

The Man in the Balloon:
Harvey Joiner's 1877



by Steven Key Meyers

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for Steven Cornwell
"I think art is the only thing there is, don't you?"

Table of Contents

[The Man in the Balloon](#)

[Endnotes](#)

[List of Illustrations](#)

[A Note on Sources](#)

[Acknowledgements](#)

About the Author



Fig. 1

Interior, Church of Christ, Utica, Indiana, looking towards Harvey Joiner's *Ruth Gleaning in the Fields of Boaz* (1877) (Photo: JSM)

The Man in the Balloon

HARVEY JOINER died a well-known American painter. His death at 80 on May 30, 1932, after two day's illness that followed a sprint for the trolley near his home in Clarksville, Indiana, was front-page news in nearby Louisville, reported throughout his state and Kentucky, and recorded by the *New York Times* in an obituary of six paragraphs.¹ The notices were testament to a lifetime's self-promotion – to a career spent creating and pleasing a public over more than *sixty years*. No matter that since before the turn of the century he had mostly been turning out variations on one characteristic style of landscape, what might be called *The Joiner* – an energetic, enigmatic little oblong of color depicting aspects of the region's beech woods as filtered through an active id (*see, e.g., fig. 2*) – Harvey Joiner at his death was almost famous.

But that fame has vanished. In the more than eighty years since his death, not a single article about Joiner has been published, no Joiner retrospective has been mounted, not more than a handful of his works hung in museums. Surveys of regional painting grudge him a few pages at most. The masterpiece of his youth, *Ruth Gleaning in the Fields of Boaz*, a remarkable document by any measure, has never been reproduced in a book and remains little known and endangered by its own obscurity.



Fig. 2

The Joiner

Harvey Joiner, title and date unknown, oil on canvas, 4½" x 11"

Collection of Steven Cornwell

Yet the man deserves to be known, for at least two reasons. First is that antic and exuberant career of his. Son of a backwoods cooper, Joiner while still a teenager engraved in wood advertising images of wild inventiveness, founded and performed in touring minstrel shows (sometimes in blackface *and* drag), tended steam aboard riverboats and fire engines. When, in his early 20s, he turned painter, he did so with a passion, turning out landscapes and portraits without number, promoting himself unremittingly, and earning prominence and prosperity. Though many American painters since Joiner have decided (to the detriment of American art, be it said) that art is less the point than the promotion, in Joiner's day that was a new notion. But if he helped pioneer it, he did so in an innocent spirit, and he offered plenty of work to back it up.



Fig. 3

The Joiner (detail of [Fig. 2](#))
Collection of Steven Cornwell

That work is the other, better reason why Harvey Joiner deserves appreciation. Joiner's response to the landscape of forests and meadows he was raised amidst was sensitive and sincere. His pictures, however awkward they can sometimes be, are truthful, personal and full of feeling, and to this day help define the landscape of Southern Indiana and Kentucky.

Take *The Joiner*. The erotically-charged little woodland scene in oil on panel or canvas represents an accommodation between talent and the marketplace. Instantly recognizable, sturdily constructed, always alluring and often beautiful, *The Joiner* is a rectangle of fetishized landscape, of woods and water veiled in light that teases the eye towards some object of desire ever around the next bend. Giving off, when properly lit, an extraordinary glow, framed in the cheap odds and ends Joiner bought in bulk, garnished (or not) with a brass plate bearing his name, and painted in its hundreds and its thousands – but with every variant displaying a fresh idea – *The Joiner* always sold, perhaps most frequently as a wedding present. And although its meaning might be filtered through a private realm of the artist's own, *The Joiner* begins as a response to the mysteries of the region's forests, particularly to the weird presence stalking through them of bright, peeling beech trees with prehensile limbs.

Harvey Joiner, an artist of accomplishment and historical interest, deserves to reclaim his lost fame.²



Fig. 3A
The Joiner (detail of [Fig. 2](#))
Collection of Steven Cornwell

* * *



Fig. 4

Harvey Joiner, ca. 1925

Collection of Ruth Emily

THE NEXT DAY everybody was asking, "*Did you see the balloon?*"³ The sight of it astonished Louisville, Kentucky on the calm and balmy afternoon of December 20, 1877: a hot-air balloon sailing in over the wharves and warehouses that lined the Ohio River from no one knew where, a giant teardrop soaring far higher than even the cathedral's twenty-story steeple as it vanished into the west.⁴ And a *man* was riding the basket slung beneath it:

One of the corps of officers in the City Engineer's office examined the balloon through a large field-glass, and perceived a man in it. He says

it was then fully a mile high and three miles distant. No one knows whence the balloon came, and there have been no ascensions in this neighborhood. The man in the balloon could not be seen by the naked eye.⁵

But some of those who rushed into the streets to gawk skyward must have recognized the apparition as the “boss balloon”⁶ promised for months by the two pranksters across the river in Jeffersonville, Indiana. Since the previous summer the irresistibly lively painter Harvey Joiner, 25 years old, and his year-older friend Ed Lott, the “accommodating compounder of pills”⁷ at Parks’ Drug Store,⁸ had been on the balloon racket.⁹ But which one was the intrepid aeronaut? Lott? Or was that Joiner’s slender figure, fair hair flung to the wind, gray eyes flashing as he grasped the shrouds and surveyed the landscape passing far below?

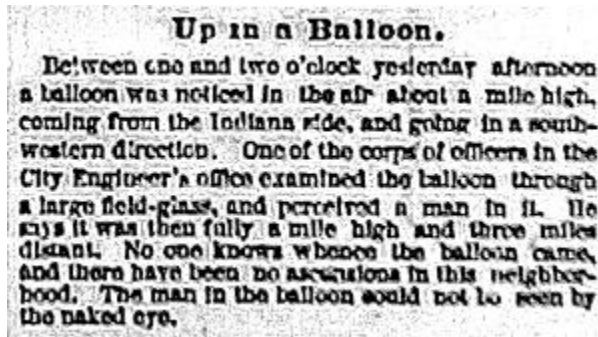


Fig. 5

"Up in a Balloon," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, December 21, 1877, p4, c2

THE YEAR THEN nearing its end was Harvey Joiner’s *annus mirabilis*. In the course of 1877 he finally abandoned a long effort to sell wood-engraved advertising images to concentrate instead on painting in oils. Moreover, with the aid of virtually a community-wide intervention he overcame the drinking problem that threatened to derail his career before it properly got going and, handed the commission of a lifetime, painted his enormous, complex, deeply personal masterpiece, *Ruth Gleaning in the Fields of Boaz*.

No wonder if in the course of such a year balloons had to fly.



Fig. 6

Harvey Joiner at 19 (1871) (detail of [fig. 57](#))

Courtesy Garry J. Nokes/Collection of Jeffersonville Fire Department

* *

BUT IN 1877, the first news from Joiner was a threat to move where he would be better appreciated. On January 10, the Jeffersonville *Evening News* scolded its readers:

Harvey Joiner, our skillful artist, expects to locate at Owensboro, Ky.
We shall be sorry to lose him. Jeffersonville ought to furnish a
gentleman of Mr. Joiner's talents a good living.¹⁰

Joiner was still a bachelor, probably living with his widowed mother,¹¹ his housepainter younger brother (who became the California landscape painter Oscar De Joiner¹²), their widowed seamstress sister¹³ and her son¹⁴ over a store in a vaguely Italianate three-story brick tenement at 17 Spring Street¹⁵ ([fig. 7](#)) in Jeffersonville's raucous, saloon-lined, traffic-clogged commercial heart, half a block from the ferry landing where laden teams were whipped screaming up the steep bank while boat whistles blasted.¹⁶



Fig. 7

Jeff's Lower Spring Street, looking north during 1884 flood (arrow points to 17 Spring Street)¹⁷

Collection of Jeffersonville Township Public Library

Industry was in full cry in Jeff, to an extent amazing for a town where goats and pigs shared the streets with fewer than 10,000 residents.¹⁸ It boasted the Howard Brothers' shipyard¹⁹—builder of fabled steamboats like the second *Robert E. Lee* in 1876—as well as the rival Barmore's;²⁰ the Ohio Falls Car Works, manufacturer of locomotives and finely crafted passenger cars;²¹ the Army's vast Quartermaster Depot²²—a major employer of women stitching uniforms on their home sewing machines²³—plus foundries, a railroad yard, several carriage makers, slaughterhouses, cooperages, a whetstone factory and, close by, the quarries and mills of a major new cement industry—not to mention the pioneering Ford Plate Glass Company²⁴ or the Indiana State Prison South, where zebra-striped convicts worked in on-site contract factories.²⁵

Joiner himself captured Jeff's *push* in his 1880 drawing of its riverfront for the *Evening News* masthead²⁶ ([fig. 8](#) & [fig. 9](#)). Looking northward from an elevation over the Louisville wharf, it shows the Ohio River roiled with boats—stern-paddler to the left, side-wheeler, ferry and sailboat on the right—against the Indiana shore sweeping

(beneath wreaths of smoke) from the mighty 1870 railroad bridge past foundry, prison, Car Works, riverfront mansions and ferry landing up to Barmore's and Howards'.²⁷ The Quartermaster Depot's hundred-foot campanile²⁸ pokes up (over the *w* of *News*) against the profile of distant knobs.



Fig. 8

Joiner's *Daily Evening News* masthead, Teusday [sic], September 20, 1881
Collection of Thomas J. Lindley III



Fig. 9

Detail of Fig. 8
Collection of Thomas J. Lindley III

But in 1877 things were slow; the decade's recurring panics and five-year recession threatened every enterprise in town, not least the young artist's career. Hence Joiner's Owensboro rumblings likely resulted from his receiving an offer – if probably a vague one – about providing graphics for the newspaper, the *Messenger*, that Col. James A. Munday²⁹ was soon to launch there.³⁰

It had been a while since Joiner's graphics were in demand. He had started producing wood-engraved images for advertising as a teenager. Almost certainly he

learned the technique of carving the grain-end of boxwood – the interim technology that preceded mechanical photoengraving – from German-born Carl Christian Brenner,³¹ the accomplished older painter who was one of the father figures Joiner sought out after his father died when Joiner was eleven or twelve.³² Brenner, himself the untutored master of many arts – painter, etcher, glazier – was also a paint-store proprietor who advertised his store, as well as his exhibitions, with wood-engraved ads ([fig. 10](#), [fig. 11](#), [fig. 12](#) & [fig. 13](#)), like the beautifully limned depictions of a billposter on a ladder³³ or the artist poking an easel up the nose of a passer-by.³⁴

Wood Engravings by Carl Brenner



Fig. 10

Brenner's Original Sign Shop store ad, *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Jan. 27, 1870, p2, c5



Fig. 11

Brenner's Original Sign Shop store ad, *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Feb. 1, 1870, p2, c5



Fig. 12

Carl C. Brenner exhibition ad, *Courier-Journal*, Dec. 19, 1887, p8, c5-6



Fig. 13

Charles C. Brenner store ad, *Edwards' 1867-8 Louisville Directory* (p125 of *Historical and Commercial Review*)

Joiner provided at least one image to the *Jeffersonville National Democrat* in 1872 or earlier ([fig. 24³⁵](#)), and a single surviving piece of stationery discovered by Jeanne M. Burke—an envelope, ca. 1871³⁶ ([fig. 14](#))—suggests that he might also have freelanced through the newspaper's job printing department. The envelope's return address corner bears an expertly engraved scene showing a young fisherman—slingshot poking out of his pocket—taunted by a fish cavorting next to his hook, beneath a standard nineteenth-century stationery legend:

IF YOU DONT CATCH HIM IN 10 DAYS: RETURN TO

Its sense of expanded horizons — the two sailing vessels might as well be on an ocean — relates this scene to Joiner's 1868-69 steamboating in the South.³⁷

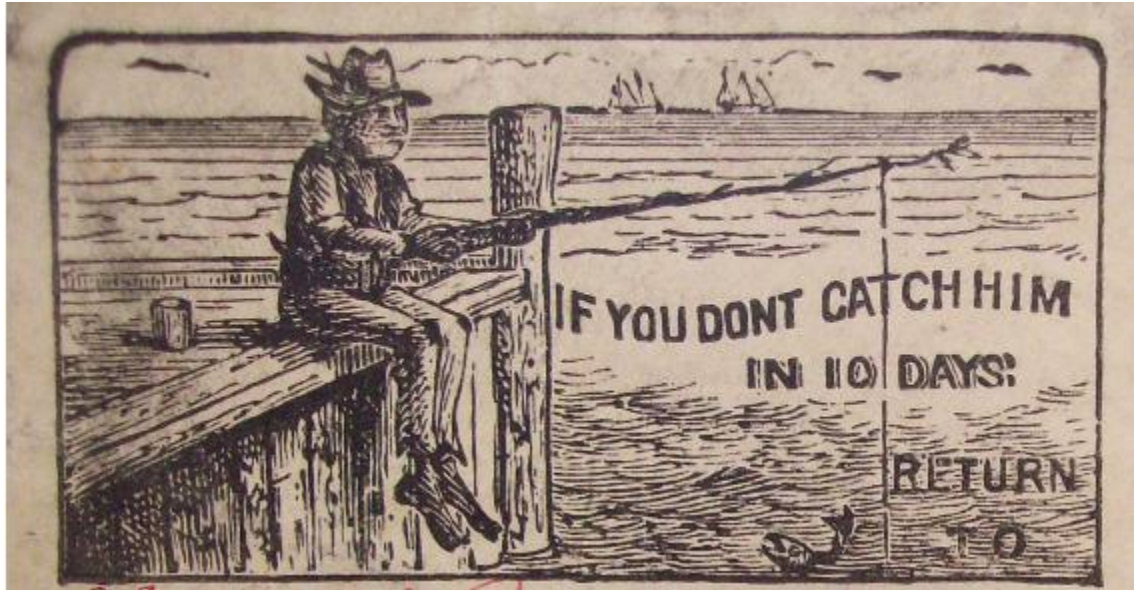


Fig. 14

Joiner's ca. 1871 wood-engraved envelope (detail; original image approx. 1-1/8" x 2-1/8")

Collection of Jeanne M. Burke

But clients for Joiner's graphics had lately been few and far between. At the start of 1877 his most recent such sale appears to have come more than six months earlier, with an ad in *Caron's Louisville Directory for 1876* for the Preuser and Wellenvoss Caps and Furs store ([fig. 15](#) & [fig. 16](#)).³⁸ Its vision of a giant, wheeled, upside-down top hat brimming over with headgear while a goose and dog tangle, mules kick, a postilion loses his footing — and a watching boy takes it all in — is incised with the whimsy and bravura of Tenniel's *Alice in Wonderland* illustrations.³⁹



Fig. 15

Joiner's 1876 wood-engraved ad for *Preuser & Wellenvoss, Caps and Furs* (original approx. 4½" x 5"), *Caron's Louisville Directory for 1876*, p747



Fig 16
Detail of *Fig. 15*

But within days of uttering his Owensboro threat, Joiner did sell an image. Hunt's Hotel and Dining-Rooms in Cincinnati⁴⁰ placed a two-column ad ([fig. 17](#)) in the *Louisville Courier-Journal* on Monday, January 22, 1877 – and every Monday for the next year – illustrated by the most extravagant wood engraving Joiner ever published. Cross-hatched to a fare-thee-well, it shows two gnome-like creatures wearing turbans and precious little else: loincloths, possibly notional shirts – and *angel wings*.⁴¹ One bears a steaming turkey on a platter, the other, dangling a “Bill of Fare” that appears to offer turtle soup, hoists what appears to be a tortoise. Crossing before a third winged figure busy shucking oysters at a counter beneath a *Restaurant* sign, the outlandish duo exchange merry and satisfied looks.⁴²



Fig. 17

Joiner's wood-engraving for 1877 Hunt's Hotel and Dining-Rooms ad

The image's action seems nonsensical until one realizes that this image had first appeared eight years earlier, in Edwards' 1869 Louisville Directory ([fig. 17](#) & [fig. 18](#)) — Joiner was a precocious *sixteen years old* when it came out early that year — advertising Kohlhepp's Exchange and Restaurant, located below the Louisville Hotel on Main Street, and that Kohlhepp's was not merely a restaurant, but a turf exchange or off-track horse-betting parlor — a place where even customers who lost their shirts on the ponies could eat well.⁴³

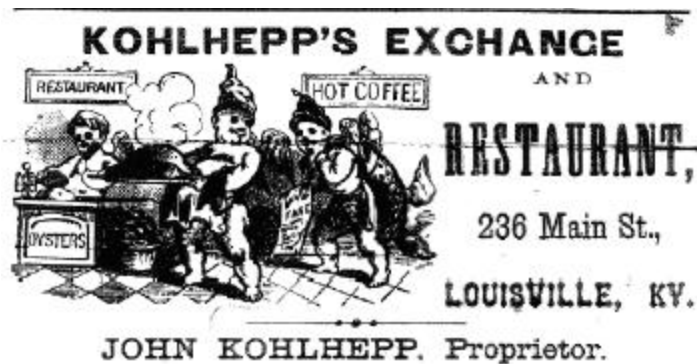


Fig. 18

Joiner's wood-engraving for Kohlhepp's Exchange and Restaurant ad, *Edwards' 1869 Louisville Directory*, p422



Fig. 19
(detail of *fig. 18*) (original image approx. 2½" x 1¼")

The real target of Joiner's threat to relocate to Owensboro was his own early patron, publisher of the very newspaper that printed it, Reuben Dailey ([fig. 20](#)).



Fig. 20
Reuben Dailey, ca. 1882
History of the Ohio Falls Cities, Vol. II, opp. p483

Dailey (1844-1906), born near London, England, immigrated to the United States in 1848 and fought with Ohio's 5th Regiment in the Civil War. In 1865, recovered from his war wounds, he became river reporter for the *Memphis Argus*, and in 1869 took over the *Courier Journal's* *Jeffersonville* column. Three years later, in May 1872, Dailey bought Jeff's weekly newspaper, the *National Democrat*,⁴⁴ and soon afterwards founded the *Jeffersonville Evening News*, at first publishing it five days a week, later daily (it is still in existence).

Both were lively journals, "Newsy, Reliable, Pure in Tone."⁴⁵ They reflected Dailey's cantankerous and aggressive personality, his boosterism and Democratic Party zeal – and his vicious racism.⁴⁶ Dailey stayed at the forefront of southern Indiana affairs until his death, lecturing on temperance and his agnosticism (even as it evolved into Presbyterianism), while keeping up numerous joyous feuds and, after 1892, serving in the Indiana General Assembly.⁴⁷

Dailey championed Joiner's career – especially before Joiner moved his studio from Jeff to Louisville in 1880 – and early on had been his most encouraging buyer of graphics. But not recently.



Fig. 21
Joiner's wood-engraved bugler (1874)

Early in 1874 Dailey had introduced an entire set of Joiner's one-column advertising "cuts," each 3½" tall by 2¼" wide, some of which were used by Dailey's advertisers for years. Their high spirits and manic intensity bear a Germanic stamp, probably derived from Joiner's admiration of Thomas Nast,⁴⁸ the German-born, New York-based artist whose wood-engraved caricatures made him famous, as well as from his association with Brenner and exposure to Jeff's own growing German population.⁴⁹ His characters — sharing a general beakiness of profile perhaps inspired by a glance in the mirror — ingeniously frame white space reserved for advertising text.



Fig. 22
Joiner's wood-engraved porter (1874)



Fig. 23
Four-legged variant detail of Fig. 22 (see [n.51](#))

The first to appear ([fig. 21](#)) portrays a one-armed bugler in Union Army cape and cap, wearing shoes but no pants, his one visible leg nubby with hair, blasting at the reader text emblazoned on the fringed banner hanging from his trumpet (in this case, “Advertise in the NEWS!”).⁵⁰ A few days later, another vigorous image – a gaping, bug-eyed, jug-eared, tattooed porter hauling up a box, his arms bulging – makes his appearance on behalf of William Guy’s furniture shop ([fig. 22](#)).⁵¹

FIRST GUN



Fig. 24
Joiner's wood-engraved cannon (1874)

Soon a smoking cannon ([fig. 24](#)) – a bronze “Napoleon,” 12-pounder mainstay of the Union Army – rolls out for service beneath the 34-star flag of 1861-1863.⁵² Days later comes Joiner’s essay in the *Commedia dell’Arte*: Harlequin taunts his boxed prisoner, heedless of the stick poised to hit him in the rear ([fig. 25](#)).⁵³ In yet another image – the one used the longest, advertising local political candidates into the late 1880s – a raging oversized head sprouting two crazy topknots kicks and punches through the very sheet in the reader’s hands ([fig. 26](#)).⁵⁴

But no sooner had the *Evening News* begun publishing these images than Joiner in May 1874 suddenly left Jeff for “a position as landscape and decorative painter” with an unnamed “large painting firm” in St. Louis, Missouri.⁵⁵

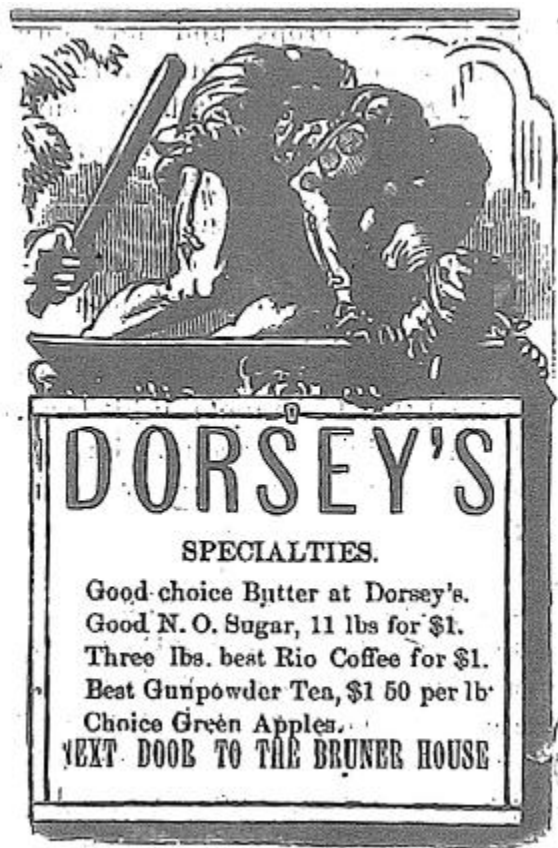


Fig. 25

Joiner's wood-engraved Harlequin (1874)

There Joiner worked for the artist David Hoffman (1826-1905).^{[56](#)} Hoffman, born in Munich, immigrated to the United States in 1833 and before the Civil War founded a glass-painting business in St. Louis. Known for his portraits also, he was a "painter of church windows, panels, friezes, etc.,"^{[57](#)} including the prized windows of St. Stanislaus Kostka and sixteen panels in fresco, each 8½ feet by 17 feet, for St. Nicholas Church.^{[58](#)}

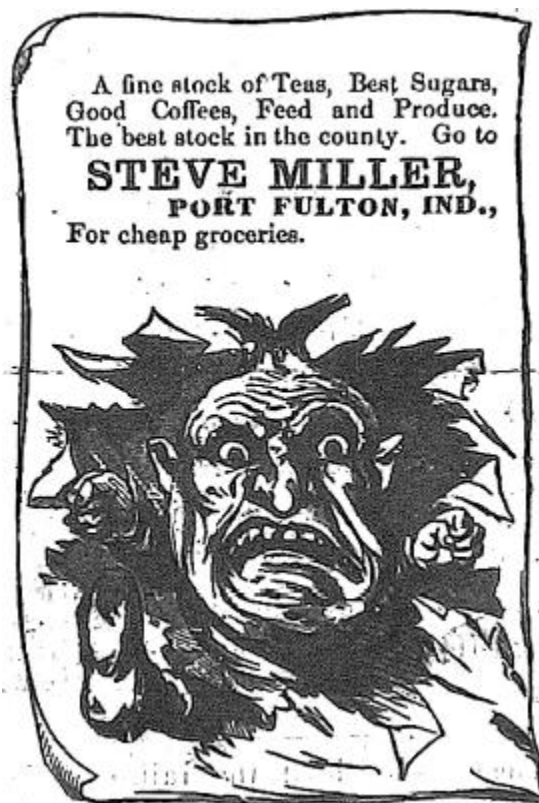


Fig. 26
Joiner's wood-engraved raging head (1874)

During his absence the *Evening News* published two new Joiner images. The first, in August, was an elaborate miniature rendering of his friend Ira Dorsey's⁵⁹ grocery store⁶⁰ ([fig. 27](#) & [fig. 29](#)) over the heading, *Angel of Mercy and Charity* ("a nice fellow too"). Harking back in style to the Kohlhepp's image ([fig. 19](#)), it shows our amiable grocer, arms spread in welcome, sugar scoop in his right hand, as he displays his wares, which include items labeled (*à la Nast*) *Raisins, Soap, Flour, Tea and Sugar*. (Another label helpfully reads *Grocer*.) Stocky like the Kohlhepp gnomes – but his face resembling the oyster-shucker's – he is garbed in similarly contingent fashion, in something like a vest, apron – and, inevitably, *angel wings*.



Fig. 27

Angel of Mercy and Charity, first publication, *Jeffersonville Evening News*, August 11, 1874, p1, c1



Fig. 28

J. Ira Dorsey, ca. 1897
Jeffersonville Journal, p13



Fig. 29

Angel of Mercy and Charity (detail from its second publication, *Jeffersonville Evening News*, August 12, 1874, p1, c1; original image approx. 2¼" x 1½")

The other new image ([fig. 30](#)) advertises Morris Rosenthal's men's store. It depicts an open-mouthed, toffee-nosed nob carefully adjusting his pince-nez over monstrous twin mustachios that frame space for advertising text.⁶¹



Fig. 30

Joiner's wood-engraved toff (1874)

In mid-November 1874 the *Evening News* reported Joiner's imminent homecoming from "the portrait-painting business" in St. Louis⁶² — and from the experience that comprised, aside from Brenner's crucial if probably informal instruction, all the art training Harvey Joiner received. Anticipating his return, the *National Democrat* reprinted his "cuts" — blank of ad copy — in successive issues under the heading "*Our Picture Gallery*,"⁶³ adding two new ones, a mustachioed figure resting his chin on a clockface, hands spread wide ([fig. 31](#)), and a slippered fellow reclining like a pasha of the East (he even wears a sort of fez) ([fig. 32](#)) who puffs at an enormous pipe while he reads his *Evening News*.⁶⁴ "*Our Picture Gallery*" also offers the "cuts" for purchase separately, apparently as postcards, just one year after the postcard's invention:

We will forward any of the following cuts to any address for 85 cents, postage to be paid by purchaser.



Fig. 79
Ruth (detail)
 Courtesy Utica Church of Christ

* * *

ENDNOTES

¹ N.Y. *Times*, May 31, 1932, p17, c2. See also Louisville (Kentucky) *Courier-Journal* (or “CJ”), May 31, 1932, p1, c4 and Louisville *Herald-Post*, May 31, 1932, sec. 2, p1, c7.

[Back](#)

² I am grateful to Billy Hertz for his anecdote concerning the sexual energy of Joiner’s paintings, and to Maurice Brown for his authoritative information on Joiner’s frames.

[Back](#)

³ Lede to the *Our Log* section of Will S. Hays’ *River and Weather* column, CJ, December 21, 1877, p3, c7 (*emphasis added*). (For Hays, see [n.172](#).)

[Back](#)

⁴ CJ’s *Daily Meteorological Record* recorded the early afternoon temperature as 67°F, with the wind out of the northeast at 4 mph (December 21, 1877, p3, c8).

[Back](#)

⁵ *Up in a Balloon*, CJ, December 21, 1877, p4, c5 (fig. 5).

[Back](#)

⁶ Jeffersonville (Indiana) *Evening News* (or “EN”), October 26, 1877, p4, c3. I follow local practice in usually abbreviating *Jeffersonville* as *Jeff*.

[Back](#)

⁷ CJ, May 5, 1880, p3, c4. Edward Bernard Lott (1851-1934) was born in Kentucky (probably in Elizabethtown), son of a carpenter from Alsace-Lorraine and his Baden-born wife. After a Catholic education, Lott by 1870 was a druggist in Louisville, but soon moved on to Jeff, where, lauded as “a pushing young man, affable and gentlemanly” (EN, July 25, 1882, p4, c1), he clerked at Parks’ Drug Store and was elected City Gauger 1879-1881. In 1882 Lott opened his own drugstore in Jeff and married Julia Inez Horr (1859-1895). By 1891 he and his wife had moved to Sterling, Kansas, where Lott owned a drugstore for a quarter-century before beginning to alternate long California visits with operating a hotel in Lindsborg, Kansas. After his death Lott was remembered as “quite an unusual character,” “his voice vibrant” to the last (obit., Sterling (Kansas) *Bulletin*, May 10, 1934).

Joiner painted Lott’s portrait in 1878, “as natural as life, but not as handsome” (CJ, January 1, 1879, p8, c6). Its present location is unknown.

[Back](#)

⁸ Floyd Parks (1843-1930) ran the business from 1873 (EN, March 14, 1891, p4, c3) until about 1925: “In the picturesque days of the river traffic, Parks’ drug store was the center of the city’s business and the rendezvous of Southern Indiana Democrats” (obit., EN, April 1, 1930, p1, c4-5 & 7 and p2, c2-5). Parks, a longtime Jeff city councilman, served in the Indiana State Senate 1906-1916. Parks bought his store from the famous former “boy evangelist” and future international swindler and fugitive—and alleged Waldorf Hotel poisoner—Dr. Richard C. Flower (1849-1916) (see EN, December 9, 1914, p1, c7; N.Y. *Times* January 5, 1907, p1, c1 & p2, c5 & October 22, 1914, p18, c3-5).

[Back](#)

⁹ In a phrase of the time (see Otsego (N.Y.) *Farmer*, October 23, 1891 for this usage). For instance, advertising for Adam Forepaugh’s circus proclaimed: “No balloon rackets!” (Auburn (N.Y.) *News and Bulletin*, July 2, 1879, p2, c6-7).

[Back](#)

¹⁰ EN, January 10, 1877, p4, c2.

[Back](#)

¹¹ Elizabeth B. Tophouse Joiner (1820-1900), whose generation usually spelled her maiden name as it was pronounced, “Toppass” (obit., Jeffersonville (Indiana) *National Democrat* (or “ND”), January 5, 1900, p1, c4).

[Back](#)

¹² Oscar De Joiner (1860-1924). Born Oscar Dunreath Joiner, Jr. and going by O.D. Joiner in his early years, which included sojourns (and possibly multiple marriages) in the Kentucky towns of Carrollton and Henderson, around 1884 he changed his name to Oscar De Joiner and moved to California. There he became a landscape painter of note, as did his son after him, Luther Evans Burdin ("L.E.B.") De Joiner (1886-1954). Family estrangement can be inferred from the fact that two obituaries appearing a quarter-century apart (that of Joiner's mother (see [n.11](#)) and elder brother, James William ("Bud") Joiner (1849-1925) (CJ, January 4, 1925, p4, c3, appearing after De Joiner's own death)) inaccurately describe De Joiner as a New York portrait painter.

[Back](#)

¹³ Lucinda Joiner Gibbs (ca.1847-1914) married housepainter Benjamin F. "Frank" Gibbs (1841-1875), a Civil War veteran, in Jeff in March 1866 and later moved to Little Rock, Arkansas. Given the tradition that Joiner began as a house and sign painter, Frank Gibbs, who died of consumption (obit., CJ, December 22, 1875, p2, c7), might have been his earliest employer.

[Back](#)

¹⁴ William J. Gibbs (1869-1946), later a sign painter in Arkansas, at age 11 in 1880 was already working at the Ohio Falls Car Works.

[Back](#)

¹⁵ *Caron's 1880 Louisville Directory* (New Albany and Jeffersonville section, pp324, 342) places Joiner's mother and sister there in 1880. (Jeffersonville's streets were renumbered in the summer of 1897; 17 Spring Street became 120.) In the 1870s that block between the river and Market Street appears to have been the only one in town where white residents lived side by side with those whose names *Caron's* denoted with "col.," for "colored." However, a blind newspaper item preceding his wedding indicates that by late 1878 Joiner was living on nearby Walnut Street (CJ, November 8, 1878, p2, c6: "A wedding between a young lady residing on Locust street and a gentleman who resides on Walnut street will take place someday next week"). Perhaps the lost 1877 *Haddock's Directory for Jeffersonville* (praised as "correct" in EN, September 5, 1877, p1, c2) will surface to answer the question of where Joiner resided in 1877.

[Back](#)

¹⁶ Frequent complaints about "the cruelty to animals on our city wharf" included an incident recounted in CJ, September 23, 1875, p2, c4.

[Back](#)

¹⁷ Joiner's plight during Jeff's 1883 flood was charmingly imagined by CJ's astute young art critic, Mary B. O'Sullivan (1861-1944):

Mr. Joiner, to the regret of his many friends and fellow-artists, is probably sailing around Jeffersonville in a palette boat, with brushes for masts, palette knives for oars and a paint-rag for a sail, sighing for a "lodge in some vast wilderness."

A Tour Through The Studios, CJ, February 18, 1883, p11, c1. The quotation is from Cowper's *The Task*. The sky sign strung from wire in the photograph was an advertising fad.

[Back](#)

¹⁸ “All the goats found on the streets yesterday were taken up and placed in the pound” (CJ, October 2, 1875, p1, c8); “Stray porkers [*are*] an exhibition of daily occurrence” (EN, December 4, 1879, p3, c2).

[Back](#)

¹⁹ The shipyard still operates, building towboats as the Jeffboat division of American Commercial Lines.

[Back](#)

²⁰ David S. Barmore (1833-1905) presided from an office furnished “like the cabin of a steamboat” (EN, June 2, 1877, p1, c1). His sister Rebecca Ann Barmore (ca.1822-1895) married James Howard (1814-1876), eldest of the Howard brothers. Barmore’s August 1877 payroll was \$1,400 and Howards’ \$2,250 (CJ, September 2, 1877, p2, c5).

[Back](#)

²¹ Later part of American Car and Foundry Co. An 1876 month’s payroll amounted to \$13,000 (EN, November 15, 1876, p4, c3). Most of its factory campus has recently been renovated as office space.

[Back](#)

²² Its 800-foot-square brick quadrangle, built in 1874 and long in ruins, has recently been renovated as office and store space. *See also* [n. 28](#).

[Back](#)

²³ As well as other military goods, on a piecework basis. The number of women so employed fluctuated. For instance, in November 1875, 887 women earned an average \$11.01 apiece (EN, December 4, 1875, p4, c3), but a year and a half later the number of sewing women, already reduced to 615, was temporarily cut further to 225 (ND, February 15, 1877, p3, c2).

Lucinda Joiner Gibbs (*see* [n.13](#)), described in the 1870 census as a “Seamstress,” was probably one of the sewing women. As the widow of a Civil War veteran, she would have received priority in work assignments.

[Back](#)

²⁴ Following floods at its original Jeffersonville and New Albany, Indiana locations, Capt. John Baptiste Ford (1811-1903) relocated his glassworks to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where it prospered as the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Co.

[Back](#)

²⁵ CJ refers to convicts’ “zebra suit” (September 15, 1877, p2, c4). In October 1877, 579 men wore it (EN, October 17, 1877, p1, c4).

[Back](#)

²⁶ Joiner’s masthead (2½” x 9½”) first appeared June 21, 1880 in the expanded and renamed *Daily Evening News*: “The design for our new head was originated by our own artist, Har J. Joiner” (*His Artistic Touch*, p2, c4).

Its engraving, stereotyped (cast in metal) for durability, is signed “E.H. Thomas-Co.” German-born Ernest H. Thomas (ca.1844-1884), who like Joiner in 1880 had a studio in Louisville’s Courier-Journal building (see [n.231](#)), was “a genius of the rarest type [*who*] without teacher, mastered the art of wood engraving” (obit., CJ, May 9, 1884, p8, c2).

Joiner’s drawing likely survived the engraving process—in the technology of the day, a photograph of it would have been developed directly on the wood surface to be engraved—but has since been lost, perhaps when the entire contents of Joiner’s studio was destroyed in the 1907 Courier-Journal building fire. EN abandoned its masthead with its next name change (to the *Jeffersonville News*), March 16, 1891.

[Back](#)

²⁷ The panorama is recognizable today, despite the addition of three bridges.

[Back](#)

²⁸ Demolished ca.1900, it rose from the middle of a “cortile” for whose landscaping Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) furnished a design ND praised as giving “indication of great taste and skill” (October 29, 1874, p3, c1). The cortile is now a parking lot.

[Back](#)

²⁹ Munday (1843-1918), a lawyer and Confederate colonel, later moved to Washington State.

[Back](#)

³⁰ The Owensboro *Messenger* began publication the following October. No Joiner images have yet been found in it, but Joiner seems to have retained hopes of doing business with it, making “a brief and pleasant business trip” to Owensboro in October 1878 from which he returned speaking “in high terms” of Munday and his new partner, Clifton Wood Bransford (ca.1858-1933) (EN, October 26, 1878, p1, c1).

[Back](#)

³¹ Carl Christian Brenner (1838-1888), who sometimes anglicized his first name as Charles, was born in Bavaria and immigrated with his parents to the United States in 1853.

[Back](#)

³² Joiner later claimed to have beaten Brenner to their mutual subject of the beech tree:

[I]t is a fact known of very few that Joiner began studying the beech even before Carl Brenner.

“I remember,” says Mr. Joiner, “when Brenner had his little sign-painting establishment around on Third street. I used to go around and watch him paint signs, when I was a boy. I thought them wonderful. I recollect distinctly his first picture. It was a long slope of hillside—hillsides were his first love—then he took up the oak tree, and for awhile would paint nothing else. I began experimenting roughly with the beech woods about that time.”

Louisville Evening Post, “Art,” December 8, 1900, p9, c5-6.

For Joiner’s age when his father died, see [n.197](#).

[Back](#)

³³ From *Edwards' 1867-8 Louisville Directory* (p125 of its *Historical and Commercial Review*). Such billposters were a standard advertising icon of the era.

[Back](#)

³⁴ Advertising his final Christmas exhibition in 1887.

[Back](#)

³⁵ See [fig. 24](#) for a Joiner image that, appearing in the *National Democrat* August 15, 1872, soon after Reuben Dailey bought the newspaper in May 1872, possibly had been in use for some time previous; the *National Democrat's* pre-Dailey file comprises only a few issues.

[Back](#)

³⁶ Its stamp is the 1870-1873 ultramarine Benjamin Franklin one cent. The envelope, postmarked Jeff, June 14, is addressed to George F. Howard (ca.1834-1891; obit., EN, June 17, 1891, p4, c3), sheriff of Clark County 1870 to August 1871. Joiner painted portraits of Howard and of James Keigwin (ca.1829-1904; obit., EN August 25, 1904, p1, c4-6), respectively Second Lieutenant and Colonel of the 49th Indiana Infantry Regiment in the Civil War, in their guise as "The Original Bohunkers" (ND, December 19, 1878, p4, c3) – that is, the "only two original singers of the popular song, 'Bohunker'" (CJ, December 18, 1878, p2, c7).

[Back](#)

³⁷ As might the cross-hatching of the hands and feet, if intended to give them a dark complexion (by contrast, the face looks incomplete). Joiner's steamboating sketches, now lost, were said to have concentrated on "negro characters dancing Jim Crow" along the levees (*Baird*, p696).

[Back](#)

³⁸ *Caron's 1876 Louisville Directory* was published in the summer of 1876.

[Back](#)

³⁹ John Tenniel's (1820-1914) *Alice* illustrations appeared in 1869.

[Back](#)

⁴⁰ CJ, January 22, 1877, p4, c9-10. Col. Charles B. Hunt (1833-1919), proprietor of Hunt's Hotel, served in the Army during the Mexican, Civil and Spanish-American wars, as well as during riots in Cincinnati in the 1880s.

[Back](#)

⁴¹ The wings predict Joiner's 1874 *Angel of Mercy and Charity* ([fig. 27](#) & [fig. 29](#)).

[Back](#)

⁴² *Edwards' 1869 Louisville Directory* (also called *Edwards' 1868-9 Louisville Director*), p422.

[Back](#)

⁴³ Prussia-born John Kohlhepp (1826-1872) appears to have been an important early figure in Kentucky horserace betting. More than thirty years after his death, CJ's obituary of his brother-in-law John Cawein declared, "During the Civil War [Cawein] was connected with Walker's exchange, a hostelry that was famous. After the war it was known as the Turf Exchange. Associated with him in the business was John Kohlhepp, who finally purchased the business" (CJ, November 23, 1904, p10, c6). The Turf Exchange, a "pool room" so called for the pools of racing bets sold there, helped make Louisville the national center of horserace betting.

[Back](#)

⁴⁴ See CJ, May 27, 1872, p3, c5.

[Back](#)

⁴⁵ EN, June 4, 1886, p3, c6-7.

[Back](#)

⁴⁶ For example: "The Cincinnati Enquirer heads the hanging of two colored citizens 'The Black Drop.' Would it not be more alliterative to have said 'Noose for the Niggers,' or a 'Choke on the Coons'?" ND, December 19, 1878, p5, c2).

[Back](#)

⁴⁷ See *Baird's History of Clark County*, by Lewis C. Baird (Indianapolis: B.F. Bowen & Co., 1909), pp528-530; obits., EN, April 9, 1906, p1, c1-7 & April 11, p1, c1-2; ND, April 13, 1906, p1, c1-7 & p6, c4-5).

Joiner painted Dailey's portrait in 1879. Dailey said of it:

When sitting for that picture we threw ourselves back to the days when we were studying for the ministry. Hence if the countenance portrays sentiments not akin to our natural wickedness, the fault is not Mr. Joiner's. He paints true to life, and in this case, as all others, Mr. Joiner has not only honored himself and the city in which he lives, but more especially the sinner he has depicted.

EN, December 30, 1879, p3, c6. After Dailey's death Joiner painted a replica of that earlier portrait (see ND, October 18, 1906, p1, c4). The present location of either portrait is unknown. Dailey's descendants live in England and have not been traced (see also [n.168](#)).

[Back](#)

⁴⁸ Thomas Nast (1840-1902). Joiner might have been even more influenced by English-born Alfred Rudolph Waud (1828-1891), who, like Nast, was a battlefield artist for *Harper's Weekly* during the Civil War and whose droll, big-headed wood-engraved characters illustrated such books as Thomas Butler Gunn's 1857 *The Physiology of Boarding Houses*. Waud engraved a view of Jeffersonville's riverfront for *Picturesque America* (1872-74).

[Back](#)

⁴⁹ Many of them craftsmen working elaborate wood inlays for the Car Works' railroad passenger cars. For some years Jeff ran dual English- and German-language school systems.

[Back](#)

⁵⁰ EN, February 25, 1874, p4, c4. Three days later it appeared in the *Weekly Memphian* (Dailey's short-lived Memphis, Indiana newspaper), the banner proclaiming:

This cut represents a certain young gentleman as he
appeared at the meeting of the Memphis brass band

Weekly Memphian, February 28, 1874, p1, c1.

[Back](#)

⁵¹ EN, February 28, 1874, p4, c3-4. Two times only, a curious four-legged device (*enlarged in [fig. 23](#)*) appears within the space framed for text (EN, March 19, 1874, p4, c4 and March 20, 1874, p4, c4).

At his English-born father's death in 1873, William F. Guy (ca.1849-1911) took over his furniture shop at 20 Spring Street, but sold it in November 1874 (ND, November 19, 1874, p1, c2). After stints clerking at Ford's Plate Glass Works and the Quartermaster Depot, Guy re-entered the furniture business in New Albany.

[Back](#)

⁵² EN, March 2, 1874, p1, c4 (as pictured, from EN, July 23, 1874, p4, c3). But in fact this image appeared in ND two years earlier (August 15, 1872, p5, c1 and August 22, 1872, p5, c1) and possibly before that (*see [n.35](#)*). (The puffs of smoke amount to a Joiner signature.) I am grateful to Stephen D. Marples for identifying the cannon.

[Back](#)

⁵³ EN, March 13, 1874, p4, c4 (as pictured, from EN, March 14, 1874, p4, c4).

[Back](#)

⁵⁴ EN, March 19, 1874, p4, c4. Elsewhere (p4, c2) appears the comment:

This picture was drawn from life, on the spot, by our special artist. It is
intended to represent an indignant husband raising the very old scratch
because his wife did not buy groceries at Steve Miller's.

Grocer Stephen M. Miller (1847-ca.1922) emigrated from Germany in 1852 and became Port Fulton's marshal and a longtime member of its school board.

[Back](#)

⁵⁵ EN, June 1, 1874, p4, c1. ND's May 1 "Letter List" of letters unclaimed at the post office (ND, May 1, 1873, p5, c1) included one addressed to "C.H. Joiner" (Joiner's full name was Charles Harvey Joiner, but see [n.83](#)).

[Back](#)

⁵⁶ Hoffman and his Pennsylvania-born wife, Anne Mary De Vere Hoffman (1835-1923), also kept a boarding house, though whether Joiner stayed with them on South 3rd Street is not known. Nor is it known whether Hoffman's Bavarian birth implies any tie to Brenner or whether Brenner might have helped arrange Joiner's employment; on the other hand, it is known that Joiner's elder brother, Bud Joiner, lived in St. Louis about this time (EN, December 11, 1875, p4, c2, refers to "his home in St. Louis").

[Back](#)

⁵⁷ Obit., *Church Paintings Made Him Famous*, St. Louis (Mo.) *Post Dispatch*, January 3, 1905, p16, c3.

[Back](#)

⁵⁸ Their present location is unknown.

[Back](#)

⁵⁹ Capt. John Ira Dorsey (1852-1941) ([fig. 28](#)) was later collector, and later still superintendent, of the Louisville and Jeffersonville Ferry Company and its successor Falls City Ferry, and a longtime Jeff city councilman (obit., EN, April 2, 1941, p1, c4-5; *see also* EN, January 26, 1924, p1, c6). Dorsey and Joiner shared a sense of humor, EN once remarking that Dorsey had dislocated his shoulder “by the premature discharge of a gag” (January 19, 1883, p4, c1).

Ira Dorsey’s brother Capt. Eugene Lyman Dorsey (1854-1924) was also a friend of Joiner’s (*see* [n.87](#)). A sometime partner in the grocery, he later became bookkeeper of the ferry company and, from 1898 to 1913, a federal inspector of steamboats (obit., CJ, January 24, 1924, p1, c5).

A sister of the Dorsey brothers, Carrie B. Dorsey Loomis (1861-1934), married Jeff’s fine and versatile architect Arthur Loomis (1858-1935), designer of Louisville’s Speed Art Museum.

[Back](#)

⁶⁰ One column wide, it twice appeared in EN, August 11, 1874, p1, c1 and August 12, 1874, p1, c1.

[Back](#)

⁶¹ It first appeared EN, August 20, 1874, p1, c1 (as pictured, from EN, August 21, 1874, p1, c1). Born in Alabama, and probably a nephew of Barney Rosenthal’s (*see* [n.110](#)), Morris Rosenthal (1851-1902) was later a haberdasher in Cleveland, Ohio. Previously his store’s slogan had been “Morris Rosenthal keeps the nobbiest furnishing goods in town” (*see, e.g.*, EN, August 13, 1874, p1, c1).

[Back](#)

⁶² EN said Joiner was “expected home this week” (November 17, 1874, p4, c3). *Baird* (p696) states that Joiner “began painting portraits with Hoffman” in St. Louis.

[Back](#)

⁶³ ND, October 29, 1874, p3, c5-6; November 3, 1874, p2, c1; November 10, 1874 p2, c1; November 17, 1874, p2, c1, and ND *Supplement*, November 17, 1874, p2, c1, in each instance next to a display ad that proclaims: “He who by hiz biz would rise, must either bust or ADVERTISE.” The sudden promotion of these images just before Joiner’s homecoming suggests tension about their use or ownership.

[Back](#)

⁶⁴ EN’s distinctive four-column layout is visible (*compare* this image with [fig. 58](#), conjecturally identified as Joiner’s colleague in firefighting and minstrel shows, Capt. Billy Patterson).

[Back](#)

List of Illustrations

- Fig. 1. [Interior, Church of Christ, Utica, Indiana](#)
- Fig. 2. [The Joiner](#)
- Fig. 3. [The Joiner \(detail of Fig. 2\)](#)
- Fig. 3A. [The Joiner \(detail of Fig. 2\)](#)
- Fig. 4. [Harvey Joiner, ca. 1920](#)
- Fig. 5. ["Up in a Balloon"](#)
- Fig. 6. [Harvey Joiner at 19 \(1871\)](#)
- Fig. 7. [Lower Spring Street, Jeffersonville, during 1884 flood](#)
- Fig. 8. [Joiner's Daily Evening News masthead](#)
- Fig. 9. [Detail of Fig. 6](#)
- Fig. 10. [Carl Brenner's Original Sign Shop wood-engraved store ad \(1870\)](#)
- Fig. 11. [Carl Brenner's Original Sign Shop wood-engraved store ad \(1870\)](#)
- Fig. 12. [Carl C. Brenner wood-engraved exhibition ad \(1887\)](#)
- Fig. 13. [Carl Brenner's wood-engraved store ad \(1867\)](#)
- Fig. 14. [Joiner's ca. 1871 wood-engraved envelope](#)
- Fig. 15. [Joiner's ad for Preusser & Wellenvos, Caps and Furs \(1876\)](#)
- Fig. 16. [Detail of Fig. 15](#)
- Fig. 17. [Joiner's wood-engraved 1877 Hunt's Hotel and Dining-Rooms ad](#)
- Fig. 18. [Joiner's wood-engraved 1869 Kohlhepp's Exchange and Restaurant ad](#)
- Fig. 19. [Detail of Fig. 18](#)
- Fig. 20. [Reuben Dailey, ca. 1882](#)
- Fig. 21. [Joiner's wood-engraved bugler \(1874\)](#)
- Fig. 22. [Joiner's wood-engraved porter \(1874\)](#)
- Fig. 23. [Variant detail of Joiner's wood-engraved porter](#)
- Fig. 24. [Joiner's wood-engraved cannon \(1874\)](#)
- Fig. 25. [Joiner's wood-engraved Harlequin \(1874\)](#)
- Fig. 26. [Joiner's wood-engraved raging head \(1874\)](#)
- Fig. 27. [Joiner's wood-engraved Angel of Mercy and Charity \(1874\)](#)
- Fig. 28. [J. Ira Dorsey, ca. 1897](#)
- Fig. 29. [Joiner's Angel of Mercy and Charity \(detail from second publication\)](#)
- Fig. 30. [Joiner's wood-engraved toff \(1874\)](#)
- Fig. 31. [Joiner's wood-engraved timekeeper \(1874\)](#)
- Fig. 32. [Joiner's wood-engraved pasha \(1874\)](#)
- Fig. 33. [Joiner's wood-engraved drum major \(1875\)](#)
- Fig. 34. [Joiner's wood-engraved The Negro Exodus \(1879\)](#)
- Fig. 35. [Runaway slave icons](#)
- Fig. 36. [Joiner's wood-engraved The Election Bummer's Lamentations \(1879\)](#)
- Fig. 37. [Joiner's wood-engraved running man \(1879\)](#)
- Fig. 38. ["Harvey Joiner has his studio"](#)
- Fig. 39. [Joiner's Boy with Puppy \(date unknown\)](#)
- Fig. 40. [Joiner's Signature: Ruth Gleaning in the Fields of Boaz \(1877\)](#)
- Fig. 41. [Joiner's Signature: Boy with Puppy \(date unknown\)](#)

- Fig. 42. [Joiner's Signature: A 1932 check](#)
- Fig. 43. [Jeff's Spring Street, ca. 1897](#)
- Fig. 44. ["His studio . . . well filled"](#)
- Fig. 45. [1937 view of former Sparks' Dry-Goods store](#)
- Fig. 46. [Joiner's Sunrise on Kentucky River \(ca. 1874\)](#)
- Fig. 47. [Joiner's Castle \(ca. 1875\)](#)
- Fig. 48. [Portrait of a Man \(conjecturally identified as Barney Rosenthal\) \(1877\)](#)
- Fig. 49. [Earliest Press Mention \(1869\)](#)
- Fig. 50. ["Unrivalled in the World"](#)
- Fig. 51. [The Rev. J. W. Sullivan's House](#)
- Fig. 52. [Red Ribbon Club's Grand Excursion](#)
- Fig. 53. [Lillie Howard's Covered Bridge at Harrod's Creek \(1876\)](#)
- Fig. 54. [Lillie Howard's Harrod's Creek at the Ohio River \(1877\)](#)
- Fig. 55. [Capt. Daniel Howard's house](#)
- Fig. 56. [Exterior, Utica Church of Christ](#)
- Fig. 57. [Harvey Joiner and the Amoskeag, ca. August 1871](#)
- Fig. 58. [Photograph of a Man \(conjecturally identified as Capt. Billy Patterson\), ca. 1868](#)
- Fig. 59. ["Joiner & Patterson's Combination"](#)
- Fig. 60. [The Amateurs Benefit \(program for Joiner's minstrel show\), 1873](#)
- Fig. 61. [Evening News review of "The Amateurs"](#)
- Fig. 62. [Mozart Hall, exterior \(ca. 1897\)](#)
- Fig. 63. [Mozart Hall, interior \(ca. 1897\)](#)
- Fig. 64. [Ruth Gleaning in the Fields of Boaz \(1877\)](#)
- Fig. 65. [Ruth \(detail of haystack\)](#)
- Fig. 66. [Ruth \(detail showing Bethlehem\)](#)
- Fig. 67. [Profile of the Indiana Knobs, as seen from Joiner's boyhood home, Blue Lick, Indiana](#)
- Fig. 68. [Ruth \(detail of water jug\)](#)
- Fig. 69. [Ruth \(detail of clouds\)](#)
- Fig. 70. [Ruth \(detail of Ruth's foot and hand\)](#)
- Fig. 71. [Ruth \(detail of Ruth's face\)](#)
- Fig. 72. [Ruth \(detail showing Boaz\)](#)
- Fig. 73. [Ruth \(detail of bag of grain and water jug\)](#)
- Fig. 74. [Ruth \(detail of tree\)](#)
- Fig. 75. [Ruth \(detail of barley stalks\)](#)
- Fig. 76. ["Probably Lost" and "Joiner and Lott's Balloon"](#)
- Fig. 77. [Sensational Blondes](#)
- Fig. 78. [Harvey Joiner, ca. 1902](#)
- Fig. 79. [Ruth \(detail\)](#)
- Fig. 80. [Joiner's wood-engraved horse flying over the Indiana Knobs \(1872\)](#)

A Note on Sources

When his studio burned in 1907, Joiner – such was his devotion to the external aspects of his career – appears (according to *Baird*, p697), to have mourned equally his 98 incinerated canvases and his “mailing list of five thousand names.” Hence it is fitting that this study should be based almost entirely on Joiner newspaper items, as discovered mainly on microfilm, and gratifying that he emerges from them a more interesting character than his faded reputation might suggest.

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–SKM

About the Author: Steven Key Meyers was born on a farm near Grand Junction, Colorado, raised in various Midwestern and Eastern locales, and now lives in rural Indiana. His novels include *Good People* (2010), *All That Money* (2011), and *New York/Siena: Two Short Novels* (2012).