

THE COLORFUL EIGHTIES IN NASHVILLE

By M. B. MORTON

No. 10

Nashville Becomes Great Center of Education—Some Great Teachers—Old Metropolitan Police Force—John L. Sullivan's Arrest and Trial—"The Headless Horror."

Nashville Banner, November 23, 1930

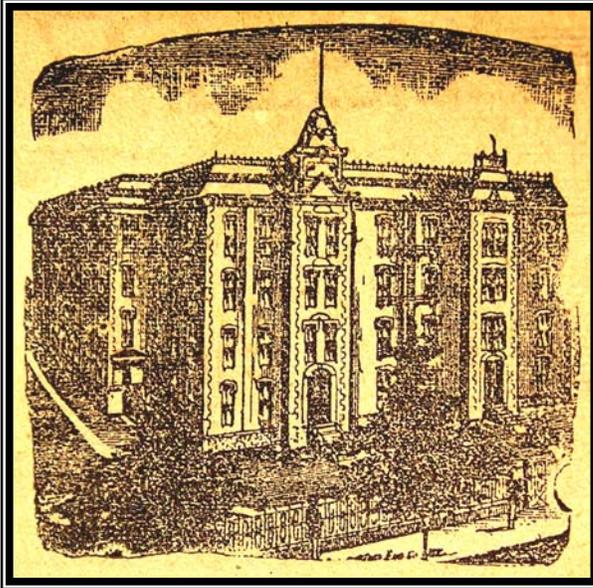
In the eighties Nashville had become a great educational center. Vanderbilt was a young but growing institution; the University of Nashville, which has since been merged into the Peabody College for Teachers, was in full swing; and there were two famous girl colleges, Ward's Seminary and Nashville College for Young Ladies, popularly known as Price's College.

Nashville had been an educational leader since Thomas B. Craighead established his school in the stone church, which was situated in what is now the Gallatin Road, opposite Spring Hill Cemetery. This was the first school established west of the Cumberland Mountains, and became the progenitor of Cumberland College, the University of Nashville and Peabody College for Teachers, in succession. Then came the first educational institution for women, the Nashville Female Academy, where La Fayette planted a tree during his visit in 1824. It was located on the north side of the east end of the present Church Street Viaduct. Boys and girls came to Nashville to these schools from Kentucky and all the territory south of the Gulf of Mexico.

The last president of the Nashville Female Academy was Dr. C. D. Elliott, whose venerable figure was often seen on the streets during the eighties. Dr. William E. Ward and Dr. G. W. F. Price were the founders, respectively, of Ward's Seminary, and the Nashville College for Young Ladies. Both were men of distinction. Dr. Ward was a man of strong personality and made his school a great success.

Dr. Price was a born educator, and devoted his long life to his chosen calling. He was a man of great eloquence, a fluent speaker and equipped with a splendid vocabulary. These schools drew pupils from all the Southern country.

Ward's Seminary was located on the west side of Eighth Avenue



Ward's Seminary, predecessor of Ward-Belmont School and Harpeth Hall School. From the *Nashville Daily American*, July 20, 1886.

between Church Street and Broadway. Some of the old buildings, with fronts built in for business purposes, are still standing near Church Street. Dr. Price's College was on Broadway and Vauxhall. The building has been remodeled and is now the Vauxhall Apartments.

Bishop H. A. McTyeire was the great president of Vanderbilt; and that university stands a monument to his ability and foresight. Bob Hoke used to be fond of telling an anecdote on the Bishop, who was president of Vanderbilt for life, under the terms of Commodore Cornelius

Vanderbilt's initial gift of \$500,000, subsequently increased to \$1,000,000, which started the university on the road to success. He was a man of great dignity, firmness of purpose, yet human and companionable. He had been summoned as a witness in a lawsuit in New York, and, after his main testimony, was taken in hand by the opposing lawyers. He was asked a number of questions with the purpose of disturbing his equanimity, but all without the desired result. Finally the interrogating lawyer asked:

"Bishop, how many official positions do you occupy?"

"Two," was the reply.

"What are they?"

"Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and President of Vanderbilt University."

"When do your terms of office expire?" asked the lawyer.

The Bishop straightened up in his full dignity and in his deep sonorous voice replied:

"I am happy to be able to state, sir, that they both expire when I expire."

Another distinguished and venerable figure in Nashville at this time was chancellor Landon C. Garland of Vanderbilt University. No one who ever heard his lecture on "The Horizontal Parallax" will forget how the distance from the earth to the moon is measured.

OLD POLICE FORCE

The personnel of the Nashville police force in the eighties presented some notable figures, and the service was not very strenuous but

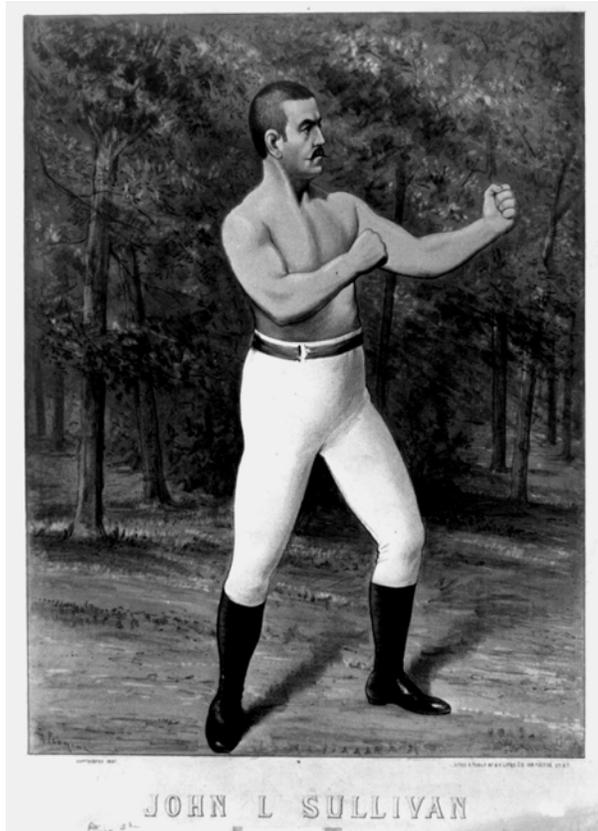
picturesque. There were seventy-five men on the force. The police chiefs were in the order given: W. H. Yates, Martin Kerrigan and Hadley Clark. After his retirement from the force Captain Kerrigan was long the peace officer and general contact man at the old railway station, on the north side of the east end of the Church Street Viaduct. Captain Clark was after his retirement Judge of the City Police Court. Lee Sanders, who is still living, was a young member of the force. Robert M. Porter, S. F. Turner and Robert Sidebottom were the detectives in the late eighties. Robert Sidebottom, who later served many years as Chief of Police and chief of the Detective Department, is still living.

There was a number of others, from time to time, who served on the detective force, among them, Alex Bolton, popularly known among his associates, when he was not present, as "Horsehead." He was one out of a number on the force who were friends of Frank James, when he lived in Nashville under the name of Mr. Woodson. Every once in a while the force was given a tip to look out for some member of the James Gang, but it never occurred to them that its chief was their friend Mr. Woodson.

Four of the captains of the force were: Bill Casteen, Henry Culmore, Dan Burke and Owen McGovern. In the latter eighties the force was reorganized and they became lieutenants. John C. Walsh was a member of that force, and is now police officer at the Union Railway Station. He was a boy in those days. Sergt. Dick Reed, W. P. Johnson and John W. Alley, who are still living, were members of the force.

JOHN L. SULLIVAN'S VISIT

It was during Hadley Clark's administration that a notable event occurred — the arrest and trial of John L. Sullivan, the prizefighter. He was the hero of the fistic world. After his fight with Jake Kilrain in Mississippi on the Gulf Coast, in which he came off the victor, he arrived in Nashville, July 11, 1889, on his way to New York. He was bruised and battered, for in those days, with bare knuckles, under London prize ring rules, prize fights were not child's play. Many of the rules now in force were not then recognized, and the pugs went at it hammer and tongs. On his arrival here in the drawingroom of a Pullman with a party of friends, Sullivan was met by Hadley Clark and a squad of detectives and some assistants, including Robert Sidebottom, S. F. Turner, Robert M. Porter, Alex Bolton, Lee Sanders and Dan Burke. Sullivan was lying down and when Captain Clark informed him he was under arrest, he did not move. Clark ordered his men to take him. Sidebottom put cat-gut nippers on one wrist, the others seized him and they dragged him out on the platform, Clark telling him: "If you strike one of my men I will shoot you." The train pulled out and Sullivan remarked: "You need not use force any further. I will do peaceably whatever you want me to do. I knew that was a fast mail train, and I was hoping it would pull out before you could get me off."



(Library of Congress)

The rest of the proceeding was amicable. Sullivan was taken to the old police station on Front Street in a hack, and was kept in durance vile while many crowded around, stuck their heads in the windows and doors and tried to feast their eyes on the great fighter.

So hasty had been the exit from the Pullman that Sullivan had lost one of his slippers, and sat in the station house with one sockfoot. Con Crowley, an ex-pugilist who lived in Nashville, fairly worshipped the great John L., and when he saw his predicament went to the nearest store and bought him a new pair of slippers, which he handed to him through the little window that opened into the workhouse. Sullivan put on the new slippers

and kicked the old one across the room. Hugh Fisher, a well known printer, asked in a drawling voice "Mr. Sullivan, can I have that slipper?"

"I don't care a d---d what becomes of it," replied the great man; and Fisher reached for the treasure, put it in his bosom, and ran all the way up town, crying out as he ran "I've got John L. Sullivan's slipper." He put it on exhibition in the show window of a store on Fourth Avenue with a card bearing the inscription: "This is John L. Sullivan's slipper, the property of Hugh Fisher."

Sullivan was tried that afternoon before Judge W. K. McAlister and released on the ground that the offense was a misdemeanor and not extraditable, the arrest having been made at the request of the Governor of Mississippi in whose bailiwick the fight had taken place.

After the fight, Jake Kilrain, who was in need of funds, went to New Orleans, where he put on an exhibition bout with an unknown young man named James J. Corbett. Much to the veteran's surprise and disgust he was bested by the youth unknown to fame, lost his temper and wanted to fight. Some time after the meeting with Kilrain, Corbett succeeded in getting a match with Sullivan, gave him his first and only knockout and became the pugilistic champion of the world, though he nor any other pugilist, was ever the great fighter and popular hero that Sullivan had been.

“THE HEADLESS HORROR”

In the beginning of the second half of the decade of the eighties Nashville was treated to a murder mystery. It lasted for a number of days, while the police force and the sheriff's office were putting forth every effort to solve the mystery and apprehend the murderer. The newspapers carried stories about it every day, and all the reporters became detectives. The hero of the solution was Dan Barr, a reporter on the Union.

There was a tanyard on Eighth Avenue in Sulphur Spring Bottom, where Couningham's coal yard is now located. One day the hand of a Negro man was seen protruding from the tanbark in the yard. An investigation proved that it belonged to a body without a head buried in the tanbark. The question was: Where was the head, and who placed the body there? The investigation went on for days, until finally the head was located in a bee gum at Belle Meade.

The murdered man was identified as Frank Arnold, and the murder was fastened upon Ben Brown, colored, who was arrested, tried and hanged. It seems that Arnold had a little property, and Brown killed him in an effort to get possession of his property.

To be continued next Sunday.

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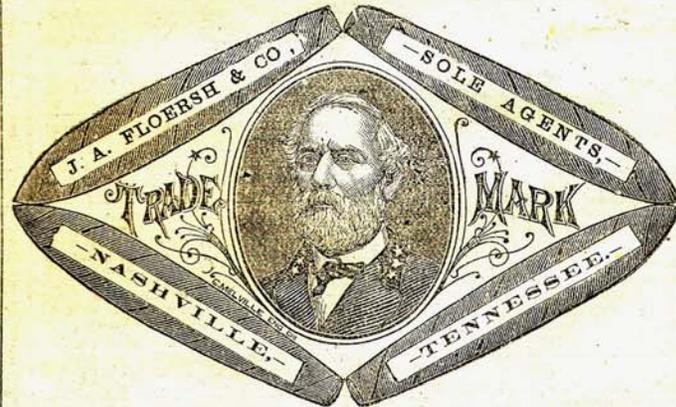
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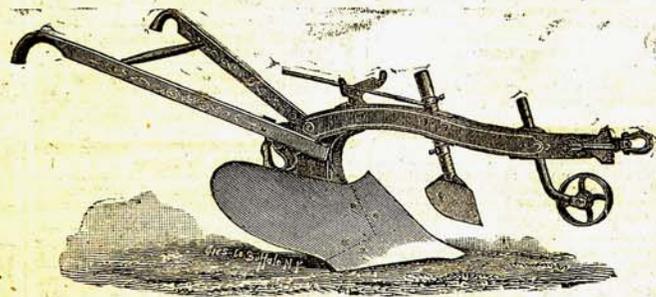
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