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## Damaging Detours: Routes, Racism, and New Philadelphia

### ABSTRACT

The 19th-century impacts of racism and transportation developments on New Philadelphia, Illinois are explored by examining oral history, documentary, and archaeological evidence. This study first addresses the region in which New Philadelphia was located, outlining the contours of a landscape torn by racial strife. Analysis of the history of the construction of a regional railroad that bypassed New Philadelphia is then provided. Evidence shows that the town was bypassed for reasons other than competition from other potential depot towns, engineering concerns with topography, or other rational business reasons. The impacts of aversive racism very likely diverted the railroad route around New Philadelphia, spelling its demise. Finally, the lessons that emerge from these past social, economic, and racial dynamics are considered.

### Introduction

New Philadelphia, located in Pike County in western Illinois, was the first town in the United States planned, platted, and legally registered by an African American. Founded in 1836 by Frank McWorter, a formerly enslaved laborer, New Philadelphia developed as a multiracial community through the late 1800s. This town was located in a region that was shaped by racial ideologies and strife, with competing factions of abolitionists and proslavery elements clashing in the surrounding region of western Illinois, and in the nearby slave state of Missouri. Yet, there is no report of racial violence occurring within New Philadelphia during the period that it existed as a town.

Racism very likely impacted this town in a more structural way, however. In 1869, a new railroad was built to connect points on the Illinois and Mississippi rivers, crossing Pike County on an east–west line that should have taken the railroad through New Philadelphia and made the town into a thriving depot facility. Instead, the railroad moved on a straight line from east to west, and then curved northward by several miles before arcing back to the south, thereby

bypassing New Philadelphia. The impact of this detour was dramatic, leading to the demise of the town by the late 1880s (Simpson 1981:1; Walker 1983:165–167, 1985:56). Today nothing remains above ground at the town site, which is covered with agricultural fields and prairie grasses.

Such profound effects, resulting from a town's becoming a depot station or of being bypassed by a new railroad, occurred frequently across the Midwest in the 19th century (Conger 1932:285; Jenks 1944:14; Davis 1998:368–370). As historian Theodore Carlson (1951:103) observed: "Every enterprising hamlet had visions of becoming an important commercial city if at least one railroad could be built through the community." Settlements that were known as communities of African American families and businesses were typically bypassed by new railways, however (Cha-Jua 2000:42).

The impact of racism and this important transportation development on New Philadelphia are explored by examining documentary, archaeological, and oral history evidence. A collaborative project of researchers is working to obtain a detailed understanding of the social history of this community, and the many families and businesspeople who resided there in the 19th century. This collaborating group includes archaeologists, African American studies scholars, historians, descendants of families that lived in and around New Philadelphia, and current members of the local communities in the region where the town site is located. The impacts of past and present racism have been among the primary themes and research questions pursued in this project of civic engagement.

The first part of this article addresses the region in which New Philadelphia was located, outlining the contours of a landscape torn by racial strife. Archaeological findings related to potential impacts of racism within the town are also considered. An analysis of the history of the construction of the regional railroad that bypassed New Philadelphia is provided in the second part. Persuasive evidence indicates that the town was bypassed for reasons other than competition from other potential depot towns, engineering concerns with topography, or other

rational business reasons that have been known to fuel the decisions of railroad construction companies. Racial prejudices likely diverted the railroad route around New Philadelphia, spelling its demise. The third part of this article considers the lessons that emerge from these past social, economic, and racial dynamics.

### A Regional Context of Racial Strife

Frank McWorter's design for New Philadelphia (which was also called Philadelphia) was set out in a plat filed in the Pike County courthouse in 1836. A town covering 42 ac., it was designed to consist of 20 blocks, 144 lots, and several streets and alleyways in a grid pattern. New Philadelphia was located just 25 mi. due east of Hannibal, a small city along the Mississippi River that before the conclusion of the Civil War served as a slave trading market in the slave state of Missouri. The Illinois River was just 15 mi. to the east of New Philadelphia, and the town was platted on a tract of land situated within the "Military Bounty Lands" located between these two river-transport routes. Planned construction of the Illinois and Michigan Canal in the early 1830s, and its anticipated impact on transport flow on the Illinois River to and from Chicago and the Great Lakes, greatly enhanced land values in this region during this time period (Putnam 1909:414; Walker 1985:51).

While many think of the state of Illinois as having developed as a "free" state, famous as the "Land of Lincoln," this region was marked by racial strife and often accommodating views toward the rights of slave owners (Walker 1983:110–111; Davis 1998:19; Shackel 2006:2.4). The land that would be encompassed by the state of Illinois in 1818 was earlier part of the old Northwest Territory, as governed by the Ordinance of 1787. The 1787 provisions generally described this territory as a "free" domain, but were otherwise protective and accommodating to existing claims of property rights in enslaved laborers asserted primarily by French colonial residents (Walker 1983; Davis 1998:94).

Illinois's 1818 state constitution described it as a free state, yet again made a number of concessions to slave ownership claims. Slavery was permitted to continue for 25 years in the southern part of the state, and other slave-ownership claims were converted into legally binding indentured

servitude (Savage 1943; Davis 1998:165; Simeone 2000:5). Slavery in Illinois was not effectively outlawed until an 1845 court decision. The state also passed its own version of "Black codes" in the early 1800s, which placed significant constraints on the rights of free African Americans, and attempted to discourage African American families from immigrating into Illinois (Savage 1943:312; Davis 1998:413; Simeone 2000:157).

Illinois and federal laws also provided recognition of the slave-ownership claims of residents in Missouri and other slave states, who often hired bounty hunters to travel through Illinois in search of laborers who were attempting to escape from bondage. These bounty hunters often engaged in kidnapping, enslaving free African Americans by capturing them and destroying the legal documents that proved their free status. Bounty hunters were also known to kidnap enslaved African Americans who did not match the warrants of runaways, so the bounty hunters could profit by unauthorized sales of those laborers in Hannibal and other slave markets (Savage 1943; Davis 1998:289).

Combating these proslavery elements were active contingents of abolitionist groups, and individuals assisting runaway slaves in the networks of the "Underground Railroad." New Philadelphia was located in an area surrounded by abolitionist centers, including Quincy, Alton, and Jacksonville, Illinois (Figure 1). In 1837, Elijah Lovejoy, an ardent abolitionist, was shot dead at his publishing house in Alton by a proslavery crowd that burned the printing press he had used in promoting the cause of freedom (Simon 1994). Abolitionists active in Quincy had frequent clashes with proslavery interests and authorities in Missouri and western Illinois, at times suffering imprisonment and death (*Quincy Herald* 1857b:3; Savage 1943; Turner 2001). Private homes in Jacksonville were active participants in the Underground Railroad (Steiner 1996; Turner 2001). Clashing factions of proslavery and abolitionist advocates faced off in Griggsville, Illinois, in 1838, just 13 mi. to the east of New Philadelphia (Figure 1) (Chapman 1880:516). Frank McWorter and his family, who owned farmsteads in the area surrounding New Philadelphia as well as lots within the town, were reported in oral histories to have helped individuals escaping from slavery (Walker 1983:149; Turner 2001:vii,15).

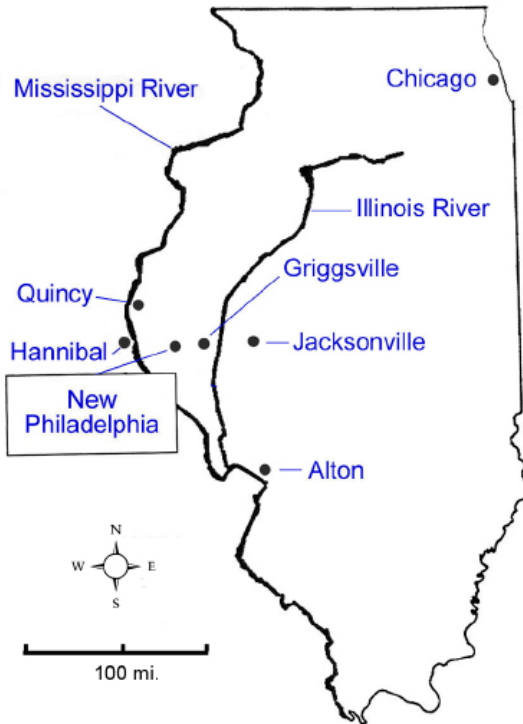


FIGURE 1. NEW PHILADELPHIA IN REGIONAL CONTEXT. (IMAGE BY AUTHOR, 2008.)

In the midst of this landscape, New Philadelphia grew as a multiracial community of homes and businesses that over time included families raising crops and livestock, merchants, blacksmiths, shoemakers, carpenters, a cabinetmaker, a wheelwright, a wagon maker, a physician, schoolteachers, and a preacher (Shackel 2006:2.12). The town founder, Frank McWorter, had attained the legal rights to found this town in a notably public and visible way. Born into slavery in South Carolina, McWorter had purchased his wife's freedom and then his own while living in Kentucky in the early 1800s. He later purchased a tract of 160 ac. in the Military Bounty Lands of western Illinois, and moved his family there in 1831 (Walker 1985:54). Manumission alone did not provide a free African American with all of the legal rights of someone classified as "white" in the federal census and Illinois state law. Under Illinois law, for example, free African Americans during the antebellum period were unable to give testimony against a white person in court,

and were required to post bonds as evidence of their economic capabilities upon immigrating into the state.

After living in Pike County on his 160 ac. farm for a few years, McWorter obtained support from his neighbors, who were farmers of European American heritage, and he applied to the Illinois legislature to register his name legally and to obtain full legal rights as a free citizen of the state (Chapman 1880:739; Simpson 1981:1; Walker 1983:106–107). These rights would facilitate his plan to plat and found the town of New Philadelphia on a 42 ac. parcel immediately to the south of his farm. An act of the Illinois legislature recorded in 1837 granted him these rights, and publicly recorded his plans to use the proceeds from sales of lots in the newly established town to purchase additional family members from bondage (Illinois State Archives 1837).

His neighbors' support, recorded in an 1837 "certificate of good character," further detailed McWorter's strong reputation, and his intention that New Philadelphia would be a town open for settlement by other free African American families, as well as by European Americans (Walker 1983:107). While there is no direct evidence indicating how McWorter chose the name of "Philadelphia" for this new town, the association of that eastern city with a growing abolitionist movement of free African Americans was well known by the early 1830s (Walker 1983:119–120; Berlin 2003:111; Davis 2006:171). McWorter's accomplishments and plans for the town were sufficiently well known in the following decades to be discussed in local history accounts and public ceremony speeches in 1872, 1876, and 1880 (Ensign 1872:54,100; Grimshaw 1876:31; Chapman 1880:739). Thus, his aspirations and achievements were also very likely known to other residents of this region of western Illinois and Hannibal, Missouri, who may have harbored racial biases against African Americans.

New Philadelphia grew slowly through the 1840s and 1850s, attaining its largest population in the time of the 1865 Illinois census, with approximately 160 residents in 29 households (Shackel 2006:1.2; King 2007). In each of the federal and state census lists compiled from 1840 through 1880, the residents of New Philadelphia were classified as "white," "black,"

or “mulatto,” with approximately two-thirds of the town classified as white, and one-third classified as black or mulatto over the time period in which the town existed (King 2007). The town grew as a community at an agricultural crossroads, with wagon traffic from surrounding farms moving across roads that passed through New Philadelphia on their way to merchant and transport facilities along the nearby Illinois and Mississippi rivers (Walker 1983:167, 1985:55–56).

Daily social and economic events in New Philadelphia, and in other, larger towns nearby were reported in local newspapers in the 19th century. Archival copies of local and regional newspapers provide a rich record of the social history of this multiracial town, with many social and economic events within the town having been reported over the years. Notably, there is no instance of racial violence reported to have occurred within New Philadelphia over the several decades of its existence as a town, even though it was located in a region that was otherwise marked by racial strife, riots, and killings. Archaeological surveys and excavations undertaken in the town site have yielded evidence consistent with such findings from the documentary evidence.

Census lists, tax records, and deed books present researchers with extensive information about the past residents of New Philadelphia. Those documentary sources do not provide detailed maps of the particular locations within the town in which residents over time constructed their homes and businesses, however. Archaeological surveys and excavations can provide that richer detail of the spatial relationships spanning blocks, lots, streets, and the time period of the community’s existence. This will be particularly useful data for the social history of New Philadelphia. A newspaper report in 1876 provides an example of frequent instances in which actual lifeways departed from the metes and bounds of official documents: “The village of Philadelphia ... has been readjusting lines, and it is found that most of the people are on other than their own lands. There will have to be some moving of property lines or a general compromise” (*Barry Adage* 1876c:3).

Excavations of several household and merchant locations within the town, dating from the 1850s through the late 1800s, show no evidence

of riots or arson (Shackel 2006). One might speculate that racial tensions within the town would lead to a pattern of segregated housing, with white and black residents occupying different portions of the town’s space. Similarly, one might speculate that racial tensions would lead to assemblages of housewares and types of personal property that were distinctive to households of white or black residents. Archaeological surveys and excavations to date, however, show that house and merchant sites associated with both European Americans and African Americans were interspersed with one another, and largely clustered in the north and central part of the town’s platted space (Hargrave 2006; Shackel 2006). The types of household belongings recovered from the residences of both whites and blacks, such as ceramic housewares, are also similar (Shackel, this volume).

Differences in, and separations of social activities that correlate with racial categories of white and black were evident in a number of lifeways in the town, however. For example, two cemeteries served the town. African American families typically buried their loved ones in a nearby cemetery where Frank McWorter and members of his family were interred. European American residents primarily used a different graveyard just to the south of town (King, this volume). Up until 1874, the children of African American families within the town were taught within one building, and the European American children learned their lessons in another building nearby. In 1874, a new, integrated schoolhouse was built next to the town’s north edge, and accommodated all of the children in the area (Helton, this volume). In addition, archaeological excavations have shown that there may have been differences in the dietary choices made by some of the African American and European American residents in New Philadelphia (Shackel 2006; T. Martin and C. Martin, this volume).

Many instances of the impacts of racism in the United States have occurred in more structural and indirect ways than in overt declarations of prejudice, or in open acts of violence and malevolence (Omi and Winant 1994:56–61; Orser 2001; Leone et al. 2005:576–580). Such structural and indirect forms of racism have been conceptualized as manifestations of “aversive” racism, in which members of a dominant social group channel social and economic activities

away from the members of a group targeted by racial prejudices. This aversion to social and economic interactions and opportunities is often detrimental to the targeted group. In contrast to such an indirect and structural impact, “dominant” racism is conceptualized as including direct, overt actions of violence and malevolence against members of a targeted group (Kovel 1970; Gaertner and Dovidio 1986; Kleinpenning and Hagendoorn 1993).

An early example of such a structural impact of racial prejudice can be seen to have occurred in 1840, when business interests of European American residents in the town of Barry lobbied the Illinois legislature to relocate a state road that ran through New Philadelphia on an east to west route between the Illinois and Mississippi rivers (Walker 1983:127–128). The relocation altered the road’s course away from the center of New Philadelphia, and to a route that took it through the center of Barry, to the detriment of the town founded by McWorter, and to the benefit of Barry’s businesses (Walker 1983:128). This lobbying proved successful, and the roadway changes were implemented in the following decade. As historian Juliet Walker (1983:128) observed, “by 1840 the state legislature was not prepared to give a black town proprietor an economic edge, however indirect, over white town proprietors.”

New Philadelphia survived that early setback of 1840, although the pace of its growth was no doubt diminished. The town population continued to grow steadily, and even more land sales occurred at the hands of speculative investors who purchased and sold lots in the town without residing on those parcels. Other roadways passing through the area of New Philadelphia provided the community with regional traffic through the 1850s and 1860s. Entrepreneurs located in the town provided blacksmith, shoemaking, carpentry, wheelwright, and wagon repair services to town residents and to agricultural producers who lived and worked in the surrounding landscape. Another transportation development would have a more profound impact on the town, however. When a new regional railroad was built across the county in 1869, its route bypassed New Philadelphia.

The impact of the railroad’s bypassing of New Philadelphia was dramatic, with businesses and residents departing the town over the following years. By 1885, an order was entered into the

local court records to vacate the legal status of a large part of the town and to return those parcels to general agricultural use. Local publications attested to the town’s demise. For example, the 1872 *Atlas Map of Pike County* observed that the “railroad did not run through the town, which has greatly ruined its trade” (Ensign 1872:10). Charles Chapman’s 1880 *History of Pike County* stated of New Philadelphia: “At one time it had great promise, but the railroad passing it a mile distant, and other towns springing up, has killed it. At present there is not even a postoffice at the place” (Chapman 1880:740–741).

There are many reasons that a particular railroad route might take one path rather than another. If a topographic feature such as a high point of elevation or a deep ravine lies along a particular path, a railroad will often be diverted to avoid the expense of traversing that location. The lobbying of existing towns to become depots along a proposed rail route often causes other towns to be bypassed. Yet, none of these typical explanations is persuasive in the case of New Philadelphia.

### **An Expensive and Damaging Detour**

The history of the railroad built across Pike County in 1869 can be studied in detail through surviving corporate records of the companies that funded, surveyed, and constructed the railroad, and the many local newspaper reports published in that period. One needs to read such documents with a critical eye, however, in order to compile data on past events separated from the opinions and biases of the past authors of such records. There is no direct statement in these collections of documentary evidence as to why the railroad bypassed New Philadelphia, whether for sensible business reasons or due to racial biases. Indeed, no reference to the town in those records has been found at all. Upon considering the contextual evidence presented in the following discussion, however, it becomes apparent that the railroad’s bypassing of the town was not motivated by rational business choices of minimizing costs and maximizing profits.

In the early 1850s, business interests in Hannibal, Missouri began promoting a plan to create a company that would construct a railroad across Pike County, Illinois, to link Hannibal to the railroad town of Naples, located on the Illinois



River (Figure 2) (*Pittsfield Union* 1853:3; Grant 2004:22). In doing so, these promoters sought to advance Hannibal as a major railroad transport and commercial hub of the region (*Hannibal Daily Courier* 1878:1; Grant 2004:22). Two earlier railroad developments provided the Hannibal interests with this opportunity by creating railroad lines to the east and west of the city (Fishlow 1971:190–191).

To the east, the Northern Cross Railroad had been sponsored by land grants and funding from the federal and Illinois governments (Grant 2004:7–11). Construction began in 1838, and the

rail line linked Meredosia on the Illinois River on the west to Jacksonville and Springfield on the east in 1841 (Corliss 1934:19; Grant 2004:7–11). This publicly funded railroad enterprise was later purchased by the privately held Sangamon and Morgan Railroad Company, and by 1849 the line was connected to Naples (*Alton Weekly Courier* 1855:4; Conger 1932:277; Carlson 1951:100; Grant 2004:11–12). Successors of the Northern Cross, including the Sangamon and Morgan and later the Great Western Railroad Company, planned on linking that east–west railroad with the Illinois Central Railroad, which

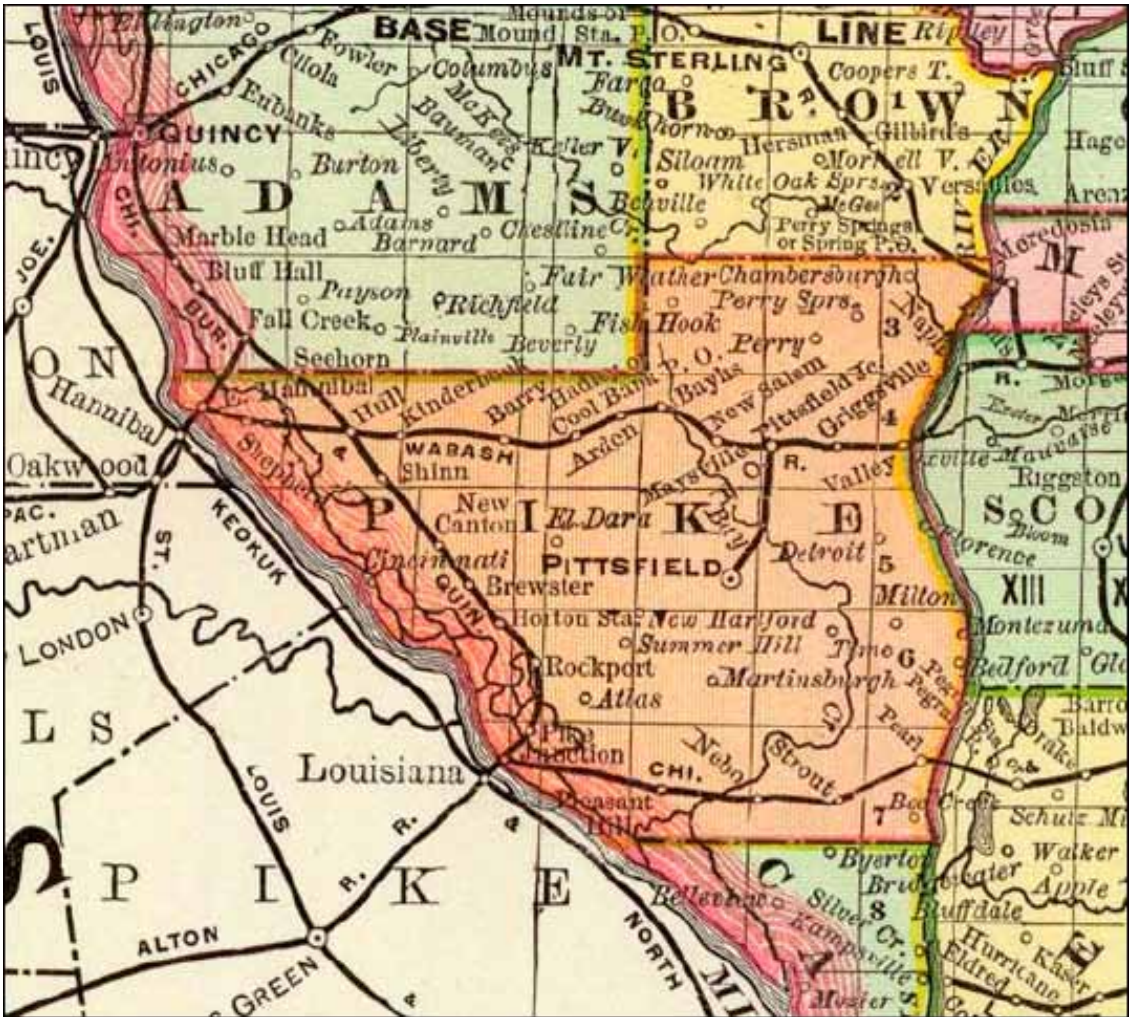


FIGURE 2. AN 1895 ATLAS MAP SHOWING THE REGION OF PIKE COUNTY, ILLINOIS, AND THE ROUTE OF THE HANNIBAL AND NAPLES RAILROAD, LATER REFERRED TO AS THE WABASH RAILROAD (RAND McNALLY 1895). THE LOCATION OF THE NEW PHILADELPHIA TOWN SITE IS MARKED BY A STAR. THE IMAGE IS ORIENTED WITH NORTH AT THE TOP; FOR A SENSE OF THE SCALE, ON THIS MAP THE TOWN OF BARRY IS 17 MI. WEST OF GRIGGSVILLE.

ran north to Chicago and to further connections with eastern market centers (Corliss 1934:37–38; Grant 2004:13).

In the other direction, the Missouri and federal governments had funded construction of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad in the late 1840s, with a plan to link Hannibal with the town of St. Joseph, located on the western edge of Missouri, and the Missouri River and its transport route to points farther west (*Scientific American* 1848:1; *Alton Telegraph & Democratic Review* 1849:3; Cochran 1950:55–57). The Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad Company was incorporated in 1847, received land grants and subsidies in the early 1850s, and construction was undertaken in the following years until completion of the line in 1859 (*Hannibal Daily Courier* 1878:1; Million 1894:77–82; Riegel 1923:159). A connecting rail between Naples and Hannibal would link these lines and promote Hannibal on a vibrant east to west flow of freight and passengers in a growing transcontinental system (*Hannibal Daily Courier* 1878:1). The town of Quincy, Illinois, located on the Mississippi River just 30 mi. north of Hannibal, competed to become a similar railroad hub in this interregional network (*Quincy Daily Whig* 1852:3; Carlson 1951:101,104; Davis 1998:375).

The construction of railroads in this mid-western region thus included three prominent projects in the 1840s that were heavily subsidized by state and federal funds, including the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad in Missouri, and the Northern Cross and Illinois Central railroads in Illinois (Cochran 1950:55,63; Fishlow 1971:190–191). After experiencing significant challenges in managing finances and in attempting to control both construction and operating expenses in such subsidized railroad projects, representatives of state and federal agencies would later disapprove additional proposals for other subsidized railroad projects (Carlson 1951:100; Davis 1998:230). Instead, other railroads to be built in the region during the 1850s and 1860s were to be constructed by private investment companies funded primarily through local funds and shareholder subscriptions (Riegel 1923:154–156; Fishlow 1971:190–191; Dobbin 1994:23–24,39–41).

To implement a plan for building a new railroad linking Hannibal to Naples, the Pike

County Railroad Company (PCRC) was formed in 1857 and received a charter from the Illinois legislature (PCRC Records 1857:14 February). This charter did not involve state subsidies, but rather provided a basic mechanism of state recognition and authorization of a private investment company that might need to request aid of local courts in obtaining rights-of-way in constructing such a railroad. Using a fairly common approach, funds for the PCRC were raised through the sale of stock to investors, and to collectivities of investors in the form of local governments that purchased stock subscriptions later paid for through bond sales (PCRC Records 1857:February; Riegel 1923:156). From the outset, this investment company was dominated by business interests based in Hannibal, with the City of Hannibal holding the most voting stock, and the managing board staffed largely by individual investors who operated in that city (PCRC Records 1857:14 February, 1860:4 June, 1862:4 June; Chapman 1880:904–905).

The PCRC accomplished quite a lot in 1857 before a significant economic recession hit the nation and impeded further progress on the railroad project (PCRC Records 1857; Cootner 1963:499; Grant 2004:22). The company optimistically advertised for “sealed proposals for grading and bridging this road” in August of that year (*Quincy Herald* 1857a:1). Grading involves clearing, leveling, excavating, and embanking the roadbed along the designated route for the railroad (PCRC Records 1857:29 December; Vose 1857). The PCRC had hired an engineering firm earlier in the year to survey the best path for the railroad, and progress on the surveying likely motivated the PCRC to start seeking bids for grading the route.

In August, the PCRC also issued a directive to the engineering firm for an additional segment of surveying. A 21 August 1857 stockholders’ meeting records an order for “a survey to be made during the fall [of 1857] beginning at some point near the town of New Salem, thence down Keyser Creek to Hannibal, the citizens in that route to pay the expense of such survey” (PCRC Records 1857:21 August). Local newspapers reported on this development as well, observing that “a new impulse has been given to the Pike road, and a new route is spoken of down Keyser creek. The citizens along that

route, we are informed, have become aroused to the importance of a rail road to themselves, and with an almost entire unanimity, they propose to subscribe to the road, much more liberally than any other route” (*Quincy Herald* 1857b:3).

Keyser Creek was a relatively shallow streambed that ran from the northeast to the southwest and was located just east of New Philadelphia. The town of New Philadelphia is not mentioned anywhere in the railroad company records of the PCRC or its successor company. This discussion of obtaining a survey of the area “down Keyser Creek” is the only mention of that stream found thus far in the PCRC Records or in newspaper reports about the construction and later operations of the railroad. Another stream, called Hadley Creek, located just to the northwest of the town of Barry, was discussed more frequently in railroad company records and in local newspaper reports about later railway operations, because that creek was prone to flooding (PCRC Records 1857:21 August; *Barry Adage* 1873a:4). Bay Creek, which ran just west of New Salem, is also mentioned in the railroad company records without any reference to flooding concerns. There is no discussion in the railroad company records or in later newspaper reports that would indicate that Keyser Creek was significant as a topographic feature due to its contours, or due to problems of flooding or drainage.

The engineer’s survey report to the PCRC was submitted and recorded in December 1857 (PCRC Records 1857:29 December). That report recommended that the railroad route proceed a short distance down the Illinois River from Naples, to a point along the same latitude with the existing towns of Griggsville, New Salem, and Barry. This path down the Illinois River side was viewed as cost effective because of the even grade that could be followed by paralleling the river, and due to a preference for crossing the river at a point level with Griggsville (PCRC Records 1857:29 December). That point for crossing the Illinois River was a location in Pike County originally called Phillips Ferry Landing, and later renamed as Valley City. Phillips Ferry Landing had served as a busy transport stop on the Illinois River, and had facilitated a heavy flow of road traffic across Pike County (Walker 1985:50,63). The engineer’s report then recommended that the railroad route should proceed east to west through Griggsville, New

Salem, and Barry, and on to the Mississippi River shoreline just opposite Hannibal (PCRC Records 1857:29 December).

As can be seen in the 1895 map in Figure 2, the route recommended in the 1857 engineer’s report was largely followed when the railroad was built in 1869. Notably, that route as described by the engineer should have also taken the railroad on an east–west line through New Philadelphia. The route made perfect sense from a business perspective, as it took the shortest distance between the terminal points of Naples and Hannibal, and thus involved the lowest amount of construction costs in terms of distance traversed by the railroad (PCRC Records 1857: 29 December). That route also would have followed fairly even topography, and would not have incurred extra costs of traversing notably higher or lower points of elevation as the railroad crossed Pike County.

The PCRC continued its work as best it could after the 1857 economic recession. The company completed the surveys for the route of the railroad and began some of the roadbed grading. In 1863, the management of PCRC placed its assets up for sale, and the operation was reorganized under a new company charter, called the Hannibal and Naples Railroad Company (HNRC) (HNRC Records 1863:12 February). The HNRC was made up of the same investors and stockholders, and was again dominated by Hannibal interests (HNRC Records 1863:4 August; Chapman 1880:904–905). A resolution passed by the HNRC management in 1867 clearly expresses this continuing influence of Hannibal and Missouri interests:

Resolved that the people of Pike County are abundantly able and willing to secure the building and completion of the Hannibal and Naples Railroad and we hereby agree that we will co-operate with the Hannibal and Central Missouri Railroad Company in the construction of both roads as an entire line and we pledge ourselves to the people of Missouri that we will secure such aid as will insure the completion of the Hannibal and Naples Railroad at as early a day as they shall be able to complete their road on the west side of the river (HNRC Records 1867:17 July).

The halting steps of building this railroad across Pike County gained solid momentum in 1868, when a number of interrelated contracts were executed. Utilizing a common strategy, the HNRC focused on constructing the railroad and



then leasing it to another company that would operate trains on it (HNRC Records 1868; Jenks 1944:8). On 22 June 1868, the HNRC entered into a contract with the Toledo, Wabash and Western Railway Company (TWWRC) for the latter to lease and operate the new railroad for 99 years (HNRC Records 1868:22 June; Grant 2004:22). The TWWRC also agreed to purchase a majority share of the stocks in the HNRC, and the HNRC agreed to hire a contractor to handle construction of the railroad (HNRC Records 1868:22 June). On 19 August 1868, the HNRC hired J. L. K. Haywood and Company of Hannibal to construct the railroad, using the existing surveys that had been completed by the PCRC (HNRC Records 1868:19 August). Such utilization of surveying and earlier groundwork completed in the 1850s when renewing a project after the Civil War, was a fairly commonplace occurrence in such projects (Riegel 1923:153; Cootner 1963:502; Grant 2004:22).

Due to demands made by the TWWRC, the HNRC instructed Haywood that the railroad had to be built using high-quality iron rails, expressed as a greater quantity of iron per yard (HNRC Records 1869:17 March; 1869:1 December). The TWWRC required this quality of iron rails because it was in the business of operating freight and passenger trains over interlinking railroads from the western part of Missouri, through the Midwest, and to Toledo on Lake Erie. The TWWRC therefore demanded higher quality iron rails to withstand traffic, and to lessen its own expense of maintaining the rails over time (HNRC Records 1868:21 August; Grant 2004:21).

Construction of the 52 mi. long Hannibal and Naples Railroad was commenced and completed by Haywood in late 1869, and inspections were conducted by the HNRC in February 1870 (HNRC Records 1869–1870; *Weekly North Missouri Courier* 1869a, 1869b; Grant 2004:22). Haywood transferred the completed railroad to the HNRC in June 1870, and the HNRC ran trains on the railroad for two years thereafter, until the TWWRC's 99-year lease started in 1872 (HNRC Records 1870:8 June; 1872:5 October). The bridge across the Illinois River was open in 1870, and the bridge across the Mississippi River at Hannibal was built in 1871 (Chapman 1880:905–906). The 1895 map shown in Figure 2 depicts the route taken by the com-

pleted railroad, which was called the Wabash at the time that map was published.

Why did the railroad bypass New Philadelphia and take a northward arc up and around the town in a way that significantly deviated from the east–west line originally recommended by the engineer's report in December 1857? There is no direct statement in the railroad company records to answer this question. To date, extensive searches through newspaper reports from the relevant region and time period have similarly uncovered no direct statement of the reason. Very persuasive contextual evidence indicates, however, that this bypassing was not motivated by rational business choices.

There are typical business reasons that have motivated other railroads to follow one path rather than another as they traverse their territory. First, the successful lobbying of some existing towns to become depot stations along a planned railroad route often has an effect of pulling the route away from other communities in their area. In addition, topography often explains some parts of a chosen path. It is more costly to build a railroad up to and across high points of elevation, or to cross deep river ravines. Railroad routes are often planned to bypass such significant topographic features (Vose 1857:32; Cootner 1963:484). Do these reasons explain the course of the railroad across Pike County?

New Philadelphia did not lie upon, or next to a significant topographic feature or change in elevation. The town was located at elevation of 732 ft. above sea level. New Salem, to the east, lies at 784 ft. above sea level, and Barry, to the west of New Philadelphia, lies at 712 ft. (United States Geological Survey [USGS] 2007). Kiser Creek (also called Keyser Creek) runs just to the east of New Philadelphia, but is a shallow streambed that was never mentioned in the PCRC or HNRC records as a matter of concern as to its contours, location, or drainage. The primary consideration for keeping construction costs low in building a railroad was to choose a route that involved the least distance between the railroad's end points (Jervis 1861:48; Cleeman 1880:12–13; Webb 1917:3–5). It would have been much less expensive to build the Hannibal and Naples Railroad on a straight line from New Salem through New Philadelphia, and on to Barry and Hannibal, simply because

that route involved a smaller linear distance of roadbed and rail than did the route that circled several miles to the north.

The factors of greatest expense in railroad construction were the linear yards of roadbed that had to be graded, excavated, and embanked, and the linear yards of iron rails and ties to be installed (PCRC Records 1857:29 December; Vose 1857:39–40; Cootner 1963:484; Fishlow 1971:118–122). In the 1850s and 1860s, railroad construction projects incurred the expense of obtaining iron rails and related hardware imported from British producers, because American-based producers could not yet meet their volume demands (Jenks 1951:381; Fishlow 1971:138–140). Straight railroad routes were also preferred over curving paths, where possible, because curving routes resulted in extra friction between train wheels and rails, and therefore additional operating, fuel, and maintenance costs (Vose 1857:10,47).

These cost items were particularly relevant for the Hannibal and Naples Railroad, because the TWWRC's 1868 contract with the HNRC required rails with higher weights of iron per yard to be used in the construction of that railroad. In contrast, items such as constructing culverts over stream beds, or even smaller bridges over small rivers, involved significantly lower cost concerns for such a railroad construction project (Cleeman 1880:29–31,44–60). Thus, it was typically less expensive to build a straight railroad route that required a number of culverts across streambeds, than it would have been to build a line that curved extra miles out of the way to avoid construction over those streams. These factors all indicate that there was no business reason to bypass New Philadelphia due to costs related to topography.

Perhaps the effects of lobbying can explain the northward arc of the railroad around New Philadelphia. Looking at the map in Figure 2, one can see a town named Baylis located along the railroad at the northernmost point of the arc. A simple answer to the question could be that the town of Baylis lobbied hard to have the railroad route come up to their location so they could serve as a depot station. This explanation fails, however, because Baylis did not exist before the railroad was built. In fact, no towns existed along that northward path before the railroad was built—it was a circuitous route

through undeveloped prairie. Initially named Pineville, the town later renamed as Baylis was platted by William Pine, Jr., in 1869, and grew over the following years as a newly created depot town (Ensign 1872:10; Chapman 1880:641–642).

Another possibility is that one or two influential landowners, such as Pine, were able to lobby the railroad on their own behalf, plying the railroad company with donations to influence the choice of the route (Walker 1985:62). This explanation fails too. The northward arc around New Philadelphia traversed the lands of numerous individuals who each held relatively modest-sized parcels. Similarly, members of the Pine family appear in reports over the following decades as individuals of relatively modest assets, and were by no means Midwest land barons (*Barry Adage* 1876b:3; Chapman 1880:641–642). Nor did the railroad pay for or receive remarkable conveyances of land from those numerous landowners along that line of tracks. Each conveyed a narrow swath of land to the HNRC in 1865 for passage of the railway across his or her parcel in a contingent deed that would become null and void if the railroad were never constructed (Pike County Deed Records 1865:247–248). That was the simple and low-cost method of land acquisition used for most of the pathway of the railroad through the county.

Would there have been a long-term interest in having the new railroad traverse previously undeveloped prairie lands? Such an interest was certainly at play in the construction of the Illinois Central Railroad, which was subsidized by the Illinois legislature and federal land grants. Running north to south from Chicago to Alton, the Illinois Central was purposefully routed through previously undeveloped parts of the state, rather than meandering from one existing town to another along its overall trajectory (Jenks 1944:3; Fishlow 1971:174). This subsidized project was designed to help spur settlement developments and new towns in underdeveloped locations, with the hope of contributing to the state's future economic growth.

Unfortunately, these large-scale, subsidized projects met with considerable time delays, financial strains, and a “consequent waste of millions of dollars [that] was a costly lesson in the evils of inflation and over-optimism”

(Carlson 1951:100; Davis 1998:230). After a subsequent shift to railroad projects being handled by private investment companies, those later private business concerns did not try to play the role of a subsidizing government. Railroad projects managed by private investment companies were designed and managed to keep costs low and profits high.

Railroads built in the 1850s and 1860s, like the Hannibal and Naples Railroad, were designed with a concern for the large-scale interconnections they provided which linked to other regional railroads (Grant 2004:22–23). Such rails were not built simply to connect a hub like Naples with a hub like Hannibal with no concern for the rail traffic in between, however. The local freight and passenger traffic that could be obtained along the extent of such a railroad was also of great concern in order to maximize operating profits (Conger 1932:286; Cochran 1950:56–57; Grant 2004:14). This factor again makes the bypassing of New Philadelphia appear problematic. That town had existed for decades before the Hannibal and Naples Railroad was built, and had grown as an agricultural service community, attracting local traffic of farmers moving their products by wagon to nearby river-based merchant points. No such traffic centers existed along the northward arc that bypassed New Philadelphia; new depot towns had to be built there from scratch after the railroad was constructed, incurring delays in the inflowing traffic available when the freight trains started running in 1870. Here again, no business justification explains the route bypassing New Philadelphia.

Topographic considerations provide another conundrum. The northernmost point of the bypass route, where Baylis would later grow as a depot town, was the highest point of elevation in the region, at 863 ft. above sea level (*Barry Adage* 1876d:2; USGS 2007). This point was sufficiently high that newspaper reports and railroad company records during the 1870s at times called it “Summit Point” or “Summit Station” (HNRC Records 1857:7 October; *Quincy Whig* 1870:4). In addition to requiring greater linear distance to bypass New Philadelphia, this path required even more length of roadbed and rails due to the increasing grade, rising to the highest point in the area. Overall, it was preferable to design a railroad route so “there should be as

little rise and fall as possible” (Vose 1857:32; Webb 1917:3–4).

Such a pathway over a high point of elevation like Baylis did not only cost more in construction outlays. Later operating costs for freight trains were also significantly increased. As one newspaper observed: “Regular outgoing freight trains from Hannibal on the Wabash are drawn by two locomotives as far as Baylis, the highest point on the road between the two rivers” (*Barry Adage* 1876a:3). The primary flow of freight traffic was from Hannibal and Barry eastward to Baylis, and beyond to market centers such as Chicago or Toledo. A freight train had to climb from Barry, at 712 ft. elevation, to Baylis, at 863 ft. elevation. To do so required a helper locomotive for the larger freight trains, and such an extra engine was maintained on the tracks near Hannibal for this purpose. With heavy freight traffic “constantly increasing” on the line, the railroad company soon began considering the possibility of changing the route to reduce this uphill grade (*Barry Adage* 1877:1).

Maintaining and operating a helper locomotive in this manner was an undertaking to be avoided by railroad companies wherever possible, due to manifold expenses (Wellington 1901:601–604). A helper locomotive required extra expenses in wages, fuel, water for steam, and space for maintaining the engine when in use and when waiting for use. Even when waiting, a helper locomotive burned fuel, because its boiler was kept heated so the engine was ready to go as soon as an eastbound freight train was ready to depart. Moreover, there were considerable opportunity costs, with such a locomotive relegated to episodic use on a limited stretch of railway, rather than being employed in a more efficient and continual manner as a sole engine on a long-distance, through-bound freight train (Wellington 1901:601–604).

In the overall operation of a freight train, one can obtain offsetting benefits related to an uphill grade if the train can then roll downslope for a comparable distance, thus conserving some fuel on the downgrade (Vose 1857:37; Wellington 1901:608; Cootner 1963:484). This was not the case for the Hannibal and Naples Railroad, however, as the freight trains incurred a longer and steeper climb from Barry, at an elevation of 712 ft., to Baylis at 863 ft., which was not fully offset by the downhill distance from

Baylis to New Salem at 784 ft. Any benefits of a downslope were similarly overridden by the extra expenses of having to maintain the helper engine (Vose 1857:37; Wellington 1901:608; Cootner 1963:484).

In the 20th century, a succession of railroad acquisitions placed the old Hannibal and Naples Railroad line within the operations of the Wabash Railway Company. Heavy freight train traffic still flowed on these tracks, and the direction of trade remained largely west to east as it did in the 19th century. After incurring the higher operating costs of running freight trains over the high point of Baylis for a number of decades, the Wabash company rebuilt the segment that corresponded to the northward arc that bypassed New Philadelphia in 1869. The Wabash moved the rail route south, away from Baylis, and closer to the town site of New Philadelphia (USGS 2007). The more even grade of elevations achieved in this rerouting lowered the railroad's operating costs from that time forward. Unfortunately, by that time in the 20th century, New Philadelphia existed only as the ruins of a town buried beneath the soil.

Another question of distance and topography can be raised. The PCRC and HNRC planned for the railroad route to pass through the existing towns of New Salem and Barry, and for depots to be located in those two communities. Could New Philadelphia have been bypassed because the railroad company saw no need for additional depot stations on the rail line between New Salem and Barry? The answer is clearly "no," as demonstrated by the fact that two to three additional depot stations were constructed along the rail line that circled to the north around New Philadelphia, linking New Salem and Barry (Figures 2 and 3). The distances between New Salem, New Philadelphia, and Barry fit comfortably in the typical range of distances between the depot stations constructed along this railroad line across Pike County.

Two other subjects concerning the ability of Pike County towns to influence the Hannibal and Naples Railroad route bear attention in this analysis. First, consider the town of Pittsfield, which was the county seat, and one of the larger communities in the area during the time when the railroad path was under consideration. One might expect the citizens of Pittsfield to have been in a confident position to lobby the

HNRC to have the main railway route pass through their community. Pittsfield is located several miles south of the east–west line of the railroad path that was recommended by the engineer's report in 1857, however (Figure 2). Rather than incur the extra expense of diverting the main railroad on a large curve to the south to run through Pittsfield, the HNRC built a separate connecting rail to link Pittsfield to the main line by a shorter distance rail (Figure 2) (HNRC Records 1870:2 June; Ensign 1872:7; Grant 2004:22). The attractiveness of having a county seat and active urban settlement along the main line of the railroad did not outweigh the desire to avoid the expense of building such a meandering route when the HNRC's primary purpose was to link Hannibal to Naples in a cost-efficient manner (Vose 1857:10; HNRC Records 1868). This extra rail line to Pittsfield was also promoted as one with a future potential extension southwest to the town of Louisiana, Missouri (HNRC Records 1868; Grant 2004:23). That additional extension was never built, however (Carlson 1951:104).

Next, one should ask whether the citizens of New Philadelphia attempted to lobby representatives of the PCRC or the HNRC to ensure the town's position along the planned railroad path. Research to date has uncovered no evidence that residents of New Philadelphia or members of the McWorter family attempted to influence the route plan in that way. No evidence has been uncovered that would indicate that the interests of New Philadelphia's residents and businesspeople were represented in the deliberations and decisions concerning the railroad.

Families of both African American and European American heritage resided in New Philadelphia, or lived on adjacent farmsteads and owned extra lots within the town. African American families, including the McWorters and Walkers, were prominent landowners and entrepreneurs with investment interests in and around the town (Ensign 1872:23,54,58; Chapman 1880:752). Frank McWorter, the town's founder, had passed away in 1854. His surviving wife and adult children were also prominent citizens and businesspeople, however. For example, Solomon McWorter was praised in the 1872 *Atlas Map of Pike County*, a publication to which he subscribed, as follows: "He is quite extensively engaged in farming and raising stock, and there

are few men in Pike county who are succeeding better than he. ... He is now the owner of five hundred acres of first class land, well stocked with cattle, hogs, horses, and mules. He is a man of good moral habits, and is highly respected by his neighbors" (Ensign 1872:54). Yet, to date no evidence has been found that Solomon McWorter, or others with interests in New Philadelphia worked to lobby representatives of the HNRC to have that town become a depot station on the railroad route.

In 1867, the HNRC appointed a number of local citizens and businesspeople to act as liaisons to the residents of the townships to be traversed by the railroad. John McTucker was listed as liaison to Hadley Township, in which New Philadelphia was located (HNRC Records 1867:17 July). McTucker served as a supervisor and treasurer for Hadley Township at various times (Ensign 1872:100). After construction of the railroad was completed in 1869, a depot named "Hadley Station" was constructed along the railroad's passage through that township (Walker 1983:167). That station was built on a parcel of land owned by John McTucker, located approximately one mile northwest of New Philadelphia (Figure 3) (Ensign 1872:100).

The northward arc of railroad that bypassed New Philadelphia cannot be explained persuasively based on business reasons, or by the lobbying of existing towns. In the absence of those alternative justifications, this dynamic appears to have been the result of the impacts of aversive racism. This was an indirect and structural impact of racial tensions, and not a direct, malevolent act recorded in a dramatic and overt manner. The HNRC was dominated by social and business interests centered in a region that was contorted by racial ideologies and strife for decades leading up to, and following the construction of this railroad.

The same set of circumstances also readily indicates why individuals invested in the community of New Philadelphia and adjacent farms, such as Solomon McWorter, would not be motivated to try to lobby business organizations such as the PCRC and HNRC. The PCRC was dominated by the business interests of Hannibal, and operated while that city contained an active slave market. The HNRC maintained that focus on the interests of Hannibal investors, even declaring in 1867 that the citizens of Pike County, Illi-

nois should "pledge [them]selves to the people of Missouri" and the goals of making Hannibal a primary hub in a growing, transcontinental system of rails (HNRC Records 1867). New Philadelphia suffered a fate seen by other towns bypassed by a new rail, as local roadway traffic was drawn away to new depot towns and stations in their area, and then businesses departed, followed by town residents (Ensign 1872:10; Chapman 1880:740–741; Walker 1983:167). As Mark Leone and his co-authors (2005:579) observe, towns such as New Philadelphia existed in "the midst of racial hostility," and "were subject to antiblack legislation, were sidelined economically, and were then all but forgotten as their inhabitants migrated to cities and larger towns in a quest to maintain their economic viability."

African American residents of the area may have seen some benefits from the placement of Hadley Station on John McTucker's land. The rail route leading from the location of Pineville southwest to a point level with an east–west line to Barry also passed through parcels owned by John Walker and Louisa McWorter, close to the McTucker tract and another neighboring tract owned by Sarah McWorter (Figure 3) (Ensign 1872:100). The railroad company typically paid nothing for such conveyances of a path through individual landowner parcels (Pike County Deed Records 1865:247–248). The fact that John Walker and Louisa McWorter granted such conveyances indicates that those African American land owners did not generally oppose the railroad's arrival in Pike County.

After New Philadelphia was bypassed by the railroad, the lots, blocks, and public streets that made up its configuration as a town were converted into agricultural land over the following decades. Those ensuing changes followed a broader trend in this region of western Illinois. Locations without direct rail line connections in the late 1800s saw more and more acreage placed into agricultural cultivation by farms of increasing size. The expanded transport capacity of interregional railroad networks led to increased demand for livestock and agricultural products, and the lands situated in outlying areas around the railroad stations saw more acreage moved into larger-scale agricultural use (Carlson 1951:111–113). Locations that became railroad depot stations, in contrast, often developed as service

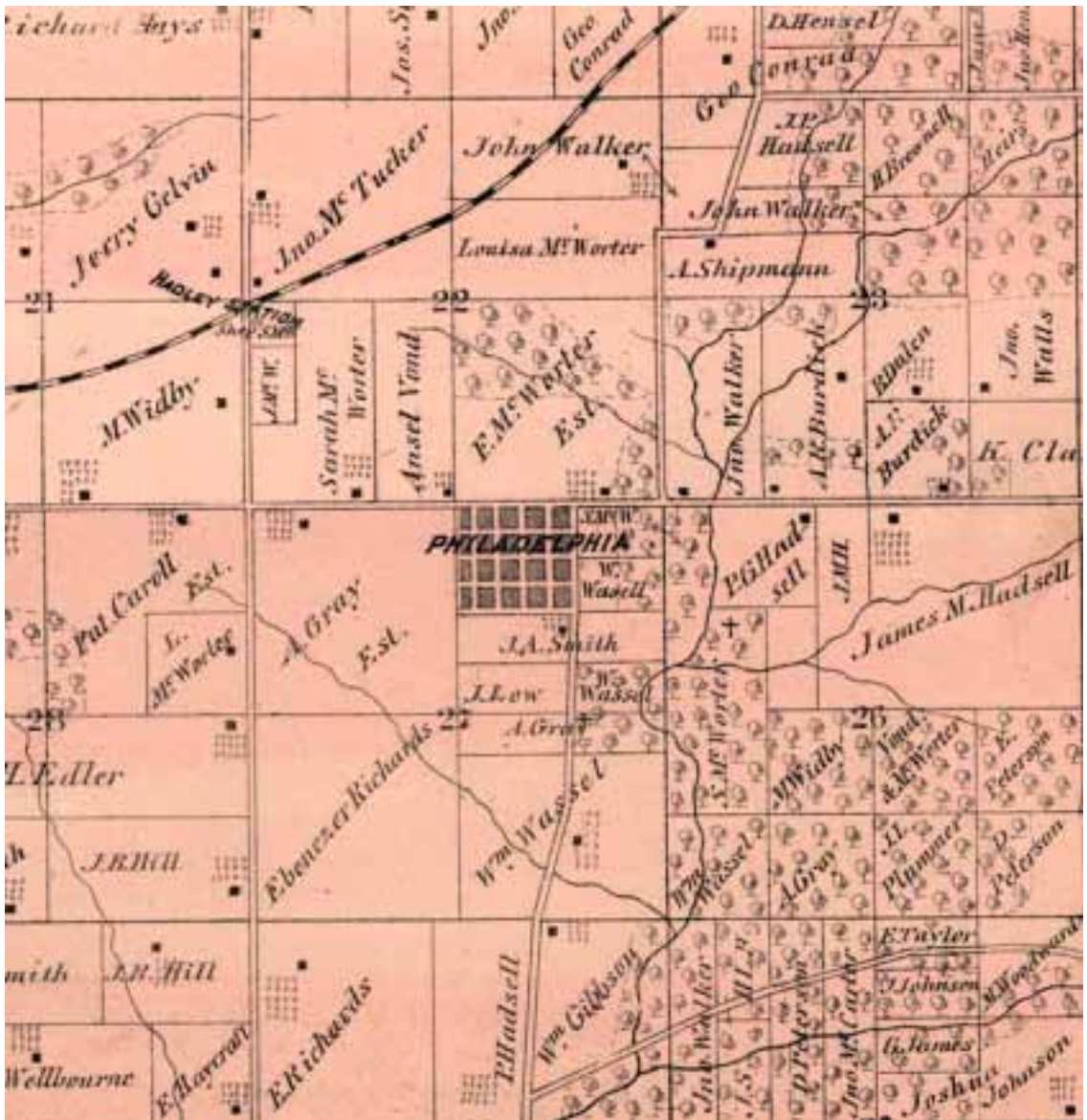


FIGURE 3. AN 1872 MAP OF HADLEY TOWNSHIP SHOWING HADLEY STATION ON THE RAILROAD LINE CROSSING LAND OWNED BY JOHN MCTUCKER, JOHN WALKER, AND LOUISA McWORTER, AMONG OTHERS (ENSIGN 1872:100). THE MAP IMAGE IS ORIENTED WITH NORTH AT THE TOP; FOR A SENSE OF THE SCALE, THE TOWN SITE OF PHILADELPHIA AS DEPICTED ON THIS MAP WAS APPROXIMATELY 0.25 MI. WIDE.

centers enjoying an increase in local traffic and merchant trade (Jenks 1944:14; Walker 1985:64; Davis 1998:369–370).

### Lessons of Combating Racism and Overcoming Adversity

What lessons are to be learned and communicated about the railroad bypassing New Phila-

delphia? One approach is to focus upon this episode as an example of racist conduct, and to insist that the knowledge and awareness of such past actions should be part of the continuing struggle against racism in the present (Shackel 2003; Leone et al. 2005). Such a message could be articulated by focusing on the racism that shaped the actions of investors and managers of the railroad, and the damage their actions



inflicted upon the residents of New Philadelphia, leading to the demise of that community as a town. Yet, some might raise a concern that present condemnations of racism should avoid constantly emphasizing European Americans as those who had choices and agency that victimized African American families. Instead, one can focus on lessons to be learned by this past event by emphasizing the choices made by African American families in New Philadelphia to overcome the adversities that confronted them (Shackel 2003; Leone et al. 2005).

Solomon McWorter provides an excellent example of the ways in which African Americans overcame obstacles and succeeded in their social and business lives. Shortly after the railroad bypassed the town his father had founded, Solomon availed himself of its transport facilities to further his own economic operations. In 1873, according to the *Barry Adage* newspaper, Solomon simply drove his livestock to the depot at Barry several miles to the west, and used the railroad to ship them out for sale. "One hundred head of fat cattle were shipped to Buffalo from this place on Tuesday. They belonged to S. McWorter" (*Barry Adage* 1873b:4). Other residents of New Philadelphia moved on to pursue new opportunities and to deal with the challenges they encountered. Some families moved to nearby cities in Illinois and Missouri, while others moved to more distant locations (Walker 1983:169). The social history of these numerous instances of perseverance should be central to society's reckoning of its past.

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