floating down the Mississippi River.[37] The captain's story paints a picture in which a group of people from Arkansas and Tennessee were so enraged at the group's abilities to avoid punishment, that they took the matter into their own hands and killed the counterfeiters and criminals. Through their actions, the vigilante's removed the counterfeiters from the region, which in turn eliminated a source of counterfeit money that likely circulated throughout the Mississippi River Valley.

As newspapers across the United States picked up the story, more facts emerged that simultaneously confirmed the majority of the captain's account, and added new information to the affair. Georgetown, Ohio's *Democratic Standard* carried a story originally published in the *St. Louis New Era* five days after the original *New Orleans Picayune* account. The *New Era's* story confirmed that the gang consisted of a group of

[37]"Lynch Law in Arkansas-Nine Men Executed without Trial," *New York Tribune*, August 25, 1841. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030212/1841-08-25/ed-1/seq-2/).

counterfeiters while adding that other members of the group were gamblers.[38] The discrepancy, while mundane, is important when paired with another description of the counterfeiters that emerged in an Illinois newspaper taken from the *St. Luis Republican*. The *Republican* noted that the vigilantes inflicted "Lynch Law" on a number of "counterfeiters, gamblers, negro stealers, and inland pirates."[39] The use of the term "inland pirate" and the inclusion of "gamblers" is a likely reference to the title of Virgil Stewart's pamphlet that detailed the scope and operations of the Murrell gang in the 1830s.[40] As such, the newspaper possibly invoked the ghost of John Murrell and the Murrell gang in its references to the Mississippi counterfeiters in 1841. Therefore, the *New Era's* and *St. Louis Republican's* description of the counterfeiters acting as both gamblers and land pirates provides an additional explanation that region may have responded violently to the counterfeiters due to its perceived problems with the Murrell gang years ago.

The new information that emerged later on about the Mississippi River incident provides insight into some of the ways that the presence of the enslaved and the South's efforts to police the enslaved and its communities influenced rural Mississippi's

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[38] "Horrible Tragedy! Counterfeiters and Gamblers Drowned!! Arson-Unheard of Outrages!!," *Democratic Standard*, August 31, 1841. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83035312/1841-08-31/ed-1/seq-3/).

[39] "Mob Law in Full Force," *The Illinois Free Trader and LaSalle County Commercial Advertiser*, August 27, 1841. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82014968/1841-08-27/ed-1/seq-2/).

[40] Howard, H.R. *The History of Virgil Stewart and his Adventure in Capturing and Exposing the Great "Western Land Pirate" and His Gang in Connexion with the Evidence; Also of the Trials, Confessions, and Execution of A Number of Murrell Associates in the State of Mississippi in 1835 and the Execution of Five Professional Gamblers by the Citizens of Vicksburg, on the 6th of July, 1835*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1839.

responses to counterfeiting. For example, one explanation as to why the group of armed citizens from Arkansas and Mississippi resorted to violence emerges in the *Vicksburg Whig* article, published in the *Southern Banner* at Holly Springs, Mississippi. The *Vicksburg Whig* described the criminals as both counterfeiters and robbers. The *Whig*, however, also added the information that the group stole horses and, more dangerously, stole enslaved from the region's farms and plantations. Therefore, the counterfeiters' abilities to undermine southern control over the enslaved meant that they, likely unintentionally, rebuked the plantation owners' beliefs in their abilities to assert their will and control over the enslaved. In short, the counterfeiters forced some of the region's slave owners to the uncomfortable conclusion that they were, in fact, not masters over the enslaved nor could they force the enslaved to stay on the planation, farm, or in the community. As such, the counterfeiters and criminals now posed a serious threat to one of the key tenants of white, male, southern identity and masculinity: their belief, and expectation, that they could assert their will and control over the enslaved. Therefore, the region's slave owning class, and others, resorted to the one tool that allowed them reassert in their own minds, and in the minds of their communities, their standing atop the social order: extreme violence.

The actual methods that the vigilante's employed to capture the Mississippi River counterfeiters is a key piece of information that reveals the intricate planning put forth into the efforts to remove the counterfeiters from the region. New Orleans' newspapers noted that the vigilantes from Arkansas and Tennessee obtained a trading boat and disguised themselves as a group of traders travelling down the Mississippi River who

stopped to sell their goods to the people living on its banks.[41] When the disguised trading boat stopped at one the gang's suspected locations, the counterfeiters boarded the ship and attempted to buy produce with counterfeit money. After the men passed the counterfeit money, the hidden members on the ship captured the counterfeiters and detained the men below deck. The entire process repeated itself until the group captured the majority of the counterfeiters, and then they executed the criminals on the Mississippi River. [42] The group's adoption of the identity of a river trader indicates that they knew the ruse would likely convince the counterfeiters to come on board their ship in an effort to buy their produce with counterfeit money. By donning the disguise of a river trader, the men gained clear evidence of the counterfeiter's guilt, and only executed the men after they had the evidence literally in hand. By purchasing produce with counterfeit money, the Mississippi River counterfeiters followed a similar tactic as the rest of the nation's counterfeiters who mostly used counterfeit money to buy food and goods, like clothing, rather than trying to pass counterfeit money in an effort to accumulate the trapping's wealth, or to even get wealthy.[43]

The execution of the counterfeiters on the Mississippi River offers a tailor made story that blurs the lines between myth and reality which makes it difficult to figure out what happened on the river's banks in 1841. One of the key discrepancies in the accounts is the reported number of men killed on the river. Initial reports indicate that

[41] "Lynch Law in Arkansas-Nine Men Executed without Trial," *New York Tribune*, August 25, 1841. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030212/1841-08-25/ed-1/seq-2/).

[42] Ibid.

[43] Mihm. *A nation of Counterfeiters*, pgs. 210 and 215

the vigilantes drowned nine of the counterfeiters.[44] The more outlandish stories believed that the disguised traders killed upwards of fifty to seventy counterfeiters and criminals on the Mississippi River.[45] In actuality, the exact amount of killed counterfeiters is not important. The mere fact that the vigilantes killed any counterfeiters at all indicates an increased hostility towards counterfeiters, and their brazen flouting of the local judicial system, not seen in other regions of the United States. By charting the names of the killed counterfeiters mentioned in the nation's newspapers, however, it is possible to arrive at a more accurate number of those killed on the Mississippi River than the inflated numbers reported in the nation's newspapers. Between the first accounts that emerged in August 1841 to the *Nile's Weekly Register's* inclusion of the *Arkansas Gazette's* defense of the vigilante's actions on November 6, twenty seven newspapers across the United States published details about the Mississippi River incident. The names of nine men appear frequently in all the accounts. While another six other names appear less frequently, they are still mentioned often enough as to warrant consideration. Therefore, rather than the disguised traders killing seventy five criminals, or fifty, or even twenty three, it is more probable that they killed at least nine and as many as fifteen counterfeiters in the summer of 1841. The key point, however, is that the vigilante's resorted to deadly violence in the first place to finally rid the area of counterfeiting. Although the group employed violence

[44] "Lynch Law in Arkansas-Nine Men Executed without Trial," *New York Tribune*, August 25, 1841. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030212/1841-08-25/ed-1/seq-2/).

[45] "Mob Law in Full Force," *The Illinois Free Trader and LaSalle County Commercial Advertiser*, August 27, 1841. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82014968/1841-08-27/ed-1/seq-2/).

to remove a source of counterfeit money form the region, in doing so they aided the state's effort to regulate and protect the region's economy from counterfeiting.

Additionally, while the vigilante's also removed the counterfeiter's families from the area, they did not kill them. The vigilante's restraint suggests that they reserved their violence for those who, in their minds, deserved it. After the vigilantes killed the counterfeiters on the Mississippi River, the group visited the areas where the family members of the gang lived, warned them not to return, and then set fire to their homes.[46] While the vigilantes burned the homes of the counterfeiters' family members, no evidence exists that the men targeted and killed the members of the families, indicating that they only wanted to use their violence in response to the criminals directly responsible for the perceived crimes that occurred along the Mississippi River. Therefore, while the counterfeiter's pushed the vigilante's to act violently towards them, the vigilantes simultaneously reserved their violent actions towards those people that they perceived as being the one's most deserving of their wrath.

Finally, an interesting piece of evidence emerges to show that the group appeared to operate on a larger, regional level as a counterfeiting network and provides a connection to the Ohio River's counterfeiting underworld. After the vigilantes burned the homes of the counterfeiter's families, they continued searching the area for a man

[46] "Most Horrible, From 70-75 Persons Lynched!" *Rutland Herald*, September 14, 1841, vol. 47, no. 37, pg. 3. The September 4, 1841 edition of the *Niles' Weekly Register* also believed that the vigilantes killed between fifty to seventy five counterfeiters. "Terrible Application of Lynch Law," *Nile's Weekly Register*, September 4, 1841, vol. 11, no. 1, pg. 3. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov).

named Marion Wright, the "cashier" for the gang.[47] The vigilantes wanted to capture Wright before he returned to the Mississippi River after he allegedly visited a major counterfeiting center on the Ohio River: Cincinnati.[48] Cincinnati's role as one of the key nodes in the United States' counterfeiting underworld and Wright's return to Mississippi after visiting that particular city, hints at a link between the Mississippi River counterfeiters and Cincinnati. Wright's fate, however, is ultimately unknown. One account claimed that several people in Napoleon, a small town near the Arkansas River, reported seeing Wright leave the area with "uncommon speed" in order to avoid the vigilantes.[49] Later accounts, however, painted a different story, when they somberly noted, "the cashier of the establishment was found dead in the river at Columbus (Columbia)."[50]

Contrast the rural, vigilante response to counterfeiting along the borderlands of the South to that of the urban Cincinnati police during the late 1840s and throughout the 1850s. Sources indicate that Cincinnati police never drew their weapons and killed a counterfeiter, even when it appeared that they would have been well in their right to do so. One such incident occurred in 1853, when a counterfeiter attempted to avoid arrest

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[47] "Lynch Law," *The Salt River Journal*, September 4, 1841. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016924/1841-09-04/ed-1/seq-1/).

[48] "The St. Louis Tragedy," *The North-Carolina Standard*, September 15, 1841. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042147/1841-09-15/ed-1/seq-2/).

[49] "Lynch Law in Arkansas-Nine Men Executed without Trial," *New York Tribune*, August 25, 1841. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030212/1841-08-25/ed-1/seq-2/).

[50] "Mob Law in Full Force," *The Illinois Free Trader and LaSalle County Commercial Advertiser*, August 27, 1841. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82014968/1841-08-27/ed-1/seq-2/).

by swinging an ax at a Cincinnati police officer. The police still arrested the man without resorting to deadly violence.[51] The Cincinnati police operated in a more reserved manner than the rural vigilantes on the Mississippi River when it came to dealing with the counterfeiters who operated in their city and in the surrounding countryside. Of course, by the 1850s, the Cincinnati police had more practice in pacifying the region and were not as concerned with the policing of slavery and all the complications that accompanied such an effort. Even before the professionalization of the Cincinnati police, they still did not respond to counterfeiting in a violent manner. Both Cincinnati's police and the rural vigilante's however, wanted to rid their respective areas of counterfeiting that in turn helped protect the economic soundness of the everyday transactions that took place in both region's economies.

The key difference between the violent Mississippi River incident and the restraint demonstrated by Cincinnati's police in regards to dealing with counterfeiting resulted from the different ways that the enslaved and capitalist economies viewed their counterfeiters constant and consistent violation of the law. First, the Mississippi River incident occurred in 1841, shortly after the territory of Arkansas achieved its statehood. Therefore, in order to help pacify the region for the expansion of the South and its economy, white southern males needed to send a strong message that the former wild frontier areas near the South were now under control. The need for the vigilante's to assert both their personal and judicial authority over the region emerges in the reasons for why the group finally took action against the counterfeiters. In regards to the Mississippi

[51] "Important Arrest of Counterfeiters at Cincinnati," *The New York Herald*, July 30, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov).

incident, several newspapers across the United States noted that the counterfeiter's constant flouting of the law, by avoiding arrest, or by appearing in court to provide key testimony that resulted in the freedom of their captured counterparts, enraged the local populace to the point that it drove them to take vigilante action.[52] In essence, the counterfeiters flouted and mocked the judicial authority of the South by exploiting its reliance on personal testimony that in turn allowed them to avoid justice, state sanctioned retribution, for their crimes. In actuality, the counterfeiters also defied the personal authority of the region's upper class, a slight and challenge that white southerners could not allow to go unpunished. The vigilante's actions, however, served to supplement the authority and power of the state and as such, they offered the state an additional tool through which to remove counterfeiters from the region that in turn helped the state regulate the economies of the Deep South.

An additional explanation for the vigilante's violent actions emerges in the August 26 edition of the *Alexandria Gazette* that shows the vigilantes reacted to the counterfeiters once they encroached on their personal authority and threatened their control over their property. The *Gazette* carried the story from the *New Orleans Bee*, which noted that "besides the encroachment on the peace and prosperity of the public," hinting at the gang's disregard for local laws, they "turned their criminal industry to horse stealing to such an extent as to rouse the whole neighborhood."[53] The two separate explanations for the vigilantes actions: that the gang spurned the men to action by

[52] "The Late Lynchings in Arkansas," *The Ohio Democrat*, September 30, 1841. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84028889/1841-09-30/ed-1/seq-2/).

[53] *Alexandria Gazette*, August 26, 1841. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85025007/1841-08-26/ed-1/seq-2/).

constantly flouting the law, or that they forced the vigilante's to act after they stole horses, show that the vigilantes' directed their violence towards those who undermined their abilities to assert their power and control over a region (the gang's constant flouting of the local law) and over their property (their horses). Both justifications, however, also show that the counterfeiter's potential to subvert the social order resulted in violent retribution, a key difference in the responses towards counterfeiting along the Mississippi River in the Deep South and responses in the Ohio River Valley.

Two questions emerge in regards to the Mississippi River incident whose answers in turn help explain the vigilante's actions and whether they responded to the group violently due to counterfeiting or for another reason such as horse stealing. First, did the vigilantes react violently towards a group of men who disturbed the peace and stole horses, or did they react because the men worked as counterfeiters? Second, would the vigilantes have ignored the counterfeiters if they left their peace and property alone? The newspapers that covered the incident provide the answers. All twenty-seven stories described the men as counterfeiters, but not all of the reports described the men as horse stealers, gamblers, or those who disturbed the peace, indicating that it was the men's identities as counterfeiters that primarily defined their danger to the Mississippi River communities. Furthermore, while the gang's decision to steal horses spurred the local populace to action, the primary reason for the vigilante's anger lay in the fact that the counterfeiters consistently avoided punishment for the crime of counterfeiting by lying and covering for each other during their examinations.[54] Finally, the vigilantes decided

[54] "The Late Lynchings in Arkansas," *The Ohio Democrat*, September 30, 1841. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84028889/1841-09-30/ed-1/seq-2/).

that the best way to capture the counterfeiters was to obtain a ship, adopt the identity of a group of traders travelling the river, and, most importantly, wait until the men tried to buy goods with counterfeit money, before they arrested the gang. The local citizens did not try and stake out a barn in order to catch the men in the act of stealing horses. Nor did they try and detain the men after they successfully avoided a trial. Rather the vigilante's waited until they received counterfeit money in exchange for their goods, before tying up and killing the men. From the vigilante's perspectives, the counterfeit money served as the only necessary proof of the men's guilt that in turn provided them with the justification to act decisively and violently to rid the area of the counterfeiters.

While counterfeit money provided the vigilante's with important proof of the counterfeiter's guilt, the crime of counterfeiting provided its practitioners with key advantages in the courtroom. Unfortunately, the Mississippi River counterfeiters exploited these advantages to such an extent that it led to their deaths. Nineteenth-century courtrooms across the United States relied heavily on personal testimonials in order to obtain convictions for the crimes of counterfeiting money and/or passing counterfeit notes.[55] By covering for each other, the Mississippi River counterfeiters simultaneously ensured both their freedom, while also reassuring each other that as long as they kept to their stories, then they would go free. In essence, the counterfeiter's alibis for each other allowed the group to operate in the region with impunity, a key reason for the vigilante's actions.

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[55] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 279

Finally, the non-violent nature of counterfeiting also provided its practitioners with protection from local prosecution, and the group of counterfeiters along the Mississippi River operated with non-violent methods. No report emerges that described the counterfeiters as violent, or that they acted violently towards others in order to advance their interests.[56] The lack of violence that surrounded their actions allowed the gang to appear unthreatening from a physical standpoint, which in turn allowed the group to operate in the region longer than they would have if they used violence to advance their interests. Other counterfeiters across the United States rarely acted violently and the Mississippi counterfeiters fell into this category as well.[57] The gang's constant avoidance of punishment, coupled with the local judicial system possibly tolerating their crimes far longer than they would have because it was a non-violent crime, meant that the local populace felt compelled to take justice into their own hands. Ironically, the advantages that counterfeiting provided its practitioners in other parts of the United States ultimately led to the deaths of a group of counterfeiters on the Mississippi River.

Furthermore, the tone that the nation's newspapers used to describe the incident reveals the deep regional divide in the United States in regards to counterfeiting, vigilante policing in the South, and the violent response to counterfeiting along the Mississippi River. The *Southern Banner* carried an article from *Vicksburg Whig* that titled the incident "Summary Justice," which implied that the citizens merely provided the justice

[56] The only time that the gang employed the threat of violence appeared in the September 2, 1841 edition of the *Holly Springs Gazette*. After the counterfeiters paid a trader in counterfeit money for his produce, he returned to the area with the counterfeit money. The counterfeiters threatened him with lynching if he did not leave at once. "Shocking Massacre," *Holly Springs Gazette*, September 2, 1841. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87090028/1841-09-02/ed-1/seq-1/).

[57] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 169

sorely needed in their communities that the state failed to carry out in its official capacity.[58] The *Columbus Democrat*, published in Columbus, Mississippi carried the same Vicksburg article but chose to title it "Summary Retributive Justice," implying that the criminals constant harassment of the locals justified the subsequent violent responses.[59] On the other hand, Georgetown, Ohio's *Democratic Standard* carried a *St. Louis New Era* article about the incident titled "Unheard of Tragedy!!—Counterfeiters and Gamblers Drowned and Murdered—Arson—Unheard of Outrages" indicating their outrage at what occurred downriver.[60] If the article's title failed to adequately convey the paper's stance on the incident, its opening left little doubt about how its writers felt about the vigilante actions taken on the lower Mississippi. The author wrote that "We have no language in which to characterize our detestation of the acts of cruelty and murder," which provides a glimpse into the different regional perspectives on the incident.[61] The author continued to lambast the incident, believing that "which for cold blooded atrocity, are unequaled in the annals of Lynch law."[62] Firing one more salvo, he believed the

[58] "Summary Justice," *Southern Banner*, August 27, 1841. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87065204/1841-08-27/ed-1/seq-3/).

[59] "Summary and Retributive Justice," *Columbus Democrat*, August 28, 1841. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016867/1841-08-28/ed-1/seq-3/).

[60] "Unheard of Tragedy!!—Counterfeiters and Gamblers Drowned and Murdered—Arson—Unheard of Outrages," *Democratic Standard*, August 31, 1841. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83035312/1841-08-31/ed-1/seq-3/).

[61] "Unheard of Tragedy!!—Counterfeiters and Gamblers Drowned and Murdered—Arson—Unheard of Outrages," *Democratic Standard*, August 31, 1841. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83035312/1841-08-31/ed-1/seq-3/).

[62] Ibid.

incident surpassed the "traditions of the most ferocious savages of the country."[63] Newspapers in the New England states offered a more muted rebuke of the vigilante's actions. In Vermont, the *Rutland Herald* contained an article published in the *Boston Daily Times* that labeled the incident "Most Horrible."[64]

Contrast the above cultural and judicial framework of the South's response to counterfeiting along the Mississippi River to Cincinnati's response to counterfeiters along the Ohio River. Despite ample evidence from past encounters that counterfeiters could either escape their prison cells or post bond and fail to return for a trial, Cincinnati police never resorted to violence as a final solution for riding the area of their presence. The difference is that Cincinnati and its people did not need to clearly establish where they fell in a local hierarchy in relation to enslaved. Nor did one's ability to assert their power and control over another human being play a key role in the formation of identity in Cincinnati. In the South, however, especially in the unsettled rural areas along the Mississippi River in the 1830s and 1840s, the above factors, power, control, the assertion of one's place in an ordered society, were key foundations of one's concept of self in the South.

Furthermore, in comparison to the lower Mississippi River in the 1840s, by the 1850s, Cincinnati and the Ohio River contained clearly settled areas with established judicial and police systems that allowed the region to police counterfeiting without resorting to

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[63] "Unheard of Tragedy!!—Counterfeiters and Gamblers Drowned and Murdered—Arson—Unheard of Outrages," *Democratic Standard*, August 31, 1841. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83035312/1841-08-31/ed-1/seq-3/).

[64] "Most Horrible," *Rutland Herald*, September 14, 1841. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84022355/1841-09-14/ed-1/seq-3/).

violence. Neither Cincinnati, nor the surrounding region, needed to assert personal and judicial authority over a newly settled region in order to pacify the area in a way that also made it safe for political and economic expansion. Therefore, the South's belief in the need for the cotton economy's westward expansion and growth in order to ensure the survival of the enslaved economy shaped rural southern responses to counterfeiting in ways not seen in the North.[65] For southerners, when the Mississippi River counterfeiters constantly undermined the authority and power of those charged with protecting their communities, which in turn potentially threatened the settlement of the area and the westward expansion of the enslaved economy, then the local populace took justice into their own hands and violently killed the counterfeiters operating in their midst.

In addition to the violent responses towards counterfeiting along the rural Mississippi River, counterfeiting in the rural areas along Mississippi's Gulf Coast also carried penalties that had the potential to destroy local reputations. During a local election in Gainesville, located in Hancock County, Mississippi in 1847, several residents allegedly received counterfeit Mexican dollar coins from an old man named Brown. When local residents failed to find counterfeit coins in Brown's possession, they took him to jail and threatened him with physical harm if he failed to provide information about the counterfeit coins. It appeared that Gainesville did not want to take the chances of bringing Brown before a local court and resorted to threatening Brown in order to obtain more information about the origin of the counterfeit coins. The threat of physical harm worked on Brown, who feared that the people would "take the law into their own

[65] Rothman. *Flush Times and Fever Dreams*, pg. 10

hands and lynch him," and he implicated two brothers, James and Washington Bilbo, as the source of the counterfeit coins.[66]

The Bilbo brothers made for an interesting source for counterfeit coins, as they appeared to contain the social standing needed to withstand Brown's accusations. Prior to the counterfeiting incident, the brothers allegedly possessed a "fair character," they worked as farmers, and lived in their own residence. Therefore the brothers, on the surface at least, contained markers of legitimacy that offered them a bit of social standing in southern society. That social standing, however, appeared to offer the brothers limited protection, as the people of Gainesville decided to pay the brother's farm a visit. After Brown implicated the Bilbo brothers as the source of the counterfeit coin, Brown's son-in-law, a man named Wages, posted Brown's bail and the men led a group from Gainesville to the Bilbo's farm, located in the upper part of Hancock County, Mississippi. Before the group arrived at the Bilbo's farm, however, they found a counterfeiting workshop near the farm that contained the dies and metals needed to create the fake Mexican gold dollars. The location of the counterfeiting operation to the Bilbo's farm, and the discovery of the material needed to create the fake coins at the production site, made the brothers the primary suspects for running the counterfeiting operation. The people from Gainesville secured the counterfeiting equipment and then proceeded to the

[66] "Fearful Tragedy in Mississippi," *The New York Herald*, January 3, 1848. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1848-01-03/ed-1/seq-1/)

Bilbo's home. After they arrived, the group arrested the two brothers without incident, and took the men back to Gainesville and placed them in jail.[67]

The brother's quick release from jail with no charges filed reveals that they possibly exploited their statuses as working farmers and men of fair character that allowed them to secure both their bail and their freedom. The potential for criminal accusations to negatively affect the little social capital the brothers had already accrued, however, resulted in the men setting out to restore their standing in Hancock County by extracting revenge on Brown and Wages. Following their release from custody, the brothers claimed that Wages made a living by stealing and branding the cattle of Hancock County's farmers. By claiming that Wages made his living through illegal means, the Bilbo's attempted to both discredit his character and to establish that unlike their status as working men, Wages worked as a criminal. Furthermore, at least one of the brothers, Washington Bilbo, lived in Hancock County for a number of years, thus potentially further establishing his standing in the rural community. Wages, on the other hand, recently arrived in Hancock with an unsavory reputation, as many people in Gainesville believed that prior to his arrival in Mississippi, Wages had killed a man in Alabama and was already on the run from the law. Following the Bilbo's accusations against Wages, Gainesville police arrested Wages, who then bonded out of custody prior to his trial. With their reputations in disrepute, Wages and Brown decided to leave Hancock County.[68]

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[67] "Fearful Tragedy in Mississippi," *The New York Herald*, January 3, 1848. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1848-01-03/ed-1/seq-1/)

[68] Ibid.

On the surface, it appeared that the Bilbo's extracted their revenge and restored their reputation in Hancock County. Despite bonding out of custody, however, the Bilbos' fellow citizens viewed the brothers with ill-repute and their reputation in Hancock County lay in shambles.[69] The charges of counterfeiting destroyed the men's reputations in southwestern Mississippi, which points to the serious effects that just being accused of the crime could have on a person's reputation in rural Mississippi. Despite finding a counterfeiting operation on, or near, the Bilbo's farm, Hancock's citizens failed to locate any evidence, other than Brown's testimony, that the brothers were the ones who created the counterfeit Mexican gold dollars found in Gainesville in 1847. Furthermore, the brothers never faced a trial before a Mississippi court and never confronted the evidence, or lack thereof, of their guilt in the matter. Rather, the mere suggestion that the Bilbo brothers ran a counterfeiting operation on or near their farm provided Hancock's citizens with enough suspicion about the brother's character that their reputation in Hancock County also lay in tatters.

The destruction of their reputation drove the Bilbo's to confront Wages and Brown as they departed Gainesville. For the brothers, only one option remained that would allow them to restore their character and standing in Hancock county: violent revenge. The Bilbo's armed themselves and confronted Wages and Brown at which point Wages shot and instantly killed James Bilbo. Caught unawares, Washington Bilbo failed

[69] The *New York Herald* article claimed that Hancock County's citizens were not angry about the brothers' deaths because Wages had "rid the country of two men whom none regretted (all believing fully in their guilt in counterfeiting) the inhabitants have taken no measures to arrest him." Fearful Tragedy in Mississippi," *The New York Herald*, January 3, 1848. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1848-01-03/ed-1/seq-1/)

to draw his rifle before Wages mortally wounded him with a second shot from his gun. Wages and Brown left Washington in the road and escaped Gainesville. A little while later, a traveller found Washington Bilbo on the road with his heavy wounds and took him back to his family in Gainesville.[70] Nobody in Gainesville ever saw Wages again.

Six months later, however, an interesting story emerged that hints at a deeper connection between the Bilbo brothers and Wages. On June 29, 1849 the *New Orleans Daily Crescent* published a story about the deaths of two men, Wagers (probably Wages) and McGrath. The Daily Crescent informed its readers that for the past six months a group of criminals terrorized Mississippi's Harrison County, and the surrounding counties as well. The paper also provided the last names of the criminals who terrorized the region, they were: Wages, McGrath, Copeland, and Bilboa. The *Crescent* reported in the article that six months ago, local police arrested and charged the men with belonging to a gang of counterfeiters who operated along the Pearl River. The location of the counterfeiting operation, on a creek that flows through the Pearl River, provides an additional piece of evidence that hints at a more complicated story between the Bilbo's and Wagers. The Bilbo's lived near the Pearl River when the Hancock citizens confronted them six months ago, in 1847, when Brown claimed that the brothers provided him with the counterfeit Mexican coin.[71] The *Daily Crescent* claimed, however, that one of the brothers provided evidence to local authorities that allowed them to arrest the other counterfeiters. The police arrested Wages, McGrath, and Copeland,

[70] "Fearful Tragedy in Mississippi," *The New York Herald*, January 3, 1848. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1848-01-03/ed-1/seq-1/)

[71] Ibid.

who failed to pay their bail. The court sentenced the men to prison to await their trial. The three counterfeiters, however, escaped from the local jail, found Bilbo, and shot him.[72]

In actuality, the relationships between the Bilbo brothers, Brown, and Wages were far more complicated and intimate than what appeared in the scattered newspaper accounts. In 1857, the Sheriff of Perry County, Mississippi recorded the confessions of James Copeland, the "Great Southern Land Pirate" that detailed his exploits with the "Wages Clan."[73] Copeland claimed that during the 1840s he and a man named Gale Wages formed a secret band of criminals influenced by the Murrell gang who operated across the Deep South.[74] According to Copeland, the gang initially engaged in the stealing of slaves by convincing them to runaway from their masters and then selling the runaways to a member of their gang, a "rich planter" who lived near New Orleans.[75] Copeland claimed that the gang successfully carried out their operations for years, with one variant of the operation calling for the men to travel to Cincinnati, pose as a group of traders travelling on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers for New Orleans, and then stealing slaves on the way.[76]

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[72] "Recent Outrage-Two Desperados Killed," *The Daily Crescent*, July 4, 1848. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015378/1848-07-04/ed-1/seq-2/).

[73] Pitts, J.R.S. *The Life and Career of Jas. Copeland, the Great Southern Land Pirate, who was Executed at August, Miss., October 30, 1857, Together with the Exploits of the Wages Clan, in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, and the West Generally, as Related by Copeland Previous to his Death, to J.R.S. Pitts, Sheriff of Perry County, Mississippi*. New Orleans: E.C. Wharton, 1858.

[74] Pitts. *The Life and Career of Jas. Copeland*, pg. 10

[75] Pitts. *The Life and Career of Jas. Copeland*, pg. 13

[76] Ibid.

According to Copeland's testimonial, the gang made such a profit stealing slaves and then reselling them back into slavery that Copeland saw little point in trying to make money from counterfeiting, an activity that the gang pursed after Copeland and Wages met Allen Brown.[77] After Brown convinced Wages to try counterfeiting, the group located a man who claimed that he could engrave their dies with the designs of the counterfeit bills. After the gang created their counterfeit notes, they added new members to their ranks who were to help distribute the money across the South. Two of the new members were James and Washington Bilbo.[78] Shortly after the group split up to pass their counterfeit money, however, the people of Gainesville caught Allen Brown paying for a small amount of goods with counterfeit money, a tactic employed by other passers of counterfeit money across the United States.[79] In an effort to avoid punishment, Brown informed the people that he obtained the counterfeit money from the Bilbo's, who swore revenge against Brown and Wages, his son-in-law, which resulted in the Bilbo's deaths.[80]

Copeland's account provides context for the Bilbo's' deaths and important insight into a man's perspective on counterfeiting in the Deep South that betrays his deep uneasiness with the crime. For a man who engaged in the extremely dangerous practice of slave stealing, Copeland seemed unusually skittish about the gang's involvement in counterfeiting money. Copeland's account contains several assertions that pin the destruction of the gang and Wages death to their shift from slave stealing to

[77] Pitts. *The Life and Career of Jas. Copeland*, pg. 50

[78] Pitts. *The Life and Career of Jas. Copeland*, pg. 55

[79] Pitts. *The Life and Career of Jas. Copeland*, pg. 58

[80] Ibid.

counterfeiting. Copeland believed that the gang's association with Allen Brown and by extension his role in convincing the group to try counterfeiting was the "main cause of our exposure, the deaths of Wages and McGrath (another member), and the annihilation of our clan." [81] When Wages informed Copeland about the gang's procurement of an engraver and their planes to pass counterfeit money, Copeland claimed that he said he "was in," but "I feel somewhat fearful."[82] Copeland concluded that he believed "that this counterfeiting business would be the means of getting us into trouble."[83] Sure enough, Copeland's alleged misgivings about counterfeiting proved correct when the people of Gainesville caught Allen Brown passing the counterfeit coin, which set in motion the chain of events that led to the deaths of several members of the gang and its destruction.

Copeland's testimony contains another interesting claim that sheds light on both criminal worlds of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Copeland claimed that one of the gang's successful slave stealing operations resulted from the men posing as traders on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.[84] According to Copeland, the men would procure a skiff at Cincinnati, obtain whiskey, bacon, and flour to trade, and then "pretend her for a peddle boat" until "the opportunity to steal" slaves emerged.[85] The strategy of posing as traders to steal slaves contains within it an inverse of the vigilantes who employed a similar ruse to rid the area of the counterfeiters in Mississippi in 1841. Copeland's testimony reveals

[81] Pitts. *The Life and Career of Jas. Copeland*, pg. 50

[82] Pitts. *The Life and Career of Jas. Copeland*, pg. 55

[83] Ibid.

[84] Pitts. *The Life and Career of Jas. Copeland*, pg. 34

[85] Ibid.

that, when viable, the Ohio and Mississippi River counterfeiters (the Johnson family for example on the Ohio River in 1859) and criminals (Copeland and Wages) posed as traders to carry out their illicit activities. Both groups believed that posing as traders to carry out their activities offered opportunities to successfully carry out their plans, counterfeiting/slave stealing, without being caught. Finally, posing as traders allowed both groups to adopt an identity that forestalled questions that usually accompanied the appearance and disappearance of strangers, that provided the men with just enough time to escape an area before resident's realized their true motives.[86]

The Bilbo's' involvement in a counterfeiting gang also reveals why Gainesville's citizens shrugged off the brother's deaths. Copeland's testimony and newspaper accounts indicate that the community cared more about the men's identity as counterfeiters rather than criminals. Copeland revealed that the Bilbo's' joined the gang when they shifted their operations towards making and passing counterfeit money and that the brothers passed their counterfeit money between Mississippi's Pearl River and Pascagoula.[87] Neither Copeland's testimony nor local newspaper accounts accuse the brother's of slave stealing, a crime that would explain the easiness with which the community greeted their deaths. Instead, newspapers linked the brother's deaths to counterfeiting, as seen when one paper reported that locals believed Wages provided a public service by killing the two due to "all believing fully in their guilt in counterfeiting."[88] The people of

[86] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, pg. 226. Mihm notes that many passers of counterfeit money worked as "peddlers, circuit riders, and drovers, anything to explain their wandering ways."

[87] Pitts. *The Life and Career of Jas. Copeland*, pg. 55

[88] Ibid.

Gainesville believed Brown's testimony that claimed he obtained the counterfeit coin from the Bilbos and his testimony, when coupled with the discovery of a counterfeiting operation on the Bilbo's' land, provided the community with key pieces of evidence of the Bilbo's' guilt.

Lastly, the Bilbo case continues highlighting the intertwined roles between violence and counterfeiting, further showing how the system of slavery influenced responses to counterfeiting in the Deep South during the 1830s and 1840s in ways not seen in other parts of the United States. Southerners across the Deep South executed John Tipton in Little Rock for counterfeiting. In 1838, people in Mobile executed the counterfeiter William Clark for slave stealing. Three years later, a group of vigilantes executed a group of counterfeiters on the Mississippi River in 1841, burned the men's homes, and chased their families from the region. In 1848, the Wages gang's involvement in counterfeiting resulted in the discovery of their group that in turn led to several of the men's deaths. While the above examples appear different on the surface, they all show that across the rural Deep South, particularly in the states that bordered the Mississippi River, violence and counterfeiting appeared to be linked together in ways not seen in other parts of the United States. Unlike Cincinnati's responses to counterfeiting along the Ohio River, which attempted to punish and control counterfeiting through the police and court system, vigilantism and violence characterized the counterfeiting underworld in the rural states that bordered the Mississippi River. The violent responses to counterfeiting in southwestern Mississippi contrasts sharply with how the South's largest urban center, New Orleans, dealt with counterfeiting in the late 1840s and through the 1850s. Although the Crescent City lay within the Deep South, when it came to

punishing counterfeiting New Orleans might as well have existed hundreds of miles away, alongside the Queen City of Cincinnati on the Ohio River.

V. CHAPTER FOUR

The Crescent City Counterfeiters: Counterfeiting and its Punishment in New Orleans

In the summer of 1859, a ship travelled down the Mississippi River bound for New Orleans. On board the ship, Carlisle Stranahan and Henry Brown created counterfeit quarters and half-dollars, likely galvanizing the coins with a battery after they finished. After the men stopped in New Orleans, they continued south to the Gulf of Mexico, where they turned west, and travelled up the Atchafalaya River to Berwick Bay. As they travelled along the Atchafalaya River, Carlisle and Brown passed their counterfeit coins, likely leaving an area before the residents figured out that their coins were counterfeit. After the two counterfeiters arrived at Berwick's Bay, they continued passing their counterfeit coins.[1] While the men's mobile counterfeiting operation passed counterfeit coin around Berwick Bay for an unspecified period of time, an argument led to its demise. The seriousness of the argument led Brown to leave the ship and travel back to New Orleans, where he informed the chief of police about the counterfeiting operation at Berwick Bay.[2] After hearing the counterfeiter's confession, the chief of police and several officers travelled to Berwick Bay and arrested Carlisle Stranahan. After they arrested Stranahan, New Orleans police found a large quantity of counterfeit coin, the battery used to galvanize the finished forged coins, and other counterfeiting

[1] "Recorder Summers' Court," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, August 12, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1859-08-12/ed-1/seq-1/).

[2] Ibid.

tools.[3] If Brown anticipated leniency from the police for informing them about the counterfeiting operation, he was sorely mistaken. After the police returned to New Orleans from Berwick Bay, they arrested Brown for acting as Stranahan's accomplice.[4] The Chief of Police charged the men with counterfeiting and when each man defaulted on their bond, the police escorted the men to jail to await their trial before the New Orleans First District Court.[5]

In October 1859, Stranahan and Brown appeared before New Orleans' First District Criminal Court on charges of possessing counterfeit coin, a charge to which both men entered a plea of not guilty.[6] By agreeing to a trial, the men face significant jail time if the First District Court convicted the counterfeiters of the charge, up to fourteen years of prison and hard labor in the Louisiana state penitentiary at Baton Rouge.[7] Finally, on January 20, 1860, the First District Court held the counterfeiters' trial. While the exact details of the trial are missing, the First District Court docket reveals that the court convicted the men of their charges on the same day, indicating that either the strength of the state's case against the two men, the weakness of their defense, or a combination of

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[3] "Recorder Summers' Court," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, July 15, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1859-07-15/ed-1/seq-1/).

[4] Ibid.

[5] The July 15, 1859 edition of the *New Orleans Daily Crescent* listed the men's bond at $1,500. See: Recorder Summers' Court," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, July 15, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1859-07-15/ed-1/seq-1/). The August 12, 1859 *New Orleans Daily Crescent* listed their bond at $1,000. See: "Recorder Summers' Court," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, August 12, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1859-08-12/ed-1/seq-1/).

[6] Case 14, 228, State vs. Carlisle Stranahan and Henry Brown alias James Robinson, 1859, New Orleans Fist District Court, obtained from the New Orleans Public Library on February 23, 2018.

[7] Claiborne, John: *The Revised Statutes of the State of Louisiana*. New Orleans, 1856, pg. 142

the two.[8] Instead of sentencing the men to the full fourteen years, however, the First District Court sentenced Brown and Stranahan to two years prison and hard labor in the state penitentiary.[9] Court records do not reveal why the court sentenced the men to a far lesser punishment than the maximum fourteen years allowed by the Louisiana statutes. The outcome of the Stranahan and Brown case is not unusual, however, as many counterfeiters convicted by the First District Criminal court served less than the maximum sentence for their crimes. The Brown and Stranahan case is just one of many that provides a glimpse into New Orleans' counterfeiting underworld, the power of its police, and the city's efforts to police counterfeiting in the South's primary urban and financial center.

Historians of the South have long viewed New Orleans as an economic and social outlier when compared to the rest of the slaveholding region. The South's largest urban center contained economic institutions in the forms of banks and a United States Mint that, outside of the presence of slavery, could have easily found a home in the New England states. Within a short walking distance, along a section of the city known as "Exchange Alley," people in New Orleans encountered the Louisiana State Bank and the Bank of Louisiana while other banks such as The Mechanics and Traders' Bank and the Canal Bank of New Orleans operated near the area.[10] Banks in New Orleans facilitated a variety of economic transactions and provided capital for the state's public works

[8] Case 14, 228, State vs. Carlisle Stranahan and Henry Brown alias James Robinson, 1859, New Orleans Fist District Court, obtained from the New Orleans Public Library on February 23, 2018.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Norman, Benjamin Moore, and Millard Fillmore. *Norman's plan of New Orleans & environs*. New Orleans, La.?: B.M. Norman, 1854, Map. Obtained from (https://www.loc.gov/item/2012593335/).

projects. As the name of the Canal Bank of New Orleans implies, it offered both banking services to the city and simultaneously invested heavily in public works projects across New Orleans.[11] Several New Orleans banks supplied capital that financed the buying and selling of cotton from the Upper South between cargo ships and local factors. They provided white southern males in the Deep South and along the Gulf Coast with access to crucial lines of credit that in turn allowed these men to further develop the areas' slaveholding economy.[12] Men who wanted to own and run their own plantations often turned to the credit provided by New Orleans' banks to finance the purchase of fertile land in southwestern Mississippi and Louisiana from land speculators that allowed them to participate in the nation's cotton kingdom.[13] Lastly, rural towns near Louisiana preferred the stability of notes of banks from New Orleans banks rather than relying on local currencies.[14]

As the Canal Bank counterfeiters demonstrated in 1859, both the counterfeit and legitimate currency based on New Orleans' banks circulated throughout both the Ohio and Mississippi River Valleys, connecting the two region's counterfeit underworlds

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[11] Bodenhorn, Howard. *State Banking in Early America: A New Economic History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, pg. 227.

[12] Schweikart, Larry: *Banking in the American South from the Age of Jackson to Reconstruction*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987, pg. 49. See Baptist, Edward E. "Toxic Debt, Liar Loans, Collateralized and Securitized Human Beings and the Panic of 1837," in *Capitalism Takes Command: The Social Transformation of Nineteenth Century America*. ed. Michael Zakim and Gary Kornblith. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012. In the essay, Baptist explores how planters in the South collateralized their slaves in order to obtain credit that aided their efforts to purchase more land and slaves in the South. In turn, as more and more planter's purchased land and slaves on credit, a bubble emerged in the southwest. When the bubble burst, the Panic of 1837 followed and severely impacted the economic fortunes of the Deep South.

[13] Rothman, Josh: *Flush Times and Fever Dreams: A Story of Capitalism and Slavery in the Age of Jackson*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012, pg. 11

[14] Green, George. *Finance and Economic Development in the Old South: Louisiana Banking, 1804-1861*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972, pg. 77

together that mirrored its capitalist counterpart. Furthermore, although it lay within the free state of Ohio, Cincinnati's proximity to the slave state of Kentucky, the city's commercial economy and financial infrastructure meant that Cincinnati had quite a bit in common with New Orleans. Thus, the region's responses to counterfeiting can help reveal important similarities and differences in the counterfeiting underworlds along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Finally, the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers facilitated and fostered important travel and trade links between Cincinnati and Ohio that encouraged Cincinnati to look west and south towards New Orleans rather than east, even though the East Coast urban centers were geographically closer to Cincinnati. Thus, the study of counterfeiting in the Deep South reveals another link between the free and slave economies of the United States and how an underground economy knit the various regions of the United States together into a shadow economy prior to the Civil War.

Through its banks, currency, and role as a major import and export center, New Orleans contained a similar form of the commercial and financial capitalism found in New England, one that relied on paper banknotes and credit supplied by a multitude of financial institutions that in turn encouraged counterfeiting to take hold in both places. An examination of counterfeiting in New Orleans demonstrates that counterfeiters in the Deep South established operations in urban centers that contained markers of mature capitalism; banks that supplied the necessary banknotes from which counterfeiters drew their inspiration, to city markets that offered shovers opportunities to pass fake coins and bank notes. While historians know that counterfeiting existed on a large scale in the New England states, and that Cincinnati and the surround areas also contained a fairly robust counterfeiting underworld, this chapter shows that despite the presence of slavery and a

strong police presence, counterfeiters established their operations in the Deep South, operations that structurally resembled those found in the other urban regions of the United States.

The extensive presence of banks, at least in comparison to the rest of the South, in New Orleans coupled with the city's role as the South's major port on the Mississippi River and near the Gulf Coast, offered the city's counterfeiters ideal conditions through which to operate in the South. In New Orleans, counterfeiters found a variety of banks from which to draw inspiration for counterfeit notes. The currency of New Orleans banks circulated far beyond the city, as evidence by the Canal Bank notes, which meant that the notes on the city's banks were in high demand that in turn aided the local shover's efforts to pass fake currency. If the city's police learned about a counterfeiting operation, then the New Orleans, counterfeiters could escape via steamboat up the Mississippi River, or they could board a ship bound for the Gulf of Mexico, escaping into the Caribbean or the Atlantic Ocean. Finally, New Orleans' demographics and its population size offered counterfeiters the necessary anonymity through which to set up a counterfeiting operation undetected.

Furthermore, an examination of counterfeiting in New Orleans demonstrates that while the city's counterfeiting underworld mirrored its New England counterparts, the outcomes of its efforts to police counterfeiting differed drastically from both the northeastern United States and the rural Mississippi River Valley. First, despite the continued presence of counterfeiting in the city throughout the mid-nineteenth century, New Orleans never resorted to using the kind of violence found along the rural Mississippi River. Therefore, the policing of counterfeiting suggests that the South's

urban police effectively deterred counterfeiting that offers evidence of a strong municipal police and judicial system. The effectiveness of the New Orleans' police and judicial system to fight counterfeiter undermines a larger argument that southern cities lacked modern police due to the presence of slavery.[15] One way to measure effectiveness is by looking at a crime's recidivism rate. A crime's low recidivism rate suggests, at the very least, that a state effectively deterred that particular crime through the punishment options found in the state's legal codes. Between the late 1840s and running into the early 1860s, few of the New Orleans' counterfeiters, dealers, and shovers who appeared before the New Orleans First District Criminal Court returned to the city's counterfeiting underworld. Even though counterfeiting, as a crime, continually existed in New Orleans throughout the nineteenth century, the city's residences did not resort to vigilante violence to deter the crime, which further suggests that an well-organized police and court system that effectively punished counterfeiting acted as a deterrent to vigilante action. The continued and consistent presence of counterfeiting in New Orleans throughout the mid-nineteenth century, however, also indicates that the city's counterfeiters, distributors, and shovers did not fear Louisiana's punishments for counterfeiting.

Unlike the rural areas that surrounded the city, by the late 1840s and throughout the 1850s, New Orleans contained the necessary judicial infrastructure and police institutions needed to punish counterfeiting that in turn provides clear evidence of the infrastructural power of the American state in the Deep South. By the 1840s and 1850s, New Orleans

[15] Monkkonen, Eric H. "History of Urban Police." *Crime and Justice*15 (1992): 547-80. Obtained from JSTOR (www.jstor.org/stable/1147625), pg. 575

housed one of the nation's most powerful police forces, one that attempted to fight counterfeiting whenever it encountered the crime and brought arrested counterfeiters before a court of law, the New Orleans First District Criminal Court.[16] In turn, the First District Court wielded the judicial power of the state that resulted in the court sentencing counterfeiters to prison and hard labor. Through the New Orleans police and court system, Louisiana attempted to regulate and protect its currency from counterfeiting that in turn shows one of the ways that Louisiana attempted to protect the common good of the state. Therefore, the actions of New Orleans' civil servants to fight and deter counterfeiting across the city and throughout the region during the mid-nineteenth century shows how the Crescent City functioned as an important nexus of American state power that facilitated that power's reach throughout the Deep South.

Thus, when viewed through New Orleans' double contexts as the South's primary financial counter and home to one of the United States' most powerful police forces, the Stranahan and Brown counterfeiting case functions as a useful window that captures the microcosm of the New Orleans counterfeiting underworld, both in its similarities to and differences from the counterfeiting underworlds found along the rural Mississippi River, the Ohio River, and in the New England States. Indeed, Brown and Stranahan provide a glimpse into one of the more peculiar aspects of New Orleans' counterfeiting underworld, one shared by its Cincinnati counterpart: its continued focus on making counterfeit coins. By the late 1840s and throughout the 1850s, many counterfeiters in the

[16] Rousey, Dennis. *Policing the Southern City: New Orleans 1805-1889*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996. Rousey argues that police reform, and the move towards a more military like police force, began in the southern cities of Charleston, Mobile, New Orleans, and Savannah, before the emergence of professional police in the north.

New England States shifted their efforts from forging counterfeit coins towards making counterfeit bank notes.[17] Indeed, quite a few of the New Orleans counterfeiters and shovers who appeared before New Orleans' First District Court faced charges of forging and/or possessing fake coins. One possible explanation for the New Orleans' counterfeiters focus on making fake coins rather than counterfeit bank notes could stem from a preference for hard specie in New Orleans' commercial economy.[18] Furthermore, the presence of the New Orleans Mint also provides a potential explanation as to why so many of the city's counterfeiters forged fake coins. Lastly, a difficulty in obtaining the necessary materials to create banknotes may have contributed to coining's prevalence in the city's counterfeiting underworld. Forging coins provided one way for the city's counterfeiters to make money, albeit through a process that was more labor intensive and less profitable than printing counterfeit notes in bulk.[19]

Stranahan and Brown's decision to create counterfeit coins placed the counterfeiters out of step with the nation's other groups of counterfeiters. Their coining business, however, was quite normal in nineteenth-century New Orleans. Records for the New Orleans penitentiary and court records for the First District Court indicate that the counterfeiting of coin was not unusual in the Crescent City. Of the sixty cases that appeared before the New Orleans First District Court between 1846 and 1861 that deal with counterfeiting, fully one third dealt with some aspect of making, passing, and/or

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[17] Johnson, David R. *Illegal Tender: Counterfeiting and the Secret Service in Nineteenth Century America*. Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, pg. 38

[18] Mihm, Stephen. *A Nation of Counterfeiters*: *Capitalists, Con Men, and the Making of the United States*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007 pgs. 190-191

[19] Johnson. *Illegal Tender*, pg. 38

possessing counterfeit coin.[20] The number of court cases that dealt with coining indicates that a sizable portion of New Orleans' counterfeiting underworld focused primarily on making fake coins rather than creating counterfeit banknotes. The counterfeiters' decisions to focus on making fake coins also suggests that many people in New Orleans, at least in their everyday business transactions such as those found in one of New Orleans' many public markets, still used coins to purchase goods. In turn, the buying of goods with coins reveals that New Orleans' counterfeiting underworld functioned in a similar way as Cincinnati's, hinting at a strong desire for specie in the Deep South and the surrounding geographical borderlands.

What is clear, however, is that the city's coin forgers did not decide to create fake coins in the mistaken belief that the penalties for doing so were less sever, as Louisiana punished both the counterfeiting of coin and the counterfeiting of banknotes to the same degree. According to the state's 1856 revised statutes, the forging or counterfeiting of any gold or silver coin "current in this state" carried a maximum penalty of fourteen years in the state penitentiary.[21] Additionally, if a person knew about the forging or counterfeiting of gold and silver coins, if they knowingly assisted in the passing of the forged and counterfeited coins, and/or if they possessed "any number not less than five similar pieces of false money," then they faced a possible penalty of fourteen years in the penitentiary.[22] In comparison, the counterfeiting of bank notes and/or if one possessed

[20] Louisiana First District Court (Orleans Parish). Records, 1846-1880, New Orleans Public Library, accessed February 2018.

[21] Claiborne, John: *The Revised Statutes of the State of Louisiana*. New Orleans, 1856, pg. 142

[22] Ibid.

"any number not less than ten" counterfeit notes, resulted in a sentence of one to fourteen years prison and hard labor in the state penitentiary.[23]

Louisiana's counterfeiting statutes, however, carried stiffer penalties for acts related to coin forging than it did for those who worked with counterfeit bank bills. The more severe penalties for coining indicate that Louisiana viewed it as the more dangerous crime, one that carried a greater potential for undermining the legitimacy of economic transactions across the state. For example, bringing forged coin into Louisiana in 1856 carried a maximum penalty of ten years in the penitentiary, while bringing counterfeit notes into Louisiana carried a maximum penalty of three years.[24] The state's laws regarding the punishment of a person who made the dies and/or other tools for coining carried a maximum of fourteen years in the penitentiary, while the penalties for engraving banknote plates carried a penalty of seven years.[25] The consistent discrepancies between Louisiana's punishments for coin forging and the counterfeiting of banknotes offer a glimpse into the seriousness with which Louisiana viewed coining versus counterfeiting during the 1850s. As such, those who counterfeited coin faced significantly more time in jail than those who counterfeited bank bills that in turn undermines an argument that counterfeiters in New Orleans would try to counterfeit coin due to less sever prison sentences.

The 1856 Louisiana statutes also reveal that its lawmakers expected innocent people to unknowingly come into possession of counterfeit coins and banknotes, and that they

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[23] Claiborne, John. *The Revised Statutes of the State of Louisiana.* New Orleans, 1856, pg. 141

[24] Claiborne, John. *The Revised Statutes of the State of Louisiana.* New Orleans, 1856, pgs. 141-142

[25] Claiborne, John. *The Revised Statutes of the State of Louisiana.* New Orleans, 1856, pg. 142

would also unintentionally pass these counterfeit coins and banknotes as well. The statute's requirements for prosecution, that the charged person needed to possess a minimum of five fake coins reveals that the state's lawmakers felt that it was within the realm of possibility for a person to come into possession of a single to few counterfeit coins and tried to mitigate the damage of this possibility.[26] If a person possessed five or more coins, however, then Louisiana lawmakers reasoned that the person likely knew that the coins were fake and intended to harm the public good. Furthermore, the 1856 statute's additional requirement, that the five coins also needed to be the same type of coin, further indicates that Louisiana's lawmakers sought to protect innocent people from the state's counterfeiters.[27] If a person possessed at least five forged coins of the same kind, then the state believed it was reasonable to presume that the person knew the coins were forged and likely intended to pass them in exchange for goods. In regards to counterfeit banknotes, the state's lawmakers also felt that it was within the realm of possibility that an innocent person could unknowingly come into possession of at least a few counterfeit banknotes.[28] Louisiana's statutes regarding counterfeit notes state that those who possessed more than ten of the same counterfeit bills, likely knew that the currency was fake and did not come into their possession by accident.[29] Unlike counterfeit coins, however, the law did not require that the bills all must be of the same type and denomination, meaning that the state expected its people to possess counterfeit

[26] Claiborne, John. *The Revised Statutes of the State of Louisiana.* New Orleans, 1856, pg. 142

[27] Ibid.

[28] Claiborne, John. *The Revised Statutes of the State of Louisiana.* New Orleans, 1856, pg. 141

[29] Ibid.

money from various banks that consisted of various denominations. If a person possessed at least ten counterfeit notes, regardless of bank or denomination, then it meant they likely knew the notes were counterfeit as it was highly improbable that they randomly came into possession of ten counterfeit notes of various denominations. Thus, Louisiana's laws regarding counterfeiting reveal that the state's lawmakers recognized the presence of counterfeit money as a real problem and that they expected innocent people to intersect with the counterfeiting underworld. By adding possession minimums and mandating that a person needed to also possess the same type of note and/or coin, the state attempted to mitigate counterfeiting's impacts on an innocent public during the mid-nineteenth century.

The First District Court's charges against Stranahan and Brown simultaneously reveal more information about their counterfeiting operation and the difficulties New Orleans faced in bringing additional charges against the counterfeiters. When Carlisle Stranahan and Henry Brown appeared before the First District Court in 1859, the court charged Stranahan and Brown with the possession of counterfeit coin in the state.[30] The charge reveals that the police found that the men possessed at least five counterfeit coins of the same denomination. The singular charge, however, also raises an interesting question: why did the First District Court fail to charge the two men for bringing counterfeit money into the state and for possessing tools for counterfeiting? The men travelled through Louisiana on a ship and the New Orleans police found the tools for counterfeiting coin near their ship. So why did the court not bring forth the additional charges? If the court

[30] Case 14, 228, State vs. Carlisle Stranahan and Henry Brown alias James Robinson, 1859, New Orleans Fist District Court, obtained from the New Orleans Public Library on February 23, 2018.

decided to charge the men with bringing counterfeit money into the state, then they faced a potential ten-year prison term; a significant amount of time that in turn could act as a deterrent to other counterfeiters who operated in the state.[31] One potential answer can be found in two issues of the *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, one from July 13 1859 and the other from August 12, 1859. The paper reported in both stories that the two men arrived in New Orleans on a ship from "upriver."[32] The *Daily Crescent* hints at the men's vague origins while failing to provide even an approximation of their former whereabouts. The mobility afforded to the men's counterfeiting operation provided by the schooner gave Stranahan and Brown enough cover that police failed, or lacked the time, to discern the men's origins. The failure to figure out where Stranahan and Brown came from possibly contributed to the state's refusal to charge the men with bringing counterfeit money into the state. After all, it was possible that men arrived in New Orleans from a different part of Louisiana rather than from outside the state. Thus, the men's mobile counterfeiting operation likely helped them avoid charges of bringing counterfeit money into the state.

It is less clear, however, why the First District Court failed to charge Stranahan and Brown with possession of counterfeiting tools, which carried a potential penalty of fourteen years hard labor in the state penitentiary.[33] As the *New Orleans Daily Crescent* reported on July 13, July 15, and August 12, 1859, New Orleans police appeared to

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[31] The Revised Statutes of the State of Louisiana 1856, pg. 142

[32] "Local Intelligence," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, July 13, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1859-07-13/ed-1/seq-1/). "Recorder Summers' Court," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, August 12, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1859-08-12/ed-1/seq-1/).

[33] Claiborne, John. *The Revised Statutes of the State of Louisiana*. New Orleans, 1856, pg. 142

obtain more than enough evidence needed to connect the men to the possession of the tools used to create counterfeit coins. The July 13 article notes that police found "a quantity of chemicals and apparatus" for making counterfeit coins.[34] The July 15 article states that New Orleans police obtained a battery used for the counterfeiting operation.[35] Both articles indicate that New Orleans police found equipment explicitly used for the counterfeiting of coin and yet the state failed, or refused, to bring charges for the possession of counterfeiting equipment. An article about the counterfeiting operation that appeared in the *Daily Crescent* reveals why the state refused to bring charges for the possession of counterfeiting equipment. The paper noted that while New Orleans police did find a large quantity of counterfeit coin onboard the ship, they located the counterfeiting tools underwater, in Berwick's Bay.[36] Allegedly, the men threw the tools overboard in order to avoid detection, an action that occurred before the fateful argument that brought an end to their mobile counterfeiting operation. Therefore, the court may have found it difficult to successfully argue that the counterfeiting tools found in the bay belonged to either Stranahan or Brown and preferred not to bring forth that particular charge. The casual disregard of their counterfeiting tools also suggests that both men expected to either easily create or purchase the necessary tools to forge coins.

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[34] "Local Intelligence," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, July 13, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1859-07-13/ed-1/seq-1/).

[35] "Recorder Summers' Court," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, July 15, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1859-07-15/ed-1/seq-1/).

[36] "Recorder Summers' Court," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, August 12, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1859-08-12/ed-1/seq-1/).

Lastly, Stranahan and Brown's decision to create counterfeit coin on board a ship and then use that ship to pass the coin around Berwick Bay, demonstrates that counterfeiters along the lower Mississippi River, like their Ohio counterparts, employed ships to help pass counterfeit money. In 1856, an assistant "barkeer" on the steamer *Grenada* appeared before a Recorder's court in New Orleans. The Grenada's captain charged the man with attempting to pass a counterfeit Louisiana State Bank note. The captain also believed that the man was "employed by other parties to circulate counterfeit money."[37] Both the 1856 case and the Stranahan and Brown case in 1859 carry similarities to the Arkansas case from 1841, where counterfeiters posed as traders on the Mississippi River to pass their counterfeit money, and the Johnson family from Cincinnati, who used a boat to pass counterfeit money along the Ohio River in 1859. The above cases also demonstrate that the two region's counterfeiters used their ships to mask the source of the counterfeit currency, a tactic that allowed them to escape an area more quickly and to avoid additional charges related to counterfeiting.

By the 1850s, however, the New Orleans police and court system knew how to handle those who passed counterfeit coin while travelling on board a ship. Prior to the arrests of the "barkeer" in 1856, and Carlisle Stranahan and Henry Brown in 1859, New Orleans police arrested Eli Hathaway on August 26, 1846. According to court documents, a Captain of the Watch who worked New Orleans' first municipality arrested

[37] "Recorder Ramos' Court," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, April 17, 1859. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1852-04-17/ed-1/seq-2/).

Captain Eli Hathaway in the city near the Mississippi River.[38] When the captain searched Hathaway, he found four packages containing two hundred false and counterfeited Mexican dollars. Then the police officer took Hathaway to his ship, the American schooner *John George*, and in Hathaway's cabin the police found five packages containing one hundred counterfeit Mexican dollars. With the Captain's testimony as evidence, the state charged Hathaway with bringing forged money into the state of Louisiana and with the possession of forged money in the state of Louisiana.[39]

The New Orleans First District Court docket for case 249, *The State of Louisiana vs. Eli Hathaway*, reveals that on September 10, and again on October 1, 1846, a grand jury found a "True Bill," or that enough evidence existed to warrant prosecution against the accused, against Hathaway for the crimes of bringing forged money into the state of Louisiana and the possession of forged money in Louisiana. The Louisiana Grand Jury's statement reveals that on August 26, 1846 New Orleans police obtained three hundred and thirteen "false, forged, and counterfeited" Mexican dollars. The First District Court's affidavit regarding Eli Hathaway reported that police found a total of six packages that contained five or six hundred counterfeit Mexican dollars in Hathaway's possession. Following the issuance of a second True Bill against Hathaway on October 25, the captain issued a plea of not guilty.[40]

[38] Case 249: The State of Louisiana vs. Eli Hathaway, 1846, New Orleans Fist District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 21, 2018.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

Captain Hathaway's decision to enter a plea of "not guilty" appears strange on the surface. Hathaway's counsel, however, believed he could exploit a loophole in the Louisiana statutes regarding the charge of counterfeiting. In the documents related to Hathaway's case, the New Orleans First District Court charged Hathaway under the sixteenth section of the act of the twentieth of March 1818. The statute notes that if any person shall "bring into the state of Louisiana, or shall possess in the same, any number of false money, or coin forged or counterfeited, similar to any gold or silver coin current within this state" then they could be imprisoned at hard labor.[41] While it appeared that within the wording of the law, the state had Hathaway all but convicted, Captain Hathaway's lawyer viewed the statute in a different light. Instead, Hathaway's counsel usurped the intention of the law by arguing that since the state charged Hathaway under the 1818 statute, then the statute's reference to counterfeit money could only be applied to the money of the governments that existed in 1818. Hathaway's counsel believed that since the 1846 version of the Mexican government did not exist in 1818, then its coins were exempt from the statute. In effect, Hathaway's counsel argued that their client committed no crime at all since the 1818 statute failed to address the change in Mexico's government. Unfortunately for Captain Hathaway, the jury failed to accept his counsel's defense and found him guilty of both charges. Fortunately for Hathaway, he only served nine days of his sentence before he was pardoned.[42]

[41] Case 249: The State of Louisiana vs. Eli Hathaway, 1846, New Orleans Fist District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 21, 2018.

[42] Ibid.

Although Hathaway received a pardon for his crime, evidence indicates that Captain Hathaway had already sold quite a bit of counterfeit money before New Orleans police arrested him on August 26, 1846. According to the sworn statement from the Collector's Office, entered in as evidence during Hathaway's trial, the *John George* arrived in New Orleans on August 10, 1846 from Galveston, Texas.[43] Over two weeks passed between the arrival of the ship from Galveston, and Hathaway's arrest on Bienville Street, where the police found packages of counterfeit coin in Hathaway's possession. That the Captain of the Watch found packages in Hathaway's possession and more packages in his trunk onboard the *John George*, indicates that Hathaway was on his way into New Orleans to sell the packages of counterfeit coin to the city's distributors of counterfeit money. If Hathaway intended to pass the coin, it is unlikely that he would attempt to pass two hundred dollars worth of counterfeit Mexican coins in a single, or even across multiple, business transactions, as the city's police could track such an occurrence back to its common denominator. Furthermore, the Captain of the Watch's testimony was quite specific; he noted that he found "packages" in Hathaway's possession, not individual coins.[44] Hathaway's decision to sell the counterfeit coin in bulk simultaneously allowed him to pass more coins at once that lowered the risk of detection. In effect, Hathaway's wholesaling increased his operation's profitability while limiting the risk of dealing counterfeit coin in New Orleans. The Captain of the Watch also noted in his

[43] Case 249: The State of Louisiana vs. Eli Hathaway, 1846, New Orleans Fist District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 21, 2018.

[44] Ibid.

testimony that he found "packages" in Hathaway's trunk on board the *John George*.[45] In turn, the packages indicate that Hathaway likely acted as an importer, wholesaler and distributor of counterfeit money in a dark mirror of the cotton wholesalers and distributors who populated New Orleans and the Deep South.[46]

Hathaway's case also demonstrates that New Orleans' position at the center of the South's legitimate commercial sector contained an underground counterpart. New Orleans' position at the mouth of the Mississippi River and along the Gulf Coast meant that during the 1840s and into the early 1850s, the city functioned as a major port for both the South and the United States.[47] New Orleans' status as both a major economic hub and as the South's largest urban center meant that a variety of real and counterfeit currency, not just the coins and money of banks in the United States, could be found in the city. As the records from Hathaway's trial revealed, the *John George* arrived in New Orleans from Galveston, Texas, and brought with it a large amount of counterfeit Mexican dollars. New Orleans police obtained the coins, already divided into individual

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[45] Case 249: The State of Louisiana vs. Eli Hathaway, 1846, New Orleans Fist District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 21, 2018.

[46] The clearest link between counterfeit money and cotton in the region occurred in 1851, when C.J. Eustis sold his cotton in Arkansas to a purchaser named Williams. In exchange for the cotton, Williams paid Eustis eight hundred and fifty dollars, in fifty-dollar bills, drawn on the Union Bank of New Orleans. Williams then took the cotton to New Orleans, where he sold it to Wright, Williams, and Co., a group of factors who worked in the city who paid Williams five hundred dollars for the cotton. When Eustis figured out that the man paid in counterfeit notes, he unsuccessfully sued Wright, Williams, and Co. for the full price of the cotton. It appears that Williams disappeared from the area, which forced Eustis to sue the company rather than the purchaser of cotton. Buying cotton with counterfeit money, and then selling that cotton in exchange for good currency, allowed Williams to make quite a profit. See: Louisiana. Supreme Court. *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Louisiana,* vol. 7, 1852. New Orleans, 1854, pg. 358. Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044057890998).

[47] Cronin, William. *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and Great West*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1991. As Cronin points out, Chicago's emergence along the Great Lakes, its role as the focal point for the nation's water and rail traffic, dealt a serious blow to New Orleans' role as a major economic hub.

packages, which indicated that Hathaway intended to sell the coins wholesale to dealers in New Orleans. In effect, Hathaway functioned as a merchant, one who obtained goods in Galveston, brought the goods across the Gulf of Mexico aboard his ship, and then attempted to import them into New Orleans. The likely possibility that the counterfeit coins originated from Galveston, a Texas port, and consisted of currency from Mexico, indicates that New Orleans' counterfeiting underworld mirrored its capitalist counterpart's reach throughout the Gulf Coast region.[48]

Eli Hathaway, Carlisle Stranahan, and Henry Brown offer glimpses into the irregularities found in New Orleans' counterfeiting underworld in the late 1840s and late 1850s. The men decided to pass counterfeit coin in New Orleans eleven years apart and their cases, when coupled with the ones discussed below, indicates that the city's counterfeiters found a market for counterfeit coins throughout the 1840s and 1850s. Their use of ships to exploit New Orleans status as a port city also reveals that the Crescent City's counterfeiting underworld mirrored the geographic scope and reach of its capitalist counterpart. Their court cases, however, also highlight the state's difficulties in prosecuting certain aspects of counterfeiting, such as linking counterfeiting equipment to its owners, as seen in the court's decision to bring forth only one charge against Brown and Stranahan. Furthermore, when New Orleans appeared to obtain an outright victory in

[48] An interesting coda to Hathaway's case appears in the *New York Herald*, which carried an article from the August 21, 1848 *Boston Traveller*. The *Traveller* noted that a house in Brighton, Massachusetts, contained a cellar that housed an old counterfeiting operation. Police found five counterfeit half-dollars in the abandoned cellar and several tools for making counterfeit coins. The *Traveller* wrote that despite the rust on the counterfeit coins, they were "well made." The paper noted that although many people lived in the house during the past few years, one of the home's previous tenants, a man named Hathaway, was arrested in New Orleans with a quantity of counterfeit coin found in his possession. Although Louisiana sent Hathaway to the state penitentiary, he "was recently discharged. "The Counterfeiters Den at Brighton," *The New York Herald*, August 23, 1848, no. 5,194, pg. 1.

its fight against counterfeiting, as seen in Eli Hathaway's conviction, the city's public fight against counterfeiting also suffered a setback when the state pardoned Hathaway for his crimes. Nonetheless, Louisiana's continued efforts to deter counterfeiting through its police and judicial systems reveal a coordinated effort to limit counterfeiting's impacts on the Louisiana economy and its participants.

Perhaps the New Orleans First District Criminal Court did not need to worry about state pardons for counterfeiters, or that shortened prison sentences offered the region's counterfeiters an incentive to return to the crime. New Orleans counterfeiters in the 1840s and 1850s rarely appear in the judicial record more than once, which in turn suggests that the city's counterfeiters created such high-quality counterfeiters as to avoid detection, or they left New Orleans to practice counterfeiting elsewhere, or they left behind their life of crime. The two men, however, appeared multiple times before the New Orleans First District Criminal Court for various counterfeiting offenses. One is Henry Brown, the partner of Carlisle Stranahan, who reemerged in 1861 when New Orleans police arrested him for passing a counterfeit gold dollar coin to a man named Charles Miller.[49] The police also found five other counterfeit gold coins in Brown's possession that provided them with enough evidence to charge Brown with knowingly passing counterfeit money.[50] While the records for Henry Brown's case are missing, the docket reveals that the First District Court charged Brown with the possession of counterfeit coin in the state of Louisiana. On May 1, 1861, Brown entered a plea of not

[49] "Another Distributor Arrested," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, January 21, 1861. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1861-01-21/ed-1/seq-1/).

[50] Ibid.

guilty and on June 6 he faced a trial by jury. Brown's defense of his actions appeared ineffective as the jury convicted Brown of the charge of the possession of counterfeit coin in Louisiana on the same day.[51] The other counterfeiter who appeared multiple times before the court was linked to Brown in the same New Orleans *Daily Crescent* article that reported his arrest. After noting the details of Brown's arrest, the paper speculated that Henry Brown worked as one of the distributing agents for a counterfeit dealer named "Dr. Angell."[52]

Out of the sixty counterfeiting cases that appeared before New Orleans First District Criminal court between 1846 and 1861, only Dr. Samuel Angel and Henry Brown appear in connection to multiple counterfeiting cases. That only two mean appear multiple times in both court cases and newspapers records between 1845 and 1861 indicates that New Orleans', and Louisiana's, efforts to police counterfeiting through a judicial approach worked. Dr. Angel first appeared in a Baltimore newspaper in October 1845, which noted that New Orleans police arrested Dr. Angel and Pleasant Harris for swindling and counterfeiting.[53] Angel then disappeared for a few years before resurfacing in the New Orleans First District court dockets in 1858 for counterfeiting and having counterfeit

[51] Case 1526: The State of Louisiana vs. Henry Brown, 1861, New Orleans Fist District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 23, 2018.

[52] "Another Distributor Arrested," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, January 21, 1861. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1861-01-21/ed-1/seq-1/).

[53] "Arrest of Counterfeiters," *American Republican and Baltimore Daily Clipper*, October 20, 1845. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83009567/1845-10-20/ed-1/seq-2/).

bank notes in his possession.[54] Finally, Dr. Angel appears in two Louisiana newspapers in January 1861, which detailed the arrests of Angel and his wife for counterfeiting.[55] Other than Samuel Angel and Henry Brown, the counterfeiters caught in New Orleans and the surrounding areas only appear before the First District Court once. The lack of counterfeiters who appeared before the criminal court multiple times, or in newspaper accounts regarding counterfeiting, indicate that Louisiana's punishment for counterfeiting effectively worked to discourage counterfeiters, shovers, and dealers from returning back to the counterfeiting underworld after their first offense. As such, Louisiana's civil servants effectively policed counterfeiting in the city and surrounding regions that in turn reveals one of the ways that the state regulated and protected the region's economic transactions from counterfeiting. Louisiana's efforts to police counterfeiting reveal the power of the state, as despite counterfeiting's continued presence, it did not appear to seriously threaten the legitimacy of the region's economy system.

A closer look at the timeline of Dr. Angel's case also reveals some of the difficulties that New Orleans' First District Court encountered when it tried to convict the city's counterfeiters for their crimes. Dr. Angel's first appearance in the court dockets occurred on Christmas Eve in 1858, when the court sought more information about his crime and charged him with counterfeiting and having counterfeit banknotes in his possession.[56] On

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[54] Case 13852: The State of Louisiana vs. Doctor Angel, 1858, New Orleans Fist District Court, New Orleans Public Library accessed on February 23, 2018.

[55] *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, January 21, 1861, vol. 13, no. 275, pg. 1. "Third Justice's Court-Carrollton," *The Carrollton Sun*, January 30, 1861, vol. 3, no. 64, pg. 2. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov).

[56] Case 13852: The State of Louisiana vs. Doctor Angel, 1858, New Orleans Fist District Court, New Orleans Public Library accessed on February 23, 2018.

January 10, 1859, Dr. Angel pleaded not guilty to the two charges and the First District Court began the process of selecting a jury for his trial. After two months of searching for a jury, the First District Court swore one in on March 29. On the same day, however, the court declared a mistrial and then it issued a nolle prosequi for Dr. Angel's case two weeks later, on April 14.[57] While the trial documents are missing from the record, it appeared that Angel's mistrial occurred when the jury failed to reach an agreement on the charge of counterfeiting.[58] On April 15, the court began his retrial and charged Dr. Angel with having counterfeit coin in his possession with intent to pass. The court dropped the counterfeiting charge altogether and focused its case on Angel's possession of counterfeit coin, rather than his role in making counterfeit money. In comparison to Angel's first case, the court quickly set up his second trial. But on May 31, 1859, the court ordered Dr. Angel to bail and he disappears from the docket. No record of punishment exists in the docket and no record exists of the jury finding Angel guilty of the charge of possessing counterfeit coin with intent to pass.[59] From his initial appearance before the court on December 24, 1858, to his disappearance from the docket on May 31, 1859, five months passed and the court failed to convict Angel of any crime. The court's failure to convict Angel on any charges relating to counterfeiting, coupled with its inability to even hold a trial for the counterfeiter, reveals a frustrating process in which a repeat counterfeiter appeared before New Orleans' judicial system and left unpunished.

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[57] Ibid.

[58] *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, January 21, 1861. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1861-01-21/ed-1/seq-1/).

[59] Case 14029: The State of Louisiana vs. Doctor Angel, 1858, New Orleans Fist District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 23, 2018.

Louisiana's failure to punish Angel likely contributed to his reemergence in New Orleans' counterfeiting underworld less than a year later, in January 1861 when the New Orleans police "specials" arrested Samuel Angel and his wife, Ann Eliza, for making and distributing counterfeit coin.[60] In 1861, Angel approached a man named Packenham in New Orleans' Poydras market with an offer to sell counterfeit coin, an offer that allegedly discomforted Packenham so much that he decided to inform the mayor of Angel's offer. The Mayor then notified the New Orleans Chief of Police about the proposed deal, who in turn alerted "his specials," that resulted in setting up "a trap" to arrest Angel.[61] The "trap" reveals the police's ingenuity in arresting a repeat counterfeiter as it involved giving Packenham specially marked half-dollars and ordering the man to visit Angel's house to purchase counterfeit money while police observed the transaction. After Packenham arrived at Angel's home, the man offered to sell Packenham the counterfeit money at a rate of three counterfeit coins for the price of a single good coin and Packenham bought six counterfeit coins in exchange for two of the specially marked coins. After the men concluded their transaction, Packenham signaled to the nearby officers who raided the house and arrested Angel and his wife, Ann Eliza, as she attempted to escape the home. The police found plaster of Paris molds and dies

[60] "The Angell Counterfeiters," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, January 19, 1861. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1861-01-19/ed-1/seq-1/).

[61] Ibid.

designed to make counterfeit American coin in Ann Eliza's possession, key evidence of a counterfeiting operation.[62]

The arrest of Dr. Angel reveals similarities between New Orleans and Cincinnati police in their efforts to arrest counterfeiters that further demonstrates that New Orleans shared more with Cincinnati than the Deep South in regards to policing counterfeiting. In an effort to secure key evidence of Angel's guilt that would aid in a conviction for counterfeiting, police designed an undercover operation to insure that they obtained enough evidence of his guilt. After all, Louisiana failed to send Angel to the penitentiary two years ago due to lack of evidence that could establish his guilt as a manufacturer.[63] Through the marked coins, the police obtained clear evidence of Angel selling counterfeit coins to their informant, Packenham. The use of marked money that allowed the police to demonstrate a link between their money and the purchased counterfeit money that further cemented Angel's guilt. Rather than using Packenham's testimony as evidence to immediately go and arrest Angel for the suspicion of dealing counterfeit money, New Orleans police "specials" planned an undercover operation designed to convict Angell of the crime of counterfeiting, which in turn finally sent the counterfeiter to jail.

By 1861, New Orleans police could afford to devote officers towards criminal investigations that took more time than a chance encounter and arrest due to the city's

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[62] "The Angell Counterfeiters," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, January 19, 1861. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1861-01-19/ed-1/seq-1/).

[63] "Another Distributor Arrested," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, January 21, 1861. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1861-01-21/ed-1/seq-1/).

decision to pay its officers wages instead of fees.[64] New Orleans' decision to pay its police through a wage system, rather than by a fee associated with bringing in a certain criminal, meant that the police could devote its attention to fighting all types of crime, not just fighting the property crime whose return guaranteed the officer's income. Additionally, by paying its officers a wage, New Orleans provided its police with a financial incentive to conduct long-term police work, as seen through their use of informants and "specials" in the Samuel Angel case, that was missing from other cities who paid their police through fees. The city's decision to arm its police under the guise of policing the enslaved meant that the New Orleans police resembled a "small army," one that wore uniforms and carried "formidable" weapons, which in turn aided its officers in the arrest of the "masculine" Angel and Ann Eliza.[65]

While newspaper accounts described Angel as "masculine," providing an indication of how they viewed the counterfeiter, their use of the derogatory term "quardroon" to describe Ann Eliza betrays its view of her status in New Orleans.[66] As such, Ann Eliza's arrest for counterfeiting carried significantly more danger for her than it did for her husband. While Samuel Angel adopted the title "Dr." that potentially provided him with social capital that could muddy his arrest, and could help explain his ability to avoid punishment for his crimes, Eliza's perceived status offered her no such protections. Nor could Eliza try and exploit a perception that, as a woman, she was ignorant of the crime,

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[64] Rousey, *Policing the Southern City*, pg. 13

[65] "The Angell Counterfeiters," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, January 19, 1861. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1861-01-19/ed-1/seq-1/).

[66] Ibid.

as her actions indicate otherwise. When the New Orleans police arrested Eliza, they found the molds needed to create the counterfeit coins in her possession.[67] Eliza's decision to take the coin molds indicates that she knew the importance of the molds as evidence of their counterfeiting operation that in turn provided the court with key evidence in establishing their guilt. Furthermore, Eliza's efforts to flee the police, possibly in an effort to destroy the evidence of the counterfeiting operation, suggests that she knew about the counterfeiting operation and the legal seriousness of their situation. Both Eliza's knowledge of the counterfeiting operation, and her status likely placed her in greater legal and personal danger in the Deep South.

While Ann Eliza potentially faced a dangerous punishment for her role in the counterfeiting operation, Dr. Angel's return to New Orleans' counterfeiting underworld, can possibly be attributed to the state's failure to punish him in the past for counterfeiting. Samuel Angel does not appear once in the prison records for the New Orleans Parish prison, which run from 1852 to 1862. Nor do the prison records indicate that Dr. Angel was out on bail and awaiting his trial. Several prisoner records indicate that they were out on bail while awaiting their trial, which shows that if Angel paid his bail then the records would make note of that particular circumstance.[68] Dr. Angel, however, does not appear in the parish prison records, nor does he appear on the list of inmates present in the Louisiana state penitentiary at Baton Rouge. Furthermore, even if

[67] "The Angell Counterfeiters," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, January 19, 1861. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1861-01-19/ed-1/seq-1/).

[68] For example, the New Orleans Parish Prison entries for 1859 contained a record for Joaquin Fernando, charged with passing counterfeit money. The Parish Prison's records for Fernando noted that he was out on bail. New Orleans Parish Prison Records, 1852-1862, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 19, 2018, pg. 131

the name "Dr. Angel" was an alias, a possibility that the New Orleans *Daily Crescent* alluded to by noting that "even his name is probably a counterfeit," the parish prison officials also noted the known aliases of their prisoners, and indicated as such in their notes about the prisoners.[69] Thus, no record provides evidence that Samuel Angel, or a person who went by that alias, ever served prison time for counterfeiting. The state's failure to punish Angel likely provided him with an incentive to return to counterfeiting.

The lack of recidivism among New Orleans' counterfeiters indicates that when New Orleans obtained a conviction against a counterfeiter and sentenced them to the state penitentiary for any length of time, then the punishment successfully deterred counterfeiters from returning to their old lives, at least in New Orleans. Only Samuel Angel and Henry Brown appear to have made a return to the city's counterfeiting underworld following their arrests, making the men the exceptions that prove the rule. While Brown's docket indicates that the court sentenced him to two years hard labor in January 1860, his reappearance less than a year later indicates that Louisiana released him early from his imprisonment.[70] Therefore, Angel's lack of punishment for counterfeiting, and Brown's shortened sentence, supports a counterintuitive argument

[69] The New Orleans Parish Prison records contain an entry for W.A. Brown, charged with passing counterfeit money. The entry notes that Brown also went by the alias "Alphonse O'Brien." New Orleans Parish Prison Records, 1852-1862, New Orleans Public Library, Accessed on February 19, 2018, pg. 144. Obtained from the New Orleans Public Library on February 19, 2018.

[70] The *Board of Directors Report* for the Louisiana State penitentiary for 1852 noted that every year the penitentiary's directors recommended four to five prisoners for early release from their prison sentences. The directors' believed that releasing a few prisoners early provided the remaining prisoners with a powerful incentive to behave. For the year 1852, the Board of Directors recommended Lewis Bishop, serving a fourteen-year sentence for passing counterfeit coin, and O.F. Bertwick (an O.F. Bostwick, appears in the 1850 First District Court docket), serving a four-year sentence for possessing molds for coining, for early release from their prison sentences. The state pardoned Lewis Bishop, but Bostwick continued to serve his prison sentence. La Sere, Emile. *Appendix, Report of the Board of Directors of the Penitentiary of the State of Louisiana.* New Orleans, 1853. pg. 4. Obtained from HathiTrust Digital Library (http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uiug.30112088114415).

that when the New Orleans judicial and penal systems fully punished counterfeiters for their crimes, they did not return to the city's counterfeiting underworld. Of if New Orleans counterfeiters did return to their life of crime they, at the very least, operated in a more cautious manner designed to avoid detection. As such, if recidivism rates indicate the state's successful deterrence of a crime, than the low recidivism rates in New Orleans indicate that the city successfully enforced Louisiana's statutes that allowed it consistently limit the influence of its counterfeiting underworld on the city's legitimate economy.

Dr. Samuel Angel's encounter with Packenham at the Poydras market is intriguing as several counterfeiters in the New Orleans First District Court records operated at, or near, that particular public market. In an effort to pass fake coins, counterfeiters across the United States recognized that markets and other busy places such as taverns, provided key opportunities to pass counterfeit money.[71] In New Orleans, shovers favored trying to pass their counterfeit money in one of the city's bustling public markets that could be found across the city by 1861.[72] In New Orleans, evidence indicates that the city's shovers frequently targeted the Poydras market, established in 1837, and one of the oldest public markets in the city.[73] In 1850, Isaac Stein, a jeweler who owned a store on Poydras Street, visited the Poydras market and bought vegetables with fake coins, pocketing the genuine money in return. After the police caught Stein in the act of passing the counterfeit coins, they learned that Stein also attempted to pay his rent in counterfeit

[71] Mihm. *A Nation of Counterfeiters, pgs*. 210 and 223

[72] Sauder, Robert A.: "The Origin and Spread of the Public Market System in New Orleans," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, vol. 22, no. 3 (summer, 1981), pp. 281-297.

[73] Ibid.

coin as well.[74] Stein fled before his trial before the New Orleans First District court and forfeited his bond.[75] Ann Conklin, Mary Grogan, and Sabrina Moore successfully passed their counterfeit coins in the Poydras market for weeks before New Orleans police put a stop to their activities. Furthermore, the informant who led the New Orleans police to Dr. Angel's house in 1861 claimed that he met Angel at the Poydras market to discuss the business of distributing counterfeit coins.[76] Thus, when New Orleans police noted that Angel's associates passed his counterfeit money in the city's Poydras market, they were likely familiar with the market's role in the city's counterfeiting underworld.

While the city's shover's frequently targeted the Poydras market, shovers also attempted to pass counterfeit money in one of New Orleans' many coffee houses. In 1850, John Karr attempted, and failed, to pass a counterfeit fifty-cent piece at a coffee house on the corner of Levee and Mandeville streets. Luckily for Karr, the jury acquitted him of the charge of having counterfeit money and allowed him to go free.[77] In 1852, John Nicholson and a visited a New Orleans coffee house and attempted to pay for his drinks with a counterfeit fifty-dollar bill on the Louisiana State Bank.[78] Following his

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[74] "Case of Stein," *The Daily Crescent*, January 22, 1850. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015378/1850-01-22/ed-1/seq-3/).

[75] Case 4777: The State of Louisiana vs. Isaac Stein, February 22, 1850, New Orleans First District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 21, 2018

[76] "The Angell Counterfeiters," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, January 19, 1861. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1861-01-19/ed-1/seq-1/).

[77] Case 4818: The State of Louisiana vs. John Karr, March 1,1850, New Orleans First District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 21, 2018.

[78] Case 7735: The State of Louisiana vs. John Nicholson, 1852, New Orleans First District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 22, 2018

arrest, other shopkeepers came forward and claimed that Nicholson also paid them with counterfeit money for their goods.[79] The court convicted Nicholson for uttering counterfeit bank bills and sentenced him to five years in prison and hard labor.[80] In 1854 Andrew Arthur, discussed above, also tried to pass counterfeit coins at a New Orleans coffee house.[81] New Orleans' coffee houses and public markets offered the city's shovers countless opportunities to pass counterfeit money undetected and as such, they made for attractive targets.

New Orleans' public markets, however, also provided the city's female shovers, such as Sabrina Moore, with their own opportunities to pass counterfeit money. Additionally, Sabrina Moore's case helps illuminate New Orleans' perspectives on female counterfeiters, how some women in the South participated in the underground capitalist market, and the difficulties that arose when New Orleans' confronted the presence of women in the city's counterfeiting underworld. In February 1857, Sabrina Moore appeared before the New Orleans First District Court, charged with knowingly passing a counterfeit coin as payment for goods.[82] Moore pleaded not guilty to the charges and her first trial for passing counterfeit coin ended in a mistrial. The court scheduled a retrial for a month later, where the jury convicted Moore of the charge of knowingly passing

[79] "Passing Counterfeit Bills," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, May 13, 1852, vol. 5, no. 61, pg. 2

[80] Case 7735: The State of Louisiana vs. John Nicholson, 1852, New Orleans First District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 22, 2018

[81] Case 9418: The State of Louisiana vs. Andrew Arthur, April 4, 1854, New Orleans Fist District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 22, 2018

[82] Case 12679: The State of Louisiana vs. Sabrina Moore, 1857, New Orleans Fist District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 23, 2018

counterfeit coin and sentenced her to three months imprisonment and hard labor at the state penitentiary.[83]

While Moore's court case is missing from the records, New Orleans newspapers help fill in the rest of her story. In early December 1856, the *New Orleans Daily Crescent* reported that for the past few weeks a group of women worked to pass counterfeit half-dollar coins on the merchants who worked in the Poydras and St. Mary's markets in New Orleans.[84] The women appeared during the markets' busy times, paid for their items with counterfeit money, and disappeared before the shopkeepers realized that the women paid for their items with bogus coins. After the shopkeepers alerted New Orleans police to the presence of shovers at their markets, the police arrested Sabrina Moore at the Poydras market as she attempted to buy goods with fake coins. By arresting the counterfeiters, New Orleans police helped protect the market from counterfeiting, insuring the integrity of its business transactions and fulfilling an obligation to regulate the public good.[85] After the police lodged Moore at the court, one of the officers noticed a nearby woman acting suspiciously. The police believed that she was a friend of Moore and followed her to a nearby house, where New Orleans police found two women, Ann Conklin and Mary Grogan, about to flee the premises. The police also found inside the home, owned by Mary Grogan, over two hundred counterfeit coins of the same kind that had been passed

[83] Case 12679: The State of Louisiana vs. Sabrina Moore, 1857, New Orleans Fist District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 23, 2018

[84] "Female Counterfeiters Arrested," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, December 13, 1856. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1856-12-13/ed-1/seq-1/).

[85] For the importance of regulating the urban public market space through licensing, and by extension policing, see: Novak, William J. *The People's Welfare: Law and Regulation in Nineteenth Century America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996, pgs. 95-105

in the markets during the past few weeks. More importantly, the police found the molds and dies needed to create the counterfeit coins, indicating that the women created the counterfeit coins in Grogan's home.[86] Conklin and Grogan appeared before the First District Court on February 7, 1859, just a few days after Sabrina Moore. Both women pleaded not guilty to the charge of passing counterfeit coin and the court set their trial for February 27. On the day of the trial, the jury returned a verdict of not guilty for Mary Grogan, who left the court a free woman. Ann Conklin, however, was not so fortunate and the court convicted her of passing counterfeit coin and sentenced her to a year of hard labor and she had to pay the court's costs of the trial.[87]

On the surface, it appears that the New Orleans court rendered justice by sentencing Sabrina Moore and Ann Conklin to prison. The court's punishment of the female counterfeiters, however, reveals insights into how white male southerners viewed them and that it treated women counterfeiters differently than their male counterparts. When Sabrina Moore's case is compared to a similar case, that of a man named Andrew Arthur, clear discrepancies arise. On April 4, 1854 the First District Court charged Arthur with passing counterfeit coins and Arthur entered a plea of not guilty. It took the First District Court a little over a month before it brought Arthur to trial for his crime and he appeared before the court on May 18. While the First District Court convicted Arthur of passing counterfeit coin, Arthur's counsel filed a bill of exception that successfully challenged the court's decision. The court reconvened a month later, on June 22, and once again

[86] "Female Counterfeiters Arrested," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, December 13, 1856. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1856-12-13/ed-1/seq-1/).

[87] Case 12679: The State of Louisiana vs. Ann Conklin and Mary Grogan, 1859, New Orleans Fist District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 23, 2018

convicted Arthur of the charge. Unlike Sabrina Moore, however, who received a sentence of three months hard labor and costs, the court sentenced Arthur to ten years in the state penitentiary along with paying the court's costs.[88]

Additionally, the discovery of a group of female counterfeiters led at least one New Orleans newspaper to conclude that a gang of counterfeiters infested New Orleans. After the police arrested Sabrina Moore, Ann Conklin, and Mary Grogan, in early February 1857, the New Orleans *Daily Crescent* warned its readers "There is little doubt that an extensive counterfeiting gang is carrying on operations in our midst."[89] Furthermore, the paper cautioned its readers to examine all of the half and quarter-dollars that they received as a "great many of the bogus kind have been put into circulation."[90] The *Daily Crescent's* warning that an "extensive" counterfeiting gang existed in New Orleans appears to be overblown, at least by early 1857. Prior to the three women's arrest for counterfeiting, only two men appeared before the First District court on charges relating to counterfeiting. On January 12, 1857, John Seigle appeared before the New Orleans District court for having counterfeit coin in his possession. Seigle entered a plea of not guilty, and the court issued a nolle prosequi in his case.[91] In February 1857 John Strawforde appeared before the First District Court on charges of passing false and

[88] Case 9418: The State of Louisiana vs. Andrew Arthur, 1854, New Orleans Fist District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 22, 2018

[89] "Female Counterfeiters Arrested," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, December 13, 1856. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1856-12-13/ed-1/seq-1/).

[90] Ibid.

[91] Case 12606: The State of Louisiana vs. John Seigle, 1857, New Orleans Fist District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 23, 2018

forged bank notes as payment. Strawforde also pled not guilty and the court again issued a nolle prosequi in Strawforde's case.[92] The appearance of two men before New Orleans' First District Criminal court hardly constitutes an "extensive" gang of counterfeiters, and provides an example of the city's newspapers over-estimating counterfeiting's presence in the city.

Lastly, while the arrests of Moore, Conklin, and Grogan, led the New Orleans *Daily Crescent* to conclude that an "extensive" gang of counterfeiters operated in New Orleans, the paper also refused to confront the fact that these women possessed the knowledge and technical skills to make counterfeit coins. The strongest piece of evidence that indicates that the women counterfeited their own coins can be found in the same *Daily Crescent* story. The story reveals that New Orleans police caught Conklin and Grogan fleeing Grogan's house with the molds and metals needed to create counterfeit coins.[93] Conklin and Grogan's actions mirror that of Angel's wife, Ann Eliza, in that Conklin Grogan, and Eliza all attempted to both flee the police before they could be arrested and also tried to bring key evidence of their guilt, in the form of the molds and metal, with them. Despite New Orleans police finding counterfeiting equipment in Conklin and Grogan's possession, the New Orleans *Daily Crescent* believed that the women worked "merely as distributors" at the behest of the "extensive" counterfeiting gang due to the fact that "the

[92] Case 12606: The State of Louisiana vs. John Strawforde, 1857, New Orleans Fist District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 23, 2018

[93] "Female Counterfeiters Arrested," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, December 13, 1856. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1856-12-13/ed-1/seq-1/).

male manufactures of it being too sharp to expose themselves to detection and arrest."[94] In contrast, none of the New Orleans newspapers questioned if Samuel Angel worked at the behest of someone else. Nor did the papers attempt to attribute Angel's counterfeiting expertise to another, vague, entity. The only other comparable instance of newspapers assigning credit to another individual in regards to counterfeiting occurred when southerners caught one of the enslaved passing counterfeit money.[95]

While several New Orleans' counterfeiters created false and forged coins, other counterfeiters who appeared before the New Orleans First District Court counterfeited banknotes, which shows that counterfeiters of banknotes operated in the Deep South. Indeed, unlike the rural parts of the South, New Orleans offered local and regional counterfeiters access to the notes of several financial institutions that could provide counterfeiters with samples from which to create counterfeit notes. As briefly mentioned earlier, *Norman's Plan of New Orleans and its Environs* reveals that New Orleans housed seven banks within its city limits by 1854. Within the few blocks in New Orleans known

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[94] "Female Counterfeiters Arrested," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, December 13, 1856. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1856-12-13/ed-1/seq-1/).

[95] Virginia's *Daily Dispatch* described one such incident in its May 21, 1852 edition. The paper reported that an enslaved man named Albert Holmes, owned by the Central Railroad Company, attempted to pass a counterfeit Bank of Virginia note to a storekeeper. The Dispatch explicitly noted that Holmes claimed he had been "sent by a white man on the cars to get the bill changed." The *Dispatch* did not seek to further clarify the identity of the "white man on the cars," leaving this vague description as the only indication that Holmes potentially acted at the behest of another man. The mayor of Richmond, however, still ordered Holmes to be punished with thirty-nine lashes of the whip. While of articles vague description of the white man is striking, it actually functioned as a tool that allowed the paper to construct a narrative where the threat of counterfeiting was externally introduced to the enslaved, rather than one that originated in the South. In Holmes' case, a white man who arrived by train, which meant he could have come from anywhere, provided counterfeit notes to one of enslaved, who attempted to pass the notes. In turn, southern men reasserted their control over the narrative, and situation, by punishing Holmes with the thirty-nine lashes. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024738/1852-05-29/ed-1/seq-1/).

as "Exchange Alley," counterfeiters found access to multiple financial centers that could provide them with bank plates, ink, and the banknote paper needed to make bills. The city's counterfeiters could also find the molds and the metal needed to create both fake notes and coins at, or near, the New Orleans mint.[96]

Counterfeiters in New Orleans imitated the methods of other United States counterfeiters by targeting the bank bills of prominent Louisiana and New Orleans' banks. For example, in 1851 counterfeit bank notes circulated around New Orleans and the police arrested John Davis, alias William Reed in connection to the bills. When police searched Davis' residence, they found a one hundred-dollar plate on the State Bank of Louisiana, a fifty-dollar plate on the Union Bank of Louisiana, a twenty-dollar plate on the Bank of Louisiana, and a ten-dollar plate on the Louisiana State Bank.[97] Police also found a working copper plate press complete with the rollers needed to create a large quantity of counterfeit banknotes. Perhaps the sheer amount of counterfeiting equipment found at Davis' house forced one New Orleans newspaper to conclude that the Davis and other counterfeiters operated not just in New Orleans, but also in "every town on the Mississippi River, as far as St. Louis."[98] The captured bank plates at Davis' residence indicates that New Orleans police captured a counterfeiter who specialized in making high denomination notes on several prominent local banks. Davis' counterfeiting equipment, the press and rollers, reveal that Davis could counterfeit the above notes

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[96] Norman, Benjamin Moore, and Millard Fillmore. *Norman's plan of New Orleans & environs*. New Orleans, La.?: B.M. Norman, 1854, Map. Obtained from (https://www.loc.gov/item/2012593335/).

[97] "Capture of Part of Gang of Counterfeiters," *The Daily Crescent*, April 21, 1851. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015378/1851-04-21/ed-1/seq-3/).

[98] Ibid.

quickly and in bulk, meaning that Davis could insert a large amount of high quality counterfeit money into New Orleans' economy quickly and undetected.

While Davis could create the counterfeit notes, he likely relied on an extended network to effectively pass the counterfeit notes into New Orleans. Through Davis' capture, New Orleans police tracked the counterfeiter's visitors and that led to the arrest of one his shovers and partner, a man Henry MaGinn. Police arrested MaGinn at a grocery store as he attempted to pass a counterfeit twenty-dollar note in payment for his goods.[99] When the police searched MaGinn's home, they found fifty-six counterfeit fifty-dollar notes on the Union Bank in a drawer. One newspaper described MaGinn as "an ingenious man," and believed that he created the counterfeit press that the police found in Davis' residence.[100]

On May 16, 1851, John Davis appeared before the New Orleans First District Court and faced charges of making a counterfeit banknote plate and also with having the counterfeit plate in his possession.[101] On the same day, the court issued a True Bill against Davis, who pleaded not guilty to the charges on May 17. On May 22, the jury convicted Davis of the charges and sentenced him to seven years hard labor in the state penitentiary and ordered him to pay the costs of the trial. The jury's conviction of Davis indicates that the state presented a strong case that Davis likely created the plate needed to make the counterfeit Louisiana State banknotes. Following his first trial, the First

[99] "Capture of Part of Gang of Counterfeiters," *The Daily Crescent*, April 21, 1851. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015378/1851-04-21/ed-1/seq-3/).

[100] Ibid.

[101] Case 6458: The State of Louisiana vs. John Davis alias William Reed, 1851, New Orleans First District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 22, 2018

District Court charged Davis with forgery, uttering forged bank bills, and bringing forged bank bills into Louisiana. The court issued a True Bill against Davis, who once again pleaded not guilty to the charges. The state dropped all of the charges, except for the charge of bringing counterfeit money into Louisiana. Once again, the jury convicted Davis and this time it sentenced him to three years in the state penitentiary.[102]

On May 16, 1851, the same day that the First District Court issued a True Bill against John Davis, the court also issued a True Bill against Henry and Mary MaGinn for bringing counterfeit money into the state of Louisiana and for having counterfeit money in their possession.[103] On June 2, the First District Court found Henry not guilty of one of the charges. Five days later, the First District Court also found Mary not guilty of one of the charges.[104] Finally, the court issued a nolle prosequi for the other charge.[105] While Mary MaGinn left the court, her husband, Henry faced another charge, one for knowingly uttering counterfeit money. On June 25, the First District Court convicted MaGinn and sentenced him to three years hard labor in the state penitentiary.[106] According to the Board of Director's annual reports for the state penitentiary that cover 1852-1854,

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[102] Case 6463: The State of Louisiana vs. John Davis alias William Reed, 1851, New Orleans First District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 22, 2018

[103] Case 6457: The State of Louisiana vs. Henry and Mary MaGinn, 1851, New Orleans First District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 22, 2018

[104] Ibid.

[105] Case 6457: The State of Louisiana vs. Henry and Mary MaGinn, 1851, New Orleans First District Court, New Orleans Public Library. It is unclear what happened to Henry MaGinn next. According to the *Daily Crescent* on July 23, 1851, a court tried and convicted MaGinn on the charge of uttering forged notes. Judge Larue sentenced MaGinn to three years imprisonment and hard labor in the state penitentiary at Baton Rouge. According to the Board of Director's annual reports for the state penitentiary that cover 1852-1854, Henry MaGinn does not appear in the prison's records.

[106] Case 6389: The State of Louisiana vs. Henry Maginey, 1851, New Orleans First District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 21, 2018

however, neither Henry MaGinn nor his alias Henry McGiney appear in the prison's records.[107] MaGinn's convoluted trial and outcome continue demonstrating the difficulties that New Orleans's judicial apparatus' encountered when they tried to police the state's currency during the mid-nineteenth century.

While John Davis and Henry MaGinn's counterfeiting operation focused on counterfeiting several different bank bills of a variety of Louisiana banks, Elijah Mallerson's arrest in New Orleans reveals how counterfeit money from a distributor swept several people up in New Orleans' counterfeiting underworld. On May 28, 1853, Henry Miller revealed in a sworn statement that Mallerson gave him a counterfeit twenty on the Louisiana State Bank.[108] Miller further informed the court that Mallerson told Miller that he could make more counterfeit money of the same denomination and also that he had the molds necessary to make counterfeit coin. According to Miller's testimony, Mallerson offered to sell Miller counterfeit twenties on the Louisiana State Bank for the price of nine good dollars per bill. During Mallerson's trial, Miller testified that Mallerson told him that he was in contact with counterfeiters two hundred miles up the Mississippi River. Miller noted that Mallerson claimed that the counterfeiters upriver often sent him butter kegs filled with counterfeit bank bills that were then distributed across New Orleans. With Miller's statement, the First District court sought a search warrant for Mallerson's house, which they believed contained a large quantity of Bank of

[107] La Sere, Emile: Appendix, Report of the Board of Directors of the Penitentiary of the State of Louisiana. From HaithiTrust Digital Library (https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uiug.30112088114415).

[108] Case 90001: The State of Louisiana vs. Elijah Mallerson, 1853, New Orleans First District Court, New Orleans Public Library, February 22, 2018

Louisiana banknote paper.[109] Miller's testimony hints at both Mallerson's role as a distributor in a larger counterfeiting network and reveals the extent of New Orleans' counterfeiting underworld. Miller's testimony also provides a glimpse into the ways that counterfeiters in New Orleans knit the underground rural and urban counterfeiting underworlds together that mirrored its capitalist counterpart.

Despite Henry Miller's crucial role in implicating Elijah Mallerson in the region's counterfeiting underworld, the New Orleans First District Court still charged Miller with a passing counterfeit banknotes, revealing that the gamble of turning state's witness did not always work out for the region's counterfeiters. The court charged both Henry Miller and a man named John Dyke with passing counterfeit banknotes on the State Bank of Louisiana.[110] Although the men pleaded not guilty to the charges on July 9, 1853, their trial did not take place until December. While the court convicted John Dyke of the charge and sentenced him to one year in the state penitentiary, Miller forfeited his one thousand dollar bond and fled the state for California.[111] For Miller, and his bondsmen, the case cost more than the one thousand dollar forfeited bond. In early January 1854, the state of Louisiana seized two lots in the city and planned to auction them off as payment for Miller's forfeited bond.[112]

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[109] Case 90001: The State of Louisiana vs. Elijah Mallerson, 1853, New Orleans First District Court, New Orleans Public Library, February 22, 2018

[110] Case 8993: The State of Louisiana vs. John Dyke and Henry Miller, 1853, New Orleans First District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 22, 2018

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid.

Elijah Mallerson's distribution of counterfeit Bank of Louisiana banknotes caused problems for several people in New Orleans that in turn reveals the lengthy time that counterfeit currency could circulate in New Orleans long after its distributor was removed from the scene. Other people appeared before the First District Court and in New Orleans newspapers in connection with passing or possessing counterfeit money on the Louisiana State Bank. The First District court indicted two men, Nicholas East and Antonio Sasser for knowingly possessing counterfeit twenties on the Louisiana State Bank.[113] According to one newspaper, Elijah Mallerson implicated Sasser as a member of the network when he confessed that Sasser brought a larger amount of counterfeit money into Louisiana and that he and two others sold the fake money in New Orleans.[114] In early January 1854, Pierre Mayer attempted, and failed, to pass a counterfeit twenty on the Louisiana State Bank to another man.[115] On July 1, 1854, New Orleans police arrested Henry Myers for passing a counterfeit bill on the State Bank of Louisiana.[116] In August 1854, police arrested a man named Bishop for trying to pass a counterfeit twenty on the Louisiana State Bank.[117] Just a few days later, New Orleans police arrested a man as he attempted to pass "one of those well executed counterfeit banknotes on the State

[113] Case 8819: The State of Louisiana vs. Nicholas East and Antonio Sasser, 1853, New Orleans First District Court, New Orleans Public Library, accessed on February 22, 2018

[114] "Counterfeiters in Texas," *The Gonzales Inquirer*, July 16, 1853. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83021636/1853-07-16/ed-1/seq-2/).

[115] "Swindling," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, January 24, 1854, vol. 6, no. 274, pg. 2

[116] "Passing Counterfeit Money," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, July 1, 1854, From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1854-07-01/ed-1/seq-2/).

[117] "Passing Counterfeit Money," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, August 15, 1854. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov).

Bank of Louisiana."[118] Also in September 1854, police in New Orleans arrested William Stoepler for passing a counterfeit twenty on the State Bank of Louisiana and Elizabeth Lane, for also passing a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill to a man.[119] Through the above arrests, it is clear that a prevalence of counterfeit money on the State Bank of Louisiana circulated around New Orleans during 1853 and 1854. While no clear evidence exists linking Elijah Mallerson to the above counterfeit money, Miller's testimony that Mallerson consistently received shipments of counterfeit money from counterfeiters up the Mississippi River raise the strong possibility that Mallerson was, at the very least, partially responsibly for some of the counterfeit State Bank of Louisiana notes that circulated around New Orleans during the mid-1850s and entrapped several people in New Orleans' counterfeiting underworld.

The Crescent City' counterfeiters embodied similar qualities as the counterfeiters who operated along the Ohio River and in the New England States in the 1850s. The city contained forgers of counterfeit coin who imported the city through the Gulf of Mexico and attempted to pass it in the city's bustling public markets and coffee houses. New Orleans counterfeiters obtained bank plates, made presses, and dealt counterfeit notes in bulk, occasionally bringing the money in from the Mississippi River. Female counterfeiters in New Orleans benefitted from southern male's inabilities to conceptualize women who were intelligent enough to forge and distribute their own coins on male shopkeepers and received lower prison sentences than their male counterparts.

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[118] "Passing Counterfeit Money," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, September 5, 1854. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov).

[119] "Passing Counterfeit Money," *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, September 16, 1854. From the Library of Congress, *Chronicling America*: Historic American Newspapers site (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov).

Counterfeiters appeared before the New Orleans First District Court, which almost as often refused to pursue charges against them as it sent them to prison at the state penitentiary. Unlike the other parts of the United States, however, New Orleans counterfeiters rarely returned to the city's underworld after they served time in the Louisiana penitentiary at Baton Rouge. New Orleans' punishment of counterfeiting through its judicial system also served to deter the use of vigilante violence that other parts of the Deep South employed to remove the counterfeiters in their midst. In short, the New Orleans counterfeiting underworld mirrored the larger commercial capitalist world of the late nineteenth-century United States: some counterfeiters managed to get by and make a little money, some of them exploited the system for a bit of personal gain, and some counterfeiters managed to get caught and punished for breaking Louisiana's counterfeiting laws. All of them, however, participated in an underground capitalist system that carved out its own small niche in the Crescent City.

VI. CONCLUSION

Counterfeiting peaked across the United States during the mid-nineteenth century and declined towards the end of the Civil War. In the 1860s and 1870s, the recently created U.S. Secret Service wielded the power of the federal government and set about dismantling the nation's counterfeiting underworld.[1] The Secret Service's extensive powers allowed the agency to police the nation's money supply more thoroughly than the urban and rural police departments across the United States. By the end of the nineteenth century, the nation's counterfeiting underworld largely disappeared, with its practitioners either deceased, locked up, or they had left counterfeiting altogether.[2] Therefore, the pre-Civil War United States offers a glimpse into a time when individual states policed counterfeiting during its heyday in an effort to ensure the integrity of their local economies. Many of the pre-Civil War counterfeiters targeted the local economies along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to pass their counterfeit money. Other counterfeiters established their operations in the two regions, particularly in Cincinnati and New Orleans.

The policing of counterfeiting along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, shows how counterfeiting operated in other parts of the United States, in particular how counterfeiting worked in and along the slave states and how fake currencies entered into the free and slave economies found along the two rivers. This story of counterfeiting

[1] See Chapter Five: Dismantling the Money Market, in Johnson, David R. *Illegal Tender: Counterfeiting and the Secret Service in Nineteenth Century America*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995

[2] Ibid.

reveals the power of Cincinnati and New Orleans over the surrounding countryside and how their police and judicial systems pulled them further into their orbits. Cincinnati's police employed innovative policing techniques to infiltrate the Ohio River Valley counterfeiting underworld and arrest its members, while New Orleans' judicial system sentenced counterfeiters to years in the state penitentiary. Although Cincinnati and New Orleans' civil servants embodied and carried out the infrastructural power of the state along its geographical borders, rural areas along the Mississippi River in the Deep South wielded vigilante violence in order to correct the local judicial system's failures to punish the criminals. When looked at from afar, however, the economies along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers functioned smoothly, meaning that municipal police, court systems, and rural vigilantes effectively deterred counterfeiting. In turn, the largely successful policing of counterfeiting in the Ohio and Mississippi River Valleys helped lay the groundwork for the United States and capitalism's westward expansions during the second half of the nineteenth century.

The exploration of counterfeiting and policing along the Ohio and Mississippi River Valleys during the mid-nineteenth century, reveals how two regions responded to counterfeiting through state laws, municipal police, courtrooms, and vigilante violence. Shifting our perspectives on counterfeiting from the northeastern United States towards the Deep South and Midwest provides a view of how counterfeiting worked along and within the system of slavery. By showing how counterfeiting worked outside of the northeastern United States' particular system of industrial capitalism, important differences in the nation's counterfeiting underworlds come to light. One key observation that emerges from the study of counterfeiting and its policing along the Ohio and

Mississippi River Valleys is that of two well-ordered regions, pacified through two state's infrastructural powers, represented by their police and court systems and occasionally supplemented by vigilante violence, that served to protect the authority of their respective states.

At the most basic level, the efforts of Cincinnati and New Orleans to deter counterfeiting along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers shows how counterfeiting worked in the river valleys. While the region's counterfeiters largely operated within a similar manner as their counterparts across the United States, the differences that emerged between their operations reveals the regional variations found in both capitalism and counterfeiting across the United States during the mid-nineteenth century. For example, during the 1840s and 1850s counterfeiters in both Cincinnati and New Orleans devoted extensive time and resources towards counterfeiting coins, indicating that a healthy market for hard specie existed in the two cities. The desire for specie in the largest urban centers on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers during the mid-nineteenth century indicates that large portions of their populations preferred the currency of specie rather than the fickle paper money that circulated throughout the United States. A preference for specie over banknotes shows that large portions of the two river valleys still distrusted the nation's paper currency well into the 1850s. Paper money's roles in facilitating the economic transactions, investments, and speculations of nineteenth century capitalism meant that people throughout the two areas distrusted key pieces of capitalism that directed the United States' economy during the nineteenth century.

Additionally, the study of counterfeiting in the Ohio and Mississippi River Valleys reveals how municipal police and judicial systems policed counterfeiting in both

their jurisdictions and throughout the two regions. In turn, adding the law enforcement and judicial perspective to the story of counterfeiting provides a counter-narrative to the perception that counterfeiting pervaded the nineteenth-century United States. The study of counterfeiting and policing along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers during the mid-nineteenth century indicates that both Ohio and Louisiana devoted significant resources to a crime that appeared to occur not all that often, at least from the view of the state. By adding the police's perspective to the study of counterfeiting we see how Cincinnati's law enforcement penetrated the many state, municipal, and political borders found throughout the Ohio River Valley in their pursuits of the region's counterfeiters. The Cincinnati police's dogged pursuit of counterfeiters in the Ohio River Valley challenges a larger narrative that casts the U.S. police as both unwitting and willing accomplices of the nation's counterfeiters that in turn gave a de facto acceptance of counterfeiting. Furthermore the study of the Cincinnati police shows how one municipal police in the Midwestern United States negotiated their duties along the borders of slavery that adds to our understanding of how policing worked in the nineteenth-century United States. In turn, the study of New Orleans' police reveals how the Crescent City police wielded their powers beyond the policing of slavery and applied them to New Orleans' various social classes.

The persistency of the Cincinnati police's efforts to pursue and arrest the region's counterfeiters throughout the 1850s caught the attention of the surrounding rural towns, whose elected officials requested the department's help to arrest their counterfeiters. The requests for help demonstrate an important deviation between how counterfeiting worked in the Ohio River Valley and how it functioned in the northeastern United States. First,

unlike towns in the New England states who viewed counterfeiters as providing a public service, and therefore tolerated their presence, rural towns in the Ohio River Valley actively removed the counterfeiters in their midst. Rather than allowing counterfeiters to operate with impunity, the towns along the Ohio River turned to Cincinnati's powerful police force to aid their fight against counterfeiting. The Ohio River Valley's desire to deter counterfeiting contrasts sharply with the de facto tolerance for the crime that existed across the northeastern United States.

The rural town's requests to the Cincinnati police for help in their fights against their local counterfeiters reveals another way that U.S. cities pulled the surrounding hinterlands into their orbits. Urban historians have already revealed the economic links that nineteenth-century cities like Chicago forged with the rural countryside, pulling goods, people, and services into their orbits.[3] Chicago's economic links to its surrounding hinterlands provides key proof of how cities across the United States created markets that allowed the city to assert its economic control over the surrounding areas. For Americans living near and around cities like Cincinnati and New Orleans, however, uniformed law enforcement provided a more visible and direct representation of the city's influence and reach into their lives during the mid-nineteenth century. As such, local accounts detailing the city's role in policing their town and the surrounding rural areas provides an additional vantage point through which rural American's confronted the growing power and reach of cities during the mid-nineteenth century. When rural towns asked Cincinnati for help, it indicates that they actively sought the city's help in dealing

[3] Cronin, William. *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1991.

with a problem that was beyond their town's power to address. Through the policing of counterfeiting, the relationships between the rural and urban United States appears more cooperative than antagonistic. Furthermore, Americans living well beyond Cincinnati, in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, and Virginia also confronted the power of Cincinnati's police and the reach of the city's influence, when its police arrived in their towns and arrested the counterfeiters in their midst. By removing counterfeiters from the surrounding regions, Cincinnati's, and to a lesser extent, New Orleans' law enforcement reveals the urban center's extensive reach throughout the Ohio and Mississippi River Valleys, connecting the regions together in previously unknown ways.

The hidden connections that knit the Ohio River Valley together in its efforts to deter counterfeiting sharply reveals its cohesion and stability that in turn contrasts with a national view of the region. Recent borderland histories of the Ohio River stress the economic, political, and social interconnectedness of the region prior to the Civil War.[4] The policing of counterfeiting in the Ohio River Valley shows how police and criminals forged additional links between the nation's free and slave states that further pulled the region together. Cincinnati police pursued counterfeiters throughout the Ohio River Valley and arrested them in Kentucky, Virginia, Indiana, and Illinois, and then brought them back to Cincinnati for a trial. The rural communities in slave Kentucky allowed the Cincinnati police to operate in their jurisdictions, while Kentucky and Ohio police worked together to arrest counterfeiters in Ohio. The department's joint efforts to deter counterfeiting indicate that a close relationship existed between Ohio and Kentucky's

[4] Salafia, Mathew. *Slavery's Borderland: Freedom and Bondage Along the Ohio River*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.

police. Additionally, the circulation of counterfeit money on both sides of the river demonstrate the ways that an illicit economy that dealt in fake currencies connected the free and slave economies together, forging links between the two that penetrated the Ohio River. Therefore, rather than a political border that separated the country's free and slave states, the Ohio River emerges as a conduit that helps us better understand the complicated and interconnected relationships that formed between the slave and free states prior to the Civil War.

The Ohio River Valley's efforts to police and control counterfeiting through the power of the state sharply contrasts with how the rural Deep South dealt with counterfeiting along the Mississippi River. Yet, despite the Deep South's violent responses to counterfeiting, their actions indicate the importance of both safeguarding their local economic transactions from counterfeiting and supplementing the state's power in the region. More importantly, the violent and vigilante rural responses to counterfeiting along the Mississippi River in the 1840s contained roots in Mississippi's past encounters with the mythic "Murrell" gang in the 1830s and with gamblers in Vicksburg in 1835. Following the violent reprisals against suspected gang members and gamblers, the justifications that emerged to defend the Deep South's actions to the rest of the United States contained within them the seeds of an argument that reveals the region's investment in the ethos of capitalism. For example, in 1835 people in Vicksburg believed that local gamblers wrongfully obtained wealth through speculation. In turn, gambling offered a shortcut to wealth accumulation that sharply contrasted with

acquiring wealth through diligent hard labor.[5] Vicksburg's views towards wealth accumulation easily fit in the ethos of industrial capitalism found in the northeastern United States.[6] As such, by removing the counterfeiters and gamblers from the area, people across Mississippi reinforced the importance of acquiring wealth through hard work, a key tenet of capitalism's in the nineteenth-century United States. When newspapers reported that local counterfeiters were suspected members of the Murrell gang and were dealt with accordingly, those actions can be viewed as another effort by the Deep South to protect the ethos and system of capitalism in the United States. In doing so, the vigilante's employed different methods to deter counterfeiting than the police and court systems used in New Orleans and Cincinnati. However, all of the actors, the urban police, municipal court systems, and rural vigilantes, pursued a similar goal: the policing and protection of the economic transactions that underwrote the basic levels of the nation's capitalist system during the nineteenth century.

Counterfeiting along the rural Mississippi River in the Deep South also provides important evidence that the region contained pieces of counterfeiting networks, such as dealers and shovers, that furthers our knowledge of how counterfeiting and capitalism worked across the United States during the mid-nineteenth century. While the research reveals that parts of the Deep South contained aspects of counterfeiting, other places like New Orleans contained actual counterfeiters, an important contribution that helps show that the region also reckoned with the consequences of counterfeiting. Records from New Orleans' First District Criminal Court, supplemented by newspaper accounts, from

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[5] Rothman, Joshua D. *Flush Times and Fever Dreams: A Story of Capitalism in the Age of Jackson*. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2012, pg. 174

[6] Rothman. *Flush Times and Fever Dreams*, pgs. 178-179

the 1840s and 1850s, paint a picture of a fully functional counterfeiting underworld. New Orleans' counterfeiting system contained the necessary structure, in the form of counterfeiters, dealers, and shovers that allowed it to spread counterfeit currency throughout the Deep South. Upon closer inspection, however, New Orleans' counterfeiting underworld contained minor variances that are revealing of both the local counterfeiting and capitalist economies. New Orleans counterfeiters created specie that hints at a preference for hard money in the Deep South and the city's counterfeiting underworld imported counterfeit coin from Texas and the Mississippi River. A preference for hard specie shows that some people in New Orleans still distrusted the nation's banking system. The importation of fake currency from Texas and the Mississippi River shows how New Orleans' illicit economy worked alongside and within its legitimate one, as both acted to import and export goods to New Orleans from across the nation. While the vigilante violence that characterized responses to counterfeiting along the rural Mississippi River in the Deep South in the 1830s and 1840s is jarring, New Orleans' urban counterfeiting underworld in the 1850s would not have been out of place alongside Cincinnati's in the Midwest. The similarities between the counterfeiting underworlds of the Midwest and South means that by shifting our prospective on counterfeiting from the industrialized northeast, we gain a clearer and more representative understanding of how counterfeiting and policing worked in other regions of the United States during the nineteenth century.

By better understanding how municipal law enforcement and counterfeiting worked in the Midwest and Deep South, the failure of the northeast to act in a similar manner shows just one of the ways the region functioned as an outlier from the rest of the

United States during the 1840s and 1850s. A focus on the failure of local police to deter counterfeiting in the northeastern United States creates a narrative of a weak police, and a weak state, unable or unwilling to arrest the counterfeiters in their midst. By applying a narrative of the northeastern United States' inabilities or unwillingness to police counterfeiting to the rest of the country, counterfeiters appeared to operate with impunity across the nation during the nineteenth century. Moreover, the conclusion of the above narrative argues that state's failed to deter counterfeiting to any significant degree until the arrival of a federal policing agency in the form of the Secret Service. A closer examination of both the Cincinnati and New Orleans police demonstrates that the above narrative is not entirely accurate, as many places across the United States were hostile towards counterfeiting. Therefore, in order to better understand counterfeiting's prevalence during the nineteenth century, we need to also focus on the parts of the United States that were inhospitable to the crime and hostile to its practitioners that in turn reveals sharp contrasts with counterfeiting in the northeastern United States.

Furthermore, within a narrative of the government's policing of counterfeiting through the Secret Service, counterfeiting in the United States only declines after the agency eradicated the crime in the second-half of the nineteenth century. From a federal perspective, individual states appear weak, unwilling and unable to police a crime that appeared to have an outsized impact on the social and economic worlds of the nineteenth-century United States. By reframing the story to include the perspectives of the municipal police of Cincinnati and New Orleans, however, an entirely different picture emerges, one in which the who municipal police departments and judicial systems went to extensive lengths to deter the crime. Cincinnati police willingly pursued and arrested

counterfeiters throughout the Ohio River Valley, while New Orleans' judicial system sentenced the city's counterfeiters to lengthy prison sentences between the 1840s and 1860s. Prior to the arrival of the Secret Service in the late 1860s, both Cincinnati and New Orleans, while not fully eradicating the crime within their jurisdictions, were more than willing to devote the necessary resources towards deterring counterfeiting during the mid-nineteenth century. Thus, at the very least, two states in the Midwest and South set the groundwork for dismantling counterfeiting networks that the Secret Service adopted years later.

Indeed, all of the literature on counterfeiting situates the Secret Service as the key institution that brought an end to its prevalence in the United States after the Civil War.[7] There is no argument that the Secret Service played a critical role in counterfeiting's decline after the Civil War. But without the numbers to establish its frequency across the United States prior to the Civil War, however, it is difficult to establish just how much counterfeiting actually declined after the establishment of the Secret Service. If we base our perspective on counterfeiting's frequency before the Civil War on anecdotal accounts, such as those found in the nation's newspapers, then it appears that thousands of counterfeiters operated with impunity across the United States. Such a perspective means that the Secret Service's dismantling of the nation's counterfeiting system in the late nineteenth century resulted in a dramatic decline. By basing our perspective on pre-Civil War counterfeiting on non-anecdotal evidence, such as crime statistics found in state documents, then an initial impression emerges in which counterfeiting's decline in

[7] Johnson, David R. *Illegal Tender: Counterfeiting and the Secret Service in Nineteenth Century America*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995. Mihm, Stephen. *A Nation of Counterfeiters: Capitalists, Con Men, and the Making of the United States*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007.

the late nineteenth century appears to be less severe. In order to gain a clearer picture of counterfeiting's pre-Civil War prevalence, however, we need to obtain additional numbers from other states detailing their encounters with counterfeiting. Ohio and Louisiana's numbers regarding counterfeiting suggests that in the United States, it was not as widespread as it appears in other literatures and that its decline in the late nineteenth century may not have been as extensive as it appears in other accounts on the subject.

Moving towards a broader and theoretical perspective, the exploration of alternative counterfeiting underworlds beyond the northeastern United States offers historians an unusual model to study the reach of American state power during the mid-nineteenth century. By grounding stories of counterfeiting in the United States in a narrative that emphasizes the counterfeiter's abilities to flummox police, flout state laws with little or no consequences, and exploit political and geographical boundaries to evade capture, earlier works on counterfeiting reveal a weak state, one that failed to protect the integrity of its currency and its economy. The policing of counterfeiting from the municipal level, through Ohio and Louisiana's statutes, their law enforcement, and their judicial systems, reveals a different perspective of power and reach of the nineteenth-century American state. The municipal policing of counterfeiting shows how the Ohio and Louisiana's civil servants carried out the state's regulatory powers over their respective economies. Both the Ohio and Mississippi River functioned as geographical and political borders in the United States and the state's ability to assert its will over these places provides key examples of its power. Cincinnati and New Orleans deterred counterfeiting in their regions to such an extent that the local economic systems worked,

despite the continued presence of counterfeiters and their currencies in the region. While rural vigilantes on the Mississippi River were not civil servants, they still pursued a similar goal in that they wanted to protect state institutions, in the form of the local judicial systems, from the counterfeiter's abilities to subvert its authority. The vigilante's did not want to overthrow the state, nor did they seek to alter its institutions through violence. Rather vigilantes in the Deep South sought to reinforce the state's power that helped protect its standing in the Mississippi River Valley. Therefore, the rural vigilantes, municipal police and court systems pursued a common goal, the eradication of counterfeiting in their midst, that contributes evidence to the argument that the nineteenth-century American state was more powerful than we previously realized.

The policing of counterfeiting along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers during the mid-nineteenth century reveals a story about one of the ways that the state pacified and incorporated territory to spread both its borders, and the system of capitalism, westward during the nineteenth century. Cincinnati's police, New Orleans' First District Criminal Court, and even the violent actions of rural vigilantes provides evidence of the state's efforts to police capitalism in the Ohio and Mississippi River Valleys during the mid-nineteenth century. The policing of capitalism through the deterrence of counterfeiting meant that states tried to regulate and protect the basic exchanges that characterized the lowest levels of the nation's capitalist system from counterfeiting. In doing so, civil servants and vigilantes played crucial roles in laying the groundwork for capitalism to ingratiate within, and then absorb, the Ohio and Mississippi river economies before it continued spreading west across the United States. Yet, historians who study capitalism and its expansion across the United States during the nineteenth century tend to focus on

how markets and institutions acted as the catalysts to bring a region under capitalism's sway. In doing so, these historians overlook the equally important roles that civil servants of the state, such as the police, judges, and juries, played in helping capitalism spread west. Taking a larger view, neither the United States, nor capitalism, could incorporate new territory in the West or across the Deep South without first ensuring the integrity of the system along places like the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Nineteenth-century municipal police, urban court systems, and even rural vigilantes, all played critical roles in deterring counterfeiting along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers during the mid-nineteenth century. In turn, their efforts to police counterfeiting along the two river valley's contributed to capitalism's spread west, thus fulfilling the economic manifest of the United States' destiny.

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