

THE
HUDSON
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VALLEY
REVIEW

A Journal of Regional Studies

MARIST

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From the Publisher

While not a formally themed issue, we have the pleasure of including three articles on women's history. Moving chronologically, we begin with a reexamination of the role of women in seventeenth-century New Netherland and New York. We continue with an article on the 1895 Woman Suffrage Convention in Newburgh. This topic is rounded out with a discussion of municipal reform in Poughkeepsie at the turn of the twentieth century. The same women who spearheaded that campaign went on to found the influential Women's City and County Club. Our fourth article is an illuminating look at the political and economic factors that led to the beginning of banking in nineteenth-century Newburgh. (Which means the great Orange County city is another mini-theme of this issue.) We also present two Regional History Forums, one highlighting Thomas Cole's Cedar Grove, the other Clermont State Historic Site's upcoming Steamboat Bicentennial exhibition. We finish with four book reviews and a listing of new and noteworthy titles about the valley.

Thomas S. Wermuth



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The Hudson River Valley Review is anxious to consider essays on all aspects of the Hudson Valley—its intellectual, political, economic, social, and cultural history, its prehistory, architecture, literature, art, and music—as well as essays on the ideas and ideologies of regionalism itself.

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On the cover: Johann Hermann Carmiencke's *The Hudson River at Hyde Park, New York, 1856*, Oil on canvas, 36 x 50 inches. Friends of American Art Purchase, 2005. Reproduction courtesy of The Orlando Museum of Art, which owns the painting. Photograph ©The Orlando Museum of Art.



HISTORIC HUDSON VALLEY, TARRYTOWN, NY, GIFT OF JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, JR., PM, 80.1 A-B.

Margaret Philipse, 1733-1752
by John Wollaston, c.1750, Oil on canvas, 29 x 24 inches

Toward a More Inclusive History of Early American Women

The Example of Married Women in New Netherland and New York in the Seventeenth Century

Michael Gherke

“... it seems perfectly clear that the dogma of woman’s complete subjection to man must be regarded as one of the most fantastic myths ever created by the human mind.”¹

In February 2000, Mary Beth Norton, a well-known, highly regarded historian and prolific writer about women and gender in early America, applauded American historians for their growing acceptance of women as valid subjects for historical investigation. However, she lamented that historians of women and gender had not brought about a reconceptualization of American history.²

I suggest that part of the reason for their limited effectiveness is failure to stretch the boundaries of ethnic diversity to include subtle cultural differences in the meaning of gender for women in the early modern European countries from which immigrants came to America. Although some scholars have focused their efforts on gender distinctions among African American, Native American, and other disaffected groups, European diversity in meaning of gender for women has not received adequate attention.³ Consequently, scholarly interpretations about the lives of non-English early colonial American women are inaccurately based on gender paradigms more true for early modern England than they are for other European countries.⁴ While the vigor with which the English acquired demographic, political, legal, and other hegemony over colonial North America left powerful cultural baggage in its wake that greatly influenced the development of American society, Americans also were influenced by the cultures of other European nations. Importantly, while English hegemony in North America was ascendant in the seventeenth century, it had not yet matured.⁵

Over the past four decades, a few scholars have encouraged greater attention to the Dutch in American history.⁶ This article defends that position by emphasizing the need for historians to recognize variations in the meaning of gender for women among the several cultures from which Europeans immigrated to America in the seventeenth century. Specifically, this article addresses practical application of Dutch gender roles for women that emanated from the pre-Reformation middle ages, tolerance as a Dutch culture trait, and the golden age of Dutch commerce.⁷

As with other aspects of New Netherland society, Dutch cultural influence on gender roles began to diminish after English expropriation of the colony.⁸ Sir Richard Nicolls' arrival in New York Harbor in October 1664, when he demanded the surrender of New Netherland, inaugurated a process of continuing growth of anglicized institutions that occurred as much as a result of increased English immigration as it did military conquest.⁹ However, despite the force with which New York became anglicized, remnants of Dutch cultural definitions of gender for women continued in hybrid form, particularly in regard to law.¹⁰ Elements of Dutch culture continued into the nineteenth century and, through contributions to American English language, remain.¹¹ Dutch enthusiasm for commerce was similarly passed on to future generations of New Yorkers, but contributions by New Netherland women in building the foundations of New York commerce are little acknowledged.¹²

English seizure of New Netherland in 1664 and permanent English acquisition of the colony by the Treaty of Westminster in 1674 was a watershed for women, but was less noticeable at the time than it would later be during the ascendance of patriarchal English common law. After 1674, New York grew legally and culturally more circumscriptive women, married women in particular.¹³ Nevertheless, women traders continued to flourish prior to 1750. In addition, they did so without a formal declaration of *femme sole trader*, which was mandated by English law.¹⁴ Moreover, many displayed an assertiveness and dedication to responsibility uncommon for either sex. This was certainly as accurate for Mary Alexander in the eighteenth century as it was for Margaret Hardenbroeck Philipse in the seventeenth.¹⁵

The assertiveness with which women of New Netherland and early colonial New York participated in commerce offers a contrast to the conventional views of early American women as little more than appendages to their presumably more aggressive, business-minded husbands. Owing to Dutch cultural precedent, married female merchant-traders and shopkeepers in New Netherland and early colonial New York often performed duties for their husbands consistent with co-partners, rather than acting independently or merely as assistants. Consequently,

the authority necessary for New Netherland women to successfully conduct commerce also found expression in the ways they asserted power within families, particularly in regard to decision-making. Nevertheless, wives' expressions of authority through commerce must not be viewed as outside the perceived bounds of conventional domesticity as it existed for the early modern Dutch. In the seventeenth-century Dutch psyche, the authority that wives employed in commerce translated into greater responsibility for promoting and protecting the economic and social integrity of their families. This was owing to seventeenth-century Dutch concepts of marriage and their understanding of marital partnership.

When Jeremias van Rensselaer, director of the Rensselaerwijck patroonship, informed his family back in the Netherlands of his impending marriage to Maria van Cortlandt in 1662, he referred to her as a "good partner."¹⁶ While it is likely Jeremias desired to assuage any bitter feelings his mother, Anna van Rensselaer, may have had for being excluded from his decision to marry, I contend he was expressing more than hyperbole or reference to biblical imperatives intended to reassure his mother, who had earlier doubted the sincerity of Jeremias' acceptance of the Reformed faith.¹⁷ Partnership defined the legal and social understanding of marital unions for most people in the Netherlands and New Netherland in the seventeenth century. Moreover, although New Netherland's population was culturally diverse, the colony was a creation of Dutch entrepreneurs whose culture of commerce shaped the attitudes of many of the colony's inhabitants.¹⁸

The necessity of a charter from the States General of the Netherlands meant that Roman-Dutch law, the same legal system that applied in the United Provinces of the Netherlands, governed New Netherland. In appearance, the law was little different from the highly patriarchal common law of England. Under Roman-Dutch law in the seventeenth-century, married women suffered legal limitations in ways that any housewife in early modern England would have understood. However, other areas of Roman-Dutch law affecting women would have been alien to them.

Historic cultural and pecuniary distinctions and extraordinary political, religious, and economic events in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries provided opportunities for married women to assert authority beyond hearth and home. Precisely, emphasis on traditional roles related to marriage and motherhood prevailed in the Netherlands and New Netherland, but as the Dutch provinces experienced profound religious and economic changes, social and legal perceptions of domesticity changed.

The primary economic activity in the early modern Netherlands was agriculture, but the country's geographic location in the northwest corner of Europe and

its cosmopolitan population fostered an economic climate conducive to commerce. For example, in the fifteenth century, several cities in the northern Dutch states were members of the Hanseatic League.¹⁹ In that period, the relationship between married women and commerce was subtle. Simon Schama revealed that many businesses and trades in the Netherlands were small and conducted from carefully delineated areas of Dutch homes.²⁰ Consequently, management of trade overlapped with domestic responsibilities and as a result added to wives' "domestic" obligations. Resourceful wives managed family enterprises in ways that did not conflict with domestic responsibilities associated with childcare, food preparation, and house cleaning. From this foundation, particularly adept women generated prosperity that accelerated when fundamental social, religious, and economic changes occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Almost simultaneously, people in the northern provinces of the Netherlands met the challenges of political independence from the Spanish Habsburgs, a Protestant Reformation that established the Calvinist-based Dutch Reformed Church, and a commercial revolution that greatly increased the wealth of the country but also produced a collective spiritual anxiety. As a result of these events, latter -sixteenth and seventeenth-century Dutch society in the United Provinces expressed a longing for stability found in religious and social convention. But the society was unable to renounce inherently destabilizing cultural characteristics such as religious toleration and new opportunities for accumulation of wealth through commerce.²¹

Traditional economic activities like agriculture and local trade provided a fertile environment for expanded responsibilities for married women. Even more influential was the commercial revolution that enriched the northern Dutch provinces in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Hugo Grotius, the distinguished seventeenth-century Dutch jurist, better known for his writing on international law, provided the connection between wives' domesticity and the golden age of commerce in his writing on the jurisprudence of Holland. With his commentary on the former limited authority of married women, he wrote,

“...a married woman may not appear in court except as authorized by her husband; may not alienate or encumber her husband's property or her own; may not contract debts to bind herself or her husband: except in times of old, a husband whose wife was wont to bake or brew, might lose by her an oven-ful of bread, or a brew of beer, without the husband being able to do anything against it: likewise, if a man's wife was wont to sell or buy woollen yarn or linen, he might lose by her a stone-weight: even if the wife

did not carry on a public trade, her husband might suffer to the extent of four pennies. This seemed enough in view of the conditions then existing, but later, *the commerce and wealth of the country being greatly increased, the principle was extended, so that, to-day, a married woman, engaged in public commerce or trade, may contract in all matters relating thereto, and consequently may bind herself and her husband, and alienate and encumber her stock.*"²²

Owing to the flexibility of Roman-Dutch laws, ambiguities in their application, and change over time, legalities are imperfect measures of social conditions existing in a specific time and place. Nevertheless, it is important to examine the function of Roman-Dutch law as it applied to married women in New Netherland and New York in the seventeenth century in order to understand the activities of elite women like Margaret Hardenbroeck Philipse, Maria Van Rensselaer, and others who achieved the status of merchant-traders. Moreover, examination of Roman-Dutch law is helpful in explaining how, despite the apparent severity of the expressions of patriarchy therein, dozens of other New Netherland and early colonial New York wives of lower status were able to assume extraordinary responsibilities that sometimes challenged the authority of males.

Roman-Dutch law contained patriarchal elements that circumscribed the activities of wives, but as the above quote by Grotius indicates, as the pace of commerce increased, Roman-Dutch law grew more flexible in regard to married women's participation in trade. As a result, wives were able to assume authority that combined traditional marital roles with opportunities to enrich their families and, hence, themselves. Importantly, as several historians have noted, under Roman-Dutch law affianced women had two fundamental options during marriage. They could choose *sub tutela*, which gave them little more than the rights of a minor. (For purposes of comparison, it was similar to the status of married women under English common law.) However, they also had the option of a community-of-goods arrangement, in which the property of both spouses formed a common pool from which each partner could experience enrichment or loss. Many women in New Netherland took advantage of this.²³

Community of goods was essential to the advancement of women's exercise of authority in commerce in the Netherlands and New Netherland. According to Grotius, under community of goods, married women who were traders were able to "contract, buy, sell, and, if necessary, borrow money."²⁴ However, it is possible that New Netherland historians have assigned too much significance to the legal requirement, as indicated by Grotius, that wives obtain written or verbal permission from their husbands to appear in court.²⁵ Recorded instances in New Netherland in which wives' authority to represent their families or their families'

businesses are so few as to indicate the law was becoming antiquated.

Owing to their enrichment, preference, indifference, or unknown reasons, some New Netherland husbands were content to give their wives full responsibility over finances, which, in their minds, may have absolved them of responsibility for maintaining accurate accounts. One such husband was Jan Harmensen, a New Netherland cooper. In January 1654, in the first session of the year for the Court of Burgomasters and Schepens of New Amsterdam, Adriaen Keysar, former Dutch West India Company commissary for New Netherland, sued several people for unpaid debts.²⁶ Harmensen was one of the defendants; Keysar asserted the cooper owed him *f*49.12 (forty-nine florins and twelve stuivers) on a two-year-old debt. When the magistrates asked Harmensen about it, he acknowledged making the debt, but suggested his absent wife, Annetje Pieters, knew more about it than he did. Specifically, he stated, “there was something due at that time, but as [my] wife has gone to fatherland, [I] do not know if she paid [it].” He then requested a postponement until after his wife’s return, which the magistrates turned down. Instead, they ordered him to pay the amount Keysar could prove that he owed.²⁷

Unfortunately, court minutes from New Netherland and early colonial New York are seldom as informative as they are in Keysar’s suit against Harmensen. However, they abound in cases in which wives represented themselves and their husbands and families in commercial suits. Unlike Connecticut, in which married women usually appeared in court for suits unrelated to trade, many New Netherland wives legally protected their families’ financial interests.²⁸

One of the most interesting suits that illustrates the authority of married women to protect financial interests—and in so doing to challenge the social foundations of patriarchy—was a suit involving a married tradeswoman and the previously mentioned Jan Harmensen. Seventeen years after Keysar’s suit against him, on June 6, 1671, Harmensen found himself once again a defendant in a civil suit in the same municipal court (the name of which had been changed to the New York City Mayor’s Court after the English seizure of the colony.) A New York City shopkeeper, identified in the record only as “Mrs. Anthonie,” sued Harmensen for *f*25 she paid him for a butter churn that, she testified, “was not merchantable.”²⁹

Perhaps recognizing that Anthonie’s suit threatened his livelihood, or possibly owing to confidence or pride in his skill as an artisan, Harmensen contested her claim. Interestingly, the magistrates turned to arbitration, a procedure more common under Roman-Dutch law than English law. Specifically, they appointed “two independent coopers,” Jan Jansen van Brestede and Evert Wessels, to examine the churn and, “in case they do not find the same merchantable, they

order the deft. to return the money, but being found merchantable, the pltf. shall be bound to receive the churn.”³⁰

Anthonie’s suit is significant for what it indicates about legal and social perceptions of gender and its connection to commerce. The suit gives the impression that law was oblivious to the sex of the litigants. Mrs. Anthonie appears in the record not as a woman or wife, but as a merchant. Yet, her challenge to the quality of Harmensen’s work may have harmed his reputation and, consequently, his livelihood. Although there was high demand for skilled coopers in colonial America, particularly among a commercially oriented population, those who acquired a reputation for substandard work were likely to see business decline and, possibly, suspension of permission by civil authorities to carry on their trade.

In making churns, barrels, and other containers that were so important to life in preindustrial America, Jan Harmensen practiced a craft with a rich tradition and long history dating to early Middle Eastern civilizations. He may have developed his skill under the watchful eye of his father or a master cooper to whom he was apprenticed. From his teacher, he acquired knowledge about the special characteristics of different kinds of tools and wood. However, experience gave Harmensen the skill to ply his trade.

Nevertheless, it is highly unlikely Harmensen knew how to make butter with the churn he sold to Anthonie. Butter-making was also a specialized talent that required experience and knowledge. Owing to the importance of butter fat in the colonial diet, butter-making was rarely the responsibility of children or servants. Most often, it was the responsibility of the female head of the household.³¹

Yet, since the suit against Harmensen is the only available record of Mrs. Anthonie, we cannot know the extent of her domestic responsibilities, and therefore the extent of her knowledge in carrying them out. However, three details about her life emerge from the suit and provide a solid basis for hypothesis: she was married; she was directly involved in trade; and she independently brought suit against Harmensen—that is, without assistance from her husband or another male. These facts establish levels of responsibility, autonomy, and ability consistent with other married women found in the records of New Netherland and New York in the seventeenth century.

The combination of Dutch concepts of marital partnership, women’s participation in commerce, and laws that recognized married women’s exercise of authority in commercial transactions caused some women to rise above the levels of responsibility and material comforts of others. Consequently, they were able to maintain and develop enterprises that were valuable to themselves, their families, and the local and budding global economies. Owing to conditions that

allowed and even encouraged their participation in commerce, some women developed personal qualities necessary to build financially secure business enterprises. Margaret Hardenbroeck-Philipse and Maria Van Rensselaer entered what was then, and largely remains today, the domain of men. Nevertheless, owing to their abilities and acumen, they succeeded more often than failed in commercial ventures. And their sex, combined with a resolve to succeed, caused them to be scorned by purveyors of morality in their own time, and, in the present age, makes historians reluctant to ascribe to them the “masculine” characteristics they certainly possessed.³²

Jasper Dankers was a member of an obscure Protestant sect that followed the teaching of Jean de Labadie. In 1679, he and Pieter Sluyter were sent from Amsterdam to New York by their fellow Labadists to scout the colony and adjacent environs for a suitable place to locate the sect in America. On June 8, Sluyter and Dankers contracted with Margaret Hardenbroeck-Philipse, owner of the *King Charles*, for passage to New York.

Several weeks into the voyage, a girl dropped a mop overboard while rinsing it. Hardenbroeck-Philipse ordered the captain to stop the ship and send out members of the crew to retrieve the item. According to Dankers, the effort “delayed the whole voyage, seaman be sent roving at the risk of their lives; we, with all the rest, must work fruitlessly for an hour or an hour and a half, and all that merely to satisfy and please the miserable covetousness of Margaret.”³³ In other places in the journal, Dankers refers to Hardenbroeck-Philipse as parsimonious, a cheat, and avaricious, but lest we accept Dankers’ opinion without reservation, earlier in the same voyage he had a disagreement with her. Moreover, he was not beyond cheating customs officials when the ship stopped in Falmouth, England, and he handled a situation so poorly in an incident over a boat that he resorted to physical violence.³⁴ Thus, he was not necessarily the best judge of character.

Regardless of Dankers’ flaws, if we ignore his prejudices and remember that Margaret Hardenbroeck-Philipse’s industry helped propel the financial and political career of her second husband, Frederick Philipse, she comes across more favorably. Moreover, Dankers’ contacts with Hardenbroeck-Philipse begs the question: If she had been male, would his judgments of her have been as harsh?

Another extraordinary woman of New Netherland and early colonial New York who has received too little attention from historians is Maria Van Rensselaer, wife, then widow, of Jeremias Van Rensselaer. Like Margaret Hardenbroeck-Philipse, Maria Van Rensselaer possessed qualities of character that enabled her to persevere in managing and maintaining the vast holdings of the Van Rensselaer family in colonial New York long after her husband’s death. Beyond management

of the patroonship brewery, it is unknown how much responsibility and authority she exercised during her marriage to Jeremias. However, her successful administration of Rensselaerwijck during very difficult circumstances after his death suggests she was intimately involved with those duties during their marriage.

In her efforts to manage the patroonship, Van Rensselaer's letters reveal her frequent frustration with others, yet she did not retreat from her responsibilities. For example, she preserved the patroonship during the proprietorship period of New York history. She did so with a mixture of charm and informed decisiveness, responding to changing political circumstances through influential contacts in the Netherlands and by entertaining colonial officials.³⁵ The patroonship was rarely profitable before the death of Jeremias and its solvency was precarious thereafter, but her efforts were enough to keep it intact during her life. In addition to inheriting the fiscal problems of the patroonship, Maria was required to answer the complaints of those in the Netherlands who had invested in it, and from the acquisitive Robert Livingston, who tried to wrest it from her.³⁶ Further, she conducted her affairs while suffering from a debilitating illness.³⁷

Following her first pregnancy, Maria Van Rensselaer fell ill to a disease that may have been septic arthritis compounded by osteomyelitis of the femur, both of which were further aggravated by palliatives she received based on mistaken beliefs about the nature of the diseases. Jasper Dankers made mention of a visit to Maria in 1680. He wrote, "in her last child-bed, she became lame or weak in both of her sides, so that she had to walk with two canes or crutches." However, he also revealed her management abilities while consumed with the effects of the diseases, writing: "We went to look at several of her mills at work, which she had there on an ever-running stream, grist mills, saw-mills, and others."³⁸

Margaret Hardenbroeck-Philipse and Maria Van Rensselaer had a great deal in common. Certainly, they were among the elite, but as women they managed extraordinary responsibilities in the formative years of New York's continuing commercial development before and after English annexation of New Netherland. Significantly, their names are rarely listed among those of men who contributed to the foundations of New York's commercial wealth.

However, there is another similarity between Hardenbroeck-Philipse and Van Rensselaer. They were both mothers. In addition to Dankers and Sluyter, Hardenbroeck-Philipse's daughter from a previous marriage was on board the *King Charles* when it sailed to America in 1679.³⁹ Therefore, Margaret's responsibilities included that of a parent attending to her child's education in commerce, which she conveyed by example. In addition, it is likely that Maria Van Rensselaer's efforts to save Rensselaerwijck in the face of debilitating illness were motivated

by consideration for her six children.

While Maria Van Rensselaer and Margaret Hardenbroeck-Philipse were elite women who, owing to that fact, left correspondence, they revealed characteristics in common with non-elite women. Women like Annetje Pieters, wife of cooper Jan Harmensen, and the shopkeeper Mrs. Anthonie demonstrated characteristics in commerce that, while not on the scale of merchant-trader, were similar to those of elite women. Like Hardenbroeck-Philipse and Van Rensselaer, Pieters and Anthonie exercised responsibilities and authority in a seventeenth-century culture that valued entrepreneurial efforts by women.⁴⁰ Yet, they were also married women whose efforts in the marketplaces and courtrooms were consistent with the early modern Dutch concept of marital partnership.

As the more restrictive patriarchal characteristics of English culture gained increasing hegemony through application of English law in New York, the commercial activities of married women faded behind the English legal concept of *femme covert*. Yet, they occasionally surfaced. Jean Jordan's study of eighteenth-century newspaper advertisements revealed a wealth of tantalizing suggestions about continuing involvement in commerce by married women.⁴¹ Interestingly, Jordan began her article with a letter to the editor published in John Peter Zenger's *New York Weekly Journal* in 1734. In it, a group of "she-merchants" complained about the lack of attention from the colony's political leaders.⁴² Seventy years earlier, in a legal assignment of power of attorney, Margaret Hardenbroeck-Philipse referred to Trijntje Willems, the person she chose to represent her interests in her absence, as a *koopvrouwe*. Translated, it means she-merchant.⁴³

It is unfortunate that writers of early American history have neglected women in New Netherland and early New York. The quote at the beginning of this article came from Mary Ritter Beard, perhaps the first professional feminist historian. In her denial of the subjection of women to men, she was specifically referring the ameliorating effects of equity in English law as it applied in the American colonies. However, it also reveals that the further historians go in their investigations of early American women, the more opportunities to examine and understand the lives of those women become available. Mary Beth Norton was correct to praise American historians for their increased acceptance of women as subjects for study. Without the efforts of Norton and others, this change would not have taken place. However, regarding her lament about failure to achieve a reconceptualization of American history, resistance to paradigmatic changes by historians continues to plague the history profession. When professional historians release their predilections for status quo history and allow women, minorities, and non-English early colonial Americans equal consideration, inter-

pretations will become more accurate and have the potential to influence future directions of American history.⁴⁴

Endnotes

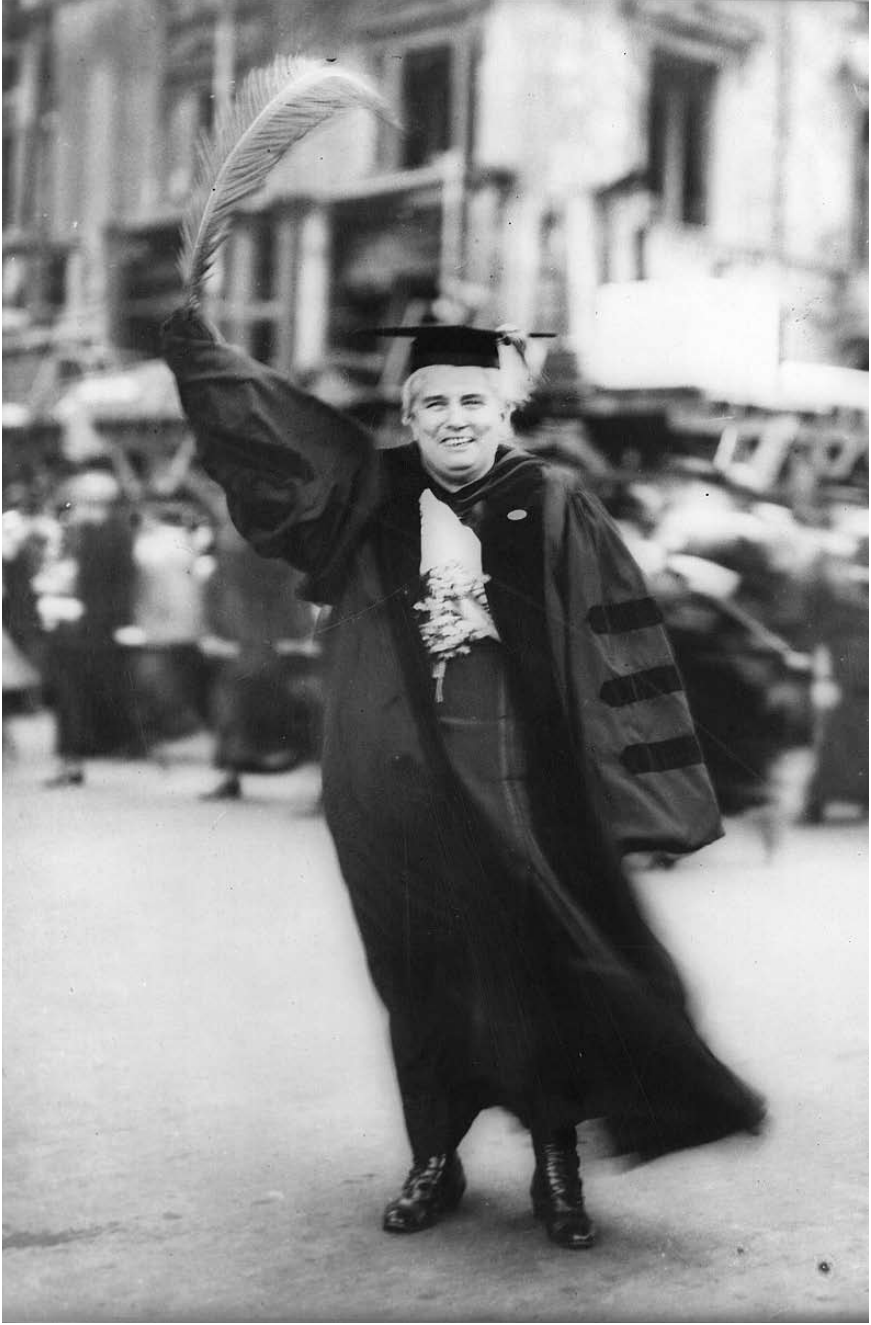
- 1 Mary Ritter Beard, *Women as a Force in History: A Study in Traditions and Realities* (New York, Macmillan, 1946), 144.
- 2 Mary Beth Norton, "From Parts to Whole," *The Women's Review of Books*, 17, no. 5 (Feb. 2000), 16.
- 3 A brief list of recent studies and commentaries about women and gender among African American and Native American societies includes, Carol Devers, *Countering Colonization: Native American Women and Great Lakes Missions, 1630-1900* (Berkeley, CA, UC Press, 1992); Michael Fickes, "They could not endure that yoke': The Captivity of Pequot Women and Children after the War of 1637," *New England Quarterly*, 73, no. 1 (March 2000), 58-81; Quintard Taylor and Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, eds. *African American Women Confront the West, 1600-2000* (Norman, OK, University of Oklahoma Press, 2003); Francille Rusan Wilson, "Introduction: New Directions in African American Women's History," *Journal of African American History*, 89, no. 3 (Summer 2004), 199-204; Barbara A. Mann, "The Lynx in Time: Haudenosaunee Women's Traditions and History," *American Indian Quarterly*, 21, no. 3 (Summer 1997), 423-449; Marilyn Norcini, "Interpreting Wabanaki Women's History," *American Anthropologist*, 106, no. 1 (March 2004), 161-164; David Stymeist, "'Strange Wives': Pocahontas in Early Modern Colonial Advertisement," *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, 35, no. 3 (Sept. 2002), 109-127. Historians have long disagreed about the effect of environmental and demographic factors in shaping the character of American concepts of gender for women. See, for example, Richard B. Morris, "Women's Rights in Early American Law," *Studies in the History of American Law: With Special Reference to the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1930), 126-200; Mary Ritter Beard, *On Understanding Women*, (New York, Longmans, Green and Co., 1931); Elisabeth Dexter, *Colonial Women of Affairs: Women in Business and the Professions in America Before 1776*, (Boston, Houghton-Mifflin., 1931); Mary Ritter Beard, *America Through Women's Eyes* (New York, Macmillan, 1933); Beard, *Women as a Force in History*; Julia Cherry Spruill, *Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies* (Chapel Hill, UNC Press, 1938); Herbert Moller, "Sex Composition and Correlated Culture Patterns of Colonial America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3RD Ser., 34 (March 1945), 113-153; Mary Beth Norton, "The Myth of the Golden Age," in Carol R. Berkin & Norton, eds., *Women of America: A History* (1979), 37-46; and, many others.
- 4 See, for example, Martha Dickinson Shattuck, "A Civil Society: Court and Community in Beverwijck, New Netherland, 1652-1664," (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1993), 166, in which in examining the roles of wives in commerce the authors refers to family owned businesses as wives' "husbands' business." While the description is accurate in regard to wives' legal capacity under Roman-Dutch law, it implies that wives duties in commerce were adjunct to those of their husbands and somehow less important; when, in fact, they were often indispensable.
- 5 Oliver A. Rink, "The People of New Netherland: Notes on Non-English Immigration to New York in the Seventeenth Century," *New York History*, no. 1 (Jan. 1981), 5-42: 7. Pieter C. Emmer and Wim Klooster, "The Dutch Atlantic, 1600-1800, Expansion Without Empire," *Itinerario*, 23, no. 2 (1999), 48-69.
- 6 Patricia Bonomi, *A Factious People: Politics and Society in Colonial New York* (New York and London, Columbia University Press, 1971), traced neglect of pre-Revolutionary New York history to Carl Becker, *The History of Political Parties in the Province of New York, 1760-1776* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1909). She asserted that historians subsequent to Becker adopted his assumptions about the insignificance of pre-Revolutionary New Yorkers. See also, Milton Klein, "New York in the American Colonies: A New Look," in Jacob Judd and Irwin Polishook,

- eds., *Aspects of Early New York Society and Politics* (Tarrytown, Sleepy Hollow Restorations, 1974), 8-28; Joyce D. Goodfriend, "Writing/Righting Dutch Colonial History," *New York History*, 80, no. 1 (Jan. 1999), 5-28; a "must read" for anyone interested New Netherland and New York history is, David William Voorhees, "Tying the Loose Ends Together: New Netherland Studies on a Par with the Study of Other Regions," in Goodfriend, *Revisiting New Netherland*, 309-327.
- 7 R. Po-Chia Hsia and Henk van Nierop, eds., "Introduction," *Calvinism and Religious Toleration in the Dutch Golden Age* (Cambridge, University Press, 2002), 9.
 - 8 A few historians have addressed Dutch women in New Netherland and early colonial New York, but as many of the following titles indicate, women's formal legal status dominates. Linda Briggs Beimer, *Women and Property in Colonial New York: The Transition from Dutch to English Law, 1643-1727* (Ann Arbor, UMI, 1983); David E. Narrett, "Dutch Customs of Inheritance, Women, and the Law in Colonial New York City," in William Pencak and Conrad Edick Wright, eds., *Authority and Resistance in Early New York* (New York, New York Historical Society, 1988), 27-45; David E. Narrett, "Men's Wills and Women's Property Rights in Colonial New York," in Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Alberts, eds. *Women in the Age of the American Revolution* (Charlottesville, UVA Press, 1989), 91-133; Firth Haring Fabend, *A Dutch Family in the Middle Colonies, 1600-1800* (New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 1992); David E. Narrett, *Inheritance of Family Life in Colonial New York City*, (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1992); Shattuck, "A Civil Society," 140-191; Susannah Elizabeth Shaw, "Building New Netherland: Gender and Family Ties in a Frontier Society," (Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 2000); Michael E. Gherke, "Dutch Women in New Netherland and New York in the Seventeenth Century," (Ph.D. dissertation, West Virginia University, 2001); Susannah Elizabeth Shaw, "New Light from Old Sources: Finding Women in New Netherland Courtrooms," *de Halve Maen*, 75, no. 1 (2001), 9-14; Firth Haring Fabend, "Sex and the City: Relations Between Men and Women in New Netherland," in Joyce D. Goodfriend, ed., *Revisiting New Netherland: Perspectives on Early Dutch America* (Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2005), 262-283; Jaap Jacobs, *New Netherland: A Dutch Colony in Seventeenth-Century America* (Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2005), passim.
 - 9 Rink, "The People of New Netherland," 42.
 - 10 Perhaps in an effort to minimize confusion that indiscriminate imposition of English common law would create, on March 8, 1665, at a meeting in Hempstead of delegates from various areas of New York, Nicolls presented what became known as the "Duke's laws." Compiled by the provincial secretary, Matthias Nicolls, (who was apparently not related to Richard Nicolls), the Duke's laws were an amalgam containing elements of English common law, variations of English law used in other English colonies like Massachusetts, and Roman-Dutch law. Several historians have reflected on the significance of the period of hybridization of law in proprietary New York; including, Herbert Alan Johnson, "The Advent of Common Law in Colonial New York," in George Athan Billias, ed., *Law and Authority in Colonial America: Selected Essays* (Barre, MA, Barre Publishing, 1965), 71-94; Julius Goebel, Jr., "The Courts and the Law in Colonial New York," in David H. Flaherty, ed., *Essays in the History of Early American Law* (Chapel Hill, UNC Press, 1969), 245-277; Robert C. Ritchie, "The Structure of Government," in *The Duke's Province: A Study of New York Politics and Society, 1664-1691* (Chapel Hill, UNC Press, 1977), 25-46; Lawrence M. Friedman, *A History of American Law* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1985), 44-45; Peter Charles Hoffer, *Law and People in Colonial America* (Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 28-30.
 - 11 Voorhees, "Tying the Loose Ends Together," 314-318.
 - 12 See, for example, Jean P. Jordan, "Women Merchants in Colonial New York," *New York History*, 57, no. 4 (Oct. 1977), 412-439; Deborah A. Rosen, "Mitigating Inequality: Women and Justice in Colonial New York," in Larry Eldridge, ed., *Women and Freedom in Early America* (New York, NYU Press, 1997), 313-329; Deborah A. Rosen, *Courts and Commerce: Gender, Law, and the Market Economy in Colonial New York*, (Columbus, OSU Press, 1997); Serena Zabin, "Women's Trading Networks and Dangerous Economies, (paper presented at "Women's Economies in Colonial British America, Program in Early American Economy and Society at the Library

- Company of Philadelphia,” October 2004).
- 13 Beimer, *Women and Property in Colonial New York*, passim; Linda Briggs Beimer, “Criminal Law and Women in New Amsterdam and Early New York,” in Nancy Anne McClure Zeller, ed., *A Beautiful and Fruitful Place: Selected Rensselaerwijck Seminar Papers* (Albany, New Netherland Publishing, 1991), 73-82; David E. Narrett, “Dutch Customs of Inheritance,” 28; David E. Narrett, “Introduction,” *Inheritance and Family Life*, 1-11.
 - 14 Joan R. Gunderson and Gwen Victor Gample, “Married Women’s Legal Status in Eighteenth-Century New York and Virginia,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 39 (1982), 114-134: 129-133.
 - 15 Ibid., 132; Peter R. Christoph, “Worthy Virtuous Juffrow Maria van Rensselaer,” *de Halve Maen*, 70, no. 2 (Summer 1997), 25-40; Michael E. Gherke, “Margaret Hardenbroeck Philipse: Merchant Trader,” (paper presented at the First Annual West Virginia University History Forum, Morgantown, WV, Feb. 1997).
 - 16 A.J.F. van Laer, trans. and ed., *Correspondence of Jeremias van Rensselaer, 1651-1674*, (Albany, SUNY, 1932), 297, 300. Hereafter cited as CJVR.
 - 17 It is interesting to note that Jeremias first wrote to his brother, who was living in the Netherlands, presumably at or near the family home, and asked him to relate the news of his marriage to their mother. See, Michael E. Gherke, “Dutch Women,” 79.
 - 18 Thomas J. Condon, *New York Beginnings: The Commercial Origins of New Netherland* (New York, 1968); David Steven Cohen, “How Dutch were the Dutch of New Netherland?” *New York History*, 43-60; Bonomi, *A Factious People*, 18-19.
 - 19 Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1995), 14-25. As Israel points out, several of the northern Dutch states in the United Provinces of the Netherlands were in competition with each other, an example of which was the rivalry between Holland’s growing commercial power and the established commerce of the western Dutch states allied with the Hanseatic League.
 - 20 Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (New York, Knopf, 1987), 391.
 - 21 Religion itself was not destabilizing, but Europeans in the early modern period still identified religious authority with political authority, i.e., the concept of “state” religion remained prevalent. Toleration of divergent Protestant sects, Catholicism, and even those who adhered to a different religion, like Jews, eroded that identification. Several studies of these aspects of Dutch society during the golden age of commerce have been published; including, Israel, *The Dutch Republic*; Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy: Success, Failure, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500-1815* (Cambridge, University Press, 1997); J.L. Price, “Catholics, Dissenters, and Politics,” *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century: European History in Perspective* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1998), 81-89; Judith Pollmann, “The bond of Christian Piety: the individual practice of tolerance and intolerance in the Dutch Republic,” in Hsia and Van Nierop, *Calvinism and Religious Toleration*, 53-71; Joke Spaans, “Religious policies in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic,” in Hsia and Van Neiroop, *Calvinism and Religious Toleration*, 72-86.
 - 22 Hugo Grotius [Hugo de Groot], *The Jurisprudence of Holland*, trans. R. W. Lee, 2 vols. (Oxford, University Press, 1953; reprint, 1977), 29-31. The italics are mine.
 - 23 Beimer, “Seventeenth-Century Law in New Netherland-New York,” in *Women and Property*, 1-9; Shattuck, “A Civil Society,” 154-55.
 - 24 Grotius, *Jurisprudence of Holland*, 2: 28; see also, R.W. Lee, *An Introduction to Roman-Dutch Law* (Oxford, OU Press, 1953), 63-64; 423-424.
 - 25 Grotius, *Jurisprudence of Holland*, 1: 29; Beimer, *Women and Property*, 1-2; Shattuck, “A Civil Society,” 140-141.

- 26 Charles T. Gehring, trans. and ed., *New York Historica Manuscripts: Dutch, Council Minutes, 1652-1654* (Baltimore, Genealogical Publishing, 1983), 67. Hereafter cited as Council Minutes.
- 27 Berthold Fernow, trans. and ed., *The Records of New Amsterdam, 1652-1674*, 7 vols. (New York, 1897; reprint, Baltimore, Genealogical Publishing, 1976), 1: 147. Hereafter cited as RNA. Keysar's proof was almost certainly an account book in which the contract with Harmensen, affixed with the signatures or marks of the parties involved, including witnesses, was recorded. Commerce was the *raison d'être* for the existence of New Netherland and properly executed, private contracts were commonly presented in court as proof of obligations.
- 28 Cornelia Dayton Hughes, *Women Before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789* (Chapel Hill, UNC Press, 1995). Shattuck, "A Civil Society," 155-191.
- 29 RNA, 6: 304.
- 30 Ibid. Owing to the magistrates' use of arbitration, Anthonie's suit exemplifies the hybridization of law that occurred in New York during the proprietorship of James duke of York, [1664-1673; 1674-1685]. Sir Richard Nicolls, commander of the four-ship flotilla that forced the surrender of New Netherland and New York's first English governor, prudently sought to avoid the confusion that indiscriminate imposition of English law would create for a largely non-English, non-Anglican population. On March 8, 1665, at a meeting in Hempstead of delegates from various parts of the colony, Nicolls presented what became known as the "Duke's laws." Compiled by provincial secretary, Matthias Nicolls, the Duke's laws were an amalgam containing elements of English common law, variations on English law applied in other English colonies, and Roman-Dutch law. Several scholars have offered their interpretations to hybridization of law in proprietary New York including, Herbert Alan Johnson, "The Advent of Common Law in Colonial New York," in George Athan Billias, ed., *Law and Authority in Colonial America, Selected Essays* (Barre, MA, Barre Publishing, 1965), 71-94; Julius Goebel, Jr., "The Courts and the Law in Colonial New York," in David H. Flaherty, ed., *Essays in the History of Early American Law* (Chapel Hill, UNC Press, 1969), 245-277; Robert C. Ritchie, "The Structure of Government," in *The Duke's Province: A Study of New York Politics and Society, 1664-1691* (Chapel Hill, UNC Press, 1977), 25-46; Lawrence M. Friedman, *A History of American Law* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1985), 44-45; Peter Charles Hoffer, *Law and People in Colonial America* (Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 28-30. For information about procedure under Roman-Dutch law see, J.W. Wessels, "Administration of Justice," in *History of the Roman-Dutch Law* (Grahamstown, Cape Colony, [South Africa], African Book Co., 1908; reprint, London, Lawbook Exchange, 2005), 144-165. For the evolution of legal precedent in Roman-Dutch law in matters relating to commerce see, Oscar Gelderblom, "The Resolution of Commercial Conflicts in Bruges, Antwerp, and Amsterdam, 1250-1650," <http://www.lowcountries.nl/2005-02/gelderblom.pdf>, (accessed 7 Oct. 2006).
- 31 Ruth Swartz Cowen, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York, Basic Books, 1983), 29-30; Joan M. Jensen, "Churns and Butter-Making Technology," *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1986), 92-113.
- 32 Although Jean Zimmerman, *The Women of the House: How a Colonial She-Merchant Built a Mansion, a Fortune, and a Dynasty* (New York, Harcourt, 2006), which discusses the life of Hardenbroeck-Philipse and subsequent generations of Philipse women, Hardenbroeck-Philipse and Maria van Rensselaer are rarely mentioned or only mentioned in passing by historians of New Netherland and early colonial New York. One of the best descriptions of Hardenbroeck-Philipse remains, Mary L. Booth, *History of the City of New York from its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time* (New York, Lippencot, 1859), 859. Further, I would be remiss for ignoring, Peter R. Christoph, "Worthy Virtuous Juffrow, Maria van Rensselaer," *de Halve Maen*, 70 (Summer 1997), 25-40.
- 33 Jasper Dankers [Dankaerts] and Peter Sluyter, *Journal of a Voyage to New York and a Tour in Several American Colonies in 1679-1680*, ed. Henry C. Murphy (New York, 1867; reprint, Ann

- Arbor, UMI, 1966), 53. Hereafter cited as Danker's Journal.
- 34 Ibid., passim.
- 35 A.J.F. van Laer, trans. and ed., *Correspondence of Maria van Rensselaer, 1669-1689* (Albany, SUNY, 1935), 127-128, 184.
- 36 Ibid., 127-128. See also, Christoph, "Worthy Virtuous Juffrow, Maria van Rensselaer."
- 37 Ibid., 26.
- 38 Danker's Journal, 317.
- 39 Soon after her arrival in New Netherland in 1659, Margaret Hardenbroeck married Pieter Rudolphus de Vries, a successful merchant with financial ties to her family. Beimer, *Women and Property*, 34; Zimmerman, *The Women of the House*, 50.
- 40 Ibid., 9-10.
- 41 Jordan, "Women Merchants in Colonial New York," passim. See also Gunderson and Gampel, "Women's Legal Status," passim.
- 42 Ibid., 412; *New York Weekly Journal*, (21 January, 1734).
- 43 "Power of Attorney," Margarita Hardenbroeck, January 9, 1664, Hardenbroeck papers, Historic Hudson Valley.
- 44 The influence of the gendered prejudices of past historians is still very much present in American history. For example, the index of the textbook currently in use for survey early American history courses at my institution, Edward L. Ayers, et. al., *American Passages: A History of the United States*, vol. 1: to 1877, 3rd ed., (New York, Houghton-Mifflin, 2007), references the individual names of 396 men, but only 41 women.



Reverend Anna Howard Shaw

The Republic May Wear a Crown of True Greatness

The 1895 New York State Woman Suffrage Association Convention¹

Shannon M. Risk

“They have their banner flung out to the winds; they are after you; and their cry is for justice; and you can not [sic] deny it.”

—*Senator Edgar Cowan, Pennsylvania*²

“The ballot is a symbol that stands for sovereignty, for power and patriotism, and when this crown shall be placed on the head of woman she should be willing to take it on bended knee and pledge her life to her country.”

—*Martha Almy, Jamestown, New York*³

“The ballot is not a question of the bayonet. It is a question of brain.”

—*Lillie Devereaux Blake, New York City*⁴

When the all stars of the American woman suffrage campaign descended upon Newburgh, New York, in 1895 for the twenty-seventh annual New York State convention, their cause was just forty-seven years old. Although many events of the American woman suffrage movement took place in New York City or Albany, the state convention allowed for a more local cadre of delegates and opinion both for and against the cause of “votes for women.” Planners selected Newburgh as a convention site for strategic reasons. There were very few suffrage advocates in this region, and they hoped the event might draw the interest of a wider public. Held from November 8 through 12, the convention boasted such crusaders as Susan B. Anthony; her sister, Mary Anthony, one-time treasurer of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association (NYSWSA); and her Madison Street neighbor in Rochester, Jean Brooks Greenleaf, who was also the President of the NYSWSA. Joining these prestigious leaders were ardent suffragists Carrie Chapman Catt,



**Elizabeth Cady Stanton
and Susan B. Anthony**



Lucy Stone

Harriet May Mills, Lillie Devereaux Blake, and Reverend Anna Howard Shaw.⁵

The 1895 convention served as an important barometer for the health of the national movement, revealing public ambivalence, a lack of solidarity amongst the suffragists in their motivations for the ballot, and a transfer of leadership and change in management style between the generations. New York and Massachusetts led the way in producing early suffrage reformers, so the New York State suffrage conventions were always on the cutting edge of reform and featured appearances by the most well-known suffragists. The decade of the 1890s also presented a shift in American politics and identity for white men and women. The United States had begun to flex its imperial might, making forays into places like Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Cuba. Simultaneously, Americans were rapidly becoming a consumer society, bombarded by advertisements that were often gender-coded, assuring customers that a certain product might make them a better man or, perhaps, a “new” woman. Progressivism, a socio-political movement, had taken hold of the middle and upper classes, who directed their version of social reform toward the government as well as to the downtrodden masses. Indeed, as immigration increased through Ellis Island, and Eastern and Southern Europeans poured into the United States, white elites linked growing crime to poverty and immigration in an increasingly urban world. These events

combined to produce societal and political conservatism in America. Hence, what might be considered a typical annual suffrage convention in Newburgh in 1895 was, in fact, a public reflection of a growing middle class of white, hegemonic women who sought access to the political forum through pressure politics and the ballot in order to address societal ills.⁶

The younger generation of suffragists represented at the 1895 convention were different from their predecessors. They pursued the vote to assert their assumed maternal influence on American society. Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Lucy Stone—the path breakers of the movement—had fought for women’s equality with men, believing the ballot to be paramount to improving women’s lives. In this era, the elder generation of suffragists was more radical.

Anthony and fellow crusaders Stanton and Stone had achieved some success since the first Woman’s Rights Convention was held in Seneca Falls in 1848. Trained in the schools of abolition and temperance before turning their energies to woman suffrage, they were able to secure property rights for women.⁷ They saw two states (Wyoming and Colorado) ratify woman suffrage for state and federal elections; many others had qualified women to vote in school elections and hold public office. Women secured higher education and entry into the professional world, first gaining access to Oberlin College in Ohio and then founding women’s colleges like Vassar and Bryn Mawr. Anthony tested the law by voting in the 1872 presidential election, believing the Fourteenth Amendment entitled her to enfranchisement as a United States citizen.⁸ Through the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), American suffragists joined with *suffragettes* in Canada and Europe for international conventions to address women’s legal rights around the world. Despite their never-ending work, much remained to be done for the American suffragists. Stateside organization was the driving force of the movement.

The elder suffragists felt that through “universal suffrage” all other legal rights could be secured. To them, “attaining the ballot alone [was] itself the peacemaker, reconciler, schoolmaster and protector.” These rights included the right to pursue an education, lay claim to wages, own or inherit property, possess her children, and serve on juries. These were not guaranteed by law to most women in the United States at the time. Rather, they were bestowed upon them at the mercy of husbands, fathers, brothers, or male guardians. Anthony and her fellow suffragists addressed these issues at state and national conventions.⁹

At seventy-five years of age, Anthony showed no signs of slowing down; however, she was meticulously cultivating her “lieutenants,” like Catt and Shaw, to carry on the fight for the national ballot. She recognized that she might not

live to see it realized.¹⁰ The 1895 convention demonstrated the transfer of power from “Aunt Susan” and Stanton to the younger generation of suffrage workers and the continued agitation for woman’s rights. The convention took place in the immediate aftermath of the 1890 unification of two separate suffrage organizations. By 1869, Anthony and Stanton broke with Stone and her husband, Henry Blackwell, disagreeing over how to secure the ballot for women. Anthony and Stanton formed the National Woman Suffrage Association and doggedly pursued the ballot as an amendment to the United States Constitution. Stone and Blackwell created the American Woman Suffrage Association and sought the ballot state by state. They generally endorsed a more conservative political stance.¹¹ But the convention also was part of a turning point in the movement, with younger suffragists no longer working singly for the ballot but perfecting their professionalism, reacting to increasing immigrants with nativism, and further developing what is now recognized as lobbying techniques.

In the 1890s, Newburgh contained a reputable theater district and resident artists like Thomas Benjamin Pope, who instructed local students. Convention attendees stayed in homes up and down Grand Street and were hosted by Mrs. James N. Dickey, Mrs. Charles S. Jenkins, Mrs. Russell Headley, and Warren Delano. Most delegates registered at the Palatine Hotel, also on Grand Street. The newly built Palatine strove to emulate New York City’s finest hostelries. The suffragists made the fine reception room of the Palatine their main headquarters during the convention.¹² The suffragists hoped this affluent city might prove to be a magnet for their ideals.

All public meetings for the convention were scheduled at the Newburgh Academy of Music, located at the intersection of Grand and Broadway. Convention organizers mapped out four full days of committee sessions, public addresses, debates, finance review, prayer, sermons, and song. Delegates from every sector of New York were on hand either to address the convention, lend their support, or refuel their own inspiration and courage. The delegates, representing fifteen counties (including locals from Orange, Westchester, Albany, and Greene counties), absorbed the full program of the convention so they could return to their often rural and unforgiving towns to argue for their legal rights through the ballot box. As the women arrived for the convention, they fastened yellow badges and roses on their lapels, displaying the official color of the movement.¹³

Part of the convention program allowed for public meeting, although the days of rowdy anti-suffragists and mobs interrupting proceedings had sharply declined. The convention was a cult of mutual admiration, part business and part pageantry. The organizers approached the annual meetings emphatically, and finely tuned

the program to reaffirm the ideas of the movement, attract the attention of the press, and lay out their future goals.

Coverage of the convention was both local and national, through Newburgh and Poughkeepsie newspapers as well as the *New York Times* and *The Arena*. But the convention was conspicuously left out of the *West Pointer*, the *Vassar College Miscellany*, and the *News of the Highlands*, based in nearby Highland Falls. The *Newburgh Daily News* and the *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle* alternately offered ridicule and admiration for the delegates. According to the *Daily Eagle*, these shining *suffrage lights* “met and talked and resolved while Newburgh opened its mouth and wondered.” The reporter chided: “None of the delegates wore bloomers or came to the convention from long distances on bicycles. Hence, we are forced to conclude that the woman suffragists are somewhat behind the times.”¹⁴

The *Daily Eagle* continued its conservative stance and its denunciation of the woman suffrage movement by further speculating that no college women attended the convention, specifically pointing to the absence of students from Vassar.¹⁵ But in fact, among the 100-plus delegates were noted college women. The more affirmative *Newburgh Daily Record* called the arrivals “[a] fine looking intelligent body of women.” The reporter noted that the delegates were the epitome of “education, refinement, and culture.” Aside from the lukewarm reception and hypothesizing by some of the local newspapers, President Jean Brooks Greenleaf felt they received fair press. She “had heard rumors that in this city the suffragists would not be welcome; that they would be looked upon as a dispensation rather to be endured than to be welcomed.”¹⁶

The first public meeting was held at 7:45 p.m. at the Academy of Music. Admission was free, but those who wished to rent boxes could do so at Green’s Store. As they arrived, curious onlookers and official delegates alike received leaflets providing responses to objections to woman suffrage. Inside, stage decorations and pageantry were displayed to the fullest. On stage, a doctored American flag showed two solid stars and two stars in outline instead of the 44 stars of the nation at the time. The solid stars represented the states that allowed women to vote; the outlined stars noted states allowing partial suffrage—Utah and Idaho. President Greenleaf opened the convention pledging to “Make our work effective.” “There must be systematic organization,” she continued, “Striving for the triumph of . . . a principle embodied in the Declaration of Independence; [and] . . . pictured by Abraham Lincoln in his speech at Gettysburg of ‘a government of the people by the people and for the people.’”¹⁷

Although at least 100 delegates had been expected to attend the convention, at times over 200 people filled the building. Local and male attendance during

the convention, however, was thin. The *Newburgh Daily Journal* noted during one public session on November 11 that men sat in the audience for this event, “probably twenty or thirty altogether.” The *Newburgh Daily Register* lamented:

It is to be regretted that the enthusiasm was confined mainly to the delegates, for the attendance of Newburgh people was small, and apparently little interest is taken in the movement here, and the public seems content to ignore the fact that these delegates represented the highest type of American womanhood; the culture, the intellectual power, the eloquence of the so-called modern woman.¹⁸

Four days of meetings, both private and public, exposed some of the key issues of the local and national movement. At the top of the agenda was woman suffrage in New York. President Greenleaf presented an executive committee brief detailing their success in the New York State Legislature in striking the word “male” from the existing suffrage laws. Despite this good news, however, there was trouble with New York Assembly Bill No. 637, which proposed that a state “resident” had the right to vote. The bill failed in the legislature under the argument that the word “resident” was not appropriate and would allow any non-United States citizen to vote. Instead, the word “citizen” should be proposed in a redraft of the bill the following winter. Even if approved by the legislature, bill No. 637 wouldn’t be in the hands of voters until 1899.¹⁹ A special committee was formed to see who was responsible for this error and to make a report in front of the legislative committee.

Aside from legislative work, much of the convention was devoted to public speaking, featuring well-known agitators as well as rising stars of the movement. For the public, this was a high form of entertainment, whether or not one agreed with woman suffrage. For the suffragists, it was a means of reinforcing a network that spanned the globe. To add clout, the women invited prominent male speakers to the program, like the Reverend Dr. Edward McGlynn, who said that he was in favor of woman suffrage “not in spite of his religion, but because of it.”²⁰ Also attending was the Honorable John C. Adams, who had voted for woman suffrage three times in the New York legislature.

The female speakers were equally reputable. Susan B. Anthony spoke of the need to continue grassroots efforts by targeting town hall meetings in every town, village, and city across the state. Annie E.P. Searing from Kingston was a regular author of fiction for *The New England Magazine*. She argued for instilling suffrage values at home, starting early in a girl’s life. Maud S. Humphrey, chairman of the finance committee, was a famous illustrator. She spoke on what she termed “the

Vanishing Minority,” observing that “41 years ago, the minority in favor of woman suffrage consisted of one woman, Lucy Stone; today, the minority against it was confined to a few classes.”²¹

Two women groomed by Anthony, Carrie Chapman Catt and the Reverend Anna Howard Shaw, were given prominence on the speaking platform. Catt rose to distinction with her successful campaign for the vote in Colorado. She focused her speech on recent and victorious travels there and in Wyoming. Shaw chimed in about techniques that had worked in Wyoming, where she said the influence now of women was as great as men. Shaw recognized the common fear among men of giving women the vote—“[that] they would rob them of certain liberties which they now enjoy by advocating certain lines of temperance and religious reforms.” She and Anthony also had campaigned in California during the summer prior to a suffrage vote in November.²²

Some of the speakers tied their recent success directly to the lifelong work of the suffrage pioneers. Mary Seymour Howell, a captivating orator from Livingston, expressed their common gratitude. “When these women began their work all that woman was allowed to do was sewing and teaching school.” Howell also commented on those opposed to woman suffrage. “They don’t want the vote because they don’t want the responsibility. That is just it.” Howell concluded, “they don’t want the responsibility of the saloon, of the sewing girls who make shirts at 45 cents a dozen, etc. When women have the ballot, they are going to lift these women up.” Howell detailed how the suffragist petition had circulated in New York State, gathering 625,000 signatures. When the anti-suffragists passed around their own petition, they collected only 15,000 names.²³

As with every convention, finances were reviewed. Convention leaders lamented that their movement wasn’t better funded and urged those with resources to put money where their mouths were. The outgoing treasurer, Cornelia K. Hood of Brooklyn, announced receipts of \$3,402.04 and expenditures of \$3,048.36, with a balance of \$353.68. Of this, \$175 was owed to the national organization in dues.²⁴

The event culminated in a hot debate between Lillie Devereaux Blake and Reverend Dr. Morgan Dix on woman suffrage. The three-and-a-half-hour discussion was titled “The Coming of Woman,” and was open to the public at the Academy of Music. Dix came out against woman suffrage, arguing that women were actually superior to men. He failed to elaborate on how this gave her power. He thought legislators voted with their mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters in mind and, therefore, woman did not need to sully herself with politics. In fact, if women did participate in the legislature, men’s and women’s “physical attraction

would count more than reason.” Dix also claimed that “behind every ballot is a bayonet and man is the factor in physical force, not woman, maternity is her glory.” Dix exalted the twentieth-century woman, whom he said would be the “high priestess of humanity in a good old fashioned home.” “In it,” he believed, “she has great powers.”²⁵

Blake rebutted: “Woman does not want to annihilate man, but to pull him up to the level of woman. The grand principle is that man should support woman. She often has to go out, however, to work not only for herself, but also for her husband.” She responded to the idea of defending one’s country in wartime to protect the ballot: “The ballot is not a question of the bayonet. It is a question of brain.” After all, Blake contended, even the current president of the United States, along with many other key politicians, had hired another man to serve in his place during the Civil War.²⁶ Susan B. Anthony supported Blake’s assertion that if women attended the legislature, the tobacco smoke and personal spittoons would disappear and legislators would be forced to act humanely. Although Blake was probably among friends during this debate, it was important for the suffragists to gauge public sentiment, as expressed by Reverend Dr. Dix.²⁷

As the convention drew to a close, the organizers followed the tradition of adopting resolutions. These included wage equalization among male and female teachers, affecting change for voting rights in the state constitution, reinforcing laws allowing for police matrons, teaching the young the political principles of the suffrage movement, and a vote of thanks “to the press of Newburgh for its courtesy and its full and able reports.”²⁸

On the whole, the *Newburgh Daily Register* concluded on November 12, 1895:

The convention in this city may be classed among the best and then again among the poorest ever held. The attendance of delegates was large, and the interest taken was general; the attendance of local ladies was very meager, and the collections simply beggarly. The receipts at the Academy of Music during the four days from all sources were less than \$100, while the expenses will foot up over \$300. The trouble seems to have been the people of Newburgh have been permitted to slumber in ignorance of the female suffrage cause, instead of keeping the subject paramount in the minds of the public for several months prior to the meeting. Next year’s gathering will probably be held in the central part of the state, where the cause has many warm friends.

Despite the lack of local interest manifested in lower attendance and meager donations to the cause, there was a buzz in the air about the prestigious event

taking place that evening in New York City—a celebration of the eightieth birthday of suffrage visionary Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The party itself was both an extension of and a conclusion to the convention, as most of its participants boarded the 12:52 p.m. West Shore Line train bound for Manhattan.

Hosted at the Metropolitan Opera House by the National Council of Women (NCW), the birthday party was a who's who of men and women of suffrage and other reform movements. NCW President Mary Lowe Dickinson wrote in the June 1895 edition of *The Arena* that:

The celebration... aims to give recognition to all human effort without demanding uniformity of opinion as a basis of co-operation... the things that separate, shrank back into the shadows where they belong, and all... found it easy to unite in homage to a life which had known half a century of struggle to lift humanity from bondage and womanhood from shame.²⁹

Susan B. Anthony lent her support to the planning of the celebration, but ultimately turned down the job as chief organizer. She left that up to members of the NCW, preferring that the younger women step up for the occasion.

Sources disagree as to the number in attendance, some noting over 3,000 people, others saying it was closer to 6,000. Birthday guests paid seventy-five cents to five dollars for their

Metropolitan Opera House Reunion of the Pioneers and Friends of Woman's Progress on Elizabeth Cady Stanton's Eightieth Birthday Commemorative Program

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Metropolitan Opera House
Messrs. ABREY, SCHOFFEL & GRAY, Lessees and Managers.

Tuesday Evening, November 12, '95.

REUNION
OF THE
Pioneers and Friends
of...
Woman's Progress,

ON THE
Eightieth Birthday of
Mrs. ELIZABETH CADY STANTON,

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF
THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN
OF THE UNITED STATES.

Mrs. MARY LOWE DICKINSON, President.

Programme.

Mrs. MARY LOWE DICKINSON, Presiding.

MUSIC. - THE PARKER SISTERS

Quartette, - - - - -

WELCOME, HON. WM. L. STRONG, Mayor of New York

GREETINGS FROM FAR AND NEAR.

ADDRESSES.

RELIGION, - - - - - REV. ANNA HOWARD SHAW

EDUCATION,
M. CAREY THOMAS, Pres. Bryn Mawr College.

MUSIC.

Solo, "The Gift," - - - - - *Belmont*
MADAME ANTOINETTE STIRLING.

PHILANTHROPY:
RED CROSS, - CLARA BARTON, Pres. Red Cross Soc.
TEMPERANCE,
MRS. MARY T. BURT, Pres. New York W.C.T.U.

WORK FOR INDIANS, } MRS. W. R. BROOKS,
 } MRS. A. S. QUINTON,
 } Pres. W. N. Ind. Assn.

MUSIC.

"The Marvellous Works," "Creation," - *Hepst*
ST. PHILIP'S CHOIR.
E. B. KINNEY, Jr., Choir Master.

MORAL PROGRESS, - - - - - REV. H. H. HERRICK

ADDRESS, - - - - - MRS. ELIZABETH CADY STANTON

MUSIC.

Solo, - - - - - MADAME ANTOINETTE STIRLING

ART, - - - - - HARRIET HOWELL

CAMERA TABLEAUX.

Themes suggested by ALICE W. ROLINS.
Arranged by ALEXANDER BLACK, author of "Miss Jerry."
MEDICINE, } PAPER BY EMILY BLACKWELL, M.D.,
 } DEAN WOMAN'S MED. COLLEGE,
 } Read by ELIZABETH M. CUSHIER, M.D.

FOREIGN MISSIONS, MRS. ENGLINE BURLINGAME CROFT

PROGRESS OF COLORED WOMEN,
MRS. FANNIE BARBER WILLIAMS.

MUSIC.

Quartette, - - - - - THE PARKER SISTERS

INDUSTRIES, - - - - - ISABELLA CHARLES DAVIS

ORGANIZATION IN LABOR, HARRIETTE A. KAYE

GOVERNMENTAL PROGRESS, C. CHAPMAN CATT

GENERAL FEDERATION OF CLUBS,
MRS. ELLA DIEZEL CLARKE.

MUSIC.

"How Holy are the Messengers," (St. Paul), *Mendelssohn*
ST. PHILIP'S CHOIR.

TRIBUTE—From N. Y. City Woman's Suffrage League,
M. S. L. DEVEREUX BLAKE.

SUFFRAGE, - - - - - SUSAN B. ANTHONY

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN,
MRS. MAY WRIGHT SEWALL.

MRS. STANTON and other pioneers, at Home,
Hotel Savoy, Fifth Avenue and Fifty-ninth
Street, Wednesday, November 13th, from three to
five P. M.

seats. The stage was designed in regal fashion. The *News of the Hudson Highlands* noted that:

There were three chairs in the floral throne over which the name ‘Stanton’ stood out in white roses, and they were occupied by that witty exponent of the feminine militant, Susan B. Anthony ... the stage was set with the palace scene, and beside and behind the chair of the stage sat ninety women prominent in their sex’s cause, two of whom were colored.

“The great auditorium was filled from pit to topmost gallery, and the majority of the boxes on the grand tier were elaborately decorated with flowers and the insignia of the various local women’s organizations,” the paper continued.³⁰

The basis of the event was to give praise to suffrage pioneers, but also to provide a showcase for leading women in the professions. Reverend Anna Howard Shaw was there, as was Dr. Emily Blackwell. Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, joined the ranks with Susan B. Anthony and Julia Ward Howe, the writer and transcendentalist known for her verses in “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.” Mary “May” Wright Sewall, a leading force in Indiana’s state suffrage campaign and secretary to the International Congress of Women, and Lillie Devereaux Blake were there as well. The program also included musical performances from the likes of Madame Antoinette Sterling, the St. Philip’s Choir performing pieces by Haydn and Mendelssohn, and quartets by the Parke Sisters.

Most poignant, however, was the presence of Fannie Barrier Williams, known for her dynamic lectures during the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair. She represented black reformers in paying homage to Stanton for her work in the abolition and suffrage movements. However, Williams reminded the audience that the condi-

tion of the “colored” woman was still very dire in the country, making a “pathetic plea in [sic] behalf of the women of her race.” Stanton later referred to Williams’ remarks: “I feel very much touched by what has just been said, more particularly because Frederick Douglass was the only person in the great convention held at Seneca Falls in 1848 who supported me in my appeals for woman suffrage.”³¹

Mary Lowe Dickinson declared, “The great meeting was but one link in a chain,” referring to the long labors of her predecessors in the suffrage movement as well as the many



Julia Ward Howe

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



The Apotheosis of Suffrage; George Yost Coffin, 1896 depicting George Washinton flanked by Elizabeth Cody Stanton and Susan B. Anthony

brave women yet to fight for the cause in the coming century. She described the deluge of telegrams, letters, gifts, and messages in support for Mrs. Stanton on her birthday: “Hundreds of organizations and societies, both in this country and abroad, wished to have their names placed on record as in sympathy with the movement.” She cited individuals and groups like the Women’s Rights Society of Finland, the National Woman Suffrage Society of Scotland, and the California Suffrage Pioneers. Honorable Oscar S. Strauss, ex-minister to Turkey, sent a letter; the Shaker women of Mount Lebanon composed an ode to Mrs. Stanton; and the Women’s Association of Utah sent an onyx and silver ballot box, symbolic of Anthony and Stanton’s support in getting them the vote, first as a United States territory and later as a state.³²

When Stanton entered the great hall and took her throne upon the stage, she was received by an eager audience waving white handkerchiefs and applauding, the custom of the day. After the musical performances, the speeches, and the tributes, she addressed the crowd, acknowledging the brave men in the audience

and giving an account of the progress of the woman suffrage movement in her lifetime:

When Stanton arose to make loving remarks for 'this day's celebration that stirred her very soul', the applause was so great and prolonged that at first few could hear what she said, but as a reaction the house seemed to withdraw into a deathlike silence, so anxious was it not to lose a word. She was not able to stand on her feet longer than to say a word to the men! 'I fear you think the "new woman" is going to wipe you off the planet, but be not afraid. All who have mothers, sisters, wives or sweethearts will be well looked after.'

Stanton relied on Helen Potter to read the remainder of her statement, as her poor health did not permit her to speak at length.³³

At the conclusion of the celebration, the women on stage gathered for a photograph with Stanton. As the audience lingered to watch, "[a] strong flash of light made every one on the stage jump and caused Mrs. Stanton to cover her face with her hands."³⁴ Thus ended four days of suffrage communion, pioneer worship, and the not-so-subtle changing of the guard.

In Stanton's autobiography, published in 1898, she reiterated her points from that special evening:

We were unsparingly ridiculed in both press and pulpit both in England and America. But now how many conventions are held each year in both countries to discuss the same ideas; social customs have changed; laws have been modified; school suffrage has been granted to women in half of our States, municipal suffrage in Kansas and full suffrage in four States of the Union ...

Then the eloquent orator and writer assessed the celebration itself:

Having been accustomed for half a century to blame rather than praise, I was surprised by such a manifestation of approval ... [it] was more than a beautiful pageant; more than a personal tribute. It was the dawn of a new day for the Mothers of the Race! The harmonious co-operation [sic] of so many different organizations, with diverse interests and opinions, in one grand jubilee was, indeed, a heavenly vision of peace and hope; a prophecy that with the exaltation of Womanhood would come new Life, Light, and Liberty to all mankind."³⁵

The twentieth-century struggle for suffrage would bring great triumph, but not before many women endured further humiliation at the hands of the public, employers, courts, the liquor lobby, the government, and the prison system.³⁶

With historical hindsight, we know women prevailed in 1920 with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, giving all American women the right to vote.³⁷ But this one moment in time, the 1895 New York State Woman Suffrage Association convention and its subsequent celebration of the movement's grand dame, allows us to witness how the new torch bearers of the early twentieth century ensured the promise that "the Republic may wear a crown of true greatness."

Endnotes

1. Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, editors, *Address to Congress, adopted by the 11th National Woman's Rights Convention held in New York City, Thursday, May 10, 1866, vol. II, The History of Woman Suffrage, 1861-1878* (Rochester, New York: Susan B. Anthony, 1881), 168. The full quote is: "Do you wish to see harmony truly prevail, so that industry, society, government, [and] civilization may all prosper, and the Republic may wear a crown of true greatness? Then do not neglect the ballot." The nineteenth-century suffragists used the word "woman's" instead of "women's" when referring to their cause.
2. Anthony, Gage, and Stanton, eds., *Senate Debate on Woman Suffrage in the District of Columbus, Tuesday, December 11, 1866, vol. II, History of Woman Suffrage, 1861-1878*, 116.
3. "They Want to Vote: Women Are Gathering to Discuss the Suffrage Question," *Newburgh Daily Register*, 8 November 1895.
4. "Dix and Mrs. Blake: They Hold a Joint Debate on the Coming Woman," *Ibid*, 11 November 1895.
5. Harriet May Mills, Recording Secretary, *New York State Woman Suffrage Association Minutes* (New York: Columbia University, 1895) pp. 131-153, 4943-1. The original minutes are stored at Columbia University, Baker Library, Special Collections. This microfilm contains the minutes from the convention but no reflections on the speakers. For these, we must rely on the newspaper accounts; there were no African-American women listed as attendees in any known sources referring to the convention.
6. Although black women like Sojourner Truth had participated in the early woman suffrage movement, they were increasingly excluded due to overt racism of many suffragists in the south and the north.
7. Anthony and Stanton hailed from New York while Stone lived in Massachusetts.
8. The Married Women's Property Act of 1848 was enacted in New York State; Anthony felt there was still some hope of a "Sixteenth Amendment" after she had seen the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments passed under Grant's, and predecessor Abraham Lincoln's, stewardship. Her trial for voting in 1872 gained worldwide attention. She was fined \$100 for "illegally voting," a debt she never paid.
9. Anthony, Gage, and Stanton, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. II, 168.
10. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, one of the chief organizers of the 1848 convention, was eighty years old and in poor health. She was unable to attend the 1895 NYSWSA convention; Lucy Stone died in 1893.
11. Anthony and Stanton, however, also campaigned in individual states for the vote but held the conviction that the national ballot was the biggest goal. See the timeline at the Stanton and Anthony Papers Online project at Rutgers University at <http://ecssba.rutgers.edu/resources/timeline.html>. Stone and Blackwell, among conservative New England suffragists, felt that the ballot for the black man was a more immediate concern and that women should wait for their chance at voting until the time was ripe.

12. For more information on Newburgh in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see: Don Heron, "The Rise and Fall of the Palatine Hotel," *Middletown (New York) Times Herald-Record* 13 September 2002.
13. Heron, "Artist Used the Hudson Valley as His Canvas," *MTHR*, 3 April 2002; *NYSWSA Minutes*, pp. 138, 142-144.
14. "The New Woman at Newburgh," November 13, 1895. See <http://library.vassar.edu/research/guides/readingrooms/localhistory.html> and <http://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/front-page> for more information about the *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*, which, in various formats, had been in publication since 1785. See also <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/nysnp/136.htm>, for the *Newburgh Daily News*, which was published between 1857-1917; In the 1850s, suffragists like Anthony, Stanton, Stone, Elizabeth Smith Miller, and Amelia Bloomer, who made the costume famous in her periodical, *The Lily*, sported bloomers, a Turkish-inspired costume that consisted of a knee-length dress and billowing trousers underneath. The suffragists stopped wearing them when they realized the bloomers were gaining more attention than their ideas; in the 1890s, Anthony endorsed the bicycle, saying it gave a woman new freedom.
15. Vassar College was notorious for advising its students to avoid the reform movements of the nineteenth century. Vassar President Raymond said in 1875: "The mission of Vassar College [is] not to reform society but to educate women." *Woman Suffrage Materials*, box 5, folder 23, Special Collections, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York; When Elizabeth Cady Stanton received a request to speak before alumnae at Vassar in 1886, she tersely wrote back: "Until the ruling principles of the institution are essentially liberalized, I should make no effort to preserve its life. It is falling behind the progress of the age, and in the nature of things cannot live." Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Laura Brownell Collier, 21 January, *Ibid*; For more information on the burgeoning suffrage movement within the ranks of Vassar College by the late 1890s, see Eva Boice, "Woman Suffrage, Vassar College, and Laura Johnson Wylie," *The Hudson River Valley Review*, Spring 2004, 36-49.
16. Carrie Chapman Catt graduated from Iowa Agricultural College—now Iowa State University— and Anna Howard Shaw received her theology and medical degrees from Boston University; "Women Suffragists: Their Convention Began Last Night," *Newburgh Daily Journal*, 9 November 1895.
17. Wyoming was admitted to the Union with woman suffrage in 1890. Colorado was the first state to pass an amendment giving women suffrage rights in 1893. Idaho and Utah followed suit in 1896. New York, on the other hand, did not grant voting rights to women until 1917.
18. "For Woman's Rights: Suffragists Are Here from All Parts of the State," November 9, 1895.
19. The error in wording was: "a resident for 90 days." The wording should have read: "a citizen for 90 days." Only a citizen for 90 days next preceding a general election may vote. "For Woman's Rights...", *NDR* 9 November 1895; Mills, *NYWSWA Minutes*, pp. 131-132; "Reminder to the Mayor: Woman Suffragists Recall a Promise Made to Them," *New York Times*, 8 November 1895; Susan B. Anthony and Ida Husted Harper, eds., *The History of Woman Suffrage, 1883-1900*, vol. IV (Hollenbeck Press: Indianapolis, 1902) 859. Martha Almy worked with the state legislature to correct this error, but could not single anyone out for blame.
20. "Woman's Suffrage: Close of the Newburgh Convention," *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle* 11 November 1895. Reverend Dr. Edward McGlynn was pastor at St. Stephen's Church in New York City and stirred up controversy with Roman Catholics by supporting land reform in the United States. For more on this topic, see http://www.cooperativeindividualism.org/fillebrown_mcglynn.html; See Stephen Bell, *Rebel, Priest, Prophet, a Biography of Reverend Edward McGlynn*, (New York: The Devin Adair Company, 1937).
21. For a detailed biography about Susan B. Anthony, see Ida Husted Harper, *Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony* 3 vols. (1898; reprint Ayer Co.: Salem, NH, 1983); Annie E.P. Searing penned stories like "A Little Leaven," "The Midshipmate," and "Summer Was a Winsome Thing," between 1894 and 1897; *NYWSA Minutes* stated that a committee was appointed for instruction of the young,

- p. 151; Maud S. Humphrey illustrated Ivory Soap children for Proctor & Gamble's advertising campaign, served on the editing staff at *The Delineator* magazine, and gave birth to future acting icon, Humphrey Bogart. See Jeffrey Meyers, *Bogart: A Life in Hollywood*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997); For more detail on these speeches, see "Woman's Suffrage: Has a Warm Friend in Reverend Dr. Edward McGlynn," *NDR* 12 November 1895.
22. "Women and Suffrage: Arguments by Fair and Talented Femininity," *NDR* 11 November 1895; The male voters of California voted against woman suffrage in 1896. Anthony's group was pitted against a fierce liquor lobby that argued convincingly that, should women have the vote, they would institute prohibition of alcohol. California women finally secured the vote in 1911.
 23. "Women Suffragists..." *NDJ* 9 November 1895.
 24. Mills, *NYSWSA Minutes*, p. 131.
 25. "Woman and Suffrage..." *NDR* 11 November 1895.
 26. Grover Cleveland was president at the time.
 27. The debates between Dr. Morgan Dix and Lillie Devereux Blake were published under the title, *Woman's Place To-Day*.
 28. "Woman's Suffrage: Has a Warm Friend..." *NDR*, 12 November 1895.
 29. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Eighty Years and More: Reminiscences 1815-1897*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1971; reprint, T. Fisher Unwin, 1898) 460 (page references are to reprint edition).
 30. "Mrs. Stanton's Birthday: Its Eightieth Anniversary Celebrated by 3,000 Women," *News of the Hudson Highlands*, 16 November 1895; Stanton, *Eighty Years*, 468.
 31. *New York Tribune* 13 November 1895. At the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, the majority of the attendees felt that asking for woman suffrage was too bold in their early movement. Despite their reservations, Stanton and Douglass persevered and woman suffrage was included in their "Declaration of Sentiments."
 32. Stanton, *Eighty Years*, 462-464.
 33. *New York Recorder*, 13 November 1895.
 34. *Woman's Journal*, Boston: 16 November 1895. This weekly suffrage journal, with one-time editor Alice Stone Blackwell (daughter of Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell) ran from 1870 to 1917.
 35. Stanton, *Eighty Years*, 467-468. Nowhere is it mentioned in newspaper accounts that Stanton's controversial *Woman's Bible*, published in 1895, had gained quite a lot of opposition in the women's reform groups. Stanton would soon face ostracism by NAWSA, with only Susan B. Anthony and a handful of others to defend her actions.
 36. The Fourteenth Amendment technically gave African American men the right to vote. The Jim Crow Laws set in the last quarter of the nineteenth century effectively crippled black male suffrage. For African American women and men, the vote was not fully guaranteed until the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which aimed to make illegal all forms of intimidation at the polls.
 37. The legalization of the female vote did not apply to Native American women living on reservations. They could only vote if they became tax-paying, "non-status" Indians.



Lucy Maynard Salmon

Pursuing Municipal Reform in Poughkeepsie: From Lucy Salmon to the Women's City and County Club

Clyde Griffen

Women played a pivotal role in championing many of the reform causes that multiplied in localities across the United States during the first decade of the twentieth century. Groups of citizens organized in pursuit of a variety of specific changes in their communities, reflecting their ideas for civic improvement and their concerns about contemporary social evils. Their campaigns ranged from building playgrounds to railing against corrupt government and blighted tenements. Women reformers frequently expressed their belief that the urban environment should reinforce the values of the home by labeling their aim “municipal housekeeping.” Their approach tended to be moralistic and for some, increasingly preoccupied with issues of social justice, but by the 1910's many of the most highly educated had joined in efforts to make municipal reform more systematic, invoking the aims and rhetoric of scientific investigation and planning. By the 1920s, the emerging profession of urban planners had become predominantly male, with a focus on urban problems like traffic and regulation of land use that concerned local businessmen. It was left to women to carry on the moral, aesthetic, and social-justice aims of the pioneering municipal reformers of their sex.

Poughkeepsie, New York, illustrates the national story. One bold woman, Lucy Maynard Salmon, chair of the Vassar College History Department, had begun sharing information on municipal reforms in other towns and cities in her frequent letters to local newspaper editors. By 1906 she had taken the controversial step of lecturing audiences on local evils and their redress. While beginning with “municipal housekeeping,” she, as a professional and avowedly “modern” woman, also had a strong interest in urban planning, doing what she could to advance that cause in Vassar College's history department. But when her city

actually commissioned a planner for a city-wide project, she was not a part of the process. Her legacy lived on in Poughkeepsie and Dutchess County, in the wake of the successful drive for women's suffrage, and in the formation in 1919 of the City and County Club. With a membership of more than 400 at its peak, the club initiated a variety of local investigations and improvements during the 1920s and 1930s under the leadership of Salmon's colleague and friend, Laura Wylie.

At the turn of the century, still fashionable Mill Street between Market and Hamilton Streets attracted professional residents. The teachers, doctors, attorneys, and judges residing there were the descendants of mid nineteenth-century immigrants. For Salmon, this thoroughly respectable neighborhood promised relief from the confinement and lack of privacy she felt living so near her students and colleagues in Vassar's Main Building. "I sigh for a quiet corner where I shall not have to get up by a bell, talk by priority of appointment and dress according to other people's standards of propriety."¹ Moving two miles away from campus typified Salmon's independence. She had upset Vassar's president in 1892 when, returning from a European trip, she bicycled around campus in *sans culotte*. He found that most undignified for a lady.

In 1901, Salmon, then in her early fifties, and her friend, librarian Adelaide Underhill, occupied 263 Mill Street and set about changing it to suit their more modern tastes. Salmon's pioneering investigation of Domestic Service in the 1880s had shown her how much servants were imposed upon by labor-inefficient sections for kitchens and laundries. While rearranging the kitchen into distinct areas for, cooking, baking, and cleaning, the two women added new domestic technology like an instantaneous water heater, a gas range, and an electric fan. Salmon valued rationality. Like other intellectuals, she also was attracted to the Arts and Crafts movement and ordered some Gustav Stickley furniture.

New for both Salmon and Underhill was the daily necessity of running errands, unlike life in Main Building, where the college provided so much, including meals. But they soon thrived on these walks to shops. Salmon realized how much you could discover about a city's past from the objects along its streets, like old signs for trades and professions. In her brilliant little book *On Main Street* (1915), she also showed how much you could learn about contemporary culture from the window advertisements of local stores. She noted of Poughkeepsie, "once known as the 'city of schools,' [that] its educational interests have been supplanted by its commercial interests as indicated by the names 'Bridge City' and 'Queen City'... names like Fairview Heights, Fairlawn Heights, and Oak Dale Park suggest the attractions held out by real estate development companies to induce suburban residence."²

As a social historian, Salmon was far ahead of her time in realizing how the physical evidence of people's created environments accumulates, as she illustrated with her own environment in her 1912 booklet, *History in a Backyard*. She could create a richer, more revealing social history. She saw national trends in local objects: "Monopoly lifts up its head in the wagons of the Standard Oil Company, the great packing houses of Armour, Morris, and Swift, and national express companies."³

But some of the sights, sounds, smells, and human behavior she encountered in her errands and walks offended Salmon. Characteristically, she soon took action. When would-be advertisers littered her doorstep with circulars, she repeatedly carried them down to the local police station to report this violation of the municipal littering ordinance, to no avail except a good laugh for the cop on duty. Salmon, like other well-educated middle class women, began to challenge local tolerance of conditions of uncleanness, disorder, and immorality (such as gambling) that they would not tolerate in their own homes.

An energetic member of that generation of college graduates who founded settlement houses, promoted children's courts, and urged drives to clean up cities, Lucy Salmon was very much a woman of and for her time as a would-be reformer. Probably she remained closer to a genteel middle-class outlook than Jane Addams because she never lived or worked among the immigrant poor. An avid student of newspapers as the best means of learning about communities, Salmon kept scrapbooks of clippings describing innovations in other cities, such as civic beautification campaigns, school gardens cultivated by children, and playgrounds.

Salmon turned to Lillian Wald at the Henry St. settlement house in New York for advice about getting a district nurse for Poughkeepsie, and she assisted many causes, like special courts for children and campaigns against tuberculosis, by arranging lectures and public discussions. Looking back at past charitable institutions, Salmon saw them as largely "palliative...for the wreckage of life." She praised instead the growing sense of responsibility on the part of the community toward all of its citizens and their preference for "preventing social, civic, and industrial ills rather than curing them after they have arisen."⁴

Arousing the Public

Salmon frequently sought to inform her fellow citizens and urge them to take action by writing letters to local newspaper editors, usually doing so under pseudonyms like "Concerned Citizen," "Housekeeper," or "Public Opinion."⁵ Writing anonymously in 1906, she praised the organization of a club in nearby Newburgh

“to study municipal conditions in the most progressive cities here and in Europe.”⁶ She decried the complacency of another local newspaper, the *Eagle*, deriding its view that Poughkeepsie was “the most beautiful city in America.”⁷ Because of that kind of misplaced local patriotism, “we shall continue to have dirty, ill-paved streets, rear tenements, and the saloons running on Sundays.” Salmon was quick to dismiss the puff pieces written by businessmen eager to attract new customers and industries. According to these civic boosters, Poughkeepsie was a delightful place for a residence or business, where poverty was nonexistent and labor conflict infrequent.

In 1908 Salmon protested the presence of foodstuffs sitting outside grocery stores on Main Street, exposed to dirt from traffic. As “Housekeeper” she pleaded for more watering of streets to keep the dust down. In 1912 she complained about men puffing cigars under a “No smoking sign” and young men sitting with their feet up on trolley seats.”⁸ Writing as “Poughkeepsian” she asked “why the great natural beauties of the city are allowed to become eyesores and plague spots.” The Fallkill Creek had “become the dumping ground of those who live on its banks.” She also wished “to know why a public meeting is called to consider the inducements to be offered a new manufacturing company to locate here while the smoke and dirt of those already established make the air vile and the buildings inside and outside grimy and unpleasing to the eye.”⁹

Generally, Salmon believed in cooperation between the Poughkeepsie Chamber of Commerce, representing businessmen, and citizens seeking civic improvements. But she did not appreciate the chamber’s effort to raise \$6,000 as part of an ultimately successful campaign to induce the Seneca Button Company to relocate its manufacturing to Poughkeepsie. The chamber, for its part, valued Salmon’s concern with the city’s appearance by making it cleaner and otherwise more attractive to visitors and potential new customers and businesses. Salmon had no objection to growth per se, but wanted attention given to other civic purposes.

Measures to create civic consciousness that were being promoted in cities like Boston and New York appear among her reform interests. In 1906 she had wondered in a letter to the editor of *The Enterprise* why Poughkeepsie was so far behind, compared to other American cities and towns, in forming organizations for civic improvement. Residents talk about its fraternal societies, whist, social, and political clubs, she noted, but have not created the “municipal leagues, civic clubs, city improvement societies, art leagues, city music commissions, civic art guilds, playground associations, tree-planting societies... street cleaning leagues, societies for checking the abuse of public advertising, pleasant-Sunday-afternoon

associations and scores of other organizations that make city improvements.”¹⁰

Pursuing the same concern in 1916 she wrote in support of a community services series being held Sunday afternoons in Poughkeepsie’s Cohen Theatre. She claimed that the series had attracted 3,000 people on consecutive Sundays. Arguing for the services’ usefulness, Salmon said: “As a community we have very little unity of purpose, and no concerted action to accomplish a common end. Each man goes his own way, with little reference to his neighbor.”¹¹

Wishing for the City Beautiful

In contrast, Salmon deplored, the “excess individualism” in architectural choices that she believed blighted the visual appearance of Poughkeepsie. She admired instead the emphasis on harmony of the City Beautiful inspired by architects like Daniel Burnham, who designed the Chicago Exposition of 1893 and the then recent plan for the mall in the nation’s capital. Salmon admired its emphasis upon harmony as opposed to what she deemed the customary excessive individualism in the design of individual buildings. She complained in 1908 that the “finest location in the city [Poughkeepsie] is occupied by a crowded mass of buildings incongruous in style of architecture, in building material, in the purpose for which they are used.” The courthouse square, almost entirely rebuilt for half a million dollars since 1900, “contains the court house, a bank building, a business block, the building of the express companies, an engine house and a saloon.”¹²

Noting many new real estate developments underway, she asked whether Poughkeepsie might take steps toward “some united plan and harmonious action? A landscape architect could be secured who would make a careful study of all of our natural advantages, report on a general, harmonious scheme of improvement...”¹³ Then putting her money where her mouth was, Salmon, at her own considerable expense, brought the distinguished landscape architect James Nolen to Poughkeepsie to lecture and devise a plan for the city. To her great disappointment, his plan sat idle on archive shelves due to objections from real estate interests. The city continued its haphazard expansion according to developers’ interests and tastes.

She lamented the transformation from a residential to an industrial city: “Two-family houses and flats have sprung up by the hundreds, while small cheap restaurants, furnished rooms, cheap amusements, and more than a score of public laundries record a population industrial in character and more or less floating in its domestic life.” Like other progressives, whether devout or not, she drew upon religious inspiration and rhetoric from the evangelical Protestant past, blurring the boundaries between religion and reform. Congestion had increased to the

point that rear houses were being built in the yards behind other houses, and a “large number of covered tenement-house outside stairways ...have been attached to older residences.”¹⁴

In the 1890s, still living at the college, Salmon had founded a Vassar chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, although she never seems to have shared the D.A.R.’s preoccupation with creating historical monuments and marking battle sites. But seeing the organization as a possible agency for addressing other social needs, she agreed to serve as regent of the Poughkeepsie chapter. She soon named committees on streets, parks, and school playgrounds. In 1908, writing to the *Eagle* as “DAR,” she described at length Chicago’s South Park System, the prize exhibit at the first annual convention of the National Playground Association. Replete with ball fields, tennis courts, swimming pools, lunch rooms, and reading and assembly rooms, it had had sharply reduced juvenile offenses in the stockyards district. Salmon argued that “the elements of their system are practicable for towns and smaller cities; and that this municipal equipment is less costly than jails...and as sound sense as good pavements and clean streets.”¹⁵ By 1911 Poughkeepsie created its first playground.

Shy and never one to seek publicity for herself, Salmon summoned up her courage to expose social evils in the belief that an aroused public would then attack them. Her favorite newspaper, the New York *Evening Post*, exemplified her faith when it observed in 1907 that “That great American institution, the revival meeting, is being ordered anew” to combat a variety of urban plagues. “After all, men need only ‘get together’ and be shown the light by earnest exhorters in order to strike down an evil, great or small.”¹⁶

Battling Poughkeepsie’s “Evils”

That faith in the power of moral exhortation brought Lucy Salmon to public attention in 1906 and 1907. In two speeches, first at the YWCA, then the YMCA, she decried “city evils.” She claimed: “there are 300 floating votes [to be bought] in Poughkeepsie. We know where the trading goes on, yet we say nothing. There’s open gambling on the boat races... Merchants say openly that they’re afraid to vote against gambling because they’re afraid to lose business...”¹⁷ Calling alcoholism a disease, she decried saloons open on Sunday, violating state law. She concluded by describing the reform of politics in Ithaca and in Galveston, Texas, after its flood. Salmon asked why Poughkeepsie couldn’t get rid of money in politics and learn to vote a split ticket, removing national parties and issues from its municipal elections.



PHOTO: SIDNEY S. BENHAM, USED BY PERMISSION OF STANLEY BENHAM, JR. AND VIRGINIA AUGERSON

Fair at Hooker Street

But unlike Jane Addams at Hull House, who challenged the political boss controlling her Chicago district, Salmon watched corruption in local politics from the sidelines. She clipped the *Eagle's* 1908 story of how “King William” McCabe’s men defeated a primary opponent in the Irish political stronghold in Ward 1. They admitted that “they had the Italian and Polack element solid, and they all turned out.” The opponent claimed that the sheriff’s bookkeeper had pockets wadded with “green,” which he paid out to “floaters.” Also the opponent “had no patronage to offer while McCabe has been getting people in the ward jobs right and left on the streets and in the department of public works.”¹⁸

Good government reformers like Lucy Salmon (referred to sarcastically as “GooGoos” by politicians) saw a local ward leader like McCabe as the enemy. Their ideal of the good citizen assumed a detached, thoughtful consideration of issues and candidates followed by rational choices at the polls. Like native middle-class reformers in other American cities, they rarely appreciated the social usefulness of “bosses” who provided immigrant constituencies with urgently needed forms of assistance. On the other hand, by the 1900s Poughkeepsie’s second- and third-generation German- and Irish-Americans included “respectable” leaders with whom Salmon could cooperate. She showed less interest in their immigrant

origins. Although in *Main Street* she could enumerate Poughkeepsie's ethnic restaurants and count forty-seven nationalities in the city, immigrants and questions about assimilation and Americanization did not figure prominently in her writing about her city at the time of the second greatest wave of foreign immigration in the nation's history.

The Lonely Path of a Woman Reformer in a Male World

Salmon's public speaking and writing on local needs and issues did capture the attention of business and professional leaders hoping to promote local improvements. In 1907 she was the sole woman among fifteen men on the organizing committee for a series of "public conferences on City Affairs" held at Vassar Brothers Institute in February and March.¹⁹ That conference brought together the mayor and Common Council, five representatives from the chamber of commerce, eleven from the Dutchess County Historical Society, ten from the Civic League, nine from the Knights of Columbus, seven each from the YMCA and the YWCA, six from Vassar Brothers Institute, four from the city library, and others from the press, realty companies, and the Arts and Crafts movement.

The local chamber of commerce, founded in 1906, took an active role in promoting civic improvements. In 1910 it invited Salmon to be a member of its Committee on Municipal Affairs and Legislation; current topics included city planning, beautifying approaches to the city, clearing streets, and creating a truly patriotic Fourth of July. That may have meant taking the celebration away from rowdier, especially foreign, groups. The chamber then appointed Salmon as chair of its Committee on Cleanup. But New York City newspapers like the *Times* and the *Sun* got wind of her plans for that campaign, and the resulting "unpleasant notoriety" led her to resign, despite the efforts of the chamber's president to persuade her to continue.²⁰ She was deeply distressed by caricatures of her plans and spurious interviews attributed to her.

The cleanup campaign went on without her leadership in June 1911, although she was asked to choose the suburban Arlington contingent for its final inspection tour. In a fall 1911 article on "The Rejuvenation of Poughkeepsie" in *The American City*, the magazine of the American Civic Association, the chamber of commerce received credit for the campaign and for other improvements Salmon had been urging for years. Whether this self-effacing reformer preferred that silence after her previous experience with unpleasant publicity is unknown. She seemed very happy with the local leadership of Mayor Horace Sague, the unlikely Democrat elected for three terms in this normally Republican city, who shared her interests in civic rejuvenation.

The acceptance of Salmon as a partner in civic work did not extend to chamber socializing. Although male members of her Cleanup Committee met regularly at her house, they would not include her in their company at chamber dinners. Year after year she sent in her check for the cost of that event, only to have it returned with a note that having women at the banquet was “impracticable.”²¹ Generally, while a newspaper might refer to her as “one of the most progressive women in this part of New York State,” Salmon’s struggle to make women equal partners in civic improvement campaigns remained difficult. To her dismay, the Poughkeepsie *Evening Enterprise* noted in 1914 that the very shy Professor Salmon is “the acknowledged leader of progressive thought and action at Vassar College... Just a generation ahead of the times with visions of a purer democracy, she has naturally paid the penalty ... of all great reformers ... of being misunderstood.”²²

Salmon seems to have played a less active role in civic affairs after her Cleanup Committee resignation. But she continued to push for greater participation by women of all classes. Writing in 1912 as “Help Wanted,” she protested the restriction of so many activities to men, or ladies, with no place for a working woman. In 1906 she had been urging formation of a Women’s University Club; two years later, she reminded Poughkeepsians in a sarcastic letter that city women were “rightly excluded” from all organizations but Vassar Brothers Institute.²³ She kept at it. In 1913 some members of Poughkeepsie’s women’s organizations tried to form a civic committee through which they could act to promote the general welfare. A Women’s League for Civic Education paved the way for the League of Women Voters. By 1916 the president of the city’s Common Council could say, in claiming Poughkeepsie was as progressive as any other city, that it “has the great mass of its women banded together in more than a dozen clubs.”²⁴

Promoting Urban Planning for Poughkeepsie

At Vassar College, Salmon made an effort to incorporate her interest in city planning into the curriculum. She kept abreast of new developments through the American Civic Association. And she continued to speak out from time to time on local questions. After the Riverview Military Academy closed, she recommended that the building be turned into a public trade or technical school because of its proximity to large manufacturing firms on the riverfront. Typically, she cited examples worthy of emulation: the University of Cincinnati had worked out cooperation between itself and manufacturers whereby students could work part time in a factory while studying, thus getting both theory and application. Coming back to her long-standing concern with parks, she noted that Riverview’s

extensive grounds could be used for recreation and athletics in a congested part of Poughkeepsie that badly needed such opportunities. That did come about; the trade school did not.

Salmon believed in working with business and professional leaders wherever her planning and reform interests converged with theirs, as they did in improving the city's appearance and its reputation as a healthy environment. But she did not share their preoccupation with spurring economic growth and their focus on attracting new businesses and industries. Significantly, the planner she had brought at her own expense to Poughkeepsie in 1915 was noted for his expertise in landscaping, whereas the urban planners the city would turn to in the 1920s took for granted that their priority was planning for population and economic growth.

The planner chosen by the Common Council to make a presentation was Myron West of Chicago. He came to Poughkeepsie in 1924, the same year that U.S. Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover published a Standard Zoning Act intended as a model for American cities. The Common Council accepted West's offer to devise a plan for \$5,000. He provided a comprehensive zoning and street plan, including street corrections; evaluation of the location of transit, rail, and water transportation; streets; schools; parks; public buildings; and—a never-ending concern for Poughkeepsie—revitalization of its waterfront. West also plotted streets beyond municipal boundaries to discourage haphazard growth by suburban developers and, if possible, to annex more territory for the city's future expansion.

West's ambitious plan, especially for dealing with traffic and city streets, received favorable public response. Although the Merchants' Association in 1919 had bitterly fought police department efforts to limit car parking on Main Street, by 1924 merchants had concluded that unrestricted parking prevented shoppers from getting to their stores. But it soon became apparent that Poughkeepsie's legislators and businessmen had narrower aims than West's plan. They primarily sought zoning, widening or extending streets, annexation of territory beyond municipal boundaries, and finding a suitable location for a new vehicular bridge across the Hudson. In 1926 the mayor appointed a committee of twenty-five businessmen and professionals to review West's plan, but did not set up a planning commission, as West and urban planners generally preferred. Instead, the mayor assigned all responsibility for action to his corporate counsel and Board of Public Works, a clear sign that he was not committed to professional planning. Business goals and political concerns, then as now usually in conflict with planning ideals, prevailed. This political resolution of who should control planning seems unlikely to have pleased Salmon, but her dedication to municipal reform lived on, first in

the local suffrage movement and then, after winning the vote, in the Women's City and County Club.

From Suffrage to the Women's City and County Club

Civic improvement and a variety of related reforms had received a powerful boost from the local women's suffrage drive during the 1910s. Leadership for that drive came from female faculty at Vassar College, especially those who had chosen to live in the city. The latter avoided the hindrance of the college's ban, in effect until 1916, of suffrage activity on campus. Lucy Salmon worked with the National American Woman Suffrage Association and collaborated with her colleague, Professor of English Laura Johnson Wylie, in forming the local Equal Suffrage League. Wylie lived not far from Salmon at 116 Market Street. Today, the modest Carpenter Gothic-style dwelling is home of the organization Hudson River Sloop Clearwater.

The League elected Wylie its president in 1910. Years later, the *Poughkeepsie Courier* described her as a "woman of indomitable energy, she was the local leader of the woman suffrage movement from 1910 to 1928."²⁵ Of the seventy-four community members listed as supporters at a league event, twenty-eight were connected with Vassar. The league proved to be remarkably efficient and well-informed in their ward canvassing. In the successful 1917 referendum on a state constitutional amendment enfranchising women, Poughkeepsie was the only major population center along the Hudson River north of New York City that voted in favor of it.

Wylie believed that having won the vote, women needed to demonstrate that they were responsible citizens. She led the way to a reorganization of suffragists, first as the Women's City Club and then as the Women's City and County Club, to promote "the cause of good government" and the "health, protection and welfare of all citizens."²⁶ No other area organization in the early twentieth century matched its range of civic and humanitarian efforts. Another offshoot of the Equal Suffrage League, the League of Women Voters, did not fare as well as the club during the interwar years, but surpassed it in membership after World War II.

The Women's City and County Club began with a roster of highly educated and often socially prominent women. They included Mrs. Richard Aldrich of Barrytown; Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt of Hyde Park; Mrs. Henry Morgenthau, Jr., of Hopewell Junction; Mrs. Gordon Norrie; Mrs. Henry Noble MacCracken, wife of Vassar's president; and Rhoda Hinkley, Mrs. Theodore DuBois, and Dr. Grace Kimball, all of Poughkeepsie. In their first year, this pioneering group felt the

community didn't take them very seriously until they established a Community Kitchen during the great flu epidemic. That led many Poughkeepsians to realize "that there was a small group of women who were vitally interested in the advancement of public welfare and who wished to be of real service to the community."²⁷

The club then brought Helen Thompson of New York City's Tenement House Department to conduct a survey of poor housing conditions in Poughkeepsie. With Thompson's report, the Women's City and County Club in its second year persuaded the Common Council to pass an amendment to the city's building code requiring more depth to lots, more air space between houses, and greater privacy in tenements. Prodded by individuals and organizations to do something "about the untidy condition of our streets," the women also persuaded the city Board of Health to create a "clean up week."²⁸ The club encouraged members to acquaint themselves with government officers through the visits and conferences it sponsored. It also pursued group visits to local institutions like Hudson River State Hospital and other health agencies, the Community Theatre, Neighborhood House, the Children's Home, and public schools. As the club made its scope county-wide, it conducted additional systematic surveys, including one on health conditions in Dutchess County's rural schools.

Investigation Prompts Action

When members discovered a major problem where their influence might be of assistance, they moved quickly to address it, as they did in hounding city officials to enforce long-neglected rules on garbage collection. That successful campaign brought them more public attention and encouraged further action. They mobilized local schools and other agencies to undertake or expand "Americanization" programs for immigrants. They cooperated with the Board of Education in urging foreign-born men to join night-school classes, resulting in a doubling of attendance. Because home duties prevented women from attending, the club persuaded the board to start home classes in English and to pay for the teachers.

The club's Industrial Committee brought Florence Kelly of the National Consumers League to talk about pending legislation affecting women and children. It then held a meeting—one of the club's most successful—on "The Industrial Crisis and How to Meet it," with discussion by the general manager of the Dutchess Manufacturing Co., the organizer for the International Garment Makers Union for Women, and the spokesman for the Operatives of the Garner Print Works of Wappingers Falls. The committee tried "to have employers represented equally with employees in the audience."²⁹ The 125 employees attending



PHOTO: SIDNEY S. BENHAM, USED BY PERMISSION OF STANLEY BENHAM, JR. AND VIRGINIA AUGERSON

Market Street Poughkeepsie, c. 1900

packed clubrooms to capacity.

The club created committees on Juvenile Court Protection, Child Welfare, Tuberculosis, City Planning, Lincoln Center, Law Enforcement, Civic Education, and International Relations, among others. It sent representatives to Albany to lobby for reforms like abolition of child labor and to meetings sponsored by other local clubs and the Federation of Women's Clubs. In 1921 one national periodical cited Poughkeepsie's Women's City and County Club as one of the four most important clubs in the United States.

By the mid-1920s, however, the club's growth slowed and so did the activities of some of its committees. Yet in its first years the club had stirred city and county officials to address a number of problems. For discussion of shared issues, it had brought together representatives of diverse interest groups, notably leaders of women's unions and company officers or spokesmen. It had prodded and supported local voluntary associations in settlement house, Americanization, and other activities intended to help newcomers and the needy. It did not conduct those activities itself, however, nor did members interact closely or continuously with those being helped. While the attitudes of club members were more inclusive and democratic than those of earlier charitable workers, there was still a social distance between them and their beneficiaries. However, this should not obscure

the fact that these largely upper- or upper-middle class women created the most important bridges—of concern and assistance, if not of direct social interaction—between the many diverse groups who made up the fragmented population of Poughkeepsie and Dutchess County.

A mosaic cannot serve as an adequate metaphor for a changing, fluid society, but it has the advantage of calling attention to the many fragments in that society at a given moment in time. Poughkeepsie was not then, or ever, a homogenous population, so it is a mistake to speak of Poughkeepsians as a whole as if they shared a common consciousness. That mistake imposes a unity that has never existed. But as the story of the Women's City and County Club indicates, a lack of unity has not meant that important linkages cannot be made at times between the leaders of even quite diverse social groups, leading to shared purposes and action. Such linkages permit more broadly-based civic actions, which, to varying extent, benefit the many rather than the few. That happened nationwide during the Progressive movement and in Poughkeepsie largely through the work of women reformers such as Lucy Maynard Salmon.

Endnotes

1. Quoted in Nicholas Adams and Bonnie Smith, eds., *History and the Texture of Modern Life: Selected Essays, Lucy Maynard Salmon* (Philadelphia, 2001), 8.
2. From *Main Street* in *ibid.*, 89.
3. *Ibid.*, 16-17.
4. See especially Folders 57:10, 57:11, and 57:13 in the Salmon Papers.
5. See Miss Salmon's book of clippings, 1902-1908 in Salmon papers, her scrapbook of clippings from the Poughkeepsie *Daily Eagle* for 1898-1904 in Poughkeepsie Document Box, Local History Room, Adriance Memorial Library, Poughkeepsie, New York.
6. *The Enterprise*, October 25, 1906.
7. *Ibid.*, October 27, 1906.
8. *Sunday Courier*, June 9, 1912.
9. Letter from "Poughkeepsian" in the *Daily Eagle* (undated clipping in 1902-1908 scrapbook).
10. *The Enterprise*, November 9, 1906.
11. *Ibid.*, March 16, 1916.
12. *Ibid.*, April 7, 1908.
13. See Salmon's clipping from the *New York Tribune*, July 19, 1908 on Nolen's plan for beautification of Montclair, New Jersey. Also, Jon Teaford, *The Twentieth-Century American City* (Second edition, Baltimore, 1993), 67-8.
14. "Main Street" in Adams and Smith, eds., *History*, 90-91.
15. *Daily Eagle*, May 11, 1908.
16. *New York Evening Post*, November 4, 1908.
17. Untitled and undated clipping reporting Miss Salmon's talk to the YWCA in the 1902-1908 Scrapbook.

18. *Daily Eagle*, October 3, 1908.
19. See the printed handout dated January 17, 1907, for the conferences on city affairs, and Salmon's notes on representation of local organizations at the conferences. Salmon Papers.
20. Howard Platt of the Chamber of Commerce to Salmon, April 28, 1910. Louise Fargo Brown, *Apostle of Democracy: The Life of Lucy Maynard Salmon* (New York, 1943), 210-2.
- 21.
22. *Evening Enterprise*, July 14, 1914.
23. *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, March 2, 1909.
24. *Eagle News*, June 9, 1916.
25. Eva Boice, "Woman Suffrage, Vassar College, and Laura Johnson Wylie," *The Hudson River Valley Review*, 20 (Spring, 2004), 42.
26. *Ibid.*, 43.
27. *Women's City and County Club*, Annual Report for 1921, 4-5. Adriance Library.
28. *Ibid.*, 8.
29. *Ibid.*, 7.

The Bank of Newburgh

Receives in payment and exchange from dealers, the notes of the undermentioned banks,
at the rates following:

IN THE STATE OF NEW-YORK.

AT PAR.

New-York City Banks, - - -	Bank of Catskill, - - -
Banks at Albany, - - -	Aqueduct Association of Cats-
Banks at Troy, - - -	kill, - - -
Lansingburgh Bank, - - -	And the notes of banks made
Mohawk Bank, - - -	payable at New-York. - - -
Bank of Orange, - - -	

AT A DISCOUNT.

Middle District Bank, - - -	Bank of Canandaigua and its
Bank of Hudson, - - -	branch at Utica, - - -
Bank of Columbia, - - -	Jefferson County Bank, - - -
Bank of Utica and its branch	Bank of Niagara, - - -
at Canandaigua, - - -	Hudson & Columbia Facilities.
Utica Insurance Company, - - -	

IN THE STATE OF NEW-JERSEY.

AT PAR.

Banks in Newark, - - -	Banks at Trenton, if not less
Banks in New Brunswick, - - -	than \$5, - - -
Bank of Morristown, - - -	All other Jersey notes from to
State Bank at Elizabeth, - - -	per cent.
Patterson Bank, - - -	

IN THE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA.

AT PAR.

Philadelphia City Banks, - - -	Farmer's Bank, of Bucks, if not
Germantown Bank, if not less	less than \$5, - - -
than \$5, - - -	New Hope Bridge Company,
Bank of Delaware County, if	if not less than \$5, - - -
not less than \$5, - - -	Bank of Montgomery, at Nor-
Bank of Chester, if not less	ristown, if not less than \$5,
than \$5, - - -	

AT A DISCOUNT.

Silver Lake Bank, - - -	All other notes out of the city
Easton Bank, - - -	of Philadelphia from to
	per cent.

IN THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT.

Middletown Bank, - - -	Derby Bank, - - -
Phoenix Bank, at Hartford, - - -	Bridgeport Bank, - - -
Hartford Bank, - - -	Hartford Bank, if payable at
Banks at New Haven, - - -	New-York, at par. - - -

IN MASSACHUSETTS & RHODE ISLAND.

Bank notes made payable in	Others from to per
the city of New-York, at par,	cent discount.

Corrected at the bank weekly.

GARLAY, PRINTER, NEWBURGH.

A common practice among banks up to 1865 was the issuance of the weekly discount list. This list would be essential for local merchants in the course of their daily business transactions. Which notes would be paid at par and which would be discounted could often depend on the political winds of the time.

Courtesy of Historical Society of the Highlands

Banking in Early America. The Mid-Hudson Valley, The Banks of Newburgh

Lucien Mott

The banks of Newburgh, New York, offer an interesting historical insight into America's early financial history. Located on the Hudson River fifty miles north of New York City, Newburgh was first settled in the early eighteenth century and incorporated in 1801. Throughout the eighteenth century, Hudson Valley settlements such as Sleepy Hollow, Garrison, Fishkill, New Windsor, Kingston, Poughkeepsie, and New Paltz existed in relative isolation, populated mostly by subsistence farmers scraping a living from the rocky soil. This pattern of life was unchanged until the early nineteenth century, when the pace of life and economic development picked up considerably. The transformation from an agricultural-based economy to a market economy caused a considerable amount of political excitement in the village of Newburgh in the 1830s. Much of this excitement and political tension focused on the development of banking. By the 1830s, Newburgh was in need of capital to continue its economic expansion. Under what terms this capital would be obtained became the starting point for political agitation. I shall examine the controversy surrounding the founding of the Highland Bank in the village of Newburgh in 1833 and 1834 through 1840. I shall also give a brief overview of the national bank era in Newburgh.

Background

When the Bank of Newburgh was founded on April 15, 1811, it was one of just 200 banks in the United States. According to the bank's own history, it was only the fifth corporation in New York State. Banks were often at the center of political controversy because until 1838 they had to obtain a charter from the state legislature. In Europe, banks represented the interests of families, individuals, or partnerships—in essence, established wealth. The average European of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries never dreamed of accessing the services of

a bank. However, in New York and much of America, capital had to be scraped together by whatever means possible, often with the help of the government. In this environment, banks quickly became embroiled in national and local politics. These debates were hard-fought because banks provided a much-needed means of exchange and capital for all classes. To be denied access to bank services was considered anti-democratic. On the other hand, conservative agrarians viewed the very existence of banks as a threat to honest labor. For this reason, a person's opinion on banks and banknotes helped define their political views.

Early Use of Banknotes

The simplest way to understand the political divisions behind banking and banknotes is to examine their use. The first fact to understand is that America's early economic development was shaped by the limited supply of specie to serve as legal tender. In a traditional economy, gold and silver had been assigned an abstract value relating to agricultural commodities. Most of the population only marginally used gold and silver, preferring barter or direct exchange of goods and labor. This was the economic system that operated in the Hudson Valley in the eighteenth century. American farmers interacted with merchants (general store owners) to obtain credit and goods they could not otherwise produce.¹ These localized economies had minimal interaction with the outside world; the needs of farmers were generally satisfied by this pre-industrial arrangement. However, such a system was stagnant because it did not provide enough capital for improvement of roads, the building of canals, or the social and economic strains associated with population growth. As the Hudson Valley economy developed, a new circulation medium, apart from scarce gold and silver, was needed: in other words, a way to assign abstract values to agricultural commodities that could then be used as a circulating medium.

Naturally, merchants were the first to address this need. Informally, they began to issue bills of exchange to facilitate business transactions, thereby providing an ample supply of money. If merchants had to rely simply on the supply of gold and silver in circulation, the growth of the economy, not to mention the scope of their business activity, would be severely restricted. In the eighteenth century, a scene was often repeated where farmers' produce or ships' cargoes went unsold, not for lack of demand but owing to a shortage of ready cash.

It was a small step for merchants to combine their resources to form banks ensuring an available source of money to facilitate commerce. These banks would further expand the supply of money by printing banknotes in excess of their

specie reserves. Alexander Hamilton understood this. He advocated different conceptions on the use of money, to the point where he was willing to consider debt as money. While the eighteenth-century merchant was conservative, he was forced into this position out of necessity. The result was a multitude of circulating banknotes representing a curious amalgamation of political, philosophical, and economic practices. These banknotes, later known as the paper system, were looked on with suspicion by the farmer and his political representatives. They saw no need for them, holding the opinion that the merchant class was somehow tricking them out of the fruits of their labor. As banknotes proliferated, the complexities of their use caused more tension between the classes. Let us consider, for example, a typical banknote from the Bank of Newburgh.



There were no standard denominations before 1861. From the Gary Ferguson Collection. Note that this banknote is made out to a specific individual or bearer

Banknotes such as the one illustrated presented a dilemma that was long unresolved, and in fact represented a skirmish line for political debate. In the early nineteenth century, the issuance of banknotes was considered a common-law right to borrow and go into debt. As such, these notes were not considered money in the current sense, being passed along almost indefinitely or until the indeterminate time that they could be paid. It was expected that banknotes would be paid in specie—coin—as soon as possible. Therefore, banknotes were not money, but a promise to pay money. Certainly the bearer had this expectation. The longer he held the note and the further the note traveled from its point of origin, the more depreciated it became. Thus, there were good reasons for the bearer to redeem his notes at the earliest possible convenience.²

This presented a dilemma for the issuing bank. It was expected to pay, and refusal to do so would effect the reputation of the issuing institution, thereby decreasing the public's willingness to accept their notes and make deposits or buy bank stock. Paying the note also meant a decrease in its specie reserve, which in turn curtailed the bank's ability to issue banknotes and make loans. So it was in the bank's interest to delay the redemption of its banknotes as long as possible. This is the reason banks tended to issue notes of small denomination. They would be more likely to circulate longer than a \$20 to \$100 dollar note.³

As a result, a market in banknotes developed. Some notes could be redeemed at par, others at a discount depending on a number of factors. Because of these discrepancies, speculators eagerly sought to buy banknotes at discount, often far away from the banks' locations. When they had accumulated a sufficient supply, the speculators would travel to the institution to demand payment in specie. You can imagine the scene as speculators showed up with bags full of banknotes. It could not have been a happy occurrence for bankers and local borrowers alike, since this practice was decidedly against their interests. Speculators leaving town with corresponding amounts of gold and silver was deflationary. Since there was no national credit system at this time, communities had to rely on their own resources to provide capital.⁴

Legislative attempts to deal with this confusing and problematic situation resulted in even more confusion. For example, in 1819 the Maryland legislature enacted a law against banks that refused to redeem notes in gold and silver. The following year it reversed itself, enacting a law against persons who demanded that notes be redeemed.⁵ The latter law was directed at speculators, the former against banks that suspended specie payments in the Panic of 1819.

After the panic, a democratic movement arose that coalesced eventually around Andrew Jackson. Following the end of the American Revolution, and particularly after the War of 1812, the market revolution connected once-isolated farmers and tradesmen to the economy. It subjected them to booms and busts, eroding economic security and predictability. Segments of the new democratic movement saw banks and their paper system as imprisoning farmers, tradesmen, and groups that formerly controlled their economic destiny. It was viewed that these workers were being entrapped in an increasingly complex web of complicated transactions they could neither understand nor control. Before the Panic of 1819, National Republicans, led by Daniel Webster, held the upper hand. They pushed for what became known as the American System, a strong National Bank and internal improvements. But after the panic, as farmers and artisans lost jobs, radicals such as William Duane of Philadelphia gained the upper hand. With the

newly politicized artisans and farmers, he and others pushed anti-bank policies as they attacked what they called the new moneyed aristocracy.⁶

Andrew Jackson became the champion of the simple folk and their “old ways.” After 1828, the Jackson Administration took what would be considered a pre-capitalist position on banks and banknotes. Using the power of the new populism, he attacked the Second Bank of the United States, and in general disapproved of all circulating banknotes. Jackson’s position was that “Banknotes are mere evidence of debt due by the banks, and in this respect differ not from the promissory notes of the merchants.”⁷ William Gouge, an advisor to Jackson in 1833, admitted that this debt essentially became the money of the country. However, he was not willing to take the next logical step and assume that the obligations of banks were not ordinary debt but money. Gouge’s view was that it was in the nation’s long-term interests to adopt a purely metallic money system. In his view, allowing excessive bank credit and the use of banknotes only led to corruption and an unequal distribution of wealth.

That through the various advantages which the system of incorporated paper-money banking has given to some men over others, the foundation has been laid of an artificial inequality of wealth... these banks give rise to many kinds of stock-jobbing, by which simple minded are injured and the crafty benefited.⁸

A further example of this class-oriented, anti-bank attack is illustrated by William Duane, who became Jackson’s treasury secretary in 1833. Duane blamed the banks for widening inequality. Without banks, Duane conceded “there might be fewer towns or such crowds as are in them; but there would have been more men at the plough; and there would have been more integrity, frugality, and content.” Instead, he argued, society had been convulsed with “fluctuations, revulsions and panics ruinous in their consequences, by the mighty power of nearly 600 banks.”⁹ Duane was not just opposed to the United States Bank but all banks. Some historians have attributed this to the survival of pre-capitalist agrarian notions, others to resistance to the rapid changes brought on by the market economy. However, it is difficult to envision America’s nineteenth-century economic development without banks. Clearly, Duane’s economic orientation was more in tune with the eighteenth century.

Jackson’s personal desire to establish gold and silver as the only means of circulation medium was not shared by all members of his party, nor by his second vice president, Martin Van Buren, whose chief reason for supporting the demise of the Bank of the United States was to get rid of that Philadelphia institu-

tion. As a New Yorker, Van Buren saw the National Bank as robbing New York institutions of their rightful leadership role in finance. Jackson and his anti-bank supporters used agrarian rhetoric to attack the Second Bank of America. Behind the rhetoric was a complex confluence of interests and attitudes. The National Bank was accused of any number of crimes. A meeting in Warwick, New York, resolved: "That President Jackson in vetoing the bill for re-charter [of the Second Bank of the United States], has endeared himself in an eminent degree to every farmer, mechanic, and laborer, who subsists upon his honest industry, whilst he has conformed to the doctrine and example of a Washington, a Jefferson, and a Madison, in fearlessly checking the overgrown power of the moneyed oligarchy, which is threatening a prostration of our Republic."¹⁰

Behind this class-based rhetoric lay the belief that the existence of the bank threatened liberty. In the age of democracy, there was strong feeling that a powerful federal government and its bank oppressed the common man. The rhetoric had very little to do with reality. Under the leadership of Nicholas Biddle, the Second Bank was acting as a central bank should. The government deposited all of its funds in it, provided a ready supply of money (this was especially important during war), and kept a watchful eye on state banks. The latter function caused the most controversy. In the course of regular business in Philadelphia and through its branches, the U.S. Bank acquired large quantities of state banknotes. It would redeem these notes, thereby ensuring discipline in the issuance of banknotes, as banks would be fearful of issuing too many notes. (The generally accepted guide was no more than three times a bank's gold reserves.) Prudent bankers saw the wisdom of this system: It weeded out weak and corrupt institutions.

However, the system led to any number of political and regional tensions. First, it gave substance to federal power because, in effect, the U.S. government was taking responsibility for the currency system. Jackson and other conservatives saw this as a clear violation of the Constitution, as well as a violation of states rights. If the federal bank were left alone and allowed to develop on a natural course, in all likelihood it would force out all state banknotes, replacing them with notes of its own issue. (Replacement of all state banknotes did in fact eventually happen, with the creation of the Federal Reserve banking system in the 1930s.) The result would be even greater federal economic power at the expense of the states and local banks. Agrarians and groups such as *Locos Focos* did not really understand the intricacies of the market economy, being frozen in an eighteenth-century conception of economic development. Farmers and workers were also stressed by the development of the market economy and the resulting periodic recessions, such as the panics of 1819, 1837, and 1857. In these downturns,

farmers and workers lost jobs and farms, leaving them with no means of support. The economic forces that shaped their lives were beyond their understanding, so they were naturally susceptible to any political movement that promised to redress their grievances.

Those who were prospering from the market revolution of the early nineteenth century—Martin VanBuren and the New York Bankers—understood the need for banks and banknotes well enough. However, they did not like the federal bank for two reasons. First, it curtailed the supply of easy money with its discipline of the market. Second, the New Yorkers resented the power of the Philadelphia bank because it took away profitable business from New York City, which by the 1820s and '30s had become America's financial capital. To destroy the U.S. Bank would bring considerable financial and political gain to New York. To accomplish this, they were not beyond using the conservatives' democratic rhetoric. In fact, they eagerly manipulated public opinion and ignorance for their own ends. After achieving destruction of the National Bank, they quickly discovered they had nothing in common with their anti-bank allies.¹¹

Banking in Newburgh

It is interesting to see how these national tensions and contradictions played out on the local level in the early nineteenth century. The founders of the Bank of Newburgh were local merchants and businessmen eager to expand their establishments. As in the rest of 1830s America, a bank was the only conceivable way to raise capital. Accordingly, a petition was presented to the New York legislature to incorporate a bank in Newburgh. A charter had advantages and disadvantages. On the plus side, it gave the corporation exclusive rights to do business in a given area. But it also restricted the scope of banking activities, often placing limits on capital and general terms relative to conducting business. The Bank of Newburgh's charter was typical for the period. Its capital was limited to \$400,000, and its shares would be \$50 per. The total liability of the bank—whether bond, note, or loan—was not to exceed three times the specie on deposit. Alexander Hamilton developed the basic outline of all of these early charters, which he had copied from the Bank of England.¹²

The original petitioners for the Bank of Newburgh were Isaac Belknap, Jr.; Jacob Powell; Selah Reeve; and Chauncey Belknap. Typical of these men was Reeve, whose family came to Newburgh in 1784, settling on a farm three miles north of the village. He began in business in nearby New Windsor, manufacturing brown earthenware. From there he became involved with several businesses in

Newburgh, including the bank. The other petitioners were also prominent citizens. Isaac Belknap was a Revolutionary War veteran and Powell a developer. The bank's first board of directors consisted of Isaac and Chauncey Belknap, Powell, Reeve, John Chambers, Francis Crawford, John D. Lawson, and James Hamilton. These men represented the emerging market elite of Newburgh, marking the transition away from an agrarian-based subsistence economy. Through their business activities, they held a tremendous amount of power in Newburgh. Like many businessmen in the early nineteenth century, they were eager to take advantage of every opportunity to gain wealth. A bank represented an excellent opportunity to do this, especially since banking was very profitable in its own right. Their background would lend them to adopt a Federalist position in support of a strong bank and improvement in infrastructure. However, as we shall see, this class of men would have to utilize the rhetoric of populism to further their interests in the 1820s and '30s.

The bank's founders were part of Hudson Valley's economic development. Through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the economy had been primarily agricultural, but that does not mean the Hudson Valley was not part of the wider Atlantic trade. Most of the local farmers bartered through the 1820s, until a moneyed economy began to appear.¹³ Farmers needed money to pay taxes, increase their land holdings, and buy goods they could not acquire through trade. For this they turned to men such as Isaac Belknap or Selah Reeve, entrepreneurs who began to look for opportunities in the growing market economy. As entrepreneurs, they began to develop different attitudes toward wealth and what we would call "individualism." Farmers tended to stop production when their immediate needs had been met and long-term goals achieved. In Newburgh, the establishment of the bank was a milestone in the triumph of market values over more traditional rural values.

The establishment of the Bank of Newburgh in 1811 came at a critical time in American history. Susceptible to strong European influence, the survival of the United States was still very much in doubt. When America went to war in 1812, the federal government was woefully unprepared to provide the means to fight. The Bank of Newburgh was part of the effort to raise money for the war, loaning the U.S. government \$50,000. Treasury Secretary Albert Gallatin had to turn to state banks because the charter of the First Bank of the United States had not been renewed, crippling efforts to organize federal forces to counter the British. As a result of this embarrassing episode, Federalists were able to persuade Congress to charter a Second Bank of the United States in 1816.

The period following the War of 1812 until the Panic of 1819 was one of

unprecedented economic growth, and the Bank of Newburgh shared in this prosperity. The transformation from the agrarian economy of the eighteenth century—the Jeffersonian ideal—to a free-for-all laissez faire market economy was not without winners and losers. Economic transformations inevitably lead to tension and confusion, as many workers and farmers resisted the implications of these new modes of business. The attack on the Second Bank of the United States is an example of this. Many Newburgh citizens welcomed this attack, but that did not mean they were against banks in general. From 1832 to 1834, national and local politics came to a boiling point over the establishment of a new Newburgh Bank.

The Highland Bank

The controversy over the establishment of The Highland Bank heated up in January 1832. The Jacksonian *Newburgh Weekly Telegraph* presented the issue, reflecting the wave of democratic class-based sentiment. It asked a rhetorical question: “How would the moneyed interest have approached the question [of a new bank] in 1811?”

Those with means and monies who had broken up their connection with the business of the community, and retired, as the term is, to become money lenders; to upon their resources, would have answered—A Bank—indeed, how presumptuous, to think of a Bank, when we have money enough to meet all the demand and sometimes more than enough—A Bank, to be sure! And what is to become of our bonuses and premiums when the times are hard and men must have the ready. How foolish and ridiculous to think such a thing when it is not in the least wanted!

The men who bear their arms and bend their back bones to the labor and business of the day; the men with few friends, and fewer dollars—who are really, after all, the very soul and body of Society—would have held and very different language. They would have said—Give us a Bank, by all means; place within our reach the funds necessary to enlarge our business, give us a fair chance with those who are born to better hopes and brighter fortunes, and we will show you what patient industry, and preserving enterprise can accomplish.¹⁴

This is a good example of the rhetoric of the period, and of the confusion and cross purposes of local and national politics. It is written in the language of class conflict, representing the issue as if the moneyed interest were different

from those striving for a new bank. As we have seen, the men who founded the Bank of Newburgh in 1811 were the moneyed interest of the community and now, according to the paper, the evil force oppressing poor working men. If they had retired to become money lenders, it was because they could make even more money with a bank that served the interests of the merchants and that class. Who were these men who now wanted a new bank, and whose interests would it serve—the people who were now being wrongfully oppressed by the Bank of Newburgh?

Opposition to the new bank certainly came from the vested interests of the Bank of Newburgh. In their view, they had been granted a charter from the state with its privileges and limitations. Having enjoyed a monopoly since 1811, the bank naturally regarded the new institution as an encroachment on these privileges. It not only challenged their economic position, but was a challenge to their political position as well. The Bank of Newburgh authorized the statement in the *Newburgh Weekly Telegraph* in January 1832 that “the sole object of many of the petitioners was to obtain directorships.”¹⁵

This may have been true to some extent, but from 1811 to 1832 Newburgh had grown a great deal. The \$400,000 limit of capital was no longer sufficient to support continued growth, so another bank, with its banknotes, was in order. The 1830s was a period of restless energy and extraordinary growth. All classes were eager to tap into it. While broad segments of the community recognized the need for a new bank, they could not muster the political support in Albany. Consequently, the first attempt to charter the new bank failed in April 1833. The *Newburgh Weekly Telegraph* reported the failure, stating “that the news was treated as a public calamity—that it was true that there are those among us who did rejoice at the disappointed hopes of the people, but when we remember that the severest calamities which befall the human family, war, pestilence and the ravages of the devouring element, are sources of profit and high enjoyment to some, we need not be surprised now to hear the note of exultation over the fate of a bill which involved the great measure, the commercial property of this section of the country.”¹⁶

By describing the opponents of the bank in such terms, the *Newburgh Weekly Telegraph* fully utilized the tone of class-based political discourse prevalent at the time. It was “us against them,” the mass of honest working men toiling under the oppression of the established moneyed interests. Such republican rhetoric dated back to the Revolutionary War period. It would become a cornerstone for the ideological basis of the new Republican Party in the 1850s. However, it failed to take into account forces at work to establish the new bank. It became a political

battle between the established Bank of Newburgh and a group of new investors representing the Highland Bank. The latter group was prepared to utilize the rhetoric of the ongoing Democratic revolution. When groups wanted to charter a new bank in the 1830s, all they needed to do was cry oppression to catch the attention of the state legislature.

The *Newburgh Weekly Telegraph* took the lead in the fight to secure a charter for the Highland Bank. In subsequent issues, arguments for the bank poured forth. “The stores of our merchants are filled with goods... Our steamboats are well patronized,... Our mechanics are all busily and most of them profitably employed, adding daily to the wealth of the nation... It is to be presumed that the honorable Senators who vetoed the Highland Bank did not once imagine that the farmers of Orange County required such vast sums of money to be expended in this place?”¹⁷ At a gathering, characterized as a meeting of the citizens of Newburgh, at the Manson House on April 20, 1833, the forces for the bank regrouped. Selah Reeve, Daniel Farrington, and Aaron Belknap were some of the prominent citizens in attendance. They resolved that “Our Bank Capital now is and has been for a long time past altogether inadequate to carry on the ordinary commerce; and such capital has become in a great measure concentrated into the hands and under the power of a few individuals... who exercise a pernicious and dangerous influence over the business of their neighbors.”¹⁸ They noted how the new bank would serve the entire community: “the poor widow who sustains her family by her daily toil feels the greatest benefit almost as sensibly as the greatest mercantile adventurer.”¹⁹ We can surmise that the bank’s supporters were posturing for the Democratic state legislature rather than exhibiting a deep concern for Newburgh’s poorer classes.

The eventual passage of the new bank’s charter did not come in time to save the political career of Isaac R. Van Duzer, a Democratic assemblyman who was defeated in his November 1834 re-election bid. In May 1833, rumblings of dissatisfaction with Van Duzer began to appear in the *Newburgh Weekly Telegraph*. By October 1833, the paper had turned against him: “We need not inform our friends, as they are doubtless already apprized of the fact, that I.R. Van Duzer, apparently a warm friend, has at length assumed an attitude of open hostility to the Democratic Republican Party.”²⁰ While Van Duzer did not come out against the new bank, his failure to get it past the legislature and his ties to the Bank of Newburgh was reason enough to cause his defeat.²¹

In any case, the Highland National Bank was incorporated on April 26, 1834, with \$200,000 dollars in capital. General Gilbert Fowler—who defeated Van Duzer in the November election—was made its president. The first directors were

Fowler, Samuel Williams, Jackson Oakley, Thomas Powell, James Belknap, and Christopher Reeve. When reviewing this list, a reader cannot help but compare it to the founders of the Bank of Newburgh. Powell, Reeve, and Belknap are from the same families that founded, subscribed to, or did business with the earlier bank. Had these men become so impoverished by the Bank of Newburgh that they needed to start their own institution to recoup their wealth? Or did they find that the Bank of Newburgh no longer fulfilled their needs? Was the new bank's purpose not to serve the interest of the common man, but those of Newburgh's merchants and businessmen? In actuality, the creation of the Highland Bank had more to do with a political fight among the propertied class than a desire to lift up the poor. The capital of a second bank was needed for Newburgh to grow. In the end, the Highland group prevailed because they were better able to utilize the democratic rhetoric of the period. This rhetoric served the purpose of established wealth on the local level just as it did on the national level for the likes of New York City bankers and men like Martin Van Buren.



An early example of a Highland Bank Dollar Note. From the Gary Ferguson collection

Political infighting and corruption stemming from the chartering of new banks, like that which occurred in Newburgh, led to a movement in New York to do away with bank charters by instituting a policy of free banking. The issue arose due to influence-peddling in the state legislature associated with the chartering of banks, or as it was put at the time, "Lobbying for Bank Charters, that monster of corruption." This issue tied into the democratic movement, arguing that it was the natural right of every citizen—not just the moneyed elite—to have access to banking facilities. Conservative bankers naturally opposed this move, both because it infringed on their hard-won privileges and on the grounds that it would cause chaos in the marketplace with an even greater array of banknotes.

The same forces that pushed for the Highland Bank were too strong to resist, and in April 1838 the Free Banking Act passed. As the *Newburgh Weekly Telegraph* put it, the new banking law “will be found, in many ways of its numerous and complicated provisions, to shadow forth those strange fears which for so many years have haunted our law makers—fears that the people, left to regulate their Banking as their other business by subjecting it to a wholesome competition and the usages and regulations of trade generally—shall prove their own destroyers; yet by this law much, very much has been gained, which looks like real liberty, and not its shadow.”²² This is a classical defense of the free market economy.

In many ways, the free banking movement has shaped our perception of banking to this day. It represented a step forward in the democratic access to money. It also inaugurated a policy of permanent inflation with which we are all familiar today. Gold and silver would be around for another 100 years; they did bring some discipline to the market. But as America reached the twentieth century, specie would become less important. From a political standpoint, the Free Banking Act departed from the “executive type” of law. In it, the legislature defined certain powers to be exercised in designated circumstances and by administrative agencies. This would lead to a proliferation of state government continuing into the twentieth century. On a national level, the increase in the number of banks during the Jacksonian Revolution meant that federal and state governments abrogated control over the credit and monetary system. This caused inflation, wasted labor, business failures, and abandonment of an efficient system of credit as well as a sound currency system. The political will for strong federal regulation of banking was still a century away.

The free banking movement did not go unchallenged. Chartered banks such as the Bank of Newburgh did not want unlimited competition or the chaos caused by an overabundance of banknotes. A traditionalist movement called *Locos Focos* started a grassroots political movement in 1837 to eliminate the paper system entirely. This movement fully utilized the eighteenth-century anti-commercial ethos that had, in part, motivated Andrew Jackson’s attack on the Bank of America. The *Locos Focos* movement combined forces, especially the New York Bankers, who wanted to kill the U.S. Bank. Once the Jackson Administration succeeded, the state’s Democratic Party split into warring factions, as New York Bankers found they had little else in common



This coin was issued by the anti-banknote party of New York *Locos Focos*. The mint drop refers to senator Thomas Hart Benton, who requested that his salary be paid in gold coins, which eventually became known as “Benton’s Mint Drops”

with anti-capitalist forces. Locos Focos groups pushed the traditionalist class argument that all of the paper circulating would bring down the working man by allowing those who produced nothing to live on the wealth created by labor.²³

In Newburgh, the Free Banking Act allowed for a proliferation of banks, this time without a political fight. The Powell Bank (1838) and Quassaick Bank (1852) were the first institutions established following its passage into law. The Powell Bank was based on converted real estate holdings; the Free Banking Law permitted the conversion of real estate into active capital by its mortgage for bills of circulation. Thomas Powell (son of the original founding member of the Bank of Newburgh) and a number of partners opened the bank with capital of \$138,000. It became private in 1843 and was absorbed by the Bank of Newburgh in 1857.²⁴



I have not come across any banknotes from the Powell Bank, nor has Newburgh note specialist Gary Ferguson. This old check is located in the Crawford House, run by the Newburgh Historical Society. Note the crossed-out Highland Bank.

This is a rather interesting and confusing aspect of the check.

One wonders if they could afford to have their own checks printed

The profusion of new banks did not solve the problem of elasticity. The opening of the Powell Bank corresponded with the Panic of 1837, which lasted into 1839. Specie had been suspended in Newburgh in May 1837, shortly after the *Newburgh Weekly Telegraph* assured that “banks in this county enjoyed the confidence of the community to the fullest extent, they would not find it necessary from the fear of a run, to suspend specie payments.”²⁵ However, Newburgh banks were forced to follow the example of New York banks and suspend specie payments.

The Panic of 1837 came about due to overexpansion. As the country became absorbed in wild schemes to make money, banks lent without restraint. With

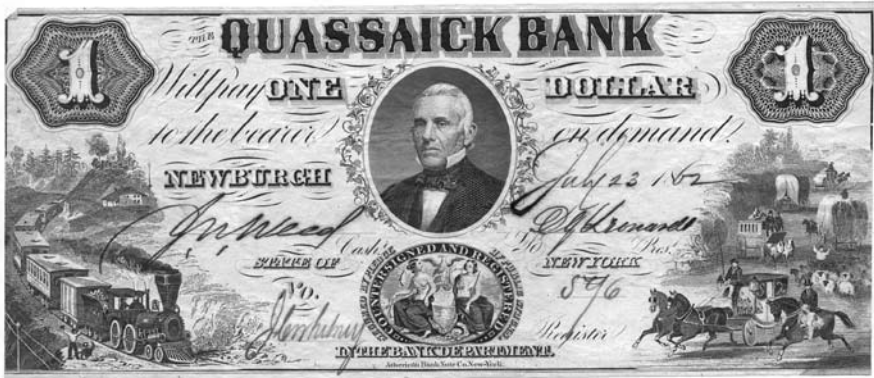
the demise of the National Bank, there was no institution powerful enough to restore discipline in the issuance of banknotes or credit. Furthermore, Jackson had aggressively pushed a hard-money policy in 1835 and 1836. His goal was to undercut the circulation of private banknotes by eliminating the government market for them. While gold and silver poured in from Europe, the economy did not suffer from these measures. But when European investment slowed, money lenders realized they had overextended. They suspended specie payments and cut back on credit.²⁶ The government, which had by this time retired all of its debt—thereby exacerbating the problem by forcing more money into the economy during the speculation period—had abrogated all responsibility over the economy, giving over to a *laissez faire* policy. Newburgh was faced with a severe credit and monetary crisis. During the suspension, banks not only stopped paying out gold and silver for their notes, but stopped issuing notes altogether, forcing merchants and municipalities to issue their own notes, usually in denominations less than a dollar. In March 1838, the *Newburgh Weekly Telegraph* became almost exasperated with the situation. “Where are all the bills of our own state banks, the 5’s, 10’s, 20’s, 50’s? They are not to be seen in the country, not in the city, not at the east, not at the west. The banks report monthly so much in specie, so much in this thing, so much in that, and, mark, so much in circulation. Where is this circulation? Who has the benefit of it? Certainly not business people...We have seen not a solitary Bank of Newburgh V [five-dollar bill] this winter, Fives at the Bank of the Highlands are as scarce as gulls on the Green Mountain.” In response to the Whig Party suggestion that smaller notes be printed, the editor asked: “How one dollar notes are to be substituted for 5’s, 10’s, when none of latter are in circulation, we cannot perceive.” If we don’t happen to have a Highland five, we can’t possibly tell how we are to go to the Bank and demand ones.”²⁷

The *Newburgh Weekly Telegraph* was aligned with the Democratic Party, which was on the defensive at this time. By 1838 the Whig Party had been formed and was blaming them for the economic slowdown. It was the Whigs who suggested that banknotes of small denominations be allowed, a suggestion the Democrats refused. This could only help the Whigs at the polls in the upcoming election. The above quote shows the untenable position the *Newburgh Weekly Telegraph* found itself in. On the one hand, it had to defend the hard-money position the Democrats had taken against the Whigs; on the other, its readers wanted access to cash on whatever basis it could be had.

With no government regulation of currency, small towns and cities were left to deal with the emergency as best they could. This problem of elasticity would plague the economy into the twentieth century. In 1890, the official history of

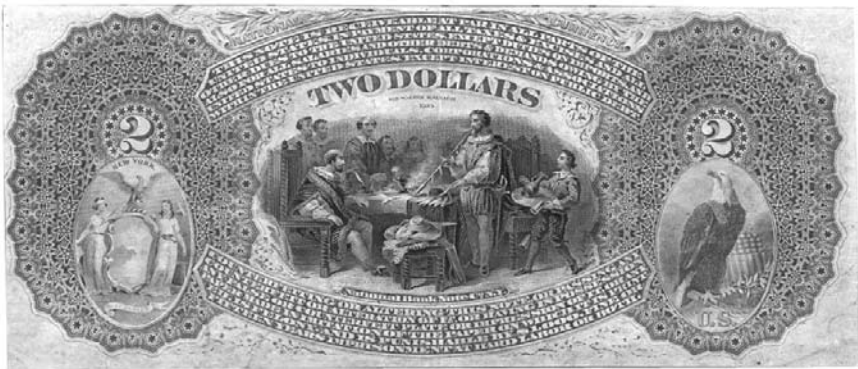
the Bank of Newburgh stated that the institution had reduced its capital from \$800,000 to \$400,000 due to competition from New York City banks, and that \$800,000 had been a large figure for a country bank.²⁸ By the 1890s, the inability of the national banking system to freely print money again became a political issue. The Populist movement called for the elimination of national banks altogether.

The Quassaick Bank was organized in March 1852 by David Crawford and other prominent Newburgh citizens after a meeting in the Orange Hotel. It was capitalized at \$130,000. E.W. Farrington was president, Jonathan Weed cashier, and David Crawford was on the board of directors. Weed's signature became one



These two notes were donated to the Newburgh Historical Society in 1901. Unfortunately, they are glued to a piece of cardboard, but are otherwise in good condition. At one time, the society had a much more extensive collection of banknotes. These notes were stolen, however, sometime in the early 1990s. What the collection consisted of is uncertain, but I suspect it contained mostly obsolete notes, perhaps uncut sheets. There was also mention of plates. Note the design, the transition from horse power to steam. Technological developments, especially transportation, were common motifs on banknotes through the twentieth century

of the most prominent on Newburgh currency into the late nineteenth century. In those days, the cashier was a bank's highest-paid official. He handled all the money and supervised the printing of notes. Weed was born in November 1825 near Newburgh. When his father died at an early age, Weed was forced to work in the family brickyard while attending school in the winter months. In 1845 he was offered a position at the Highland Bank, where he rose to the position of teller. From there he became cashier of the Quassaick Bank. He also served as treasurer of a number of local organizations as well as on company boards.²⁹



A beautiful Lazy Duce from the collection of Gary Ferguson

National Bank Era

By the Civil War, the confusing situation in currency was complicating the transition into an industrial society. Occasionally, public outcry—such as the 1842 Cincinnati Bank Riots—erupted over worthless currency.³⁰ With no national banking system to police state banks and uneven supervision by state govern-

ments, anyone could open a bank and start printing notes. At the advent of the Civil War in 1861, the federal government's fiscal policy—as during the War of 1812—was in such disarray that it had no means of financing its army. Like Albert Gallatin before him, Treasury Secretary Samuel Chase had to turn to state banks. He requested a loan of \$150 million, which the banks were prepared to provide. But Chase's requirement for payment in gold and silver essentially drained all hard money out of the economy. Banks would have had no problem in raising funds paid in their notes, but gold and silver were another matter. In short order, Chase was forced to introduce a federal currency to pay for the war and supplement state banknotes. National banknotes were authorized by an act of Congress on February 25, 1863. They were intended to be a temporary expedient. Temporary turned into lengthy: national banknotes were not withdrawn until July 1935.³¹

A natural solution to the problem was to bring back a national bank, but Chase did not propose a new federal bank. Instead he proposed a national banking system. State banks would be chartered by the federal government; they would buy U.S. bonds and issue currency of uniform size and design against them. At first, banks resisted. But they were soon brought along with a tax on their notes. Thus Congress finally reasserted some measure of authority over the currency. Private and public interests merged to create a currency system in which state banknotes could be converted into U.S. notes during the war and into coin thereafter. However, it would take time for these notes to circulate at face value. Even during this crisis, the government was unwilling to take full control over the paper system. The political fights over the National Bank were still too fresh for the government to fully regulate state banks and to embrace a paper system.

Political and social resistance to a paper system continued after the Civil war, as demonstrated by the Supreme Court case of *Hepburn v. Griswald*. The question was whether greenbacks (the new Federal currency) were constitutional, that is legal tender. A strict interpretation of the Constitution would suggest that only gold and silver were legal tender. The case arose when Hepburn contracted to borrow \$11,500 in gold from Griswald in 1862. Two years later, Hepburn offered to repay the amount in greenbacks, which in the meantime had been made legal tender. Her offer was refused because the market value of the greenbacks in gold was only \$4,500. In 1869, the Supreme Court upheld the view that only gold and silver were legal tender and ordered Hepburn to repay the amount in gold.³²

The government was dissatisfied with the decision: It denied them the right to define legal-tender status. In a series of Supreme Court rulings that followed, the *Hepburn v. Griswald* decision was overturned. This case demonstrates the deeply embedded resistance to the development of capitalistic institutions, and in

particular the paper system. The need to establish federal currency as an accepted medium led the government to establish gold certificates and silver certificates, in essence promising to pay all of its notes in specie. The resistance of the development of banks, banknotes, stocks, and bonds would influence America well into the late nineteenth century, even after the direction of monetary development had become clear. By the early twentieth century, however, gold and silver were becoming less and less important as mediums of exchange.

In the post-Civil War era, most Newburgh Banks found it advantageous to join the National Banking System, especially since most of them were note-issuing banks.



Note the date on the back of the obsolete note from the Quassaick Bank. One can speculate that this note might have been redeemed as late as 1881. It would be interesting to discover whether it was redeemed at par

The pattern of the history of banking in Newburgh in the latter half of the nineteenth century into the twentieth century was similar to other Northeastern

towns and cities. It was a pattern of consolidation. The Highland Bank seems to have been the strongest of the Newburgh banks; it maintained its identity into the late twentieth century. We can trace this consolidation process through the notes issued by the local banks.



First title, most common. Gary Ferguson Collection



Second title, very rare. Gary Ferguson Collection

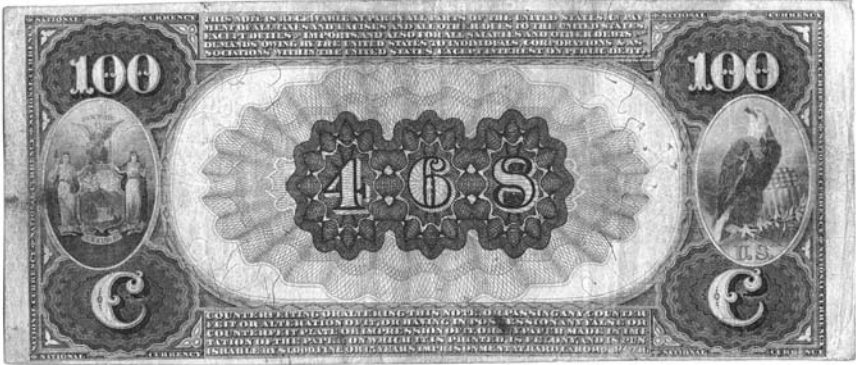


Third title, exists in both large and small size. Gary Ferguson Collection

In May 1927, the Quassaick Bank and the Highland Bank merged, creating one of the largest banks of its kind outside New York City.³³ This process of merging continued until 1997, when the bank was acquired by Fleet Bank. Long before then, it had lost its local roots. The National Bank of Newburgh surrendered its local identity in 1958, when it merged with the National Bank of Orange County.

Conclusion

At the heart of the banking controversies, in Newburgh and the nation as a whole, was the American perception of republicanism as it had evolved from the American Revolution. Jacksonian America had broadened the definition of republicanism to include groups of property-less men. Inevitably, banking became embroiled in the evolution of democratic ideals. It was not so much, as the rhetoric of the time would suggest, an issue of the moneyed aristocracy oppressing the working man. The real argument was over who had access to easy



A rare large denomination note. Gary Ferguson Collection

money (or credit) and under what terms. This was a democratic cause because access to money meant access to equal opportunity. The drive for easy money ran directly into older pre-capitalist notions of how the economy worked. Hamilton's vision, though not intended to empower the masses, inevitably led to a democratic conception of banking. Jefferson's agricultural vision viewed banking in pre-capitalist terms—that is, with suspicion. Jefferson hard-money advocates were viewed as the champions of democracy. It was their belief that the only legal tender of the nation was gold and silver. To accept the paper system was to create an aristocracy of money that would exploit the working man. This was definitely the view of Jackson and his advisor William Gouge.

In any era, there are contradictions and cross currents, and the 1830s were no exception. The easy-money advocates espoused the Jeffersonian vision by arguing that all citizens should have access to money, and that to deny such access was decidedly antidemocratic. From a practical standpoint, only a paper system could provide for economic growth. As was demonstrated in the panics of 1819, 1837, and 1857, the hard-money system could never provide enough credit to satisfy the

needs of businessmen, let alone the common man. The implications of a total paper system, however, were such that no political consensus could form until the twentieth century to fully implement it. Such a system required a strong federal government with full control over the country's currency. The political climate of pre-Civil War America viewed this as an attempt by the federal government to squash states rights and to elevate bankers to a position of power. However, this does not mean that bankers and their paper system were not powerful forces.

The tension between the two systems—hard money and paper—generated the substance of political debate. In Newburgh, when the *Newburgh Weekly Telegraph* called for a new bank to fulfill the needs of commerce, when it praised the passage of the Free Banking Act, when it spoke out against the aristocracy of money and praised the destruction of the Second Bank of America, and when it complained during the Panic of 1837 about the lack of currency in circulation, it was advocating a paper and easy-money system. For Newburgh and many communities like it, democracy meant access to credit. Local need for money was the predominant motivation. Like Martin Van Buren and other national leaders, the *Newburgh Weekly Telegraph* fully utilized the hard-money rhetoric of the day to advocate a paper system. The dilemma of the Democrats in Newburgh and the nation was that while this rhetoric was popular with their base, it did not really serve their interests and in the end opened the way for the growth of the Whig Party.

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Regional History Forum

Each issue of *The Hudson River Valley Review* includes the *Regional History Forum*. This section highlights historic sites in the Valley, exploring their historical significance as well as information for visitors today. Although due attention is be paid to sites of national visibility, HRVR also highlights sites of regional significance. Please write us with suggestions for future Forum sections.



PHOTOS BY JESSICA FRIEDLANDER

Cedar Grove as seen from the gardens

Mastering the Hudson: A study of Thomas Cole and his lasting impression on the Hudson River Valley

Jessica Friedlander, Marist '07

Thomas Cole, the father of the Hudson River School, is one of the most nationally recognized painters in American history. His ingenious vision and delicate style helped to shape today's deep appreciation of American landscapes, paving the way for a new kind of art.

The Painter in the Dark

He sets off, his mind envisioning the adventure ahead. An early robin sings a jeweled melody as he shifts his small canvases and cotton-woven sketchbooks, strapped at his back by a thin, taut stretch of cowhide, and grips tightly his cedar box of pencils. His knuckles are bare and cracked, and the air that tightens his skin is cool and smells of moss. His eyes graze the sky, a temptress; her deep navy-black robes reveal a shine of purple, tinged with orange and pink. It is dark, yet he is able to spot some wisps of heated gold strewn up from the horizon. The sun is on its rise.

Moments later, through the tangled brush and thick pines, he reaches his destination: a nearby patch of soft, overgrown earth littered with shards of rock and sheltered by a few aging oaks; there is just enough clearing to sketch. He meticulously scans the view of the mountainside, his vision streaming over each distant crevasse and grassy hill, picking apart the shadows from the masses of landscape. An assembly of deer distances itself from the woods to lick, slyly, at the brook trembling from the ravine. Its waters foam into delicate pools, playfully splashing into the air, into ozone, into his lungs, trickling back into the studio. His easel and board await the flood; his fresh, crushed pigment sits heavy in the thickening, swirling oil, one of his many sable-haired brushes poised precariously between forefinger and thumb, quivering and wet, barely above the canvas. He breathes deep the fresh vision. He opens his eyes.

He is ready.

At the start of the nineteenth century, the electricity from the French Revolution had charged the air, causing an urgent need for change to thunder throughout Europe and reverberate into America. Classicism made way for a more individual philosophy, in which the emotional aspect of the arts was glorified. It strived to move away from the harsh limitations of the previous ways of thinking that had stressed order, reason, and logic. This new ideal was Romanticism. In breaking free of the old, rigid structure, it encouraged a sort of personal freedom, allowing writers, artists, and philosophers to finally exert their creativity and include their spiritual—not religious—beliefs in their works. In other words, they were allowed to be human, to be natural, to be uninhibited—to be *themselves*.¹

During this time, English Romantic poets such as Byron, Shelley, Keats and Blake were on the rise, spearheading this movement by focusing more on the symbolic and the natural, rather than the restrictions of rationalism. Soon after, this means of expressing oneself bled into American literature, as revealed in the works of Emerson and Thoreau, Whitman and Poe. Literature became loose, more

active, and more expressive, and its newfound dreams inevitably bled into the realm of the fine arts. Transcendentalism, a branch of Romanticism with origins near Concord, Massachusetts, inspired artists to challenge even further the scientific and seek the imaginative and spiritual. Of these artists, Thomas Cole would earn renown as the Father of the Hudson River School—a revolutionary breed of painters who, in seeking the raw, uncontrolled beauty of the Hudson River Valley as their subject, immortalized the essence of Romanticism.²

The Father of the Hudson

Cole, born February 1, 1801, was a native of Bolton-le-Moors in Lancashire, England, a historic county recognized for its rich textile industry. At seventeen, his family relocated to Steubenville, Ohio, where the young Cole was taken under the wing of a wandering portrait artist, known only as Stein.³ However, Cole did not succeed as a portrait painter, so he turned to capturing the spellbinding grandeur of landscapes. In the early 1820s, he studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, thus expanding his technique and greatly improving his talent. Soon after, Cole moved to New York, where his connections with some very generous patrons changed his life forever.⁴ One of these was George W. Bruen, a merchant so impressed with Cole's work that he financed a summer expedition for the painter to study the Hudson Valley. It was there that Cole was able to visit the Catskill Mountain House. The trip unquestionably incited Cole's passion with the Hudson Valley that so greatly dominated his works.⁵

The youth stole a sideways glance at his framed work propped in the window and nervously picked at the raw calluses on his fingertips. The view had been magnificently lovely; a gentle, tree-filled hillside gave way to an open marsh on which a family of ducks were fishing, and surrounding it, a lush forest of pines. The lake, in reality, had not been suffocated by the twisting and rotted trunks on his canvas, but no one needed to know. It was his own creation, his expression, his voice—they must simply feel it. The murky waters regurgitated a pale pink sheen from the sun's dusky rays and, in other places, contrasted well with the grey-green of the clouding atmosphere. He had also added a few stately bucks fleeing in the shadows. He debated eagerly with himself; could he have included some more color to that mossy trunk lying in the foreground? Were the mountains in the distance too subtle? Was it sufficient? The canvas was small, but it was enough, he had decided. Any further, and he would have ruined the message.

The slick streets of the city reflected a chilly overcast from the early evening. There were three men before him: the writer and painter were eagerly discussing

his lake with the dead trees, now being wrapped, as the third—a colonel—thumbed gingerly through a fat, leather wallet in his considerable grasp. He eyed the careful splash of oils that, unhooked from its display in the bookstore window, was to sit, wrapped, alongside the two others. He was much older, said he had “dabbled,” too, in oils and poetry. (The young man recalled a slight twist of the lips, a curious purse in the corner of the mouth, as the man said this.) He’d handed him a few stiff bills, fresh and sharp. The youth tried to stifle his grin—SOLD! The man mumbled his thanks to the bookkeeper, turned back to the boy; he felt his cheeks evaporating the rainwater from his coat collar, his bright eyes gleaming with proud embarrassment. The man had said something. Pardon? I “surprise” you? The older man smiled. Yes. At your age, and to paint like this...⁶

After selling a number of works and coming into contact with some of the East Coast’s most influential patrons, including John Trumbull, Luman Reed, and good friend Asher B. Durand, Cole was becoming a household name. He was in his mid-twenties when he co-founded the National Academy of Design alongside Samuel F.B. Morse and Durand, and in 1829 he toured Italy and France, networking with a number of wealthy patrons, producing more works, and further enhancing his popularity. Some years later, Cole married and settled in the Catskills, where he had embraced his first studio (and later, his home) at Cedar Grove in Catskill.⁷

During the commission of one of his most famous works, called *The Course of Empire*, Cole expressed his concern with the frailty of nature and humankind’s insatiable thirst for industrial growth—a terrifying monster whose only interest with the natural world was to crush it. Throughout the next two decades until his death, this theme helped to feed Cole’s inspiration in promoting the peaceful coexistence of nature and mankind, thus producing other allegorical works such as *The Voyage of Life* and *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*, as well as Hudson Valley-inspired pieces including *View on the Catskill: Early Autumn* and *Home in the Woods*.

In the early months of 1843, Cole had documented his worry of financial stability in various letters and poems later published in several New York magazines. Despite his increasing fame, he had felt a considerable anxiety about selling his work. For the next two years, he took under his wing the young Frederic Edwin Church; they agreed to a fee of \$300 per year for instruction, with room and board for an additional three dollars per week. Due in large part to Cole’s avant-garde inspiration, Church later became one of the most prominent members of the Hudson River School, famed for pushing the boundaries in his landscape paintings, traveling across continents to capture the exotic vistas of volcanoes,

rainforests, icebergs, and magnificent waterfalls.⁸

The boy's teacher was in no mood for unnecessary questions. He must learn the rules before he could break them. Draw what it is you see! he'd said, cold and severe, whirling from the sketches toward the ginger-streaked mountainside before them. Easier said than done, the boy grumbled. The wind was bitter for mid-October, much like his teacher's voice—like a steel rail splitting firewood upon impact. The brittle crack, the dry, unforgiving thud, had echoed in his thoughts as he glared at the back of the painter's unusually pale neck. The man was a genius, there was no doubt of it; he had eyes like no other, a vision that reached out of his body and wrapped itself around the pines and crags, dipped into valleys, and blew over hills, curved inward and snaked along the grass and hissed, coiling through the air, until it streaked, submissive and obeying, back into the fingertips that regurgitated masterpieces. The boy so desperately struggled to match it, to keep in step. The aching desire to break free, like a grenade in his chest, was difficult to appease. His hands were unsteady; he couldn't focus. What had these past five months proven? He had trouble staying true to the real, of feeling inspired with simply an exact rendering of his surroundings; he needed more. The trees became boring, and he craved an apocalypse, even if for a moment. He wanted a new color. He wanted a mess. He was ready—and now. He would have it now. In due time, his teacher sniffed, curiously, eyes gleaming. First he was to "learn the practice; learn to draw. He was to be disciplined." He would be disciplined. Then, he would be more. He would be great.

The Hudson River School is Born

In the years following his premature death in 1848, Thomas Cole's work inspired a distinguished class of artists delving into the wondrous landscapes of the Hudson River Valley. The region, a longtime area of economic and historical growth, offered these innovators the artistic freedom they sought and the untainted beauty of the natural world they wished to preserve. Thus, the Hudson River School was formed; a revolutionary breed of painters, poets, and artists who took advantage of the wilderness of the Hudson River Valley, the Catskills, Niagara Falls, and the White Mountains to the north. Their highly esteemed movement dominated American art of the 19th century and perfected the representation of man's humility to—and peaceful connections with—the astounding grandeur of nature.⁹

Due in large part to the values of European Romanticism, those inspired within the Hudson River School, such as Asher B. Durand, Frederic Church,

Jasper Cropsey, and George Inness, were able to explore the unknown wilderness in a quest to establish the bond between humans and nature. These artists, proud of the raw and pure bounty their country offered, rejected the stuffy portraiture of old classicism in an effort to promote and exploit the wild creativity that is unique to landscape painting.¹⁰ Where portraiture was restrictive—the sitter could only be represented in one way—landscape painting was not. In fact, Hudson River School artists often trekked to exotic locations to study the area and make preliminary sketches before returning to their studios, where they created a composite of their experiences and visions.¹¹ Thus, the Hudson River School artists were unique; they were able to combine their creativity and inventiveness with the infinite detail of the landscapes in which they lived and visited, often depicting features from a variety of sites in a single painting so as to create an entirely new—and enchantingly nonexistent—world. These works were the first to depict America in all its untamed glory.

In addition to breaking the chains of classical painting, the Hudson River School artists often invested much of their spiritual beliefs into their works. It was held that, in opposing the steely, destructive devils of industrialization in favor of the more peaceful and awe-inspiring wonders of the wilderness, these painters discovered an outlet for reconnecting with God; nature, in itself, was highly regarded as a manifestation of the divine.¹² Artists and poets alike were encouraged to embrace the natural as a way in which to return to one's "roots"; likewise, it was a call for one to acknowledge his origins as a simple, honest, and humbled creature—a cleansing of the soul. This ideal easily lent itself to the creation of a more easygoing persona, one who was not restrained by the metal and concrete and grimy, dust-streaked windows of an urban factory, but instead, who flies free in self-discovery through the untainted and candid exploration of the spirit.

Among the Cedar Groves

Though many of the works of the Hudson River School artists are preserved and presented throughout the region, catching a glimpse of an interpretive vision in a crowded gallery certainly does not compare to witnessing the very sites and trails where these masters painted and gained their inspiration. Cedar Grove, the estate where Thomas Cole lived and worked, is nestled comfortably in the village of Catskill, at the foot of the Catskill Mountains, and bordered by the Hudson River. Originally owned by John A. Thomson, lovingly called "Uncle Sandy" by those living on the 110-acre farm, Cedar Grove encompassed much of the land east of the site. It consisted mostly of orchards, grain fields, fruit and vegetable gardens, and vineyards that Thomson tended.¹³

We may credit the luxuriant locale of Cedar Grove with supplying Thomas Cole the inspiration for the many works that would so drastically change art history. A land grant in 1684 and later subdivisions in 1773 carefully selected the borders that would frame the Thomson farm. Slowly but surely the Thomson family accumulated and developed nearby lots, until nearly a fifth of a century later the main house was constructed, facing the glorious panoramic view of the Catskill Mountain range to the west. In 1825, as his reputation as a unique landscape artist was beginning to bloom, the young Thomas Cole first visited the Thomson

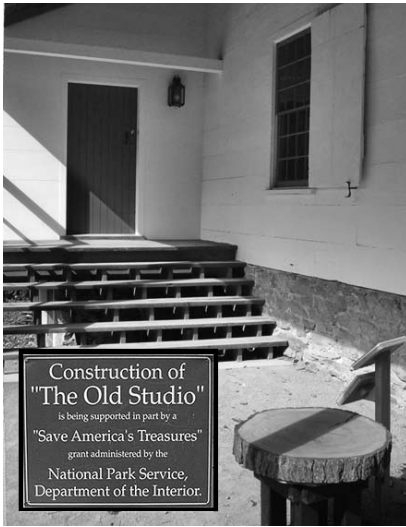


Veranda at Cedar Grove

property. Soon after, he became a regular habitant, renting the cottage space that was to become one of his legendary studios. Interestingly, it is said that the south lawn, which enclosed a copse of cedars, inspired Cole to name the Thomson farm Cedar Grove before 1830. Within a few years, he married Maria Bartow, Thomson's niece, thus expanding the already large family.¹⁴ Undoubtedly, his close relationship with Sandy, as well as the fruitful and animated environment in which he lived, helped to nurture and strengthen Cole's abilities as a painter.

Today, the nineteenth century Federal-style house at Cedar Grove has been largely returned to the way it appeared when Thomas Cole breathed the Romantic air. For a time, its future was not assured. The dilapidated house's valuables were sold at auction by one of Cole's descendants in the late 1950s, and the majority of the estate's fields and orchards were sold to the village. Finally, in 1999, the National Park Service officially declared the house a National Historic Site. Immediately afterward, restoration began, including repainting the structure the original soft yellow of Cole's time. In 2001, at a celebration honoring the 200th anniversary of Cole's birth, Cedar Grove was introduced to the public.¹⁵

Although Cedar Grove today only encompasses a few acres, visitors may venture along the fifteen-mile Hudson River School Art Trail linking sites where these revolutionary artists once painted.¹⁶ These beautiful surroundings are a living testament to the passion of the Hudson River School artists and their efforts to preserve and promote the glory of an ideal artistic, historic, and social



Construction of
"The Old Studio"
is being supported in part by a
"Save America's Treasures"
grant administered by the
National Park Service,
Department of the Interior.

Entrance to the Old Studio



Rustic Bench in the Garden

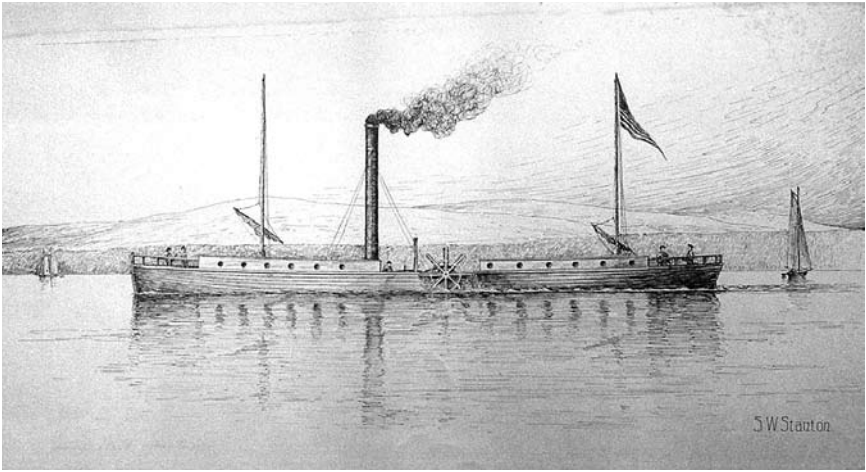
liberty. With careful and diligent preservation, the breathtaking vistas of the Hudson River Valley will flourish forever, inspiring and influencing generations of artists to come.

He decided it was time to retire for the evening. He sat back on the stool and yawned generously, stretching the knots from his long, thin calves. The studio had been comfortably dark, too dark to work any further, and he itched to remove himself from the depression. He could feel his chest loosening, his lungs filling with an undesired vapor that settled and chilled and produced such a violent cough that, whenever he'd become agitated at his work, he'd be forced to quit. A walk along the trail might not be wise, yet it was necessary to clear his mind. Perhaps only a brief stroll, he decided. He stood, took a moment to carefully wash his brushes and wrap them in their pouch, and placed the stoppers into the jars. Once this was finished, he stepped back to inspect the fresh canvas. He sighed; he would return to it at a later date

Propping his weight heavily against the door's frame, soft, tired eyes rested upon his chair, his books, his easels, his long cedar palettes still stained, the oil soon to crack and flake. The frosty air snapped suddenly at his cheeks and sent icy shards down his throat. He was ready. He softly closed the door and stepped into the white snow.

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FROM THE COLLECTION OF JOANN FARRELL STICKLEY

The Clermont, Samuel Ward Stanton, 1895

The Livingston-Fulton Partnership:
**Inventing America's First
Successful Steamboat**

Maria Zandri, Marist '07

Clermont State Historic Site will be hosting a large exhibition celebrating the 200th anniversary of the *Clermont*, the Hudson River's first working steamboat, opening in May 2007. The exhibition recognizes the partnership between Chancellor Robert R. Livingston, Jr., and Robert Fulton, the *Clermont's* designer.

Located in Germantown, New York, Clermont was home to seven generations of Livingstons, one of the most distinguished and influential families in American history. In 1686, royal Governor Thomas Dongan granted 160,000 acres to Robert Livingston, who in turn left 13,000 acres to his son, Robert Livingston, Jr. Described as a self-made man, "Robert of Clermont" developed his estate through tenant farming and land speculation in the Catskill Mountains. When he died in 1728, the estate, which he had increased forty times over, was left to his son, Robert R. Livingston. Involved with New York Whigs during the outbreak of tensions prior to the Revolutionary War, Livingston advocated moderation and compromise.



Robert Fulton

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Robert R. Livingston, Jr.

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In December 1775, Livingston unexpectedly passed away, leaving the title of Clermont to his son, Robert R. Livingston, Jr. Very much involved in Revolutionary politics, Robert Jr. was elected a member of the Second Continental Congress. At this time, Margaret Beekman Livingston, Robert Jr.'s mother, acted as caretaker to Clermont. Through her determination, the home was rebuilt after British troops burned it to the ground in 1777. A quarter mile south of the main house, Chancellor Livingston constructed a new home, known as New Clermont, in 1792.

While serving as America's minister to France, Livingston befriended Robert Fulton. The two men eventually became partners. Not only were they eventually able to produce the first successful steamboat, but they also maintained a monopoly on New York waters for almost twenty years and set off a transportation revolution in the United States. Livingston died in 1813. The Clermont estate was passed to his two daughters, Elizabeth and Margaret Maria Livingston.

Elizabeth and Margaret Maria were the first Livingston women to hold the title to Clermont, and were very devoted to their family. In order to ensure the continuation of the Livingston family name, both sisters married distant cousins and made their homes on the Clermont estate. By 1843, both women and their husbands had passed away and the estate was passed along to the next generation. New Clermont passed to Margaret Maria's youngest son, Montgomery Livingston. Old Clermont was inherited by Clermont Livingston, Elizabeth's eldest son.



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Clermont State Historic Site

While Clermont Livingston was having success with Old Clermont, the same could not be said for Montgomery. New Clermont eventually fell into such disrepair that it was auctioned off to Anna and Emily Clarkson for \$61,250 in 1857. They renamed the home Idele. Meanwhile, title to Clermont passed to Clermont Livingston's son and daughter, John Henry and Mary, who soon after passed away. Idele did not remain in the Livingston family; it passed along to the nephews of Anna and Emily. In the 1870s, John Henry operated a dairy farm at Clermont for a short time before using it simply as a country home. John Henry's wife, Alice Delafield Livingston, took great interest in Clermont and completed Colonial Revival renovations in the 1930s, as well as adding many gardens. After John Henry's death, Alice moved into the smaller Clermont Cottage and transferred the title to Clermont and much of the surrounding land to New York State. She retained the cottage and ninety surrounding acres, which would eventually be passed to Alice and John Henry's daughters, Honoria and Janet Cornelia. The Clermont Cottage remained in the hands of the Livingston family until 1991, when Honoria deeded seventy-five more acres to the state. Since this time, more property has been added, and the Clermont State Historic Site has been established in order to recognize the Livingston family's importance.

While the Livingstons are known for their prestige, and especially their involvement with the American Revolution, less is known about their important connection to Fulton's steamboat. While in France, Robert Livingston, Jr., and

Robert Fulton, an artist and inventor from Pennsylvania, collaborated on plans to produce a boat powered by steam. The combination of Fulton's ideas and Livingston's monetary support and interest in technology led to the development of America's first successful steamboat.

Officially named the *North River Steamboat* (but renamed the *North River Steamboat of Clermont*, and known simply as the *Clermont*), the ship made its maiden voyage from New York City to Albany in mid-August 1807. The success of the steamboat activated an agreement that Livingston had made with the New York State Legislature. Livingston was given the "privilege of navigating all boats that might be propelled by steam, on all waters within the territory or jurisdiction of the state, for the term of twenty years." The one condition of the agreement was that the boat must exceed four miles per hour, which the *Clermont* did. Livingston and Fulton were equal partners in this lucrative Hudson River monopoly, which allowed the men to seize any steamboat operating without a license and collect a penalty for each trip unlicensed boats made on the river. The U.S. Supreme Court's 1824 ruling in *Ogden v. Gibbon* put an end to their monopoly.

After almost four years of planning, the Clermont State Historic Site will pay homage to the Livingston-Fulton partnership with the presentation of the Steamboat Bicentennial Project, which will celebrate the 200-year anniversary of the *Clermont's* first trip. After extensive research and cooperation with other institutions and museums around the world, the staff at Clermont has compiled an extensive exhibit that tells the story of the first successful steamboat in America and celebrates the 200th anniversary of the *Clermont's* maiden trip up the Hudson. A large part of the exhibit will be housed in the Visitor Center at Clermont. It will include paintings by James Bard and Robert Fulton, correspondence between Fulton and Chancellor Livingston, account books from the North River Steamboat Company, and a piece of the *Clermont's* hull.

Another element of the exhibit, featuring art of the steamboat era, will be on display in the Livingston manor. It will include works by famous artists during the steamboat era, from James Bard, Antonio Jacobsen, and Samuel Ward Stanton. Many of these paintings are on loan from descendants of the Livingston and Fulton families or the artists.

Another key event of the Steamboat Bicentennial Celebration will be a scholarly symposium, which will take place on June 1 and 2. The event is sponsored by both the Friends of Clermont and Bard College. Merritt Roe Smith, a professor of history of technology and director of the Program of Science, Technology and Society at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, will be the keynote speaker. The event is open to the public. Its proceedings will be published by the Friends

of Clermont in 2008.

In addition to the activities occurring at Clermont, its museum staff has developed several programs to engage the community in the steamboat bicentennial. “Days of the Steamboat” school programs have been developed for students in grades three through five. These programs will combine a field trip to Clermont with pre-and post-visit activities educating students about the development of the *Clermont* and its importance to America. While at Clermont, groups may choose to spend from ninety minutes to four hours at the site, participating in any of the seven different educational stations, as well as enjoying time on the grounds. For educators who are interested in the program but unable to arrange a visit to Clermont, the packet of ten lesson plans and activities can be purchased. The Clermont staff also has developed outreach programs for local historical societies, as well as senior citizen groups. These outreach and educational efforts will be focused on the 2007 bicentennial year, but they will remain available after this time.

In special commemoration of Robert Fulton’s historic thirty-two hour trip from New York City to Albany, Clermont is presenting a three-day Steamboat Day Festival. Activities will include a collection of steam vessels, model steamboat races, special exhibits, and lectures. Food, music, and entertainment of the steamboat era—and fireworks—also will be part of the festivities. It will take place from August 17 to 19, 200 years to the day of *Clermont*’s first successful trip.

It is the hope of all at Clermont involved with the Bicentennial Steamboat exhibit that much will be learned of Robert Fulton and the Livingston family, as well as the construction of the *Clermont*. It’s also hoped that the activities will help further the expansion of the Clermont State Historic Site with the restoration of the old steamboat dock and the bridging of the Amtrak right-of-way to permit direct access to the Hudson River.

More information on the Steamboat Bicentennial taking place at Clermont State Historic Site can be found on the Friends of Clermont website at www.friendsofclermont.org. For those interested in visiting, Clermont is located in Germantown, Columbia County. The visitor center and historic home are open Tuesday through Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The site also is open on Monday holidays from 11:00 .m. to 5:00 p.m. The grounds are open daily from sunrise to sunset.

The Steamboat Bicentennial is the first in a series of celebrations leading to the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial Celebration in 2009; for more about the history and events surrounding this commemoration, please visit: <http://www.explore.ny400.com/home.php>.



The Great Hudson River Paddle

By *Theresa Keegan*

The Hudson River is the heart of New York, although far too often its historical and environmental wonders fade into the background as people traverse its bridges on their way elsewhere, ignoring the estuary below them.

However, for each of the past six summers, a ten-day guided kayak tour from Albany to Manhattan has been exposing a diverse group of thirty people to America's First River.

That moniker dates back to the pivotal role the estuary played in America's formation, and the Great Hudson River Paddle allows participants to vividly learn about the history that has transpired here.

Organized by the Hudson River Valley Greenway and the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area with help from the Hudson River Watertrail Association, this comprehensive journey is a delightful mix of outdoor adventure and camaraderie that also addresses environmental and historical issues.

When Henry Hudson first sailed the river in 1609 he passed land that had been occupied almost 4,000 years. But when the Dutch started to move to the Hudson River Valley in 1624, they enjoyed fifty years of fur trap-

ping and logging, creating an environment comfortable enough that, fifty years later, the British believed it worthy enough to take over. The Hudson River Valley was critical during the American Revolution and the waterway was, and continues to be, a necessary and well-used, transportation corridor.

Nowadays, the Hudson River is also enjoying a renaissance as a destination and recreational treasure. Water pollution is being eradicated, and a water trail stretching from Albany to Manhattan is encouraging people to enjoy the river as shoreline parks and boat launches make access easier.

It is along this 146-mile route that the Great Hudson River Paddle travels. From its start in downtown Albany, the feel of being removed from civilization is compounded as bald eagles soar overhead and line the banks, even as huge barges glide past.

The birds are the offspring of an experiment that was innovative in 1976, when scientists first intervened with an endangered species. Hoping to thwart the extinction of bald eagles on the Hudson, they replaced eggs compromised by DDT exposure with plaster eggs. At hatching time, a set of live chicks were introduced into the nest of the last pair of eagles on the river. At the same time, other eagle chicks were placed in abandoned nests. Though initially cared for by humans, they ultimately survived on their own. The experiment succeeded.

Today over 40 pairs of eagles reside along the river, often nesting under bridges and other remote areas, and the intervention practices have been repeated throughout the world.

It is just one of the many diverse roles the Hudson has played in the history of the environmental movement.

Further downriver, the group paddles past Olana, home of the painter Fredric Church, a leader in the famed Hudson River School. It is easy to understand how the translucent light inspired an entire art movement. Sunsets illuminate the sky over the river and the clouds become ethereal. Sometimes the Hudson is so smooth it actually reflects the grays and greens on the surrounding riverbank. Often, the post-dawn light creates a mirage, as the shore and the water blend together. Daybreak on the river brings in the horizon; the trees emerge, and slowly the surrounding hillsides come into focus.

These images, captured by many painters, become the daily scenery on the paddle.

The group also travels past defunct factories and glorious mansions, a dichotomy that is a small revelation into what has transpired on the waterway.

Midway through the trip, history buffs are truly thrilled as the group enters the historic Highlands area.

Last summer, U.S. Army Colonel Jim Johnson (Ret.) joined the group. Standing on the shores of Constitution Island, looking westward toward West Point, he offered a moving rendition of the area's role in the Revolution. Pointing northward, he explained how the foundry produced the chain that was pulled across the Hudson at this site to thwart British ships. He talked about the strategy that secured this bend of the river and the trials and tribulations as General George Washington led his troops to ultimate victory.

As the group passed Stony Point Battlefield, a "welcome" shot from the cannon reverberated through the cove. Upon landing—and being "greeted" by a British soldier, complete with musket—paddlers were told the exciting and daring role of American soldiers as the battlefield, museum, and lighthouse were toured.

Entering a historic site by waterway is an enhanced experience, giving a new perspective to those who depended so much on the Hudson. The river again becomes the important element it was before cars and trains changed our transit patterns.

As the group had paddled past Storm King Mountain, a guide had recounted the local fight to halt a Con Edison plant from being built. The ensuing court battle took seventeen years, but ultimately it led to the environmental movement's legal defense strategy. Now people's rights as well as the neighboring environment must be considered in development efforts.

It was yet another critical role the Hudson played in our country's history.

Throughout the trip, the writings of Washington Irving were recounted, as well as the smaller tales of local families and businesses that make the area home.

During the Great Hudson River Paddle, the journey, not the destination, is crucial. Its moderate pace and opportunity for paddlers to join in for just a day trip or a few nights allows a variety of people to learn of the river's wonders. Participants come from as close as Albany and Manhattan and as far away as California. Guides vary in their skills, being experienced river runners and kayakers, as well as historical experts.

In 2006, for the first time, weather required the trip to disband before reaching Manhattan. Lightening storms made the journey unsafe, and in Croton Point, paddlers reluctantly bid each other farewell. This year the trip will begin earlier in July, and its very fine reputation should be continued.

The event began in 2000, a very rudimentary trip with a group of experienced river aficionados who wanted to make the journey. Ignoring tides and making do with whatever sleeping arrangements they could find, they still appreciated the Hudson's wonder and glory. Like the water trail it celebrates, the great Hudson

River Paddle has since become much more organized and accessible.

A land-support team carries participants' bags, as well as provides all breakfast and dinners on the ten-day journey. Meals are catered, warm, and delicious. On a few pre-arranged nights, the group ventures into towns to enjoy the local restaurants. Snacks and nutrition are stressed, port-a-potties are clean, and, for the ultimate luxury on any outdoor journey, hot showers are available every night. The outstanding support team certainly makes it an easier trip.

The day trips are also an option for people who do not own their own equipment. Local outfitters along the way support the spirit of the trip by providing everything a person needs to join the adventure for a day, or overnight.

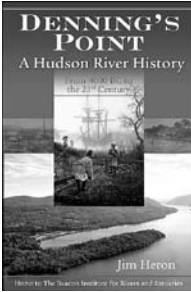
On land, festivals allow people not on the trip to still gain a greater understanding of the river.

It's obvious the challenges facing the Hudson are great. Former Governor George Pataki had promised to make the estuary swimmable by 2009, the 400th anniversary of Hudson's exploratory journey. There are areas of hope, but areas of concern remain. Exclusive development plans continue to hinder public access and cash-strapped municipalities are ignoring aging, inadequate sewage systems.

As the region plans to commemorate Hudson's journey, it is not only a time to look back, but also forward to comprehend how the Hudson shapes, and defines, who we are. Whether you've kayaked along it, or simply seen it from a car traveling over a bridge, the Hudson reflects more than just the lovely foliage that lines its shores. It reflects our heritage and our values.

Information and Registration information for the Seventh Annual Great Hudson River Paddle can be obtained by visiting www.hudsongreenway.state.ny.us/ghrp/ or contact Scott Keller at 518-473-3835 or by writing to P.O. Box 47, Clarksville, NY 12041. Individual and overnight portions of the trip are still available. For information on the Watertrail Association, visit www.hrwa.org.

Book Review



Jim Heron, *Denning's Point: A Hudson River History* (Hensonville, NY: Black Dome Press Corp. with The Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries, 2006). 228 pp; 114 maps.

Denning's Point, a peninsula that extends into the Hudson River to the east and south of the modern city of Beacon, New York, was acquired as parkland by the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation in 1988 and selected as the site of the Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries in 2003. *Denning's Point* traces this land's history over some 6,000 years. Various chapters investigate the lives of the native peoples who lived there; colonial owners, most notably Catheryna Brett, whose homestead has been a historic site in Beacon for years; and the Revolutionary era, when Alexander Hamilton briefly resided at the point and wrote early versions of ideas he later incorporated in the Federalist papers. There are two centerpiece chapters. "The Glory Years" focuses on the Denning family, which owned the property beginning in 1821 and lived there until 1889. "The Early Years of the Denning's Point Brick Works, 1882-1920" describes Homer Ramsdell's development of a prosperous brickyard on the point. Taken together, these chapters juxtapose eras of stewardship and environmental degradation, of mercantile and industrial capitalism.

These chapters are keys to the book because they present the authorial theme of declension. Photographs in "Glory Years" capture a handsome dwelling and extensive pleasure grounds. The author portrays a genteel family living grandly on an income-producing property (the making of hard cider was the most profitable enterprise), yet he does not appear to recognize that the Denning era was one of significant environmental change for the peninsula, however benign when compared with later uses. Moreover, the public who might otherwise have crowded the point's beaches and walked its paths stayed away, Heron explains, out of respect for the family. By contrast, when an outside capitalist like Ramsdell (a resident of Newburgh, Beacon's sister city across the river) took control of the property, Heron presents him as a conniving entrepreneur who extracted profit from the land in the form of clay and sand transformed into bricks—a fate that befell many similar landscapes along the Hudson. Unsurprisingly, given the nature of the brick-making enterprise, Ramsdell forbade public access to the land, even

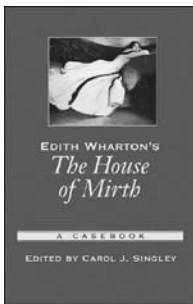
though bathing and other activities occurred without harassment. Heron vilifies Ramsdell by quoting from a history of brick making in the Hudson Valley, which in turn quotes a passage from Walter Barrett's nineteenth-century *Old Merchants of New York City*. It describes Ramsdell as someone who married his way to wealth (a time-honored American tradition) and then brought the Erie Railroad to near bankruptcy. Ramsdell had been president of the Erie, but resigned in 1857, more than a decade before Jay Gould and Jim Fisk issued thousands of shares of watered stock and bribed state legislators in the attempt to wrest control of the railroad from Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt in the notorious "Erie War." These actions, concluded Gould biographer Maury Klein, left the railroad "a sinking and abandoned ship." Newburgh historian John J. Nutt predictably described Ramsdell in more favorable terms, as that city's foremost citizen.

What would enrich Heron's account is a clearer explanation of what change has occurred to the land. Throughout the book, the author describes Denning's Point as a 64-acre peninsula, yet he also recounts several occasions when the property expanded through filling in portions of the Hudson River or Fishkill Bay, and another period when acreage was lost to sand dredging. It would be useful to learn how large Denning's Point was at various stages of its history, how tall its rolling hills were before excavation of clay for the brickworks—in short, how much physical change the peninsula experienced over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Moreover, Heron sometimes falters in interpreting the very sources he presents. For example, he quotes at length from an 1881 article published in the *Fishkill Standard* that describes the "former wild and deserted character" of the Denning's Point landscape and notes approvingly that "trees and unsightly shrubbery" were being transformed into buildings and a site of industrial production. Yet Heron does not use this quote to explain how the financially strapped owners had allowed the estate to go to seed. Instead, it's meant to show how Ramsdell inflicted irreparable harm on the land by exploiting its natural resources.

There are other points that need greater, or more careful, elaboration. Heron presents Denning's Point as a lawless place in the 1920s and 1930s, yet also as a "safe haven" for unemployed people during the Great Depression. He never establishes who owned the "People's Pleasure Ground"—an entertainment pavilion at the point—or even when it was built (although he does identify the operator of the concession stand). This leads to questions about public access throughout the course of his account and to the changing nature of public recreation. And there is no clear sense of who the brickyard workers were by race and ethnicity, even though manuscript census schedules would enable Heron to present a clearer sense of their lives and livelihood.

Eighty years ago, Lewis Mumford published an essay celebrating the value of local history as the foundation of all history and for contributing to a sense of identity in place and time. Heron, a former teacher and retired Episcopal priest who is project historian for the Beacon Institute, understandably presents the state's acquisition of Denning's Point and the development of an environmental institute there as redemption for the exploitation of the land. *Denning's Point* may not accomplish all that Mumford envisioned for local history, but general readers will enjoy the excitement of discovery that enlivens every chapter of the book.

—David Schuyler, *Franklin & Marshall College*



Carol J. Singley, editor. *Edith Wharton's The House of Mirth: A Casebook*. (New York: Oxford U. Press, 2003). 337 pp.; 7 pp. selected bibliography.

In this volume, noted Wharton scholar Carol Singley collects a range of essays on Edith Wharton's 1905 masterpiece *The House of Mirth*. The essays are at once accessible, informative, and exemplary of the discipline of literary criticism as a whole since 1980. Much of the critical commentary in this collection will be familiar to those who have followed developments in Wharton studies over the last generation. Its great strength emerges in its depth of coverage for the period from 1980 to 2000, a fecund era for Wharton scholarship. Apart from its specific utility to readers of *The House of Mirth*, this volume provides the occasion to think more broadly about how and why fashions—in manners and in values—undergo change, a concept central to much of Wharton's work.

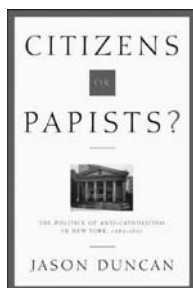
Following Singley's brief, straightforward introduction, the collection begins with two short pieces by Wharton herself. The first is a well-known excerpt from the author's memoir, *A Backward Glance*, about the inspiration behind *The House of Mirth*. The second, less commonly reprinted, is the introduction she wrote for the novel's 1936 edition. In this essay, Wharton ruminates on what it means for a book to outlast its own time. The surprise and awe that she feels for her creation's longevity ought to frame our own reading experience seventy years later, now that *The House of Mirth* has achieved its centenary, as a vibrant work still capable of generating debate.

The earliest essay in this collection, by Joan Lidoff, begins by noting the "renewal of interest in *The House of Mirth*" at the beginning of the 1980s. The collection includes subsequent watershed works from that decade by Wai Chee

Dimock, Elaine Showalter, and Amy Kaplan. Each of these major critics contributed important scholarship on Wharton and helped shape American literary criticism at the time. The collection is not organized in strict chronological order, a puzzling editorial decision. Yet when looked at as a group, the essays from the 1990s do show the subtle changes that occurred in Wharton studies as her canonical status became more fully assured. The later essays in this collection, like most Wharton scholarship today, tend to focus less intensively on Wharton's biography; the authors see themselves less as advocates for Wharton's greatness than do their predecessors. The new approach is exemplified by Jennie Kassanoff's essay from 2000, the most recent work included. She explores the importance of race, gender, and class issues from a vantage not entirely flattering to Wharton.

As a whole, Singley's collection serves two functions. First, it has brought together some of the best, most astute, most influential writing on *The House of Mirth*, a novel as important now, 100 years after its original publication, as ever. Second, it has provided a snapshot of literary criticism over the last generation. Like the volume's minimal scaffolding, the choice not to include critics and reviews from before 1980 should make this work useful for undergraduates who simply want an introduction to the debates and ideas surrounding *The House of Mirth*. At the same time, specialists interested in literary movements should enjoy what this collection can reveal about the history and fashion of ideas.

—Joshua Kotzin, Marist College



Jason K. Duncan, *Citizens or Papists: The Politics of Anti-Catholicism in New York, 1685-1821*. (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2005). 264 pp.

In *Citizens or Papists: The Politics of Anti-Catholicism in New York, 1685-1821*, Jason K. Duncan traces the struggle of Catholics to win religious freedom and full citizenship in New York. Underemphasized by historians of the early republic and overlooked by historians of Catholicism, Catholics in New York, Duncan argues, were among those groups that continued to have their liberties curtailed in the years following the American Revolution. He fills in this historical gap and provides a close examination of the international issues, events, and party politics that contributed to the initial resistance to Catholic citizenship and ultimate acceptance and promotion of Catholics by the party of Andrew Jackson.

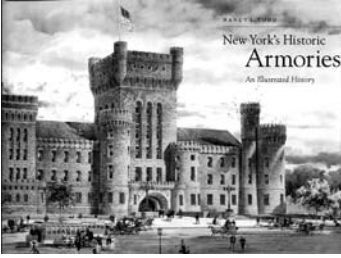
Duncan begins his study by explaining the significance of European events in shaping the colonial perspective on Catholicism. After the re-establishment of Protestantism in England with the Glorious Revolution, New York Catholics lost the potential to hold political office unless willing to swear an oath denying Catholic doctrine. The New York province furthermore denied Catholics the right to vote and banned priests from entering the province. According to Duncan, conflicts between England and France only deepened New York's resentment toward Roman Catholics.

Effectively excluded from political life before the Revolution, Duncan asserts that Catholics gained recognition as patriots during the war. With the defeat of the British, Catholics came out of hiding. They built not only churches, but political alliances with the Federalists. Nevertheless, the association of Catholicism and foreign ecclesiastical authority unsettled many New Yorkers. The Patriots and later anti-Federalists, for instance, sought to continue oath requirements for the franchise. Despite defeat of this bill, oaths for public office holders were maintained in New York until 1806.

Between the end of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth century, Duncan highlights the Catholics' movement away from the Federalists, due to their hostility toward Irish immigration, and toward the Atlantic Republicans. It was this Republican faction that ultimately challenged and won the right for Catholics to hold political office. Soon after, Catholic participation in the War of 1812 lifted the last significant resistance to Catholicism by Nationalist Republicans. It was with these Bucktail Republicans, later allied with the Democrats, that Catholics ultimately found their political home. Duncan concludes by noting that the rise in Catholic political activism "coincided, paradoxically, with the desire of most of the Catholic laity to place greater decision making power in the hands of the bishop..."

Overall, Duncan provides readers with a sophisticated study of early American political and religious history. The work's particular strengths lie in the areas of transnational contextualization and in the political detail of New York history. Duncan strays beyond his evidence in his conclusions, however. His examination of internal religious events and actors is minimal, and any assessment of the laity's decision to forgo leadership in Church affairs must wait for another writer. Nevertheless, this book remains a valuable addition to political, religious, and New York history.

—Sally Dwyer-McNulty, *Marist College*



Nancy L. Todd, *New York's Historic Armories: An Illustrated History* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, September 2006). 322 pp.

New York Army National Guard armories are among the oddest yet grandest sights in towns and cities throughout the state. Like great medieval castles, some dominate the streets they reside upon, while others seem dwarfed by their glass and steel neighbors. Yet they recall for the observer a time when there was a need to house soldiers in heavily protected fortresses within New York State communities. These American castles are the subject of *New York's Historic Armories; An Illustrated History*, in which Nancy L. Todd profiles nearly 120 arsenals and armories across New York State. As the title indicates, the book is packed with photographs and sketches that accompany brief descriptions of each subject. Furthermore, the book presents the sub-theme of armory construction as an illustration of the evolution of the National Guard.

Todd's introduction presents the building of armories as a testament to the growth and development of the New York Army National Guard and as a response to the growing tension between labor and business in the later half of the 1800s. The opening chapter presents a general history of the National Guard, allowing the reader to understand the armories within a larger historic context. In following the construction chronologically, one gets the sense of the growing confidence and stature of the American militia. The humblest of the early armories, such as the 1808 Canandaigua Arsenal of Ontario County, look like little more than brick church houses. Post-Civil War armories grew grander and castellated in size and design. The book ends with the few post World War II armories, such as the 1959 Rome Armory.

In looking at the nearly twenty arsenals built prior to the Civil War, one immediately notices the modest structure and utilitarian sensibility involved in their design, pointing out that these early arsenals were meant as storage places for local militia units. The photographs accompanying most of the individual arsenal entries demonstrate the masonry construction and simplistic design. Yet keeping in mind the history of the time, this reflects the division in American society about the role of the military—large or small, professional or volunteer.

As the reader advances in the book, we see the gradual acceptance and growing love of the military reflected in the size, scale, and pomp of post-Civil War arsenals and armories. Perhaps the greatest example of the enfranchisement

of the New York National Guard into mainstream society is reflected in the Seventh Regiment Armory on Manhattan's Upper East Side. Todd devotes an entire chapter to this exceptional armory. Towards the end of the 1800s, with the Civil War left to the memories of old men and idealized by young ones, a new generation sought the prestige and honor of service won by the veterans of Americans worst conflict. However, photographs of the opulent entrance hall and Board of Officers' Room show that they brought their own community values to the militia.

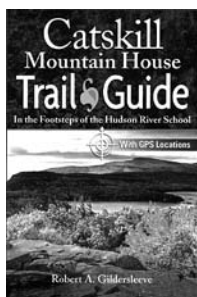
The book also shows the alternative roles that the armories played in local communities. With the buildings' growing size, a closer bond was shared between the regiment and the area around it. This can be seen in the grandeur of the Seventh Regiment Armory, but also in more modest constructions like the Virginia Street Armory in Buffalo. The later armories, with their large drill houses, were often the only large indoor facilities available to the areas they served. As a result, dances, sports exhibitions, and community fairs were hosted at them. However, in this time of labor unrest, their imposing size and structure also served as a very visible symbol of communal law and order.

The book could certainly contain more content on the histories of the various regiments themselves. For most, we are only given a sketch of their involvement in the events of the time. However the author points out that this is beyond the scope of the work, and furthermore, the examination of individual regiments could often fill a study of their own. But this reader is still left to question why New York led the way in armory construction. What was so distinct about the state that its armory construction was at the forefront of a nationwide movement?

The layout of the book is easy to follow. Each armory is given an entry describing the date, architect (where available), and brief histories of the regiment and the armory's construction and eventual fate. The strength of the book lies in its great use of period photographs; Todd uses period photography to show the armories at their grandest. The accompanying captions add further detail about their design. In this, the reader is led to reflect on New York's military history and the artifacts left behind.

—Jason Schaaf

New & Noteworthy Books Received



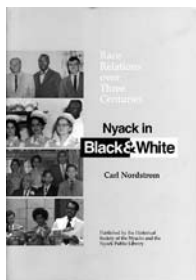
Catskill Mountain House Trail Guide: In the Footsteps of the Hudson River School

By Robert A. Gildersleeve

(Hensonville, NY: Black Dome Press, 2005).

224 pp. \$16.95 (paperback). www.blackdomepress.com

One is implored to inhabit the spirits of those Victorians who sought and found inspiration for their art in the sublime natural beauty of the Catskills, not merely stepping into their top boots but seeing with their aesthetically attuned eyes. Painstaking detail is provided in the map data, descriptions, and directions authoritatively leading one to the region's breathtaking vistas.

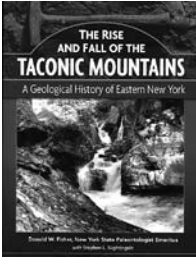


Race Relations over Three Centuries— Nyack in Black and White

By Carl Nordstrom

(Nyack, NY: The Historical Society of the Nyacks and the Nyack Public Library, 2005). 360 pp. \$16.00 (paperback).

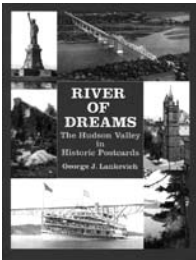
If not the most likely candidate for the telling of this tale, the subject nonetheless chose its author and its voice. A request in the mid-1960s to deliver a lecture on “Rockland County Negroes” coupled with an increase in racial tensions several years later were the impetus for this impeccably researched, thirty-year work-in-progress recounting one small community’s painfully tragic divisions that are ultimately trounced by the yearning for cultural accord.



**The Rise and Fall of the Taconic Mountains:
A Geological History of Eastern New York**

By Donald W. Fisher with Stephen L. Nightingale
(Hensonville, NY: Black Dome Press, 2006). 184 pp. \$24.95
(paperback). www.blackdomepress.com

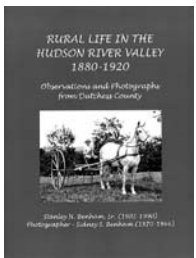
Written in response to myriad pleas of intrigued laypersons, this is a beginner's guide not only to the evolution of the glorious Taconic and Catskill mountain regions, but a primer on the marvels of geology itself. Maps, drawings, and photographs enhance one's comprehension of this captivating science.



**River of Dreams:
The Hudson Valley in Historic Postcards**

By George J. Lankevich
(New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2006). 122 pp.
\$21.95 (paperback). www.fordhampress.com

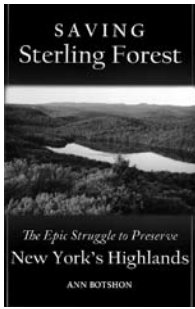
Pastel-tinted postcards pave a pathway to the past in this unique visual rendering of the diverse natural and manmade gems along the banks of the Hudson River. The journey is supplemented by a charming travelogue; indeed, one feels as if one is reading postcards from a friend who is utterly enamored with his surroundings, if not completely in command of its history.



**Rural Life in the Hudson River Valley 1880-1920:
Observations and Photographs from Dutchess County**

Manuscript by Stanley H. Benham, Sr., photography by Sidney S. Benham, and drawings by Stanley H. Benham, Jr.
(Poughkeepsie, NY: Hudson House, 2005). 254 pp. \$21.95
(paperback). www.hudsonhousepub.com

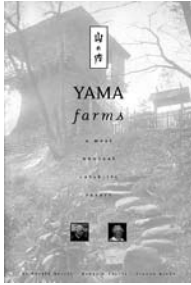
The Benham family graciously invites us into their homes, infectiously sharing their rich inheritance and love of the land and lifestyle in which they thrived for over a century. The snapshots, visual and narrative, of a bygone era are an absolute treasure.



**Saving Sterling Forest:
The Epic Struggle to Preserve New York's Highlands**

By Ann Botshon
(Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007).
204 pp. \$59.59 (hardcover), \$19.95 (paperback).
www.sunypress.edu

Spinning the saga of a victory twenty-five years in the making, this book serves double-duty: it is a how-to manual for stick-to-it-iveness regarding any worthwhile enterprise as evidenced by the salvation of the Sterling Forest and a good ol' page-turner, what with all the twists and turns of plot, not to mention allegiances.



Yama Farms: A Most Unusual Catskills Resort
By Harold Harris, Wendy E. Harris, and Dianne Wiebe
(Cragmore, NY: Cragmore Historical Society, 2006).
93 pp. \$19.95 (paperback).

A lovely scrapbook chronicling the brilliant if brief Japanese-infused retreat known as “Home in the Mountains,” this farm nestled near the hamlet of Napanoch was created by the advertising titan Frank Seaman and his companion Olive Sarre, to provide in turn stimulation and tranquility for its invitation-only artists, inventors and magnates of the early twentieth century. Perusing everything from photographs and personal letters, to certification and classification of its produce and livestock and “Between-the-Meal” bar list, one ‘morphs into a turn-of-the-century fly on the wall.

—Ann Panagulias

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