

BURRITT COLLEGE IN SPENCER (VAN BUREN COUNTY), TENNESSEE:
A PACIFIST COLLEGE OR A COLLEGE JUST NAMED FOR A PACIFIST?

The early years of Burritt College in Spencer, Tennessee, February 1849 to May 1861, provide for students of the Restoration Movement an interesting study for the impact of war on antebellum religion in the United States. The small college was founded by local leaders, including members of the Christian Church, who seemingly felt compelled to name the school after a well-known, international peace movement activist, Elihu Burritt, at a time when the nation was completing its war for territorial expansion with its southern neighbor, the Republic of Mexico. In its thirteenth year of existence, however, the college found it necessary to close its doors due to the country's drift into Civil War that took many of Van Buren County's young men away for military service in the newly-formed Southern Confederacy and disrupted the socioeconomic systems of the South and, needless to say, the educational institutions in the breakaway states. These two important wars for the country—the Mexican-United States War and the Civil War—had far-reaching implications for mainstream and highly visible religious institutions in all states as well as backwoods religious institutions in remote places like the Cumberland Plateau and Spencer, Tennessee.

Early in 1840, the Tennessee General Assembly passed a bill to consolidate portions of three counties—Bledsoe, Warren, and White—and form a new county along the Cumberland Plateau that was named Van Buren in honor of Martin Van Buren, the eighth President of the

United States (1837-1841).¹ From the early days of settlement and statehood, Tennessee had seen steady growth in its economy and population.² As early county formation across the state followed closely the land acquisitions from the region's Indian tribes,³ the state's population increased by 2,800 percent from 35,691 in 1790 to over one million, 1,002,717, by mid-century

¹An Act to establish the county of Van Buren, passed January 3d, 1840, Chapter LIX, *Acts Passed at the First Session of the Twenty-Third General Assembly of the State of Tennessee, 1839-40* (Nashville, TN: J. Geo. Harris, Printer to the State, 1840), 130-134. For online access, see "County Formation in Acts of Tennessee, Van Buren County," Tennessee Secretary of State (Nashville, TN: State Library and Archives, 2016), at: <http://sos.tn.gov/products/tsla/county-formation-acts-tennessee-van-buren-county> (accessed 26 January 2016). See too "The Formation of the County," *Van Buren County Historical Journal*, Vol. 1 (1981), 5-10.

For a visual overview of the parts of the three counties that became Van Buren County, see William Thorndale and William Dollarhide, *Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses, 1790-1920* (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1987), 319.

For geographic delineation of the county's eight districts, see "Van Buren County Court Records (1840)," WPA Records (Nashville, TN: Tennessee State Library and Archives, n.d.), 8-10, Microfilm, Record Group 107, Roll 83.

²See Robert E. Corlew, "Economic, Social, and Cultural Development at Mid-Nineteenth Century," *Tennessee: A Short History*, Second Edition (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 227ff.

³For good visual representations, see "Indians and Cultural Encounters: Broken Treaties," Tennessee4me, Tennessee State Museum, National Endowment for the Humanities (Nashville, TN: Tennessee State Museum, n.d.), at: www.tn4me.org/minor_cat.cfm/minor_id/15/major_id/32/era_id/2 (accessed 23 January 2016); "History of County Formations in Tennessee 1776-1985," The State of Tennessee, RootsWeb (Knoxville, TN: George W. Durman, n.d.), at: <http://homepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~george/countyformations/tennesseeformationmaps.html> (accessed 23 January 2016).

For treaties and Native Americans, see Colin G. Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft: Treaties and Treaty Making in American Indian History* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013); D. W. Meinig, "Empire: The Geopolitical Management of Captive Peoples," *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*, Volume 2, Continental America, 1800-1867 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 170-196; and "Indian Land Cessions" in Sam B. Hilliard, "A Robust New Nation, 1783-1820," *North America: The Historical Geography of a Changing Continent*, edited by Robert D. Mitchell and Paul A. Groves (Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1990), 162-165.

or 1850.⁴ And growth of the economy kept pace with rapid settlement.⁵ By the year 1840, due to removal of the Cherokee (i.e., 1838) and the realization of what might be called a true market economy, the “frontier” period of Tennessee’s history came to an end. But, as John Finger cautions, “within some subregions—the Cumberland Plateau, for example—that point came later or perhaps never arrived at all.”⁶

⁴Richard L. Forstall, compiler and editor, *Population of States and Counties of the United States: 1790 to 1990*, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996), 4. *Seventh Census of the United States: 1850*, J. D. B. DeBow, Superintendent of the United States Census (Washington, DC: Robert Armstrong, 1853), 577, gives 35,791 as the total population in the state in 1790.

For policies on land acquisitions in early Tennessee, see Daniel Byron Dovenbarger, “Land Registration in Early Middle Tennessee: Laws and Practice” (Master of Arts thesis; Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University, 1981); Billie R. McNamara, *Tennessee Land: Its Early History and Laws* (Knoxville, TN: Billie R. McNamara, 1996).

⁵See Christopher Warren Baker, “East Tennessee Within the World-Economy (1790-1850): Precapitalist Isolation or Peripheral Capitalism?” (Master of Arts thesis; Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee, 1991); Susanna Delfino, “Many Souths: Changing Social Context and the Road to Industrialization in Antebellum Tennessee,” *Southern Studies*, Vol. 22 (1983): 82-96; Susanna Delfino and Michele Gillespie, eds., *Global Perspectives on Industrial Transformation in the American South* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2005); Wilma Alene Dunaway, *The First American Frontier: Transition to Capitalism in Southern Appalachia, 1700-1860* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Douglass C. North, *The Economic Growth of the United States 1790-1860* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentiss-Hall, 1961); Larry Schweikart, “Tennessee Banks in the Antebellum Period,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 45, Nos. 2/3 (1986): 119-132, 199-209; and Donald L. Winters, *Tennessee Farming, Tennessee Farmers: Antebellum Agriculture in the Upper South* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1995).

For access to economic data on Tennessee from the decennial censuses beginning with 1810, go to: “Census of Population and Housing,” U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015), at: www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html (accessed 24 January 2016).

For an older summary of economic growth in antebellum Tennessee, see “Growth and Development” in *Goodspeed’s General History of Tennessee* (1887 reprint; Nashville, TN: Charles and Randy Elder Booksellers, 1973), 229ff.

⁶John R. Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers: Three Regions in Transition* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 316.

With meager beginnings, Spencer might seem an unlikely place for a college with a national attribution and, in a limited sense, an international connection. But pioneers on the “frontier” who were adventurers by nature generally have aspired to lofty accomplishments and noble achievements. And, more than anything, they worked hard to overcome challenging circumstances. Plans for the town of Spencer began when the new Van Buren County Court, in its September term of 1841, drew out lots for its county seat.⁷ By 1846, Spencer officially had been incorporated. And by 1850, the town had a population of 164 and the county of Van Buren had a population of 2,674.⁸

Both town and county had grown steadily but slowly during the decade. In the calendar year ending June 1, 1850, the county had 110 births, 25 marriages, and 27 deaths.⁹ Farming of 12,115 improved and 164,851 unimproved acres of land, with a total cash value of \$140,287, was

⁷See the brief discussion and documentation by Wayne Haston, “David Haston’s Town Lots in Spencer, TN,” *The Heritage of Daniel Haston* (n.p., Wayne Haston, 2010-2015), at: www.danielhaston.com/children/david/spencer-lots.htm (accessed 19 February 2016); also Chapter VII, “Town of Spencer,” in Landon D. Medley, *The History of Van Buren County, Tennessee: “The Early Canebreakers,” 1840-1940* (Salem, WV: Don Mills, Inc., 1987), 77-84; and “The Town of Spencer,” *Van Buren County Historical Journal*, Vol. I (1981), 11-21.

Joseph Cummings, Jr., John Flemmings, John Paine, William Worthington, and Uriah York were “appointed commissioners to lay off the town of Spencer and do and perform all other things that the law requires said commissioners to do.” “Van Buren County Court Records (1840),” 17.

⁸Forstall, *Population of States and Counties of the United States: 1790 to 1990*, 151, gives 2,674 as the total population in the official 1850 count, but the handwritten summation by John Gillentine, Assistant Marshal of the Census, gives 164 as Spencer’s population and 2,355 as the rest of the county’s population for a total of only 2,519 inhabitants. For the handwritten schedule, see the last file under “Index of / tn/vanburen/census/1850,” *Census Images on CD* (Wichita, KS: S-K Publications, n.d.), at: www.usgwarchives.net/tn/vanburen/census/1850 (accessed 19 February 2016).

⁹Seven of the births were by slaves; all marriages were between whites; and three of the deaths were of slaves. *Seventh Census of the United States: 1850*, 576.

the mainstay of the county's economy with \$72,160 of value from livestock¹⁰ and \$12,669 of value in homemade goods from "produce."¹¹ In addition to farmers and laborers, the two occupations most cited in the 1850 census, the county also had blacksmiths, brick masons, carpenters, a cheese maker, college teachers, court clerks, a dentist, distillers, doctors, grocers, a gunsmith, mechanics, merchants, a midwife, millers and millwrights, pensioners, a renter, a sawmill keeper, schoolteachers, a sheriff and a jailor, shoemakers, spinsters, stonemasons, tanners, tavern keepers, a vase turner, a wagon maker and a wheel maker, weavers, and several ministers of the gospel.¹²

Five churches had been established in the county—three Baptist Churches with total accommodations for 700 people, one Christian Church with accommodations for 300 people, and one Presbyterian Church with accommodations for 300 people.¹³ The county had 732 students

¹⁰Livestock included 791 horses, 78 mules, 814 milk cows, 252 oxen, 1,730 other cattle, 2,268 sheep, and 10,716 pigs. *Ibid.*, 585-586.

¹¹The "produce" included 1,752 bushels of wheat, 656 bushels of rye, 131,890 bushels of corn, 11,800 bushels of oats, 2 400-pound bales of ginned cotton, 4,634 pounds of wool, 71 bushels of peas and beans, 4,705 bushels of potatoes, 8,076 bushels of sweet potatoes, 23,886 pounds of butter, 900 pounds of cheese, 4 tons of hay, 1,700 pounds of flax, 6 bushels of flaxseed, 1,655 pounds of maple sugar, 24 gallons of molasses, and 3,920 pounds of beeswax and honey. *Ibid.*, 586-590.

¹²"Schedule I.—Free Inhabitants . . . County of Van Buren State of Tennessee," *Seventh Census of the United States: 1850* (Nashville, TN: Tennessee State Library and Archives, n.d.), Microfilm, Roll 897.

¹³*Seventh Census of the United States: 1850*, 593-597. See Chapter XX, "Churches," in Medley, *The History of Van Buren County, Tennessee*, 231ff. By 1870, the county still had five churches—one Baptist (with 400 sittings), two Christian (with 500 sittings total), one Methodist (with 400 sittings), and one Presbyterian (with 200 sittings). Table XVIII, Statistics of Churches in Each State and Territory (By Counties), State of Tennessee, *Ninth Census—Volume I, The Statistics of the Population of the United States . . . Compiled from the Original Returns of the Ninth Census (June 1, 1870)*, by Francis A. Walker, Secretary of the Interior (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1872), 554.

(392 males and 340 females) attending school during the year, but 277 persons in the county—99 white males, 172 white females, four free colored males, and two free colored females—still could not read nor write.¹⁴ There were thirteen schools in the county—eleven public schools (with eleven teachers, 505 pupils, and an annual income of \$703 with \$643 from public funds and \$60 from other sources), one academy (with one teacher, 35 pupils, and an annual income of \$298 with \$238 from public funds and \$60 from other sources),¹⁵ and one college (with three teachers, 73 students, and an annual income of \$1,500 with no public funds and \$1,500 from other sources).¹⁶

Burritt College, named for Elihu Burritt, a well-known peace activist from New England, was the college in Van Buren County that had originated from thirty-three stockholders in

¹⁴*Seventh Census of the United States: 1850*, 583.

¹⁵This was York Academy that began classes in June 1843. See “York Academy,” *Central Gazette (McMinnville, Tenn.)*, Vol. XI, No. 19 (May 19, 1843); Larry Craig Boyd, “Blessings of the Eternal Mountains: The Schools of Van Buren County, Tennessee” (Master of Arts thesis; Cookeville, TN: Tennessee Technological University, 1987), 23-24.

¹⁶*Seventh Census of the United States: 1850*, 593. Compare Chapter XIX, “Early Schools,” in Medley, *The History of Van Buren County, Tennessee*, 211ff.

December 1846 and was incorporated by the State of Tennessee in January 1848.¹⁷ But is the connection between Burrirt College and the pacifist reformer for whom it was named so obvious? Burrirt, who became known later as “the learned blacksmith,” was a self-taught but very well educated common laborer. Born in New Britain, Connecticut in December 1810, Burrirt, one of ten children and the youngest son of Elihu and Elizabeth (Hinsdale) Burrirt, apprenticed to a local blacksmith, possibly Samuel Booth in Simsbury,¹⁸ at the early age of sixteen. In 1828, he undertook the blacksmith trade to help the family after the death of his father who was a farmer and shoemaker. Naturally inquisitive and a quick learner, Burrirt became interested in books when friends of his grandfather, a veteran of the Revolutionary War, visited their home and rehearsed old war tales.¹⁹

¹⁷The original stockholders were George W. Anderson, M. Y. Brockett, James W. Copeland, Abijah Crain, James Cruse, Gabriel P. Cummings, Joseph Cummings, William Burrell Cummings, John Gillentine, James A. Haston, Joab Hill, W. B. Huddleston, D. G. Hughes, E. G. McKinney, John A. Mims, Jabez G. Mitchell, John Morris, Joshua Morris, W. A. Myers, John Paine, Andrew K. Parker, Major Passons, F. E. Plumlee, John Stewart, William Templeton, Nathan F. Trogon, Daniel Walling, Daniel F. Wood, John G. W. Woods, William Worthington, Seth Wright, George W. York, and Uriah York. See Entry for December 28, 1846, “Burrirt College Board of Directors Minute Book, 1848-1915,” prepared by Lori D. Lockhart (Nashville, TN: Tennessee State Library and Archives, 2007), 1-3, Microfilm, Roll 1811. For a good summary, see Sydney Elizabeth Beard, “Historic Burrirt College,” *Van Buren County Historical Journal*, Vol. III (1984), 4ff.; and Boyd, “Blessings of the Eternal Mountains,” 27, 60ff.

The stockholders were to elect twelve trustees from their number to conduct the business of the college, and each stockholder was given one vote for each share of stock in the college. See An Act to incorporate the Andrew College . . . , passed January 24, 1848, Chapter XCI, Sections 9-14, *Acts of the State of Tennessee Passed at the First Session of the Twenty-Seventh General Assembly for the Years 1847-8* (Jackson, TN: Gates & Parker, 1848), 141-144. The legislative record lists twenty-seven of the original thirty-three contributors and also misspells the name of the College as “Burrett.”

¹⁸See Albert J. Brooks, “Elijah Hinsdale Burrirt: The Forgotten Astronomer,” *Popular Astronomy*, Vol. 44 (1936), 295.

¹⁹See Charles Northend, ed., *Elihu Burrirt: A Memorial Volume Containing A Sketch of His Life and Labors* (New York, NY: D. Appleton & Company, 1879), 13ff.

The young Burritt, at night and in his spare time, picked up what learning he could, and he also benefitted from the labors of Elijah, his brother and seventeen years his senior. Elijah had attended Williams College, in Williamstown, Massachusetts, taught briefly at Sanderson Academy, in Ashfield, Massachusetts, and, beginning in 1819, taught school, edited a weekly newspaper, and worked as a state surveyor in Milledgeville, the state capitol of Georgia. While in the South, Elijah, although not himself an abolitionist, had received pamphlets from well-meaning northern friends that had been left out in his newspaper office and picked up and read by locals. Suspicion brewed about Elijah's views on slavery, so that, when feelings of hatred intensified in December 1829, he thought it best to return to New Britain.²⁰ Back home, the older Burritt sold for \$10,000 the copyright for a mathematics textbook he had authored, and he purchased the Stone Store on North Main Street, which he converted to an observatory and a boarding and day school, for instruction in "higher English studies and in ancient and modern languages." This allowed the younger Elihu to attend his brother's school and also to help with some of the teaching.²¹

Elihu continued to improve himself academically, and he had a remarkable gift for learning languages. By age thirty, he could read nearly fifty languages that included Classical (i.e., Greek, Latin), European (i.e., French, German, Italian, Spanish), and Oriental (i.e., Hebrew, Syriac) languages. In 1837, after the family's grocery business closed, he moved to Worcester near Boston, supported himself with blacksmith work, and became a frequent patron of the

²⁰But see Glenn M. McNair's more nuanced interpretation, "The Elijah Burritt Affair: David Walker's Appeal and Partisan Journalism in Antebellum Milledgeville," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 83, No. 3 (Fall 1999), 448-478; see too Herbert Aptheker, "Militant Abolitionism," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (October 1941), 446-447.

²¹Brooks, "Elijah Hinsdale Burritt: The Forgotten Astronomer," 295-296.

American Antiquarian Society's famous book collection. Here his interest in self-improvement through persistent study and effort and his interest in humanitarian causes, such as the right treatment of common workers, the abolition of slaves, the eradication of conflicts or wars, and the need for international cooperation to solve world problems, grew and matured. By the mid 1840s, he had published *The Literary Gemini* (1839-1840), a bilingual monthly periodical in English and French, established himself on the local lecture circuit as an advocate for reform, and started a weekly journal, *The Christian Citizen* (1844-1851), that highlighted the ideals of significant antebellum reform movements—anti-slavery, peace, temperance, and personal moral development or self-improvement.²²

By 1843, Burritt had joined the American Peace Society, and he became editor of their official journal, *Advocate of Peace*, in 1846.²³ But he believed it necessary to go further and reject all war, including “defensive war.” This alignment with the Society’s “radical” segment and the leadership’s justification of the war with Mexico as a defensive measure led Burritt to resign from its executive committee and look elsewhere to promote the cause of peace. Always a friend to the working class, Burritt more and more came to understand that issues of war and peace were universal in scope, since common laborers across the globe suffered the most from

²²Northend, ed., *Elihu Burritt*, 21ff.

²³For brief overviews of the development of peace societies in antebellum years, see “The Peace Crusade” in Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), 645-647; “Breaking the Bonds of Corrupt Custom” in Steven Mintz, *Moralists and Modernizers: America’s Pre-Civil War Reformers* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 117-119.

For extended studies about antebellum peace reform, see Merle Eugene Curti, *The American Peace Crusade: 1815-1860* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1929); and Valarie H. Ziegler, *The Advocates of Peace in Antebellum America*, Religion in North America Series, edited by Catherine L. Albanese and Stephen J. Stein (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992).

war's brutalities. He appealed to laborers and hoped they would form an international system or union that effectively could go on strike against any sort of armed conflict. As editor of *The Christian Citizen*, he had commissioned peace reformers to draft brief statements, or "Olive Leaves," that were sent to newspapers across the United States and Europe. And he expanded the idea of international cooperation by initiating a "Friendly Address" program for pacifists and others in "sister cities" of England and the United States to exchange greetings and good will.²⁴

Influenced by William Ladd, the first president of the American Peace Society and a vigorous proponent of the quest for peace as a world movement, the wrangling and potential conflict between the United States and Great Britain over the boundaries of Oregon Country, and encouragement as well as invitations from English pacifists to come overseas, Burritt took his crusade to Europe.²⁵ He left for England in May 1846, and during the following year, a few weeks after meeting with fellow pacifists in Manchester and Birmingham in northern England, he organized the League of Universal Brotherhood to promote fraternal relations among

²⁴See "Historical Background" of "Elihu Burritt Papers, 1840-1965," Swarthmore College Peace Collection, archived by Anne M. Yoder (Swarthmore, PA: Swarthmore College, 2013), at: <https://www.swarthmore.edu/library/peace/DG051-099/dg096Burritt/dg096burritt.htm> (accessed 11 February 2016). That Burritt's appeal and work had a wide reach is evidenced by a lengthy article, "The Learned Blacksmith," that was "compiled from American newspapers" in *The Polynesian (Honolulu, Hawaii)*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (May 20, 1848), 2. After a review of Burritt's many accomplishments, the article concludes, "Among his works of philanthropy, Elihu Burritt issues almost weekly 1000 or 1200 of his 'Olive Leaves' for the press; and in proof of his powers of writing, we must mention the fact—a fact perfectly unparalleled in the annals of periodical literature—that the articles thus forwarded are regularly printed in about three hundred newspapers in various parts of the United States." For an early laudatory piece about Burritt's powers of persuasion and oratory skills, see "The Learned Blacksmith," in *Voice of Freedom (Brandon, Vermont)*, Vol. VI, No. 52 (June 19, 1845), 1.

²⁵See Chapter 9, "The Elihu Burritt Era: Pacifist Impact, January 1846-September 1851," in Martin Ceadel, *The Origins of War Prevention: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1730-1854* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1996), 356ff.

countries and to work toward the complete eradication of war.²⁶ The singular requirement of membership in the Brotherhood was signing a strict pacifist pledge:

Believing all war to be inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity, and destructive of the best interests of mankind, I do hereby pledge myself never to enlist or enter into any army or navy, or to yield any voluntary support or sanction to any war, by whomsoever or for whatsoever proposed, declared, or waged. And I do hereby associate myself with all persons, of whatever country, color, or condition, who have signed, or shall hereafter sign, this pledge, in a League of Universal Brotherhood, whose object shall be, to employ all legitimate and moral means for the abolition of all war, and all the spirit and manifestations of war throughout the world; for the abolition of all restrictions upon international correspondence and friendly intercourse, and of whatever else tends to make enemies of nations, or prevents their fusion into one peaceful brotherhood; for the abolition of all institutions and customs which do not recognize and respect the image of God and a human brother in every man, of whatever clime, color, or condition of humanity.²⁷

Over time, the Brotherhood swelled to include perhaps 50,000 members, both men and women older than twelve, who had pledged to give up military service and never to fight in a war. Burritt continued to appeal to the masses in his writings—*The Bond of Brotherhood* (published from 1846 to 1867), *Sparks from the Anvil* (1847), and *A Way-Word to the Working Men of Christendom* (1847)—and he helped organize Friends of Peace Congresses first in Brussels in 1848, at Paris in 1849, and then in Frankfort in 1850. The international Peace Congresses pressed for a Court of Nations to promote cooperation among nations for beneficial

²⁶Denise M. Henderson, in her critique of Valarie Ziegler's *The Advocates of Peace in Antebellum America*, labels Burritt "a consummate Anglophile" due to perceived inconsistencies in his pacifism based on British influence; see her "The Peace Movement that Slipped out of Great Britain's Control," *Executive Intelligence Review*, Vol. 19, No. 33 (August 21, 1992), 55.

²⁷Northend, ed., *Elihu Burritt*, 27-28.

and mutual disarmament.²⁸ For Burritt, however, the “parliament” necessary to resolve these issues was the international forum of common laborers whereby “workers from both sides of the Atlantic could exchange views and ideas related to industrial wealth and military armaments.”²⁹ And, to encourage the interchange of ideas from continent to continent, Burritt vigorously urged governments to adopt “Ocean Penny Postage” or inexpensive transatlantic mail.³⁰

Early in 1850, Burritt returned to the United States where he continued to work for peace by lobbying members of Congress in Washington, D.C. and by lecturing at several cities in the heartland, primarily along the Ohio River. By May, he had returned to Boston to set sail for Europe in order to attend the Peace Congress in Frankfurt, Germany in August.³¹ Burritt remained in Europe, primarily Great Britain, and worked diligently to help organize the Peace Congresses in London (1851), Manchester (1852), and Edinburgh (1853). After the Edinburgh Congress, Burritt returned to the United States and began to lobby vigorously for the Ocean

²⁸See James Brown Scott’s comments about William Ladd’s “Essay on a Congress of Nations” (1840) in “Elihu Burritt,” *The Advocate of Peace (1894-1920)*, Vol. 72, No. 6 (June 1910), 131-134; also “Letter from Elihu Burritt to George Bancroft in 1849,” written from Bedford Hotel, Rue de L’Archade, Paris, April 21, 1849, in *The Advocate of Peace (1894-1920)*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (January 1908): 12-14.

²⁹“It was through this ‘parliament’ that Burritt first initiated plans calling for an organized strike against a threatened war. Radical for its time, his idea was promoted before Marx and Engels published their famous *Communist Manifesto*.” Charles F. Howlett, “Elihu Burritt’s Nineteenth Century Peace Education Efforts,” *Encyclopedia of Peace Education*, Teachers College, Columbia University (New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University, n.d.), at: <http://www.tc.edu/centers/epe/> (accessed 11 February 2016). See too “The Life of Elihu Burritt” in Charles F. Howlett and Ian M. Harris, *Books, Not Bombs: Teaching Peace Since the Dawn of the Republic* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2010), 28ff.; Charles De Benedetti, “Peace History, in the American Manner,” *The History Teacher*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (November 1984), 96.

³⁰See Frank Staff, *Penny Post, 1680-1918* (Cambridge, UK: Lutterworth Press, 1964).

³¹Northend, ed., *Elihu Burritt*, 93ff., 101ff.

Penny Postage. In August 1854, he went a third time to England and stayed nearly a year to lobby members of Parliament for the penny postage, and he also made brief visits to Holland and Prussia where he spoke with cabinet members in those countries to get their support for the penny postage as well.³²

By late 1855, Burritt had returned to the United States, since the Crimean War (1853-1856), between Russia and the alliance of France, Great Britain, and the Ottoman Empire, and the growing enmity between North and South over the expansion of slavery had convinced him to suspend any major efforts toward peace. But Burritt continued his work to fight for abolition of the slaves with a plan that he called Compensated Emancipation whereby the federal government, from the sale of its public, western lands, would pay southern slave owners to free their slaves, something he advocated as editor of the Philadelphia monthly *The Citizen of the World* from January 1855 through November 1856 and while he helped to organize the Compensated Emancipation Convention in Cleveland, Ohio that met in August 1856.³³

With the outbreak of Civil War in April 1861, though, his immense disappointment over the apparent failure of his labors for both peace and emancipation kept him in retirement at his small farm near New Britain, although he did remain active in publishing a weekly paper, *North and South*, and other literary projects.³⁴

A fourth trip to Europe by Burritt, to visit old friends and tour places in England that he wanted to see, lasted from 1863 to 1870, since while there he was appointed Consular Agent for

³²Ibid., 109ff., 142ff.

³³Ibid., 148ff.; also Richard L. Scharper, "Elihu Burritt and Compensated Emancipation," *A Paper for American Studies* (unpublished; New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1971).

³⁴Frederick G. Harrison, "Elihu Burritt," *Men of Achievement: Biographies*, edited by Edward Everett Hale, Jr. (New York, NY: The University Society, 1902), 197.

the United States at Birmingham, England by President Lincoln in Spring 1865.³⁵ Before his departure to return home, in some measure due to a reduction in congressional and administrative support for United States Consulates across Great Britain, Burritt took the opportunity to spend a few weeks at Oxford University and expand on his language skills at the famous Bodleian Library. In 1870, the townspeople of New Britain welcomed back Mr. Burritt with construction of a schoolhouse in his honor, Burritt School, that proudly displayed his name and rightly celebrated his stature as “the learned blacksmith.”³⁶ Here, in New Britain, he lived for about a decade until his death in March 1879. Elihu Burritt overcame meager circumstances and poverty largely as a result of his own personal determination and education. A fervent lover of peace and a hater of war, but never unkind to those who disagreed with him, Burritt held true to the principles of his Congregationalist upbringing as well as to his interest in “all evangelical church work,” since “he had a strong desire to promote a spirit of kindness and harmony between members of the different evangelical churches.”³⁷ In the words of one of Burritt’s friends,

Whatever good thing he saw or felt ought to be done, he was ready to take hold of and work for with all his might. . . . A spirit of inspiration seemed to possess him, and he must have had the conviction that God was leading him in a way that but few men have been led. . . . The best synopsis of his character is, that he was himself a true *Christian*

³⁵See David Nelson Camp, “Recollections of Elihu Burritt: World’s First Champion of Universal Peace,” *The Connecticut Magazine*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (October, November, December 1906), 604-605; Northend, ed., *Elihu Burritt*, 153ff. Denise Henderson’s assertion, “The Peace Movement that Slipped out of Great Britain’s Control,” 54, that Burritt “finally moved to England to protest the outbreak of the Civil War” is incorrect.

³⁶Northend, ed., *Elihu Burritt*, 167.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 180, 181.

citizen; and in being so, he blended in beautiful harmony the cardinal principles of piety and philanthropy, religion and humanity, love of God and love of man.³⁸

But for all his accomplishments and travels, as far as we know, Burritt, obviously an outspoken advocate of peace and antagonist of war, never visited the South, never visited Tennessee, so never visited the Cumberland Plateau or Burritt College in Spencer. And, as far as we know, in all his extensive correspondence, Burritt never sent a letter to or communicated directly with anyone affiliated with Burritt College. Furthermore, although a New England Congregationalist, Burritt was not affiliated with Baptists, Christians (i.e., Restoration Movement Churches), Methodists, or Presbyterians. With the lack of any direct or obvious connection between the illustrious reformer and the College that bears his name, the puzzling question is why did the founders of the College choose Burritt? One might expect the founders and the

³⁸Z. Eastman, quoted in Northend, ed., *Elihu Burritt*, 182-184. For assessments of Burritt, see "Peace Societies, and Elihu Burritt, the Learned American Blacksmith," from *The Christian Observer*, printed in *Littell's Living Age*, Vol. X (July, August, September 1846), edited by Eliakim Littell (Boston, MA: Waite, Peirce & Company, n.d.), 486-488; Herbert A. Jump, "A Pageant of Brotherhood," *The Independent*, Vol. 68, No. 3207 (May 19, 1910), 1062-1065; James Brown Scott, "Elihu Burritt," *The Advocate of Peace (1894-1920)*, Vol. 72, No. 6 (June 1910), 131-134; Robert K. Shaw, "Elihu Burritt—Friend of Mankind," *American Antiquarian Society*, Vol. 36, Part 1 (April 1926), 24-37.

For archives of Burritt's letters and writings, see "Elihu Burritt, 1810-1879," Elihu Burritt Library, Central Connecticut State University (New Britain, CT: CCSU, n.d.), at: <https://library.ccsu.edu/help/spcoll/burritt/index.php> (accessed 13 February 2016); "Elihu Burritt Papers, 1840-1965," Swarthmore College Peace Collection, archived by Anne M. Yoder (Swarthmore, PA: Swarthmore College, 2013), at: <https://www.swarthmore.edu/library/peace/DG051-099/dg096Burritt/dg096burritt.htm> (accessed 11 February 2016); "Burritt, Elihu (1810-1879), Elihu Burritt's Miscellaneous Writings," The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History (New York, NY: GLIAH, 2009-2016), at: http://www.gilderlehrman.org/collections/866ca0eb-0594-4cc6-bd4d-145780352163?back=/mweb/search%3Fneedle%3DBurritt%252C%2520Elihu%2520%25281810-1879%2529%2526fields%3D_t301000285 (accessed 13 February 2016). There is also a collection of Burritt's journals and papers at "New Britain Public Library" (New Britain, CT: NBPL, n.d.), at: <http://www.nbpl.info/localhistory.html> (accessed 14 February 2016).

For standard biographical works, see Merle Eugene Curti, *The Learned Blacksmith: The Letters and Journals of Elihu Burritt* (New York, NY: Wilson-Erickson Publisher, 1937); Peter Tolis, *Elihu Burritt: Crusader for Brotherhood* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1968).

administrators of the College during its early years to be staunchly pacifist. Were they? And one might expect the leaders of the College to follow and promote an agenda of pacifism, at least in its early, formative years. But did they? If a deeply held belief in pacifism was not the motivating reason behind the naming of Spencer's College, then would it be too much to suggest that the naming of the College after a pacifist like Burritt was merely an afterthought—perhaps a reaction to or a mild rebuke to pro-Mexican War Christians who were riding the high tide of Manifest Destiny and the nation's western expansion at the expense of the Mexican people?³⁹

³⁹If this assumption is correct, then it is all the more remarkable, since the “rebuke” is coming from a backwoods area on the Cumberland Plateau, an area inhabited by mostly farmers and laborers, i.e., the working class not the privileged class, and something that Elihu Burritt himself would have appreciated very much. For comments on opposition to “Polk’s War,” see Robert W. Merry, *A Country of Vast Designs: James K. Polk, The Mexican War, and the Conquest of the American Continent* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2009), 245ff.; also Corlew, *Tennessee: A Short History*, 268-270. For comments on “Citizen Resistance to the Mexican War,” see Marcus Cunliffe, “Testing A Union, 1788-1865,” in *The Almanac of American History*, Revised Edition, edited by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble Books, 1993), 251.

In “The American Churches and the Mexican War,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (January 1940), 311, Clayton Sumner Ellsworth observes, “The Disciples of Christ were silent as a church, except for a signed statement drawn up by a hundred and fifty members in New England. This statement condemned the war as an invasion of Mexico, its motives as lust of territory and the desire to extend slavery, and its continuance as ‘one of the greatest crimes of our modern history.’ The church’s main periodical, the *Millennial Harbinger*, said little until the close of the war. Its editor, Alexander Campbell, then took up the subject with great vigor to pen a total repudiation of war.” Compare comments by Michael W. Casey, “The Ethics of War: Pacifism and Militarism in the American Restoration Movement,” *Leaven*, Volume 7, Issue 4, Article 7 (Fall 1999), 2, at: <http://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/leaven/vol7/iss4/7> (accessed 6 March 2016).

In his study of Burritt College, “‘Pioneer of the Cumberlands’: A History of Burritt College, 1848-1938,”⁴⁰ Marion West overviews the founding the College, its early history, and suggests three broad themes about the College that possibly explain why its stockholders and trustees named it “Burritt”: (1) “the nature of the religious group with which Burritt College was associated throughout its existence” (i.e., the Church of Christ); (2) “the group’s views on social reform and education”; and (3) the international fame and work of Burritt as a peace activist.⁴¹ But in his assessment, West indicates that when they picked a name for the College, the founders wanted something that “represented the ideals which they sought to embody in the school: scholarship, the dignity and worth of labor, and service to man.”⁴² The issue of pacifism does not seem, according to West, to be a burning concern, although a bit later he confesses, “that the founders . . . knew enough of the work and personality of Elihu Burritt to name a school after him indicates there was some degree of sympathy, if not outright support, for the peace crusade.”⁴³ The only hard connection that West summons for this assertion is the circulation of

⁴⁰Master of Arts thesis (Cookeville, TN: Tennessee Technological University, 1986). West’s work, with several errors of transcription, also is available online at: www.therestorationmovement.com/_states/tennessee/burritt.htm (accessed 27 February 2016). Compare Chapter VIII, “Burritt College,” in Medley, *The History of Van Buren County, Tennessee*, 85ff.

⁴¹West, “‘Pioneer of the Cumberlands,’” 4-7.

⁴²Ibid., 6, quoting address by Charles Lee Lewis, “Burritt College Centennial Celebration: August 13-15, 1948” (Spencer, TN: Burritt College, 1948), 6.

⁴³Ibid., 8.

Burritt's "Olive Leaves" to "a few newspapers in Tennessee,"⁴⁴ the influence of which is unclear, that is, whether the College's founders were familiar with or had read Burritt's "Olive Leaves."⁴⁵

And it does not help tidy up any connection between pacifism, Burritt, and the naming of the College by cursorily summarizing Restoration Movement leaders' thinking about war and

⁴⁴This is based on a personal letter to West from Peter Tolis, then Professor of History at Central Connecticut State College in New Britain, Connecticut, dated 11 December 1967. For a sample of Burritt's "Olive Leaves," see the end of the paper.

A quick search for "Elihu Burritt" in Tennessee's newspapers revealed forty-three occurrences, only three before but forty-three after the Civil War. See "Chronicling America, Historic American Newspapers," National Endowment for the Humanities, Library of Congress (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, n.d.), at: <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/> (accessed 5 March 2016). Included in the three pre-Civil War occurrences are: (1) a notice about Burritt's "Plan of Abolition," *The Athens Post (Athens, Tenn.)*, Vol. IX, No. 450 (May 8, 1857), 1; (2) a brief about "Elihu Burritt, emancipationist . . . to publish a paper at New Britain, Ct . . . called *North and South* . . . devoted to the gradual abolition of slavery, by compensation to the owners," *Nashville Union and American (Nashville, Tenn.)*, Vol. XXIX, No. 74 (April 27, 1858), 2; and (3) a quip that "Elihu Burritt, the learned blacksmith, complains of personal embarrassment by the debts of the National Emancipation Society," *Nashville Union and American (Nashville, Tenn.)*, Vol. XXIX, No. 124 (June 24, 1858), 2. Most instructive are the breadth of these occurrences, over sixty percent from the 1870s, in newspapers across the state, i.e., Bolivar, Camden, Jackson, and Memphis in West Tennessee; Clarksville, Columbia, Fayetteville, McMinnville, Nashville, and Pulaski in Middle Tennessee; and Athens, Jonesborough, Knoxville, Maryville, Morristown, and Sweetwater in East Tennessee. This indicates that Tennesseans in all parts of the state, who were well read, had some knowledge of the life and work of "the learned blacksmith."

⁴⁵West further clarifies this by suggesting, "Until 1854 only a limited number of Burritt's 'Olive Leaves,' as well as periodicals of the American Peace Society, had circulated in the South. It was in this same year that the Reverend William Potter, an agent for the American Peace Society, toured Tennessee and Alabama and met with what he described as 'a kind reception.' Although many of the citizens were 'open to appeals,' Potter wrote that 'they were all practically unacquainted with the subject of peace.'" Curti, *The American Peace Crusade: 1815-1860*, 217, quoted in "'Pioneer of the Cumberlands,'" 7-8. See also Peter Tolis's biography of Burritt, *Elihu Burritt: Crusader for Brotherhood*, 230ff. Reverend Potter's tour, though, came several years after the founding of Burritt College, and we do not know if he visited Spencer or the Cumberland Plateau region.

peace.⁴⁶ Such thinking may or may not have influenced the men who decided to build their school in Spencer.⁴⁷ But unless any direct connection can be shown, we may be left in the dark about the meanings and motivations of naming the College after Elihu Burritt. So, what was in the minds, the heads of the founders? What were they thinking when they called their College–Burritt? How had they been influenced by this great nineteenth-century American pacifist? How, in their decision-making, did this influence count more than, say, what notable Baptist Church, Christian Church, or Presbyterian Church leaders had said about war and peace in their sermons and writings?

Five reasons suggest that the founders of Burritt College named their school not for Elihu Burritt “the pacifist and peace activist” but rather for Elihu Burritt “the learned blacksmith.” First, the founders did not decide on a name for their school until some months after their decision to build a school had been made, and even then they gave no clear indication of why

⁴⁶For his assessment, West, ““Pioneer of the Cumberlands,”” 8ff., depends on Garrison and DeGroot’s *The Disciples of Christ: A History* and various writings by Davis Edwin Harrell, Jr. For more detailed analysis, see Chapter 2, “The Pacifist Tradition of the Disciples of Christ to 1865,” in Johnnie Andrew Collins, “Pacifism in the Churches of Christ: 1866-1945” (Doctorate of Arts dissertation; Murfreesboro, TN: Middle Tennessee State University, 1984), 26ff. Collins does not mention Burritt College, but his focus centers on the post-Civil War experience of the Disciples.

⁴⁷West notes at the close of his first chapter, “The founders of Burritt College chose the name of Elihu Burritt to affix to their school because they admired the initiative, perseverance, and determination which characterized Burritt’s rise to national prominence. While there was not an overwhelming amount of pacifistic sentiment within the Church of Christ, there was nevertheless a sufficient amount for the small band of Christians in the isolated village of Spencer, Tennessee, to know of the life and work of one of the outstanding leaders in the peace movement.” ““Pioneer of the Cumberlands,”” 31-32. Again, West does not give evidence to support the pacifist connection, but he does cite, for the character and initiative of Burritt as an important motivating factor, his personal interview with Creed Shockley, an alumnus of the College, dated 23 July 1968, and the motto of the College, “There is no excellence without great labor.”

they selected the famous Elihu Burritt. At their meeting on December 28, 1846,⁴⁸ the founders of the College declared their intentions to start a school in Spencer, so they appointed a committee of five to “open books to receive subscriptions” and appropriately noted the shares of each of the thirty-three original shareholders. The directors’ “Minute Book” reads:

At a meeting held in the courthouse in the town of Spencer on Monday night the 28th December 1846, the following preamble and resolutions were adopted.

Whereas, the great, and increasing prosperity of our government demands that the intelligence of its citizens should keep pace with its progress in wealth and power; and we believe that under God the salvation of our free and happy institutions depend upon the cultivation of virtue and the dissemination of knowledge amongst us, and whereas, the mountain country from its healthy and elevated situation presents advantages for the establishment of a seminary of learning unequalled by any district of the state of Tennessee; and we believe will command attention for the benefit which may be conferred upon the whole county by the erection of such an institution here.

Therefore. Be it resolved that we will unite in the great work of erecting an Institution of Learning in or near the town of Spencer upon the Cumberland Mountain and that a committee be appointed to open books for the said building of said institution, the said building to be erected by subscription, each subscriber taking so many shares in the said institution at the price of fifty dollars per share.⁴⁹

The group also appointed a committee of five to “draft a plan of said house [for the College],” and they appointed a committee of five to “contract with John Stewart for a site to build the College upon.” But there was no mention of a name for the College at this time.

In August 1847, over six months later, a contract was awarded to Daniel Walling and Uriah York, who had the lowest bid of six hundred twenty-nine dollars, to build for the College “a house thirty six by eighteen feet . . . of good cube burned brick.” Again, no mention was made in the “Minute Book” of any name for the College.⁵⁰ By Spring of the following year, however,

⁴⁸The College was not formally incorporated by the Tennessee State Legislature until January 24, 1848; see Note 17 above.

⁴⁹Entry for December 28, 1846, “Burritt College Board of Directors Minute Book, 1848-1915,” 1-3.

⁵⁰Entry for August 3, 1847, *ibid.*, 4.

after the state's incorporation of the College, twelve trustees were elected, and the "Minute Book" notes "a correct return of the election of trustees for Burrirt [College] held in the town of Spencer this 22nd day of April 1848."⁵¹ Appropriately, "the board of trustees for Burrirt College met according to previous notice" on May 2, 1848, and with a sufficient number present "proceeded to [conduct] business . . . for the benefit of Burrirt College."⁵² After this date, the minutes of the directors refer to the College by its assigned name—Burrirt. So it would seem from the records of the trustees that the founders decided on their name for the College sometime between early August 1847, the second recorded meeting of the stockholders, and late January 1848, the time of incorporation by the state legislature. But nowhere to be found in the board's minutes is the rationale for naming the College after a notable pacifist.

Second, while it is clear that some of the founders were affiliated with the Restoration Movement, i.e., Christian Church or Church of Christ, the Church of Christ in Spencer was not incorporated formally until May 1859.⁵³ But the College's religious attachments, and especially any emphasis on pacifism, do not seem to be important factors in the founding of the College. In

⁵¹The twelve trustees elected for the College were George W. Anderson, M. Y. Brockett, William Burrell Cummings, W. B. Huddleston, D. G. Hughes, Jabez G. Mitchell, W. A. Myers, John Stewart, Nathan F. Trogon, Daniel Walling, George W. York, and Uriah York. Entry for April 22, 1848, *ibid.*, 5-6.

⁵²Entry for May 2, 1848, *ibid.*, 6-7. W. B. Huddleston, who was appointed temporary clerk for the trustees, consistently misspells the name of the College as "Burrhitt."

⁵³See Haston, "Incorporation of the Church of Christ" in "David Haston's Town Lots in Spencer, TN," *The Heritage of Daniel Haston*, *op. cit.*; also West, Appendix B, "'Pioneer of the Cumberlands,'" 158. Boyd, "Blessings of the Eternal Mountains," 60, assumes but offers no proof that the College "was founded by members of the Church of Christ." It may be that reckoning Burrirt College to be a Restoration Movement school at its inception, as the major historiographical works seem to do, might be anachronistic. Haston notes as well that what became the Spencer Church of Christ was originally the Christian Church at Spencer.

the early curriculum of the College under its first three presidents (Isaac Newton Jones⁵⁴ who served only one year from 1849 to 1850, William Davis Carnes⁵⁵ who served two terms, the first

⁵⁴Jones (b. 1822, d. 1898) schooled at Irving Institute in Warren County prior to his year at Burritt College. Afterwards, he served three years as president of Waters and Walling College in McMinnville and five years as president of Manchester College in Coffee County. His father was Reece Jones, an early newspaper publisher in Coffee County. Extended family members were all members of the Christian Church. See Kathryn Hopkins, "Couch-L Archives," Rootsweb, An Ancestry.com Community, at: <http://archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/COUCH/1998-07/0901157320> (accessed 8 March 2016); Charles Lee Lewis, "Burritt College Centennial Celebration: August 13-15, 1948," 6; and "Mrs. [Rebecca Jones] Moss Recalls Early History of Famous Old Burritt College," *Van Buren County Historical Journal*, Vol. V (1985), 31-33. Mrs. Moss was a daughter of Isaac Newton Jones.

⁵⁵For a concise overview of Carnes' life (b. 1805, d. 1879), see William Walter Hill, "Grandfather Carnes: Oct. 23, 1805 - Nov. 26, 1879," at: <http://chuicy.com/wdcarnes.htm> (accessed 8 March 2016). See too Alva Lee Kelton, "William Davis Carnes, Burritt College President," *Van Buren County Historical Journal*, Vol. V (1985), 3-30; and H. Leo Boles, "William Davis Carnes," *Biographical Sketches of Gospel Preachers* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1932), 120-124.

In addition to his two terms as president of Burritt (1850-1858, 1872-1878), Carnes also served as president of East Tennessee University in Knoxville (1858-1860), of Franklin College near Nashville (1860-1861), of Manchester College in Coffee County (1865-1872), and of Waters and Walling College in McMinnville (Fall 1878). Of interest, Hill argues that Carnes was forced out of his post at Burritt in 1878 by Dr. T. W. Brents who gained control of Burritt by getting stockholders to give him the "privilege of voting the proxy." In this manner, Brents "packed the Board of Trustees . . . and demanded that President Carnes retire and he [Brents] be elected president. President Carnes' friends were dumbfounded with astonishment and indignation. Two of the trustees resigned. There were many protests, but the Brents faction was in control." For a more positive view, see Boles, "Dr. T. W. Brents," *Biographical Sketches of Gospel Preachers*, 205-206. See too the overviews by Effie Gillentine-Ramsey, *Burritt Our Alma Mater* (Nashville, TN: McQuiddy Publishing Company, 1914), 24; and West, "Pioneer of the Cumberlands," 75-82.

Of interest, the Roane County Tennessee Family History Project has indexed about eighty letters, many written at Burritt College in the 1850s, between William Hill and Mary Carnes Hill, the daughter of William Davis Carnes. See "The Hill Collection - Index" (Rockwood, TN: The Sloan Family, 2005-2016), at: <http://www.roanetnhistory.org/docindex.html?coll=Hill&ind=LoveLetters> (accessed 26 March 2016).

being eight years from 1850 to 1858, and John Powell⁵⁶ who also served two terms, the first being from 1858 to 1861), the school began “the type of curriculum which Burrirt was to follow for sixty years virtually without change . . . Latin, Greek, philosophy, mathematics, logic, natural philosophy, and evidences of Christianity.”⁵⁷ Issues about war and peace certainly could be included in the study of philosophy and perhaps evidences of Christianity, but the lack of any strong inclination toward pacifism or peace studies at Burrirt argues against viewing the school as a pacifist institution.

Third, during the first twelve years of the College, no real controversy arose over issues of war and peace, i.e., the recent Mexican-United States War or the crisis at hand due to growing

⁵⁶Little has been preserved about Powell, but according to A. E. Prince, *History of Ewing College* (Collinsville, IL: Herald Printing Company, 1961), 27, Powell was “a Baptist minister and president of [Burrirt] College” when John M. Washburn, the first president of Ewing College (Illinois), received his A. M. Degree from Burrirt in July 1859. Compare entry for “Elder John Washburn” in J. H. Grime, *History of Middle Tennessee Baptists* (Nashville, TN: Baptist and Reflector, 1902), 530-532. Too, the Entry for July 3, 1858, “Burrirt College Board of Directors Minute Book, 1848-1915,” 44, states, “. . . it is understood by the Board that it is the wish and desire of the new stockholders that the Rev. John Powell be elected President of College to succeed President Carnes. Therefore ordered by the Board that the Rev. John Powell be elected President of Burrirt College, to supply the place of President Carnes, whose resignation we have this day accepted.”

Also of note, “the Trustees unanimously voted the Degree of D. D. on Rev. Jesse M. Purinton of Virginia,” Entry for July 2, 1859, “Burrirt College Board of Directors Minute Book, 1848-1915,” 51. This must be the Baptist minister who was a son of Rev. David Purinton, a Baptist minister of New England, and the father of Daniel Boardman Purinton, a well-known (West) Virginia educator and president of the State University at Morgantown. Jesse Purinton “was a native of Massachusetts, and pastor of the churches at Coleraine and Shelburne Falls, in that state. He was a preacher, a teacher, and an editor . . . of the ‘Watchman and Reflector,’ the great Baptist periodical for New York. He married and had four sons, of whom three became ministers, and one a physician.” James Morton Callahan, *Genealogical and Personal History of the Upper Monongahela Valley, West Virginia*, Vol. III, edited by Bernard L. Butcher (New York, NY: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1912), 1052; compare the entry for “Daniel Boardman Purinton” in *Men of West Virginia*, Vol. 1 (Chicago, IL: Biographical Publishing Company, 1903), 94.

⁵⁷West, “Pioneer of the Cumberlands,” 40.

alienation of North and South over the expansion of slavery.⁵⁸ The major issues that seemed to capture the attention of administrators and students during these years were: (1) introduction of coeducation by President Carnes in his first year at Burrirt; (2) establishment of mandatory religious observances by Carnes (i.e., daily chapel, Bible reading, Sunday School attendance); and (3) adherence by students and staff to strict standards of personal behavior and ethics (e.g., segregation of sexes in school activities, chaperoned dating, and prohibition of alcoholic

⁵⁸But the lack of dependable information on these matters may not be a true indication of what was happening internally at the College. However, the College's rules and regulations, set forth by the trustees in July 1853, seem to indicate that students needed much work on issues of getting along with each other, i.e., harmony and peace. For example, "1. No student shall quarrel or fight, or encourage others to do so, or foment strife or riotous proceedings of any kind. . . . 2. No student will be allowed to insult another, by word, gesture, or otherwise. . . . 3. No student shall carry any dirk, pistol, or other deadly thing about his person or keep such thing or things about his room or any other place accessible to him. . . . 4. All wrestling, scuffling, boxing, or other exercise out of which difficulties are liable to arise between students, or in which there is danger one or more may be hurt, must be strictly avoided. . . . 5. No student or number of students shall engage in or encourage any hazing party. . . . 6. No student will be allowed to curse, swear, or use any obscene or vulgar language. . . ." But these rules come from a later College Catalogue. Beard, "Historic Burrirt College," *Van Buren County Historical Journal*, Vol. III (1984), 8ff.

Beard also notes that activities of the College in early years "centered largely around the weekly debates of the . . . literary societies. The Philomathesian Society was chartered in 1851; its members debated questions of literary, religious and social merit. Its constitution forbade the discussion of any question 'political or immoral or bordering on immorality or sectarian.'" *Ibid.*, 25.

beverages).⁵⁹ None of these trends, though, engendered debate as to the importance of a personal or an institutional (i.e., corporate) stand, in the spirit of Elihu Burritt, for or against military service and war.⁶⁰

Just the opposite, however, might be true, but in a limited and subtle way. For example, it very well could be argued that the efforts of President Carnes to put a stop to the distribution of whiskey on campus, through expulsion of several “scions of prominent families” from the College, set off a “war” with the local moonshine “industry” and prodded the President to seek

⁵⁹See West, “Pioneer of the Cumberland,” 41ff. Lewis, “Burritt College Centennial Celebration: August 13-15, 1948,” 7, notes two significant reforms of President Carnes, i.e., coeducation and “introduction of scientific physical culture,” but admits that the greatest problem for Carnes was student use of intoxicants and drunkenness. This continued to be a problem under the administration of President Powell, i.e., “Resolved by the Board of Trustees of Burritt College that F. G. Plumlee, Joseph Cummings, and William Worthington be appointed a committee to prosecute all violators of the law in relation to selling or giving Spirits to students of Burritt College and that the President and faculty be excused from prosecuting such offenders,” Entry of January 28, 1860, “Burritt College Board of Directors Minute Book, 1848-1915,” 52.

During the previous summer, the school’s trustees had taken the stern measure of banning any current student from contact with any previous student who had been dismissed from the College due to an infraction of regulations, i.e., “On motion it was agreed that no student in Burritt College should have the right to correspond with any one who has been a student of said college and has been dismissed dishonorably, and for a violation of this order the student so violating will be admissible for the same,” Entry for July 2, 1859, “Burritt College Board of Directors Minute Book, 1848-1915,” 51. But it is not clear whether the problem was illegal bootlegging on campus or some other problem.

⁶⁰On the board’s dealing with “religious parties” in the College, i.e., “the charge that the students in the Christian Church had banded together to rule the P[hilomathesian] society connected with the college” and that “the President had acted partial,” see Entry for July 19, 1853, “Burritt College Board of Directors Minute Book, 1848-1915,” 33-34. See West, “Pioneer of the Cumberland,” 70-72, on the Philomathesian Literary Society at Burritt College.

political help with an appeal to Nashville for a statewide “Four Mile Law.”⁶¹ The consistent support and political maneuvering of Carnes for prohibition, a well-intentioned stance for any administrator dedicated to the sober education of young minds, ended with anything but harmony and peace among conflicting parties, namely, conflagration of the President’s house in Spencer and his subsequent resignation from his post.⁶² By any account, such an episode did not speak well of an institution named for a noble and notable pacifist.

Fourth, a presumption against pacifism at Burritt College could be made on the basis of its abrupt closure following the Spring session in 1861. West highlights two reasons for this sudden termination of classes at the College: (1) the conscription of many of Spencer’s young men and most of Burritt’s male students by the Confederate Army; and (2) the growing discord between President John Powell and several of the College’s trustees.⁶³ But West cites only a 1930s article about the College (i.e., an anachronistic interpretation) for his latter assertion about

⁶¹See West, “Pioneer of the Cumberlands,” 54. Later in 1877, Tennessee’s state legislature passed a law forbidding the sale of intoxicating liquors within four miles of chartered schools in rural areas. On prohibition in Tennessee, see W. Calvin Dickinson, “Temperance,” *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, edited by Carroll Van West (Nashville, TN: Rutledge Hill Press, 1998), 911-915; Kay Baker Gaston, “Tennessee Distillers: Their Rise, Fall, and Re-emergence,” *Border States: Journal of the Kentucky-Tennessee American Studies Association*, No. 12 (1999), *Border States On-Line* (Georgetown, KY: Georgetown College, n.d.), at: <https://spider.georgetowncollege.edu/htallant/border/bs12/fr-gasto.htm> (accessed 12 March 2016); and Grace Leab, “Tennessee Temperance Activities, 1870-1899,” *The East Tennessee Historical Society’s Publications*, Vol. 21 (Knoxville, TN: East Tennessee Historical Society, 1949), 52-68.

⁶²“It is understood that President Carnes will leave after the present session . . . the Trustees regret that President Carnes cannot be retained.” Entry for May 25, 1858, “Burritt College Board of Directors Minute Book, 1848-1915,” 43.

⁶³West, “Pioneer of the Cumberlands,” 58. For details about enlistments, see Landon Medley, “Civil War Companies for Van Buren County,” *Van Buren County Historical Journal*, Vol. I (1981), 28-33; cf. his Chapter XIII, “Civil War,” in *The History of Van Buren County, Tennessee*, 129ff.

problems between Reverend Powell, a Baptist minister,⁶⁴ and the trustees. There is no evidence of such discord in the Board of Directors Minute Book. The College, no doubt, closed abruptly because of the outbreak of Civil War and the lack of substantial resistance to the termination of classes by administrators, staff, students, and supporters.⁶⁵ In the matter of Civil War, there was little or no hesitancy on the part of the College's patrons and personnel to follow the South's political leaders in secession efforts.⁶⁶ This closure of the College pointed to its ready acceptance of the vagaries, compelling though they might be, of division and strife, of hostility and war, that is, evils that conscientious pacifists and persistent peacemakers struggled to avoid.⁶⁷

Finally, the appeal of Elihu Burritt to a group of leading residents in a rural county on Tennessee's Cumberland Plateau finds its most reasonable explanation, without more data to

⁶⁴West mistakenly notes (footnote 74, "Pioneer of the Cumberlands," 58) that "whether Powell was a Baptist is not known." The local community knew he was Baptist; the trustees knew he was Baptist; his fellow educators knew he was Baptist; and the students knew he was Baptist.

⁶⁵Boyd, "Blessings of the Eternal Mountains," 28-30; Medley, *The History of Van Buren County, Tennessee*, 88, 97.

⁶⁶By June 1861, "the Trustees [only six and the President were present] unanimously voted to dispense with the usual examination exercises and that the present session close on the 28th last [month]. The Board thus voted in favor of all the students who left College the present session, to join the Army, having an Honorable Dismission." But, by November 1861, the trustees had decided to reopen the College the following Spring. "After deliberating on the propriety of the commencement of the next session of said college, it is kindly agreed and ordered by the Trustees that the next session of said college commence on the 2nd Monday in March next and continue for 40 weeks. And on motion it was ordered by the Board that John Powell and John Stewart be appointed a committee to look up and ascertain the amount of College stock due and owned by each stockholder and issue certificates accordingly." Burritt College did not reopen, and the next entry of the trustees' minutes was penned about six years later—June 14, 1867. Entry for June 15, 1861; Entry for November 16, 1861; Entry for June 14, 1867; "Burritt College Board of Directors Minute Book, 1848-1915," 57, 58, 59.

⁶⁷See, though, the balanced treatment of proclivities in North and South toward war in R. Don Higginbotham, "The Martial Spirit in the Antebellum South: Some Further Speculations in a National Context," *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (February 1992): 3-26.

conclude otherwise,⁶⁸ in the fact that Burritt himself was a rustic, a self-made but well-educated Christian leader. He was “the learned blacksmith.” And, his example was worth following. As stated by Charles Lee Lewis at Burritt’s Centennial Celebration in 1948, “While [Elihu Burritt] was working the hand-bellows to heat a piece of metal in his blacksmith shop, he studied from a book conveniently propped open. This is the reason the seal of Burritt College portrays a blacksmith at work at his anvil.”⁶⁹ For the enclave of settlers who favored living on the rugged Cumberland Plateau, this attraction, of the common man who rose to great heights of learning and international leadership, did not lie so much in the substance of his energy—his peacemaking and pacifism. The attraction lay in Elihu Burritt’s energy itself—his drive to achieve and his spirit to excel in spite of odds against him. This was the mantel most advertised throughout the country about the resplendent Burritt—not “the learned pacifist” but “the learned blacksmith.” And this was the ideal that the founders and leaders at Burritt College held high and used to challenge one another, their fellows, and their students.⁷⁰

Thus, for the bigger issues about peacemaking, war, and religion in the antebellum United States, the initial years of Burritt College can highlight three points. First, the founders of the College focused primarily on the “nuts and bolts” (e.g., buildings, operating costs, ongoing support) of an upstart school. To have the fame of Burritt’s name attached to the College no doubt was a plus. But the motivating rationale was not the lofty and perhaps unattainable anti-

⁶⁸Were there any extended family ties of Burritt’s founders to New England, to Connecticut, or to Elihu Burrit himself?

⁶⁹Lewis, “Burritt College Centennial Celebration: August 13-15, 1948,” 5.

⁷⁰There were eleven blacksmiths in Van Buren County at the time Burritt College was founded. “Schedule I.—Free Inhabitants . . . County of Van Buren State of Tennessee,” *Seventh Census of the United States: 1850* (Nashville, TN: Tennessee State Library and Archives, n.d.), Microfilm, Roll 897.

military, anti-war goals of Burrirt and others. That would have been a controversial position, even among religious people, and might have been a major distraction for a new school. The motivating rationale for Burrirt College in its first decade or so of existence was to provide a sound, liberal arts education, in the classical model, for sons and daughters of commoners (e.g., blacksmiths, clerks, distillers, mechanics, millers, spinsters, stonemasons, tanners, and tavern keepers) as well as sons and daughters of the more well-to-do (e.g., dentists, doctors, and lawyers). Classical learning, not peace movement activism, was the primary focus for Burrirt College at and from the outset.

Second, the founding of the College and its operations from 1849 to 1861 illustrate very little about the beliefs of the local Baptist Churches, the Christian Church, or the Presbyterian Church regarding issues of military service or war in general. Perhaps those associated with the College and the local churches thought these matters best be left to an individual's own conscience or an individual's personal beliefs, that is, not to be determined by any official or public position. Too, the lack of evidence for Burrirt College being a Restoration Movement "brotherhood school" or "church school" from the outset emphasizes this point.⁷¹

Third, the disruption of the College for almost six years because of Civil War between North and South simply adds weight to the incredible portrait of devastation, difficulty, and waste that accompanied the fighting that tore apart the United States in the 1860s. This does not discredit the decision of the founders to honor vigorous efforts toward harmony and peace in

⁷¹But the regional influence of Burrirt, admittedly in an isolated geographical location, as well as its broad religious connections remained significant. For example, the newly elected Board of Trustees for Spring 1860, after a decade of operation, included two members from Warren County, two members from White County, seven members from Van Buren County, and one member from Glasgow, Kentucky. Entry for March 4, 1860, "Burrirt College Board of Directors Minute Book, 1848-1915," 54. And, Reverend John Powell, a Baptist minister, served a second term as president of Burrirt from 1870 to 1872.

their use of a staunch pacifist's name—Burritt. But it does show that for the people of Spencer and Van Buren County, Tennessee, because of the exigencies of the moment, they worked to do what seemed proper and honorable. Founding the College in the name of Elihu Burritt, in early 1849, right after the conclusion of the Mexican-United States War, had seemed fitting and appropriate.⁷² And, dissolving the College, after Spring session 1861, at the beginning of the United States Civil War, also appeared to be the acceptable course of action. Like a common laborer or a good blacksmith, at each moment in history, they rose to the occasion, that is, they took up hammer and anvil to strike a blow for one's fellows, for humanity, in hope that the outcome would be beneficial.

⁷²There seems to be some sense of urgency by the founders to “keep up” with promoters of Irving Institute, later Irving College, in nearby Warren County that had started several years earlier and was dedicated to higher education with a classical curriculum. See *Central Gazette (McMinnville, Tenn.)*, Vol. XII, No. 24 (July 26, 1844), Vol. XII, No. 46 (January 24, 1845), Vol. XIII, No. 12 (June 13, 1845).

Appeal from Elihu Burritt—Important Information.⁷³

The learned Blacksmith, Elihu Burritt, is in England, tramping on foot on a tour of observation and philanthropy. The appalling condition of Ireland and portions of Scotland has kindled his great heart to ‘welding heart,’ and he has appealed with resistless eloquence to his fellow countrymen in this land of plenty, in behalf of the destitute and famishing. “It aims at the Pocket through the Heart,” and will reach it.

Mr. B. has also done the cause of humanity good service, in obtaining the promise of the British Government to pay the freight on produce and clothing. The following is the Address and Correspondence:

An Olive Leaf for the American People.

Friends of Humanity:

Hundreds of your fellow-beings are dying, almost daily dying of starvation in poor Ireland. Will you not send them bread from your plentiful boards! It has been stated that more have perished by famine in that afflicted land, than those who fell by the cholera in that dreadful year of death. A penny a day will save a human life. Will you let thousands die when they can be rescued so cheaply from the grave? The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ forbid! Farmers, Mechanics, Merchants, men of the United States, children, wives and mothers, will you let thousands of your kind be thrown uncoffined into the grave, when two cents worth of Indian meal a day will save a human life? Mothers, daughters, wives of America! There are thousands of your sex dying naked upon the damp cold ground in Ireland, without even straw to lie upon. Will you not look into your wardrobes and give what you can spare to the poor creatures, perishing with famine and famine fever? May the God of all grace and mercy and compassion touch the heart of America in view of such a spectacle of wretchedness. Anything—anything to eat or wear, will come to thousands like a ministration of Heaven’s mercy.

The English Government, as you see below, has promised to pay the freight of all contributions of food and clothing which may be forwarded from the United States. Will not the railroad companies in the United States, and steamboat companies, transport from the interior to the seaboard all such contributions *free of charge*? All these contributions may be consigned to the Society of Friends in England, who have made arrangements for extensive distribution to the starving, or to any other parties that may be preferred. I cannot add any other words. I expect to be obliged to travel all night from London to Liverpool to transmit the following communication from the English Government, which I received after the mail was closed.

Yours for humanity, Elihu Burritt.
London, Feb. 3, 1847.

⁷³From *The Portage Sentinel (Ravenna, Ohio)*, Vol. 2, No. 42 (March 17, 1847), 2.

Notes On Religious Affiliation or Civic Status of Burrirt College Founders and Family Members

- Crain, Abijah Minister, according to Medley, 237. Named gentleman *venere* for April term of Circuit Court, VBCCR ["Van Buren County Court Records (1840)"], 12.
- Cummings, Gabriel P. Appointed gentleman *venere* for April term of Circuit Court, VBCCR, 12.
- Cummings, Joseph, Jr. Elected trustee of Van Buren County. Named gentleman *venere* for April term of Circuit Court, VBCCR, 7, 12. Superintendent of Van Buren County schools, according to Boyd, 17; Medley, 101.
- Cummings, William Burrell Appointed deputy, VBCCR, 11; cf. Medley, 101. A judge and father of Joseph D. Cummings, who served as steward, trustee, and superintendent of the Sabbath-school of the Methodist Episcopal Church South for twenty-seven years. Joseph D. Cummings was a Mason and an ex-officio member of each quarterly and district conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South. From *Compendium of Local Biography: Van Buren County, TN* (Signal Mountain, TN: Mountain Press, n.d.), 8-9.
- Gillentine, John Trustee of the Spencer Church of Christ, see Haston, op. cit. Chairman pro tempore, appointed District 3 Revenue Commissioner, appointed gentleman *venere* for April term of Circuit Court, VBCCR, 2, 12. Father of Squire John Gillentine, who "when a young man he belonged to the Hardshell Baptist Church but was dismissed from that organization because he permitted the Separate Baptists to hold meetings at his home. He then joined the latter denomination, but at the time of his death was a member of the Christian Church." *Compendium of Local Biography*, 10.
- Huddleston, W. B. Bishop and original trustee of Spencer Christian Church / Church of Christ. Haston, op. cit. A teacher at York Academy, according to Boyd, 24.
- Paine, John Appointed gentleman *venere* for April term of Circuit Court, VBCCR, 12; cf. Medley, 102-103.

- Parker, Andrew K. Appointed County Court Clerk, VBCCR, 12. Affiliated with the Union Association of Baptists, according to Medley, 238. The brother of Rev. Arthur L. Parker who was a “well-known and beloved minister of the Missionary Baptist Church.” Arthur L. Parker received his “literacy education in the York Academy at Spencer.” Rev. Parker’s brother, Andrew K., was the first clerk of Van Buren County, and at his death, after serving six years in that office, was succeeded by our subject [Arthur L.]” *Compendium of Local Biography*, 21-22.
- Passons, Major Appointed gentleman *venere* for April term of Circuit Court, VBCCR, 12.
- Trogdon, Nathan F. Affiliated with the Union Association of Baptists, according to Medley, 239.
- Wood, David S. Elected Registrar of Van Buren County, VBCCR, 8
- Worthington, William Esquire and qualified justice of Van Buren County and White County, VBCCR, 1; cf. Medley, 103.
- York, George W. Appointed gentleman *venere* for April term of Circuit Court, VBCCR, 12.
- York, Uriah Appointed gentleman *venere* for April term of Circuit Court, VBCCR, 12; cf. Medley, 104. “He married Fannie Rae, daughter of Rev. John Rae, who for forty years was a Baptist minister.” From Worth S. Ray, *Tennessee Cousins* (Austin, TX: Worth S. Ray, 1950), quoted by Medley, 104.

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