

# CHAPTER ONE



## JENKINS'S BOARDING HOUSE

8 November 1847–31 December 1847

*Boardinghouses provided the setting for nineteenth-century bachelor life; in 1850, Cincinnati had nearly two hundred such establishments.<sup>1</sup> When JJM began his journal on 8 November 1847, he lived in Mrs. Jenkins's residence. The "Old Woman," as he called her, was the single mother of Fanny and Mary Jane Jenkins. Mrs. Jenkins was likely a widow, supporting her family in one of the few ways open to her.<sup>2</sup> Servants helped with domestic chores. The guests (at various times) included John Bradley and son; Charles Brown; Dr. Emerick G. and Mary Darling; Mr. Delamater; Mr. Dow; Mr. and Mrs. Granger; Mary Howe and children; Mr. Johnson; Mary Price; and Mr. Wardner.*

*Located a few blocks from JJM's workplace, Edmund Dexter's store, Jenkins's was near other Third Street boardinghouses. A house of prostitution was on the next block.<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Jenkins charged \$3.00 weekly per person for lodging and meals. JJM and Brown shared a room with one double bed, a common sleeping arrangement. Boarders visited each other's rooms for small parties or socialized in the parlor. JJM supplemented the daily fare with special treats—cakes, oysters, and bottled beverages—from neighborhood shops. Every Sunday he dined at the home of his oldest sister, Elizabeth Kattenhorn, but the boardinghouse residents comprised his surrogate family.*

*Although JJM mentions he had been keeping a record for several years, the earlier volume was apparently lost. Therefore, JJM's story begins abruptly, as 1847 is drawing to a close. JJM worked six ten-hour days per week, but he had many other activities.*



Cincinnati Riverfront Landing, 1848. This plate is one of eight daguerrotype plates made in 1848, which show the entire length of the Cincinnati, Ohio, riverfront. It is the sight Mersman saw in his trips to and from Cincinnati. (From the Collection of the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County.)

*Monday Novr 8th 1847*

Cloudy and disagreeable Weather. Business commenced very favorably for the Week.<sup>4</sup> The weather lately has been very changeable. at our last Ball I caught a severe cold of which I have been unable to rid myself as yet. the changes of weather and temperature are so Sudden. one Consolation (although a poor one) is that one half of the people of this good City seem to be in the same dilemma. I amused myself with my flute until nearly 8. then went to the *Liedertafel* singing meeting.<sup>5</sup> the attendance was poor so I did not overstrain myself with singing. from there some 4 or 5 of us went to Drachs old Establishment now termed "Mikes Headquarters"<sup>6</sup> Menzel Junr treated me to a good Cigar and unexceptionable Ale. from there direct home 11 o'clock. ☞<sup>7</sup> I Borrowed 10\$ from A. Nulsen. ~ ~ ~Exp—00—

[Margin note] Paid 1.20 for this Book

*November 9th.*

Not much doing at the Store. had no difficulte in getting my french exercise ready for this Evening. I had my french exercise or rather lesson after supper.<sup>8</sup> did not go out afterwards. to Bed 10. Exp 10. ☞ Repaid Mr Nulsen 5\$ Balance due him 5\$.

*Wednesday 10th.g*

Towards Evening the Weather was beautifully Cold and Clear. The evening I passed with my Sister.<sup>9</sup> she noticed my severe cold, and with a Sisters kindness, immediatly had a footbath prepared for me. also gave me a fresh pair of Woolen Socks. nothing like a kind Sister. To Bed 10. Exp 10c.

*Thursday November 11th 1847*

The Weather although Cold, is really beautiful. I am Sorry to add that Business is almost too dull.

I have determined to pass my Evenings at home, at least until I am rid of my cold which is really too anoying. I went to Mr Lange after supper. he has at present the honor to be my boot maker. left a pair of Boots with him to be repaired. then went to my Brothers Store,<sup>10</sup> took a box of principee Cigars<sup>11</sup> with me. I did not pay for them. returned home at 8 oclock. Amused myself with the little girls<sup>12</sup> there till 10 oclock, when in Company with Brown and a Mr DeLaMaître went to Billy Tell's,<sup>13</sup> indulged in a glass of Ale, which I shall not do again so late before going to Bed. it having the disagreeable effect of making me a little too hot for Comfort. we returned home immediatly—To Bed ½ past 10. Exp 15c

*Friday 12th.*

Another change in Weather and Temperature. I am destined to keep my cold a little while longer. however I am taking all the Care of myself that it is possible for any young Man. The Evening I passed at home with the little girls. Went to Bed 10. Exp 5

*Saturday 13th*

Rained more or less throughout the whole day. About 6 oclock as I was going home, there was a very Severe Shower which drenched me Completely. remain'd home during the Evening. To Bed at 11. Expe 4.10.

[Margin note] August Ulrich paid 4.50. I paid N[ulsen] & M[ersman] 3.25 for Cigars, Lange & Co 75 cts repairing boots.

*Sunday Novr 14th 1847.*

Disagreeable, Cloudy, Windy and Cold Weather. I arose suffiscently early to dress before breakfast. About 8 oclock, after the morning dampness had somewhat

evaporated I walked slowly to my brothers. It was too Cold to go out dressed so I did not take any particular pains in dressing merely putting on a Clean shirt, and wrapping my Old Cloak about me. I felt in Condition to go any where and be seen by any body. Henry was unwell, so I could not get him to go out with me. I Amused myself with his Old Guitar until ½ past 10. then went down Called on Menzel<sup>14</sup> at his rooms. the young Man was busy drawing a plan for new kind of Canal lock. I kept him from his work for a ½ hour, then went home and wrote two pages french exercise to finish my lesson. Dinner Bell rung a few minutes after I had finished writing. After dinner Mr Moulinier Called to give me my lesson. As we were in no hurry we of Course took it easy. it was 4'clk when we were through. We Walked out to Tappe's for the purpose of inspecting some Guitars that he has made but he was not at home. Walked about for an hour or so, without any diffinite object. I went to my Sisters to get supper a little earlier than where I board, but they kept me at the Card Table till near 7 oclock. I then went Post haste to Julia's.<sup>15</sup> found the good girls in good health and apparently glad to see me. Apparantly is suffiscent for me. dont care whether they were or not. I received an invitation through them to a Wedding Ball. To Bed 11. Exp 5c

*Monday 15th Novr 1847.*

Beautiful and lovely Weather at present. Businiss opened very briskly this Morning and continued so throughout the day. The Evening I passed at home playing "not precisely Duetts" but Continually attempting to play with Fanny.<sup>16</sup> went out a little from 9 to ¼ past merely to smoke a Cigar. To Bed 10. Exp 5c [Margin note] Bot a beautiful Edition of Milton<sup>17</sup> for 2.50—paid—

*Tuesday 16th*

Another beautiful day. Commerce is as good with us as desired. I had a hurried french Lesson this Evening. Went with Moulinier to Tappe's to look at some Guitars he has made. He had two finished they were both very good indeed. I have given him permission to make one for me, he offering to take mine in trade or exchange. We did'nt get home until 11 oclock. Expence 5c

*Wednesday 17th.*

Business very good. The Evening ~~beautifully~~ pleasantly mild and Automne like. bright moonshine. I was at Julia's a little before 8 oclock. We had a very pleasant [walk] down to the Assembly rooms.<sup>18</sup> The Company was large, but any thing except select. I underwent some hard jostlings. The best Amusement for

me was to see the others enjoy themselves. The native Wine they had there was pretty good. I Showed my appreciation of by drinking a good deal of it. I danced quite as often as I intended. had to pay 75 cents for Supper. Went home at 3 oclock precisely. Total Exp 1.50¢—

*Thursday Novr 18th 1847*

Another change in the Weather, raining again. Business fortunately is dull. I am a little dull also. 'Though I do not feel the effects as much as usually. Julia tried to make me Jealous last Evening. If she knew how hard and difficulte matter that is for any young Lady, she would safe herself the trouble. towards Evening it turned cold again. I did not leave the house after supper. played on my Guitar for an hour or so. then went down ~~stairs~~ in the parlor where the Ladies of the house were all assembled. Amused myself with them until 10 oclock then went to Bed. Exp 5c

*Friday 19th*

Quite cold this morning. Business slow. We are shipping very extensively which gives me plenty to do.<sup>19</sup> I have however as yet found time to do my french writings in the Store. I as usually devoted an hour or [so?] after Supper to my Guitar and Flute. then called on my sister Mrs Kattenhorn.<sup>20</sup> passed my time very agreably until 9 oclock. When I came home Fanny was just released from a visitor. we [talked] with Doct. D[arling] and his Wife passed our time very agreably till past 11. I finished the Evenings entertainment with smoking one of Browns Cigars, and listening to his description of the Theatrical performance. No Exp

*Saturday 20th*

Cold, but beautiful Weather. After Supper I called on my brother. in returning home I met Moulinier. he wanted me go to with him to Witness the exertions of The Sable Harmonists.<sup>21</sup> I left before it was out. To Bed 11. Exp 10¢

*Sunday Novr 21st*

The morning was'nt particularly beautiful, so I did'nt dress before breakfast, but took a reasonable time for that purpose afterwards. Somewhere about 10 oclock I left the house, first went to Kattenhorns, but the good people being all to Church, I soon left there.

Called on Mr Monfrod at his room. the young man was very nearly dressed. We had a long but not very Comfortable Walk of it, being Cold and Windy.

About 11 o'clock we returned to my room where we amused ourselves Comforably until One. Had dinner at 2.

I made an Engagement at my sisters<sup>22</sup> for 3 o'clock but we did'nt get through with our french in time to keep that. I was there a little before 4. My Share of Coffee and eatables had been preserved for me.

Went home to supper. immediatly afterwards left for Julia's<sup>23</sup> Mansion. my heart is very little engaged there. It is really amusing for me to see her laudable efforts in making ME Jealous. Miss C.<sup>24</sup> was there on a visit. Now Miss C is a brilliant and beautiful Girl, and of course it was my duty to make myself agreeable. whenever I try to be so I am most generally successful. I was so much so in this instance, that it required no very penetrating Eye to see that Julia was more out of humor than I have ever been. I promised Miss C to call and see her which I shall certainly do, whenever I have nothing els to do. I left for home at 9 o'clock precisely. Went to Bed at 10. Spent 20 cts.

*Monday Novr 22nd 1847.*

Was really a beautiful day. Business was also very good. The Evening I passed at home. Should have went to the Singing Company, but I amused myself Satisfactory, and that is all I personally care about. Our good and religious *Animaux*<sup>25</sup> went to such a vulgar place as the Theatre. To Bed 10 o'clock No Exp.

*Tuesday 23rd*

Rainy and disagreeable Weather. Business very good. I intended to pass the Evening at home, but Mr Brown wishing to go the Theatre again, very particularly requested my Company, which of Course I Could'nt refuse. We Went to the National.<sup>26</sup> Three Comedies of the most amusing kind, made time pass. the pauses we passed in the "Cock loft," amusing ourselves with Angels of "Lightness" Angels of "Darkness" being too "Dark" a term for these "Light" and accommodating beings.<sup>27</sup> Miss Clark appears very pretty on the Stage. Miss [?]<sup>28</sup> is also very pretty. we remained until the whole was over. I met Mr. Ireland<sup>29</sup> there. he was in a jolly humor, had been above also. We got home 11 o'clock. Exp 15c

*Wednesday 24th.*

Business dull. I finished my french lesson before Evening. I had a french lesson after supper. Made Miss Mary Price a present of a book being through with my lesson. I went in the Parlour, assisted Miss Jenkins to play Chess until 12, then went to bed No Exp

*Thursday 25th November 1847.*

To day we had snow for the first time. it is very Cold and disagreeable. I was very busy this Morning. Business is very good. The Evening I passed entirely at home. Our little parties in the Parlour are very attractive sometimes. this Evening I made love to<sup>30</sup> Mary Price a young lady of 15 or therabouts. she intends “coming out”<sup>31</sup> next spring. She being blessed with a good looking and healthy person all-ready begins to experience sexual influence, although her behavior towards a young Man is what more aged young Ladies would denominate “verdant,” still it is natural, and I like it. I did not go to bed until ½ past 11. No Expence.

*Friday 26th*

Disagreeable and Windy Weather. Business Continues excellent. I have hardly time at present to write my french exercises in the Store.

The Evening I passed at home, excepting a trip I took to see Mayle<sup>32</sup> at the Store, but not finding him I returned direct home. I was bored there by a party of Fanny’s friends who talked of nothing but their Eastern doings and Amusements. to bed 10. Exp 5c.

*Saturday 27th*

We were very busy all day receiving and Shipping Whiskey. being very tired I went to the Atheneum<sup>33</sup> with Mr. Brown, having engaged my Seats during the day. Mr Hackett as Fallstaff<sup>34</sup> was very good. Exp 1.15¢.

*Sunday November 28th 1847.*

The morning was beautiful, but it became Cloudy, Windy and Cold towards 10 oclock. I was dressed before breakfast, and went out immediatly afterwards to give the Servant an opportunity of Cleaning my room, as I intended to be home again by 10 oclock to write my french lesson before dinner. I went to Henry’s,<sup>35</sup> waited until he was dressed, then we both went to my room. he amused himself with my Guitar and I with writing french. I finished just as the dinner-Bell wrung ½ past 1. After dinner from ½ past 2 to 4 I was Employed in reciting my lesson. Then walked and took a view of the river with Moulinier. the river is very high and still rising. I returned home by 5. Amused myself with the young Ladies until Supper.

The Evening I added my little self to a large audience attending Mr Boyentons discourse. It was very interesting. I escorted nearly the whole female population

of our house 6 in number, including Fanny of course. before going to bed I had a Smoke with Brown. Exp 30c.

*Monday 29th*

Ye Gods!<sup>36</sup> how Cold it was this Morning. business Commenced dull. Still I was very busy with last week's unfinished affairs. After Supper I intended to visit our Singing Company, but was prevented by events at home. Brown and myself inflicted our Society on Mr Bradley in his office.<sup>37</sup> We Smoked, and played Cards till we had done Smoking. then went in Mrs Howe's room played there also until near 10 oclock. Smoked in the dining-room till bed time.

*Tuesday November 30th 1847*

It is, and has been very Cold during the last two days. towards Evening it Moderated. Business passably fair. The Evening I passed at home except a short walk to Deserins to drink a glass of Ale. Mary Jane gave me a lock of Mary Price's hair.<sup>38</sup> as a romantic young Lady she of Course thought that she did me a great honor. Mr De'lamaître returned this Evening. We Waited until Mr Brown returned from the Theatre. his Report of the *Viennoises Danseuse*<sup>39</sup> was very favorable. I shall see them to morrow Evening. To Bed ½ past 11. Exp 10.

*Wednesday December 1st 1847*

Rainy and disagreeable the whole day. Business nevertheless very good. The Evening I passed in the Theatre with Mr Brown. The *Viennoises* children appered in 4 of their favorite dances. They certainly surpass every thing in the form of dancing. Their flower dance met with most approbation. During the last piece we went up into the "Cock-Loft" one of its inhabitants took a fancy to me.<sup>40</sup> She Commenced showing it, by running against [me] several [times]. perceiving that she wished me to speak to her, I did so, but no sooner done than I felt her lascivious lips on my virgin cheeks. of course I appeared highly flattered. she continued to make very unmodest advances towards me throwing her vile arms around my hitherto undefiled neck. I was Compelled at last very ungalantly to put a stop to her Amorous Movements. Went to Bed ½ past 11. Exp 30 cts.

*Thursday decr 2nd 1847*

Weather Continues dirty, nasty, sloppy and disagreeable. The Evening I passed partly at home. I played flute till 8 oclock, then went to Kochs<sup>41</sup> a few minutes,

from there to my watchmakers,<sup>42</sup> whom I did not find at home. returned and remained home balance of Evening, amusing myself with the g'hals<sup>43</sup> until their Mama's sent them to bed, then smoking a Cigar with Brown, and amusing the Old Woman who was sitting up for her Daughter.<sup>44</sup> The Theatrical party returned 11 o'clock. A few minutes after we all went to bed. 15c.

*Friday Dec 3rd*

Changing Cold again. Business very good. After supper I assisted Fanny with my flute in studying some new music. we played till past 7. I then went in the parlour and played with the little girls until Moulinier [arrived?]. we did not get through with our lesson until near 10 o'clock. we frequently get into Scientific disputes and when we do it generally gets late before we finish our *leçon*.<sup>45</sup> Ten I went to Bed. No Expencc

*Saturday 4th*

My Cash balanced Satisfactory this afternoon.<sup>46</sup> After supper I called on Misses Corbins. The young Lady's were in good health. we went to see Mr Murray who intends leaving for New Orleans, where [Granger?] has been during the last two months. I received news from Granger. 9 we took the Ladies home. Went to Bank Exchange, had some Pigs feet &c. from there we went to a Bath house.<sup>47</sup> To Bed 11. Exp 50¢.

*Sunday Novr [December] 5th 1847.*<sup>48</sup>

Cold and nasty weather. Snowing a little every now and then. I called at Sisters<sup>49</sup> immediatly after Breakfast. poor Daddy<sup>50</sup> is unwilling to let Frank<sup>51</sup> go to Havanna.

I received a letter from Frank on friday in which he states his intention of going to Havanna with a Tobacconist now in St. Louis. father is unwilling to let him go and desired me write his disapprobation of this step.<sup>52</sup> I prefer myself to have frank about so I shall advise him strongly not to go. I shall also write to Agnes<sup>53</sup> who is at present in St. Louis, to use all her influence in preventing his going. from ½ past 10 to dinner I was busy preparing my french lesson which I recited after dinner. Shortly after 3 I went to Kattenhorns played Cards the whole afternoon until past 5. went home to Supper. Sweet Fannie went to church with Mr Delamaitre. I not knowing what better to do went to Kochs where I certainly have not been for 3 or 4 months. Koch Senr<sup>54</sup> was sitting quite cozely 'side his intended—as yet Miss F[riedebor]n,<sup>55</sup> but this long and ugly name she intends to discard and a “Cook” or rather in german “Koch.” Rule Came about 8 o'clock. he intends making Miss K— Mrs Rule, so as to have at

least somebody to rule, according and with (I suppose) a "Rule" of his own. It was dull Company for those not interested so I did not trouble them with my presence very long. went from there direct home. but not to bed for I discussed religious Matters with a very Sober Phiz<sup>56</sup> till ½ past 10. then retired. Exp 5 cts.

*Monday Novr [December] 6th 1847*

Beautiful Weather is morning. Business Commenced very briskly. I was busily Employed the whole [day]. After Supper I went as I intended to the Singing Company.<sup>57</sup> An Election of officers took place. I did not leave with any high degree of satisfaction, but suppose shall have to attend once a week. I went from there direct home 10. Exp 30

*Tuesday 7th*

Disagreeable Weather again. our Commercial transactions are in a very flourishing Condition. The Evening I passed at Misses Corbens very pleasantly playing Whist<sup>58</sup> &c till 10 oclock then went home to bed having nothing better to do. Exp 10c

*Wednesday 8th*

Business not particularly lively. Weather damn nasty. The Evening I passed at home with my french and teacher. Went to bed 10 oclock Exp 10.

*Thursday 9th*

Was a disagreeable day in every respect. I was disappointed about Something in the Evening. went to Kochs, returned about 8. passed balance of Evening agreeably with the girls. Went to bed 10. Exp 5—

*Friday 10.*

I saw Anderson perform this evening at Atheneum. *King of the Commons*<sup>59</sup> was performed and most beautifully was it done home to bed 11 oclock. Exp 60

*Saturday Novr [December] 11th 1847.*

Confound Mayle Larkin he brot in my Store a pretty young Lady who made me Contribute 50 cts for a Library in their Sunday Scool. however she was pretty and there is no use in regretting what's gone. my cash balanced very well this afternoon. The Evening I passed with Mayle at Mrs Corbins playing Cards with

her daughters. we played a very interesting game Called *Cousini*.<sup>60</sup> It was 11 oclock before we [were] aware of the time. being once aware of the lateness of the hour of course we retired. gently disingaging ourselves from the girls, we bade them “good night” went direct home. Exp 60.

*Sunday 12th*

Commenced very fairly. got up too late to dress before breakfast. however I was down to Mayle on Lower Market by 10 oclock, 1 hour later than my appointment. we [went] down to the river to be Astonished at its extraordinary Size. It is higher than I have ever seen it, lacking only 15 feet to make it as high as it was in 1832.<sup>61</sup> it is rising rapidly, and may destroy a great Amount of property before it Subsides. went to Church in order to hear Rev Mr Moffit preach,<sup>62</sup> but he not appearing I left the place indignant with being imposed upon. After dinner I had my french lesson as usual. it being somewhat lenghty, it was 4 oclock when we were through with it. went to Sisters and passed balance of my time there. I had my Supper at home, went out a little to Smoke a Cigar, and give our Sanctimoneus Ladies a chance to go to Church. passed balance in making love to mary. Exp. 25.

*Monday Novr [December] 13th 1847*

It Commenced Snowing this Morning pretty freely and Continued to do the whole day. by Evening we had 6 to 7 inches Snow on the ground. The river Continues rising 5 oclock P.M. it is on the upper Corner of Water and Main, having risin about 3 feet during the last twenty four hours. The water has allready driven over 300 famillies within City limits out of house and home. It is decidedly a grand sight to see this immense Stream of yellow muddy water gradually approaching the business part of front<sup>63</sup> setting its natural boundery at defiance.

The Evening I passed at home, amusing myself with playing on my Guitar, reading and amusing the girls.<sup>64</sup> I went to bed at ½ past 11 oclock. The days Expences 10c.

*Tuesday 14th*

The river continues to advance. I went down this morning immediately after breakfast. The water had risen about 2 feet during the night it was just touching the Curb Stones corner Syc[amore] & front. Mr Dexter was down early. We Commenced early in the morning to move things out of our Old Warehouse, on Syc[amore] in the new building<sup>65</sup> we were busily employed at this the whole day. all the most valuable articles were removed from warehouse and cellar under Store. It is an exciting time there is no business done of any account.

laborers receive 50 cts an hour.<sup>66</sup> This Evening the water is within 4 feet as high as in "32" and rising at the rate of 1 inch every hour. I being froze quite through and otherwise very tired did not go out after Supper, but worked at my french lesson till 10 oclock. 11 went to Bed. No Expencc.

*Wednesday Novr [December] 15th 1847*

The River has risen about 18 inches last night. this Morning the water covered our Still house<sup>67</sup> to the depht of 6 to 8 inches, and according to Mr Dexters Measurement 13½ inches of "32." the cellars all along lower Market were filled. 12 oclock, the water is under the arch next to our Store 18 inches will bring it on the floor. the water Continues to rise, although Slowly. I was in the Store the whole day but had nothing, but Satisfy the Curiosity of idle passers bye. The Ev'ning I passed at home entirely. had a french lesson at first. I then Amused little Mary for a half an hour or so. then went with Brown to Billy Tells drank a glass of ale, went home direct and finished the evening Amusement with Smoking a cigar. To Bed 11 oclock Exp 0000.

*Thursday 16th*

It Snowed again to day. The river Continues rising. this Evening it was at its hight very nearly and was within 8 inches of the "32" mark. After Supper I went to the Theatre with Brown and Delamettre. Anderson was playing *The Elder Brother*<sup>68</sup> to a passably filled house. he played well. I was very much pleased so were my Companions. Went home and to bed ½ past 11. Exp 55c

*Friday 17th*

This Morning 8 oclock the river was at its height and within 6 inches of the 1832 mark. during the afternoon it receeded 1 inch. I wrote to Chs D[exter] this day. The Evening I passed at home playing Flute Duetts until 9. Amused the girls<sup>69</sup> till 10. Smoked till 11. Exp 15c

*Saturday Novr [December] 18th 1847.*

The river Continues to recede although slowly. it fell about 10 inches this day. is still in the Distillery. my Cash balanced very accuratly for this Week. the business of the week has been very Small.

I commenced the Evenings Amusement with playing Some Duetts with a gentleman Border in the Same house. Shortly before 7 Moulinier Came and requested me to accompany him to the Atheneaum. as it was Andersons benefit,<sup>70</sup> and he

appeared in two fine pieces, *The Lady of Lyons* and *Elder Brother*,<sup>71</sup> I went with him, and was really well repaid for my trouble and Expence. Miss Logan Sustained him in a most effective and satisfactory Manner. It [was] within 5 minutes of 12 when the performance Concluded.<sup>72</sup> Exp 1.15c

*Sunday 19th*

I arose too late to dress before breakfast. I and Mr. Delamettre were dressed a few minuites before 10. went togather to Selves to partake of a bottle of Dayton Ale. from there to my Store to note the fall of waters. it fell fully two feet last night. we then went to enjoy a pleasure excursion over the river in to Covington. It was certainly [amazing?] to see the usually modest Ohio river of width of two and three miles in Some places and well repaid for the trouble of getting on the Ferry. I came near getting drowned again in making a long jump on the ferry. I was paying the owner of the Skiff<sup>73</sup> when the ferry pushed off. I made a grand jump and a fortunate one. We called on some female acquaintances of Mr D[elamater]. Being through with this We Went to an Eating house took lunch in the Shape of mince pie and Coffee. The whole of Newport was still under water. returned in time for dinner. Had my french from 2 to 4. then went [to] Brother in Laws.<sup>74</sup> from there I went home, not till I had supper. it [was] 8 oclock. played with the girls till 9. Smoked till 10. then to Bed. My expence wer 75 cts.

*Monday Novr [December] 20th 1847.*

Most Excellent Weather again. Snowing beautifully. the river fell last night over 2 feet and stands now below front St. the present Cold weather will make it recede rapidly. I suppose business will be dull this week, so I'll devote my time to french, and getting my bills ready for the End of the year.

Business made a gentle Commencement again, merely to intimate that it had not deserted us. I was occupied the whole day in filing this years bills. The Evening I passed at home, the Weather being very raw and windy. played flute Duetts until 9. then joined Mr Bradley's Card Table, and assisted him till 11. We then in Company of Brown [and] Del—r went to Billy Tell's and partook of glass of Egg Nogg<sup>75</sup> or a Sort of milk Punch. Went direct home. Smoked and Chatted till 12 or nearly so. 12 to Bed. No Expence.

*Tuesday 21st.*

Very Cold yet. river falling rapidly. it is allready 5 to 6 feet below front St. Business is very good Compared to what other Merchants are doing. After supper I went

“at the risk of breaking my neck” to Currman’s<sup>76</sup> for the purpose of getting my flute Duets and also of playing some with the above named Gentle Man and if Miss C. was handy to have a chat with her. I was eminently Successful in a these things.

C. having an Engagement with his intended, we had to quit at ½ past 8. Stopped at Hunkums<sup>77</sup> to take a glass of Egg Nogg. Then went direct home. Smoked with Brown and Del—r till 11 o'clock. Exp 20.

*Wednesday Decr 22nd 1847*

Cold, Clear and frosty weather. Business has resumed its full and most active course. if it continues so, this will be a brilliant week for us. After supper I had a french lesson which detained me till 10 o'clock. Went with Del—r to Billy Tell’s. he treated to Egg Nogg. Smoked home until 11 o'clock, then went to bed. Exp 10.

*Thursday Decr 23rd*

Business very good, our Commercial transactions cannot but prove Satisfactory to Mr Dexter. After Supper I had nothing particular to do. So I paid Mr Koch a visit. returned home about ½ past 9 o'clock. Smoked with Mr Brown and Mr Del—r till 10. then to bed.

*Friday 24th*

Commerce Continues flourishing. I am at present so much occupied with it, that I have no time at all for my french. The Evening was passed in Bradleys office playing “Euchre.”<sup>78</sup> It being Christmas Eve, the Ladies of our Establishment took the liberty of beseiging our Retreat with firecrackers and torpedoes<sup>79</sup> wounding none and killing less. We afterward Smoked until 11 o'clock. then to Bed. Exp 10.

*Saturday Christmas, 25th*

This was decidedly the worst and most uninteresting Christmas I have ever spent. I was Confined in the Store the whole day. Received no present Except a handkerchf from my Sister. The Evening I passed at home with the girls who gave a party. To Bed 10 o'clock Exp 5.25.

[Margin note] I gave presents to the following persons: Mary Price, Mary Jane Jenkins, my Cousins<sup>80</sup> and Mr. Dexters children.<sup>81</sup>

*Sunday Decr 26th 1847*

A very Cold, but bright day. I got up too late to dress before breakfast. about 10, I was dressed. Went to Kattenhorns where I passed my time in reading and Amusing my Brother in law. Went home to dine. after dinner I went to the post office<sup>82</sup> to deposite a package for Mrs Howe which Cost me 40 cts and which I have allready charged to profit and Loss. Moulinier Came to see me about ½ past 1. we read until ½ past 3, then went to the Cathedral<sup>83</sup> to get hold of Burkhard.<sup>84</sup> we were Successfull, took him along and got him to play the flute part in flute and Guitar Duetts. we had a most Excellent Supper, and about an hour afterwards Punch which was also good. I received an invitation from Mrs Moulinier to dine with them next New Year, which of Course I accepted. I left for home about 9 oclock. found the familly all up yet and enjoying themselves excellently. after they had retired we Gentn Smoked until 10 when we retired also. No Expencc—

*Monday 27th*

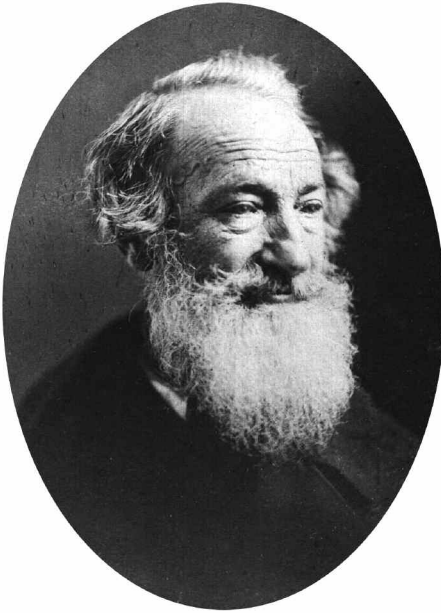
Commerce & Trade made a faire Commencement this Morning. I am nearly all the time occupied with the business of the day. Weather moderated considerably during the day. The Evening I passed with Brown and at his Expencc at the Atheneum. Booth<sup>85</sup> performed the Character of Shylock to the Satisfaction of a large and fashionable Audience, but omitted the last act,<sup>86</sup> which did not Satisfy myself and Brown. To Bed ½ past 10. Exp 50c.

*Tuesday December 28th 1847.*

Weather moderate again. Business however does not moderate because the Weather is doing so. The Evening I passed entirely at home with my french Teacher. we had a long lesson. from 10 to 11 I Smoked with B[rown] & D[elamater]. Exp 25c for french Book

*Wednesday 29th*

Weather is quite mild and moderate. thawing fast. whiskey is declining again. Business very good—plenty to do. I gave a Small party to the Gentleman part of our Establishment at Bradley's office.<sup>87</sup> we played Euchre and drank of course we had some fine Cakes with it. we kept going until ½ past 10, when we retired being driven out of our retreat by the Ladies of our Establishment with fire crackers and torpedoes and other destructive missiles. Exp 70.



Edmund Dexter (1801–62), c. 1860. Dexter took young Mersman on as an apprentice at age 14, for a ten-year apprenticeship. Under Dexter, he learned whiskey distilling and rectifying, as well as good business practices. (Cincinnati Museum Center–Cincinnati Historical Society Library.)

*Thursday 30.*

Business good. Weather dirty and Sloppy, raining at intervals. After supper I and Mr Dow amused ourselves with playing some duetts. afterward I joined the girls who were playing in the Parlour we amused ourselves Capittally until the Old folks came home. To Bed 12. Exp 15.

*Friday 31st*

To night the *Liedertafel* gave a ball. I did not feel like going, not having had time to attend the Singing Meetings. I went with Brown to the Atheneum. *The Naied Queen* was performed by Miss Logan.<sup>88</sup> I amused myself very well. Brown did'nt. To Bed 11. Exp 30.

NOTES

1. In addition, Cincinnati had some three hundred small hotels and taverns, many of which provided lodging (CCD 1848–49, 23–27, 117–22).

2. Mrs. Jenkins was not unusual. Of the 163 boardinghouses listed in the city directory, sixty-two (37 percent) had female proprietors (CCD 1848–49, 23–27).

3. USC 1850, M432, roll 687, page 155, lines 1–12; page 317, lines 27–32.

4. A clerk in Edmund Dexter's wholesale business, JJM rectified domestic whiskey and also sold imported spirits (CCD 1842, 29).

5. See the Annotated List of Persons, Places, and Businesses and map 3.
6. By November 1847, Louis Drach had relocated his food and drink business from 289 Main Street to the Bellevue House, north of the city. See map 2. No tavern called “Mike’s Headquarters” is listed in the CCD; that may be a name derived from a bartender at the establishment (CCD 1846, 149; CCD 1848–49, 118).
7. JJM drew a tiny hand in the original text here and in the following entry.
8. JJM hired Charles Moulinier to tutor him in French so that he could communicate better with businessmen in New Orleans and St. Louis.
9. JJM’s older sister Elizabeth, wife of grocer Arnd Kattenhorn and the mother of four children (Louisa, Sophia, Henrietta, and Arnd Jr.), assumed a maternal role for her younger siblings (Henry, Joseph, Agnes, and Frank) after their mother’s death in 1833. See the Annotated List of Persons, Places, and Businesses.
10. Henry Mersman’s business, styled as Nulsen & Mersman, sold cigars and other tobacco products at a shop at 210 Main Street. See map 4 (CCD 1848–49, 57).
11. Principé cigars, thinner and shorter than others, provided a brief smoke.
12. Likely Mary Jane Jenkins and Mary Price, teenagers at Mrs. Jenkins’s Boarding House.
13. The William Tell Restaurant. See the Annotated List of Persons, Places, and Businesses and map 5 (CCD 1848–49, 63).
14. Possibly the younger Menzel, Jacob, a tobacconist with many talents.
15. Julia Corbin and her sister Mary Corbin were JJM’s friends. See map 4.
16. Fanny Jenkins.
17. John Milton (1608–74), English poet and prose writer, is famous for his masterpiece, *Paradise Lost* (1667) (Siepmann, 652).
18. They attended the wedding ball mentioned 14 November 1847.
19. Edmund Dexter routinely shipped large quantities of whiskey to ports along the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. See map 1.
20. It was common to refer to family members formally as “Mr.” or “Mrs.” An etiquette book of the era noted: “It is low-bred also to say ‘my husband,’ ‘my wife’ or, except amongst relatives, to use the Christian name only, in speaking of husband or wife. Speak of your own husband or wife as, ‘Mr.’ or ‘Mrs. B.,’ and of your friends also by the surname prefix as ‘Remember me to Mr. or Mrs. D.’ (Frost, 46).
21. The Sable Harmonists, a minstrel group of six to eight Caucasian men in blackface who toured major American cities, played folk music on banjos, violins, guitar, accordion, tambourine, and bone castanets. Original conundrums, quaint sayings, and comic lectures added to the evening’s entertainment (ANY, 5:392, 394, 410; ENQ, 20 November 1847).
22. Elizabeth Kattenhorn and her husband, Arnd, welcomed JJM’s extended family (his father, siblings, their spouses, and children) for dinner each Sunday at their home on Seventh Street between Main and Walnut Streets (CCD 1849–50, 159).
23. Julia Corbin.
24. The identity of this woman (perhaps Miss Dorothea Carrman or Karrman) has not been positively established.
25. [Fr.] creatures.
26. The National Theatre featured a comedy, *Follies of a Night*, a drama, *The Imp of the Elements*, and a burlesque, *The Humpback*. See map 5 (COM, 23 November 1847).
27. Commercial sex workers frequented the third tier of theaters, where there were opportunities to solicit clients. During performances, audience members often wandered about, talking with friends and making arrangements for later assignations (Hill [1], 134–35, 199–206; Gilfoyle, 109–12; Cohen, 77–78).
28. Possibly Miss Bruce, who also performed at the National Theatre that evening. Nothing more has been discovered about that actor, whose career seems to have been local and limited.
29. Mr. Ireland has not been further identified.
30. “Make love” was understood in the nineteenth century to mean to pay amorous attention, flirt, or practice coquetry. No sexual activity was implied (OED, s.v. “love”).

31. "Coming out" marked the formal entry into society upon reaching womanhood, i.e., becoming eligible for courtship (OED, s.v. "come").

32. Mayle Larkin.

33. The Athenaeum, another of Cincinnati's three theaters, scheduled touring actors as well as local talent. See map 5. That evening's bill included *Rip Van Winkle*, *Henry IV*, *Monsieur Mallet or The Post Office Mistake*, and concluded with the farce *Nick, The Cabman* (COM, 27 November 1847).

34. One of William Shakespeare's (1564–1616) best-loved characters, Sir John Falstaff is a drunkard who befriends young Prince Hal in *Henry IV, Part I*.

35. Henry Mersman. See map 4.

36. JJM's choice of words may reflect the general interest in classical civilizations that was fashionable, or it may indicate his knowledge of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*: "Therein, ye gods, you make the weak most strong; / Therein, ye gods, you tyrants do defeat" (1.3.91–92)

Although he lacked formal education, JJM attended plays including *Richard III*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *King Lear*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, and *Much Ado about Nothing*. JJM's exposure to theatrical language appears to influence his choice of words. For example, in chapter 9, he quotes from *Hamlet* while describing an epidemic.

37. JJM uses the term "Bradley's office" in a jocular fashion to refer to Mr. Bradley's room in the boardinghouse.

38. A lock of hair could be a keepsake for an admirer. Mary Jane Jenkins, some eight years younger than JJM, was playing the role of Cupid for Mary Price.

39. *Les Danseuses Viennoises*, a troupe of four dozen ballet dancers from Europe, toured the United States to great acclaim in 1848 (ANY, 5:256, 258, 260, 324).

40. See note 27.

41. The Koch brothers, Henry (John Heinrich) and John D., lived together. See map 4.

42. Fritz Tappe.

43. JJM refers to Mary Jane Jenkins and Mary Price. In the United States, from approximately 1846 to 1866, a "b'hoy" was understood to be a town rowdy, and a "g'hal" was the female companion of such a character. The spelling attempts to replicate the lower-class dialect, as popularized by the play *A Glance at New York in 1848*. JJM saw these spellings in newspapers of the time (Peters, 306–7; ENQ, 7 August 1848).

44. Mrs. Jenkins was waiting for Fanny Jenkins.

45. [Fr.] lesson.

46. On Saturdays, JJM tallied the records for Mr. Dexter's business, summarizing weekly income and expenses.

47. Few mid-nineteenth-century households had the plumbing required for bathing. Cincinnati had at least three large public bath houses: the Arcade Bath House, the Eagle Bath House, and Watson's Bath House. They provided warm and cold baths, shaving, hair-cutting, and shampooing services. See map 3 (CCD 1848–49, 19; COM, 23 March 1848; ENQ, 29 July 1848).

48. On 5, 6, 11, 13, 15, 18, and 20 December 1847, JJM incorrectly wrote "Novr" as the month.

49. The home of Elizabeth Kattenhorn.

50. Frederick Mersman, JJM's father, widowed in 1833, remained single for the rest of his life.

51. Eighteen-year-old Frank Mersman, JJM's youngest brother, worked wherever he could find employment as a laborer. At this time, he was in St. Louis.

52. Within the family and among close friends, the Mersmans likely spoke German. Although the father may have been able to write in German, Frank, who was only four years old when he left Oldenburg, probably could not read it. Therefore, JJM likely wrote letters in English to help his father communicate with Frank.

53. Agnes Lake, JJM's younger sister and wife of circus clown Bill Lake, was traveling with Rockwell's Circus, performing as an equestrian (MOR, 15 November 1847).

54. "Koch Senior," refers to the older Koch brother, John Heinrich. See note 41.

55. Elisabet Friedeborn married John Heinrich Koch on 4 May 1848 in Cincinnati (Hamilton County Marriage Records, A-19:403).

56. "Phiz," an abbreviation for "physiognomy," meaning face, countenance, expression, or some aspect of the face (OED, s.v. "phiz").

57. The *Liedertafel*.

58. Whist, a card game for four players divided into two partnerships, was a predecessor of bridge (Hoyle, 93–95; Beaver [2], 104–5).

59. *King of the Commons*, written by James White (1803–62), was first performed in 1846.

60. No information about a card game named “Cousini” has been found. Perhaps JJM was referring to casino, a card game for two, three, or four players (Hoyle 409–15).

61. The flood of 1847 crested on 17 December, at a point within six inches of the record set in February 1832. The 1832 flood resulted in two Cincinnati deaths, while the 1847 flood, despite widespread property damage, claimed no lives (HOC 82, 96).

62. Raised as a Roman Catholic, JJM attended a Methodist Church on this Sunday to hear Mr. Moffitt’s sermon.

63. Front Street, the second street north of the river, was just one city block south of Edmund Dexter’s store. See map 4.

64. Mary Jane Jenkins and Mary Price.

65. In 1846, Dexter’s business was on the corner of Lower Market Street and Produce Row. By 1848, he had relocated to the west side of Sycamore Street between Columbia and Lower Market streets. See map 4 (CCD 1846, 143; CCD 1848–49, 180).

66. During the emergency, a laborer could earn five dollars for a ten-hour day of work. In comparison, JJM’s wages were approximately two dollars per day (an annual salary of seven hundred dollars).

67. Edmund Dexter used stills to rectify whiskey. The flood temporarily interrupted production.

68. *The Elder Brother*, written by John Fletcher (1579–1625) and Philip Massinger (1583–1639), was first performed in 1625 (<http://search.eb.com/shakespeare/micro/380/24/html>, and <http://search.eb.com/shakespeare/micro/211/91.html>).

69. Mary Jane Jenkins and Mary Price.

70. A benefit performance was one in which a major portion of the receipts was given to a designated actor or performer (OED, s.v. “benefit”). The benefit night was generally the night before the termination of the engagement (Weisert, iv).

71. *The Lady of Lyons* (1838) was written by Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803–73); for information about *The Elder Brother*, see note 70 above.

72. Because theatrical performances typically included multiple plays as well as singing and dancing acts, shows commonly lasted until midnight (Foster, 112).

73. Because of the flood, the Covington-Cincinnati ferryboat was unable to get close to its usual mooring. Therefore, JJM had to take a rowboat out from the water’s edge to board the larger ferryboat and make the crossing.

74. The residence of Arnd Kattenhorn. See map 4.

75. Eggnog (or egg-nogg), a beverage made with eggs stirred into hot beer, cider, wine, or spirits, was popular during cold-weather months (OED, s.v. “egg-nog”).

76. Probably Carrman’s or Karrman’s home. See map 4.

77. Frederick Honkomp operated the Second Ward House. See map 5.

78. Euchre, a card game for two to seven players, was extremely popular in the United States during the nineteenth century (Hoyle, 237–41; Beaver [2], 106–9).

79. Torpedoes, toys made of explosive powder and fine gravel wrapped in paper, made loud noises when thrown against a hard surface (OED, s.v. “torpedo”).

80. JJM’s paternal uncle, John Henry Mersman (1794–1867), known in Oldenburg as Johann Heinrich Messmann, came to America in 1836 with his wife, Maria Elizabeth, née Schroeder, and settled in Cincinnati. The couple had at least three children, JJM’s cousins: seventeen-year-old Marianne, fifteen-year-old John Henry, and six-year-old Samuel Alexander (VOL, 23 September 1867; USC 1850, M432, roll 691, page 14, lines 9–13).

81. On this Christmas, Mr. Dexter’s small children included three-year-old Adolphus and five-year-old Julius (USC 1850, M432, roll 687, page 100, line 15).

82. The United States Postal Service charged ten cents per half ounce for letters sent over three hundred miles. For half-ounce letters to California or Oregon, the charge was forty cents (ENQ, 21 February 1849).

83. St. Peter in Chains Cathedral. See map 3.

84. One of the two Burckhardt brothers, probably the younger, Leopold.

85. That night, Junius Brutus Booth appeared in two plays: *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare, and a farce, *The Review* (COM, 27 December 1847).

86. As a result of time constraints, performing only part of a Shakespearian play was a common practice in the 1840s.

87. See note 37.

88. Eliza Logan appeared in the *The Naiad Queen* (1839) by J. S. Dalrymple (COM, 31 December 1847).