

THE
HUDSON
RIVER
VALLEY
REVIEW

A Journal of Regional Studies

MARIST

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From the Editors

As we began assembling this issue, another colleague mentioned that Eleanor had once visited his grandparents, where his grandfather had been stationed in Japan. Eleanor mentioned them by name in her June 19, 1953 “My Day” column. “FUKOAKA, Japan...went to the Consul General, Mr. Zurhellen’s house. Mr. and Mrs. Zurhellen very kindly invited us to spend the night and it was a joy to see such a happy American family, four boys and a baby girl, all learning to be good Americans but at the same time all learning to speak Japanese in the most painless way. ...On the way up we had a glimpse of Fuji again, just the top floating in the clouds, and now we are catching up on mail which was awaiting us in Tokyo.”



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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. All articles in *The Hudson River Valley Review* undergo peer analysis.

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HRVR prefers that essays and other written materials be submitted as two double-spaced typescripts, generally no more than thirty pages long with endnotes, along with a computer disk with a clear indication of the operating system, the name and version of the word-processing program, and the names of documents on the disk. Illustrations or photographs that are germane to the writing should accompany the hard copy. Otherwise, the submission of visual materials should be cleared with the editors beforehand. Illustrations and photographs are the responsibility of the authors. No materials will be returned unless a stamped, self-addressed envelope is provided. No responsibility is assumed for their loss. An e-mail address should be included whenever possible.

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1885

October 11, 1884
Anna Eleanore Roosevelt (ER)
born in New York City



1890

1892
Her mother, Anna Hall, dies
of diphtheria. She and her
brother, Hall go to live with their
maternal grandmother, Mary
Ludlow Hall, in Tivoli, NY.

Eleanor Roosevelt Timeline (selected highlights)

Introduction

JoAnne Myers

This year marks both the 125th anniversary of Anna Eleanor Roosevelt’s birth and the sixtieth year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which Mrs. Roosevelt was the chief writer, so it is very appropriate that this issue of the *The Hudson River Valley Review* be dedicated to Mrs. Roosevelt and her legacy. Eleanor Roosevelt (ER), raised to be a stereotypical upper-class wife and mother, became a woman ahead of her time, championing civil rights, equality, and women’s rights. As First Lady of the United States she was a role model for the modern woman, traveling around the country, writing daily columns, and starting projects such as Val-Kill Industries in Hyde Park, New York, and Arthurdale, the planned homesteading community in West Virginia. After President Roosevelt’s death, she continued her work as a civil and human rights activist. She remained, until her passing in 1962, the “First Lady of the World.” Today, she remains a woman ahead of her time, a visionary, and a diplomat for human rights.

I am very pleased to present this issue of the *Review*, for Eleanor Roosevelt is one of my heroes. When I am confronted with an affront to equality or human dignity, I ask myself, “What would Eleanor do?” and find my strength to do what must be done to make the world a more just place. As ER said, “It is not fair to ask of others what you are unwilling to do yourself.”

Eleanor Roosevelt’s early life did not betray that she would be a woman of substance, a hero. She was born in 1884, at the end of the Victorian era, and was

1895

1900
Her father, Elliot Roosevelt, dies.

1900

1901 Travels through France and Italy with Mme Souvestre, who had become her mentor.

1899
Sent to Mme. Marie Souvestre’s Allenswood School in London.



1902
Debuts in NYC, joins the National Consumers’ League and the Junior League. She volunteers at the Rivington Street (NYC) Settlement House.

November 1903
Officially becomes engaged to her fifth cousin, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR).

raised to be a proper upper class Victorian wife—to maintain the family and their various homes. After her parents died, she was raised in the Hudson River Valley, in Tivoli, by her maternal grandmother, Mary Ludlow Hall. Her formal education, as per young women of her class, consisted only of four years of finishing school in her mid-teens under the tutelage of the feminist Madame Souvestre at Allenswood Academy in London. It was with M. Souvestre that ER came into her own, gaining confidence and independence. She traveled with M. Souvestre through Europe, making the travel arrangements that would give her the management and scheduling skills that would stand her well when she later had to organize the many moves of her future family between their homes.

She returned to New York City, making her debut in 1902 and volunteering at the Rivington Street House on the Lower East Side, where she helped immigrants to assimilate. This work imprinted on her the need for education, trade training, and sanitary indoor plumbing—in short, the need for all humans to have a life of dignity.

After a secret engagement, she was married to her fifth cousin, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) on March 17, 1905. Their marriage began with little to make it noteworthy, save her being given away by her uncle, President Theodore Roosevelt, and living with a very domineering mother-in-law, Sara Delano Roosevelt, who had done her best to discourage the romance. When FDR began his political life in Albany as a New York State Senator in 1910, Eleanor began her life as a political wife—making house calls and listening to speeches.

At first she did not think it was important that women had the right to vote, but then FDR came out in favor of women’s suffrage in 1911. “I took it for granted that men were superior creatures and knew more about politics than women did, and while I realized that if my husband was a suffragist I probably must be, too, I cannot claim to have been a feminist in those early days,” she wrote.

1905

March 17, 1905 Given in marriage by her Uncle, President Theodore Roosevelt, to FDR. The couple live between NYC and his mother’s (Sara Delano Roosevelt) house in Hyde Park, NY. Summering at Campobello, New Brunswick, Canada. They have 6 children between 1906 and 1916; five survived.

1910-1913 FDR served in the NYS Senate. ER begins her political life as a political wife.

1910

1911 Endorses women’s suffrage.

1912 Attends first Democratic Party Convention.

1913 FDR is appointed under-secretary of the Navy. ER moves to Washington and continues being a political wife. She hires Lucy Mercer as her social secretary.

“I became a much more ardent citizen and feminist than anyone about me in the intermediate years would have dreamed possible. I had learned that if you wanted to institute any kind of reform you could get far more attention if you had a vote than if you lacked one.” She summed up this change by noting, “I became more of a feminist than I ever imagined.”

In 1918, ER ceased being the stereotypical wife when she discovered love letters between Lucy Mercer and her husband. She demanded the affair end immediately. Divorce would have ended FDR’s budding political career, so they renegotiated their marriage.

When FDR was paralyzed by a polio attack in 1921, ER became his eyes and ears. While continuing to encourage his political career, she traveled all across New York State, making political speeches for the state Democratic Party. She was influential in supporting then-governor Al Smith’s candidacy for President, and FDR stepped up to run successfully for governor. Eleanor also was teaching American history and literature at the progressive Todhunter School for Girls in Manhattan with Marion Dickerson and Nancy Cook. She became involved with many women’s activist groups, including the League of Women Voters and the Women’s Trade Union League. With the latter, ER worked to abolish child labor, set the forty-eight-hour work week, and the minimum wage—goals she thought necessary for basic labor and human dignity.

In 1924, ER was asked by the Democratic National Committee to chair the platform committee on women’s issues at the party convention. She was very shocked, then, when women were locked out of platform negotiations. This instigated her to call, as editor of the *Women’s Democratic News*, for more women to become political. By 1936 she had recruited 219 women delegates and 302 women alternates. She wrote, “Women must learn to play the [political] game as men do.”

In 1926, FDR built Stone Cottage at Val-Kill for Eleanor. With friends

1915

WORLD WAR I

1918 Volunteers in Washington with the D.C. Red Cross and Navy League.

1920



1920
Joins the League of Women Voters

1924
Chairs the Women’s Platform Committee and leads the women’s delegation to the state Democratic Convention. She joins the Women’s City Club, and is elected to their board of directors. She lobbies for equal pay and child labor laws, for Al Smith for governor, and against her Uncle Teddy. (FBI begins a file on ER.)

Marion Dickerman and Nancy Cook, she used the property to help local farmers learn new skills; they set up Val-Kill Industries, the furniture factory. She and FDR also used the informal, relaxed atmosphere at Val-Kill to entertain heads of state throughout his Presidency, and her life after his death.

ER met Lorena Hickok, the first woman Associated Press political reporter, when Hick (as she was known to friends) was assigned to cover ER as she campaigned for her husband's Presidency. As a reluctant First Lady (the title of Lorena Hickok's biography of ER) and under Hick's advisement, ER held the first women-journalists-only press conferences, which compelled newspapers and wire services to hire women reporters. ER also assembled a list of qualified women for FDR's administration including Frances Perkins, the first female Secretary of Labor, and Mary McLeod Bethune, head of the Division of Negro Affairs. She continued this one-woman campaign for women's employment in high-level political positions through John F. Kennedy's Presidency.

During the Depression and the first years of FDR's first term, ER traveled and reported back to him about social conditions. She learned to drive—and was a notoriously bad driver—and traveled with Hick, who had quit her press position since she felt she could no longer be objective. Hick worked with Harry Hopkins, Secretary of Commerce, and sent ER letters about what she saw as she traveled the country reporting on the Depression. Many of ER and Hick's letters became ideas for New Deal policies and programs, such as one of Eleanor's pet anti-poverty projects, the West Virginia homestead community of Arthurdale. With Hick's encouragement, the letters also became ER's "My Day" columns, which she continued to write until 1962.

1928

ER is appointed by the Democratic National Committee director of Bureau of Women's Activities (with Molly Dewson). Leads women's activities for Al Smith's presidential campaign, convinces FDR to run for Governor. She resigns from political and other positions when he is elected. ER moves family to the Executive Mansion in Albany.

March 6, 1933

FDR becomes President of the United States, ER its First Lady. She transforms the position from a social to a political one. She is the first First Lady to hold regular press conferences, (women-only). She also travels and lectures widely.

1925

1930

GREAT DEPRESSION

1925 FDR builds her Stone Cottage at Val-Kill (part of the Roosevelt Estate at Hyde Park). Dickerman and Cook live there. They begin the Val-Kill furniture factory. ER becomes the Editor of *The Women's Democratic News*.

1929 Earl Miller becomes her bodyguard, Malvina (Tommy) Thompson her secretary. She works with Louis Howe on political matters.

1931 Coordinates the Women's Division for Friends of Roosevelt for FDR's campaign for President.

1932 On the campaign trail, ER meets and becomes lifelong friends with Lorena Hickok, at that time the top (only) woman AP political reporter.

1926 Funds the Todhunter School for Girls (now the Dalton School) with her friends Marion Dickerman and Nancy Cook. ER teaches literature and American History.

1933 Begins her work on Arthurdale, WV, a homestead project for coal miners. She joins the Housing Division advisory committee of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). She also sponsors the White House Conference on the Emergency Needs of Women.

The Hudson River Valley Review

After FDR's death, ER was appointed by President Truman to be a delegate to the United Nations. There she served as the first chairperson of the United Nations' Human Rights Commission, and drafted, with the other members, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The Preamble to the UDHR mirrors FDR's famous Four Freedoms address in declaring that "freedom of speech and belief and from fear and want are the highest aspirations of common people... that human rights should be protected by the rule of law..." The body of the declaration articulates specific human rights. The General Assembly voted to support the UDHR on December 10, 1948. ER resigned from the U.N. in 1953, until she was re-appointed by President Kennedy in 1961. She also served as the head of the Kennedy Commission on the Status of Women until her death the following year.

The articles in the first section of the *Review* reflect ER's local, national, and global legacies—from the furniture factory at Val-Kill and the people she entertained there after it had become her home to the planned community at Arthurdale, and the impact of the UDHR. Susan Curnan reflects on growing up at Val-Kill, where as "the littlest Curnan" she witnessed history in the making and was encouraged by Mrs. Roosevelt to be on its receiving line. Frank Futral's article on Val-Kill Industries traces ER's commitment to labor and human dignity through the ten-year project. Marilee Hall's depiction of Arthurdale details the holistic homesteading initiative, which was one of Eleanor Roosevelt's "pet projects"—from prefabricated housing (including furniture from Val-Kill) and indoor plumbing to a progressive school, community clinic, and subsistence farming. While some critics say Arthurdale was a failure because it did not prove self-sustaining, it is still alive—due in part to Arthurdale Heritage, Inc., a group

1935 Began her "My Day" columns, which continue until her death.

1937 Writes *This is My Life*.

1939 Resigns from the Daughters of the American Revolution and arranges for Marian Anderson to sing at the Lincoln Memorial on Easter Sunday. (ER does not attend the concert.) She addresses the NAACP conference in Richmond.

1942 Joins the board of the Wyltwyck School for troubled Boys; supports women's employment in wartime industry and the Tuskegee Airmen's role in the air war in Europe.

1935

1940

WORLD WAR II

1934 Hosts the White House Conference on Camps for Unemployed Women. She travels the nation (and Puerto Rico) with Hickok investigating government programs.

1936 Val-Kill Industries closes.

1938 Hosts the White House Conference on Participation of Negro Women and Children in Federal Welfare Programs. At the Southern Conference for Human Welfare (Birmingham, AL) defies segregation laws by sitting between black and white audience members.

1940 Testifies before Congress in support of migrant farm workers' aid; establishes the U.S. Committee for the Care of European Children. July 17, 1940, ER speaks for Harry Wallace as Vice President at the Democratic National Convention.

1940-45 Invited Lorena Hickok to live in the White House.

that is preserving the community center and some representative housing. But its greatest success were the children of the original homesteaders who went on to become doctors, teachers, and active community members.

Thalia Mulvihill’s bibliographical article traces the impact on females of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Article 26, the right to education. Education was one of ER’s projects—from her work in the Settlement House in New York City, to funding and teaching at the Todhunter School for Girls, skills training at Val-Kill to the progressive school she helped found at Arthurdale. The currency and importance of the UDHR is reflected in the Open Letter to President Obama that emerged from the participants at “Bringing Human Rights Home,” a conference sponsored by the Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute, and the Schweitzer Institute to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the of the UDHR’s signing.

“Saving History,” the symposia for this issue, is especially pertinent to the Hudson River Valley, Eleanor Roosevelt, Val-Kill, and ER’s friend Lorena Hickok. It seems for those of us living in the Hudson River Valley that sites like the FDR Presidential Library and home, Vanderbilt mansion, Olana—the list goes on—and the home that FDR built for Eleanor on the Roosevelt estate have always been protected historic sites. In reality, Val-Kill was saved from being a retirement community by the work of a few people. In this section, we have the beginnings of the oral history of Val-Kill and the Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill (ERVK), as well as a photographic essay.

Likewise, Lorena Hickok was almost written out of history. Among the papers she left to the FDR library was an unpublished autobiography. The chapter excerpted here details her life living in the White House with “Mrs. R.,” albeit sanitized by making the Lincoln bedroom into a guest bedroom (way before the

1945 Influences the Army Nurse Corps to allow black women to join; becomes a board member of the NAACP.

1945

April 12, 1945 Following FDR’s death, ER moves to Val-Kill.

1945 Appointed by President Harry Truman to the United States Delegation to the United Nations General Assembly. She serves until 1953.

December 10, 1948 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. ER served as chair of the Human Rights Commission, which drafted the UDHR.



1953
Resigns from the U.S. Delegation to the U.N. and begins volunteering for the American Association for the United Nations.

1950

1954
Writes *Ladies of Courage* with Lorena Hickok.



Clintons rented it out), instead of Eleanor’s room, where historians have located it to have been. Lorena Hickok died five years after Eleanor; her ashes were buried in a pauper’s grave in Rhinebeck, NY. A chance viewing of a one-woman play led a group of women, headed by Linda Boyd Kavars, to have Hick’s grave marked with a plaque, bluestone bench, and dogwood tree. Thanks to the work of these women, Hick’s legacy now lives on in social-justice scholarships awarded in her name. They are available to young women who attend ERVK’s Girls’ Leadership Workshop.

The books reviewed for this issue include one by Eleanor about lessons from her life; Robin Gerber’s book pulls together lessons on leadership from Eleanor Roosevelt’s life and writings. ER’s writings from the Human Rights Years along with a collection of essays that look at women’s and girls’ health as a human right echo the importance of the UDHR. Letters written between Eleanor Roosevelt and Isabella Green, a lifelong friend who became the first Congresswoman from Arizona, detail the hard life of families before antibiotics, as well as the political issues facing the nation. David Woolner’s review of James McDonald’s papers from 1933 to 1945 underscores the tragic plight of European Jews and the UDHR’s necessity.

Also included is an overview of all the books of note that have been published about ER since John Edens’ 1994 *Eleanor Roosevelt: A Comprehensive Bibliography*. We are all, of course, eagerly awaiting Blanche Wiesen Cook’s third volume in her extensive biography of ER (which hopefully is being completed as I write this).

It is my hope that Eleanor’s legacy lives on and that when any of us are confronted with civil or human rights issues we will ask: “What would Eleanor Do?” In doing so, we keep alive her inspiring accomplishments.

1955

1957
Representing the *New York Post*, Eleanor visits the Soviet Union.

1959
Is a visiting lecturer in International Relations at Brandeis University, where she is also on the Board of Trustees and delivers the first commencement speech.

1960
Meets with John F. Kennedy at Val-Kill.

1961 President Kennedy reappoints her to the U.S. Delegation to the U.N., and as a member of the National Advisory Committee of the Peace Corps. President Kennedy also appoints ER to be chair of the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women.

1962 Chairs an ad hoc Commission of Inquiry into the Administration of Justice in the Freedom Struggle for CORE.

November 7, 1962
Dies of tuberculosis in New York City.

1958 Despite threats from the Ku Klux Klan, ER speaks at a civil rights workshop at Highlander Folk School, TN.



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Eleanor Roosevelt papers at George Washington University www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/abouteleanor/
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PHOTOS COURTESY CURRAN FAMILY ARCHIVES

Eleanor Roosevelt welcoming visitors to Val-Kill.

Memories and Lessons from Eleanor Roosevelt’s “Kitchen Cabinet” 1931-1970

Susan P. Curnan

When I cross the old plank bridge to Val-Kill Cottage and walk on the grounds, I reclaim two decades of social study and childhood memories. I hear the sounds of many voices and see the colorful, diverse images of people at work and play around the landscape. I remember Eleanor Roosevelt, her friends, family, adversaries, colleagues, and “the help” at Val-Kill, a.k.a.: the “Kitchen Cabinet.”

I grew up there in the 1950s and ’60s—a Val-Kill kid for 20 years. Exploring the nooks and crannies and haystacks, and learning lessons of a lifetime. Am I a Roosevelt? No. I am a Curnan, “the littlest Curnan,” as Eleanor Roosevelt would be fond of saying when she complimented me on my “good seat in the saddle,” added me to her Christmas list, read to me on the porch, invited me to lunch, and so much more.

My father, Charlie Curnan, started the Curnan-Roosevelt connection in 1931 when, as he used to say, he “was just a young kid out to make a living.” A Hyde Parker of Irish-Dutch heritage, he was thirteen when he went to work in the greenhouses for FDR’s mother, at the “big house.” At the time, there were two kinds of people in Hyde Park—the very wealthy and those who worked for them on their Hudson River estates.

Well, he did make a living working with and for three generations of Roosevelts, including the President’s mother, FDR, ER, Elliot, and John Roosevelt. Over the course of nearly forty years of association, he worked his way up from tending the gardens to superintending the Val-Kill estate. In the process, he quietly integrated many other Curnans into the Roosevelt family. He arranged



Charlie Curnan in the gardens at Val-Kill.

for the employment of his brother “Tubby,” ER’s large, well documented chauffeur, “who never donned a uniform”; his sister Helen, who served as part-time correspondence and travel secretary for ER; his brother Patrick; cousin Woody, who worked in the library; and other Hyde Parkers he recruited to run the kitchens and grounds crew.

Early in my life, he purchased his own corner of the Val-Kill property for his family. Before that, he purchased land from Elliott Roosevelt and built a solid, square house on neighboring Creek Road. And before that, he (and the growing family) lived in and repaired Roosevelt farmhouses—“fixer-uppers”—on all reaches of the property, which at the time spanned six miles from the Hudson River to FDR’s famous Top Cottage.

As I think of my father’s words—“out to make a living”—I also think about words spoken by the Brandeis University rabbi recently. He said it is good to remember that one makes a living by *getting* (material goods to provide for your family), but one makes a life by *giving*.

My story is really about giving—making a life. It’s about a Val-Kill spirit of generosity and adventure. It is about Eleanor Roosevelt, to be sure, and it’s about my parents, because they are inextricably linked.

My family was part of the landscape there—the hidden infrastructure that kept the place going—Eleanor Roosevelt going—and in the process, I inherited what I call an uncommon legacy or sometimes invisible legacy. Unlike what Doris Kearns Goodwin, author of *No Ordinary Time*, writes about, I know about ordinary days at Val-Kill—the daily habits (and extraordinary events) that humanize us all.

All of us have been influenced by many people, known and unknown, ordinary and extraordinary people, places, events. Each of us has a story to tell—how we learned certain things, how we came to value others, what shaped our view of the world. Most of these stories go untold, almost unthought. Yet, they find their way out of us, expressed in our choices of home, mate, career, child-rearing patterns. Ultimately, these early influences inform what we do, why we do what we do, and where. They influence what we come to know, think, believe. As ER once wrote, “We all create the person we become by our choices as we go through life... by the time we are adult, we are the sum total of the choices we have made.” I was fortunate—my worldview and values were born and nurtured at Val-Kill. It was a dynamic place where values were caught as much as taught.

Growing up at Val-Kill as I did in the 1950s and ’60s offered me a glimpse into world events (though I hardly knew it at the time) and opened my eyes to a world of possibilities beyond the confines of Hyde Park. Indeed, the exposure and opportunity afforded one (by birth, chance, and choice) influenced the choices I

made and shaped my values.

I learned to swim, shoot, ride, fish, play tennis, and play the piano. It was here that I learned about social class, social kindness, diversity, democracy, politics, and people. Early on, I learned about racism and civil rights, Jews and anti-Semitism, communism and democracy, Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, accomplished and adventurous women called lesbians, and the U.N. Human Rights agenda. I also learned to work hard, play hard, and be “useful”; to see patterns; to craft an agenda not only for meetings and greetings but for lunch and dinner gatherings. I learned that simplicity is elegance, casual is comfortable, and conversation is important work. And sadly, I learned a lot about loss during those years, too. Finally, I learned by observing that social change is possible when you know who you are, act on what you know, think or believe is right or wrong even at personal risk, and are open with others that that is what you are doing. In Eleanor Roosevelt, I had a terrific role model close to home.



John Roosevelt and Anne Clark Roosevelt (left and right)
flanking ER and Charlie.

On The Grounds

I begin my story at the end of the story: July 28, 1962. The last party hosted by Eleanor Roosevelt on the grounds at Val-Kill was poolside at the Stone Cottage. My mother told the story best, as recorded in Stella Hershan’s book, *A Woman of Quality*:

“That summer before Mrs. Roosevelt died, she made a big surprise party for Charlie. She was the one who dreamed it up, but her daughter Anna was in on it too, and I, of course, also knew. The only one who was completely unaware of what was going on was Charlie. He even helped preparing the

food for the party. And then, when he appeared, everybody started singing, 'He's a jolly good fellow!' and Charlie sang right along with them and he kept looking around to see for whom all this celebrating was." She laughed and Charlie joined her. "They really caught me by surprise," he said.

"When did you find out that it was for you?" Ms. Hershan asked. And my mother responded, "When they gave him this." And she showed a lovely large silver platter. Engraved on it were these words: "Presented to Charles Curnan in grateful appreciation of continued association with Mrs. James Roosevelt, President and Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Mr. and Mrs. John Roosevelt. 1931-July 28, 1962."

The silver platter itself is a family treasure, as you can imagine, but the words say much about the giver. ER thought of my father as her "associate"—in sharp contrast to the more popular notion of "domestic help." He was her "top man" at Val-Kill, and according to my father's journal, Charlie could do, and did, just about everything around the place. At the party that day, ER took my father's arm and held on to him with one hand, and to her white purse with the other. It was hard to tell if she was holding on to keep him at the party or to steady herself. Either way, she held tight and smiled that Eleanor Roosevelt way that told you she was totally present.

I was thirteen years old that summer, and through these eyes it seemed to be a happy time for Roosevelts and Curnans alike.

Like most summers of my childhood (1955-1963), we went to Campobello the August after the party. Mrs. Roosevelt went at the same time that year and it was special.



The last Val-Kill party hosted by Eleanor Roosevelt.



Charlie and Millie Curnan



Mourners at Eleanor's funeral service.

Just months after that wonderful party and vacation, Eleanor Roosevelt died. Charlie tended to every detail as ER had requested. Behind the scenes, he personally guided every preparation for the funeral and burial. He worked with the funeral home to honor her wishes. He officially



He officially welcomed all presidential entourages and other guests, directed Secret Service agents, personally gathered the pine boughs to cover the casket, and laid her to rest as a pallbearer with his brothers and others.

As it sent shockwaves through the world, Eleanor Roosevelt's death signaled big changes at Val-Kill, for the people and the place. However, although it was the end of her living story, it was not the end of the vivid memories of Val-Kill, which come to me as we celebrate the thirty-second anniversary of saving this American treasure, the sixtieth anniversary year of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the 125th birthday of Eleanor Roosevelt!



The author in foreground with Roosevelts and Curnans in the service line.

Picnics

One outstanding memory is about picnics, and there were many at Val-Kill. The Wiltwyck Picnics were my favorites. What a treat to have “city kids” arrive in buses at the gates to Val-Kill. The other kids-in-residence that week—including some of ER’s grandchildren, as well as other family and friends—were expected to help set up, serve, clean up, and entertain. That’s when I learned from ER and my father, “Never ask anyone to do anything you wouldn’t do yourself—and let them know you will and can do most anything!” And, “Never underestimate what young people can do when you put them in charge!” All of us were in it together!

I was my father’s constant companion during these days, and he was hers. On this day, he was Secret Service, chief cook and bottle washer, and property and people manager all in one. And he saw to it that I always got the best jobs on the service line—spooning beans and potato salad to the line of smiling faces—all as curious about us as we were of them. The main course: hot dogs and rolls prepared on the fieldstone fireplace in big vats—the same style hot dogs served to the Queen of England and members of the United Nations at other Val-Kill picnics. Dessert was solid slabs of Sealtest neapolitan ice cream—rainbow slice between two sides of wax paper so it was easy to eat. I don’t think they make that anymore,



Eleanor reading at the annual Wiltwyck Picnic.

and that's a shame!

After lunch, Eleanor Roosevelt would sit on the old weatherbeaten log near the lake and read to the children, often from *The Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling. Rikki-Tikki-Tavi, the mongoose, and Nagu, the black cobra, never seemed more alive than on the banks of the Val-Kill stream. While riveted to her words, most of us were fidgeting and looking in the tall grass for Nag and Nagaina, hoping beyond hope that the resident ducks would do the good work of the famous mongoose if necessary.

The other great event of the day, to which we all looked forward, was a fabulous steel drum concert. Homemade, hand-painted instruments and homegrown talent—it was amazing.

Each year, there were a few of the older boys whose attention would wander during these festivities. Soon their bodies would follow that wanderlust, and soon after that my father would hear the start of a hot-wired T-bird or see a tractor heading down the road with newly converted farm boys at the wheel. No one was ever seriously hurt, though a few vehicles had to be hauled out of ditches and kids out of the lake. But all in all, it was another successful Roosevelt picnic—one for a good cause.

Until reading my Uncle Tubby's oral history transcript recently, I could only imagine what it was like for people in charge—namely my father. Tubby said about the Wiltwyck boys: "...it was a lot of fun. Mrs. R. loved it, and as for the boys and the help, well, they loved to come and we loved to see them go." Apparently, the help was relieved when ER went happily to bed that night, filled with the sounds of colorful steel drums, reflecting on the good work and good people of the Wiltwyck School—none the wiser about the mischief.

Inside the Cottage

To some, the phrase "Eleanor Roosevelt's Kitchen Cabinet" may conjure up images of political advisors, chief strategists, and foreign correspondents. To other more literal friends, a picture of someone's kitchen may come to mind. Both apply. The name of this article springs from the notion that kitchens, then and now, in ER's house, yours or mine, often become the center of nurturing, shared confidences and socializing, as well as sustenance. At Val-Kill, it was all of that and more. It was where critical events, life changes, and new ideas were played out—just as in life today. A place where protocol is relaxed, where wooden spoons convey golden rules, where plans are made and great ideas are hatched. As a kid, I spent most of my time on the grounds and inside the cottage.

Entering ER's home still evokes mixed feelings that come with joy, excitement, high adventure, high expectations, and anxiety. It is a big rambling, cozy house—knotty pine, wall hangings of all sorts arranged in random patterns, and an interesting mix of furniture. I know every room and slept in most at one time or another. The house was run by members of my family and people who worked for them, so I was "at home" and free to roam about.



Eleanor at home, at Val-Kill.

If you've been there, you know the house is casual, comfortable, simple and ripe for exploring and discovery. ER's "offices" with bookcases and fireplaces, photos and all manner of worldly collection were found in several places. I have fond memories observing her write with Lorena Hickock at the partners desk in the playhouse (now the Visitor's Center) while I played ping pong or read by the fire, and of playing in her bedroom while she read on the porch or in "Tommy's apartment" with her gifted assistant Maureen Corr or my Aunt Helen assisting with travel and manuscripts.

In other words, ER excelled at the art of integrating work and living. There were no boundaries for a start and end to work or socializing. A "both, and" way of life, in contrast to the "either, or" so common today. The spillover of the 24/7 lifestyle to the Curnan household was a given and became a way of life, almost an ethic—a seamless blend, simply the way one lives, blurring the lines between work and play, and work and learning. For me, "learning by doing" was also a way of life.

Being a kid "at the table," for example, offered many challenges and lessons. Having lunch and dinner with ER and guests in the dining room or on one of the porches was an invitation to practice all your best manners, including proper use of finger bowls (glass finger bowls filled with water and lemon wedges), multiple utensils and glasses (and yes, she used a little bell to call Becky or Marge from the kitchen)—but that was the easy part. The expectations for conversation were also clear and high. I learned from ER that it works best if you always carry at least three conversation topics into any social encounter. "Have an agenda," something about politics, travels, family, books, food. It was scary, but exciting. I read somewhere that in her younger days, ER was advised about using the ABCs to invent topics when your mind goes blank—A for Ants, etc.—but by the time I sat at the



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

table, she no longer needed to calm herself with the ABCs! She was compelling to be with, whether she intended to be or not. I remember a story about a reporter's inquiry. "Does she sit at the head of the table at Val-Kill?" he asked. The reply shot back, "Wherever she sits becomes the head of table." Fact is, she did always sit at the head—the chair on the north side facing south, whether in the dining room or on the porch.

When I think of food stories from Val-Kill days, I often think of Khrushchev. And when I think of Khrushchev, I think first of his visit to Val-Kill in August 1959, and then I think of borscht. That strange, great beet-red, beet soup served cold with a dollop of sour cream. My father made it for the first time for his visit! The perfect high-stakes recipe for cold soup to accompany high-stakes discussions of the Cold War! It was an exciting, fast-paced kind of scary day—the preparations were elaborate and intense behind the scenes. I was by my father's side as he briefed Secret Service agents and state troopers at one moment and instructed kitchen staff and put finishing touches on the borscht the next. A trip to the Presidential Library to ensure security and protocol was intact for the mansion tour and rose garden visit, and the flowers were perfect for laying at FDR's gravesite. Then on to the press corps, including Walter Cronkite, Daniel Schorr, Howard K. Smith, Charles Kuralt, Sam Jaffe, Harry Reasoner, and others.

It was a paparazzi occasion and we were all a little surprised when ER asked to have me in the short receiving line with her. The moment sticks with me like it was yesterday. I was nervous and awkward as I was "escorted" to the front line and had a sense this was more than a simple request...the event was captured by the press, photographers, and film makers who seized the moment to show Khrushchev's "Pause for Affection." The story was subsequently featured in "Images of Peace—a Television Chronicle of a Turning Point in History" (CBS Television Network, 1960). On this occasion, the reporters wrote, "For once, Nikita Khrushchev seems dominated. Mrs. Roosevelt has him by the arm and is obviously in charge."

Unfortunately, the borscht moment didn't go nearly as well. Time was short, duty at the U.N. called. The delegation made a quick pass through the kitchen and dining room, picked up a dinner roll, and moved out to the limos. ER was furious about the hasty visit and we all ate borscht for weeks!

From Val-Kill, the entourage moved down the Hudson River to the U.N.—a well-known visit—and on to Hollywood to meet with Frank Sinatra, Bob Hope, Marilyn Monroe, Shirley MacLaine, and others.

Only later, reading "Images of Peace," did I understand the gigantic impact of this visit. Indeed, in Khrushchev's final statement made on American soil, only days after the Val-Kill visit, he said:

We were here at the kind invitation of President Eisenhower. We visited various cities in your country from the Atlantic to the Pacific. We had many pleasant meetings and talks with Americans, with the business people of America, with political and public men. We met your workers, farmers and intellectuals. As a result of the useful talks we had with President Eisenhower, we came to an agreement that all outstanding international issues should be settled not through the use of force but by peaceful means and through negotiations. When we come home we shall tell the Soviet people of our impressions, of the meetings and talks we had on American soil. The Soviet people as a whole seek to live in peace. They want there to be good friendly relations between our two great nations. We are convinced that the American people also desire peace. There are many outstanding issues between us. But let us rather not turn to the past but look to the future and do all we can for that future. Let us join efforts to consolidate peace and to improve understanding between all the nations of the world.

To be sure, it was a special time and place. As someone once said, “When history is being made, and I am present, I miss the significance.” That was surely true for me despite the fact that my father always told me, “Don’t forget where you came from.” Crossing the bridge that my father built transports me back to that place where I came from. Where values were lived and where ideas were debated with reason and passion.

Historians Blanche Wiesen Cook and Allida Black describe Val-Kill as the “Window into ER’s infinite courage and compassion. Sturdy, comfortable, accessible, and enduring, Val-Kill Cottage is the personal symbol of ER’s life. Part home, part refuge, part retreat, part political laboratory, Val-Kill was the space held closest to her heart.” And to that I would add—a place where she blurred the lines between work and play, and between family, friends, and staff. And it is a place I call home, too.



Eleanor Roosevelt and Nancy Cook inspecting a table outside the Val-Kill Shop.
Inset, The Val-Kill Furniture Factory.



COOK-DICKERMAN COLLECTION,
ELEANOR ROOSEVELT NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Room arrangement with Val-Kill furniture from the trade catalog.

Val-Kill Industries: A History

Frank Futral

By 1926, when Eleanor Roosevelt and three friends—Nancy Cook, Marion Dickerman, and Caroline O'Day—joined in partnership to establish Val-Kill Industries, the American Arts and Crafts Movement had reached its declining years.¹ Some advocates, disheartened by the movement's inherent inability to effect change in an industrial society, redirected their momentum, drawing national attention to the craft traditions of America's colonial past.² The decade of the 1920s witnessed an explosion of activity in what historians refer to as the Colonial Revival, a complex reactionary movement against growing immigration, multiculturalism, and anxieties over urbanism and modernism.³ During this time, the status of early American craft was elevated to fine art as museums established permanent exhibits to showcase the artistic merits of furniture made during the colonial era, while at the same time fashioning a taste for the early colonial style.⁴ The new demand for colonial-style furniture flooded the market with poorly manufactured factory goods, and in turn, a reaction analogous to earlier attitudes toward fine craftsmanship.

Val-Kill Industries embraced both Arts and Crafts and Colonial Revival ideologies. These movements had much in common, sharing an appreciation for simplicity and honesty in design and materials, nostalgia for a pre-industrial past, and emphasis on agrarian values. Mrs. Roosevelt and her friends established Val-Kill on a firm foundation of handcraft traditions and a secure marketing



COOK-DICKERMAN COLLECTION, ELEANOR ROOSEVELT NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Living Room, Val-Kill Cottage. The hanging bookcase, desk-on-frame, ribbon-back chair, fireside stool, oval tavern table, Cromwellian chair, and large gate-leg table were among the first pieces Landolfa made in the new factory. This room was occasionally shown to prospective customers visiting the Val-Kill Shop as an example of how one could decorate a room with Val-Kill furniture.

strategy built upon the popularity of early American furniture.

Over the course of its ten-year life, Eleanor Roosevelt would see Val-Kill Industries in a broader context. In the process, she played a key role in shepherding Arts and Crafts ideas and ideals into larger government-sponsored initiatives that adopted many of the movement's philosophical attitudes toward craft, labor, and human dignity. In this way, Val-Kill Industries and Eleanor Roosevelt achieved some success where the Arts and Crafts movement had fallen short. When Franklin D. Roosevelt became President, Val-Kill Industries was transformed from local experiment into a model for New Deal economic recovery.

Mrs. Roosevelt met Nancy Cook and her companion Marion Dickerman in 1922 at a fundraising luncheon sponsored by the Women's Division of the New York State Democratic Committee. Shortly after, Mrs. Roosevelt invited them both to spend a weekend at Hyde Park. A vibrant friendship followed and eventually, with the encouragement of FDR, the three women built a cottage together on the Fall Kill, a stream that flowed through the Roosevelt family estate in Hyde

Park, New York. Val-Kill Cottage was completed in 1926 and became the symbol for a partnership that included Mrs. Roosevelt, Cook, Dickerman, and Caroline O'Day. Joined by their mutual dedication to social reform and progressive politics, together they published the *Women's Democratic News*, purchased the Todhunter School in New York City, and established the Val-Kill Furniture Shop.⁵

Nancy Cook had an energetic, intense, and creative spirit. Handsome, with dark and penetrating eyes, photographs capture her unease before the camera, concealing a fun personality and irreverent sense of humor. On the other hand, she could be hypersensitive, was given to mood swings, sometimes exhibiting a passive-aggressive nature when she felt threatened or misunderstood. But Cook was thoughtful, sincere, and artistic.

Cook was the driving spirit behind Val-Kill Industries, suggesting that the workshop at Val-Kill make reproduction early American furniture.⁶ She was at Syracuse University from 1909 to 1912, and while there, was likely a student of Irene Sargent, a close associate of Gustav Stickley and editor of his publication *The Craftsman* from 1901 to 1905.⁷ Sargent fully understood the ideologies of Morris and Ruskin, and through her teachings and writings for *The Craftsman* gave the American Arts and Crafts Movement its philosophical voice.⁸ Under Sargent's influence, Cook may have developed her lifelong interest in craft and early American furniture.⁹

Making furniture was something that Nancy Cook had always wanted to do. But Mrs. Roosevelt's decision in 1926 to establish Val-Kill Industries was prompted by a growing national crisis, and a desire she shared with her husband to do something locally in response. The outbreak of the World War in 1914, which severely disrupted agricultural production in Europe, presented American farmers with an opportunity to supply the European food market. During that time, agricultural production in the United States increased on an unprecedented scale as America's farmers overextended themselves to meet market demand and profit as never before. This all came to an abrupt halt with the restoration of peace and the resumption of European farming.



COOK-DICKERMAN COLLECTION, ELEANOR ROOSEVELT NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Nancy Cook in the finishing room at Val-Kill. Mrs. Roosevelt recalled Cook's "distinct artistic ability," saying that she "could do almost anything with her hands."

American farmers were plagued by massive surpluses and rapidly depreciating prices. Compounded by overwhelming debt incurred to meet market demand and escalating foreclosures, the United States plummeted into an agricultural depression that persisted throughout the 1920s. Unemployed farmers and their families began to leave the countryside in search of employment opportunities in urban areas at such an alarming rate that the farm crisis became the most urgent national political issue.¹⁰

Agriculture remained the dominant economic activity in Dutchess County, New York, during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The county's most important agricultural products were dairy, apples, corn, and barley. Increasing competition and the invention of refrigerated rail cars weakened the region's position as a leading supplier of the vast, nearby New York City market. This market shift and the concurrent agricultural depression took its toll. The number of acres actively farmed in New York dropped from twenty-three million at its peak in 1880 to eighteen million by 1930—an average loss of 40,000 acres per year. As was happening across the nation, abandoned farmland was becoming all too common in Dutchess County.¹¹

Mrs. Roosevelt, responsible for promoting sales, never missed an opportunity to explain the purpose behind Val-Kill Industries:

For some years I had been rather intimately acquainted with the back rural districts of our state, and realized very clearly the problems of country life. If it were possible to build up in a rural community a small industry which would employ and teach a trade to the men and younger boys, and give them adequate pay, while not taking them completely from the farm, I felt that it would keep many of the more ambitious members in the district, who would otherwise be drawn to the cities. It was with this in mind that we decided to make furniture our test case.¹²

Social reformers had long thought craft and agriculture ideal companions because handicrafts could provide profitable work to supplement the farmer's income. Many attempts were made toward this end, but they were not widespread and seldom met their founders' expectations.¹³ As many of its Arts and Crafts predecessors had tried, Val-Kill was intended to be a vocational program to serve the needs of local farming families. "Eventually," Mrs. Roosevelt told one reporter in 1929, "we plan to have a school for craftsmen at Val-Kill, where the young boys and girls of the neighborhood can learn cabinetmaking or weaving, and where they can find employment, rather than have to go down to the city to work."¹⁴ Despite Mrs. Roosevelt's continued insistence on this point in her promotion,

Val-Kill never realized this aim.¹⁵

Sometime in 1926, Mrs. Roosevelt approached Charles Cornelius for advice on her plans to establish the Val-Kill Shop. The first curator of American furniture at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Cornelius, was initially skeptical of the Val-Kill plan but consented to help after thorough discussions with Mrs. Roosevelt and Cook. Cornelius offered access to the museum's collection and introduced the ladies to Morris Schwartz, a prominent Hartford, Connecticut, furniture restorer and leading authority on American furniture. Schwartz was restoring many of the pieces destined for exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum and advised the women on American furniture and aspects of design. In the years that followed, Schwartz maintained contact with them, supplying some furniture for Val-Kill Cottage; later, his son George would work at Val-Kill in the finishing room and delivering furniture orders.

During this time, Cook dedicated herself to the study of historic furniture styles, researched recipes for stains and the finishing process, and drafted sketches of furniture based on antiques in the Metropolitan Museum and the large collection assembled by Wallace Nutting and recently sold for exhibit at the Hartford Memorial (later renamed the Wadsworth Atheneum). The shop employed a part-time draftsman to convert Cook's sketches into measured drawings from which blueprints and templates were made. Henry Toombs, the architect for Val-Kill Cottage (under FDR's direction), drafted the shop drawings in that first year. He was succeeded by Lewis Macomber, an architect working in New York City. Toombs and Macomber also submitted some of their own designs for Cook's consideration.¹⁶



**No. 24, Butterfly Drop-Leaf Table,
by New York architect Louis Macomber.**



COOK-DICKERMAN COLLECTION, ELEANOR ROOSEVELT NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

No. 24, Butterfly Drop-Leaf Table.



**Eleanor Roosevelt and Frank Landolfa
at his lathe in the shop.**

With construction of the cottage and factory nearing completion in the winter of 1926, it was time to set up the furniture shop and begin production.

Frank Salvatore Landolfa was an Italian immigrant who arrived in New York City on Christmas Day in 1925. Trained in a family of cabinetmakers and woodworkers, he was working with wood at age five. Landolfa possessed what Mrs. Roosevelt described as an “artist’s love of fine workmanship.”¹⁷

Reserved and pensive, he was a man of few words, with a craftsman’s appreciation for the feel of fine wood. “It’s mahogany,” Landolfa would say, caressing it. “My favorite. It is rich. It feels good.”¹⁸

Landolfa came alone to the United States to establish a branch of an import-export business for his family. His efforts were unsuccessful, obliging him to fall back on what he knew—woodcraft. Landolfa found work with a New York City furniture maker.¹⁹ At night, he instructed boys in a vocational program at Greenwich House, where Mrs. Roosevelt served as a trustee.

Today a thriving community center, Greenwich House was founded during the Settlement Movement in 1902 by Mary Kingsbury Simkhovitch and other social reformers like Jacob Riis. Its goal was to improve the lives of the predominantly immigrant population living in what was then Manhattan’s most congested neighborhood. By 1926, Greenwich House was developing pioneering vocational education programs in the arts and craftsmanship. Mrs. Roosevelt approached Nicola Famiglietti, an immigrant master cabinetmaker from Naples who ran the woodcarving workshop, for assistance in locating a craftsman for Val-Kill. Famiglietti recommended Landolfa, who agreed to an interview with Cook (with the aid of an interpreter) and arrived at Val-Kill in December 1926 to establish the Val-Kill workshop.²⁰

Val-Kill Cottage was nearing completion and the furniture factory was still under construction when Landolfa arrived. Shortly after, Cook purchased machinery and workbenches selected by Landolfa from a New York City supplier.²¹ Landolfa began constructing furniture for Val-Kill Cottage during the first months of 1927.²²



Otto Berge, Karl Johannesen, and Frank Landolfa (left to right) in the furniture shop.

Landolfa had understandable misgivings moving to rural Hyde Park: he knew no one and spoke little English. A lifelong urbanite who cared little for country life, he was homesick for Milan, and considered returning to Italy. Mrs. Roosevelt encouraged him to remain in Hyde Park. She enrolled him in a night class to learn to speak English, provided room and board, driving lessons, and helped him purchase his first car. As a result, Landolfa stayed.

The Val-Kill Shop was soon bustling with several important orders placed that winter. FDR was the first customer, purchasing furniture for his newly renovated cottage at Warm Springs, Georgia. Roosevelt family friend Henry Morgenthau, Jr. (later FDR's U.S. Secretary of the Treasury) placed a large order for his country home in upstate New York. FDR's mother placed an order of tables for the James Roosevelt Memorial Library she built for the town of Hyde Park. A sampling of products had to be made in time for the first exhibition and sale scheduled for May at the Roosevelts' East 65th Street townhouse in New York City. To meet the deadline, Landolfa hired two additional cabinetmakers and two finishers, all of them Italian immigrants. The sale included a copy of a large walnut gate-leg table in the Metropolitan Museum, a desk-on-frame, a pair of leather upholstered Cromwellian chairs, an assortment of butterfly drop-leaf tables, trestle tables, mirrors, a dressing table, and chairs. Guests could view photographs and drawings illustrating the full range of Val-Kill Shop products. The exhibition and sale



No. 117, Pennsylvania Pine Dresser.

ated with Alfred G. Compton.²³ Berge developed his craft by instinct, familiarizing himself with eighteenth-century craftsmanship and perfecting his technical skill. He studied the furniture collections at the Metropolitan Museum and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. He also was acquainted with Wallace Nutting and Morris Schwartz. “You have to study your art,” Berge said, “and in order to study any kind of art you have to go way, way back and you have to study and you have to find out who knew more than yourself.”²⁴ Throughout his life, he remained committed to traditional values of craftsmanship and historic integrity.

Schwartz, who had earlier advised Mrs. Roosevelt and Cook, referred Berge to the Val-Kill Shop. Berge interviewed with Nancy Cook in New York City and joined the shop in the summer of 1927. It was busy and well-equipped when he arrived, but he was critical. Berge thought the designs by Toombs and Macomber were attractive but lacked correctness, pointing out their unfamiliarity with authentic American style and techniques. Berge’s criticism was directed, in part, toward adaptations in the designs to make them “suitable for modern needs,” a feature Mrs. Roosevelt promoted in magazine

was a success—the shop received more orders than it could sustain, necessitating the need for a fourth craftsman hired the following month.

Otto Berge arrived at Long Island City from Norway in 1913. Berge was a wheelwright by training, and was largely self-taught as a cabinetmaker following his arrival in the United States. After working a short time as a woodcrafter in an automobile body factory and then a few years as a house carpenter, Berge took a job repairing furniture at the East 13th Street Antique Shop in New York City. His employer was a dealer associ-



No. 3, Gateleg Table.



PHOTO BY NANCY COOK, PRIVATE COLLECTION.

No. 91, Flat Top Desk.



PHOTO BY NANCY COOK, PRIVATE COLLECTION.

No. 54, Bannister Back Chair and No. 74, Low Chest of Drawers.

articles, interviews, and radio spots.²⁵

According to Berge, the shop was joining furniture with glue and dowels when he arrived. He credits himself with introducing authentic eighteenth-century construction methods, including dovetail and mortise-and-tenon joints. However, this isn't consistent with furniture known to be among the early pieces crafted by Landolfa for Val-Kill Cottage.²⁶ Berge was a purist, confident in his craft, eager to be correct. He certainly may have witnessed methods that did not meet his approval, and given his exposure to the American antiques market and museum collections, he may have refined or perfected practices at Val-Kill.



Eleanor Roosevelt in the finishing room with Matthew Famiglietti.

The real issue may have been the pressure the shop was under in that first year to complete orders and be ready for the first exhibition and sale. Mrs. Roosevelt recalled “how difficult it was at first to instill into the minds of the workmen that what was expected of them was craftsmanship, not speed.”

Even though we selected our workmen for their artistic leanings as well as their technical ability...they could not understand, at first, that we did not want the furniture slapped together any old way in order to get it finished. They were so used to rushing through with a job, using the methods of joining and finishing which would give quick though not always lasting results, that it seemed incredible that anything else could be asked of them in this age of factory production. But once they realized that what we wanted was the very best cabinet making of which they were capable, they swung into the spirit of the undertaking, and now they take a genuine pride in turning out a beautiful piece of work.²⁷

Whatever the case, it was about the time of Berge's arrival that the Val-Kill Shop adopted a marketing strategy that highlighted construction methods. In an early article, Caroline O'Day made reference to “the careful fitting of part to part with mortise and tenon joints pinned with wooden pegs. The common and usual way of putting furniture together in these hurried days is with dowels and glue,

none of which have any part in the construction of Val-Kill furniture.”²⁸

Val-Kill designs offered lyric simplicity that championed traditional values. Rather than develop a full range of American antique styles like many competitors, shop practices at Val-Kill were motivated by economy to keep production costs modest.²⁹ The more ornate features typical of the Queen Anne style or the characteristic inlay of Federal furniture would have added substantially to production costs. As noted in a 1931 *New York Times* article, “All of the furniture emphasizes directness of construction and simplicity of ornamentation. Most of the pieces are reproductions of that great age of simply carved and turned wood-work, the Jacobean era of the seventeenth century.”³⁰

Miss Cook assigned each order for a piece of furniture to one craftsman, who would be solely responsible for selecting the wood, preparing the layouts, making the cuts, and assembly until it was ready for the finishing room.³¹ Lumber supplies were purchased from Ichabod T. Williams & Sons in New York City, the oldest and largest firm in the world dealing in mahogany and other imported hardwoods.³² The men would drive to New York City and select the wood themselves. Machines were shared by the men, but each was assigned his own workbench and, as was customary, a craftsman was responsible for his own hand tools, a set

typically including chisels of various types and sizes, planes, a handsaw, and a dovetail saw. Prior to delivery, a finished piece of furniture would receive the Val-Kill Shop trademark.³³

Finishing was a meticulous process requiring patience and perseverance. Repeated sanding, staining, and polishing lent the work its solid integrity and produced a silken luster. During the first months, Cook worked in the finishing room herself, assisted by two young men from the local area. As orders increased, Landolfa recruited Matthew Famiglietti, an acquaintance from Greenwich House. Famiglietti was hired to manage the finishing room and train the steady



PHOTO BY NANCY COOK, PRIVATE COLLECTION

No. 22, Large Stand



PHOTO BY NANCY COOK, COOK-DICKERMAN COLLECTION, ELEANOR ROOSEVELT NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

No. 63, Cromwellian Chair.

procession of local boys employed for that purpose. Mrs. Roosevelt boasted that although the furniture was made by expert craftsmen, “we also employ boys of the neighborhood, and teach them the trade of finishing furniture, in the best possible way.”³⁴ Famiglietti arrived late in 1927 and remained until Val-Kill Industries closed in 1936.

Caroline O’Day described the appearance of the finishing room and the process:

The unstained piece is taken to the finishing room. Huge glass jars filled with mysterious liquids are on the shelves that line the walls. Jars and bottles of gruesome looking mixtures stand in corners and under workbenches. Indeed the place might be mistaken for the workshop of an alchemist of old were it not for the collection of chairs and tables, chest of drawers, bed and benches piled high, awaiting their turn to be stained. This staining process seems almost a ritual, so carefully, almost reverently, is it done—a little color at first, carefully rubbed down, then a second or third coat, but always preserving the beauty of the grain of the wood. The furniture gradually takes on the desired richness of tone. When this is finally satisfactory, the polishing begins. It is done entirely by hand, for hours and hours, until the wood becomes like velvet to the touch.³⁵

Cook developed a document for charting as many as fifteen steps in the finishing process. Clifford Smith, caretaker and gardener at Val-Kill who worked in the finishing room, specifically recalled using a water stain, lacquer, wet sandpaper, pumice, and burlap in the finishing process.³⁶

Cook was a stern taskmaster and had a tendency toward micromanagement, requiring the employees to complete detailed timesheets. According to Landolfi, she developed a timetable estimating the amount of time needed to complete each piece of furniture.³⁷ Her notations giving specific instruction on how to perform a particular task appear frequently on Val-Kill shop drawings—“Be sure to get the wood marked K.D. for the top. Don’t make a mistake,” or “Pick out very nice wood and do nicely. Time on last ones 12¾ hrs” are typical of her annotations.³⁸ These must have been a source of irritation for some of the men.³⁹

The business grew steadily, reaching its peak in 1930, surviving the Wall Street market crash of 1929. During this period of growth, the Val-Kill Shop employed as many as six cabinetmakers, crowding the workmen and forcing an expansion of the factory. Two additions were constructed in 1928 and 1929, nearly doubling the shop’s size.

Encouraged by strong sales, Mrs. Roosevelt and Cook considered developing

a forge at Val-Kill. The Val-Kill Shop's steady decline began in 1931, as the Great Depression took its toll. The economy and resulting drop in furniture sales delayed their plans until 1934. Mrs. Roosevelt showcased the first pewter wares from the Val-Kill Forge at the April 1935 exhibition and sale held at her New York City residence.

The forge was run by Otto Berge's younger brother Arnold, who had immigrated to the United States in 1927 and held various jobs in New York City before moving to Hyde Park. Arnold was first apprenticed to Otto in the furniture shop in 1929. A quick study, he made several fine pieces of furniture under his brother's instruction. Arnold consented to operate the Val-Kill Forge; he received his training in only a few weeks from a New Jersey pewtersmith.⁴⁰ The forge offered more than fifty items, including plates, bowls, porringers, mugs, candlesticks, pitchers, and lamps—most copies of popular eighteenth-century forms—as well as a few modern products such as matchbook covers and cigarette boxes.⁴¹ Berge usually worked with one assistant, Clifford Smith from 1935 to 1937, followed by Frank Swift.

Berge continued operating the forge for Mrs. Roosevelt and her partners on the Val-Kill property after the furniture shop was disbursed. In 1938, he relocated the operation as sole proprietor from 1938 until World War II, when it became difficult to obtain the necessary raw materials. Berge closed the forge and went to work in a shipyard. He did not reopen it when the war ended.



ELEANOR ROOSEVELT NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Arnold Berge at his lathe in the Val-Kill Forge.



PHOTO BY NANCY COOK, COOK DICKERMAN COLLECTION, ELEANOR ROOSEVELT NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Assorted pewter from the Val-Kill Forge.

In 1934, Mrs. Roosevelt visited the hand-weaving room at Biltmore Industries in Asheville, North Carolina with the determination of establishing a similar model at Val-Kill. Upon her return to Hyde Park, she learned that her housekeeper, Nelly Johannesen, had an interest in weaving. Fred Seeley, who had purchased Biltmore Industries from Mrs. George W. Vanderbilt, its founder and patron, gave Mrs. Roosevelt a loom and offered to train a weaver from Val-Kill as his guest.⁴²

Nelly Johannesen had a cheerful disposition. She worked as housekeeper at Val-Kill from 1928 to 1930, when her son Karl was employed in the furniture shop. In 1933, with encouragement from Mrs. Roosevelt, Johannesen built a tea room with gas station at the entrance to Val-Kill. The following year, Johannesen spent eleven days studying weaving at Biltmore, returning again in 1935 for more training. Working primarily during the winter months, Nelly Johannesen wove an average of 800 yards of homespun cloth in a year and sold it for three dollars per yard. "Most of Mrs. Johannesen's material is used for dresses, coats and suits," a local paper reported. "Varicolored bolts are stacked in the new south room, built on to the teashop recently by her son. There are solid colors and stripes, subdued shades and bright red-and-green plaids."⁴³

The weaving industry was intended to be part of Val-Kill Industries, but Johannesen managed the business quite independently. Over a short period of time, she was able to repay Mrs. Roosevelt for her investment in the set-up costs. By 1936, she was managing the accounting herself as sole proprietor.

By the end of 1930, orders for the furniture shop dropped so low that most of the workers were let go, leaving only Landolfi, Famiglietti, and Otto Berge. During the remaining years, orders were scarce and infrequent, preventing steady full-time work. In 1932, Landolfi, with more time on his hands, began crafting small wood accessories—bookends, salad bowl sets, jewelry boxes, letterboxes, cheese plates, paper knives, and picture frames. Some of these were made with lumber Mrs. Roosevelt salvaged from the White House, initially removed during 1927 renovations to the roof.⁴⁴ Items manufactured from this stock were affixed with a small, engraved brass plate indicating the wood's origin.

The hardest years for the furniture shop were 1934 and 1935, when Landolfi finally left for a more reliable income. Mrs. Roosevelt arranged a job for him restoring furniture for an acquaintance. He eventually opened his own shop in Poughkeepsie and continued making and restoring furniture for another forty years until his retirement.

Finally, Mrs. Roosevelt and her partners began liquidation of the furniture shop. Mrs. Roosevelt was making plans to convert the factory building into her

own residence. Otto Berge stayed through 1936 to complete the final orders, most of them placed by Mrs. Roosevelt for her new cottage. Berge had been setting up a shop at his home, presumably to start his own business as soon as he was able. He accepted the women's offer to take what machinery from the shop he still needed as well as the Val-Kill Shop trademark. Berge continued making furniture under the Val-Kill name until his retirement in the 1970s.

Events leading to the decision to dissolve the Val-Kill partnership are not precisely known. A personal disagreement between Mrs. Roosevelt and Cook in 1938 was the highlight of what may have been a growing disaffection. But economic realities were really to blame. Managing the shop during a recession coupled with her political responsibilities at the State Democratic Party headquarters were having an effect on Nancy Cook's health.⁴⁵ A note Mrs. Roosevelt dashed off to her friend Lorena Hickok confirms the circumstances:

Lots of work going on today but moving the shop out and giving the furniture to Otto and machinery and the other two boys the pewter and little things is really a great relief to [Nancy] and will mean a more peaceful life.⁴⁶

The assessment of Val-Kill's financial health has never been fully understood. Nancy Cook apparently destroyed most of the records shortly before her death.⁴⁷ Family members and friends close to Mrs. Roosevelt later expressed concern that she was underwriting the shop's losses. In his published memoir, Mrs. Roosevelt's son Elliott disparagingly referred to his mother's "hopeless task of turning Val-Kill Industries into a paying concern."⁴⁸ Mrs. Roosevelt even admitted "I put up most of the capital from my earnings from radio and writing and even used some of the small capital that I had inherited from my mother and father."⁴⁹ Mrs. Roosevelt's secretary, Malvina Thompson, added that Val-Kill failed for lack of expertise in business management, and that Cook refused to bring in help.⁵⁰ Otto Berge agreed.

But the scant surviving financial records suggest that the situation was not always so desperate. With the exception of the very difficult year of 1930 and the final years 1935 and 1936, records indicate that the Val-Kill Shop was making a modest annual profit divided equally among Roosevelt, Cook, and Dickerman. Most years, they earned a profit that ranged from \$500 to \$1,900.⁵¹ However, the return on their total investment in Val-Kill Industries of \$18,610 from 1925 to 1936 was only \$5,028—a loss of \$13,582.

But analysis of Val-Kill's success based solely on the fiscal realities misses the point. Despite Val-Kill's inability to sustain itself as a commercial venture, it did succeed in some ways where other cottage industries had failed. The experiment

at Val-Kill paved the way for larger initiatives that became possible when Franklin D. Roosevelt took the oath of office in 1933. Among the New Deal agencies established by FDR's administration, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) organized more than 3,000 craft projects, the Farm Security Administration (FSA) experimented with cottage industry, and many more government-sponsored programs embraced some form of traditional craft to liberate Americans from poverty and restore their dignity.

The relationship between Val-Kill Industries and the quest for solutions to the crises of the Depression were early observed by one writer who paid a visit to the Val-Kill Shop. "While therefore, Mrs. Roosevelt so vigorously and so effectively sponsors the handicraft movement, it is almost plain that she is not fully aware of the revolutionary bearing and implications of her sponsorship." This perceptive reporter recognized Eleanor Roosevelt as the pivotal figure in transforming a national aesthetic movement into effective government programs. "The world is full of Val-Kill workshops," he further remarked. "What is happening in America in the encouragement and development of handcrafts is significant more because of the political turn it has taken through Mrs. Roosevelt than because of any other aspect of the movement."⁵²

Endnotes

1. Val-Kill Industries was variously referred to as the Val-Kill Shop, Roosevelt Industries, and the Hyde Park Village Craftsmen.
2. See Robert W. Winter, "The Arts and Crafts as a Social Movement," *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (1975): 36-40. Winter cites Mary Ware Dennet, a leader of the Boston Society of Arts and Crafts, whose writings concluded with a tone of resignation that radical reform could not occur without fundamental change in the economic system. Even at Val-Kill, craftsman Frank Landolf admitted "we couldn't compete with the factories." See Frank S. Landolf, interview by Emily Williams, Poughkeepsie, NY, 14 July 1978, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.
3. See Alan Axelrod, ed, *The Colonial Revival in America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985).
4. The Metropolitan Museum of Art opened its American Wing in 1924. Two years earlier, on the occasion of the museum's Duncan Phyfe exhibition, the connection between early American furniture and the Arts and Crafts movement was referenced in the *Bulletin* introducing the show: "...while rendering homage to one of our few distinguished master-craftsmen, the collection should prove of value to our present-day designers, as well as to the collectors of the American arts and crafts." See "An Exhibition of Furniture from the Workshop of Duncan Phyfe," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Vol. XVII, No. 10 (October 1922), 213-14.
5. Eleanor Roosevelt was editor of *The Women's Democratic News*, Marion Dickerman served as vice-principal of the Todhunter School, and Nancy Cook managed the Val-Kill Furniture Shop. Beyond contributing her share of the financial support and authoring a few articles, Caroline O'Day's role in the partnership is unclear.
6. Mrs. Roosevelt stated in a letter to Marion Dickerman that she supported Val-Kill Industries "because I felt that Nan was fulfilling something which she had long wanted to do." See Eleanor

- Roosevelt to Marion Dickerman, 9 November 1938, President's Secretary's File, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library. In published articles and interviews, Mrs. Roosevelt frequently credited Cook's primary role in creating and managing the Val-Kill Shop.
7. In a given four-year cycle, a student could expect to take several of Sargent's classes covering aesthetics, architectural history, or the history of fine arts. She defined art broadly to include all forms of craft, giving equal attention to Rookwood Pottery and the Renaissance.
 8. See Catherine W. Zipf, *Professional Pursuits: Women and the American Arts and Crafts Movement*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007), 143-160.
 9. After graduating from Teachers' College at Syracuse, Cook taught art and handicrafts to high school students in Fulton, New York.
 10. David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear, The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 16-18.
 11. See Edith Van Wagner, ed., *Agricultural Manual of New York State* (Albany: State of New York Department of Farms and Markets, Division of Agriculture, 1918): 65; and Martha Collins Bayne, *County at Large: A Norrie Fellowship Report* (Poughkeepsie: The Women's City and County Club with Vassar College, 1937), 53.
 12. See Eleanor Roosevelt, "Making a Town Furniture-Minded," *The Spur* (15 December 1931): 28; and "Mrs. Roosevelt's Story of Val-Kill Furniture," *Delineator* (November 1933), 23.
 13. Coy L. Ludwig, *The Arts & Crafts Movement in New York State, 1890s-1920s* (Hamilton, NY: Gallery Association of New York State, 1983), 16.
 14. Frieda Wyandt, "A Governor's Wife at Work, *Your Home*, (September 1929), 68.
 15. Frank Landolfa admitted in an interview, "I was supposed to teach young local men, which I never did because nobody ever came." Otto Berge remembered teaching woodworking classes at night and on Saturdays after he arrived, but said the classes didn't last because of rivalry among the local boys. Most young men employed at Val-Kill were put to work in the finishing room. See Frank Landolfa, Interview by Emily Williams, 14 July 1978, Poughkeepsie, NY, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library; Frank Landolfa, Interview by Emily L. Wright, 25 July 1978, Poughkeepsie, NY, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site; and Otto Berge, Interview by Emily L. Wright, 17 July 1978, Red Hook, NY, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site.
 16. Henry Toombs was a cousin of Caroline O'Day. After studying architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, he trained in the offices of Paul Cret and McKim, Mead and White. Very little is known of Lewis Macomber. He maintained an office at 665 Fifth Avenue in New York City.
 17. Eleanor Roosevelt, typescript for article dated 1927, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Box 3022, Folder: "Val-Kill Industries." Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library.
 18. LeClaire T. Wood, "In His Hands, Beauty Speaks," *Poughkeepsie Journal* (July 6, 1980).
 19. In his interviews, Landolfa identifies the shop's owner, variously transcribed as John Soma, John Somnia, or John Sonmma.
 20. TRANSCRIPT, Interview with Frank Landolfa, July 25, 1978, by Emily L. Wright. See also "Parts of House Work of Boys of Greenwich House Workshops," *The Westfield Leader* (October 12, 1932): 2; and "Greenwich Woodcarvers," *Time* (December 3, 1928).
 21. Shop machinery included a table saw, band saw, jointer, shaper, hollow chisel mortiser, and wood-turning lathe. See Otto Berge, interview by Emily L. Wright, 31 July 1978, Red Hook, NY, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site.
 22. For a while, Val-Kill Cottage also served as "the demonstration house for the furniture itself." See Frieda Wyandt, "A Governor's Wife at Work," *Your Home*, (September 1929), 69.
 23. Alfred Compton (1835-1913) was a professor of physics and mechanics at the College of the City of New York. He authored several books on manual training and the craft of woodworking, among them *Manual Training: First Lessons in Wood Working* (1888), *First Lessons in Metal-*

- Working* (1890), and *Advanced Metal-Work* (1898). See "Prof. A.G. Compton Dies," *The New York Times* (December 13, 1913).
24. Otto Berge, interview by Dr. Thomas F. Soapes, 19 September 1977, Red Hook, NY, Eleanor Roosevelt Oral History Project, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.
 25. Frieda Wyandt, "A Governor's Wife at Work," *Your Home*, (September 1929), 69. Notices for the biannual exhibitions and sales published in the *New York Times* also make reference to these adaptations.
 26. Shop drawings dated before Berge's arrival clearly illustrate mortise and tenon construction details.
 27. Frieda Wyandt, "A Governor's Wife at Work," *Your Home*, (September 1929), 68.
 28. Mrs. Daniel O'Day, "Bringing Back Artistic Furniture of the 17th Century," *Motorodom* (March 1929), 9.
 29. Several sketches are annotated "too expensive."
 30. Walter Rendell Storey, "Village Craftsmen Show Their Talent," *New York Times* (January 11, 1931).
 31. The process is outlined in several feature articles on Val-Kill: "Once the drawing is presented to the chosen craftsman, the responsibility of handling every operation is his. From selecting the most suitable pieces of kiln-dried wood in the cellar of the shop to polishing down the last coat of wax or varnish, the piece never leaves his hands. There are no specialists for each operation, for mass production has never infected Val-Kill." See "A Governor's Wife and Her Workshop," *The Home Craftsman* (July/August 1932), 90. On the point of finishing, the editors of *The Home Craftsman* were incorrect, but the idea of the single craftsman overseeing all aspects of production was a point to be made in contrast to the monotony of the factory system, isolating workers required to turn out just one part over and over. Otto Berge also emphasized that each craftsman was wholly responsible for the manufacture of a single piece of furniture, with exception of the finishing process.
 32. Lumber receipts are in the Otto Berge Papers, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites. On the history and reputation of Ichabod T. Williams & Sons, see John C. Callahan, "The Mahogany Empire of Ichabod T. Williams & Sons, 1838-1973," *Journal of Forest History*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (July 1985), 120-130.
 33. Two trademarks were used at Val-Kill. The first was a simple block print with the word VAL-KILL. According to Landolfa, the second trademark came into use in 1933; also a block print, it featured the word VALKILL framed within a double rectangle. These trademarks appear on surviving Val-Kill furniture, sometimes in combination with the craftsman's signature (a block print of his first name) and a catalog number. Trademarking was not consistently practiced.
 34. Eleanor Roosevelt to Mr. D.D. Streeter, 12 May 1930. Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Box 15, Correspondence S-Miscellaneous, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library. See also typed manuscript, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Box 3022, Val-Kill Industries, 1927, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.
 35. Mrs. Daniel O'Day, "Bringing Back Artistic Furniture of the 17th Century," *Motorodom* (March 1929), 9.
 36. Clifford Smith, interview by Emily L. Wright, 26 July 1978, Hyde Park, NY, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site.
 37. Johanne Berge, wife of Val-Kill Industries employee Arnold Berge, said that the time sheets were necessary in the finishing room because the young boys didn't apply themselves and played too much. See Johanne Berge, interview by Emily L. Wright, 1 September 1978, Saratoga Springs, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Sites.
 38. See Val-Kill Shop Drawings Collection, National Park Service, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site. Notations are from drawings 01.004.03 and 01.034.06.

- 39 Berge's dislike of Nancy Cook is evident in his interviews, firm in his conviction that she didn't know anything about making furniture or running the business. Cook clearly had talent, but it's hard to determine the extent of it. She didn't make furniture at Val-Kill (evidently uncomfortable with the large machinery). Berge's opinion of her was finally prejudiced by an unpleasant incident in 1938 involving Cook and Berge over some frames made in Berge's shop for Mrs. Roosevelt. According to Landolfa, there also were ethnic-related tensions and jealousy among some of the men regarding who could work better and faster. For the most part, Landolfa was politely quiet on the subject of shop factions. He appeared to have a distant but friendly disposition toward Cook, admitting that she treated him well. Landolfa did however note that Berge's attitude toward Cook contributed toward shop tensions.
- 40 The pewtersmith is identified in the interviews as a man named Eichner (probably Jacob Eichner). Johanne Berge, interview by Emily L. Wright, 1 September 1978, Saratoga Springs, NY, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site.
- 41 Arnold Berge made several attempts to manufacture iron hardware and experimented with approximately twenty samples that include boot scrapes, strap hinges, latches, and locks. Finding iron too difficult to work with, the production of hardware was abandoned. Had economic circumstances been different, the forge would have expanded to include other metals.
- 42 Biltmore Industries was established in 1901 by Mr. and Mrs. George W. Vanderbilt to train local young men and women in handcraft production. At Biltmore, they produced furniture and were famous for their woolen homespun cloth. President Roosevelt was particularly fond of their lightweight white wool cloth.
- 43 "Violet Avenue Woman Weaves," *Hudson Valley Sunday Courier*, n.d. Quoted in Emily L. Wright, "Eleanor Roosevelt and Val-Kill Industries," (unpublished report for Eleanor Roosevelt's Val-Kill, Inc., October 1978): 55.
- 44 President Calvin Coolidge replaced the White House's leaky roof in 1927, simultaneously adding a third floor.
- 45 Despite speculations, Marion Dickerman insisted that Val-Kill "ceased operations only because the volume of orders and work were becoming injurious to Miss Cook's health." Quoted in James R. Kearney, *Anna Eleanor Roosevelt: The Evolution of a Reformer* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968), 169. Joseph Lash quotes Dickerman as saying "The load that Nan carried nearly killed her." See Joseph P. Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1971), 476.
- 46 Roosevelt to Lorena Hickok, 11 May 1936, Lorena Hickok Papers, Box 3, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library.
- 47 Author James R. Kearney stated that a confidential source told him that Cook destroyed the financial statements. See Kearney, *Anna Eleanor Roosevelt: The Evolution of a Reformer* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968), 169.
- 48 Elliott Roosevelt and James Brough, *A Rendezvous With Destiny: The White House Years* (G.P. Putnum's Sons, 1975), 159.
- 49 Eleanor Roosevelt, *This I Remember* (New York: Harper and Brothers), 34.
- 50 Joseph P. Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1971), 476-7.
- 51 Profit was \$562 in 1928; \$1,900 in 1929; \$880 in 1931; \$1,000 in 1932; and \$686 in 1934. Regardless of what Cook, Dickerman, and Roosevelt each invested, they shared the profits equally. See "Construction of the Shop Building and with the Additions," Cook-Dickerman Papers, Box 12, Folder 6, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site.
- 52 Sydney Greenbie, "Whither, Mrs. Roosevelt? A Refuge from Speed and Monotony—Val-Kill," *Leisure* (May 1934), 8.



Eleanor lobbied for electricity, appliances, and bathrooms in all the homes. Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Department of the Interior, complained to FDR about the money being spent in Arthurdale, stating the project worried him more than any other in his department. With all the amenities being provided to the homesteaders, Ickes asked, how one would be able to tell the rich from the poor? Eleanor Roosevelt replied that in matters of simple dignity and decency, one should not be able to tell the rich from the poor. Ickes continued to complain to the President, to which FDR replied, “My Missus, unlike most women, hasn’t any sense about money at all.”

Arthurdale: First New Deal Planned Community

Marilee Hall

It was 1933 when First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt visited the Scott's Run area near Morgantown, West Virginia, to see first hand the deplorable conditions of coal miners. She came at the urging of the American Friends Service Committee. The Depression, combined with miners' efforts to unionize, meant the situation at Scott's Run was volatile.

"I remember Scott's Run as a dark place; train soot and coal dust covered everything," recalled Glenna Williams, daughter of an original Arthurdale homesteader. "Many people lived in shanties, some worse than others. It was dark, dismal. We were never hungry, but many were. I'll never forget the coal companies evicting unemployed people. Their furniture was thrown out of their houses onto the ground between the road and the railroad tracks."

Mrs. Roosevelt was so overwhelmed by conditions at Scott's Run that she returned to Washington and asked her husband, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, to address this explosive issue by relocating these impoverished people. Mrs. Roosevelt felt that if only given the space and opportunity to succeed, the disadvantaged would prove themselves.

According to Glenna Williams, Mrs. Roosevelt worked closely with Clarence Pickett to "foster the creation of Arthurdale"—the nation's first New Deal subsistence homestead. Pickett was a Quaker and was involved in the popular back-to-the-land movement of the 1930s. Like Mrs. Roosevelt, he envisioned transplanting miners to a rural, healthful community. Together they persuaded federal officials to purchase their dream—over 1,000 acres of farmland in rural Preston County, West Virginia—and thus Arthurdale was born. It was named after the Richard Arthur family, from whom the land was bought.

Through the perseverance of Mrs. Roosevelt, unemployed workers were hired and began work immediately. Land was cleared, roads were built, and a drainage system was installed. On her frequent visits, Mrs. Roosevelt sometimes walked through the muddy construction sites to personally keep an eye on her pet project.



COURTESY LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

In 1880, agriculture dominated the Scott's Run area, with farmers comprising sixty percent of the population. However, by the mid-1920s, coal operations had sprung up along the hollow. By that time, miners made up sixty-three percent of the population and farming only represented twenty percent.



COURTESY LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

In November 1933, Louis Howe ordered the first fifty houses from the E. F. Hodgson Company of Dover, Massachusetts. The Hodgson Company was one of the first in the country to market prefabricated homes. His 1920 catalog stated, “thousands of people in every climate of the globe...are today living, sleeping, playing, and working in Hodgson Portable Houses.”

Until houses were built, workers used the Arthur mansion as a place to eat and sleep. Later, the mansion was torn down and the Arthurdale Inn was erected on its site.

The first fifty homes, called Hodgson houses, were hastily erected. The prefabricated structures didn't fit the foundations, so alterations had to be made. The press had a field day concerning this mistake. Since it was the first of its kind, Arthurdale was constantly under attack from the media and government.

The problems were corrected and the families moved into their dream homes in the summer of 1934. Williams described this experience as going from the "black and white of Scott's Run to the technicolor of Arthurdale."

The second seventy-five homes, called Wagner houses, were completed in 1935. The last group of houses were constructed from locally quarried stone. Eventually, 165 homesteads were built and occupied. Homesteads varied in size from three to five acres. Each had a barn, hog shed, chicken coop, root cellar, and smokehouse. Special alterations were made for teacher houses, the doctor's house and clinic, and the project manager's house. All homes had electricity and indoor plumbing.

To be a real community, houses weren't enough. The Center Complex was built with space for offices, crafts, small businesses, recreation, and fellowship. Until the school buildings were completed, the Center served as a nursery school and high school. The Arthur mansion also was used as a school during the first year. Dances, plays, music festivals, meetings, and non-denominational church services also were held at the Center.

Mrs. Roosevelt knew the importance of health care to a community's success; nurses and a doctor were employed. A clinic was opened in one of the houses. Then in 1935, the core of the community was completed with the construction of six school buildings. The schools were the answer to the future of Arthurdale. Mrs. Roosevelt personally picked progressive educator Elsie Clapp to head them. Both Clapp and Mrs. Roosevelt hoped the schools would stand as an example for the rest of the country.

According to Glenna Williams, school was an integral part of the new community. It was a "living lab" and a learning-by-doing experience for both the students and community. Mrs. Roosevelt had so much faith in this school that she gave the earnings from her "My Day" news column to it.

Elsie Clapp left Arthurdale in 1936. Gradually funding dwindled and the schools became part of the Preston County School System. However, those early years of innovative teaching methods proved to be very successful in redirecting the lives of students and their families. Annabelle Mayor, daughter of an original



COURTESY LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

While in Scott's Run, Eleanor Roosevelt met an employed minor who showed her his weekly pay envelope. Inside was \$1, on which he was to feed and clothe his children.

In the miner's home, she "noticed a bowl on the table filled with scraps, the kind that you might give to a dog, and I saw children, evidently looking for their noon-day meal, take a handful out of that bowl and go out munching. That was all they had to eat." The meeting had a profound effect on the First Lady, who used stories like this one to solicit donations from Washington socialites to help the starving families.



COURTESY FRD LIBRARY

Eleanor Roosevelt enjoyed visiting the homesteads to meet the families who lived in Arthurdale. Her visit with the DeGoyler family was documented in the national magazine *Woman's Day*. Clarence worked in the furniture factory and made most of the furniture in their home, including the table seen here, which seated the entire thirteen member family. The First Lady found the home "in immaculate order and smelling of freshly baked bread."

homesteader, remembered: “if anyone needed some type of help, they always received it. We all felt a part of each other’s lives and the life of the community. The school made this possible.”

“I have so many good memories,” said Mayor. “It was wonderful to dig clay from the earth and to watch someone make pottery from it, or see a tree felled and watch it eventually become a beautiful piece of furniture. I never knew, before I came to Arthurdale, that these things could be done.”

As time passed, adequate industry to support Arthurdale residents never materialized. Federal planners realized that farming was a supplemental vocation. They felt that industry was needed to keep Arthurdale self-sustaining. Several industries were started but were not profitable. Industry related to World War II saved Arthurdale, but after the war, homesteaders had to look elsewhere for



COURTESY THOMAS AND LORETTA DAVIS

The First Lady enjoyed visiting Arthurdale each year to see how the homesteaders were progressing with the creation of their new community and to praise their successes. As well as being a cheerleader for the community, she took great concern for the welfare of the families. During World War II, when she visited Arthurdale for a high-school graduation, Eleanor Roosevelt heard that Lee Davis, son of homesteaders Frank and Annabel Davis, was missing in action. She immediately set out to find the whereabouts of the soldier. Within three days of returning to Washington, D.C., she sent a telegram informing the Davis family that Lee was a prisoner of war. The First Lady continually sent Red Cross care package items to be forwarded to Lee, who afterwards said the packages helped him immensely.

The Davis family is pictured in 1945.

employment. Then in 1947, the government sold all the remaining property to private owners.

The social experiment ended, but the Arthurdale community didn't. Thanks to a "lift up" and not a "hand out," the community thrives seventy-five years after it was homesteaded. The dream of a better life that Mrs. Roosevelt envisioned became a reality.



PHOTO COURTESY FDR LIBRARY

Eleanor Roosevelt handing out Arthurdale High School diplomas, May 27, 1939.



PHOTO COURTESY FDR LIBRARY

Arthurdale Gym-Silman Manufacturing Army-Navy Celebration,
Arthurdale Gymnasium, 1945.



Homesteader descendants viewing old photographs.
(From left to right): James McNelis, Edna Day, Gabrielle and Terry Day.

Remembering a Great Lady

No one had better say a negative word about First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt in the community of Arthurdale, even though she has been dead for forty-seven years. Why? Because too many people in the community still remember and honor her.

“I can remember Mrs. Roosevelt coming [to Arthurdale],” said resident Richard “Dick” Myers. “But I did not realize how special her visits were. I just thought she visited every community.”

Emery Shuman, a homesteader’s son, said, “When Eleanor was in the crowd, she was one of the crowd. When she was here, we always had to do the ‘Virginia Reel’ for her. That was her favorite dance. I got to be her partner. It was always the last dance, and it was for Eleanor.”

“At the Christmas parties they had every year at the gym, we received gifts from Mrs. Roosevelt,” stated Eloise McNair, a homesteader descendant. “My sister Betty still has a doll, and I have some hankies she gave us. I also recall a play gas station with cars that my brothers received.”

“I remember when my mom went out in the yard to greet Mrs. Roosevelt’s motorcade on one of her visits to Arthurdale. Later Mom was very upset because she saw a newsreel of herself standing in the yard with her apron on,” stated Edna Day, another homesteader’s daughter.



PHOTO COURTESY ARTHURDALE HISTORY, INC.

Hay Wagon Tour of Arthurdale at the seventieth anniversary celebration.

Neva Davis, an original homesteader, chuckled as she recalled the time her son Jack was pictured in all the local newspapers being hugged by Mrs. Roosevelt because he had said to her, “I know you’re far away from home, so why don’t you come to my house for lunch?”

Mary Lou Reber and Genevieve Cartwright were young girls selling “buddy poppies” at the Arthurdale School. Guess who stopped by and made a purchase? How many First Ladies do you know of who visit a school and ask what you need and then buy it using their own money? That is what Eleanor did when she came to Arthurdale.

“Eleanor Roosevelt was a wonderful lady who had love and compassion for others,” said Christobel “Kitty” (Price) Pfizenmeire, a homesteader descendant. “I thank her for helping to provide a place for my parents to live and a place where we could grow in love and peace.” She continued, “One memory I have of the Roosevelts was one time they came by in a convertible when we lived on F-Road and I was raising the flag and they slowed down and saluted as they went by. That was a thrill I will never forget!”

One humorous memory Anne Valjean “Honey” (Work) Smith, the daughter of Arthurdale’s project manager, had about Mrs. Roosevelt was that she liked to drive around the homestead in her convertible. A Colonel Howe was always her companion. “One day as they were leaving my parent’s house, Colonel Howe was



PHOTO COURTESY ARTHURDALE HISTORY, INC.

**Natasha White (left) and Patty Cooper,
re-enactors at the New Deal Festival, Arthurdale.**

fumbling in the car for his glasses. Mrs. Roosevelt blurted out at him, ‘They’re on your head, you fool!’”

Original homesteader Lova McNair reminisced about Eleanor Roosevelt’s many kindnesses.

She was a very caring person. She was interested in the health and education of the kids. When a child was sick, she would personally go see them and would revisit later to see if they were better. Because of her, the clinic was started and a dentist was brought in. I know Mrs. Roosevelt thought education was important, too, because she would personally visit each classroom and make a few passing remarks to kids and teachers.

Original homesteader Bertie Swick, recalled a visit by Eleanor Roosevelt and two other ladies only two months after moving into her Arthurdale home. They came to inspect the house and furniture. The ladies asked Bertie if she had any children. Bertie chuckled in relating the incident because, she said, “The ladies thought I didn’t have any kids because there wasn’t any crayon marks on the walls!”

Edson McClain was one of fifty-six coal miners killed in the Christopher No. 3 Mine at Osage, West Virginia. He didn’t come home to his wife and two daughters, but the caring Mrs. Roosevelt did. Shortly after McClain’s death, the First

Lady visited his widow, Gertrude, and daughters Gloria Dean and Donna. At the time, the girls didn't know their mother was pregnant. Mrs. Roosevelt broke the news to them. The girls overheard Mrs. Roosevelt ask their mother if she needed clothes for the new baby. Donna spoke up, proclaiming, "I'm no baby!" To this, Mrs. Roosevelt replied, "I know, I mean for the new baby your mommy's having." When baby sister Edson Arlene was born, she had her first picture taken wearing the blue dress given as a present from the First Lady.

As the project manager's wife, Cecelia Work became a good friend of Mrs. Roosevelt. "She was the dearest woman I ever knew. She always thought about others."

Work often prepared lunch for Mrs. Roosevelt and her guests. Weather permitting, she served it on the large front porch of her home that overlooks Arthurdale. In preparation for Mrs. Roosevelt's arrival each spring, Mrs. Work cut dogwood branches from the trees lining her driveway and placed them on the living room fireplace mantel. "Mrs. Roosevelt loved dogwood bloom," Work noted.

"Restoring Yesterday for Tomorrow"

Stemming from the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the homesteading of Arthurdale, Arthurdale Heritage, Inc. (AHI) was a grassroots organization started to preserve the Arthurdale story and keep its dream alive. Mrs. Roosevelt wanted a community of cooperative doers. Arthurdale still is. Many descendants of homesteaders have gone on to be prestigious and viable citizens with roots embedded in their heritage.

Arthurdale Heritage ensures that Mrs. Roosevelt's "pet" project continues. Through the efforts of this non-profit group, the community, and friends, the entire community was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The American Association for State and Local History honored Arthurdale Heritage by presenting it with the internationally prestigious Corey Award for Volunteerism.

Through nickel and dime contributions, the Center Complex was purchased by AHI and is debt-free. Later, as the state and nation started recognizing Arthurdale and its unique history, grants were awarded to the organization. With these, as well as personal donations, a homestead, three original school buildings, and adjoining property were added to its holdings. AHI is presently acquiring another homestead bordering property it currently owns.

Educational programming, lectures, classes focusing on different genres, and museum acquisitions help preserve Arthurdale's unique story for future generations. An endowment has been established with interest proceeds earmarked for maintenance and salaries to insure the longevity of AHI's goals.

Thanks to Mrs. Roosevelt's dream, the original homesteaders' hard work, and the formation of Arthurdale Heritage to protect the dream, Arthurdale remains a viable community today. It is now the seventy-fifth anniversary of the homesteading of Arthurdale. Let's celebrate together by remembering the past, enjoying the present, and dreaming for a bright future.

Glenna Williams, AHI's first president, was a visionary just like Eleanor Roosevelt. Williams said, "I have a dream to see Arthurdale stand as a monument to the fulfillment of self-worth and community pride. The government gave us a chance. WE made it work! I'd like Arthurdale to always remind people of that."

Arthurdale

By *Glenna Williams*

Built of dreams by dreamers

A symbol of hope to a nation in despair

A new beginning for some unemployed, stranded coal mining families

A picture of tranquility with small houses and farm buildings along winding roads sprinkled over the rolling landscape of fields and wooded areas

A feeling of warmth and security after long days of hard work rewarded by harvest with jars of fruit and vegetables on the cellar shelves; potatoes in bins; cabbage turned into kraut and stored in stone jars; hams and bacon hanging in the smokehouse; and corn in the crib and hay in stacks to feed the chickens and a cow which would provide eggs, milk, cream, butter and cheese
Hunger is banished

Opportunities to learn new skills and try new ideas

Progressive education (learning by doing) for adults as well as children

Health care for all with a doctor, nurse, and infirmary

A sense of expectancy—meeting people who really cared and having expectations for the families

People like Eleanor Roosevelt, Clarence Pickett, and John Dewey, who encouraged each person to do their best

People learning to laugh, trust, play, and sing again



President and Chair of the Commission on Human Rights, Eleanor Roosevelt, looking at the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Education

Examining the Issues and Vital Voices for Women and Girls through Comparative Educational Biography

Thalia M. Mulvihill

“Where do human rights begin? In small places, close to home, so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world.”

—Eleanor Roosevelt

“It is in these small places—homes, schools, health clinics, markets—that women are lifting up their lives and the lives of their families...perhaps it all begins in the smallest of places—in our hearts and our minds, who we are as women, as human beings, our relationships, our connections with one another.”¹

—Hillary Rodham Clinton

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is arguably *the* international project of the twentieth century.² It spawned many significant forums, conferences, and policy directives that continue to guide the international community’s conscience and actions with regard to women and the girl-child. For example, in the 1990s alone, the UDHR served as the cornerstone document for the World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien, Thailand (1990); the World Summit for Children (1990); the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio, 1992); the World Conference on Human Rights (1993); the International Conference on Population and Development [ICPD] (Cairo, 1994); the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995); the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995); and the formation of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

This paper is designed to look, in particular, at Article 26 of the UDHR—which focuses on the right to education—by tracing its origins and uses via biographical methodologies.

Article 26 reads:

Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.³

What do educators need to know about Article 26 and the central issues it raises? Who have been the vital voices for women and girls in the effort to secure education as a human right? And why are historical biographers well-equipped to bring these issues into the public debates? Educators and the public in general need to be acquainted with the history of the UDHR; the subsequent documents, policies, and actions generated by the guardians of the UDHR; and the current state of affairs related to the effort to secure education as a human right. This paper addresses these questions through a comparative biography of Eleanor Roosevelt and Hillary Clinton focusing on their educational and political work.

Historical Background of the UDHR and Eleanor Roosevelt's Role as Educator

As Chairman of the Human Rights Commission, Eleanor Roosevelt led the passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.⁴ The Economic and Social Council established the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in 1946, and Eleanor Roosevelt was named the United States representative. She was appointed to Committee III, the Assembly's Economic and Social Committee, because most of the men on the delegation, including John Foster Dulles and Senator Arthur Vandenberg (both Republicans), considered that committee an area where she couldn't stir up too much trouble. She worked tirelessly from 1946 to 1948, chairing eighty-five meetings of Committee III. At three a.m. on December 3, 1948, the call came that "the nations of the world had agreed to create this new common standard for human dignity."⁵ Forty-eight nations voted yes; there were eight abstentions (Byelorussian SSR, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Ukrainian SSR, Union of South Africa, USSR, and Yugoslavia) and no dissenting votes. Mary Beard, the historian famous for her work in the 1940s such as the well-

known *Women as Force in History*, described Eleanor Roosevelt as reaching “to the borderlands of political, social and cultural change.”⁶ President Truman called Eleanor Roosevelt the “First Lady of the World” because of her unprecedented work at the United Nations.

It is my contention that Eleanor Roosevelt’s (unspoken) identity as a political and social educator allowed her to build a successful consensus-building strategy as a woman in a leadership position, speaking to the hearts and minds of other women. Fortuitously, she was offering a new model for teacher-activists concerned with women and girl-children. She was not unlike other nineteenth- and twentieth-century reformers when she balked at being identified as a feminist. However, the gender question would be directly and indirectly responded to by Eleanor Roosevelt. In the heat of discussions over passage of the UDHR, the delegate from India, who was a woman, protested the draft’s phrase “all men are created equal” because it might be interpreted to leave out women. Joseph Lash reported that Eleanor Roosevelt responded with her assessment that “American women had never felt cut out because the Declaration of Independence said “all men,”... but [she] yielded when [the delegate from India] told her, “if it says ‘all men’ when we get home it will be all men.”⁷ The final 1948 version of the Declaration read, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” Furthermore, it addressed the needs of children specifically with text such as, “All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.”

Roosevelt was also not unlike other female educators who were warriors for social change. Many women educators believe in the social reconstructionist possibilities of education and view educational institutions as the most important catalysts for reforming not only local communities, but the world. Some argue that this tradition of education for social reconstruction involves a spiritual dimension that, mixed with democratic values, charges women with the task of “Sweeping the world clean.” This was the metaphor Emily Dickinson used in a poem she wrote in 1861 to describe the inherent nature of women to accept the responsibility to be the caretakers for the universe. Amanda Porterfield analyzed this Dickinson poem by claiming that domestic beauty is a metaphor for spiritual transformation. Porterfield wrote, “The receptivity to change and the capacities to see one’s environment as a home and oneself as a maker of a home characterize a tradition of spirituality that has played a powerful role in the history of American culture.”⁸ Envisioning the world as a home and herself as having responsibilities to be the maker of that home, Eleanor Roosevelt used her abilities as an educator to negotiate one of the most complicated and challenging international agreements to date.

In 1933, Eleanor Roosevelt became the first First Lady to hold press conferences; only female reporters were admitted. This decision is another example of her determination to use her voice as an educator. So was her insistence to write directly to the people in her syndicated column called “My Day,” which she wrote from 1935 to 1962, and her willingness to answer direct questions (mostly from women) through her monthly column that appeared in the *Ladies Home Journal* (1941–49) and later *McCalls* (1949–62).

Val-Kill, first a non-profit furniture factory in Hyde Park, New York, that Eleanor helped to found, became a retreat for her during her life. Today known as the Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill, the organization maintains a strong and vital educational agenda to continue the legacy of Eleanor Roosevelt by emphasizing the need for education to move people to social action. Eleanor Roosevelt’s leadership in promoting human rights, democracy, inter-racial understanding, international peace, and the enduring need for the United Nations are some of the driving themes that Val-Kill is committed to advancing.

In recent history, First Lady Hillary Clinton has been a high-profile champion for rights for women and children, both in the U.S. and abroad. For example, fifty years after the creation of the UDHR, Clinton reminded her audience that “Human rights are not given to us by a parent or the government; they do not miraculously appear when we turn eighteen; no piece of paper can give them or take them away.”⁹ Clinton provided a special focus on the relationship between education and the state of affairs of women and children throughout the world when she reported in 1997 that 140 million primary school age children are not in school; sixty percent of that number are girls; seven million children die every year from malnutrition; 585,000 women die of childbirth complications; 250,000 children in Haiti are enslaved as domestic servants; 100 million children are living on the streets in the developing world; women make up seventy percent of the world’s poor; two-thirds of the 96 million people worldwide who can neither read nor write are women.” She concluded with the assertion that “Rights on paper that are not protected and implemented are not really rights at all.”¹⁰ While the relationship between education and well-being is being constructed by many scholars, activists, educators, and others, how people define “education” remains crucial to the debates.

The Education Question

It cannot be assumed that each official document calling for action to secure the right to education defines education in the same way. Joel Spring, working to clarify the difference between “the right to education” and “the right to a democratic education,” claims that “Placing the right to an education in the hands of the individual negates the right of a government to impose an education. The imposition of an education by the state results in an education that serves the interests of the state. In contrast, the right to an education places the citizen in the position of demanding an education that serves their interests.”¹¹ This recognition of the relationship between education and government raises moral questions that educators must be engaged in.

The organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank understand education as a “form of economic investment, and consequently, the value of education is measured [only] by its contribution to economic growth.”¹² This limitation makes it very difficult for some of the issues essential to women and girls to be adequately addressed. Women’s contributions to the economy are often rendered invisible and their experiences with the economy are rife with human rights violations of every nature. The use of the term education (presumed to be a nonpolitical term in economic rhetoric) often serves as a camouflage for harmful social, political, and economic policies for women and girls. For example, the World Bank, created in 1946, provides loans to developing nations and “recently has made education loans a top priority.”¹³ “Beginning with its first \$5 million loan to Tunisia in 1962 for school construction, the World Bank, by 1995, had loaned \$20 billion for 500 education projects in over 100 countries.”¹⁴ Armeane M. Choksi, the World Bank’s vice president of Human Capital Development, reconfirms the economic-only connotation of the term education with the following: “The World Bank finances education because it is a sound economic investment with high returns and many external benefits to society.”¹⁵ In the language of the World Bank, education becomes reduced to an economic article of trade.

Beyond the competing descriptions of the purposes of “education,” there are related questions of access, curriculum, qualifications for educators, and equity that need to be addressed. For example, Spring raises the following questions: “what subjects should be included in an elementary education? . . . Is there a conflict between teaching human rights and parental choice? . . . Could a parent choose an education that did not promote human rights, freedom and peace?”¹⁶ We know of the numerous human rights violations that are supported by cultural and political systems, such as female genital mutilation, denial of freedom of speech, and the

torture of political dissenters. The complex questions of what material ought to be included within the curriculum in order to be in compliance with Article 26 are perhaps the most difficult to work through. Who ought to be responsible for selecting, preparing, and evaluating the educators charged with creating the educational environments necessary for bringing the “right to education” to fruition? What constitutes an equitable education? Is it possible to arrive at a universal notion of what constitutes an education that is “directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms [in an effort to] promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.”¹⁷ These are some of the central, and enduring, questions put before the organizations and bodies responsible for urging and/or demanding compliance with the UDHR.

Compliance and Continuation of the UDHR’s Commitment to Education

In 1960, at the Convention against Discrimination in Education, the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted nineteen Articles in an effort to secure education as a basic human right and to prevent and eliminate discrimination in education. “Discrimination” in this document was defined as including “any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference which, being based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic condition or birth, has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing equality of treatment in education.”¹⁸ In particular, the document was concerned with issues of access to education, of quality of education, of establishing or maintaining separate educational institutions, and with issues of dignity.

In 1993, the United Nations Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna, created the position of High Commissioner on Human Rights. Mary Robinson was the first to hold the post. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action reaffirmed the principle of the universality and indivisibility of all human rights. Lilian Careon Mercado and others claim that human rights conventions need to be criticized for their “generic rather than gender specific approach to human rights and for contributing little to the articulation of specific rights... affecting women.”¹⁹ Mercado also claims the language of international human rights law is too narrow to speak to women’s issues.

In her book *Women Reshaping Human Rights* (1996), Marquerite Guzman Bouvard explains some of the inherent difficulties in reconciling human rights

and women's rights: "... the very language and concept of rights derives from the liberal political tradition focused on the political activities of male citizens."²⁰ She was referring to John Locke's natural rights theory, which held that the state is responsible for guaranteeing political and civil freedoms and rests upon a clear distinction between public and private. For women, Bouvard argues there cannot be such a stark separation between the public and the private because it only serves to negate the abuses of freedoms in their lives. She also claims that one of the strengths of the UDHR was that it included economic, social, and cultural rights as well as political and civil rights. These rights are further incorporated in the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and in the European Social Charter. Bouvard believes there exists a reluctance in most human rights organizations associated with the U.N. to address the structural problems that generate social and economic problems. Furthermore, she claims that the moving of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women from Vienna to New York City (in 1993) has alienated the Geneva-based U.N. bodies from the information they need to respond to women's human rights issues.

Hilary Charlesworth and others have created some groundbreaking research focused on the relationship between the theoretical constructs of "women's rights" and "human rights," especially through the application of feminist theories.²¹ Charlesworth moves the theoretical into the practical through her position as a Hearing Commissioner for the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. Another complication lies in the fact that very few women hold positions that make human rights policy or monitor for compliance to current policy. Marsha A. Freeman reports that "six of the thirty-two Special Rapporteurs/Special Representatives/Working Group Chairs appointed by the CHR [Commission on Human Rights] to investigate particular human rights situations are women."²² One of those six is Radhika Coomaraswamy, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. She believes that the discourses of international law work against securing human rights for women. Freeman explains this problem by reminding us that "human rights is a legal construct, but its enforcement mechanisms are almost entirely political, even those that appear legal."²³ Special Rapporteurs like Coomaraswamy are "Independent in that they are chosen for their expertise and are bound only by their mandate from the commission. They are not required to take instruction from their own or any other government. Usually they are recognized academic experts, and many have strong ties to human rights NGOs."²⁴ Freeman claims that "until recently, human rights theory and practice have concentrated primarily on identifying government

violations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other sources of International law. This approach is effective in addressing civil and political rights but is more difficult to... deliver on rights such as education and healthcare.”²⁵

Recognizing these problems, as well as problems associated with compliance and enforcement in 1999, the Commission on Human Rights, put forward a resolution focused on integrating the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system.²⁶ Simultaneously, the United Nations Children’s Fund published its report, *The State of the World’s Children 1999*, and placed special emphasis on the right to education.

Guardians of the Right to Education

The creation and evolution of the UDHR has been undergirded by developing notions of what it means to be human, what it means to be female, and what ought to constitute a human right. During its tenth World Congress of Comparative Education (Cape Town, 1998), the International Council on Education for Teaching heard a paper entitled “Globalization of Education and Teacher Education.” In it, Brazilian Professor Jacira da Silva Camara claimed that “Education has been considered, worldly, not only by educators but also by professionals of different fields, as fundamental to comply with the challenges of the next millennium. Social issues are related and will be solved through education.”²⁷ Paulo Freire, a fellow Brazilian and father of critical education theory, is invoked in order to further clarify the connection between education and the social order:

To Freire (1997), [the] knowledge necessary to [use a] educative-critical practice [which is] based on a pedagogical ethic and [on] a vision of the world, involves a variety of values, [competencies] and abilities that derive [from] the [human] capacity [for] critical reflection on practice, common sense, curiosity, esthetic and ethic, methodical strictness, respect [for] the educating person’s knowledge, dialogue availability, corporeity of words through examples, [the] conviction that change is possible, acceptance of the new, apprehension of reality, security, decision-making, happiness and hope, humbleness, tolerance and even the fight to defend [human] rights.²⁸

Social scientists, especially feminists, have aided these conversations through their emphasis on interdisciplinary knowledge construction. Advocates of feminist pedagogies such as Bell Hooks, with her notions of “engaged pedagogy” and education as a “practice of freedom,” and Kathleen Weiler, with her emphasis on ideas about the forms and functions of “resistance” within public school settings,

all are predicated on the basic belief in the right to education for all, and give special attention to securing and enhancing that right for women and the girl-children of the world. Many women human rights activists have been teachers. For example, Gertrude Mongella, the assistant secretary-general of the U.N. and the director of the U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women, was a teacher and an inspector of secondary and teacher-training colleges.²⁹

Some substantial debates have arisen within the group of people struggling as guardians of the right to education. For example, along with competing understandings of the purposes of education, there are issues of colonialism that create tensions. First Lady Hillary Clinton responded to the criticisms that the construction of human rights, and its accompanying rhetoric, are further manifestations of colonialism with these words:

There are others who say that human rights are a Western invention, and that they come from a Judeo-Christian base, and that they do not have universal application. But we know differently. We can go back and trace the roots of the beliefs that are set for in the [Universal] Declaration [of Human Rights]. They were not invented fifty years ago. They are not the work of a single culture, whether it is Confucius who articulated such rights in ancient China, or Sophocles who wrote about 2,500 years ago about such rights when he had Antigone declare that there were ethical laws higher than the laws of kings. But whether it is the Golden Rule, which appears in every possible religion in one form or another, we know that at root we understand, whether we admit it or not, that we as human beings are bound to each other in a mutual web of respect that we should nurture for our own sake, as well as for others.³⁰

Clinton reported that she received more reaction to her Beijing pronouncement that “women’s rights are human rights and human rights are women’s rights” than she ever expected:

I have been overwhelmed by the response that speech received, and also bewildered that the proposition would be open to question. Yet we know that even in advanced democracies such as ours, where these conditions [where families and communities flourish] are present for the vast majority of women, women’s roles and rights are still being debated. They are being debated among women as well as between men and women, with implications for whether our democracies will meet the challenges of the future.³¹

Clinton has made it a tradition to refer to Eleanor Roosevelt and her work in many of her public addresses. It is clear that she holds Eleanor Roosevelt in the highest esteem. On one such occasion she said:

Wherever I go as First Lady, I am always reminded of one thing: that usually Eleanor Roosevelt has been there before. I have been to farms in Iowa, factories in Michigan, and welfare offices in New York where Mrs. Roosevelt paid a visit more than a half-century ago. When I went to Pakistan and India I discovered that Eleanor Roosevelt had been there in 1952, and had written a book about her experiences.³²

Hillary Clinton is fond of telling audiences one of her favorite Eleanor Roosevelt stories:

It was a day in the 1950s, and [Eleanor Roosevelt] had a speech to give in New York. She was so sick that her throat was literally bleeding. Everyone wanted her to cancel, but she refused. She drove from Hyde Park to 125th Street in Harlem, and when she got out of her car, a young girl with her face beaming handed her a bouquet of flowers. Eleanor Roosevelt turned to the person with her and said, "You see, I had to come. She was expecting me." Well, they were always expecting her and she always came.³³

The rights of women and girls have been aided by the UDHR and the United Nations' leadership in bringing women together in international forums to forge alliances. Speaking to an audience brought together to celebrate International Women's Day in March 1999, Hillary Clinton celebrated the new advances that were being made for women, such as the decision by the government of Yemen to waive the "tuition fees for elementary school girls in order to encourage families to send them to school," and the fact that "Turkey passed the Family Protection Law making spousal abuse a crime," and that the women of Nigeria, "who have struggled thirty-nine years for this moment, are celebrating the overturning of a traditional practice that denied widows inheritance rights."³⁴

The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) clearly announced that "women's rights are human rights, and human rights are women's rights." Amnesty International played a critical role in establishing the human rights parts of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In paragraph 8, the participating governments reaffirmed their commitment to the U.N. Charter and the UDHR, as well as to the following documents: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Declaration on the Elimination

of Violence Against Women, and the Declaration on the Right to Development.

The crowning assertion that “women’s rights are human rights” was placed in paragraph 14 of the Beijing Declaration. And in paragraphs 9 and 23, the pronouncement that “the full implementation of the human rights of women and the girl-child as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, . . . [necessitates] that effective action against violations of these rights and freedoms [must be taken].”³⁵ Many have interpreted this assertion to have direct implications for the right to education.

Current State of Female Education

In 1990, at the World Conference on Education for All, President Hossain Muhammad Ershad of Bangladesh proclaimed that “when you educate a woman, you educate a nation.”³⁶ According to the University of Iowa Center for Human Rights, “over 125 million children, most of them young girls, never see the inside of a classroom. Another 150 million children receive schooling of such low quality and such high cost that they drop out of school soon after they start.”³⁷

In June 2000, the United Nations General Assembly held a special session (referred to as Beijing Plus Five) to review and appraise the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. One of the results was a new document that more than 180 countries agreed to; it reaffirmed the need to eliminate the gender gap in education, setting a target date of 2005. The rhetoric of this special session mirrored that presented by Clinton in 1998.

While addressing an audience gathered at a conference sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development on Girls’ Education, held in Washington, D.C., in 1998, Hillary Clinton strongly announced that

Education is no longer viewed as a luxury for some, but as a necessity for all. The World Bank has said repeatedly that education provides the highest rate of return of any investment in developing nations. And that is especially true of girls’ education. Because we know that when we educate a girl, we improve health of women and families. We know that a woman who has a single year of education has children that have a better chance of living . . . When we educate a girl, we decrease poverty by helping women support themselves and their families. A single year of education usually correlates with an increased income of ten to twenty percent for women later in life.³⁸

Three years earlier, the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women issued this statement about its priority themes of education, literacy, and training:

The right to education is universally recognized. Female education is considered a powerful instrument of public action and a catalyst for economic and social change. Investing in educational opportunities for girls yields perhaps the best returns of all investments in developing countries. Recently, the focus has been shifting from mere access to education to the quality, type and appropriateness of education and training for women throughout their lives. The elimination of gender bias from curricula, textbooks and teacher attitudes and the introduction of supportive measures are ways to improve female education. Improved access to training in science and technology is also considered important, in order to prepare women for the twenty-first century.³⁹

Another important dimension of the struggle to secure education as a human right is the continuous participation of women in the political process. Clinton recognized the importance of women's involvement in the political process today, especially around issues impacting human rights. She often advocated in her public addresses for women to become active in their community and national organizations, to participate in local and national elections, and to support the campaigns that will send more women into public office. She recognized that women are under-represented in legislatures around the world, yet noted progress that is being made. For example, in 1998 women filled thirty-three percent of the Senate seats in the Bahamas, while in Argentina women held twenty-eight percent in their lower congressional House.⁴⁰ All types of engagement in the political process will help secure education as a human right, in turn establishing the interdependent relationship between all of the human rights delineated in the UDHR.

Hillary Clinton signaled the need for continued vigilance toward human rights when she was invited to speak at the Eleanor Roosevelt Lectures in 1998: "There are still too many excluded from the Declaration, too many whose suffering we fail to see, to hear, to feel, or to stop."⁴¹ And the largest part of the "too many" she refers to are women and girl-children. The agenda for the articulation and protection of human rights is large, and one significant component must continue to be the educational needs of the women and girl-children of the world. Educators of all types must recognize their responsibility in joining these efforts.

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Excerpts from:

Bringing Human Rights Home An Open Memo to President- Elect Obama

Submitted by the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute, the Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill, and the Albert Schweitzer Institute at Quinnipiac University

On December 5 and 6, 2008, the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute, the Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill and the Albert Schweitzer Institute at Quinnipiac University convened a special conference on the Roosevelt estate in Hyde Park, New York, to mark the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The host organizations believe that the American public has, for too long, tended to think of human rights as something applicable to other countries. The conference sought to lift the veil of this misconception and demonstrate how many of the domestic and foreign policy challenges Americans face today are in fact human rights issues.

Entitled “Bringing Human Rights Home” the conference brought together a diverse group of individuals and organizations to examine how the Declaration might apply to the United States in six key areas: international law, counterterrorism, criminal justice, health care, employment, and education with the goal of establishing a human rights action agenda for the incoming Obama administration in each of these six areas.

The work was based on the premise that one of the most compelling arguments in favor of policies that address such domestic issues as the current health care or unemployment crisis stems from the belief that access to medical care and a decent livelihood are basic human rights; human rights the United States can no longer afford to ignore.

To this end the host organizations wish to submit this memo to the new administration’s transition team in the hope that it will help inform the policies

that are developed in these six key areas over the coming months and years.

The participants also felt strongly that there is an urgent need for the incoming administration to reclaim America's status as a champion of human rights both at home and around the world. Indeed, given the severe domestic and international challenges we face today, a consensus soon emerged among the participants that certain steps should be taken immediately.

We have, therefore, divided this memo into two parts. The first part examines how the new Administration might immediately position itself as firmly committed to the cause of human rights as it makes the transition to power in the coming weeks and months. Here we examine how the new administration might use the inaugural address, executive orders, the State of the Union Address and other steps to make it clear to the American people and the world community that a new day has dawned in America. The second part contains the action agendas developed by the working participants of the conference in the six topic areas already mentioned: international law, counter-terrorism, criminal justice, health care, employment, and education.

Part I

Re-affirming America's Commitment to Human Rights

Sadly, America's reputation as a nation committed to basic human rights for all peoples, everywhere in the world, has suffered greatly in the past few years. This degradation of our moral standing has seriously jeopardized our ability to carry out an effective foreign policy, work towards the peaceful resolution of armed conflict, maintain world-wide respect for the rule of law, and protect and promote America's national interests. We therefore urge the incoming Obama administration to do all it can to make a clean break with the recent past by pursuing the following four strategies:

1. Make as strong and sweeping a statement as possible embracing America's commitment to human rights and the rule of law both at home and abroad in President Obama's inaugural address;
2. Name specific actions in the inaugural address that the Obama administration will take to affirm its commitment to human rights abroad and at home: e.g. end the practice of torture, close Guantanamo, introduce legislation to ensure universal health and equal access to education;
3. Issue a number of Executive Orders within the first few days of the new administration that will make it clear to the public at home and abroad that our commitment to human rights is real, not rhetorical;

4. Use the State of the Union message to lay out how the new administration intends to incorporate a commitment to human rights into its executive and legislative strategy by developing policies that address the most pressing issues within the six policy areas mentioned above.

Laying the Groundwork for a Long-term Commitment to Human Rights in the State of the Union Speech

President Roosevelt asserted in his 1944 State of the Union message to Congress, known as his “Economic Bill of Rights” speech, it is not enough for our citizens to possess political freedom—“true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence.” Nor should we “be content, no matter how high our general standard of living may be, if some fraction of our people—whether it be one-third, one-fifth or one-tenth—is ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed, and insecure.”

Like President Roosevelt the participants of the “Bringing Human Rights Home” conference assert that it is high time we recognized health care, education, and employment as human rights, and begin the process of ensuring those rights through the policies and legislation developed by the new Administration and Congress.

We urge President-elect Obama to use his State of the Union Address as an opportunity to frame the challenges we face in providing adequate health care, employment and education to all Americans as a human rights challenge that we can no longer afford to ignore. As a first step in meeting these critical human needs we suggest that the State of the Union address include: a commitment to the establishment of a universal non-discriminatory health care system, the passage of the Employee Free Choice Act, and the establishment of a free, national pre-school program within the next three to five years.

Part II

Detailed Action Agendas for the Six Topic Areas

As noted above, the conference “Bringing Human Rights Home” examined six key domestic and domestic/international topic areas: international law, counter-terrorism, criminal justice, health care, employment, and education.

Over the course of two days, the participants in the conference—which included representatives of a number of human and civil rights organizations, as well as individual scholars (please see the appendix for the complete list of participants)—deliberated in working groups with the assigned task of developing

an action agenda within their topic area for the new administration and Congress. The working groups were assisted in this effort by rapporteurs, who took notes and compiled the agendas listed here. Because each of these groups worked independently, the reports below differ somewhat in style and structure. But their goal—to provide the new administration with a human rights action agenda in each of their selected areas—remains the same.

ACTION AGENDA: International Law and the Ratification of International Human Rights Treaties

The conference working group that examined America's record on international law and the ratification of international human rights treaties makes the following recommendations to the Transition Team on human rights treaty obligations:

1. Demonstrate early on a sustained political commitment to human rights and the rule of law throughout all levels and all branches of government.

Key immediate steps:

- Ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- Sign the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and Send to Congress for Ratification
- Issue an Executive Order reinstating Inter-Agency Working Group for implementation
- Create a Special Envoy for Human Rights in the office of Secretary of State
- Promote and Implement meaningful signs of openness and reengagement around human rights by:
 - Setting up a Commission of Inquiry on accountability for human rights abuses perpetrated by the US
 - Opening Guantanamo to Special Procedures visit
 - Engaging in Universal Period Review (UPR)
 - Re-signing the Rome Statute
- End current policies that permit discrimination and commit to full inclusion of people with disabilities within the foreign service and all US foreign operations abroad

Longer term steps:

- Push for ratification of all human rights treaties with strong political leadership:
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
 - International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
 - American Convention
 - Rome Statute
 - Reassess and remove inappropriate reservations, understandings and declarations (RUDs) for existing and future commitments
 - Commit to extending principles of nondiscrimination and inclusion to people with disabilities in our foreign assistance efforts (such as UN, USAID, State Dept grants)
2. Recommitment to the rule of law at home and abroad consistent with human rights treaty obligations.
- Adopt Executive Orders to recommit to core principles (such as the absolute prohibition against torture)
 - Clear reference that people will be held accountable
 - Reengage on the treaties that we have ratified
 - Pass implementing legislation for the treaties which have been ratified
 - Create an independent Commission to examine US human rights treaty commitments/implementation as well as treaties not yet adopted.
 - Re-engage with the United Nations (join the Human Rights Council, Durban Conference). The United States should “lead not leave.”
 - Ensure the appointment of engaged and expert human rights leaders to international bodies with a commitment to diversity including women and people with disabilities (such as Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and relevant UN bodies)

ACTION AGENDA: Criminal Justice

The Criminal Justice working group discussed the general framework for a criminal justice system that respects human rights.

A system of criminal justice that respects human rights and human dignity must provide for the possibility of hope and an opportunity for redemption. Such a system reflects a view of humanity reflected in something Bryan Stevenson, an Alabama human rights and criminal justice advocate, has often said: “each person in our society is better than the worst thing he or she has done.” Such a system is also consistent with the themes of the Obama Campaign: Hope, Change, and “Yes we can.”

The criminal justice system should promote three related goals:

1. respect for human dignity and individualized fairness, which are catalysts for personal responsibility;
2. public safety; and
3. effective investment of scarce public financial resources.

The current criminal justice system fails to promote any of these objectives. Moreover, evidence-based studies uniformly show that the decades-long use of mass incarceration as a means to deal with pervasive crime has also failed. The cost of this approach has been too high in financial resources and human lives.

A human rights-based criminal justice system should contain the following components:

1. With respect to juveniles, the system should first focus on prevention and early intervention: invest in turning children into responsible citizens rather than inadvertently into more dangerous criminal.
2. Provide for appropriate screening and assessment prior to final sentencing to permit individualized placement and treatment.
3. Permit judges to impose sentences that are fair and proportionate, thereby reflecting the individual's culpability and the needs of justice. Sentencing should not extinguish hope or eliminate the opportunity for redemption.
4. Ninety-five percent of individuals sentenced to prison eventually are released back into the community. Use their incarceration to prepare these individuals to be responsible citizens by providing appropriate health care, education, and skills.
5. Use the states as laboratories for development and identification for human rights-based policies and programs that work. Allocate resources in a way to promote adoption of reforms and policies that are right and smart.
 - There are effective human rights-base programs in such states as Texas (diversion for first-time offenders), Missouri (juvenile programs), Washington (justice reinvestment), New York (depopulation of prisons), and Massachusetts.

Finally, the Criminal Justice Group encourages the Obama Administration to establish immediately a federal inter-agency commission to identify evidence-based programs and policies that are promising or effective and that promote human rights; to evaluate existing programs that are funded by these agencies; and to ensure that federal funds and state funds that can be influenced are invested in promising and effective programs and policies. The Commission

would include representatives from such agencies as the Department of Justice (Policy), Health & Human Services, the Department of Education; Department of Labor, and the Bureau of Prisons. The commission would be directed by a prominent person whose appointment would reflect the administration's commitment to the Commission's work.

ACTION AGENDA: Health Care

The conference working group on health care took heart from President-elect Obama's comment during the campaign that he thinks health care "should be a right for every American."

This is an urgent moment. If we're going to realize the right to health the new administration will need to move quickly on healthcare reform. In recognizing health care as a human right President-elect Obama stands in a long tradition of American leaders. In 1944, President Roosevelt included in his Economic Bill of Rights, "the right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health." Eleanor Roosevelt, in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights wrote in Article 25: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family."

We firmly believe that in implementing this health care reform the administration should take inspiration from this earlier acknowledgement that healthcare is a human right, based on equality and non-discrimination.

To this end, the health care working group recommends that the United States reverse its position on international economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to health, and stand with other nations in acknowledging health to be a human right. Recognizing these human rights can be an important step in the administration's plan to restore American standing and credibility in the world. We also recommend that the United States play a more active role in such institutions as the WHO, UNFPA, UNDP and the World Bank to reinforce and encourage taking a human rights based approach to health care.

To use a human rights approach to health reform has distinct advantages over a technocratic approach in that it captures the moral imperative and the policy priorities that are needed to improve the lives of people everywhere. We strongly urge the Obama administration to build on his position that health care is a right for everyone, not a privilege for the few and embrace health as a human right. This means that everyone, without discrimination on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity, national origin, language, income, religion, sexuality, age, or disability, must enjoy the highest attainable level of physical and mental health.

In achieving universality, health care reform must place a high priority on the needs of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

The human right to health does not mean that everyone has a right to be healthy since genetic and other factors are beyond the control of the health system. However, external factors such as environment, housing, food, and workplace conditions can be improved as part of the realization of the right to health. Health care and medical services are critical in this context. A human rights approach to health care reform places a priority on universality, accountability, equity and participation, within the context of government's obligation to protect our health and to help us be as healthy as possible.

Specifically, hospitals, clinics, medicines and doctor's services must be accessible, available, acceptable, and of good quality for everyone, on an equitable basis. Access is more than just insurance; health care is more than just access; it must be financed and delivered in a non-discriminatory way that enables the participation of individuals and communities; it must provide access to information, ensure transparency of institutions and processes, and have effective mechanisms to hold both private sector and government agencies accountable.

The human right to health is based on risk and income solidarity and can be realized through a wide range of public and private responsibilities. It includes a role for insurance, health care management organization and other private sector providers but in a way that maximizes health outcomes and minimizes costs as part of a system of health protection.

ACTION AGENDA: Employment

The working group on employment felt it was important that the new administration recognize that dignified work is a human right, and that living wages, decent working conditions, and job security are no less fundamental in times of crisis than in times of prosperity.

Now is the time for us to work together by passing The Employee Free Choice Act and investing in Green Jobs, including the creation of public and private employment to rebuild our nation's infrastructure.

The new administration should not see the passage of employment legislation as a singular act. The package should be similar to the FDR's New Deal and address not merely employment relief, but housing, education, and job creation. It should emphasize human development and aspire to develop the full human potential of the American populace. We should also insist that no one who is working should be living in poverty.

The employment working group also recommends that the new administration:

1. Create public works jobs which include direct employment by local, regional and national government agencies;
2. Use new technologies to train a new generation of workers;
3. Provide employment opportunities by strengthening broadband access in every community;
4. Improve the value of technical schools and the other workforce development programs so that students who are not college bound still have a chance to compete in the global economy;
5. Support programs like Skills2Compete and provide each adult with a two-year guarantee to further educational or technical training over his or her lifetime;
6. Open a discussion of progressive economic policies that create more equity in our society, including reducing the income disparity between top executives and workers and using price controls to ensure living wages;
7. Insist on accountability and national responsibility for all the profiteering that we have seen in the Wall Street debacle;
8. Seek innovative solutions to social and economic problems from both business and government;
9. Change the public's attitude toward taxes; make sure taxes are valued and put to good use.

ACTION AGENDA: Education

The working group on education sees access to education as a basic human right, and as called for in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we believe all children and young people should have access to a free quality education that allows each individual to reach his or her full potential.

Moreover, as called for in the Preamble of the Declaration, the group agrees that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stands as a “common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations...” and that “every individual and every organ of society... shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms...”

We acknowledge that the United States has made great progress in providing quality education to its citizens, but the goal of providing quality education to all within our borders has not yet been realized. To achieve this goal and to place our country on a competitive footing with other modern industrialized nations, we must do more to close the significant opportunity gaps that exist in the United States today. For too long those who need help the most receive the least. We must

reverse this trend and do all we can to eliminate educational discrimination based on race, ethnicity, economic circumstances, first language and disability.

To achieve our full educational potential we recommend that the incoming administration establish a national program aimed at eliminating inter-state disparity in education and address itself to the following priorities as soon as possible:

1. Establish a free, national pre-school program within five years, with an immediate emphasis on providing free pre-school classes to low income children as soon as possible;
2. Establish rigorous national standards that will render the United State educational system among the top performing nations in the world;
3. Work to eliminate the fiscal inequity between states and districts;
4. Elevate teaching to the highest rank among the professions in our country, on par with the study of medicine and law. Set much higher standards for entering teaching colleges and set outcome expectations to match; use programs like “Teach for America” to attract the best and the brightest to the teaching profession;
5. Make it a goal of public education to prepare each student for at least two years of post-secondary education and training. Use National Service as a means to make higher education affordable to all Americans and attract gifted people to teach in our most challenging schools;
6. Make sure our schools and school districts are rooted in their communities; take cognizance of the changed family structure within our society and recognize that some families and some communities need extra time for learning and additional financial resources to meet these needs;
7. Stress the need for accountability among parents, teachers, and local, state, and national officials involved in education;
8. Do not be afraid to use—as FDR suggested—“bold, persistent, experimentation” to build one of the best educational systems in the world.

Bringing Human Rights Home Conference Participants

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John Beam, *National Center for Schools and Communities, Fordham University*

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Sarah Olson, *Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites*
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Mary Price, *Families Against Mandatory Minimums*
Eric Rosenthal, *Mental Disability Rights International*
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The full text of the letter may be found online at: www.ervk.org/word/OpenMemo.doc



Stone Cottage at Val-Kill.

Saving History

Preface

The Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site—Val-Kill—was almost a nursing home and retirement community, and Lorena Hickok’s ashes and legacy were nearly forgotten, if not for the action of a few people in each case who realized what was being lost and stepped up to save history.

After Eleanor Roosevelt’s death, her son John Roosevelt and his family moved to Val-Kill, taking up residence in the Stone Cottage. In 1970, the property was sold to private developers who planned on turning it into a retirement community. In the fall of 1975, members of the Hyde Park Visual Environment Committee and a staff member from the New York State Lieutenant Governor’s Office began working to save the Val-Kill complex. In May 1977, Congress voted to establish the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, which included a cooperative agreement between the National Park Service and the Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill (ERVK). ERVK programming reflects Eleanor Roosevelt’s vision and legacy.

Lorena Hickok, the first woman Associated Press reporter, as well as an intimate confidante and friend of Eleanor Roosevelt, was almost literally lost to history—her ashes were buried in an unmarked grave and her picture was cropped out of photographs. Another group of concerned citizens came together in the late 1990s to establish an appropriate recognition of her legacy and gravesite.





“Mrs. Roosevelt, the expert leader or convener of both informal and more formal exchanges, made this a place where the unthreatening venue permitted preliminary conversations as prefaces to satisfying decisions.”



“What we learned and earned in the process of recovering Val-Kill was trust, from family, friends, elected officials and volunteers.”

“Recovering Mrs. Roosevelt’s ‘style’ in dealing with conflict was a goal which will be transferred to every group of leaders and helpers who succeed the original founders.”



(Quotes excerpted from an interview with ERVK cofounder Joyce Connelly Ghee)



The plaque, memorial dogwood tree, and bluestone bench marking Lorena Hickok's grave at the Rhinebeck Cemetery.

Linda Boyd Kavars and Lorena Hickok

(Excerpted from an interview)

I didn't set out to save history. I reluctantly set out to see a one-woman play by Pat Bond about Eleanor Roosevelt (ER) and Lorena Hickok (Hick) for my partner's birthday in June of 1997. After seeing the play and realizing its importance, I thought the play needed to be seen by many more than the few who stumbled upon it each evening in Provincetown. So I talked with the actress and took the play on the road.

The first stop was a shakedown in Kingston, New York, in early winter of 1998, before we really hit the road. It was at one of these first performances that Patsy Costello, the Town of Hyde Park historian came, and while she disagreed as to whether or not Hick and ER had a lesbian relationship, she wanted to know where Hick was buried. Patsy called me a few days later to tell me that her ashes had been kept by Dapson Funeral Home for twenty years before being buried in an unmarked grave in the Rhinebeck Cemetery.

Just the thought of being forgotten on a shelf and written out of history got me very angry. Thus began my research. I spent hours at the FDR Presidential Library reading her letters and manuscript. I found out that the only picture of Hick that hung in the library had been removed the day after Blanche Wiesen Cook's book became a best seller. Then I called together a group of feminist friends, including Blanche and Patsy, to form the Lorena Hickock Memorial and Scholarship Fund to restore Hick to her place in history.

We held concerts, a sail of the *Clearwater*, and raised enough money to get her gravesite marked with a plaque, a bluestone bench, and a dogwood tree. In Hick's will, she asked that her ashes be spread under a tree, so we brought the tree to her. The Associated Press picked up on the story, and since then Hick finally gained the notoriety she deserved.

The scholarship fund lives on. It is used to fund social justice projects proposed by the young women who attend the Girls Leadership Workshop at the Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill.

The Unpublished Autobiography of Lorena Hickok

The following is a chapter from Lorena Hickok's unpublished autobiography. It details the time she lived in the White House with Eleanor Roosevelt. While she describes her room as an anteroom off the Lincoln Bedroom, she does not place Mrs. R.—as she calls ER in the text—in that bedroom, where historians have noted she was. Hick probably took this liberty to protect ER's reputation. For the same reason, she did not allow the letters she left to the FDR Library to be made public until ten years after her death (ER having died before Hick). This manuscript also was among the papers Hick left to the library.

Lorena Hickok was born in Wisconsin in 1893. She had a troubled and abusive childhood resulting in her father hiring her out as a maid. Encouraged by an aunt, she finished high school and went to college. With Edna Ferber as her hero, she commenced a career in the newspaper business, working her way from the Society page, where women reporters were stuck, to the male bastion of the political pages. As a reporter for the Associated Press, she covered the Lindbergh baby kidnapping and eventually found herself covering the Presidential campaign of Franklin D. Roosevelt. When FDR took office, Hick retired from the AP because she felt she could no longer be objective in her reporting. Hick and ER maintained a thirty-year friendship; in her later years, Hick lived in Hyde Park, in apartments paid for by ER.

While historians take different stances concerning the physical aspect of their relationship—Blanche Wiesen Cook, for instance, on one side, and Doris Faber on the other—there is no quibbling about the fact they did have an intense and intimate friendship. Hick is credited by all as helping to turn a very reluctant First Lady (the title of Hick's biography of ER) into a force to be reckoned with. It was she who suggested that ER hold women-only press conferences to spur other news agencies to hire women. Her letters to Eleanor from the road as a fact-finder for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, and their travels together became the essence of ER's "My Day" columns and the impetus for many social programs, including Arthurdale, West Virginia.

∩ denotes deleted passages

CHAPTER XIII

THE WAR YEARS AT THE WHITE HOUSE

I doubt if anyone ever lived at the white House less conspicuously than I did.

It had to be that way, or I could not have done it. For during the years I was there I was on the staff of the Democratic National Committee. From early February, 1940, through the convention, campaign, and election I was an assistant to the famous old publicity director, Charley Michelson. And for four years, the war years, I was executive secretary to the Women's Division.

My job with the Women's Division required that I be continually in touch with the leading Democratic women of the country. That included more than a hundred national committee-women, state vice-chairmen, and scores of other leaders, including office-holders and office-seekers, who were in and out of Washington all the time. Had it been generally known that I was close enough to the President and Mrs. Roosevelt to be living at the White House, I could quite obviously have been placed at times in an exceedingly difficult and embarrassing position. So I kept quiet about it. I do not believe more than a dozen of the women around the country knew—at least I used to hope they didn't. If they did, they did not hear it from me except in rare cases.

One of the national committeewomen, Emma Guffey Miller of Pennsylvania, sister of Senator Joe Guffey, lived in Washington winters and was a frequent caller at my office at the Hotel Mayflower. Throughout the four years we played a kind of game, Mrs. Miller persistently and with humor trying to trick me—or so I thought, at any rate—into admitting that I lived at the White House. I managed to evade all traps, although I was morally certain that she knew it all the time. We thoroughly enjoyed the game. At least I did.

I think my secret was well kept on the whole for I shall never forget the expression on the face of Representative Mary T. Norton of New Jersey when she found out about it. One night early in our friendship she offered to drive me home from a party given by the National Committee at the Mayflower.

"Where shall I tell him to go?" she asked, indicating her driver, as we climbed into her car.

"The White House," I replied, confident that there would be no difficulty with Mrs. Norton, who, as chairman of the House Labor Committee, was liked

and respected by both the President and Mrs. Roosevelt as an able and courageous fighter.

“The—the-w-what?” she gasped. She told me later that, while I was struggling to keep from laughing, she nearly rolled out of the car.

I realized a few weeks later that my confidence had been justified. From her office at the Capitol she telephoned me one day, said she had a memorandum which she was anxious to get to the President immediately, and she asked me if I would hand it to Mrs. Roosevelt to be placed on his bedside table that night. I agreed to do so without any hesitation, pretty certain that Mrs. Roosevelt would do it for Mary herself as readily as she would for me. A few minutes later Mary called me back and said:

“Hick, I’m going to withdraw that request. I don’t think your friends have any business putting you on the spot that way, and I’m not going to do it.”

She never asked me to do any more errands for her at the White House, and once, when by telling it to Mrs. Roosevelt without realizing that she would repeat it to him, I innocently got word to the President that Mary was deeply discouraged about a certain legislative problem, she was furious at me.

There was also the night when I told Elizabeth Conkey, national committeewoman for Illinois, one of the shiest women I ever met, that I lived at the White House. My boss, Mrs. Charles W. Tillett, vice-chairman of the National Committee, and I had succeeded in getting Mrs. Conkey, a Cook County commissioner with a record so excellent that Republicans came out openly and supported her whenever she ran for reelection, appointed to the United States delegation at the first UNRRA meeting in Atlantic City. On a train hours late Mrs. Conkey arrived from Chicago one night to be briefed the following day at the State Department before proceeding to Atlantic City. Hotel rooms in Washington were so scarce during the war that I had made a reservation for her many days ahead. As we went up to the desk I learned with dismay that the clerk had let her room go, having decided she wasn’t coming. I excused myself, slipped into a telephone booth, called the White House, explained the situation to Mrs. Roosevelt, and arranged for Mrs. Conkey to spend the night in the big Lincoln room, next to mine. When I went back and told her, the woman actually turned pale. And to my confusion and chagrin she absolutely refused to spend the night at the White House.

“I couldn’t,” she said. “I just couldn’t. One has to have time to get mentally and emotionally adjusted to something like that. I can’t just walk in and inflict myself on those people. Please forgive me and tell Mrs. Roosevelt I’m sorry. I just can’t do it.”

Finally the clerk came up with a tiny room without a bath, a kind of closet, and there she stayed.

My determination to keep the fact that I stayed at the White House as quiet as possible sometimes necessitated odd little deceptions. On the rather infrequent occasions when I went to parties, someone would usually ask to escort me home. I would say that I lived at the Mayflower, get out at the Connecticut avenue entrance, say good night in the lobby, start in the direction of the elevators, duck into a telephone booth, wait until I was as sure as I could be that my escort had departed, emerge, and take a cab to the White House.

Mrs. Roosevelt was always kind and cooperative about inviting visiting Democratic ladies to the White House for luncheon or tea. This was especially helpful when there were ladies with hurt feelings! Many the ruffled feather she smoothed in that way for us. Sometimes, before we got into the fighting war, when the President's time was so filled that he rarely saw anyone except on official business, she would even have him present if we felt the occasion warranted it! Every now and then, when Mrs. Tillet was out of town, I would accompany the visiting Democratic ladies to the White House. I had an understanding with the door men and the ushers that when I arrived with one of my delegations there must be no indication that I ever entered the White House except on occasions such as these. They would greet me formally, along with the rest, take our names, and escort us to the Red Room, announcing us to the other guests assembled and waiting for Mrs. Roosevelt to come down. Mrs. Roosevelt would play the game, too, greeting me with "Why, how nice to see you!" as though she hadn't seen me for a month, although we had actually had breakfast together that morning! One day one of the ushers murmured as he assisted me out of my coat:

"In residence today? Or just a visitor?"

I feel a little ashamed now as I write of the deceptions I practiced on some of the women who became my good friends. If they ever read this, I hope they will forgive me. I am sure they could not have realized how very little influence I really had at the White House, even though I did live there. I was afraid they would not understand, and that I might be expected to produce favors which I could not produce. They would have been disappointed and hurt.

I think most people would find it hard to believe that anyone could live in the same house with the President and see as little of him as I did during the war years, or know as little about what was going on. Although my room—the room Louis Howe had when he lived there—was probably not more and two hundred feet from his room, months would go by without my even catching a glimpse of him. The last time I ever saw him to speak to him, as a matter of fact, was more

than a year before he died.

We were at tea one winter Sunday afternoon in the West Hall—the comfortable, informal sittingroom Mrs. Roosevelt had arranged behind screens at one end of the wide call that runs the length of the second floor. I was there at her special invitation—I usually spent Sunday afternoons at my office—because two old friends of mine were guests, Adelaide Enright of St. Paul and Mrs. Raymond Clapper. It was about a week, I believe, before Ray was killed out in the Pacific. The Crown Prince and Crown Princess of Norway—to whom the White House staff used to refer comfortably as “the Norwegians”—were there, too. And young Mrs. John Roosevelt with their daughter Nina, then a most enchanting baby. The president joined us. He looked thin, I thought and tired. I had heard that he had been ill with the flu, from which I had recently recovered, myself. He held out his hand, smiled wanly, and said:

“I hear you’ve been having this flu, too, Hick. Did you have a cough with it? I can’t seem to get rid of mine.”

That was in February, 1944. He died in April the following year.



For on thing, I had never shed completely a kind of awe and shyness toward the President of the United States, rather typical, I believe, of small town Middlewesterners. I remember the first time I went to the White House for a weekend, about a month after the inauguration in 1933. I arrived late in the evening, and as we came in after taking her two dogs for a walk in the South Grounds, Mrs. Roosevelt said:

“Come on in and say goodnight to Franklin.”

I hung back.

“What on earth is the matter with you, Hick?” she demanded.

I found it difficult to explain to her that I was actually scared stiff of a man I had known for years—for a long time, as a matter of fact, better than I had known her—a man with whom I had joked and laughed with complete ease when he was governor of New York on whose campaign train I had traveled all over the country as an AP reporter a few years back. But I was, and I never really got over it although during his early years in the White house I saw a good deal of him and had many a jolly dinner at his table.

Had I not held him in such awe, I still would have stayed out of his way as much as possible during those last five years. I felt it was the only considerate thing to do. Doctor MacIntire and others who saw him constantly have related how hard he drove himself, how little rest or relaxation he permitted himself. Living in

his household, I, too was aware of it even though I rarely saw him.

I think the thing I missed most was his laughter. In the early days when the President laughed you could hear him all over the house—a great, ringing, musical laugh, so joyous and so infectious that you involuntarily laughed, too. It was heard less and less frequently in the White House from 1940 on.

As the pressure on him increased, he seemed to withdraw more and more into the Oval Room, his study, when he was in the house. He rarely sent down to the family dining room for dinner anymore. His working day would start before he was out of bed in the morning. He had always seen people that way—in the old days, Steve Early, Marvin MacIntyre, Henry Morgenthau. But it was different now. Mrs. Roosevelt and I, breakfasting in the West Hall, would rarely hear them laughing any more. I heard that he had given up his daily swim in the pool, and if I happened to be in the house around 7 or 7:30 in the evening, I would sometimes see him coming out of the elevator having apparently just come over from his office. He dined usually in his study, I was told, and worked there all evening, night after night, week in and week out.



I carefully kept out of his sight, never tried to see him and, in fact, dodged him. Starting out through the Big Lincoln Room to the elevator, or coming in through the ushers' office downstairs, if I heard the bell they used to ring when he was about to enter the elevator, I would slip back and wait until he had passed. Once Mrs. Roosevelt told me: "Franklin says he never knows when you are in the house!" I was pleased.

During the war years I also made a point of not knowing what was going on in the house of an official nature. The results were sometimes humorous and a bit startling.

One hot Sunday morning in the summer of 1941 I was alone in the house except for the servants. Mrs. Roosevelt was at Hyde Park, where I assumed the President to be also. After breakfast I got into my bathing suit and went up on the roof to take a sun bath. Around noon I decided I had had enough and started for my room to take a shower and dress and then get along over to my office, where I had some work to do. There is a big skylight in the center of the second floor hall to let in air from the third floor. As I came in from the roof I heard a lot of voices on the second floor. The skylight was partly open, and peering down I saw to my horror a crowd of celebrities—Cordell Hull, Summer Welles, some generals, and a lot of Navy uniforms glittering with gold braid. To get down to my room—and my clothes—either by stairway or by elevator—I had to skirt a corner of the hall.

I did not even have a bathrobe with me. After a long wait I finally got hold of one of the servants, who brought me some clothes. The next morning I read in the paper that the President had returned on Sunday from a conference with Winston Churchill on the high seas—the Atlantic Charter conference. And I had thought he was at Hyde Park!

One Sunday night lying in bed listening to the radio in my room at the White House I heard in startled amusement that the President was in an airplane on his way back from Casablanca! I had realized that he was away. I could always tell, because there would be no secret service men sitting around the ushers' office, and the machine gun on the roof of the swimming pool outside my window would be covered and unattended. But I had thought he was at Warm Springs!

I think the funniest of these surprises, however, occurred just before Christmas in 1941. Mrs. Roosevelt and I had a long established custom of dining together just before Christmas and exchanging gifts—most of the giving, I must confess, being done by Mrs. Roosevelt. We usually met in New York, and I would proceed home to Long Island for the holidays. In 1941 however, Mrs. Roosevelt was carrying an extra heavy schedule—she was with OCD then—so we decided to dine in her sittingroom at the White House, and I was to take the midnight train to New York.

In the middle of the afternoon Tommy phoned me at my office and said:

“Mrs. Roosevelt would like you to get home early if you can. By 6 if possible. The President has some plans which will involve her in the evening.”

A few minutes before 6 I walked through the West Hall to my room, observing as I passed through that tea things were still there and that nobody had had any. And I noted with surprise also bottles, highball glasses, and ice. This impressed me because, except for the President's before-dinner cocktail, which he mixed himself at his desk and which was served in his study, anything stronger than wine or beer was rarely served at the White House. I had been in my room only a few minutes when Mrs. Roosevelt appeared. She looked annoyed.

“Hick, I'm afraid our party is ruined,” she announced. “Winston Churchill is arriving and Franklin has gone to meet him—they'll be here any minute.”

I stared at her for a second, then threw back my head and howled with laughter. But she didn't see anything funny about it, at the moment!

She hurried me across the hall into her sittingroom. I had barely closed the door and turned on the radio to listen to the news broadcast of his arrival, when I heard Winston Churchill's voice in the hall outside! Mrs. Roosevelt and I had dinner in front of the fire in her sittingroom, as she had planned it. Then I remained with her while she dressed for the state dinner to Mr. Churchill.

I never met Mr. Churchill. As a matter of fact, I knew he was in the house only because of the presence of British army officers and what I presumed to be by Scotland Yard men who joined the Secret Service detail sitting around the ushers' office. I managed to keep out of the way of visiting celebrities as carefully as I managed to keep out of the President's way.



I missed the one celebrity whom I really wanted very much to see. When Madame Chiang came to the White House during the war she was very much "the woman of the hour." All I had read about her and heard about her made her to me a most fascinating person. I had no desire to meet her—I am quite sure Mrs. Roosevelt would have arranged for me to be at dinner or luncheon had I asked her, but I would have run in the opposite direction had she ever tried to present me to her. I only wanted an observation post where I could watch her and hear her talk. One morning she held a joint press conference with the President in his office. Mrs. Roosevelt arranged for Mrs. Henry Morgenthau and me to attend the press conference and stand with her behind the President's chair. Thinking it over, I regretfully declined. The office would be packed, I knew. Probably not all of the working press could get inside. I could imagine some of my former colleagues muttering: "What's she doing, taking up room in there? She's no longer a reporter." Their resentment toward me I could have borne, but I was afraid some of it might be directed at Mrs. Roosevelt.

Among the visitors I did meet, and fairly frequently, were "the Norwegians." Everybody liked them. They were simple, friendly, charming. On Inauguration day in 1941 I encountered them downstairs in the reception room at the South entrance, waiting for the President to return from the Capitol. We all smiled, and I held out my hand to Princess Martha. She smiled, but looked embarrassed and did not extend her hand. Then I remembered and shook hands first with Prince Olaf. And we all laughed.



For some people I met at the White House I shall always be grateful to Mrs. Roosevelt. The room which I occupied was part of a suite. There is a suite at each of the four corners of the second floor—one large room, a smaller room originally designed. I have heard, for a dressing room, but now usually assigned to a secretary or servant of the visiting dignitary, and a bath. Mrs. Roosevelt used the suite on the southwest corner, the small room for her bedroom and the large room for her sittingroom. A plate riveted into the mantel stated that Abraham Lincoln had

occupied this room during the Civil War years, and back in the thirties, when I used to sleep on a day bed there when I was a White House guest, I would think about him, pacing up and down through the night, worrying. The suite of which my room was a part was called the Lincoln suite, however, because of the presence of the large room of a long, dark, heavy carved, forbidding-looking old bed, in which Lincoln was supposed to have slept. This room was completely furnished in the Civil War period—heavy, dark stuff—not a particularly inviting room to live in, but interesting. I heard that the Trumans moved the bed out to make room for Margaret’s piano, and that they used it as a kind of sittingroom. The suite on the Northeast corner, done in rose, with a beautiful old canopied bed, was Anna’s when she was in the house. It was frequently given to distinguished women guests—Queen Elizabeth, for instance, and Madame Chiang. Opposite, on the southwest corner, is a handsome suite in which Harry Hopkins lived while he was there. King George had it too, during his visit. The large room of that suite was Lincoln’s study, and he signed the Emancipation Proclamation there. At the end of the wide hall, between those two suites, the Roosevelts’ family Christmas tree used to be set up.

Since my room was part of a suit, I shared the bath with the occupant of the big Lincoln Room, and frequently, when there was a guest whom she thought I might like, Mrs. Roosevelt would put her in that room. That is how I got to know Helen Gahagan Douglas and Mrs. Kermit Roosevelt.

I first met Helen in the spring of 1940, not long after I had arrived to go to work for Charley Michelson. We were introduced at luncheon or tea, I believe, and late that evening, as I was getting ready for bed, she stopped at my door for a chat. Presently, wearing a flannel bed jacket over her nightgown, with her feet curled under her, she was seated on the foot of my bed, her face glistening with mineral oil, which she used as a cleaning cream, her nose dripping—she had a dreadful cold—clutching a box of cleansing tissues to her bosom. We talked for hours that night and every night thereafter while she was in the house.

Helen was then just beginning to get involved in politics. Although she did not tell me about it then, she had come home in the autumn of 1937 after a European concert tour—and after tearing up a contract to sing with the State Opera Company in Vienna—determined to devote all of her considerable talents and energy and the rest of her life, if need be, to fighting everything Hitler stood for. She had started out working in California to help the migratory farm workers—the Okies, of John Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath*. Inevitably Mrs. Roosevelt met her on a trip to California and invited her to the White House. I think I met her on her second visit.

Our conversations for the most part were impersonal. Helen was a regular sponge for soaking up information—information about politics, the government, issues, the state of the nation. Since during her school days she had been interested only in the theater and acting—cutting classes so consistently while she was at Barnard that some of her friends one day locked her in her room and threw away the key so she would cram for an examination—there were strange gaps in her education. Years later, I remember stopping her while she was writing a speech to explain to her what the Monroe Doctrine was all about!

She told me about the Okies and the struggles she and her husband, Melvyn Douglas, had had with the Communists who came in and took over and eventually drove the Douglasses out. We argued endlessly. One night we discovered that we had been standing for nearly two hours side by side leaning on the mantel staring at ourselves in a huge, gilt-framed mirror that hung above it, completely absorbed in our discussion. And one night it went on until 4:30 a.m. “You two haven’t any more sense than a couple of school girls,” was Mrs. Roosevelt’s amused comment when I told her about it.

One of Helen’s visits which I recall most vividly was the time she, her little girl, Mary Helen, and I all had the flu together in the Lincoln suite. It was around the end of January, 1943. Helen, by that time Democratic national committee-woman for California, and I had attended a meeting of the National Committee in Chicago. She had had to bring Mary, then about four, because Melvyn was away in the Army—at that period, a private, getting Fifty Dollars a month—and the sharp reduction in their income had necessitated her letting the nurse go. Packed in a drawing room with all our baggage, the three of us had come to Washington. Train reservations were so hard to get that we considered ourselves lucky to get on the train at all. The weather was bitter cold, and the train over-heated part of the time and chilly the rest of the time. Mary caught cold first. She complained of an ear ache, and she apparently was running a temperature. We finally arrived at the White House hours late, and all three crawled into bed. Helen recovered first—at least she thought she had—and went to out to dinner, leaving Mary tucked in and presumably asleep in the big Lincoln Room. Hours later I was awakened by noises in the bathroom. Helen was scolding Mary in her most penetrating dramatic soprano, and Mary was howling. I looked in and discovered Helen giving Mary a shampoo—at 2:30 a.m.! Mary, it seemed, had not remained asleep. She had gone into the bathroom, got hold of the mineral oil her mother used for cleaning her face, had rubbed it into her hair and then tried to get it out with her mother’s hair brush, a couple of bath towels, and anything else that happened to be lying around! I thought I could taste mineral oil in my tooth brush for days.

Mrs. Kermit Roosevelt, small, graceful, and exquisite in black, with golden hair and brown eyes, appeared one morning in the summer of 1941 at breakfast on the South veranda. Our hostess was called away from the table, and we started talking. We never stopped talking for four years. Since we so obviously got on well, she usually stayed in the big Lincoln Room from that time on, and she was at the White House often. Both the President and Mrs. Roosevelt were fond of her. Talking with her, I used to think, was like reading a most absorbing book. I would listen for hours, utterly fascinated, while she reminisced about her father-in-law Theodore Roosevelt, my childhood hero, about the old days at Sagamore Hill, about her girlhood in Virginia, about her grandmother who was a Confederate spy. Belle Roosevelt's family owned the Willard hotel in Washington until they finally sold it in 1955 or 1956. Her great-grandfather was the proprietor when Lincoln stayed there before his inauguration and when Julia Ward Howe wrote the Battle Hymn of the Republic there during the Civil War. It was another, smaller building then. The present Willard was built on the site, with some of the old walls left in it. Her father was Joseph Willard, Woodrow Wilson's ambassador to Spain, and Belle was married in Madrid, with Alice Roosevelt Longworth as her matron of honor and with most of the Oyster Bay Roosevelts and the King and Queen of Spain in attendance. There were wonderful stories about her early married life, traveling about in the South American jungles with her young husband, carrying her first born baby, young "Kim," in a basket! And stories about traveling in other strange places and hunting big game. On the floor of her bedroom in her town house in New York there is an enormous tiger skin, with a head almost as big as a bushel basket. Belle Roosevelt, who weighs not much more than a hundred pounds, shot that tiger from the back of an elephant in India. I have many enchanting memories of the White House when Belle Roosevelt was there.

About the reception I gave one occupant of the big Lincoln Room I shall always feel ashamed. I was in my room one warm Spring evening, dressing to go out for dinner. It was so hot that I had left my door open. A woman appeared from the big Lincoln Room, which I had not realized was occupied, enroute to the bathroom. Being startled and somewhat scantily attired, I moved quickly to close my door—and slammed it right in her face. The woman, I found out later, was Eve Curle. We might have become friends. I greatly admired her mother, whom as an AP reporter I had interviewed on the deck of a ship coming up the bay in New York on her first visit to this country. She was a shy, grey-haired, plain little person, who must have felt as she moved about in the noisy canyons of New York City very much like Alice in Wonderland.

One distinguished White House visitor whom I found exceedingly interesting

and liked very much indeed, although I never got to know him well, was John G. Winant. He was over from London during the winter of 1943 and stayed at the White House a week or ten days. Unlike many of the celebrities, he always appeared at breakfast at 8:30 with Mrs. Roosevelt and in the West Hall. I do not recall that he ever said anything particularly interesting or important. I had the impression that he was so shy that he found it difficult to converse with anyone, even Mrs. Roosevelt. Perhaps once or twice in a lifetime, however, you may meet someone of whom you say to yourself: "I am in the presence of a very great man." That is how I felt about Ambassador Winant, awkward, fumbling at times for words, unpretentious, homely. I liked him more than anyone else I had met in a long time. People said he looked like Abraham Lincoln. I could see why.

I never saw "The Man Who Came to Dinner" and do not know how long he stayed, but his feminine counterpart at the White House stayed five years! I should like to think that she was less trouble to her hostess. When I took the job with the Women's Division of the National Committee, I certainly had no intention of remaining on at the White House. It was different the first year, while I was working for Charley Michelson. ...it was never understood that I should continue on that job after the election. But my position with the Women's Division was for four years, provided I proved satisfactory the first year.

When I went back to Washington in January, 1941, to take over my new job, I left behind me an apartment in New York and a country house on Long Island. I put the apartment up for sub-lease, but in 1941 apartments in New York were not yet at a premium. The actually went beggin in those days! Obviously I could not afford two apartments and a country house. So Mrs. Roosevelt invited me to stay at the White House until I could get rid of my apartment. Winter dragged on into spring, and spring into summer—and still my apartment was unrented. The lease was to expire about the end of the year, so Mrs. Roosevelt generously asked me to stay on until after it had run out. Finally one evening in December, shortly after Pearl Harbor, I told her I was getting rid of the apartment, was ready to move, and asked her if she could help me get a room at the Allies Inn in Washington. I wanted a single, furnished room.

"I thought you wanted an apartment," she said.

I explained that I had decided not to take an apartment. My work at the office was too heavy. I did not want to try to keep house, and I had worked out an arrangement with Mrs. Tillet whereby, in return for working anywhere from ten to fourteen hours a day, including Saturdays and Sundays, while I was in Washington, I could take fairly frequent three or four day weekends on Long Island.

“Well if that is the way you are going to live,” she replied, “you might just as well stay on here—that is, if you don’t mind all these black curtains and the restrictions too much.”

I have heard Mrs. Roosevelt say in the years since we all left Washington that I lived at the White House to save money. That is true. The house in the country meant a very great deal to me. It would have broken my heart to give it up. And the house on Long Island involved more than merely the rent. A long weekend up there would cost me twenty-five or thirty dollars in travel expenses alone. But that was not the only reason why I stayed on at the White House, although I never told Mrs. Roosevelt. I couldn’t bear the idea of being in Washington and hardly ever seeing her. And with her schedule as heavy as it was, I was certain that that was the way it would be. Even staying in the house, I used to think I did not see very much of her—but at that I think I fared better than most of her friends, except Tommy, who worked with her every day. When she was in Washington we had breakfast together, and I would stop in her sittingroom on my way at night to say goodnight. I usually got in around 10:30 or 11, and at that hour I would find her buried in mail. Sometimes, if she was out when I came in, or had visitors, she would come into my room and sit at the foot of my bed and talk for a little while.

Mrs. Roosevelt was right about the restrictions and the black curtains, although I think they bothered her more than they did me. I never saw a place change so abruptly as the White House did after Pearl Harbor. I was at home on Long Island that December Sunday. I had house guests, and we were still at the table after a late luncheon when one of the neighbors ran in shouting: “Turn on your radio! The damned old Japs are bombing the Hawaiian Islands!”

I got back to the White House the following evening, came down with the flu, and had to stay in my room for several days. The weather was cold, grey, wet. Mrs. Roosevelt was away. She and Tommy and Major LaGuardia had flown out to the West Coast, a rumor having come in that Japanese planes had been sighted off Los Angeles or San Francisco. The house was chill and silent, as though it had died. Even Fala did not bark. But outside, all day long and into the night, I could hear a steam shovel at work digging a trench across the front lawn toward the Treasury building. I learned later that my surmise had been correct. It was a bomb shelter, an underground passage leading to some vaults deep underneath the Treasury. Hunched against the rain and the wind on each of the funny little platforms that are part of the gingerbread roof of the State, War, and Navy building, stood a soldier with a gun. Later board fences were built around the platforms, waist high, apparently to keep the men from falling off, or perhaps to provide a little shelter. What I took to be mounted machine guns appeared on the roof of

the office wing and the swimming pool, just outside my window with a crew of two. Later I heard that a couple of anti-aircraft guns had been set up among the trees on two little knolls on the South grounds.

By the time Mrs. Roosevelt returned I believe the blackout curtains were up. The windows on the second floor of the White House must be fifteen feet tall. The new curtains, hung behind the drapes next to the venetian blinds, were made of some heavy black stuff treated with fireproof dressing. Yards and yards of them—so much, to cover those enormous windows, that when they were drawn, especially in my little room with its two big widows, they made the whole room look black. You manipulated them by pulling a cord at one side. It wasn't long before the edges began to curl and stretch, so that they had to be pinned together. Twice during blackouts I was called by the ushers—guards had reported light escaping from my windows. I had to learn to undress in the dark, carefully stepping around the big electric fan, set on the floor to blow up cool air, if there was any cool air.

Along with the black curtains came garbage pails painted bright red and filled with sand, each accompanied by a shovel. No fires were allowed in any of the fireplaces, something of a winter hardship in those great, high-ceilinged rooms. I never knew whether it was feared that smoke drifting out of the chimneys would attract the attention of enemy bombers, or whether they were afraid of fire in case the place was hit.

The first time I went out after recovering from the flu I stopped short in the lobby and stared. Two huge mirrors that cover the east and west walls were crated to keep them from breaking and falling out, should a bomb hit.

Immediately after Pearl Harbor all casual visiting at the White House was stopped. No more throngs of Congressional constituents being escorted along the beautiful, stately grand corridor, with its crimson hangings and carpet, from the East Room to the State Diningroom. No more government clerks hurrying through the grounds on the Pennsylvania avenue side in the late afternoon on their way home from work. No more Sunday tourists feeding the squirrels, taking snapshots, and hanging around the portico hoping someone interesting would come out. The northeast gate leading in from Pennsylvania avenue was closed and locked. A guard house was built just inside the northwest gate and staffed with Secret Service, White House guards, and city police. Only those who had appointments were admitted, after careful scrutiny. If a taxi came in, a policeman—usually a likeable, red-haired city cop who was normally attached to the hack bureau—rode in the running board and stayed with it until it had discharged to collect its fares, turned around, and left. All around the grounds, outside the high iron fence, sentries paced. Shrubbery was cut out inside the

fence so that, even if someone bent on assassinating the President or blowing up the place should manage to get inside, he would have no place to hide. No passerby were allowed on the White House side of Pennsylvania Avenue. And barricades were put up between the White House and the State, War, and Navy Buildings, with more police. After dark a big steel cable was stretched across the driveway inside the Northwest gate, and even White House cars coming in had to stop while guards poked their flashlights around in the back. One of the guards, explaining this procedure to me, said:

“You can’t tell. There might be someone in there with a gun pointed at the chauffeur’s back.”

One of the notable changes inside the house—although I was not aware of it until one evening when I came in very late—was the presence outside the President’s bedroom door of a Secret Service man all night. There had always been a uniformed guard who went around ringing bells every hour on the second and third floors, a kind of glorified night watchman. He was very unobtrusive about it. In all the time I was there I caught a glimpse of him only two or three times. But after Pearl Harbor a Secret Service man would take up his post not more than fifteen feet from the President’s bedroom door every night as soon as the President had retired and sit there until morning, his eyes on that door!

Soon after Pearl Harbor I heard that everybody in the house was to be fingerprinted—servants, secretaries, Harry Hopkins, even the family. I went down to the ushers’ office one morning and held out my hand [but they were not] much interested. Nothing was ever done about me, although I repeated the offer several times. Even Mrs. Roosevelt cannot understand why I was never fingerprinted. It may be that, except in the matter of ration books, I was rated not as a member of the household, but as a house guest. House guests of course were never fingerprinted. They were vouched for by the President or Mrs. Roosevelt.

The restrictions about visitors never bothered me. Since hardly anybody knew I stayed there, I had few visitors. Practically the only person who ever came to see me was the Judge Marion Harron of Tax Court. She used to come often when I was ill with the flu. All I ever had to do was to let the ushers know she was coming. A list of the day’s visitors was sent down to the Northwest gate every morning. Eventually the guards got to know Marion well enough so that they would wave her past and let her park her car in the driveway without even bothering to ask for any identification.

The only restriction that ever caused me any inconvenience—and that was light—had to do with ration books. When the books were issued I was obliged under the law to turn mine in to Mrs. Nesbitt, the housekeeper, even though the

only meal I ate regularly in the house was breakfast. I was rarely there for lunch or dinner unless I was ill or especially invited by Mrs. Roosevelt. Since I ate most of my meals in restaurants I did not need the books except when I went to Long Island. Mrs. Nesbitt tried to save me enough points in my books to see me through those weekends, but sometimes I forgot to let her know in advance that I was going, and once or twice I had pretty slim fare. Eventually we worked it out. I kept my books and ate my breakfasts out, too, except when Mrs. Roosevelt was in the house and invited me to breakfast as her special, personal guest!

I realized that my being able to stay at the White House as inconspicuously as I did was partly due to the cooperation of the newspaper women, my former colleagues, most of whom knew I was there, but never mentioned it in their stories. But I also cooperated with them, to the extent of trying never to do anything that would make copy. They did not have to write anything about me—there was nothing to write.

After gas rationing went in, for instance, I never rode in a White House car except with Mrs. Roosevelt, who would be going somewhere on White House business. It would have made too good a story—Mrs. Roosevelt's friend who lived at the White House and worked for the Democratic National Committee, riding around on the White House rubber and gasoline. Mrs. Roosevelt herself was so scrupulous about the use of White House cars that for a long time she went everywhere in taxis, busses, trolley cars, or on foot. The President worried about her, and she finally gave in to his wishes, using a White House car when she went out after dark. Under the President's directive, I could have had a White House car to and from Union station, but I didn't. I think I broke down only once. One stormy morning the guards at the Northwest gate had been trying for half an hour or longer to get me a cab. There just wasn't any cab to be had. The White House mail truck was about to leave for the postoffice. Finally, at the suggestion of one of the ushers, I rode out on that and had the driver let me out at the side entrance to the Mayflower.

I did miss the White House car at Union station. With cabs so scarce, no one was permitted to ride in one alone in Washington during the war. At Union station no cab was allowed to leave until it was filled. To save gasoline and rubber, passengers who were going to the same part of town were loaded into one cab, which was held until it was filled. This procedure of course held up the line and caused delay, confusion, frustration, and irritation. It wasn't so bad when I arrived in the daytime. In broad daylight the guards at the Northwest gate could, without seriously violating restrictions, permit a filled cab to drive in—always with my red-haired cop friend on the running board—let me out, and proceed on its way. But

at night, when they searched even White House cars, that was impossible. Once or twice I was let out at the gate, and one of the guards helped me to carry my baggage up the long, curving driveway. But I usually had a lot of baggage, and it was heavy. I spent hours arguing with the taxi starters at Union station, who quite frankly did not believe me when I told them I had to have a cab by myself because I was going to the White House and could not get through the gate if there was anyone else in the cab. Some of them thought I was crazy, and one night, when my train was very late and did not get in until 2:30 a.m., I thought the starter was going to call a cop.

“You can’t get into the White House at this hour, lady,” he told me sternly. “They don’t let nobody in there at this hour of the night.”

Finally I worked out a scheme that saved a lot of wear on my nervous system and on the disposition of the starters. I would get into a loaded cab, ride to the Mayflower, get out, and take another cab to the white House. Drivers on the Mayflower stand had taken me there enough to know that I was telling the truth.

Staying out of trouble, for friends of the President or for members of his family is by no means a simple matter. Especially under wartime restrictions. I always felt a good deal of sympathy for friends of Mrs. Roosevelt and for the boys when embarrassing stories about them got into the newspapers. It was especially incumbent on me, I thought, to watch my step. After all, with twenty years in the newspaper business behind me, I knew better than most of them what would make a newspaper story, and there would be no excuse for my getting into trouble. There was the “Blaze” story, for instance. It could have happened something like this—as a matter of fact, it did:

Just before the Democratic National convention in 1944 I had to be in touch frequently by long distance telephone with Helen Gahagan Douglas in Los Angeles. Several times I called her late in the evening from my room at the White House, either because I had been too busy all day to get to it, or because I wanted to talk to her quietly without any turmoil going on around me. I would get the call in through the White House switchboard, but have it charged to the Democratic National Committee. One night my call came through so quickly that I picked up the receiver after I had finished to thank the White House operator. I learned to my horror that he had put the call through on a White House priority. I managed to get my breath to instruct him to have the call charged to me personally, not to the National Committee, and asked him as gently and tactfully as I knew how never under any circumstances to put a White House priority on any of my calls. He had not meant to get me in trouble. I was staying at the White House, so why shouldn’t I be entitled to a priority when he couldn’t get the call through any other

way? That call cost me somewhere around twenty dollars, it it was cheap at that. Suppose the story had leaked out—and such stories seem to have a way of getting out—that Mrs. Roosevelt’s friend used a White House priority on long distance calls on political business for the Democratic National Committee!

And here is how the “Blaze” incident occurred. To begin with, Elliott had nothing to do with it. He did not even know about it. He was in Europe, at the front. During the war the Army Air Transport command used to shuttle freight that had to be moved quickly back and forth across the country. Apparently a schedule of some kind was maintained, for sometimes the planes would not be filled. Enlisted men and junior officers in the lower pay ranges used to pick up free rides aboard the unfilled planes when they were home on leave. They did not always get all the way across the country of course. A friend of mine, a young lieutenant from the Pacific, got as far as St.Louis, where he had to get off to make room for more freight.

One day Anna telephoned the Air Transport command in Washington and asked if it would be possible to ship Elliot’s dog in a crate out to the West Coast sometime when they had a plane going out that was not filled. That was all she asked. But when the dog arrived for shipment, some youngster slapped a White House priority on him, thinking he was doing the right thing—just as the White House switchboard operator thought he was doing the right thing when he put a priority on my call to Los Angeles. The White House knew nothing about any priority having been put on Blaze until the story broke in the newspapers.

As it happened, the plane on which Blaze was shipped was nearly empty when it left Washington. So it took aboard two GIs, who had been home on leave and were on their way back to the West Coast. At St. Louis the GIs had to get off to make room for more freight. Even if Blaze had not had a priority, he probably would not have been put off because he and his crate together weighed less than one GI. The boys were short of money, and their efforts to borrow money to complete their journey “broke” the story. I might have found myself in the same sort of difficulty as Blaze, had I not chanced to pick up the receiver that night to thank the operator for getting my call through so quickly.

There was certainly nothing wrong with the reporters who wrote the story in the beginning. Had I been a reporter on a St. Louis paper that day, I’d have written it, too. Perhaps their Washington correspondents or the wire services might have done some checking before it was published, but on a newspaper you are up against deadlines and do not always have time to check as thoroughly as you might—or at least you think you don’t. Certainly no city editor in his right mind, knowing the opposition had it, too, would have held up a story awaiting a check from

Washington. He might have had to sit on the story for hours. Incidents like the Blaze story have convinced me that I would never be any good as a newspaper reporter again. I'd always be worrying.

I have thought a good deal while writing this chapter about the little room in which I lived during those war years. Some of the details of its furnishings I no longer remember. But some I shall never forget. There was, for instance, a portrait in colored crayon or pastel of Senator Joe Robinson of Arkansas, so hung that it was the last thing I saw before I turned off the light and usually the first thing that met my eyes when I awakened in the morning. For some reason I could never figure out, the artist had done only his head, stopping at the chin. And Joe's expression was grim. Had the artist only drawn a platter underneath, I used to think, it would have passed for a portrait of the head of John the Baptist. Over the dressing table hung another portrait, done in oils—a very bad portrait, it seemed to me with my limited knowledge of painting—of a man in Colonial uniform. I always thought it was John Paul Jones. I don't remember why. Perhaps there was something nautical painted into the background. His head was too big for his body, and the whole thing looked pretty amateurish to me. On another wall, where I glanced at them as I went out the door, were a couple of framed press photographs of a handsome young man with long straight legs—young Franklin D. Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy at the western front during World War I. He was accompanied by several naval officers in the old fashioned uniforms, with high stiff collars hooked up under their chins, and he carried a walking stick, which he did not need those days.

The room was equipped with grey painted furniture—bed, dressing table, chiffonier, a desk that jiggled, an old fashioned commode, with space for a “potty” underneath. This served as a night table. There was a radio on it, a lamp that had to be manipulated carefully or it would go out, an ash tray that had to be watched or the cigaret would roll off. I finally went to a 10-cent store and bought some big safe glass ashtrays—the kind men like—after a cigaret rolled off one of those inadequate White House ashtrays and burned a hole in a beautiful lace cover on the dressing table. There was a bench, to hit my shins against, in front of the dressing table, a little grey rocking chair, too small for me, and a comfortable over-stuffed chair upholstered in green and brown. The drapes at the windows—yards and yards of them—were in dull green satin. The telephone was on the desk, and I regularly skidded to it to answer my morning call on an oriental scatter rug that slipped on the waxed floor. One day the grey bed disappeared, and one painted ivory took its place. I learned later that the grey bed has gone to Shangri-la, the secret camp in the Maryland mountains where the President sometimes went

weekends to get away from the Washington heat. It was a little longer than the one I inherited. Both were exceedingly comfortable.

The thing I remember most fondly about that room was the fireplace. With its heavy marbled mantel and the enormous gilt framed mirror above it, it was too big for the room—it filled the place. And it was so placed that I could look into the fire only while in bed. But I never knew any greater comfort or luxury of lying in bed with the flu—which I had twice every winter while I was in Washington—looking into that fire. It was wonderful not to have to carry in logs for it. Twice a day a man came in with logs, poked up the fire, and swept the ashes. I have three fireplaces in my house on Long Island, but sometimes I'd rather freeze than carry in logs from the back porch to keep them going.

Another feature I remember, not so fondly, was a window seat with a view out towards Pennsylvania avenue. There I used to sit sometimes through long, breathlessly hot Sunday afternoons, darning stockings and watching the Waves stroll aimlessly along Pennsylvania avenue in forlorn little groups, all dressed up with no place to go. I was lonely, too, and bored. Sometimes I would get up and go over to the jiggly little desk, study the calendar, and mark off the days until I could again go home to Long Island and my dog.

The White House, when the family are all away, is about as cozy as Grant's tomb after midnight. Even the dogs get low in their minds. One time, in the early winter of 1936, Anna's Irish setter Jack and I were alone there for a couple of weeks. Jack would not let me out of his sight. He slept by my bed at night and even followed me into the bathroom to lie beside the tub while I took a bath. He was so forlorn that I hardly ever went out, hating to leave him, but not daring to take him along for fear that something might happen to him. Finally he got so he would curl his lip and growl, most unpleasantly, whenever anyone came into the room. I represented to him the last link connecting him with his family.

One summer Friday night I enter just after the president had left for some place—probably Hyde Park. Everyone had gone away. Howell Crim, the head usher, getting ready to leave, said to me, with his own special solemn humor:

“Madame, you are the sole occupant of the White House tonight—with forty seven men to guard you!”

There was in my room an old fashioned mahogany clothes tree that used to get tangled up in the cords of the venetian blinds. If the big Lincoln Room was occupied, I had to remember before I went to bed to get out the clothes I intended to wear the next day and hang them on it. I had one of the few closets in the White House. Most of the rooms on the second floor are equipped with huge, frowning old mahogany wardrobes, with mirrors in the doors. But my closet was

in the bathroom!

When the big Lincoln Room was occupied in the summer time, I would frequently put on my bathing suit and go down and take a dip in the swimming pool in the morning, to avoid congestion in our joint bathroom. One night I brought home with me a beautiful English setter, Mr. Choate, who had been given to me. He was uncertain and worried, with a new mistress, but he slept quietly enough in my bed that night. I was starting for Long Island with him the following morning. I decided when I got up, around 6 a.m., to let Mr. Choate have a run in the South grounds while I went to the swimming pool. He was alright until he missed me, when he set up the most piercing howls, right under the President's window. I'll wager no one ever climbed out of that swimming pool faster than I did that morning!

The White House bathrooms, when the Roosevelts first went there to live, fascinated me. In Mrs. Roosevelt's bathroom there was a tub so big that, if you filled it with water you floated, as though you were in a swimming pool. Maggie, one of the maids who had been there for something like forty years, told me it had been installed for President Taft. In the middle thirties a lot of repairs had to be made on the plumbing, and while they were at it they installed some new fixtures. I hated to see President Taft's bathtub go and suggested facetiously to Mrs. Roosevelt that they sink it somewhere in the south grounds and plant pansies in it. I suppose it finally ended up in a junk shop in low estate, like poor old Black Beauty when he had to haul around a cartload of fish.

In the bathroom attached to the Lincoln suite the most memorable feature was an oldfashioned wooden rack, the kind they used to have for drying baby's diapers. It was always filled with towels—big, soft, snowy bath towels and beautifully laundered linen hand towels. Only the older towels were monogrammed with the shield of the United States. Ike Hoover told me back in 1933 that they had had to quit having White House linen monogrammed because so much of it disappeared from the guest bathrooms. There was an oldfashioned wash basin big enough to take a bath in, and there was a glass wall cabinet. One night back stage at the National theater I met Gertrude Macy, Katherine Cornell's manager and sister of Louise Macy, who married Harry Hopkins at the White House.

"Oh, I know who you are," she said as we were introduced. "You're the woman who has three tins of English boot polish in her bathroom cabinet!"

I must have been away when she was there. I could always tell when the big Lincoln Room was occupied by the presence of strange toothbrushes in the bathroom. If there was a hot water bottle draped over one end of the bath tub, I assumed the occupant to be an old lady. If there were traces of face powder on the

side of the wash basin, lip rouge on towels, and a row of cosmetics on the glass shelf above the basin, she would be a young woman.



During the years I was there I grew very fond of some of the people at the White House. Of the staff I think the two I missed most after I left were Charley Clawnych and “Mrs. Mac.” Charley Clawnych was one of the ushers. I liked all four of the ushers very much. They were courteous, friendly, and helpful, and Mr. Crim, the head usher, was sometimes very funny. But I was especially fond of Charley Clawnych because he always had a joke to tell as I passed through the office. He was one of the most cheerful souls I ever knew.

“Mrs. Mac” took care of the President’s room—and mine, among other. When I was down with the flu in the days after fires were no longer permitted in the fireplaces, she would bring in a little electric heater from the President’s bedroom after he had gone over to his office, carefully returning it before he came back in the evening. Her husband, McDuffie, was the President’s valet for years, although he had quit valeting and had a job over in the Treasury during the war. The President was fond of the MacDuffies. “Mrs. Mac” used to be sent up to Hyde Park to look after his room when he was there, and she was with him at Warm Springs when he died. “Mrs. Mac” was one of the most comforting people to have around I ever knew. She did not wait on me personally very much because I wouldn’t let her. I don’t like to have anyone help me when I’m dressing, and I hate to let anyone pack or unpack for me, because I can never find anything afterwards. But I loved to have her around just to talk to me. She had an interesting background. She still remembered her grandmother, who had been a slave in Georgia. She herself was a graduate of Hamton Institute, had taught school, and as a young woman had traveled about giving dramatic readings. Sometimes she would recite poetry to me. It was a thrilling experience to hear her read Oscar Wilde’s poem about Hagar and Ishmael. She had a good voice, and she put so much bitterness into it. One summer I was afflicted for weeks with neuritis in my back and shoulders.

“Didn’t anybody ever iron you?” she asked me one evening.

She disappeared and presently returned with a bath towel and an electric iron, directed me to lie on my stomach, spread the towel over my back, and passed the warm iron back and forth across my back and shoulders, quietly talking to me of her girlhood days in the old South, until I felt completely relaxed and drowsy.

Children who were guests at the White House were fond of “Mrs. Mac,” too. They called her “Duffie.”



I had a great admiration for the White House staff. I used to marvel at the services they managed to give during the war years, when the place was always short-staffed. Some of the men had gone into the armed services, and some of the women into government offices to replace the men who had been called. Many of the servants had been there for years—Maggie, for instance, and Mays, who stayed on long after he was supposed to retire, because he knew how to cut the President's hair.

Because of my self-imposed restrictions about keeping out of the way, living at the White House during the war was, for me, not much different from living in a hotel. Especially when Mrs. Roosevelt was away. I would go out about 9:30 in the morning, through the big Lincoln room—or around through the West hall if the big Lincoln room was occupied—down in the heavy, clumsy old elevator, which you operated yourself, always wondering if it was going to stick between floors, into the ushers' office, sometimes to wait for a cab which the guards at the Northwest gate were trying to get for me, and on over to the Mayflower. At 10:30 or 11 in the evening I would do the journey in reverse, being careful, if I was on foot, to cross Pennsylvania avenue at a point where I would arrive directly opposite the gate. Sometimes the police on the barricade across Executive avenue would fail to recognize me, and I would be embarrassed.

Sometimes when I came in at night a little earlier than usual there would have been a dinner party, and the guests would be watching a movie in the second floor hall—the President still liked to see his movies there even after a theater was put in in the basement adjacent to the new East wing offices. The screen in the West hall was so placed that one could get an oblique view by standing squeezed in a corner just outside the elevator door. One night I saw all of Noel Coward's thrilling war movie, "In Which We Serve" the story of Lord Mountbatten and his destroyer—that way, so absorbed that I didn't even realize until later that my eyes were hurting from watching the screen so close up and at an angle, and my legs and back from standing too long in a cramped position!

When Mrs. Roosevelt was in the house we breakfasted together, in the West Hall in the winter time, down on the South veranda in warm weather. The last few weeks before I left we had breakfast on a sun porch off the third floor, which had been fixed up so that the President could get away from his desk at lunch time and get a bit of sun and relaxation. Mrs. Roosevelt would appear at my door promptly at 8:30 and always look surprised because I wasn't quite ready. During the war we breakfasted alone more often than not. There weren't so many house guests then, and to most of them 8:30 apparently seemed very early.



One guest we always had with us—Fala, the most insatiable bacon eater I ever knew. He really was not supposed to be fed so much of our breakfast, for after he finished with us he would proceed to the President's room to share his breakfast, too. Mrs. Roosevelt would pour the coffee—café au lait out of two pots, one in either hand, a remarkably deft performance—and give Fala a few bites of toast, making him earn them by doing all his tricks, and then retire behind the *New York Times*, reading aloud an item here and there. She ate sparingly. Fala and I did not. He would come around to my side of the table and beg every crumb of bacon I dared to give him, refusing to accept toast from me until he was sure the bacon was all gone. In the days before ration books I used to have breakfast on a tray in my room when Mrs. Roosevelt was away. Fala found my door and would appear every morning ahead of the tray, gruffly barking to be admitted. I think he always thought of me as “the bacon woman.”

Breakfast at the White House was a bountiful and delicious meal. There would be big glasses of orange juice, wonderful orange marmalade and strawberry jam muffins or popovers, hot cross buns around Easter time, cereal—not so popular after wartime restrictions made it impossible to get heavy cream—bacon and eggs, griddle cakes on Sunday, and always huge steaming cups of café au lait. The President stopped eating cereal when he couldn't have heavy cream on it. The thing that impressed me was that it apparently never even occurred to him that an exception would be made in his case if he asked for it.

Mrs. Roosevelt learned to like café au lait when she was a school girl in England. The French served it, out of big cans, on the pier at Calais to travelers after a night crossing of the Channel. I took two souvenirs with me when I left the White House. One was a letter opener—an ordinary metal cutter such as you can buy in stores that sell office supplies. It was on the desk when I moved into the little Lincoln room, somewhat battered and rusty. I thought it had probably belonged to Louis Howe and kept it in memory of him. My other souvenir was given to me by Mrs. Roosevelt—an enormous coffee cup in blue and white willow ware. It holds nearly a pint. When the story was published in 1933 that the Roosevelts drank their coffee out of big cups, they were promptly bombarded with them. One day Mrs. Roosevelt asked me if I wouldn't like to have one of my own to use when I was there. From that day on my coffee was always served in that cup. The staff never forgot even when my visits were infrequent. When I left Mrs. Roosevelt had it packed to go with me.

In March, 1945, just a month before the President died, I left the White House for good. My doctor had ordered me to quit my job, get out of Washington

at once, and go down to the country for a long rest. A couple of days before I left Mary Norton and I had a birthday. We were both born March 7 and have always celebrated together since we became friends. Mrs. Roosevelt used to participate in the celebration—sending flowers to Mary and a big birthday cake out to her apartment at the Kennedy-Warren when we were having the party there. Our birthday in 1945 was a special one. Mary was seventy years old that day. Mrs. Roosevelt gave a small luncheon for the two of us at the White House. It was a beautiful party, gay and informal, with only a few guests, close friends of Mary or me. There were festive table decorations and a wonderful birthday cake. With much laughter and confusion we went through a ceremony of blowing out the candles that only a Roosevelt can negotiate without faltering. As we left the table Mrs. Roosevelt remarked:

“This has been such fun!” We must do it more often.”

I have heard since that I was the last informal, personal party they had at the White House while the Roosevelts were there.

Down on Long Island one April morning I received a letter from Mrs. Roosevelt.

“Franklin and his party got off to Warm Springs today,” she wrote. “He seemed very happy, and I hope they will have a grand time.”

At twilight a few evenings later, Jim Clark, farmer on the place where I live, came running to my kitchen door.

“It’s the President,” he said. “He’s dead! It’s on the radio...”

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 paid to sites of national visibility, HRVR also highlights sites of regional significance. Please write us with suggestions for future Forum sections.

Val-Kill: Where Eleanor Emerged as an Individual

Lindsay Moreau

The life of Eleanor Roosevelt, the most influential First Lady in the history of the White House and a significant social leader, is being celebrated this October on the 125th anniversary of her birth. She accomplished much of her most important work while living at Val-Kill—the personal retreat that was her only true home.

Following the death of her parents, Eleanor grew up under her grandmother's care. She was a lonely child, plain and quiet, who did not truly find herself until she studied at Allenswood, a school for girls in England. At the age of eighteen, she returned to the United States. In 1907, she married her fifth cousin, Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

As her husband began his political rise toward the White House, Eleanor was searching to find her purpose. Her family, which grew to include five children and her strong-willed mother-in-law, Sara Delano Roosevelt, split their time between the Roosevelts' Springwood estate in Hyde Park and their New York City townhouse. Eleanor constantly lived under Sara's thumb. However, she loved Springwood and enjoyed spending time outdoors amid its grounds. A favorite spot of hers was located two miles east of the mansion, near the Fall Kill Creek. One day, while picnicking with Franklin and her two good friends, Marian Dickerman and Nancy Cook, Eleanor lamented how she would miss their Hyde Park home during their wintertime sojourn in Manhattan.¹ Franklin suggested the three friends should build a cottage in their favorite picnicking spot, so they could spend time there year-round. The three women quickly accepted the offer.

Franklin was just as excited about building the cottage as the three women. He hired Henry Toombs, a budding architect who assisted him in designing and

constructing a stone replica of a vernacular Dutch colonial cottage. Completed in 1926, the building cost \$12,000, which was paid by the three women.² They named it Val-Kill, in tribute to the creek.

During the cottage's construction, Eleanor, Marian, and Nancy met with Caroline O'Day, a leader in social change and a member of Congress from New York.³ The group began discussing the economic conditions of the Hyde Park area. The majority of inhabitants were farmers, which left them idle and without income during the winter months. The women decided to start Val-Kill Industries, a furniture-making company where local employees could learn a craft during the off-season. Nancy Cook, who was in fact a former shop teacher and skilled carpenter, designed all of the furniture.

The factory also was built on the Val-Kill property. Val-Kill Industries operated from 1926 to 1936 and grew to include a pewter forge and homespun weaving enterprise. It was moderately successful, but eventually became a victim of the Great Depression. Operations were shut down in 1936 with the exception of the weaving enterprise, which continued until the 1940s.⁴ Currently, pieces produced at the factory have become prized antiques, with collectors spending tens of thousands of dollars to acquire them. Any piece that was given away as a gift was signed by Eleanor herself, making these particularly sought after.

After Val-Kill Industries was shut down, Eleanor converted the factory into a personal retreat. She remodeled the interior to include several bedrooms, two sitting rooms, a kitchen, a dining room, an apartment for her live-in friend and secretary, two porches downstairs, and a sleeping porch upstairs. Outside, a swimming pool, gardens, and a stable were constructed. Franklin and Eleanor had twenty-nine grandchildren, and it was typical to have at least nine at Val-kill at any one time. Barbecues were popular, and Franklin enjoyed cooking on the large outdoor stone fireplace. Once he died in 1945, Val-Kill truly became Eleanor's permanent residence. Here she hosted thousands of guests and wrote thousands of articles. She went on to become one of the most influential women of the twentieth century.

Eleanor's guests included royalty, world leaders, celebrities, politicians, students, and even troubled youth. She always had her guests' comforts in mind. Upon arrival, they would find a bouquet of their favorite flowers adorning their room, along with a freshly baked plate of their favorite cookies and a book Eleanor believed would be of interest to them. She also used cheap china; she never wanted guests to feel bad if a plate or cup was accidentally broken. It was common for Eleanor to have upwards of twenty people over for dinner. Guests would come from all walks of life, but every meal was served family style to encourage camara-

derie and equality. Eleanor often chose to invite guests with differing viewpoints; she enjoyed hearing a variety of opinions. She also hoped these discussions would broaden the minds of her guests.

At Val-Kill Eleanor met with politicians such as John F. Kennedy and world leaders such as Haile Selassie, the King of Ethiopia. Each summer she hosted a retreat for 150 troubled boys from the Wiltwyck School. She also wrote her “My Day” columns and read hundreds of public policy articles as part of her job as a United States delegate to the United Nations. Val-Kill was where Eleanor not only found herself, but became the inspirational leader revered by so many, earning universal admiration as the “First Lady of the World.”

Eleanor passed away in 1962 and left the Val-Kill estate to her son John. At the time, John’s financial state was unstable. To make money, he converted the Val-Kill cottage into four rental units. He eventually auctioned off the majority of Eleanor’s belongings. In 1970, he sold the property to two doctors from Long Island, who planned to convert the estate into a senior citizen facility complete with a nursing home, assisted living apartments, and health care clinics.⁵

While a rezoning request for Val-Kill was going through the Hyde Park Town Council, several local residents began to worry that the property’s historic significance would be lost forever. The group of preservationists from the Hyde Park Visual Environment committee joined forces with the Roosevelt family, the New York State lieutenant governor’s office, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and National Historic Site in the effort to save Eleanor’s home from commercial development.⁶ In the end, the rezoning request was denied.

President Jimmy Carter took note of the growing movement and decided to turn Eleanor’s estate into a national park in 1977. As he signed the bill, he stated,

...I am deeply touched that this new addition is to be a living memorial to the former First Lady, Anna Eleanor Roosevelt. This law establishes her home, Val-Kill, in Hyde Park, N.Y., as the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site.... I think that it was in the area of human rights that Mrs. Roosevelt made her greatest contributions. In her many projects, she appealed to the best qualities and instincts of humankind and fought to break down the barriers of prejudice, discrimination, and injustice which divided people against each other. Her memory stands as an inspiration to us today as we continue to strive for the higher ideals which she articulated.... I hope that this site will serve as an inspiration for our generation and the generations to come.⁷

Thus, the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site was created—the first dedicated to a First Lady. It took years for the park to open, as the buildings had

fallen into severe disrepair. Fortunately, a few days after Eleanor's death, pictures had been taken of every room from several different angles, allowing them to be refurnished almost identically. Some of the furniture at Val-Kill today is original, but many pieces are from the period.

The park officially opened in 1984. Today it attracts close to 80,000 visitors annually. They are allowed to wander through the gardens and displays that explore Eleanor's works toward affecting social change. A guided tour of the estate is available and lasts about forty-five minutes. A typical visit starts in the playhouse (formerly the pewter forge) with a brief video about Eleanor; it is followed by a walking tour through the Val-Kill and Stone Cottages, where guides expertly describe Eleanor's life—both public and private. The grounds, which are open dawn to dusk, feature trails for hiking and biking. On select summer days, children kids can enjoy an hour of free outdoor activity with a National Park Service Ranger. Participants explore the trails behind the cottages and create a nature guidebook on Eleanor's Woodland Walk.

Along with the creation of the historic site, the Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val Kill (ERVK) was established in 1977. This non-profit organization's mission is to "to preserve Eleanor's home in Hyde Park and provide programs inspired by her values and example." One of ERVK's most successful programs, the Girl's Leadership Workshop, began in 1997. It brings groups of young, talented female leaders to Hyde Park for nine days. Workshop participants learn about social justice, personal responsibility, human rights, feminism, citizenship, and leadership while meeting with successful female leaders and visiting organizations such as the United Nations and UNICEF. The program's objectives include:

- Developing the self-esteem, confidence, and skills needed to exercise leadership.
- Providing opportunities for self-awareness, self-definition, and growth.
- Nurturing sisterhood, citizenship, and social responsibility.
- Celebrating the life and legacy of Eleanor Roosevelt.⁸

In addition to training young women to be tomorrow's leaders, ERVK also celebrates and honors individuals who contribute to society today. Persons who play a significant role in bettering society in ways similar to those Eleanor championed are awarded the Eleanor Roosevelt Val-Kill Medal. Past recipients include Hillary Clinton, James Earl Jones, Susan Sarandon, and many Hudson Valley natives such as Hamilton Fish, Jr., and several members of the Dyson family. The ceremony is held annually in October on Val-Kill's grounds.

Eleanor Roosevelt's life and her accomplishments are interesting and inspiring. A woman of true character, dignity, kindness, and strength, she helped

pave the way for social equality. Her legacy lives on through the works and programs of ERVK. Her presence is still felt at Val-Kill.

As the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, Val-Kill is open daily May through October from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. It is open November through April on a limited schedule with tours available at 1:00 and 3:00 pm. The grounds are open daily year-round, sunrise to sunset. For more information about Eleanor Roosevelt and Val-Kill, call 845-486-1966, or visit: www.ervk.org, www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu, www.nps.gov/elro.

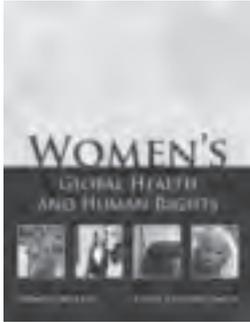
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2. Ibid.
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4. Ibid.
5. Beasley, 574.
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ER Related Book Reviews

Padmini Murthy and Clyde Landford Smith, Editors. *Women's Global Health and Human Rights*. Sudbury: Jones and Bartlett Publishers (2010). 556 pp.



Women's Global Health and Human Rights begins with a dedication “to the memory of the disappeared, of the survivors, of all the women who have suffered just by reason of their gender, and of all women who have fought for the integrity of their and every person’s health and human rights” (Murthy and Lanford Smith, 2010). This text is dedicated to respectfully address many of the challenges faced by women and girls who have been denied their basic human rights as articulated in the 1948 United Nations Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) and elaborated on in subsequent human rights conventions. Drs. Murthy and Lanford Smith bring together experts from the fields of public health, sexual health, maternal health, and reproductive health to speak to sensitive issues such as family planning, harmful practices against girls, gender-based violence as a weapon of terrorism and war, human trafficking, medical ethics, neglect of “positive rights” in the reproductive rights discourse, the AIDS pandemic, and cultural practices such as female genital mutilation.

The text is divided into six sections that address problems and suggest solutions to women’s global health issues. From an educator’s perspective, the organization of the sections and chapters makes each topic all the more accessible to students, rights activists, and policy makers. Each section begins with a quote by a prominent human rights activist. For example, Section IV: Health Problems and Challenges Specific to Women, Including Chronic Diseases and Their Global Burden begins with a quote from Eleanor Roosevelt: “When will our consciences grow so tender that we will act to prevent human misery rather than avenge it?” (128). Most of the chapters are organized as follows: a brief overview of an issue; a discussion of the legal frameworks; a reference to related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); references to benchmark decisions at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) 1994 and/or the 1995 Beijing Women’s Conference; a list of best practices; and recommendations for legislative or policy reform. Most chapters end with discussion questions, such as that posed by Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury, former U.N. under

secretary general: “Why is women’s engagement vital to promote the culture of peace?” (498).

Although some chapters cover women’s health issues from an economic, political, legal, and developmental stance, the majority of the text is exclusively written from a health researcher’s or practitioner’s perspective. In future editions, it would be beneficial to include chapters on legal and political analysis of health issues as well as social and cultural critiques of health policies. It would also be important to elaborate on the work of the World Health Organization (WHO) and other organizations that have sought to highlight the effect of neglected tropical diseases on women living in Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, a chapter on the Inter-American Commission on Women’s work on the punishment and eradication of violence against women (Convention of ‘Belem do Para’, 1994) would enhance the text.

—Jerusa Ali, *Political Science Department, Marist College, Poughkeepsie, NY*

Allida Black, Editor. *The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers: Volume 1: The Human Rights Years, 1945-1948*. University of Virginia Press (2009). 1,121 pp.



In volume one of a planned five-part series, Dr. Allida Black, executive director of The Eleanor Roosevelt and Human Rights Project at George Washington University, and her team of researchers have assembled an anthology of 410 carefully chosen documents that trace the life and letters of Eleanor Roosevelt (ER) in her attempt to “define, implement, and promote human rights” for all (introduction, xlii). This volume, now released as a paperback, covers the period immediately after the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1945 to the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. It promises to be a valuable reference work for human rights advocates for years to come.

In the human rights lexicon, ER is most well-known for her work in drafting the UDHR. However, in reading this volume, it becomes clear that this represented a culmination of years of direct advocacy work as an activist, First Lady, and diplomat. Black presents the reader with an intimate perspective on a number of human rights themes that were close to ER’s heart, including the enduring support for the rights of women, children, and workers; the promotion of racial, ethnic, and religious tolerance; the protection of refugees and displaced persons;

the endorsement of a foreign policy grounded in human rights and democratic principles; the advocacy for a peaceful settlement between Jews and Arabs over the question of Palestine; and, most significantly, the emphasis on the importance of the codification of human rights principles during her work as a United Nations (UN) delegate and chairperson of the Human Rights Commission.

Informative introductions, historical commentary, and explanatory notes help to elucidate the deeper meaning of the documents without infringing upon the reader's right of individual interpretation. These notes expand and explain a number of confounding circumstances, such as why Cold War strategic concerns prevented ER's attendance of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP) presentation of the *Petition on the Denial of Human Rights to Citizens of Negro Descent in the United States and an Appeal to the UN for Redress* (Documents: 264-266; Document 285, note 4) and why the United States supported a declaration on human rights rather than a legally binding international covenant on human rights (Documents 289-291). In these instances, ER had suggested that the State Department allow NAACP delegates to convey their concerns to the U.N. (Document 266, note 4), and she supported the drafting of a convention, despite the obvious concern over states' rights and Senate ratification (Document 238). From the documents presented, it is clear that ER was able to persuade her superiors of the need to acknowledge economic and social rights in addition to political rights (Document 290, note 2), even if only in a moral but not legal sense. Reading these documents leads the reader to ponder the possibility of more socially just outcomes if the UDHR had been a convention and if minorities had been given the right of individual petition to an International Court of Human Rights (Document 287, 285, note 5).

In the documents found in this volume ER is depicted as a strong and committed woman who felt a strong sense of duty to the American public and who was optimistic about the future of the United States. She wrote an average of 150 letters a day, and during her post-White House years, she received no less than 100 and sometimes 300 to 400 letters a day (Document 74). Black and her team have carefully selected letters that capture ER's vision of human rights and democracy at home:

If we really believe in democracy, we must face the fact that equality of opportunity is basic to any kind of democracy. Equality of opportunity means that all of our people, not just the white people... must have decent homes, a decent standard of health, and educational opportunities to develop their abilities as far as they are able... (Document 151)

Her words are as relevant today, if not more so, than when they were written in 1946. This collection of documents represent ER's human rights legacy, which will not be forgotten. And as the then-Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton concludes in her foreword, "I hope her words will be a call to action."

—Jerusa Ali

Kristie Miller and Robert H. McGinnis, Editors. *A Volume of Friendship: The Letters of Eleanor Roosevelt and Isabella Greenway, 1904-1953*. Tucson: The Arizona Historical Society (2009). 354 pp.



Miller and McGinnis provide a fascinating story and a wonderfully versatile resource with their recent work, *A Volume of Friendship: The Letters of Eleanor Roosevelt and Isabella Greenway, 1904-1953*. In this book, built around the two women's forty-nine year correspondence, the editors illuminate a tender relationship that traversed American history from the Progressive Era through World War II.

Throughout the book, Eleanor and Isabella's letters reveal the ever-present specter of sickness and death in the first half of the twentieth century. Tuberculosis, scarlet fever, pneumonia, polio, and chicken pox were among the illnesses each woman nursed family members through. In most cases, the patients survived, but some did not. Nevertheless, no one seemed to escape a long bout with a potentially life-threatening sickness.

Marriage found Isabella making the best of a demanding outdoor life and home schooling her two children, while Eleanor attempted to balance the social demands of being a politician's wife with caring for her growing family. The contrast of life in the West versus life in the East is one of the most compelling aspects of the book. Although both women were arguably "privileged," their lives were never without daunting complications. Mingled with their difficulties are intriguing glimpses into Isabella's tent life in New Mexico, the Mexican Revolution, and the development of Progressive politics in the East and West.

Both women continued to nurture their friendship through letters as their children grew older. Eleanor and Isabella both performed volunteer work during World War I and moved on to political activism in the post-war years. Arizona voters elected Isabella as their U.S. Representative in 1933, when Eleanor took up her post as First Lady. Despite their greater public responsibilities and Isabella's decision not to support Franklin's run for a third term their relationship continued

uninterrupted.

Volumes of Friendship will captivate a variety of readers. Miller and McGinnis have written excellent “bridge narratives” to fill in the history and significance of events and people mentioned in the letters. Therefore, they provide a provocative story for followers of Roosevelt-era history. Additionally, advanced high school students and college students will gain fresh perspectives on twentieth century women’s lives, family, illness, war, and politics from the letters. The editors include meticulous citations, which will not only assist the reader but might launch the entrepreneurial researcher on an investigation of his or her own. This book will be welcome addition to women’s history and the history of the Roosevelt era.

—Sally Dwyer-McNulty, *History Department, Marist College*

Robin Gerber. *Leadership the Eleanor Roosevelt Way: Timeless Strategies from the First Lady of Courage*. New York: Portfolio (2002). 317 pp.



After discovering the lack of books on female leaders and their leadership methods, Gerber felt it necessary to construct a book based upon Eleanor Roosevelt’s inspiring story. A combination of Eleanor’s biography and advice from the best female leaders of today, *Leadership the Eleanor Roosevelt Way* seamlessly integrates the best lessons and advice from the past and present. Gerber’s purpose is to inspire readers to follow in Eleanor’s courageous footsteps by detailing the story of her progression from the quiet, self-conscious child into the First Lady of the World.

Gerber wrote *Leadership the Eleanor Roosevelt Way* to appeal to women as well as to motivate and encourage them. By following the time line of Eleanor’s life, readers gain a relationship with Eleanor. Gerber details Eleanor’s hardships and accomplishments, which humanize her and forges a bond between the historical icon and the reader. The lessons Gerber provides from Eleanor’s life are reinforced by integrating stories of working women today as well as the author’s own anecdotes. Stories of women overcoming adversity, learning to take risks, and discovering how to lead are scattered throughout the text.

The book is broken up into twelve chapters, which tell Eleanor’s chronological story and metamorphosis into the great leader and activist respected by all today. Each chapter commences with a relevant quote and concludes with a series of statements that summarize the chapter’s key learning points. While it’s best to

read the book in its entirety the first time, its greatest attribute is its capability of being a handbook for living. Pertinent chapters can be re-read and applied to real situations throughout one's life and career.

The first chapter, "Learning from Your Past," dives into Eleanor's unfortunate childhood while pointing out the necessity of understanding how one's childhood determines behavior and character. When working toward personal growth, the best place to start is evaluating and learning from the past. Other chapters include the subjects of mentoring, mothering, networking, and learning, as well as leadership, criticism, focus, and risk.

The final chapter, titled "Never Stop Learning," points out Eleanor's commitment to lifelong learning by experiencing new people and new places. As she once wrote, "Never, perhaps, have any of us needed as much as we do today to use all the curiosity we have, needed to seek new knowledge, needed to realize that no knowledge is terminal....Each new bit of knowledge, each new experience is an extra tool in meeting new problems and working them out." In response, Gerber states in her concluding sentence, "Now it is your turn to learn, to teach, and to lead."

While the lessons can certainly be applied to women in high-powered positions making influential decisions, their beauty is their applicability to everyday living. One of Eleanor's great strengths was her capability of encouraging people to make small, progressive changes. Eleanor knew that in succeeding with little challenges, people gain confidence and courage to work toward greater change. Gerber supports Eleanor's method by providing methods toward developing an optimistic disposition, elevating one's level of tolerance, and learning to believe in one's talents and capabilities.

With sixteen pages of photographs, hundreds of quotes, and the infusion of historical lessons with present-day advice, *Leadership the Eleanor Roosevelt Way* will appeal to a variety of readers. As President of the Women's College Coalition, Jadwiga S. Sebrechts stated, "Whether one reads this book for historic information, for behavior strategies, or for motivation, one will not be disappointed."

Gerber utilized Eleanor's own works in addition to dozens of books written on the Roosevelts and/or the topic of leadership. She provides several detailed sections at the close of her book to assist those interested in learning more about the legacy of Eleanor through the resources Gerber used herself. Included are endnotes, a bibliography, and a resource section complete with Web addresses and contact information. Lastly, Gerber provides her physical and e-mail address and requests anyone interested to write to her, just as Eleanor did.

After extensive research, Gerber found herself astounded by Eleanor's

strengths and talents. In the preface, she writes, “Eleanor led me to reflect on my leadership, focus on my passion, and get ‘fired up’ about acting on it.” At the conclusion of *Leadership the Eleanor Roosevelt Way*, Gerber leaves her readers feeling the same way.

—Lindsay Moreau, Hudson River Valley Institute

Richard Breitman, Barbara McDonald Stewart, and Severin Hochberg, editors. *Refugees and Rescue: The Diaries and Papers of James G. McDonald, 1933-1945*. Indiana University Press (2009). 376 pp.



James G. McDonald was an American diplomat whose experience as League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the early 1930s and as Chairman of President Roosevelt’s Advisory Committee on Political Refugees from 1938 to 1945 placed him at the center of the humanitarian crisis that culminated in the Holocaust.

Fortunately for scholars, McDonald also was a keen observer and diarist. His extensive and only recently released papers and diaries form the basis of this, the second of a three-volume series, that chronicles his remarkable career from the end of World War I through the creation of the state of Israel.

Refugees and Rescue is a remarkable account that sheds new light on the plight of European Jews during the horrific decade from 1935 to 1945. It is especially telling with respect to the years immediately prior to the onset of World War II, when the possibility that many more thousands—perhaps hundreds of thousands, or even millions—of German and East European Jews might have escaped their fate under the hands of the Nazis if only the democracies had been willing to take them in as refugees.

Tragically, the pervasive influence of Depression-era nativism in the United States, Europe, and the British Commonwealth, coupled with an equally pervasive anti-Semitism, made this all but impossible, despite the best efforts of McDonald and many other like-minded individuals, including Eleanor Roosevelt.

Perhaps the most illustrative example of this can be found in the United States, where McDonald’s diaries indicate that President Roosevelt was repeatedly advised in the mid- and late-1930s not to even raise the possibility of a change in the highly restrictive U.S. immigration quotas for fear that such a move would result in a push for an even more restrictive regime. Frustrated by

his lack of domestic freedom of action, Roosevelt—whom Breitman describes in his concluding chapter as a man of “grand vision”—sought to find solutions abroad. The most tangible consequence of this sentiment was the ill-fated Evian conference, which the President hoped would result in an effort by the democracies “to unite and share the burden” of finding suitable areas of settlement for “these unfortunate people.” Given the xenophobia and anti-Semitism of the time, however, there would be no direct call upon any of the participants to change existing immigration laws. In fact, much of the focus of the conference was on getting the democracies to encourage other states—especially in the developing world—to take in more people. Roosevelt also gave serious consideration to the possibility that he might try to convince Congress to appropriate \$100 million to \$150 million to be added to an additional potential \$250 million provided by the other democracies to help finance the transfer of refugees to suitable areas of habitation.

Aside from the successful immigration of some 20,000 European Jews to Bolivia, and the establishment of the principle that German Jews were in fact political refugees, the Evian Conference was largely a failure. But the deliberations leading to it—including conversations between Roosevelt, McDonald, and others—provide a further example of the President’s antipathy for the Nazis and the most tangible evidence to date of his sincere desire to engineer a large-scale solution to the 1930s Jewish-refugee crisis.

McDonald also communicated with Eleanor Roosevelt, who, although not referenced in the diaries as frequently as her husband, was clearly seen as a sympathetic figure within his administration. For example, in October 1940, McDonald’s papers reveal that the First Lady joined others in appealing to the President for his support for the successful admission of eighty-one Jewish refugees from the Portuguese Steamship *Quanza*, which had docked in Norfolk, Virginia. She also supported the efforts taken by McDonald and the President’s Advisory Committee in the fall of 1940 to counter Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long’s attempts to tighten up the definition of political and intellectual refugees (which had been relaxed in the late 1930s under Roosevelt’s direction to admit more Jewish refugees). Long wanted visa controls tightened to prevent the admission of potential spies and saboteurs into the United States, a stance McDonald vehemently opposed.

The debate over immigration controls in late 1940 brings us to the war years. Here, the manuscript turns out to be equally revealing—in part because of what these chapters tell us about the difficulty of trying to extricate refugees (both Jewish and non-Jewish) from a war zone, and in part because of what they

tell us about the shift that occurred in the Roosevelt Administration from a focus on humanitarian concerns in the late 1930s to the actual war effort in the early 1940s. As noted, one consequence of the onset of the war was the push by Long and other officials within the administration for an even more restrictive policy on immigration, leading to what Breitman calls the “most restrictionist phase of American refugee policy.” But McDonald’s papers and diaries also reveal what Breitman calls the “reversal” of this policy under the leadership of Henry Morgenthau, who, as Secretary of the Treasury Department and a confidant of FDR, directed an effort in late 1943 to counter the obstructionists. Thanks to Morgenthau’s efforts, FDR created the War Refugee Board in January 1944—a body which McDonald strongly supported and which, Breitman notes, in spite of its limited scope and duration, “stands up well to the light of history.”

Refugees and Rescue has much to teach us about the tragic events of the 1930s and 40s. McDonald’s objective observations about the strengths and weaknesses of the Roosevelt Administration; about the level of support for refugees among Jewish leadership in Great Britain and the United States, as well as among the leadership of the Protestant and Catholic communities in both countries; and his assessment of what was and was *not* possible during these difficult years provide the reader with an unprecedented sense of the context within which these events took place. Sadly, his diaries also make clear that in spite of his prescience about the true intentions of Hitler and his Nazi henchmen—a prescience that began with McDonald’s first and only visit to Hitler in 1933—too few people understood or shared this conviction to prevent the greatest crime in history.

—David B. Woolner, *History Department, Marist College*
and Senior Vice President of the Roosevelt Institute

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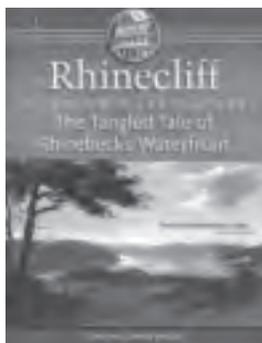
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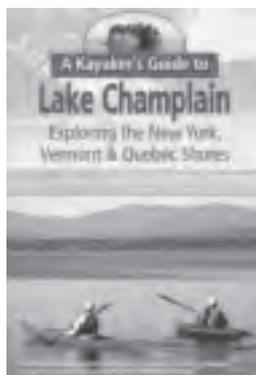
New & Noteworthy Books Received



Rhinecliff A Hudson River History: The Tangled Tale of Rhinebeck's Waterfront

By Cynthia Owen Philip
(Hensonville, NY: Black Dome Press Corp., 2008).
216 pp. \$24.95 (paperback). www.blackdomepress.com

These “tangled tales” present the story of the Hudson River Valley and American history as viewed from the hamlet of Rhinecliff, perched on the Hudson River. This comprehensive record provides a well-illustrated look at the families and institutions that make up Rhinecliff's history, while also describing the changes in American industry and culture as viewed from this small transportation hub. While often combined with the much larger town of Rhinebeck, Philip captures the charm and character that Rhinecliff possesses all on its own.



A Kayaker's Guide to Lake Champlain: Exploring the New York, Vermont & Quebec Shores

By Catherine Frank & Margaret Holden
(Hensonville, NY: Black Dome Press Corp., 2009).
308 pp. \$17.95 (paperback). www.blackdomepress.com

A truly comprehensive guide to Lake Champlain and its surrounding areas, *A Kayaker's Guide to Lake Champlain* comes with enough information to satisfy anyone interested in exploring the outdoors. Complete with maps, directions, and photographs, the guide divides the lake into eight regions to investigate from the water. To complement the information, Frank and Holden provide thoughtful narratives documenting their own experiences and create a useful list dos and don'ts for any nature lover visiting the Lake Champlain region.



**Dutch New York:
The Roots of Hudson Valley Culture**

Edited by Roger Panetta
(Yonkers, NY: Hudson River Museum/Fordham University Press, 2009).

454 pp. \$29.95 (paperback). www.fordhampress.com
www.hrm.org

The celebration of the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson’s voyage to the Hudson River Valley has led to a reexamining of Dutch influence and the significance of Dutch heritage on the region. The thirteen essays in *Dutch New York* explore a wide variety of topics to create a balanced representation of Dutch influence in the region over the from the past five centuries. Topics include commerce, religion, and slavery, with particular emphasis on how the legacy of Dutch culture and heritage has evolved and changed since its introduction to the Hudson River Valley in 1609. The book also contains a collection of over forty color images and a forward by historian Russell Shorto.



**My River Chronicles:
Rediscovering America on the Hudson**

Jessica DuLong
(New York, NY: Free Press, 2009).

308 pp. \$26.00 (hardcover). www.simonandschuster.com

This is the tale of DuLong’s journey of becoming “one of the world’s only fireboat engineer” and the appreciation of hands-on labor that grew out of her experiences. *My River Chronicles* provides a modern context for the great tradition of jobs that take place on the Hudson River and weaves a modern-day narrative within the region’s rich history. DuLong’s experiences put a strong emphasis on the preservation of what is becoming a lost way of life and the necessary conservation of waterways to maintain it.

—Andrew Villani



**Main Street to Mainframes:
Landscape and Social Change in Poughkeepsie**

Harvey K. Flad and Clyde Griffen
Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009. 451 pp.
www.sunypress.edu

Main Street to Mainframes is an ambitious examination of Poughkeepsie and the broader Mid-Hudson region in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Its authors, respectively a geographer and historian, each of whom taught at Vassar for more than thirty years, witnessed the city's tragic decline. Deeply involved in various causes in Poughkeepsie and environs, they used the city as their classroom and have produced an impressive analysis of how and why a community they clearly love has changed so dramatically. This is a sad, at times quietly angry book that examines the racism and public policies that resulted in disinvestment in the city and subsidized suburban sprawl, but one that also expresses admiration for the many people who have struggled over time and against daunting obstacles to make Poughkeepsie a more just and vibrant place.

Although most of the book covers the twentieth century, the first three chapters investigate the formation of Main Street before 1900. Poughkeepsie, like Kingston but unlike Newburgh, did not grow inland from the Hudson River. Instead, its earliest occupants and industries located on higher ground along the Fall Kill, a creek that cascades into the Hudson near the northern end of the city. Only in the 1830s, when Matthew Vassar located his brewery on the waterfront, did the city begin to expand there, and industrial development along the river intensified following construction of the east shore railroad, which extended from Manhattan to Albany in 1851.

Poughkeepsie's population grew quickly as immigrants, largely from Ireland and Germany in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, arrived in the city looking for work. As Griffen pointed out in an earlier book, *Natives and Newcomers* (co-authored with Sally Griffen), cultural conflict became a fact of life as the number of immigrants increased and experienced hostility from native-born residents, who rightly feared that the recently arrived would compete for jobs and depress wages. As the village evolved into a small city, neighborhoods became stratified by class and ethnicity: economic inequality defined the spatial as well as the social geography of Poughkeepsie.

By the dawn of the twentieth century, when a new wave of immigration from southern and eastern Europe was well underway, Poughkeepsie could boast a diverse manufacturing economy. But what had once been a compact community was reshaped by the introduction of the trolley, which made possible the develop-

ment of residential neighborhoods beyond the city. Yet even as they promoted suburbanization, the trolleys brought riders downtown, and Main Street became a thriving commercial center that attracted shoppers from throughout Dutchess County. At the same time, the city constructed a modern infrastructure of utility lines and sewer service and paved and straightened its streets. The intersection of Main and Market streets became the symbolic heart of city and county, home not only to shops and department stores but to governmental offices, banks, and cultural institutions that erected buildings in the Beaux Arts classical style, which had become symbolic of civic improvement nationwide in the aftermath of the World's Columbian Exhibition, held in Chicago in 1893. But despite the efforts of reformers such as Vassar professor Lucy Maynard Salmon, Poughkeepsie did not fully embrace a range of Progressive goals, including the implementation of a comprehensive urban plan that might have structured urban growth in the decades to come.

In several chapters, Flad and Griffen analyze economic change in the first three decades of the twentieth century—the loss of some longstanding businesses and factories, the arrival of new ones, industrialists' efforts to suppress wages, the impact of the Great Depression on city and region. But more than half of *From Main Street to Mainframes* involves the impact of IBM on the Mid-Hudson Valley. Because Poughkeepsie was already densely built and the City's attempt to annex the township in the 1920s had failed, IBM located in the suburbs: beginning in 1941 it erected a series of large, campus-like facilities south of the city, and later built massive installations in Kingston and East Fishkill as well.

IBM brought prosperity to the region, and, with the shift from punch-card operations and building typewriters to computers, a more highly educated and well-paid workforce. But this prosperity was unevenly distributed: IBMers lived mostly in the suburbs, near their places of work, and as the suburban population exploded retail followed the customers to suburban malls, which soon vanquished Market and Main as the shopping destination of choice. Moreover, the IBM facilities paid taxes to suburban townships and school districts, not the city, which was faced with a population with many impoverished racial minorities who had difficulty finding jobs at IBM or, indeed, even of getting to work in the expanding suburbs.

The city's efforts to revitalize downtown through extensive clearance of the older, deteriorating neighborhoods along the river and in the north end—more than 1,300 dwelling units were razed, as were numerous factories and other businesses—as well as through the introduction of a pedestrian shopping mall on Main Street (which many other cities adopted, usually with no more success than

Poughkeepsie), simply could not succeed. Even with federal urban renewal and antipoverty funds and gains that resulted from the Civil Rights movement and antidiscrimination laws enacted by Congress in the mid-1960s, the challenges were much greater than the resources: federal policies had tipped the developmental playing field by subsidizing suburban growth through tax policies and spending programs. By the 1970s, Flad and Griffen conclude, “For all practical purposes, the city as vital core for the larger community had ceased to exist” (p. 225). As the city’s population of racial minorities increased along with fear of crime, white flight accelerated, as did Poughkeepsie’s downward spiral. An aging, impoverished city was surrounded by prosperous suburbs, which Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton have described as “American apartheid.”

Even as Poughkeepsie’s residents struggled to overcome the segregation that afflicted every Hudson River Valley city I know, IBM’s loss of market share in the manufacture of personal computers resulted in a dramatic downsizing of its operations and workforce. Although the Poughkeepsie region managed to recover from the loss of high paying jobs, the future remains uncertain. To be sure, the continuing vitality of its two hospitals and three colleges (Vassar, Marist, and Dutchess Community as well as the Culinary Institute of America, all located outside the corporate limits of the city)—“meds and eds” in planning and development discourse—is a major driver of the postindustrial economy. So are the efforts of conservation organizations such as Scenic Hudson and the Hudson River Valley Greenway in protecting the quality of life. Nevertheless, the process of subdividing farms and transforming productive agricultural land to commercial or residential use continues largely unchecked; tax and spending policies still redirect investment from city to suburb; and parochialism and racial divisions still inhibit the development of a shared sense of community between Poughkeepsie and its neighbors and across the racial divide.

In broad outlines, this is an all-too-familiar story to historians of urban and suburban America. What gives *Main Street to Mainframes* its distinctiveness is its broader focus on the region: while Poughkeepsie remains the centerpiece, the authors tie its destiny both to competition with other cities in the Hudson Valley in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and to the racial, cultural, and economic divisions that have increasingly separated the city and its suburbs over the second half of the twentieth century. Flad and Griffen bring to their study a devotion to Poughkeepsie as community and shared landscape and present a compelling argument for why understanding history is essential to shaping a more inclusive society and economy in the decades to come.

—David Schuyler, *American Studies, Franklin & Marshall College*

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