

George W. Cutter: America's Poet Warrior

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Purportedly, Cutter's favorite portrait,
which shows the gold ring
given by Henry Clay.

George W. Cutter's life might be of interest only to antiquarians, were it not for the fact that his poem "The Song of Steam" has been in nearly continuous publication since Cutter wrote it in the mid-1840s. It appeared in *Robert Merry's Museum*, an immensely popular children's periodical in 1849. Around the turn of the nineteenth century, it was anthologized in *The New McGuffey Fourth Reader*. Generations of schoolchildren memorized it. It was included in *The Library of Poetry and Song*, originally edited by William Cullen Bryant. The poem still surfaces from time to time in letters-to-the-editor columns when someone writes to ask, "My grandfather used to quote 'The Song of Steam.' Who wrote it?"

Once identified as Indiana's "most distinguished literary man," Cutter made significant contributions as an Indiana legislator and as captain of a company of Kentucky volunteers during the Mexican War.

For a decade, he was married to America's leading tragic actress. With those credentials, it is surprising so little is known about him. Although the record is fragmentary, enough information exists to reconstruct much of his fascinating, if tormented, life.¹

The earliest years of Cutter's existence are the least defined. Even the poet's precise name, birthdate and birthplace are obscure. Creditable sources identify him as "George Washington Cutter." However, a close family member asserts he was christened

"George Wales Cutter," the name which emerged occasionally in newspapers during his Indiana legislative career. Some suggest he was born as early as 1801; however, it is probable he was born between 1808 and 1810. Biographers place Cutter's birthplace in Quebec, Massachusetts and Kentucky, but the likeliest location is Toronto, Canada.²

By 1826, Cutter was residing in Terre Haute, a thriving western Indiana village situated on the Wabash River. His decision to locate there may have been influenced by his cousin, newspaper editor-publisher John Willson Osborn, a forthright anti-slavery and temperance advocate. In 1819, at Vincennes, Indiana, Osborn and attorney Amory Kinney had united to test the legality of slavery in Indiana, filing a writ of *habeas corpus* on behalf of a slave acquired before the Treaty of Greenville by the family of tavernkeeper Hyacinth Lasselle. The trial court concluded that the servitude was legal, but the Indiana Supreme Court reversed, finding "the framers of our constitution intended a total and entire prohibition of slavery in this state." Osborn relocated to Terre Haute, sixty miles north, and began publishing the *Western Register & Terre Haute Advertiser*, the first village newspaper, on July 21, 1823. Kinney moved to Terre Haute from Daviess County, Indiana, in 1826.³

Cutter worked as bookkeeper-clerk in Nathaniel Huntington's Terre Haute dry goods store. When Huntington departed on a business voyage to New Orleans in early September 1828, Cutter was placed in charge. Huntington did not return, perishing in New Orleans on September 29. After closing Huntington's store, Cutter was employed by Terre Haute merchant Lucius H. Scott and studied law in the evenings under Judge Kinney's tutelage. For awhile, he supported himself by pursuing collections before a magistrate, developing immense compassion for the plight of debtors. The day he was officially admitted to the bar, Cutter contracted a severe case of smallpox, which left his face permanently scarred. While recuperating in isolation, he studied theology. The first notice of Cutter's law office appeared March 7, 1833, in Terre Haute's *Wabash Courier*. Gradually, he entered politics, proclaiming his candidacy for justice-of-the-peace in June 1835. In August 1838, he was elected to a one-year term in the Indiana House and re-elected, as a Whig, August 5, 1839.⁴

Peers lauded Cutter's ability as a writer and orator. As a politician, he exhibited no timidity; legislative minutes reflect his frequent participation. A proposal he introduced to abolish imprisonment for debt gained the sobriquet, "Mr. Cutter's Bill." Despite initial rebuffs, Cutter resubmitted it until it was adopted. One journalist wrote: "Mr. Cutter deserves much credit for his enthusiastic efforts in defense of the bill. I have never, in the course of my life, seen any man whose whole soul was more fully engaged in any cause than has been George Wales Cutter's in this measure." He advocated fiscal responsibility and advanced bills to improve, safeguard and expand public works. Though vociferously supporting William Henry Harrison in the 1840 presidential campaign, Cutter seemingly achieved approval beyond party boundaries, at least on the local level. According to a relative, he "often wrote beautiful little poems in those days that were never published. . . ." In early 1840, he produced *Elskatawa, or the Moving Fires, and Other Poems*, perhaps the first book of poetry ever printed in Indiana. The fifty-page title poem empathized with the Native Americans' plight against white oppression. As a youth in Upper Canada, Cutter associated with several Indian families, learning to speak the Mississauga language and other tongues fluently.⁵

During the 1839-40 legislative session, Cutter met Frances Ann (Denny) Drake, the acclaimed tragedienne and widow of actor Alexander Drake. Known on stage as "Mrs. Drake" after her marriage, she resided at the Drake home in Covington, Kentucky, with her four children. Most theater historians avow she was the first bona fide American-born female stage star, preceding Charlotte Cushman. Alexander's sudden death on



Drake Home, Covington, Kentucky. Photo by: Tim Herrmann.

stage in Cincinnati February 10, 1830, shocked family, friends and fans. The Kentucky and Ohio legislatures adjourned their respective sessions out of respect. At the pinnacle of her career, Mrs. Drake received vigorous endorsements from author Washington Irving and playwright John Howard Payne and was compared to the eminent English actress "Mrs. Siddons."⁶

When they met, Cutter and Mrs. Drake were staying at Edmund Browning's Washington Hall, also known as the Browning Hotel. Cutter roomed there while the legislature was in session. It was Mrs. Drake's headquarters while she appeared at the "Hoosier Theater" in the hotel dining room. The courtship was brief. Cutter accompanied her to the theater each evening to watch from the wings. One night he interrupted a performance, to

the "uproarious delight of the audience," by racing onto the stage to her "rescue" after a staged fall and "tenderly raising her ponderous loveliness,—for she was 'fat, fair, and forty,'—carried her off with many sweetly murmured condolences."⁷

On January 22, 1840, Cutter awakened Marion County Clerk Joseph F. Brown at midnight to secure a marriage license. The wedding was performed January 23, 1840, by the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis. For awhile, Cutter was the brunt of jokes by fellow members of the Indiana General Assembly. At forty-two, Mrs. Drake was old enough to be his "aunt, if not his mother."⁸

Mrs. Drake made her *Terre Haute* stage debut on March 14, 1840, and still was performing there at the end of the month. Soon thereafter, the couple moved to the spacious Drake residence in Covington, a rapidly growing city which would more than quadruple in the ensuing decade. The expansion supported numerous industries, many of them steam-driven. Establishing a law practice, Cutter assumed an active role in the community. At various times, he was president of the Washington Temperance Society, ran for county office, worked diligently for the state and county Democratic party and served as Officer of Health for the City of Covington.⁹

He continued to write poetry, evoking editorial praise and going "the entire rounds of the Western and Eastern press, every where receiving the highest commendation and eliciting the warmest admiration." On November 29, 1845, the *Licking Valley Register* reported: "The poems of our fellow citizen, G.W. Cutter, Esq., particularly his 'Song of Steam' and 'Miser's Death,' have attracted universal attention. The 'Song of Steam' has crossed the 'briny deep' and been republished in several London papers."¹⁰

The next month the same newspaper opined that "The Song of Steam," "Miser's Death," and "Ode to Henry Clay" were "redolent of the highest sweets of poetry."¹¹ By that time, steam technology had come into its own:

In 1838, Levi Woodbury, Secretary of the Treasury, made public a comprehensive survey

which revealed a total of 1,860 stationary engines in the United States. In the aggregate this represented 36,319 horsepower, or approximately six times as much power as the 350 railroad locomotives then in the country, and equal to about two-thirds of all the power developed in the eight hundred steamboats owned in the United States.¹²

Cutter comprehended the boundless potential of steam power and the spirit of the American steam engine. "The Song of Steam" opens:

Harness me down with your iron bands,
Be sure of your curb and rein;
For I scorn the power of your puny hands,
As the tempest scorns a chain.¹³

From the beginning, the poem's voice is that of a steam engine in its various manifestations: steamboat, marine engine, railroad locomotive, factory engine and agricultural engine. It divulges how it waited to be discovered and how it insinuated itself into nearly all facets of human endeavor. Haughty and arrogant, the engine proclaims that it has conquered the world by being powerful enough to do everything: "... I imagine this world myself."¹⁴ It was a colossal success. The *Cincinnati Commercial* said:

G.W. Cutter, Esq., of Covington, Kentucky, has immortalized himself by "The Song of Steam." . . . To show what a sensation it created in Europe we quote the following paragraph from a late London paper of high literary character: "... 'The Song of Steam,' which first appeared in an American paper . . . and was copied into the London Times, is very popular . . . Mr. Cutter has written other pieces of great merit, but if he had not written another line after 'The Song of Steam,' it would have been sufficient to hand his name down to posterity."¹⁵

While Cutter was establishing his literary reputation, opportunity arose to prove his martial valor. The United States declared war upon Mexico on May 13, 1846, following months of political and military maneuvering by both nations in response to the annexation of Texas. Congress appropriated ten million dollars and called for 50,000 volunteer troops to supplement the minuscule regular army consisting of fewer than 9,000 effective soldiers. For a variety of reasons, the American people, by and large, greeted the war with approbation, stirred by President James K. Polk's assertion that "American blood had been spilt on American soil" in Texas. Not awaiting the federal government to entreat each state to organize militia, Kentucky Governor William Owsley called for volunteer companies of one-year duration to be ready when the official announcement came. Kentucky's eventual quota was 2,700 men, comprising one cavalry and two infantry regiments of ten companies each, inadequate to satisfy the state's nearly ten thousand citizens eager to go to war.¹⁶

Cutter was working on a new anthology of poetry when war intervened. No sooner had the requisition reached Covington than he organized a volunteer company. Consistent with tradition he was selected captain of the Kenton Rangers, attached as Company E to the Second Kentucky Volunteer Infantry under Col. William McKee. Major C.S. Clarkson, a War of 1812 veteran, presented his sword to Cutter in an official ceremony. The company departed Covington aboard steamer *Diadem* amid patriotic cheers on May 31, 1846. Subscriptions to his book, which promised to contain "The Song of Steam," provided support for Frances during his absence, an experiment which

"far exceeded any expectation."¹⁷

Cutter's early military record almost transformed literary fame into infamy. Like many volunteer officers, initially he proved to be a questionable choice for military command. Discipline was difficult to enforce against neighbors and peers. Louisville, the rendezvous point for the Second Kentucky, breathed a collective sigh of relief when the regiment departed for New Orleans, ending drunken brawls and several near riots. On the voyage to Texas aboard the *Sea Lion*, five companies, including the Kenton Rangers, were placed under the regiment's second-in-command, Lt. Col. Henry Clay, Jr., third son and namesake of the venerated Kentucky statesman. One day a soldier in Cutter's company climbed onto the ship's rigging and refused to come down, defying Cutter and, then, Col. Clay. When the colonel directed a group of men to bring him down, the soldier produced a knife and threatened to kill the first man there. Clay sent for pistols to arm the guards. The aspiring topsman relented and was clapped into irons. "The example worked the proper effect," Col. Clay noted in his diary.¹⁸

Cutter's military experience included an early August illness and arguments with other soldiers. He had a major disagreement with 2nd Lt. Henry Robinson. Later, he was accused of taking a shot at one of his men, arrested "for shooting a pistol with intent to kill" and removed from command. When Gen. Zachary Taylor reinstated him, twenty-four Rangers protested by ignoring his orders and were imprisoned at Camargo. Major John P. Gaines of the First Kentucky Cavalry intervened, convincing the troops to return to duty.¹⁹

The discord apparently did not impair Cutter's image, or else combat courage salvaged old wounds. During the battle of Buena Vista, he was among those who attempted to rescue Col. Clay from the battlefield after the officer was mortally wounded. A fellow officer noted that Captain Cutter and his company "fought like lions." That evening Cutter was moved to compose a poem on a cartridge keg in his tent near the battlefield.²⁰

Buena Vista! when the sun
Set o'er the battle cloud,
The sulphur vapors, dark and dun,
Lay o'er thee like a shroud;
And the wounded and the dying
O'er all thy hills were strewn,
And the red path of the flying
Was lighted by the moon.²¹

"Buena Vista," the title poem of the volume Frances Cutter sold by subscription, "became famous throughout the country." After the war, Cutter journeyed to Ashland to deliver Col. Clay's pistols, entrusted to him by the mortally wounded officer, and personal effects to the soldier's father. In return, senior Clay presented Cutter with a custom-designed ring containing a lock of his son's hair, mementoes cherished by Cutter for the rest of his life. The ring is visible on his little finger in the portrait used as a frontispiece in the book, purportedly the poet's favorite self-image.²²

Cutter's rank as an orator was enhanced soon after the war. As principal speaker at Covington's 1848 Independence Day celebration, he exalted Gen. Taylor, his former commander and the Whig presidential candidate. On October 17, 1848, he made an appearance before a packed Vigo County Court House in his old hometown, already decidedly pro-Taylor.²³ One *Terre Haute* newspaper reported:

Capt. GEORGE W. CUTTER, formerly of our own town, but now of Covington, Ky., appeared among us . . . on Tuesday night made a most brilliant speech in our Court House. At an early hour the house was filled—all anxious to hear Capt. Cutter. And it is but justice to say that sanguine expectations were fully realized . . . Capt. Cutter's manner is peculiar—in description and anecdote he is very happy. He can raise the laugh; not at the expense of conviction, but to enforce belief upon understanding.—Rarely have we seen a more delighted audience—and on no occasion the separation of a large meeting with more decided conviction that Gen. Taylor was the very proper man for President of the United States.²⁴

Purportedly, Cutter was to be named Minister to Morocco, a post he coveted. However, upon President Taylor's sudden death, successor Millard Fillmore allegedly told him: "No, I want you here. I cannot spare our only 'Poet Warrior,'" and urged him to accept a position as a law clerk in the Treasury Department. Cutter and his wife decided to stay in Washington; however, when Frances returned to Covington to dispose of the home and pack furniture, she found her daughter, Julia Chapman, and her grandchildren ill. Her decision to remain in Kentucky led to estrangement. When she declined to return to the nation's capital, the separation became "final." Cutter held the Treasury post, with its \$1,400 annual salary, until 1853 when shifting political fortunes forced him out with offer of a lesser clerkship. He refused, continuing to work in Washington, D.C., for at least a few years.²⁵

The last ten years of Cutter's life are shrouded in mystery. An ardent relationship with a woman named Althea inspired him to place her portrait in a volume of poetry which included romantic verses about her. "A few years later" he married "Mrs. Spencer of Rochester, New York . . . a writer of some note and an interesting woman." The couple had two sons, the older of which was named "George Washington Cutter." For awhile, his poems continued to be published in western newspapers.²⁶

If journals surrender scant details about Cutter's final years, glimpses of his thoughts and emotions may be discerned from his poetry. It can be deduced, for example, that Cutter was passionate and that nature and patriotism were important forces in his life. With national pride at its zenith, Cutter penned "E Pluribus Unum," considered by some, including lecturer and poet Bayard Taylor, as his "finest work." The lyrics were the foundation for "an American national song," composed by Mrs. Ed H. Pendleton. "Never," another Cutter poem, was adapted to music by Carolyn Rive in 1856. "The Song of Lightning," which first appeared in *Poems and Fugitive Pieces*, was called "brilliant."²⁷

Ultimately, Cutter's physical and mental health began to fail. Apparently he abandoned the temperance principles he once flaunted. Though two books of his poetry were published in 1857, one historian asserted he "sank into sporadic idleness" during his second marriage. In his final days, it seems, he was alone. In early December 1865, Cutter was admitted to Providence Hospital in Washington, D.C., at the direction of the Commissioner of Public Buildings. Deathly ill from an unstated malady, he came to the attention of Mr. C. Cammack, Sr., a Mason visiting a fraternal brother at the hospital on December 22. Cutter had been inducted into National Lodge No. 12 in Washington in 1851 but withdrew in 1853. Cammack reported the poet was "insensible . . . inflicted with paralysis, and . . . sinking rapidly." He died on Christmas Day, 1865. Members of Saint John's Masonic Lodge attended the funeral, arranged by Cammack, and paid for his interment, without headstone, in a plot owned by the lodge at Congressional Cemetery.²⁸

The memory of Cutter faded in the decades following his death. His decorous poetic

style, fashionable in the antebellum, was seldom employed. If "The Song of Steam" had not resurfaced in contemporary journals devoted to the steam era, the poet might today be known only to antiquarians.²⁹ Cutter seems to foretell his own rediscovery:

Ha! ha! ha! they found me at last,
They invited me forth at length,
And I rushed to my throne with a thunder-blast,
And laughed in my iron strength.³⁰

Endnotes

1. Benjamin S. Parker and Enos B. Henry, eds., *Poets and Poetry in Indiana* (New York, 1900) 425; Arthur Wesley Shumaker, *A History of Indiana Literature* (Indianapolis, 1961) 82; Donald E. Thompson, ed., *Indiana Authors and Their Books* (3 vols., Crawfordsville, 1974) II, 151.
2. *Dictionary of American Biography* (20 vols, New York, 1928-1937) V, 17; *Who Was Who in America*, Historical Edition (Chicago, 1963) 132; *Appletons' Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (8 vols., New York, 1888-1901) II, 49; Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, eds., *American Authors (1600 - 1900): A Biographical Dictionary of American Literature* (New York, 1938) 200; *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (63 vols., New York, 1898-1984) XXII, 146-147; Rebecca A. Shepherd, Charles W. Calhoun, Elizabeth Shanahan-Shoemaker and Alan F. January, eds., *A Biographical Directory of the Indiana General Assembly*, (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1980) I, 90; Mary Caroline (Osborn) Gookins, Letter to William H. English dated April 20, 1888, William H. English Papers, Indiana Historical Society Library [hereinafter referred to as "Gookins Letter"]. The oldest daughter of John Willson Osborn, Mary Caroline was born November 2, 1815, and died August 26, 1889, in Columbus, Georgia. She was Cutter's first cousin once removed; Leander J. Monks, editor-in-chief, *Courts and Lawyers of Indiana* (3 vols. Indianapolis, 1916), III, 251; *Gookins Family Genealogy File*, Vigo County (IN) Public Library, Special Collections; *The Enquirer* [Terre Haute] February 19, 1840; *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), December 27, 1865; Shumaker, *A History of Indiana Literature* 82; 1850 Census, *Kenton County, Kentucky*; Gookins Letter.
3. *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* XVIII, 293-294; Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Indiana and Indianans: A History of Aboriginal and Territorial Indiana and the Century of Statehood* (5 vols. Chicago and New York, 1919) I, 344-347; *Indianapolis Daily Journal* November 15, 1866; Monks, *Courts and Lawyers of Indiana* I, 292; III, 1146; Shepherd, et al., eds., *Biographical Directory of the Indiana General Assembly* I, 223; *State v. Lasselle*, 1 Blackford Indiana Reports 60 (1820); *Indianapolis Daily Journal* November 15, 1866; Dunn, *Indiana and Indianans* I, 347; *Western Register & Terre Haute Advertiser* April 20, 1826; August 4, 1826.
4. Shepherd, et al., *A Biographical Directory of the Indiana General Assembly* I, 199; Thomas James de la Hunt, "Judge Elisha Mills Huntington," in "No Cheap Pudding": *Seventy-five Years of the Indiana Magazine of History* (Indianapolis, 1980) 140; *The Enquirer* [Terre Haute] February 5, 1840; Berry R. Sulgrove, *History of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana* (Philadelphia, 1884) 257; *Wabash Courier* [Terre Haute] June 25, 1835; Dorothy Riker and Gayle Thornbrough, eds., *Indiana Election Returns: 1816 - 1851* vol. XL, Indiana Historical Collections (Indianapolis, 1960) 244, 247.
5. Shumaker, *A History of Indiana Literature* 82; Blackford Condit, *History of Terre Haute from 1814-1840* (New York, 1900) 173; *The Enquirer* [Terre Haute] December 18 and 25, 1839; January 8, 15, 22 and 29, 1840; February 5, 12, 19 and 26, 1840; Dorothy Riker, ed., *Messages and Papers during the Administration of Governor David Wallace*, vol. XLIII, Indiana Historical Collections (Indianapolis, 1963) 323-352, 393-399; Sulgrove, *History of Indianapolis and Marion County* 257; Gookins Letter; Thompson, ed., *Indiana Authors and Their Books* II, 151; "Uncle Joe Brown Talks," *Indiana Magazine of History*, vol. I (1906) 23; G.W. Cutter, *Elskatawa, or The Moving Fires, and Other Poems* (Indianapolis, 1840).
6. *Dictionary of American Biography* V, 428-429; Joseph Jefferson, *The Autobiography of*

Joseph Jefferson (New York, 1889-1890) 415, 420-425; John J. Weisert, "The First Decade of Sam Drake's Louisville Theater," *Filson Club History Quarterly* vol. 39 (1965), 287, 307-308; George D. Ford, *These Were Actors: A Story of the Chapmans and the Drakes* (New York, 1955) 168, 181; West T. Hill, Jr., *The Theater in Early Kentucky: 1790 - 1820* (Lexington, 1971) 133; J. Stoddard Johnston, *Memorial History of Louisville from Its First Settlement to the Year 1896* (2 vols. Chicago, 1895) II, 328-329; Karl Bernhard, Duke of Saxe-Weimar Eisenach, *Travels through North America, during the Years 1825 and 1826* 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1828) vol. 2, 133; Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of Americans* (New York, 1949) 130.

7. Ezra F. Pabody's letter to his wife, December 7, 1837, E.B. Newcomb Papers, Indiana State Library, quoted in Justin E. Walsh, *The Centennial History of the Indiana General Assembly* (Indianapolis, 1987) 125, 136; Sulgrove, *History of Indianapolis and Marion County* 257; Walsh, *The Centennial History of the Indiana General Assembly* 125.

8. "Uncle Joe Brown Talks," *Indiana Magazine of History* vol. 1, (1906), 26; *The Enquirer* [Terre Haute] January 29, 1840; Sulgrove, *History of Indianapolis and Marion County* 395-396; Jane Shaffer Elsmere, *Henry Ward Beecher: The Indiana Years, 1837 - 1847* (Indianapolis, 1973) 51-61 93-95; *Indiana Journal* February 3, 1840; Walsh, *The Centennial History of the Indiana General Assembly* 125; Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis: The History, the Industries, and the People of a City of Homes* (Chicago, 1910) 458-459.

9. *The Enquirer* [Terre Haute] March 18 and 25, 1840; Geoffrey J. Giglierano and Deborah A. Overmyer, *The Bicentennial Guide to Greater Cincinnati: A Portrait of Two Hundred Years* (Cincinnati, 1988) 122-123; *Licking Valley Register* August 18, 1841; March 12, 1842; June 11, 1842; July 23, 1842; October 8, 1842; December 17, 1842; September 13, 1845.

10. *Licking Valley Register* September 13, 1845; November 29, 1845.

11. *Licking Valley Register* December 20, 1845. "Miser's Death" and "Ode to Henry Clay" appeared under slightly different titles in G.W. Cutter, *Buena Vista: and Other Poems* (Cincinnati, 1848) 51-54, 133-135.

12. Reynold M. Wik, *Steam Power on the American Farm* (Philadelphia, 1953) 5.

13. Cutter, *Buena Vista: and Other Poems* 24. Later editions of the poem incorporated minor stylistic changes.

14. Cutter, *Buena Vista: and Other Poems* 27.

15. *Licking Valley Register* January 31, 1846, quoting from the *Cincinnati Commercial*.

16. K. Jack Bauer, *The Mexican War: 1846-1848* (New York, 1974) 67-69; Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York, 1967) 182; Robert W. Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* (New York, 1985) 25-28; Works Progress Administration, *Military History of Kentucky* (Frankfort, KY, 1939) 124-125.

17. G.W. Cutter, *Buena Vista: and Other Poems*, Preface. *Licking Valley Register* May 23, 1846; June 6, 1846; August 15, 1846.

18. Works Progress Administration, *Military History of Kentucky* 128; Henry Clay, Jr. Manuscript Diary, in special collections of the University of Kentucky Library.

19. *Licking Valley Register* August 15, 1846; August 29, 1846; December 5, 1846; January 16, 1847.

20. Henry Clay, letter to Thomas B. Stevens dated July 23, 1847, in Melba Porter Hay, *The Papers of Henry Clay* vol. 10 (Lexington, KY, 1991) 341; *Licking Valley Register* May 14, 1847; Gookins Letter.

21. Cutter, *Buena Vista: and Other Poems* 24.

22. Shumaker, *A History of Indiana Literature* 82; *Licking Valley Register* August 6, 1847; Henry Clay, letter to Thomas B. Stevens, in Hay, *The Papers of Henry Clay* 341; Gookins Letter; Ruby Alice (Mrs. Lucius P.) Chapin, Letter to William H. English dated January 4, 1889, William H. English Papers, Indiana Historical Society Library.

23. *Covington [KY] Journal* July 28, 1848, August 4, 1848; *Wabash Courier* [Terre Haute] October 21, 1848.

24. *Wabash Courier* [Terre Haute] October 21, 1848.

25. Gookins Letter; *Covington [KY] Journal* July 23, 1853; Alfred Hunter, *The Washington*

and *Georgetown Directory: A Strangers' Guide-Book for Washington and Congressional and Clerks' Register* (Washington, 1853) 97; I. Ten Eyck, *Ten Eyck's Washington and Georgetown Directory, with a Complete Congressional and Department Directory* (Washington, D.C., 1855) 17.

26. G.W. Cutter, *Poems and Fugitive Pieces* (Cincinnati, 1857). Cutter's poem entitled "To Althea," speaks of his devotion to a lady he met in Washington, D.C., who died during the relationship. *Wabash Express*, November 14, 1855.; Gookins Letter. Mary Gookins refers once to Cutter's second wife as "Mrs. Spencer Cutter."; G.W. Cutter, *Poems, National and Patriotic* (Philadelphia, 1857) was his last known anthology.

27. Gookins Letter; Cutter, *Buena Vista* 38; "E Pluribus Unum: an American national song." Adapted and arranged by Mrs. Ed. H. Pendleton (Baltimore, Cincinnati and Louisville, 1850). "E Pluribus Unum: an American national song." Arranged for the piano forte by Mrs. E.H. Pendleton. (Cincinnati, 1863); "Never, never, never: American national song." Words by G.W. Cutter; music by Carolyn Rive (Cincinnati, 1856); Cutter, *Poems and Fugitive Pieces*; Shumaker, *A History of Indiana Literature* 84.

28. Shumaker, *A History of Indiana Literature* 84; Condit, *History of Terre Haute* 173-174; Brown Letter; *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), December 27, 1865; Membership certificate in the Grand Lodge Register, Washington, D.C. Cutter was initiated October 13, 1851; Transaction Ledger, Congressional Cemetery, entry dated December 27, 1865.

29. See *The Iron-Men Album* vol. 45, (No. 2, 1990) 15, 22.

30. Cutter, "The Song of Steam," in *Buena Vista: and Other Poems* 24.



Photograph from the collection of Dr. Robert T. Rhode.

In 1853, Alexander B. Latta of Cincinnati built this steam-powered fire engine named Citizen's Gift.

The previous year, Latta invented the very first steam fire engine, named Uncle Joe Ross. The distinguished inventor later moved to Ludlow, Kentucky.

The Song of Steam

by George W. Cutter

Harness me down with your iron bands,
Be sure of your curb and rein;
For I scorn the power of your puny hands,
As the tempest scorns a chain.
How I laughed as I lay concealed from sight,
For many a countless hour,
At the childish boast of human might,
And the pride of human power.

When I saw an army upon the land,
A navy upon the seas,
Creeping along, a snail-like band,
Or waiting the wayward breeze;
When I marked the peasant faintly reel
With the toil which he daily bore,
As he feebly turned the tardy wheel,
Or tugged at the weary oar;—

When I measured the panting courses's speed,
 The flight of the courier dove—
 As they bore the law a king decreed,
 Or the lines of impatient love—
 I could not but think how the world would feel,
 As these were outstripp'd afar,
 When I should be bound to the rushing keel,
 Or chained to the flying car.

Ha! ha! ha! they found me at last,
 The invited me forth at length,
 And I rushed to my throne with a thunder-blast,
 And laughed in my iron strength.
 Oh! then ye saw a wondrous change
 On the earth and the ocean wide,
 Where now my fiery armies range,
 Nor wait for wind or tide.

Hurrah! hurrah! The water o'er
 The mountains steep decline,
 Time—space—have yielded to my power—
 The world! the world is mine!
 The rivers, the sun hath earliest blest,
 Or those where his beams decline;
 The giant streams of the queenly west,
 Or the orient floods divine:

The ocean pales where'er I sweep,
 To hear my strength rejoice,
 And the monsters of the briny deep
 Cower, trembling, at my voice.
 I carry the wealth and the lord of earth,
 The thoughts of his god-like mind,
 The wind lags after my flying forth,
 The lightning is left behind.

In the darksome depths of the fathomless mine,
 My tireless arm doth play,
 Where the rocks never saw the sun decline,
 Or the dawn of the glorious day,
 I bring earth's glittering jewels up
 From the hidden cave below,
 And I make the fountain's granite cup
 With a crystal gush o'flow.

I blow the bellows, I forge the steel,
 In all the shops of trade;
 I hammer the ore and turn the wheel,
 Where my arms of strength are made;
 I manage to furnace, the mill, the mint;

I carry, I spin, I weave;
 And all my doing I put to print,
 On every Saturday eve.

I've no muscle to weary, no breast to decay,
 No bone to be "laid on the shelf,"
 And soon I intend you may "go and play,"
 While I manage this world myself.
 But harness me down with your iron bands,
 Be sure of your curb and rein;
 For I scorn the strength of your puny hands,
 As the tempest scorns a chain.