Today an array of scholars have shared their thoughts, and from the discipline of each of them we have gained perspectives on factors that have helped to make this region distinctive. It is fair, then, to tell you of my own perspective. I come to the symposium as a local historian, as the director of a local history institution. As such, I would underscore the validity and necessity not only of the study of regional historical and cultural developments, but local and community ones as well. I would like to proceed to a brief precis of the initial and following early Euroamerican settlement patterns in Connecticut's Western Reserve, and some suggestions about the impact that that pattern had upon nineteenth century cultural development in the section.

I think that one of the most interesting aspects of the Western Reserve is that, as a definable region, it was the result of a political and arbitrary imposition rather than of natural or geographical causes. That New England's influence was instrumental in forming and defining the cultural foundations of the Western Reserve has been a long-accepted and obvious tenet. Writing in 1840, when the region was only just beyond the frontier stage, Ravenna editor Lyman W. Hall remarked that the Reserve was "in its education, in its leading habits, sympathies [and] feelings, New England in miniature." In 1873, standing before a meeting of Geauga County Historical Society, Congressman James A. Garfield observed that "there are townships on this Western Reserve which are more thoroughly New England in character and spirit than most towns of New England today." In a turn of the century Atlantic Monthly article, Rollin Lynde Harte noted that in the Reserve "is the Puritan regimen of Massachusetts and Connecticut condensed and exaggerated. In what other part of the country, save in antique New England, could you have brewed such a strenuous leaven." In Years of My Youth William Dean Howells recalled "that remarkable group of counties in northern Ohio called the Western Reserve," a region of which "the population was almost purely New England in origin, either by direct settlement from Connecticut, or indirectly after the sojourn of a generation in New York State."

Speeches, articles, memoirs and other writings from the latter half of the last century and the first years of the present one are studded with observations similar to these. The Western Reserve as NEW ENGLAND IN MINIATURE or, indeed, as MORE NEW ENGLAND THAN NEW ENGLAND ITSELF has become commonplace wisdom. (2) I would like to say that I have not catalogued these thoughts in order to dismiss or destroy them. Especially in terms of the nineteenth century -- "the world the settlers made," in the phrase of the subtitle of this session -- I see no reason to revise that wisdom. Instead, I would like to suggest ways in which our understanding of the cultural foundations of the Western Reserve, and New England's undoubted influence upon them, may be refined.

The initial imposition of "New England culture" upon the Western Reserve was the result of a number of factors. Most important of these were a singular pattern of land acquisition and settlement, and of intent. For mostly arbitrary reasons, I will discuss the latter of these first.

When the states which held claims to western lands by virtue of colonial charter or purchase from Indian tribes ceded them to the Federal government in the 1780s, several retained small areas for their use. Connecticut reserved a portion of land running running 120 miles west from the Pennsylvania line and from the 41 north latitude to the southern shore of Lake Erie -- a hefty chunk of land totalling more than three million acres (3,333,699). Thus from the outset, the Western Reserve would be a creature of the Commonwealth of Connecticut. When Moses Cleaveland's surveying party crossed the Pennsylvania line into the reserved territory, apparently providentially on the Fourth of July, 1796, the General ordered appropriate celebrations of the event. The men fired a fifteen round salute, one for each state of the Union, and then a sixteenth, for "New Connecticut." Cleaveland then broke open a cask of "grog" and offered several Independence Day toasts. The first was for the President of the United States; the second was the the "state of New Connecticut" (my emphasis). (3) We need not read too great a significance into the revelry of a surveying team to realize that such expressions were a clear indication that the implantation of a New England stamp -- more precisely, a Connecticut stamp -- upon the Western Reserve was neither accidental nor haphazard. It was, indeed, a modified repetition of the initial impulse to carry an "errand into the wilderness"
that brought Puritan settlers to Massachusetts Bay in the first place. When settlers from New England came to the Reserve, they brought their cultural baggage with them not unconsciously but quite deliberately. Again to quote James A. Garfield, "In many instances, a township organization was completed and their minister chosen before they left home. Thus they planted the institutions and opinions of old Connecticut in their wilderness homes [and] nourished them with an energy and devotion scarcely equalled in any other quarter of the world." (4)

An often cited but still pertinent example was that of Hudson. David Hudson of Goshen, Connecticut, experienced a religious visitation that, in description, was not unlike the religious experiences of the Visible Saints of seventeenth century New England. Hudson's visions instructed him to be "guided by four basic controlling ideals of religion, morality, law observance, and education." In 1799 Hudson and five co-propriators purchased a township in the Reserve. In June of that year, after an arduous journey, Hudson discovered and occupied his land for the first time. That first night, lying in the open in a downpour of rain, Hudson was filled with a spirit of "grateful pleasure," peace and joy. Several months later, he returned to Connecticut to fetch his family and to recruit settlers for his oasis in the wilderness. By January, 1800, he was ready to return to the Reserve permanently. On the eve of departure, Hudson was sleepless and filled with forebodings of the dangers of the "extreme frontier." But after presenting my case before Israel's God and committing all to his care," he concluded, "I cheerfully launched out the next morning upon the great deep. (5) Upon arrival, he found the party he had left in Ohio had survived, and he immediately called the new and old settlers together for a thanksgiving service. In 1802, the township was officially named Hudson. That same year, a Congregational Church was founded and a school opened. The next year saw the construction of a saw mill, and within five years David Hudson and his family were living in a neat frame house in what had literally been a trackless wilderness. Within a score more years Hudson led the way in founding Western Reserve College in Hudson, which was self consciously designed to be the "Yale of the West." Robert Shackleton, who wrote of the Western Reserve for New England Magazine in 1896, saw in Hudson "that most charming of New England towns, Concord." It is perhaps to place too fine a point on the observation to add that even today Hudson remains emblematic of the Reserve's Connecticut heritage, and with a strict architectural code intends to preserve such associations. (6)

Can we generalize from the case of Hudson? Certainly David Hudson was an exceptional man, and the development of his township was not precisely replicated elsewhere. But, save for Hudson's driving organizational genius and inspirational leadership, the pattern of planned settlement was repeated time and again. Burton, also settled in the first decade of the nineteenth century, was initially populated almost exclusively by emigrants from Cheshire, Connecticut. Indeed, in 1806 when young Peter Hitchcock determined to make his way in the unsettled west he decided to go to Burton precisely because it was peopled by neighbors and acquaintances from home. In 1798, Alexander Harper, of Delaware County, New York, led several families to what became Harpersfield in Ashtabula County. During the next decade a steady trickle of immigrants came to Harpersfield from the same district. Charles Curtiss, for whom Charlestown in Portage County was named, came to Ohio in 1811, joining the families of Chauncey Curtiss, Linus Curtiss, and Levi Sutliff who had settled there the year before. In 1815, four other families, numbering 56 persons, joined the Curtiss clan. Thus by 1820, in addition to other accessions, the community contained a nucleus of better than 100 residents from fewer than ten families, all hailing from the same section of New England. In Windsor, Ashtabula County, among the earliest settlers were thirteen families from Tolland, Connecticut. (7) And so it went throughout the Western Reserve.

Once in the new country the settlers continued, again very deliberately, the process of introducing and nurturing New England institutions upon the new land. In 1801, the Reverend Joseph Badger penned a petition to the territorial legislature for the creation of an institution of higher learning in the Western Reserve. "It is wished by the people in general in this part of the Territory," he wrote, "that something might be done to bring forward a literary establishment." At the time there could not have been more than 1,000 residents in the entire Western Reserve. This petition failed, but two years later the first General Assembly of the new state of Ohio acted favorably on a similar request from "a number of proprietors of land" in the Reserve seeking to organize to "support of a seminary of learning" there. The legislature authorized the incorporation of the Erie Literary Society which acted as institutional agent to encourage the founding of a college. The efforts culminated in 1826 with the establishment of Western Reserve College, but the point to underscore here is that organized, institutionalized efforts to do so dated from the initial settlement of the first communities. (8)
In practice, too, the New England stamp upon education in the Reserve was unmistakable. "In the pioneer days we come upon no trace of a character who is familiar in many Southern States and in parts of Ohio," remarked Burke A. Hinsdale in the 1890s. "I refer to the Scotch-Irish schoolmaster. The New Connecticut Yankees had no use for him." Instead, "Presbyterian and Congregational ministers did good educational service in those days..." (9)

Indeed, the Missionary Society of Connecticut was diligent in serving all the needs of New Connecticut. "From the first settlement of New Connecticut," noted an 1807 report of the Society, "the Trustees have thought it their duty....to pay particular attention to that country...." A similar report in 1812 remarked that "the Connecticut Western Reserve has received the greatest attention of the Society." Indeed, during the first sixty years of the Society's existence, thirty per cent of all missionaries appointed were sent to the Western Reserve (84 of 277). (10)

Thus the early, overwhelming transferral of New England cultural norms was due greatly to these deliberate processes. The organized settlement of new towns by families already related by kinship, previous associations and, often, common purpose meant that they almost immediately developed a sense of community so often present in frontier settlements. It also meant that the degree of cultural transferral would be great; portions of existing New England communities were grafted as complete or semi-complete social organizations upon lands previously unbounded and undivided. The very early organization of institutions in the Reserve to nurture New England culture meant that the efforts would succeed.

This institutional transplantation of New England culture accounted for its strength in the Western Reserve. But instrumental in the continuing pervasiveness of that legacy was the distinctively random pattern of land acquisition and dispersal that shaped Western Reserve settlement. The stereotypical pattern of the "western movement" in America was a relatively steady push of population westward (or northward or southward or, in the case of Maine even eastward) into unsettled frontier regions just beyond more established communities. The process was irregular, depending upon geographic features, Native American resistance and fluctuations in national economic and political factors. Typically, though, pioneers ventured from settled areas into geographically contiguous regions just beyond the cutting edge of the Frontier. Even in instances of long migrations beyond the established frontier through hostile and uncharted lands to a distant destination (such as transcontinental forays to California and Oregon in the 1840s and '50s), once in the new land, pioneers' settlement patterns were determined by the desirability of specific locales, natural resources, hostile Indians, and other immediately relevant conditions. (11)

Such patterns were not at work in the settlement of the Western Reserve. Several factors combined to make the settlement pattern of New Connecticut atypical.

First, there was no Native American population within the area capable of mounting resistance to White settlement. Aboriginal groups which had occupied the northern Ohio country had all been dispersed by the time Europeans first penetrated the region. (12) By the eighteenth century, the Indians of Ohio were all refugee populations -- groups already displaced by European intrusion or related inter-tribal warfare. For a variety of reasons, none of these groups heavily re-occupied northeastern Ohio, an area that one colonial mapmaker (1755) described as "the seat of war, the mart of trade & chief hunting grounds of the Six Nations" (that is, the Iroquois Confederation). Northern Ohio, then, was an area of Native American activity and contention but none of the tribal or sub-tribal groups became strongly entrenched in the section that was to become the Western Reserve. By the end of the American Revolution, the power of the Six Nations had been vastly reduced, and the Ohio tribes had also been "battled by the forces of war." (13) During the last years of the eighteenth century, however, these Indians joined in a loose but effective confederation which, for a time, was able to block Euroamerican penetration of the Ohio country. This confederation was defeated by the army of General Anthony Wayne at Fallen Timbers in 1794, and the resulting Treaty of Green Ville (1795) opened eastern Ohio for White settlement. Confederation chiefs, whose tribes' strength lay to the west and south acquiesced in the creation of a treaty line through Ohio that in the Reserve ran from Lake Erie south along the Cuyahoga River. This meant that the western portion of the Reserve was still claimed by the tribes, but that the entire eastern portion was at once thrown open to settlement. The few, scattered Indians who did remain in northeastern Ohio had been long since militarily nullified, and presented more a curiosity than a threat to the pioneers. (14) In 1806, renewed negotiations with the tribes resulted in further concessions by the Indians. In the Treaty of Fort Industry, the remaining portion of the Connecticut Western Reserve, among other lands, were ceded by the Indians. These developments meant that the settlers of the Reserve encountered no hostile bands of Indians to stymie their penetration of first the eastern
portion, or, a decade later, the entirety of the Reserve.

Meanwhile, in Connecticut, the Reserve was transferred by the state into the hands of private investors. The western half-million acres were set aside for the benefit of Revolutionary War sufferers in the state whose property had been put to the torch by the British -- the "Fire Lands." The remaining portion of nearly 3 million acres was sold to a group of investors: the Connecticut Land Company. Investments by individuals ranged from a few hundred dollars (Sylvanus Griswold, $1,683) to well over one hundred thousand dollars (Oliver Phelps, $168,185). In all, 57 investors purchased shares in the Company's property, all while the land itself remained unsurveyed.

After Cleaveland's expedition of 1796 and a subsequent one led by Seth Pease in 1797, the land east of the Treaty Line was measured and bounded for the first time, and ready for division among the shareholders. The territory was to be divided according to the monetary investment of each man, but great care was taken that none would receive undesirable property. An extremely complex formula was devised by which above average, average and substandard lands were "equalized" by combination with each other. The investors then divided their land by blind lottery. Investors received blocks of land -- sometimes more than one, depending upon the amount of their investment and the equalization process -- purely by chance, and for the most part, sight unseen.

After the division, each proprietor became responsible for his own holding. The actual settlements which followed, therefore, were widely scattered. Settlement did not commence at the Pennsylvanian line and inch westward, or at the lakeshore and push southward, or proceed along some natural avenue like a river or even a ridge. Rather, each settling party made its way to a site determined arbitrarily by chance, or by purchase from of the fifty-odd proprietors. (15) And in some instances, the desire to colonize New Connecticut made any knowledge of the land itself decidedly secondary. When David Hudson and his co-proprietors, enamored with the idea of establishing a godly commonwealth in the wilderness, enthusiastically made their way west, it mattered little to them where their property exactly was. Indeed, so trackless were the wilds into which they came that it took them six days to discover the boundaries of the township once they arrived. En route, Hudson's party encountered Benjamin Tappan and Elias Harmon and his family, also on their way to the Reserve. The party shared the journey from Buffalo to Ohio. Under other circumstances, these pioneers might have fallen in together, pooling their strengths and resources for the benefit of them all. Instead, once in New Connecticut, they separated, each going to his own respective plot: Hudson to Hudson; Tappan to Ravenna; the Harmons to Mantua. (16) In such fashion the initial settlements in the Reserve were established many miles from each other, although the founding of many of the earliest communities were contemporaneous. Other townships remained unsettled for years. Proprietors who owned portions of more than one township due to the equalization formula quite naturally put their energies and resources in the development of the one they believed the most promising -- but at the expense of the other(s). Also, individual proprietors established specific conditions for their lands not present elsewhere. During the first decade of the nineteenth century, land was offered and sold in Geneva Township, Ashtabula County, for $1.50 per acre. At the same time, Christopher Leffingwell and Daniel Coit were offering property in their southern Ashtabula County town (later Orwell) for $5.00 per acre. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Orwell had no permanent settlement until after the War of 1812. In Harts Grove Township of the same county, the proprietors made no attempt to market the land for years, and settlement was so spotty that the town "was for many years the hunting ground of the settlers of the neighboring townships....While adjoining localities were denuded of their timber and gave evidence of the advance of civilization, this township, for more than twenty years after the arrival of the first settlers, remained an unbroken wilderness." (17)

When the western portion of the Connecticut Land Company's holdings became available for settlement by Indian cessation, the process of division was similar. Likewise, the Firelands were parceled among the Sufferers and the heirs by lottery (18). There were therefore, three major divisions within the Western Reserve: the eastern portion of the Connecticut Land Company's holdings opened to settlement by the Green Ville Treaty Line; the western portion of the company's holdings, opened by the Treaty of Fort Industry; and the Firelands. But the method of land acquisition and division was such that in each of these subsections the actual pattern of settlement was crazy quilt. While major portions of the Reserve were opened for colonization at a time, the actual settlements -- the colonies -- remained quite isolated. Settlement, wrote the Reverend Carroll Cutler in 1876, was relatively steady after 1800. The pioneers, however, "did not...locate near each other and thus form strong communities...but scattered over the whole region so as to greatly increase their privation, dangers and hardships." (19)
Such separation created more than hardship; it created too an atmosphere in which cultural continuity, stability, even insularity, would be fostered. The deliberate implantation of New England cultural norms into communities that, by the very processes of the settlement would remain isolated from even their most immediate neighbors, helped to perpetuate both autonomy and that aura of "antique New England," to repeat the phrase of Rollin Linde Harte.

This process seemed to make the region as a whole impervious to change. Indeed, some observers attributed the evident cultural continuity that they sensed to a lingering isolation, and an absence of change. When James Garfield spoke of the New England traits that were characteristic of the people of the Reserve, he offered a reason: "Cut off as they were from the metropolitan life that has gradually been molding and changing the spirit of New England, they preserved here in the wilderness the characteristics of New England as it was at the beginning of the century. This has given to the people of the Western Reserve those strongly marked characteristics which have always distinguished them." (20) A generation later, an alumnus of Western Reserve Academy recalled Hudson as a "transplanted academic village amid the rolling richness of Middle-Western woodland and farming country [which] was what New England had been half a century before and would have remained but for the importation of Southern European mill hands." (21) Such an observation, of course, failed to recognize, among other things, the presence of "Southern European mill hands" and other non-Yankees who were and had been present throughout the Reserve.

A 1916 Cleveland Public School System report characterized Cleveland as "one of the most foreign cities in the United States. Of the 50 cities having a population of over 100,000 at the time of the last census, only seven...contained a larger proportion of foreign inhabitants. Cleveland's foreign population would constitute by itself a city larger than any other in the state of Ohio except Cincinnati..." (22). Such change was confined neither to Cleveland nor to the twentieth century. The Ohio Canal, constructed in the 1820s, was not known as the "Irish Ditch" accidentally. The men who came to dig the canal remained to bring wives, families, and parish priests to New Connecticut. Akron, a town virtually created by the canal, as well as Ravenna and Cleveland, all had Irish neighborhoods by the 1830s. Also by the 1830s, German-born immigrants made up sizeable minorities in the southern Portage County towns of Deerfield, Rootstown and Randolph. In 1829, there were enough German Catholics to support the organization of a German-language Catholic Church in Randolph. In the 1870s, the German speaking population of the county was substantial enough to warrant the printing of data in a county atlas in both English and German. (24) During the 1870s and '80s, the smaller lakeshore cities of Lorain, Fairport, Ashtabula and Conneaut all experienced an influx of European immigrants to work on the docks, in the mills and on the railroads. In 1872, the Ashtabula Sentinel noticed that "among our railroad operatives is to be found a considerable number of Finlanders -- a class of people that have but recently made their appearance among us." Attracted first to the ports of Ashtabula Harbor and Fairport Harbor, by the 1880s Finns were working in Youngstown steel mills, on rail lines, and on lake steamers. By 1900, 97 per cent of the Finnish born population in Ohio lived in the Western Reserve. (25)

Nor was change in the Reserve confined to European immigration. Both Youngstown and Akron experienced phenomenal industrial growth in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Akron, created by its strategic position at the watershed of the Ohio Canal was never the stereotypical New England settlement. A transfer point on an important north-south avenue, Akron from its earliest days received not only goods but people from the interior of Ohio and in fact the entire Ohio River Valley. Youngstown, connected by river to Pittsburgh, also always had important ties outside the Reserve. (26)

These examples constitute something more substantial than exceptions that prove the rule. The Western Reserve was not, as Garfield supposed, "cut off from metropolitan life," but rather from the mid-nineteenth century on very much a part of it. Yet Garfield was not wrong when he characterized the prevailing cultural flavor of the region as that of New England. The combination of deliberate processes by earliest pioneers coupled with the separated, isolated fashion in which the communities developed permitted the Reserve to experience the processes of industrialization, immigration and urbanization without transforming the cultural continuity of the region as a whole. This is not to say that the newcomers left no mark. In politics, for example, the importance of foreign born and first generation voters was substantial, particularly in local elections. In 1860, the foreign born voters in Cleveland presented a solid phalanx against Abraham Lincoln, due primarily to nativism and prohibitionism on the part of the local Republican party. In the 1880s, Walter Dickinson, of Randolph, gave a similarly ethnic explanation for political developments in his community: "The politics of this township are now, as they were away back in the forties, Democratic. The change from Republicanism to Democracy has been slow
but sure, owing to the prolific nature of our Catholic German population. The way new voters, who have just come of age, present their ballots at every election is surprising. The Yankees 'can't hold a candle' to them in this natural increase. Well, we all known how this class of people vote." (27)

The effect of such political developments were generally of only local importance in the nineteenth century. The Western Reserve as a region retained, as Garfield and so many others observed, a pervasive atmosphere of New England, throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. No one would argue that the Western Reserve remains a bastion of Yankee Puritanism in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Yet even today, the built environment, the town- and country-scape, the regular five-mile-wide gridwork pattern of townships established by the Connecticut Land Company's surveyors are still present, tangible reminders of New England influence.

The challenge to us, as students of our region's history and culture, is not to miss the rich cultural diversity and ethnic variety that has long characterized so many Western Reserve communities by concentrating too heavily on that Yankee heritage. For too long, written regional and local histories of the Reserve have emphasized the latter to the near exclusion of the former. We can sympathize with the Sandusky physician and historian Ernst Von Schuleenburg, who observed in 1889 that "although the German population of Sandusky seems almost the same as that of the native-born and has become a powerful factor in the religious, political and social life of the city, yet it is surely striking that in all the local histories which I have seen, the German element was either completely ignored or at best treated as a step child." (28) Von Schuleenburg went on to remedy that situation, by penning Sandusky Then and Now, which he subtitled With Special Regard to Local, German Situations. We, too, must look beyond the obviousness of the region's New England influences, even in the nineteenth century, to important, other threads of regional culture. Using the methods of the new social history, nearby and community history; collecting, exhibiting and interpreting objects of material culture; preserving buildings and other structures are the means, and the opportunity, to discover, record and appreciate the true richness of Western Reserve history and culture.

END NOTES


8 Petition to the Territorial Legislature for a Charter for a College on the Connecticut Western Reserve, November 1801, and An Act To Incorporate the Erie Literary Society, April 16, 1803, in Carroll Cutler, A History of Western Reserve College, 1826-1876 (Cleveland, 1876), 73-77.

9 Burke A. Hinsdale, "The History of Popular Education on the Western Reserve," Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications, V. 6 (1898), 47.

10 "Narrative of Missions for 1807," Connecticut Evangelical Magazine and Religious Intelligencer, V. 1:9 (1808); "Narrative of Missions for 1812," Ibid, v. 6:27 (Jan. 1813); Waite, Western Reserve University, 23.


15 Hatcher, Western Reserve, 15; 37-38.


17 Williams, Ashtabula County, 173, 231, 254.


20 Garfield Address, September 16, 1873 in *History of Geauga County*, 19.


22 Herbert A. Miller, *Cleveland Education Survey: The School and the Immigrant* (Cleveland, 1916).


26 Knepper, *City of the Summit*, passim; H. Z. Williams, *History of Trumbull and Mahoning Counties* (Cleveland, 1882), 2 Vols., 1, 368-375.


28 Ernst Von Schulenburg, *Sandusky Then and Now, With Special Regard to Local, German Situations* (Cleveland, 1889; Cleveland, 1959 trans. ed.), xv.