

DUTCHESS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

YEAR BOOK

Volume 82
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Individual copies may be purchased through the Society. Selected earlier Year Books are also available.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Publications Committee is now soliciting articles for future Year Books. Articles should be no longer than 7500 words, double-spaced typescript or on disc, Word Perfect 5.1. Inclusion of photographs or other illustrative material is encouraged. Manuscripts, books for review, and other correspondence relevant to this publication should be addressed to:

DUTCHESS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Publications Committee
PO Box 88
Poughkeepsie, NY 12602

The Society encourages accuracy but does not assume responsibility for statements of fact or opinion made by contributors.

The Dutchess County Historical Society was formed in 1914 to preserve and share the county's rich history and traditions. The only county-wide agency of its kind, the Society is an active leader and promoter of local history in Dutchess County. Principal endeavors include the publishing of historical works and the collection and safe-keeping of artifacts, manuscripts and other priceless treasures of the past. The Society has been instrumental in the preservation of two pre-Revolutionary landmarks, the Clinton House and Glebe House, both in Poughkeepsie. In addition the Society has educational outreach programs for the schools of Dutchess County.

The Society offers a variety of activities and special events throughout the year. Contact the Society for further information: 845-471-1630, or address above.

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ANNUAL MEETING

Grace Church, Millbrook, NY

December 9, 2000

The meeting was called to order by President Joyce Ghee. The president thanked staff members, consultants, board members and volunteers for their efforts. She gave an overview of the Society's 86th year reporting on programs, events and accomplishments. The Glebe House interior has been cleaned and repainted. Peter Rose, food historian and writer, was the guest speaker at the Glebe's open house. Physical conditions at Clinton House are also being addressed. New agreements with the City of Poughkeepsie and the State of New York are being pursued as well. Increased fund raising activity and programming as well as grants from Senator Saland and Assemblyman Miller also helped. Executive Director Eileen Hayden followed with her report.

The main item on the agenda was the presentation of the revised Constitution and By-Laws. The President, Vice-President Rocco Staino and Lorraine Roberts read each section of the document to the assembled members. Following the reading, a motion was made to accept the Constitution. Discussion following produced several clarifying adjustments to the wording. A vote on the Constitution was taken and the motion to accept the new document passed. A subsequent motion was made to accept the By-Laws as presented and that motion was passed as well.

Because the newly voted Constitution called for a change in election procedures, the Nominating Committee had to produce a complete slate of officers and trustees. Following the election of the Board, an election of the 2001 Nominating Committee was held. Richard Reitano, Chair; James Smith, Sharon Kroeger, Donna Levinson and Rocco Staino were chosen. The meeting was adjourned.

Introduction

Few women have been the subject of articles in the annual DCHS Year Books since the Society's beginning in 1914 and, with some notable exceptions, few of the hundreds of articles have been written by women. This issue, the combined 1999-2000 Year Book, attempts to correct that imbalance. The partial list of women in Ghee and Mauri's self-guided tour shows an impressive number of accomplished women who have lived in the county from the 17th to the 20th century. The articles that follow offer a small sample of women who have lived in Dutchess. Here they raised children and cared for their families, established libraries, worked for the rights of women and minorities, volunteered in myriad ways. Some used their wealth to make the county more livable, others preserved the environment, provided health care, ran for office. They inspire us to follow in their footsteps according to our talents and abilities. We are all their beneficiaries.

In a chapter from her autobiography, Dorothea Taylor traced the beginnings of the movement to educate retarded children in Dutchess County and the origins of the Little Red School House. Taylor believed each child has potential for growth and that "the education of children and their teachers is society's greatest tool for improving itself."

Ruth Hogan's tribute to her mother, Mary Lucy Ham Alley, shows a life devoted to family and community that lasted until her death in 1988 at the age of 95. Of her mother, Hogan writes, "She did not concede adversity. Rather, she ... found a way to overcome or circumvent obstacles."

Maria Mitchell was largely self-taught and knew from experience that women were the intellectual equals of men. She proved it in her 23-year career as professor of astronomy and director of the observatory at Vassar College. Elizabeth Daniels has written of a lesser-known aspect of Mitchell's life, her efforts to develop and advance women in general.

Lawrence Mamiya's article about Bessie Harden Payne presents a woman who used her many talents to create a life of service. As a wife, mother, missionary in South Africa, teacher and principal of the Little Red School House, and later as a civil rights worker, active member of Ebenezer Baptist Church and Board of Directors of Catherine Street Community

Center, Payne worked to improve opportunities for Dutchess County's African-American community.

In the photo essay about Pauline Reichert Slater we glimpse a way of life that would have been the experience of many second generation families in Poughkeepsie in the 19th century. Their whole lives were lived in the Union and South Perry Street neighborhood of Poughkeepsie. Her parents and her husband's family had immigrated from Germany at mid-century and German continued to be spoken at home and in the German Catholic Church of the Nativity where they were members.

Marian Liggera tells the story of D.A.R. women saving Clinton House twice: once in the 1890s from deterioration, and again in 1951 when the State questioned its importance as an historic site worthy of state support.

Margaret Thorne Parshall's love of embroidery illustrates how sharing her interest led to the founding of a national organization and the training of dozens of Dutchess County women whose work continues to benefit the community.

Reprints of Nancy Alden's newspaper column, "Across the Spectrum," concern three county women. In the article on Eleanor Roosevelt, perhaps Dutchess' most famous woman, she presents an interview with Roosevelt biographer Blanche Weissen Cook, which brings to light aspects of Roosevelt's humanitarian spirit that are less well known. A second column pays tribute to Grace Murray Hopper, a professor of mathematics at Vassar College, Navy Admiral, and author of the programming language, COBOL. In the last excerpt Alden addresses her own successful careers as Navy officer, wife, mother, teacher, town supervisor and journalist.

Often it is the suffering of others that motivates a woman's choice of vocation. This was the case in the life of Grace Kimball, a missionary to Turkey in the 1880s, medical doctor in Poughkeepsie before 1900 and president of the YWCA from 1899 to 1940. Nancy Taubman relates the difficulties Kimball overcame to become a doctor at the turn of the century and how her medical knowledge served the community.

The women came from the south and midwest as well as the northeast; some were native Poughkeepsians. What they had in common was military service and living in Dutchess County. In interviews, twenty-two women discussed their time in the armed forces, from World War II to the 1990s, in jobs that ranged from intelligence work and nursing to checks of airplane electronic systems and cryptographic equipment repair. Sometimes their motivation for joining was a response to a loved one in the war effort or an opportunity for job training when college was not a possibility or because of racial discrimination. They are an adventurous group and each woman spoke well of her experience. They make us proud.

Nan Fogel
Editor

MRS. SLATER'S WORLD

by Annon Adams

Annon Adams is a local history researcher who has focused her interests on the Bardavon Opera House and the architect, J.A. Wood. She is a Poughkeepsie resident and is currently researching her family history.

Introduction

In the fall of 1998, James Storrow and I created "William Slater's World," an exhibit sponsored by the Dutchess County Historical Society at the Cunneen-Hackett Cultural Center in Poughkeepsie. The exhibit brought together photographs printed from glass plate negatives which William Slater took of his family, himself and his community. The photographs came from two private collections that were reunited by historical serendipity.



*Figure 1: Pauline Reichert Slater
Collection of Dan and Lucia Edgcomb*

For this issue of the Year Book on women, Mrs. Slater and her life in Poughkeepsie will be told through these photographs. In addition, research in City Directories, census information, and Poughkeepsie newspapers provide the bare facts of Mrs. Slater's life. She would have undoubtedly called herself an ordinary woman who lived most of her life in homes within a two-block radius in what is today the Union Street Historic District of Poughkeepsie.

Early Years

Mrs. Slater (see Figure 1) was born Pauline Reichert on July 26, 1862 in Poughkeepsie. Her parents were Joseph and Martha Lauderman Reichert. They had both immigrated to the United States from Germany. Pauline was their second child. Her older sister, Sophia, was born in 1859, and her younger sister, Mary, in 1865. She had two brothers: Frank was born July 30, 1867 and John in 1870.¹

Pauline's father, Joseph Reichert, was born in Germany on September 30, 1836. He came to the U. S. in 1856 at the age of 19, and became a U. S. citizen in 1861. He held a number of jobs as a laborer, a peddler and, finally, a carman in a coal yard. He owned his home at 48 South Bridge St. with a mortgage.² Pauline's mother was also from Germany where she was born about 1829. She came to the United States by 1849. She had married Joseph by 1860, and had seven children, five of whom were living in 1910. At her death in 1914, she had been living in Poughkeepsie for 65 years.³

Before her marriage, Pauline worked in a factory as did her younger sister, Mary. Her older sister, Sophia, was a servant, who lived with her parents. Nothing is known about Pauline's school; however, she



*Figure 2: William E. Slater
Collection of Cathy Bala*

and her sisters could all could read and write English.⁴

On November 17, 1885, Pauline Reichert married William E. Slater (see Figure 2), son of the late John and Mary Slater. Their marriage is recorded in German in the records of the German Catholic Church of the Nativity, located on Union Street at South Perry Street. William Slater's parents were also from Germany. He was a carpenter. Poughkeepsie's



*Figure 3: From left to right-
Frank Joseph, Pauline and young William Slater.
Collection of Dan and Lucia Edgcomb*

weekly newspaper, *The Sunday Courier*, also reported their marriage, which was performed by Rev. Gallus Bruder.⁵

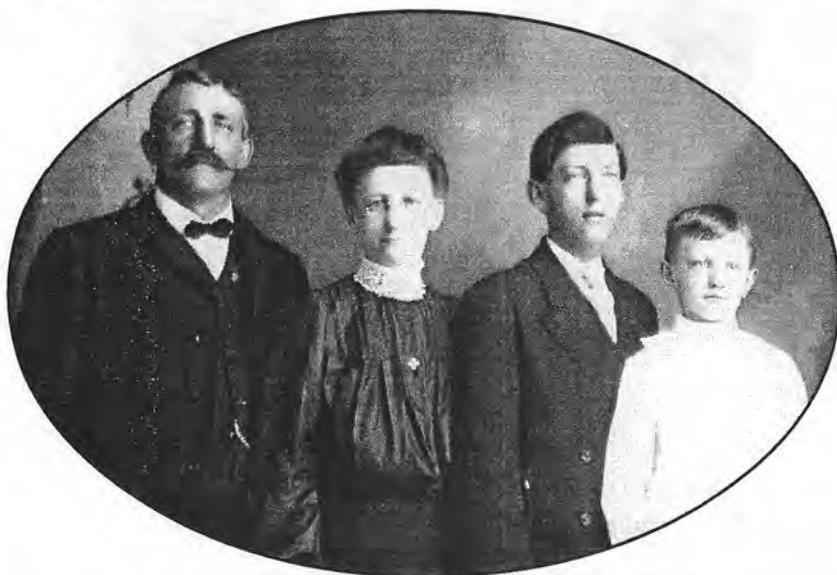
At or soon after their marriage, Pauline and William Slater went to live with her parents at 48 South Bridge Street. They had three children. Frank Joseph Slater was born in July, 1888. A daughter, Pauline, was born January 30, 1896 and died a year later on February 18, 1897. Their

younger son, William J. Slater, was born April 26, 1898. Beginning about 1891 and for many years thereafter, William worked for Mr. William W. Smith of Smith Brothers Cough Drops. A 1908 newspaper article said he was a "total abstainer."⁶

Two photographs show Mary with her children. The first (see Figure 3) is an informal photograph of Mary and her two sons. They are dressed up, the boys in suits and Mary with a lace-front blouse. The second photograph (see Figure 4) is probably a studio photograph which William copied, as indeed he did with the formal photographs of himself. The table on which the work was done is visible in a couple of the photographs. Mary wears a dark formal dress. They all look like they are trying to keep still and are staring at something in the distance. The warmth of the informal photographs is missing.

Fireman's Wife

In 1888 Pauline's husband became a member of a volunteer fire company, the Lady Washington Hose Company. Two of his brothers were



*Figure 4: From left to right- William, Pauline, Frank Joseph and young William Slater
Collection of Dan and Lucia Edgcomb*

already members, as well as his brother-in-law, John Bright, who was married to Pauline's sister, Sophia. Bright was also a carpenter and had superintended the construction of the Poughkeepsie Armory at the corner

of Market and Church Streets. He served as Foreman of Lady Washington Hose Company, and in 1888, 1889, 1892 and 1893 was Chief Engineer of the Fire Department. A recollection by Sophia 50 years later, tells us about an incident that must have shaken the members of the Slater and Reichert families - the sinking of the *Emeline*.⁷

John and Sophia Bright had gone on a fire company outing to Catskill. "Young America Hose Company, sponsors of the outing to Catskill that day, had chartered the *Emeline* and aboard the ship were scores of Poughkeepsie residents. The day was stormy part of the time, but towards evening it cleared.



*Figure 5: William E. Slater, Second Assistant Engineer,
Fire Department, City of Poughkeepsie.
Collection of Cathy Bala.*

'The *Emeline*,' Mrs. Bright says, 'was coming downstream, all aboard were sitting down to eat when there was an awful shock, and awful noise, and everybody began to shout. We had struck a rock.'

Events transpired fast, she'll tell you today. She can still picture

John, standing in the deep water alongside the ship which sank to the level of its main deck--one more step would have taken him over his depth in the channel--handing out to other rescuers to be passed up to the banks, the panicky picnickers aboard the craft.



*Figure 6: William E. Slater, First Assistant Engineer,
Fire Department, City of Poughkeepsie
Collection of Dan and Lucia Edgcomb.*

‘I was the last woman off the boat,’ she says proudly.... No transportation was available back to Poughkeepsie that night, she said. ‘All sorts of news went back ahead of us,’ she recalls. ‘They thought down here we were all drown.’

She recalls the night spent at Catskill, around a fire as the picnickers awaited the arrival of another boat the next day to bring them back to Poughkeepsie.”⁸ No doubt everyone at 48 South Bridge Street was relieved when Chief Bright and Sophia returned the next day!

Pauline was to share with her sister the life of a wife whose husband

was an officer in Poughkeepsie's volunteer fire department. William was quickly promoted to positions of trust within Lady Washington Hose Company and then the Poughkeepsie Fire Department. In 1892 and 1893 he was Assistant Foreman of Lady Washington. In 1896 he became Second Assistant Engineer of the City of Poughkeepsie Fire Department



*Figure 7: Young William Slater
in his carriage/stroller.
Collection of Cathy Bala.*

for four years until 1900, and is pictured in his uniform as Second Assistant Engineer in Figure 5. From 1902 through 1905, William Slater was First Assistant Engineer and then again served in 1908 and 1909. Though the uniform looks less impressive, the insignia on William Slater's hat in Figure 6, indicates his higher rank. In December 1905, the Knights of Columbus

Fraternal News reported that Slater "... has not failed to respond to a single alarm of fire."⁹



Figure 8: Young William with Frank Joseph (?) in front of the Christmas tree. Collection of Cathy Bala.

Sophia Bright talked about the life of the wife of a firefighter in the days of horse drawn fire apparatus. Of her husband, John, she said, "His comings and goings, day and night, winter and summer, to answer the call of the fire alarm was an annoyance to her, to be sure...."¹⁰ When Slater was appointed Assistant Fire Chief again in 1908, a local paper said, "He resides at 216 Union Street, 'right under the bell,' with his wife and children and a happier home cannot be found in the city."¹¹ And not only were there fires to fight, but also parades to march in, decorations to make for special

occasions like the 1907 Convention of the Hudson Valley Volunteer Fireman's Association and the 1909 Convention of the State Fireman's Association held in Poughkeepsie, and other social activities of the individual fire companies.

Life at Home

For the first 18 years of their marriage, Pauline and William lived with her parents at 48 South Bridge Street. For much of that time her sister, Mary, married to John Spiegel, a butcher, lived next door at 46 South Bridge Street. Later, Pauline's sister, Sophia, and her husband, John Bright, also lived with the Spiegel family. John and Mary Spiegel had two children, Katherine, born about 1889, approximately the same age as Pauline's older son, and John, born in 1892. Nearby lived their

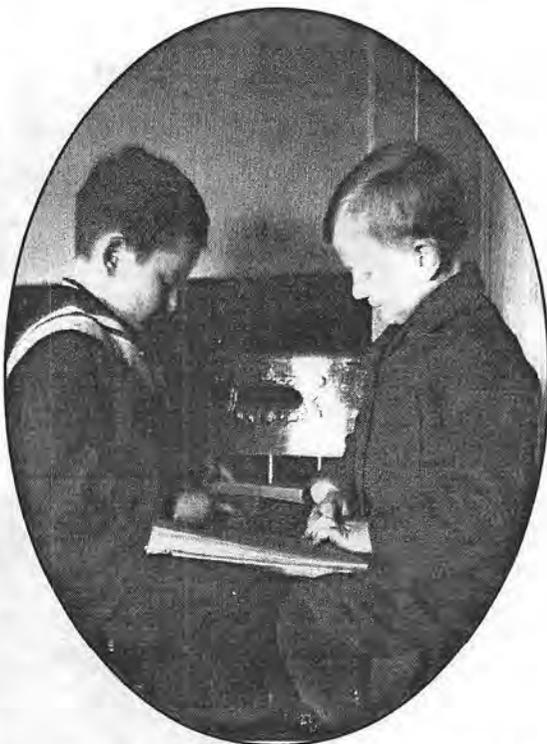


Figure 9: Young William and a friend with a board game.

Collection of Cathy Bala.

Nearby lived their brother, Frank, who was a barber, and his wife, Josephine. They also had two children, Charles, born in 1898, the same age as young William Slater, and Frank, born in 1901¹².

When the Slaters moved from 48 South Bridge in 1907 to 216 Union, they only moved a couple of blocks and were still in the Union Street area where a large number of families of German descent resided. The Slaters and the Reicherts attended the German Catholic Church of the Nativity. Young William attended the Church of the Nativity School and his brother probably did as well.

The photographs portray the Slater's family life. The photographs of young William are especially evocative. Young William in his carriage/

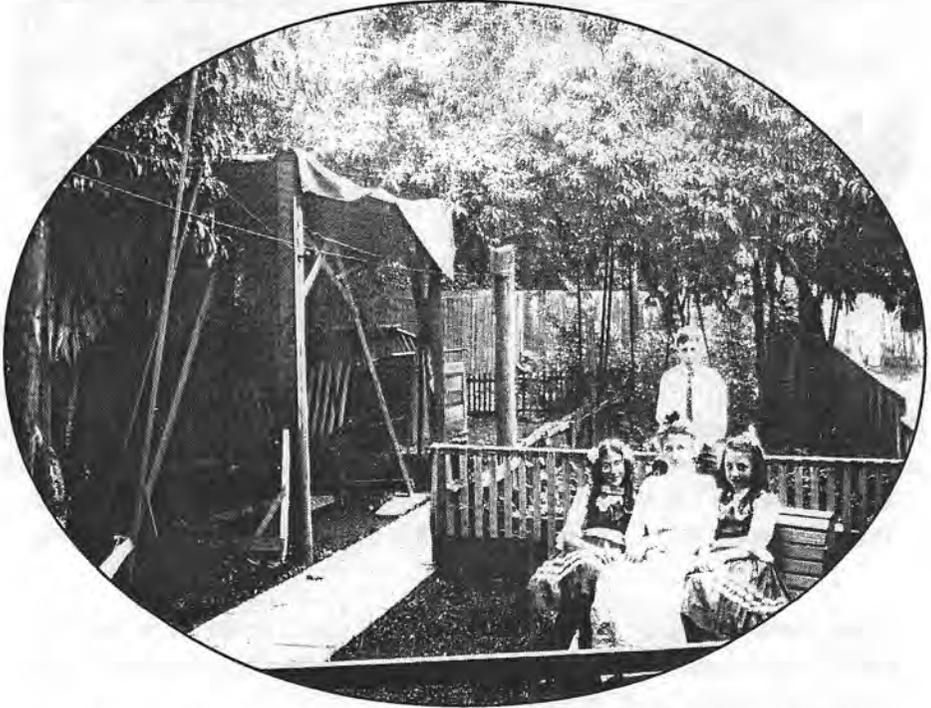
stroller (see Figure 7), sitting under the Christmas tree, maybe with his older brother (see Figure 8), playing a board game with a friend (see Figure 9), and standing beside a friend, perhaps his cousin, Charles (see Figure 10)



*Figure 10: Young William and a friend, perhaps his cousin Charles, getting their picture taken.
Collection of Cathy Bala.*

Two fascinating pictures show the backyards at 48 (see Figure 11) and 46 South Bridge (see Figure 12). That a carpenter was in residence at 48 is visible in the board walk, fencing and shelter in the back yard. Next door the yard is more functional. Both photos, but particularly the one at 46, show a warm family setting, with the women (Could it be, from left to right, Pauline, Mary and Sofia?) and the children in everyday clothes. Young William is hanging over the fence that separates the two yards.

Another photograph (see Figure 13) is taken at 46 South Bridge Street during a large gathering. A gentleman at the left has placed a plate on his head, which most of the others are looking at. Mary can be seen in the first row in a light dress, sitting in the middle of the young children. Many of the participants are laughing.



*Figure 11: A carpenter's back yard at 48 South Bridge Street.
Frank Joseph standing behind a woman and two girls.
Collection of Cathy Bala.*

A later photograph (see Figure 14) is taken at 216 Union Street. William Slater is in the lower left of the photo. A number of photographs include William. They were taken using a handheld remote control device which allowed him to photograph at a distance of about five feet. A couple of the young men, including Frank Joseph are enjoying cigars. Mary and perhaps her sister, are playfully tasting a dish cooked for the occasion. There is a jovial, warm feeling to the photograph.

There are also photographs (see Figures 15 and 16) taken at unknown locations which show the Slaters gathered with friends or family on the porch. In both pictures Mary has a smile on her face. Is it a smile

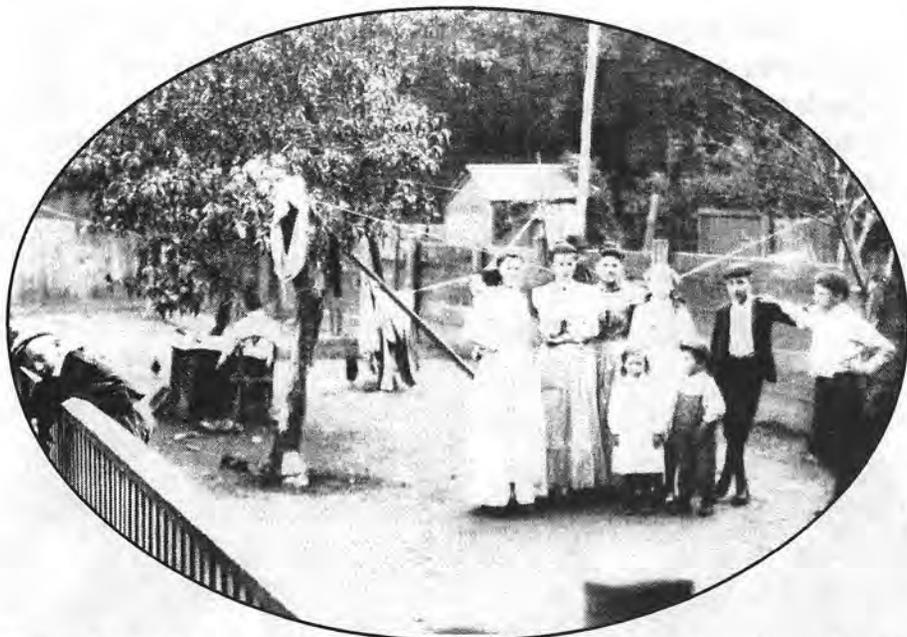


Figure 12: A butcher's back yard at 46 South Bridge Street. Young William at left is hanging over the fence that divides the yards of 48 and 46 South Bridge Street. The three women could be the sisters, from left to right, Pauline Slater, Mary Spiegel and Sophia Bright. Frank Joseph is the

for the camera or is she ready to crack a joke? We'll never know, but the photographs continue to paint a picture of a life filled with warm relationships with family and friends.

Mary and Her Church

The only other clue now available about Pauline Slater's life is that she was an active member of the Church of the Nativity. In 1902 the Church celebrated the Golden Jubilee (50th year) for the Congregation and the Silver Jubilee (25th year) of its pastor, the Rev. Gallus Bruder. A book was published to mark the occasion, in German, and it gives some evidence of Pauline's involvement with the church. She was the Treasurer of the St. Elizabeth's Society, and her sister Mary was the Vice-President. At the time of the Jubilee there were 140 members. The book relates that the St. Elizabeth Society's purpose was educational. The women who joined committed to guiding their children into the teachings and dogma of their religion, which was particularly important, in the opinion of the priest who

wrote the book, as too many families were neglecting the religious education of their children. In addition, from dues and donations, the Society provided funds for special projects.

At the end of the Golden Jubilee Book is an Appendix (Anhang), and in that is a section of Rules of Conduct. It lays out what was expected of church members. These rules no doubt helped to shape Pauline Slater's conduct as well as that of her sisters. It stated that all Germans should belong to the German Catholic church. They should send their children to its school "... to plant and cultivate the religion and good morals....Parents who send their children to public school commit a grave sin...."

Dangerous things to be avoided included:

1. Keeping company with godless and immoral people.
2. Bad books and above all like minded newspapers...
3. Mixed marriages...
4. Work and service by man on Sunday..."



Figure 13: Group photo in the back yard of 46 South Bridge Street. The center of attention is the man on the left with a plate on his head. Pauline Slater is in a light dress seated among the children in the first row. Collection of Dan and Lucia Edgcomb.



Figure 14: Clowning around in the back yard of 216 Union Street. Young William in front, his father on the left with a large pipe in his mouth, Pauline in the center with perhaps a sister, and Frank Joseph, right, on the fence with a cigar. Collection of Cathy Bala.



Figure 15: On the porch with family or friends. Someone other than William must have taken the picture because he is standing in the rear, Pauline is seated in the center, and their children in the front, young William on the left, and Frank Joseph on the right.

Collection of Dan and Lucia Edgcomb



Figure 16: William is in the right front taking the photograph. The squeeze bulb of the remote device is in his left hand. Young William is in the center front and Pauline sits in the rear.

“Hold your German Mother tongue dear and worthwhile....In English you calculate your dollars, but you converse in German with your children, to your confessor and to God.....In your family you will converse in German....

A Christian house should contain:

1. A crucifix
2. A picture of the Mother of God
3. Holy water
4. A Sick Call set
5. A prayer book
6. A good Catholic newspaper
7. A good Catholic calendar
8. A bible”

Each day was to begin and end with prayer. Mass was to be attended whenever possible. On Sundays and Holy Days it was a mortal sin not to go to Mass. Fast and abstinence days were explained as well as other holy days, baptism, confession, communion, marriage, sickness and the funeral. The Church of the Nativity undoubtedly played a central role in Pauline's life.¹³

After the Photographs

The photographs which exist probably span a period of approximately 25 years, from about 1890 until about 1915. This was when Pauline Slater's children were young, going to school and then beginning their life's work. Both children became electricians. Both would marry and have two children. Pauline's Mother died in 1914 at 85 years. Her husband probably died in the 1920's, though no death or burial records have been located for him. Her father, Joseph, lived to be 94 and died in 1931 at the home of Mary and John Spiegel. Perhaps the most difficult death for Pauline to accept was that of her son, Frank Joseph, who died in 1940 at the age of 53 of a heart ailment. Her son William and his family made their home with her on Grand Street, where they would have shared the loss together. Later in 1940, her brother Frank died. In 1941, John Spiegel died and in 1942, Mary Spiegel. Upon Pauline's death in 1943, only Sophia was still alive. She died in 1950 at the age of 91. She had been a widow for 40 years.

Pauline Slater died at her home, 10 Grand Street, on Wednesday, February 23, 1944. The funeral was held at the Church of the Nativity and

Pauline was buried at Calvary Cemetery as had been her parents and most of her brothers and sisters. She had three grandsons, two of whom were serving in World War II.¹⁴

Pauline had lived her entire life in Poughkeepsie, most of it in the Union Street area, near her church, and near many other German families. She probably spoke German at home, and could do most of her shopping at family-operated stores within walking distance of her home. She lived surrounded not only by her immediate family, but also her parents, and her brother and sisters. From the photographs it appears that she was a self confident and contented person -- perhaps with a sense of humor! Hers was an ordinary life at the turn of the nineteenth century. To us today, it seems extraordinary.

Endnotes

1 *Poughkeepsie New Yorker*, Wednesday, February 23, 1944, page 13. Obituary: "Mrs. Pauline Slater Dies at Her Home." *Poughkeepsie New Yorker*, January 24, 1950, page 23. Obituary: "Mrs. John Bright, In Her 91st Year." 1880 U. S. Census, Dutchess County, New York, City of Poughkeepsie, 2nd Ward, page 7, line 21.

2 *Poughkeepsie Eagle-News*, Thursday, February 12, 1931. Obituary: "Joseph M. Reickert Dies at the Age of 94 Years." 1910 U. S. Census, New York, Dutchess County, City of Poughkeepsie, 4th Ward, E.D. 5, District 67, Sheet 4A.; 1920 U. S. Census, New York Dutchess County, City of Poughkeepsie, 4th Ward, E.D. 48, Sheet 6 B; *Poughkeepsie City Directory*, 1864/1865 - 1901/1902.

3 *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*, April 3, 1914, "Mrs. Reickert's Funeral". 1860 U. S. Census, New York, Dutchess County, City of Poughkeepsie, First Ward. 1910 U. S. Census, New York Dutchess County, City of Poughkeepsie, District 5, E. D. 67, Sheet 4A.

4 1880 U. S. Census, New York, Dutchess County, City of Poughkeepsie, E.D. 58, Page 2, Lines 28 - 32. 1910 U. S. Census, New York State, Dutchess County, City of Poughkeepsie, 4th Ward, E. D. 67, Sheet 12 A.

- 5** Records of the Church of the Nativity now kept by Mt. Carmel Church, Poughkeepsie, N. Y. Poughkeepsie City Directories. *The (Poughkeepsie) Sunday Courier*, November 22, 1885.
- 6** *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*, Saturday, February 20, 1897, "Died: Slater, Pauline"; 1900 U. S. Census, New York State, Dutchess County, City of Poughkeepsie, 4th Ward, E. D. 25, Sheet 8, Line 24; *The Poughkeepsie Eagle-News*, Friday, April 19, 1940, Obituary: "Illness Fatal - Frank J. Slater"; *Poughkeepsie Journal*, Friday, May 17, 1963, Obituary: "William Slater, 65, Dies; Retired Electrical Contractor." *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, Thursday, January 2, 1908, page 5, "Popular Appointment William Slater, First Assistant Engineer of Fire Department, an Expert Fire Fighter."
- 7** *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*, Friday, March 11, 1910, Obituary: "The Death of John Bright"; Annual Report of the Chief Engineer of the Fire Department of the City of Poughkeepsie for the year 1888, Local History Collection, Adriance Memorial Library, Poughkeepsie.
- 8** *Poughkeepsie Star-Enterprise*, Monday, April 24, 1939, "Mrs. Bright Lives Here at 80 - Recalls Rescue Work at Catskill."
- 9** Knights of Columbus Fraternal News, December, 1908 and Annual Reports of the Chief Engineer of the Fire Department of the City of Poughkeepsie, both in the Local History Collection, Adriance Memorial Library, Poughkeepsie.
- 10** *Poughkeepsie Star-Enterprise*, Monday April 24, 1939, "Mrs. Bright Lives Here at 80 - Recalls Rescue Work at Catskill."
- 11** *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, January 2, 1908, page 5, "Popular Appointment William Slater, First Assistant Engineer of Fire Department, an Expert Fire Fighter."
- 12** Poughkeepsie City Directories. 1910 U. S. Census, Dutchess County, City of Poughkeepsie: Slater - 4th Ward, E.D. 67, page 12; Frank Reichert - 4th Ward, E.D. 68, page 4B; Spiegel - 4th Ward, E.D. 67, Page 4 B.
- 13** Andenken an das "Goldene Jubiläum" oder Funfzigjähriqe Bestehen der Geburt Christi Kirche zu Poughkeepsie und zur Erinnerung an das Silberne Jubiläum des Hochw. Gallus Bruder als Pfarrer in der Gemeinde. Local History Collection, Adriance Memorial Library. Thanks to Anna Buchholz and Ellen Urbin for translating parts of the book from German to English.

14 *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*, April 3, 1914, "Mrs. Reickert's Funeral." *Poughkeepsie Evening Star and Enterprise*, Thursday, February 12, 1931, "Joseph M. Reickert Dies at Daughter's." *Poughkeepsie Eagle News*, Thursday, February 12, 1931, "Joseph M. Reickert Dies at the Age of 94 Years," March 3, 1941, Fri. April 19, 1940, "Illness Fatal Frank J. Slater," August 26, 1940, "John A. Spiegel, Sr. Dies at His Home," August 26, 1940, "F. B. Reickert, Barber, Dies," and Saturday, October 10, 1942, "Mrs. Mary Spiegel Dies at 77." *Poughkeepsie New Yorker*, Wednesday, February 23, 1944, "Mrs. Pauline Slater Dies at Her Home" and January 24, 1950, "Mrs. John Bright, in Her 91st Year," Records of Calvary Cemetery, St. Martin De Porres Church, Poughkeepsie.

BESSIE HARDEN PAYNE

(1895 - 1991)

By Lawrence H. Mamiya

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Bessie Harden Payne and Rev. Herbert A. Payne

Mrs. Bessie Harden Payne, a native Poughkeepsian, was a prominent, distinguished and articulate leader in the African American community in the city of Poughkeepsie. She was a "driving force behind many of the city's black civic organizations."¹ Born in Poughkeepsie on January 16, 1895, she was the daughter of John and Mary M. Woods Harden. Her paternal grandfather, Mr. James Harden, came from Highland, New York and worked as a waiter on the Hudson River boats in the late nineteenth century. Mr. Harden had also fought in the Civil War. Bessie's mother, Mrs. Mary M. Woods Harden, came to Poughkeepsie in 1892 from Stonington, Connecticut, where her maternal grandfather was a freedman in the early nineteenth century and her father, Henry Woods, worked as a constable in Stonington. Educated in Poughkeepsie schools, Bessie Harden became one of the first black graduates of Poughkeepsie High School, matriculating in the

class of 1913. Recalling her education, Mrs. Payne said, "I was the first colored to graduate in a number of years. I don't think there were but about 500 Negroes all together in Poughkeepsie at that time. And of course, there weren't that many young people to go to school."²

As one of the few African-American students in Poughkeepsie's public schools, she did encounter a few incidents of racial discrimination. In the sixth grade, a Miss Tuttle invited her class to her home for a social gathering and Bessie informed her mother that she was going to be late that day. When the group reached the corner of the street where the Hardens lived, Miss Tuttle said, "Bessie, you can go home, you don't have to go with us." After arriving home early, she told her mother what had happened. The next day Mrs. Harden accompanied her daughter to school and spoke with Miss Tuttle. "I don't know what she said to Miss Tuttle but she was always very kind to me after that."

During her childhood years, Bessie Harden pointed out that there was a level of "de facto" racial discrimination in some of the local hotels and restaurants. The Nelson House, for example, did not hire Negroes to work there for a long period of time. After some pressure by local leaders in the late twenties, Negroes worked there as porters and waiters, but they could not stay overnight in the Nelson House. Bessie's father John Harden worked at the Nelson House as a waiter for thirty years. She recalled that when the famous singer Marian Anderson performed at the Bardavon Opera House, the audience was still applauding while Ms. Anderson was being driven back to the train station by Rev. Payne because she could not stay overnight in a hotel in the Queen City of the Mid-Hudson. Other famous black performers like Roland Hayes and Langston Hughes encountered similar kinds of discrimination, returning to New York City after their performances in Poughkeepsie. The Smith Brothers Cough Drop Company also had a restaurant that did not hire black people or let them eat there.

The Ebenezer Baptist Church, which laid the cornerstone of its building in 1905 and was led by the Rev. Charles Ferris, was very important in the formation of Bessie's life. Her mother, Mrs. Mary Harden, was the superintendent of the Sunday School and also played the piano for worship services. Ebenezer became the center of Bessie's social life and activities. Most of her close friends were members of the Baptist Young People's Union which met every Wednesday night. The family also spent all day Sunday at the church with worship service at 11 a.m., dinner at the church, Sunday School at 3 p.m., followed by an

evening service.

In 1913, Mrs. Mary Harden and her daughter Bessie gathered a group of 10 women to start the Poughkeepsie Neighborhood Club. Mrs. Harden also served as the president of the club until her death in 1948. The purpose of the club was to help women do civic work and to help uplift womanhood in general. It brought outstanding Negro speakers to Poughkeepsie for lectures. It also encouraged churches and community groups to observe Emancipation Day and Negro History Sunday. In 1917 the club sponsored its first Lincoln-Douglass dinner. During the first week of every April, the club supported Negro Health Week. The Poughkeepsie Neighborhood Club became a member of the United Federation of Negro Women, which was organized by the famous educator and college president, Dr. Mary McCleod Bethune. The club also played an informal role in social change by encouraging black professionals like Dr. Garrett Price to relocate to Poughkeepsie. The Catherine Street Community Center, which was established in 1922, was an outgrowth of the Poughkeepsie Neighborhood Club. The club experience became significant for Bessie Harden when in later life she was elected as the president of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Inc.³ These women's clubs were the forerunner of the women's movement in black communities.

After graduating from Poughkeepsie High School, Bessie attended Virginia Seminary College in Lynchburg, Virginia where she married her husband, the Rev. Herbert A. Payne, who was then training for the ministry. Married on November 13, 1915, they had two sons: Herbert Harden who was born in South Africa and John who was born in Poughkeepsie. Two daughters, Rosemary and Nada, died as infants.

Although she desired to do missionary work in India after hearing a speaker in high school, Bessie agreed to follow her husband to do mission work for the Baptists in South Africa in 1916 during World War I. Their boat took a longer route along the South American coast to South Africa due to the fear of German submarines. While her husband was busy with missionary work, she taught the sixth grade in a Baptist-run school. Mrs. Payne was also puzzled by the apartheid system in South Africa, especially in regard to the fine racial gradations found there. "Well, to see an advertisement in the paper for a nurse is really amusing. Some want a native, some want a three-fourth colored, some a four-fifth colored---I don't know how they figure it." While she claimed that neither she nor her husband had encountered problems

with racial discrimination in South Africa because they worked largely in the rural areas with the native Amafango and Kawagi people, she did notice that black Africans were not allowed to walk on the sidewalks, particularly when whites were present.

After spending six years (1916 to 1922) in South Africa as missionaries of the Baptist Church, the Paynes returned to the U.S. and lived in New York City and Albany where the Rev. Payne had churches. During the Depression years, he became one of the directors of the Work Projects Administration in New York State during Franklin Delano Roosevelt's presidency, while Mrs. Payne was active with the American Baptist Home Mission Society. She also made friends with Dr. Mary McCleod Bethune, the founder and president of Bethune-Cookman College and friend of Eleanor Roosevelt, who became the highest ranking African American administrator in the federal government under FDR. When Rev. Payne worked in Albany with the WPA, the family lived in Chatham, Columbia County.

During the 1930s in Poughkeepsie, there were no African Americans working in the factories or the local hospitals: Hudson River State, St. Francis and Vassar Brothers. Bessie's mother, Mrs. Mary Harden, Gaius Bolin, Sr. (the first black attorney and first black to graduate from Williams College), and Dr. Robert Wesley Morgan (the first black physician) were among the local black leaders who persuaded these employers to begin hiring black people. They were successful. Prior to the protests and demonstrations of the civil rights movement, these leaders believed in a "quiet way of working," using moral suasion behind the scenes.

After her husband died in 1952, Bessie Payne returned to Poughkeepsie from Chatham and became a teacher of retarded boys. She worked at and later became the principal of the city's Little Red School House for the education of retarded children from 1959 to 1966. Her eldest son, Herbert, died in 1954. To deal with the pain of two major losses in a short period, she immersed herself in community and church affairs in Poughkeepsie. She renewed her membership at the Ebenezer Baptist Church and became an active member and missionary. Along with President and Mrs. Henry Noble MacCracken of Vassar College, and the local NAACP, Mrs. Payne helped to desegregate some of the large stores in Poughkeepsie, such as Luckey Platt, by encouraging them to hire black clerks. She also served on the Board of Directors of the

Catherine Street Community Center.

Mrs. Bessie Payne won numerous awards for her activities including the following: Distinguished Achievement Award; Woman of the Year in 1964 by the Poughkeepsie Business and Professional Women's Clubs; New York State Legislature Achievement Award in 1974 for her work on behalf of senior citizens; the Mary C. Christian Award in 1976 by the Hudson Valley Opportunities Industrialization Center, Inc. For volunteerism; American Legion Merit Medal and Citation; Empire State Federation of Women's Clubs; president of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Inc.

After a long period of illness, Mrs. Bessie Harden Payne died on July 31, 1991 at the age of 96. Besides her achievements, Bessie is remembered for her distinguished bearing, poise and leadership skills. "When she was in her prime, she did her share of volunteering for the people of the Mid-Hudson Valley," said Mrs. Earlene Patrice, a friend and fellow activist for 30 years. "Her living was not in vain because she gave of herself to everyone."⁴

Endnotes

¹ Obituary, "Civic Leader Bessie H. Payne, 96, helped found black organizations,

Poughkeepsie Journal, Thursday, August 1, 1991, p. 2B.

² See the edited transcript of the oral history interview with Mrs. Bessie Harden Payne in Lawrence H. Mamiya and Patricia A. Kaurouma, editors, *For Their Courage and For Their Struggles: The Black Oral History Project of Poughkeepsie*, New York. Poughkeepsie, New York: Center for Africana Studies, 1978, pp. 18 to 33. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes and biographical materials are taken from this interview.

³ See Lawrence H. Mamiya and Lorraine Roberts, "Invisible People, Untold Stories: A Historical Overview of the Black Community in Poughkeepsie," in *New Perspectives on Poughkeepsie's Past: Essays to Honor Edmund Platt*, edited by Clyde Griffen. Dutchess County Historical Society, Volume 72, 1987: 76-104, pp. 88-89.

⁴ *Poughkeepsie Journal* Obituary, op.cit., p. 2B

**“FEEDING YOUNG LADIES’ MINDS FROM LIVING
SPRINGS”**

MARIA MITCHELL AND VASSAR COLLEGE

By Elizabeth A. Daniels

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*Maria Mitchell
Special Collections, Vassar College Libraries*

In keeping with his desire to make Vassar Female College a first-rate institution of learning, Matthew Vassar, founder, decided to try to attract Maria Mitchell (1818-1889), America's celebrated woman astronomer, to the college as the professor of astronomy and director of the

observatory. To that end, he asked Rufus Babcock, one of the college's first trustees, to visit her in Lynn, Massachusetts in the summer of 1862 and sound her out. Babcock did so, and followed up his visit in October with a letter expressing hope that she would accept the offer tendered on behalf of Matthew Vassar to teach in the newly-endowed college for women, which was to open in 1865. The references from important scientists were so enthusiastic about her abilities that the college must have her, Babcock said: "For certainly we cannot but desire our young ladies' minds to be fed from living springs--rather than from a reservoir."¹

Maria Mitchell accepted the invitation and she was indeed a "living spring," with innovative ideas about teaching and about how women could reshape their lives intellectually. For twenty-three years she was a faculty leader at the endowed woman's college. In a culture that put a premium on men's self-reliance and women's dependence on men, she was a source of inspiration and creative ideas and an advocate of self-reliance and independence, not only for her astronomy students but for all women. An activist, she played a leading role in establishing at Vassar a mode of teaching that required individual research into the sources (in her case, requiring students to do self-reliant, systematic observation of the stars and planets), and she encouraged women to refute over-dependence on the largely male-created "reservoir" and think for themselves.

Sixty-nine year old Poughkeepsian Matthew Vassar, a wealthy brewer, had declared in 1859 that he wanted to start and endow an institution that would be of value to mankind (womankind, as it turned out) and at the same time would honor the heritage of his family, which had emigrated from England to America in 1796. Returning to England in 1845 to make the grand tour and to find his roots, he visited Guy's Hospital in London where he decided on the spot to devote a portion of his estate to a charitable purpose, as had his early ancestor, Sir Thomas Guy. Thereafter, responding to the often expressed desires of his deceased schoolmistress niece, Lydia Booth, who had urged him to take up the cause of women's education, and also the persuasive advice of Milo P. Jewett, who became the first president of the college, he made up his mind to start a women's college that would do for young women what a Yale or a Harvard had been doing for men during the years of young America. In his first official communication to the Trustees at their meeting (February 26, 1861) he said: "It occurred to me that woman, having received from her Creator the same intellectual constitution

as man, has the same right as man to intellectual culture and development." Maria Mitchell was just the person to help in conceiving such a college, Vassar thought, and he determined to ask her to hold the chair of astronomy.

Like so many of the early young women who were to study under her at Vassar, Maria Mitchell lacked a high school education. Yet she was very well educated and naturally very bright. From the time she was a child, she took astronomy seriously and helped her father, a self-taught astronomer, with one of his Nantucket undertakings of "rating" the chronometers for ship captains, a procedure which depended on knowledge and use of the telescope. When she was seventeen she took a position which she held for many years, as a librarian at the Nantucket Athenaeum, where her father was on the board. Many well-known persons came to Nantucket from the mainland and abroad to lecture at the Athenaeum, and she met many of America's distinguished citizens, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, whom she welcomed again when he lectured at Vassar. At the Athenaeum also, she occupied herself with study during her spare time, reading the classics of mathematics, science and literature. On October 1, 1847, while "sweeping the sky," she discovered a comet, "as a result of her own mathematical calculations" later wrote Martha MacLeish, her Vassar student in the class of 1878).² The comet was named for her, and she won a prize of a gold medal from the King of Denmark for the discovery. Thus catapulted into sudden fame, the next year she was elected into membership in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the only woman so honored until 1943. (The membership was designated as "honorary" and not as "fellow" because she was a woman.)

In 1857 Mitchell began what were to turn out to be liberating and instructive travels. She first made a trip across the United States and to the South as companion to the daughter of a banker. Then, with letters of introduction from Professor Benjamin Silliman, distinguished scientist at Yale University, and Professor George Bond of Harvard, she traveled to England a year later to meet the Astronomer Royal, Dr. G.B. Airy, at Greenwich Observatory, and in England she also visited Sir John and Caroline Herschel, astronomers, and Mary Somerville, the 75-year old mathematician. Subsequently visiting France, she called on Urbain Leverrier, distinguished mathematician and physicist at his astronomical observatory and then traveled with Nathaniel Hawthorne and his family to Italy, where she was admitted to the Vatican

Observatory, the first woman to be officially received. In Italy, she stayed with Harriet Hosmer, an American sculptor.

Forty-one years old when Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published in 1859, she was forty-seven when she started teaching astronomy at Vassar where she was probably the best known professor for the next twenty-three years, from 1865 to 1888. She helped establish the quality of the Vassar education in its formative period. The first students to come to the college were often ill prepared to meet collegiate standards, but she did not let that stop her. Insisting on the intellectual equality of women and men, she developed in them that self-reliance that many of them initially lacked in the acquisition and development of mathematical and observational skills. Her methodology consisted of a foundation of mathematics on which to pursue calculation, observation and recording of individual results. She believed in the independence and initiative of the individual student and refused to guide students' thinking too closely: she wanted them to learn for themselves. She made use of new technologies which emerged during her lifetime, such as photography and telegraphy. (Samuel F.B. Morse was a member of the college's first board of trustees.) Her students photographed the sun every day and made running observations about sunspots, just as she had recorded the weather daily in Nantucket at the Athenaeum Library.

Twice she took her students or ex-students on field trips halfway across the country to observe total eclipses, once to Burlington, Iowa (1869) and one to Denver, Colorado (1878). In her observatory, she conducted night classes both out-of-door and indoors, at night and during the day. She met students at all levels, social and academic. The observatory dome, where she guided students in the use of the telescope, was also the locale where she conducted her famous "dome parties" on special occasions.

The first years of the college were not easy: it was very hard to set standards and build a curriculum from scratch, especially since the college was without precedent. Mitchell's role in the struggle was seminal. Her student, Mary Whitney, who became her assistant after she graduated and her successor after Mitchell's retirement, summed up her contributions to the college in an unpublished manuscript.

"In this struggle to hold up the college standard against the heavy odds of its initial days, Miss Mitchell took a prominent and influential part. She had not herself enjoyed the privilege of collegiate

training, but she knew what exact, thorough, and advanced study meant, and she would accept no other in her department. To many, even educated people, astronomy implies half-poetic and half sentimental gazing at the stars, a tracing out of the constellations, a watching of the evening star and its setting or the morning star and its rising ... but the working astronomer gains nothing thereby.”³

Mitchell, instead of catering to the public notion, delineated routines and set problems which required systematic observation of the skies and recording of the results. She called the students from their rooms in Main Building to the roof of the observatory and, dividing them into groups, made them responsible for using their eyes to become acquainted with the individual stars and planets and their shifts and changes, before using instruments. The projects she set for them were ones that only their own observations could satisfy. They could not find their answers except through their own line of investigation.

Over the years, much has been written about Mitchell, but less has been said about her interest in the advancement of women than about her Vassar professorship. The two interests fed each other. She was president for two years of the Congress for the American Association for the Advancement of Women, and she convened the third congress to Syracuse in 1875 and the fourth in Philadelphia in 1876. In 1877 she invited the association to Vassar, where a mid-year meeting was held in the observatory. It was unusual to have a congress of women meet on a political subject at that time. (When the Boston Branch of the Vassar Alumnae Association was formed in 1878, it was not considered suitable for a company of adult women to meet in a hotel without a chaperone, and James Monroe Taylor, president of the college, offered himself for that purpose.) The opportunity to observe or just hear about articulate women discussing and reading papers related to issues in women's lives drew Mitchell's students into a world of ideas larger than the Vassar classroom.

In this fashion Mitchell enlarged the sphere of her influence as she headed the congress's committee on science education. In a paper, subsequently published, which she delivered at the Philadelphia meeting, she offered the view that women were needed in scientific work because they could create and offer scientific methods that were different from those of men. She wrote:

“When I see a woman put an exquisitely fine needle at exactly the same distance from the last stitch at which that last stitch was from

its predecessor, I think what a capacity she has for astronomical observations. Unknowingly, she is using a micrometer, unconsciously, she is graduating circles. And the eye which has been trained in the matching of worsteds is especially fitted for the prism and spectroscope....”

“... But for the young women who have a love of nature and a longing to study her laws--how shall the taste be developed? We must have a different kind of teaching. It must not be text-book teaching. There is a touch of the absurd in a teacher's asking any but a very young person a question, the answer to which he already knows. In old fashioned books the dialogue method is better used: The pupil asks and the teacher answers. Eudora asks how far the earth is from the sun, and Tutor answers The spirit of science ... is the love of investigation ... I should have more hope of a girl who questioned if three angles of a triangle equalled two right angles, than of one who learned the demonstration and accepted it in a few minutes.”⁴

Mitchell retired from Vassar in 1888 and returned to her home in Lynn, Massachusetts. In 1991 her Vassar Observatory was listed as a National Historic Landmark, celebrating her unique contributions to American education, women's progress, and science.

Endnotes

¹ Rufus Babcock to Maria Mitchell, October 15, 1862, Maria Mitchell Library, Nantucket.

² “Maria Mitchell's Dome Parties,” Maria Mitchell Collection, Vassar College Libraries.

³ Maria Mitchell Papers, Vassar College Libraries.

⁴ Papers Read at the Fourth Congress of Women Held at St. George's Hall, Philadelphia, October 4, 5, 6, 1876. Washington, 1877, Todd Brothers.

HOW THE DAR LADIES "SAVED" THE CLINTON HOUSE - TWICE!

By Marian Liggera

Marian Edmonds Liggera, Historian of Mahwenawasigh Chapter, NSDAR, was Regent of the Chapter one hundred years after the founding Regent, Mrs. Caroline Atwater. She lives in Poughkeepsie and is the mother of four children.

The Clinton House in Poughkeepsie and the Mahwenawasigh Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution share a curiously intertwined history. The Clinton House was built in 1765 and named for a famous Revolutionary Patriot, Governor George Clinton. The Mahwenawasigh Chapter of the DAR was founded in Poughkeepsie and its members, like all DAR members, trace their ancestry to one of the Revolutionary War Patriots. Both the DAR and the Clinton House have persevered through the changes of the Twentieth Century to give testimony to forebears whose indomitable spirit would not give up or give in.

In 1894 an active, community-minded woman named Mrs. Edward Storrs (Caroline Swift) Atwater organized a local DAR chapter. There were thirteen charter members: Mrs. Atwater, Mrs. Frank Hasbrouck, Mrs. Horace D. Hafcut, Mrs. D. Crosby Foster, Mrs. Martin Heermance, Miss Myra H. Avery, Miss Helen W. Reynolds, Mrs. Robert Sanford, Mrs. Spencer VanCleave, Miss Mary Varick, Miss Katherine Wodell, Mrs. Milton A. Fowler and Mrs. William A. Miles.

Mrs. Atwater was deeply involved with many community organizations and had a family tradition of service to others. Shortly after becoming Regent (president) of the chapter, she was dismayed to see an old stone house, the Clinton House, in disuse. Mrs. Atwater began reading through old records and became convinced of its historic value. She decided that the building must be saved and turned into a museum of Colonial and Revolutionary "relics." Mrs. Atwater rallied chapter members to join her in raising money for its purchase and for two years the ladies sold subscriptions and held fundraisers such as a loan exhibition of antiques.

The Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle, Friday, January 21, 1898 reported:

OLD STONE HOUSE PURCHASED

By Syndicate for Daughters of the Revolution (sic)

“It has been rumored several times that the local chapter of the Daughters of the Revolution had carried out their plan of purchasing the only building in Poughkeepsie of real historic associations and now the announcement is definitely made that a syndicate has purchased it in the interest of the chapter. The building stands at the corner of Main and White Streets, not a very promising location for a historical museum. It should have been built on some one of the bluffs in the lower part of town that commanded a fine view of the river, but as Governor George Clinton had the bad taste to live way out there when there was so much good land along the river, there is nothing more to be said. It will be a considerable gain to redeem the building from the disreputable uses to which it has so long been put.”

The Chapter was able to purchase the property from Mr. Charles Kirchner for \$7,000, a sizable portion of which was “forgiven” by Mr. Kirchner, as he was convinced that their purchase of the House would enhance the value of his neighboring properties. Members dedicated themselves to lovingly refurbishing and furnishing the “Clinton Museum.” Donations of furnishings were requested, and within two days 800 pieces of furniture and antiques were received. A formal opening was held May 25, 1898, but it was a simple affair due to the Spanish-American War.

In 1899, however, the Chapter was having financial difficulty managing the upkeep of the property. It was decided that a committee should be formed to incorporate and hold title to the property on behalf of the Chapter. This was accomplished in April when Mrs. Atwater, Frank Van Kleeck and Tristram Coffin obtained the title to the property with a \$5,000 mortgage at 4% from the former owner, Mr. Kirchner. Judge Hasbrouck, with the consent of the Court, incorporated the “syndicate,” with their stated object being “Patriotic, Educational and Historical” -- also the object of the DAR. In July 1900, New York State purchased the mortgage with a \$5,000 appropriation. The bill was signed by Governor Theodore Roosevelt, with a verbal agreement that the building would continue to be used as a “Museum of Relics.” The State Taconic Park Commission had jurisdiction over the property, which was maintained with a stipend from the State and operated by the DAR.

Mahwenawasigh Chapter members continued their restoration work, with a 1902 motion that "the conservatory be removed and a new kitchen be built" at a cost of \$500. In 1914 the 75-year old mansard roof was replaced with a Revolutionary-style gable roof. Members spent three months with Mr. Vought of the New York State Architects office, poring over records and studying other stone houses with the goal of returning the building to its Revolutionary form. During these investigations eight open fireplaces were uncovered and two original mantles were discovered in the attic.

While the restoration continued, members were also busy with work for the War Effort. Every Wednesday, five sewing machines were operated with the result of hundreds upon hundreds of pajamas, robes, comfort bags, splint pillows and piles of knitted garments. Mrs. Atwater's daughter, Evelyn Atwater Cummins, was now a chapter member and she was busy organizing many of the activities as well as driving an ambulance.

In January of 1921 work was complete enough that a formal opening of the "Clinton Mansion" was held. Despite inclement weather, Main Street was lined with waiting motor cars drawn up to the curb on Main Street. Guests were treated to welcoming fires in the great open fireplaces and were serenaded by the Gibson Mandolin Club.

The next thirty years proved fruitful for both the DAR and the Clinton House. Thousands of visitors came to the House, and Mahwenawasigh Chapter now had hundreds of members. One member, Mrs. W. Arthur (Belle) Saltford began an Occupational Therapy program at Ellis Island for ill immigrants. Her program achieved national acclaim, with model programs under her direction in Staten Island and California. World War II saw increased activity as members engaged directly in war activities, with a total of 36,000 hours and \$125,000 in war bonds and stamps the output.

On September 21, 1951, there came surprising news: the New York State's Joint Legislative Committee on Historic Sites listed Clinton House as one of ten holdings which should be "disposed of." It had been first reported by Helen Wilkinson Reynolds in the 1925 Year Book of the Dutchess County Historical Society that Clinton House had been built in 1765 by Hugh Van Kleeck, who lived there until selling it in 1780, thus disproving the popular theory that Governor Clinton had lived there. Dr. Henry Noble MacCracken, President Emeritus of Vassar College, also made the assertion in the spring of 1951 that Governor Clinton had never lived in Clinton House.

At this time, Mahwenawasigh Chapter was being led by a new regent, Mrs. Douglas C. (Barbara) Buys. Mrs. Buys, at the age of twenty-six, was the youngest regent that the chapter ever had. Mrs. Buys made a fortuitous choice in appointing former regent and community leader Mrs. Saltford of Ellis Island fame to lead a special Clinton House committee. This committee was charged with the task of proving the House's worth to the New York State Historian, Albert B. Corey.

Mrs. Saltford's committee declared that they would show the state and national importance of Clinton House. The committee also set out to prove that New York State had a moral obligation to continue its agreement to maintain Clinton House as a state historical site. The DAR committee's first course of action was to sponsor a public meeting at Clinton House. They invited the State Historian, Mr. Corey, as well as all of the members of the Joint Legislative Committee on Historic Sites. The October 3, 1951 issue of the *Poughkeepsie New Yorker* featured Mr. Corey examining a spinning wheel, while Mrs. Saltford and Mrs. Buys looked on:

"Stirring appeals for state retention of the house were made at the hearing. Leaders of the DAR Chapter were joined by city and county officials and other civic leaders in presenting the case for continued state recognition of the Revolutionary period house as having state and national importance. The DAR chapter has helped maintain the house during all of the period of 50 years it has been under state control. Mrs. W. Arthur Saltford, past regent of the DAR chapter, presided at the hearing, attended by an audience which filled the west room of the Clinton House main floor. ... State Historian Corey and his associates of the State Education Department contended in a formal report the Clinton House had no significance from a state standpoint. Mr. Corey held out no immediate promise the state department would change its plan to dispose of the house and nine other historical sites in the state. Mrs. Saltford who summed up the position of the DAR chapter, declared she resented state officials handling of the entire matter."

From the State's point of view, the matter was at a standstill until a review by the Board of Regents of the Education Department. Dr. Louis Wilson, State Commissioner of Education, was slated to present the question to the Board in December. Not being ones to wait idly by, Mrs. Saltford, Mrs. Buys and a few others prepared a pamphlet stating their case in defense of Clinton House. They then secured an appointment with Dr.

Wilson and drove to Albany to discuss it with him. They also sent copies of the pamphlet to each of the members of the Board. On December 7, 1951 word came that the Board of Regents and the State Education Department voted to maintain Clinton House unless directly instructed not to by the State Legislature.

January 29, 1953, *Poughkeepsie New Yorker*:

STATE KEEPS CLINTON HOUSE, DAR JUBILANT AT
'VICTORY'

The members of the Joint Legislative Committee voted to retain the house permanently as an historic site. Mrs. Saltford was quoted as saying: "We had faith that the right would win ..."

The Council on Historic Sites made another bid to dispose of Clinton House, this time in November of 1956. This bid was short-lived as the whole community defended the worth of the House and joined the DAR's once again vocal protest. The matter was quickly at an end, due to, as State Senator Hatfield put it in the January 23, 1957 issue of the *Poughkeepsie New Yorker*:

"The evidence that the Daughters of the American Revolution have accumulated regarding the historical value of Clinton House has convinced me that I can rally enough votes in the Senate to defeat any bill the Board of Regents may introduce to abandon it."

The ladies of the DAR had won yet another battle for historic preservation. Like Mrs. Atwater before them, Mrs. Saltford and Mrs. Buys saw a challenge and took it in stride. Their example inspires new generations of women in Dutchess County to be involved in their communities. It shows that women, whether working alone or together, can make a difference in their neighborhood, town, county and nation -- not only for today, but for years to come.

Walking With Grace

By Nancy Taubman

Nancy Taubman is a midwesterner who moved to Dutchess County in 1984. For the past seventeen years, until her retirement in 2001, she worked as public relations coordinator at the YWCA in Poughkeepsie. She first became interested in Dr. Grace Kimball while working on a calendar for the 110th anniversary of the YWCA in 1991.



Dr. Grace N. Kimball

On the south side of Poughkeepsie there is a cluster of streets with pleasant homes and trees, tall and straight as soldiers. They mind their sentry duties well for they are keepers of the nearly forgotten stories of the women for whom these streets were named: Bancroft, Seaman, St. Anne, Yates, Gaskin, and Kimball. At the turn of the last century women worked in factories, offices and stores and, most importantly, at home. They tended

the sick, gave birth to, educated, and raised the children. They were not allowed to hold office or vote; nevertheless they left a strong imprint on the map and heart of the city of Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County, and the world.

If the streets could talk, they would tell of Mrs. William Bancroft Hill, Annie Yates Seaman and her daughter, Josephine Gaskin Seaman, founders and dedicated workers of the Young Women's Christian Association of Poughkeepsie. The goal of the organization, which began in 1881, was dedicated to "the improvement of the religious, intellectual, social and, as far as possible, the temporal welfare of young women, especially those depending on their own exertions for support, and strangers to Poughkeepsie."

Perhaps the most interesting story is the one about a determined young woman and the Sultan of Turkey. This is the life of Grace Niebuhr Kimball. Born in Dover, New Hampshire in 1855, young Grace would not have imagined how far her adventurous spirit and desire to help others would take her. The daughter of Richard Kimball and Elizabeth White Hale Kimball, Grace left home at the age of 18 to complete her early education in Bangor, Maine. Deeply touched by the need for missionaries in Turkey, she enlisted for service and in 1882 the American Board of Foreign Missions assigned her to Van, "a city of Armenia in Turkey in Asia."¹

Recalling those early days, Grace declared it was "less the spirit of the evangelist that led her, than a desire to minister to their needs and comforts and to teach them the simple rules of hygienic housing." She soon felt the futility of trying to help the people without some scientific knowledge of medicine. At the expiration of her six-year contract, Grace returned to the United States determined to study medicine.

There is no record of the obstacles Grace encountered and overcame in order to pursue her medical studies or how alone she felt, but it can be said women were not always welcome in the all-male bastion of higher education, especially medical education. Women could be nurses, of course, but doctors were men. Of the 105 medical colleges in the United States in 1900, only 37 accepted women. Even so, Grace Kimball managed to attend and graduate from New York Infirmary for Women and Children. This institution later merged with Cornell University.

Upon becoming a Doctor of Medicine, Grace returned to Van in 1892, just as a cholera epidemic was devastating the area. Dr. Grace,

as she was called, began at once to organize relief stations for cholera victims and refugees who came to Van for protection. Under her direction, the Industrial Relief Organization, which she initiated and developed, distributed food and clothing throughout the province of Van. Funds arrived from England and America as information became known about the terrible living conditions in the area.

It wasn't long before the Sultan of Turkey became aware of the work of the bold Dr. Grace and her associates. The Sultan invited her to come to Constantinople to receive an award in honor of her "great service to his beloved people."² Dr. Grace, suspicious of the Sultan's real intentions, declined the "honor" and hurriedly left for the United States. It was a wise decision as the Sultan had put a price on Grace's head which, if she had gone to Constantinople, she would have surely lost.

The Sultan's loss was Poughkeepsie's gain, however, because when her steamer docked, Dr. Grace came directly to this city to begin work as assistant physician to her friend, Dr. Elizabeth B. Thelberg, at Vassar College. Two years later Dr. Grace established her own office and divided her time between the college and her practice. It grew to such an extent that in 1900 she left the college to devote full time to her patients. According to the *Poughkeepsie New Yorker*, "her magnetic personality, combined with a sincere sympathy for the sick, inspired as much confidence as her medical knowledge."³

During the administration of Poughkeepsie Mayor John C. Sague, Dr. Kimball was appointed to serve on the Board of Health. While occupying this official position, she became interested in the Anti-Tuberculosis project, which had been inaugurated by the State Department of Health. The City Health Board cooperated in this campaign and Dr. Kimball worked to provide hospital care for the ill and also established an educational campaign for the prevention of the devastating disease. From this early attempt to stamp out the "white plague," there was established the spacious and beautifully-equipped Samuel W. Bowne Memorial and Samuel and Nettie Bowne Hospitals. From their beginning, until her health prevented it, Dr. Grace served as President of the hospitals' Boards of Trustees. In addition to her work with these hospitals, Dr. Grace also served on the staff of St. Francis Hospital. A 1914 photograph of the staff of the hospital attests to the fact that she was the only female on the all-male staff of physicians. She may have measured a full head shorter than the

other doctors, but neither her height nor her gender kept Dr. Grace from additional service, which extended beyond the medical world to the community.

In the early years of her residence in Poughkeepsie Dr. Grace was asked to serve on the board of the Young Women's Christian Association of Poughkeepsie. She was elected President in 1899, a position she held for 41 years. During her tenure, Dr. Grace was responsible for a great expansion of services and a broadening of the vision of the organization. The Poughkeepsie association became the first YWCA in the country to employ a secretary to direct "girls' work" -- programs developed for young girls and teens. Through this program, young women were taught not only to embroider and sew, but to participate in archery, tennis, bowling, roller skating, hiking and Bible Studies. Prompted by the needs of the first World War, girls and women were encouraged to become proficient in First Aid. Those who passed a test received a certificate signed by Woodrow Wilson. When Dr. Grace retired in 1940, YWCA activities were held in two buildings, the original three-story building on Cannon Street, and the "pool" building on Bancroft Road. With many additions and renovations, the Bancroft Road building continues to operate as the YWCA's main facility in Dutchess County.

Recognized for her boundless energy and great ability, Dr. Grace was also appointed head of the Census. It was noted at her retirement party that, "this is the first time a woman has been recognized as competent to manage such important work." Another arena that received her attention was Woman's Suffrage. Dr. Grace became President of the National League of Women's Service in 1917. A favorite saying was "An ounce of 'start' is worth 2 pounds of 'think it over.'" Dr. Grace practiced what she preached.

Blessed with a long life and professional success, Dr. Grace never forgot the suffering she had seen in Turkey. The first World War brought hardships to the doorsteps of Poughkeepsie. Dr. Grace also lived to see the approach of World War II. In her President's letter for the YWCA Annual Report, 1917-18, Dr. Grace wrote: "Let us each one be faithful wherever we are called to work, realizing that upon womanhood depends much of the success of the Nation..." YWCA member Frances T. Rawson recalled in a talk she presented in 1981 that "before and during the war years the YWCA gym was filled with women practically every day rolling bandages for the Red Cross. Also

during the war, a large plot of ground at Cedarcliff was plowed up for Victory Gardens.” In the YWCA Annual Report, 1916-17, Dr. Grace wrote: “... our work stretches out to the suffering world.”

Despite her protests to the contrary, Dr. Grace had a deeply religious spirit. When she died on November 18, 1942, at the age of 87, her obituary stated: “Her creed was simple and her sympathies were broad. She expressed them both in love and service and for these outward tokens of her inward nature, she will long be remembered with affection and gratitude.”⁴

Endnotes

¹ *Poughkeepsie New Yorker*, November 19, 1942, Obituary of Dr. Grace N. Kimball

² Obituary of Dr. Grace N. Kimball

³ Obituary of Dr. Grace N. Kimball

⁴ Obituary of Dr. Grace N. Kimball

A WOMAN WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE

By Ruth Hogan

Ruth Hogan presented this paper in October 1997 at the Wednesday Club, a literary group celebrating its 100th year. A graduate of Arlington High School and Vassar Brothers Hospital School of Nursing, Mrs. Hogan was a school nurse in the Arlington School District for 26 years. She and her husband, Robert, married fifty-five years, live in Poughquag. They have one son and three grandchildren.



Mary Lucy Ham Alley

Without a doubt there have been countless women through the ages who have had extensive influence both on their contemporaries and on subsequent generations. They made a difference.

A number of women have had an influence on my life. Certainly my grade school teacher, Dorothy Howell, later Dorothy Hitsman, had a major

impact. She taught grades 1 to 8 in a one-room school in Fishkill Plains. She was a highly intelligent woman with the patience of Job, a dedicated teacher who truly inspired her students. Other influential women were those nursing teacher/supervisors at Vassar Brothers Hospital. Student nurses ate, slept, studied, and worked under the watchful eyes of Rachael McCrimmon, Sara Sweet, and Edith Lindberg. They surely made a difference in my life. Great as these women were, however, they were second to one other, for it was Mary who was my primary mentor, advisor, and my encouragement throughout my life.

Mary was born in the fall of 1893, the oldest of six living children. Her father at one time had been a school teacher but at the time of Mary's birth he was a farmer, by circumstance and not by choice. His twin brothers had migrated to South Dakota leaving him on the family farm, which supported him, his wife and children, as well as his aging parents. Mary's mother, typical of her day, had not worked outside the home since completing her studies at Linden Hall Finishing School in Poughkeepsie. She was a wife and mother, a homemaker.

Mary loved the farm. She enjoyed the animals and the fields where she could walk to see flowers, plants, and birds. She was very fond of her siblings and often found herself their sitter. Mary loved her grandparents, both those who lived under the same roof and those who lived on Parkins Lane, a short distance from the farm. She attended Sunday School and church but she liked school best and was eager to learn. Her spare time was spent learning to sew and cook; most of all she loved to read and spent many hours lost in stories found in the books which filled her home.

Mary's school was near her home, just down the road a few hundred feet. It was a one-room school housing a couple of dozen students in grades 1 through 8. They were neighbors and all walked to school each day; most also walked home for lunch. Mary's very good friend, Rebe Vincent, lived nearby so they often walked together as well as played together at recess.

The road over which they traveled to school, to church, or wherever they went, was a dirt road. Dirt was an idealistic term, according to Mary, since "it was more often mud, liberally laced with horse droppings." Walking in long dresses and leather slippers amid such a mess rendered the clothing messy and fragrant. Of course, no one noticed since all had a similar odor.

Mary's home, built by her paternal grandfather, was a spacious

two-story farm house situated on an intersection in the road at North Clove. A brook ran through the dooryard and there was a spring house on the brook. It was used primarily to cool cans of milk awaiting market. Often, however, cured hams hung in the cool spring house or a watermelon floated in the water. A root cellar behind the house kept the potatoes, cabbages, carrots, apples and beets from freezing during the cold weather.

Upon completion of her elementary schooling Mary wanted to attend high school. The nearest high school, however, was in Millbrook, too far for daily travel. Mary, therefore, rode the milk train to Millbrook each Monday morning, boarded in the village during the week and returned home to the Clove on Friday afternoons. She helped with the cooking and serving meals to help pay her board. All of this was worth the effort, for she was able to attend school and enjoy her studies and peers. She excelled in her classes and finished with one of the highest grade averages in her graduating class.

Following graduation in 1912, Mary returned to the Clove where she was hired as the local school teacher. She taught for two years but soon concluded that was plenty. Certainly contributing to her decision were the facts that she was teaching her siblings, living at home where she was expected to help with household chores, and help care for her aging grandparents as well as prepare lessons and correct papers. The role of the one-room school teacher of that day included various janitorial duties before and after school hours as well as building a fire to heat the room, emptying ashes and sweeping the school room. It was not the life on which Mary was ready to settle. She was young and eager to explore new horizons.

In Poughkeepsie, Eastman Gaines College offered courses for young ladies. There was a great demand for those proficient in typing, shorthand, bookkeeping, and filing skills. Mary enrolled and while there was encouraged by one of her instructors to take the Civil Service test for government employment. Her success gained her an appointment in Washington, D.C. during World War I, working in the Executive General's Office of the Department of War. She was far from home but not alone, for she found many other young women in like circumstances. Again Mary used her experience to get work serving meals in her Washington boarding house to defray some of her board. Despite a great outbreak of flu, Mary thoroughly enjoyed her experiences in Washington.

Following the Armistice, Mary's position was eliminated. She

returned once again to the Clove but not to stay, for she had met a young man from Fishkill Plains and they planned to be married. Bert was a dairy farmer, the youngest of six children, who, with the exception of himself, had left home. As a single man, he was operating the family farm and living at home with his parents. In the spring of 1920, Bert and Mary were married at her home in the Clove, and they set up housekeeping in one half of the farmhouse on Hillside Lake Road. Mary was very close to her mother-in-law whom she both loved and respected.

In July 1921 Mary gave birth to a boy. She had been under the professional care of an obstetrician in Poughkeepsie and had spent her "confinement" in a maternity hospital there. The baby was seen at regular intervals by a pediatrician in Poughkeepsie too, yet he failed to thrive. On a cold January day when traveling to Poughkeepsie was an impossibility, the baby became gravely ill. Bert hastened to Hopewell to get Dr. Coburn, the local doctor. When he entered the home, he recognized the distinctive symptoms of the baby and instructed Bert and Mary to get ready to go to New York City with the baby. Although this pathetic group made it to the city, the baby died before surgery. He had succumbed to pyloric stenosis, correctly diagnosed by Dr. Coburn but completely missed by the specialists in Poughkeepsie. From that day on, there was no physician to care for Mary or her family but Dr. Coburn. This was true until his death.

During the same winter of 1922, for the first time, all dairy cattle were required to undergo tests for tuberculosis. Bert's entire herd reacted and were destined for slaughter, leaving Bert and Mary with no income. Mary once remarked, "the chickens and the food from the root cellar saved us from starving that winter." They survived and Bert rebuilt his herd; however, his mother's health was failing and Mary was pregnant again.

A baby girl was born in January 1923 and another daughter in July 1924. By that time Bert's back pains made it impossible for him to continue the hard labor of farming. Following the death of his mother in the spring of 1925, Mary and Bert moved to the village of Fishkill Plains where they bought a small bungalow which had been built by Ernest Horton. They also operated a general store just two doors down from their home. It was possible for Mary to take her two girls to the store with her. She would place the baby in the sugar bin where she would sleep, but the toddler was much more challenging. Bert was rarely at the store, for he had launched a new vocation in cattle dealing. He traveled far and wide buying, trading,

and selling cows and horses. By the time Mary's third daughter was born in 1926, the store was proving too much for her to handle, so they sold the business and Bert became the sole provider for his growing family.

Bert was the breadwinner but it was Mary who held it all together. Mary often remarked that at the time of their marriage Bert was 34 and she was 27. They wanted several children, so there was no time to waste. After three girls, two boys were born just two years apart. By 1930 Mary had delivered six children in just ten years, busy years indeed.

Soon after her son Jack's birth, the banks failed and America was plunged into the Great Depression. The country was devastated as factories went out of business and able-bodied men were without work. Although many were hungry, there was never a hungry day in Mary's family, nor was anyone, friend or stranger, ever turned away hungry. The many hobos who disembarked from the train near Mary's home were always fed. After eating they were often allowed to bed down in the warm barn during the night.

There was always plenty of food in the house, but it did not come without hours of hard work. Each year Bert planted a large vegetable garden, raised hogs for butchering, had a chicken coop filled with Rhode Island Reds, good layers and good for the pot. He also raised Muscovy ducks, also good to eat. Mary preserved food for the winter by canning tomatoes, corn, peas, green beans, beets, strawberries, pears, peaches, jams and jellies, as well as several kinds of pickles. My mouth waters yet when I recall those delicious pickled pears and the watermelon pickles. All of this was done with the aid of the kerosene-burning oil stove.

Since the vegetable garden produced more than even this large family could consume, Mary maintained a vegetable stand in front of her house. She sold fresh produce to neighbors and friends, or to anyone desiring freshly-picked produce. Monies from these sales provided Mary with funds for school clothes, as well as for birthday gifts and Christmas presents. She pored over the Montgomery Ward and Sears & Roebuck catalogs.

Mary's days were long and busy, leaving little time to herself, certainly little time to read. Yet her love of books and her love of reading never waned. Whenever she went into Poughkeepsie, she frequented the lending library at Luckey Platt & Co. They would loan books to people living outside of the city. In the mid-1930s, Augustus Bush donated several boxes of books. Mr. Bush, a resident of Fishkill Plains, was the warden

at Sing Sing Prison. His sister, Irene, had died and left the contents of her personal library. There were about 100 volumes, consisting primarily of essays and poetry, but Mary could see these books as the seed for her long-dreamed-of library. Soon word got around that books were a welcome gift. Mary, with several of her neighbors, organized and opened the Community Library at Fishkill Plains. All of the work was done by volunteers, and money was raised through donations and from card parties held in homes around the community. It was not until the 1970s that the Town of East Fishkill budgeted \$400 to be used by the library.

Originally, the library was housed in the Wesleyan Methodist Church Chapel in Fishkill Plains and was open on Saturday afternoons and Wednesday afternoons and evenings. Some of the earliest roll-away book shelves were made by Nelson Sitzer. They were on rollers and could be pushed out of the way when the chapel was used for either religious services or other community gatherings. Mary ordered all of the books for the library, both new books and books on loan from the New York State Library in Albany. All were delivered to her home. She scanned each book before preparing it for the shelves. Her large family was a great help as she was forced to take books back and forth to the chapel. The mere fact that Mary was not a trained librarian never phased her. She was relentless in her pursuit of help and advice. Ruth Clow, librarian at Arlington High School, and the librarian at Adriance Memorial Library in Poughkeepsie were constant sources on which she relied.

Early in the life of the library, Mary initiated the Children's Story Hour and the Summer Reading Program for Children. She encouraged young children to take books home so that parents or older siblings could read to them. Young students in high school and college often came to Mary with the subject of their research. She would select several books, flag them for reading, and reserve them for the student. This saved many hours and enabled the student to devote more time to reading and writing.

Mary often served as ombudsman for the rank and file in her community. There was an African American man who had reached the age to collect his Social Security. He was required to produce a copy of his birth certificate, which he did not have. He could neither read nor write sufficiently to untangle the web of red tape in order to get his birth certificate. Mary wrote endless letters to authorities in the southern community of his birth and finally obtained the required document. I recall too an old Italian immigrant who was barely able to speak English, let alone read or

write. He had served in the Italian army and was eligible for a small pension but did not know how to get it. Mary spent two years unraveling the red tape until he was awarded his pension. She thoroughly enjoyed the challenge presented by such a task and derived great satisfaction in seeing people reap the benefits of her labor on their behalf. When April 15th rolled around each year, Mary stayed up late at night to fill out income tax returns for those neighbors who could not afford the services of an accountant. She also took the necessary test and became a Notary Public so that she could certify documents for her neighbors.

In the early 1960s Mary was diagnosed with cervical cancer. The subsequent surgery and treatment kept her confined only briefly, but it gave her some time to read. Bert's stroke and illness deterred her for a while too. It was his death in 1964 that left a huge void in her life. Her responsibilities at the library took her attention away from her personal loss.

As Mary's health began to fail, she found that she was unable to negotiate the steep stairs at the new library site in Gayhead. She sorely missed working in the library, but those volunteers with whom she had worked for so many years made certain she had a constant supply of reading materials. Each week someone brought a large shopping bag of books for her to read. When her vision began to fail she was supplied with large print books. Her desire to read was insatiable. Mary was thrilled when plans were made to construct a new building for the library. It was to be built on land alongside the Town Office building on Rte. 376, land which had long before been designated for the library. One spring day Mary was on hand to help break ground for the new building. For months she watched as the building took shape, but she did not live to see the dedication. On July 3, 1988, in her ninety-fifth year, Mary died.

I am sure the reader has come to the conclusion that Mary was my mother. Mary Lucy Ham Alley, who never failed to encourage my efforts, left her legacy. Her encouragement was verbal as well as by example, for she did not concede adversity. Rather, she worked, consulted, and found a way either to overcome or to circumvent obstacles. She never found hard work a deterrent nor did it discourage her. I am certain that there were many times when she was exhausted, yet found time and energy to help make hot chocolate and cookies for a group of hungry teenagers. I never knew Mom and Dad to take a vacation until long after all of their children had left home. They enjoyed their family, their friends, and their community.

It is a distinct pleasure to visit the East Fishkill Community Library

knowing that Mary's dream and her work toward that dream was a constant source of pride and pleasure to the people in her community. Her legacy lives for all to enjoy. She made a difference, not just in my life, but in the lives of many.

Dutchess County Women in the Military

By Nan Fogel

Nan Fogel's interests in history and the arts have led to articles in past Year Books. She serves on the Publications Committee of the Historical Society and currently edits the Newsletter. She works at Vassar College.



Janet Effron Katzin

The following twenty-two Dutchess County women served in the United States military during years from World War II to the present. Some of them are your neighbors and possibly friends. Six are native to Dutchess County; the others have lived here from five to fifty-five years:

Eva Rugar Abbott (Poughkeepsie), U.S. Marines, 1980-86
Nancy Chapman Alden (Staatsburg), U.S. Navy (Waves), 1951-53
Barbara Greener Brinckerhoff (Millbrook), U.S. Army, 1975-76

Patty Brunk (Dover Plains), U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, 1978-84 and Air Force National Guard, 1997-present
 Karen Joyce Buckley (Hyde Park), U.S. Navy, 1978-82 and Naval Reserves, 1991-present
 Dorothy Hammerle Butrica (Fishkill), U.S. Marines, 1953-54
 Lorraine Mondrick Campilli (Poughkeepsie), U.S. Army Medical Specialists Corps, 1954-56
 Mary Darrow Ciolko (Poughkeepsie), U.S. Navy (Waves), 1944-46
 Helen Salsick Curran (Poughkeepsie), U.S. Army Nurse Corps, 1942-46 and U.S. Army Reserves, 1946-52
 Patricia Deufemia (Poughkeepsie), U.S. Air Force, 1980-95
 Elva Riker Girton (Wappingers Falls), U.S. Army, 1964-66
 Goldie Weiss Greene (Poughkeepsie), U.S. Army Nurse Corps, 1943-46
 Evella Gary Harrell (Poughkeepsie), U.S. Army, 1956-58
 Mary Alice Hunter (Poughkeepsie), U.S. Navy (Waves), 1943-46
 Judy Utecht Husted (Poughkeepsie), U.S. Navy, 1979-82
 Janet Effron Katzin (Litchfield, CT), U.S. Navy (Waves), 1943-45
 Alice Roy LaDue (Fishkill), U.S. Army Medical Unit, 1945-46
 Sarah Poppinhouse (Poughkeepsie), U.S. Army, 1975-78
 Sally Goldberg Reifler (Wappingers Falls), U.S. Army Nurse Corps, 1944-46
 Martha Umphenour Rooney (Columbia, SC), U.S. Army Nurse Corps, 1960-63
 Margaret Stickler Schultz (Poughkeepsie), U.S. Navy (Waves), 1943-45
 Marjorie Weatherwax Woodside (Poughkeepsie), U.S. Navy (Waves), 1943-45

Collectively, the women served in every decade from the 1940's to the 1990's, years that cover World War II, the Korean, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf wars. All branches of service are represented with the exception of the Coast Guard. Unfortunately it was not possible to find a woman veteran from Vietnam who was willing to be interviewed.

Letters were sent to approximately 150 women whose names were gathered from bus lists of those who had gone to Washington, DC to take part in the dedication of a memorial to women who have served in the military, referrals from women in the American Legion and Castle Point Veterans Hospital, and word of mouth. An article in the *Poughkeepsie*

Journal about the project brought additional volunteers. The end result was the participation of the women listed above.

Between June and November 1998, twenty-one women were interviewed about their military experiences. The interviews were usually held in the women's homes and took approximately two hours. Janet Effron Katzin, who was born and brought up in Poughkeepsie and now lives in Connecticut, heard about the project and sent a letter telling of her experience in the Navy and a photograph of herself in a World War II Waves' uniform. Audiotapes of the interviews and a summary of each are housed at the Dutchess County Historical Society in Poughkeepsie.

The reasons given by these women for joining the military are as numerous and varied as they are themselves. Generally their explanations fall into four categories: patriotism, opportunity, adventure, and financial incentive; usually a combination of motives was involved.

The prime motivation of women who served during World War II was patriotism. Margaret Schultz spoke of "an ever-present concern about the war that pervaded daily life." Women were recruited for the armed forces directly or encouraged to take a man's job in industries at home so that he might be sent overseas to fight. Asked why they joined the military, Goldie Greene and Mary Alice Hunter gave the same simple answer, "We were at war." No further explanation seemed necessary. When her brother was injured in an accident and could not go into the Army Air Force as planned, Alice LaDue enlisted in the Army. Janet Effron Katzin had two brothers in the Army Air Force and wanted to help with the war effort. She joined the Waves because, unlike the age-21 minimum required to be a WAC, they would accept a 20-year old.

For others, the catalyst for enlisting was opportunity. Evella Harrell found few job opportunities in 1956, but knew she could receive training in one of the military services. She chose the Army and trained as a medic at Valley Forge (PA) Medical Center. Unable to go to college after high school, Elva Girton looked for alternatives. She thought the Army had the best program at the time and trained as a Medical Laboratory Specialist. Eva Abbott faced the same situation after graduating from Poughkeepsie High School in 1980 at the age of seventeen. The Marines offered training and a career that weren't available to her in civilian life at the time. As Barbara Brinkerhoff put it, "The Army was my ticket, my ship to get where I wanted to go." When the Army offered Lorraine Campilli a one-year paid internship at Walter Reed Army Hospital with a rank of 2nd Lieutenant in return for a second year as a dietitian, she jumped at the chance to add a

fifth year to her B.S. degree from Penn State University and be relieved of another year without an income. For Judy Husted, the Navy offered education, travel, and the chance to meet new people. Her training in electronics took almost half her time in service.

The call to adventure spurred some to enlist. Nancy Alden wanted "to do something new and adventurous." As a journalism student and editor of her paper at Winthrop State College for Women in South Carolina, she thought she could always go back home and be a journalist one day. For Sarah Poppinhouse it was a desire to see the world.

Financial considerations were never entirely absent from the decision to enlist, although they were only part of the reason the women joined the military. With the financial assistance she received as a member of the Marine Corps Reserves from 1978-1984, Patty Brunk was able to finish college. She graduated from Marist College with a Master's degree in psychology; with further study she earned an advanced certificate in school psychology. Martha Rooney and her twin sister joined the Army Reserves while they were in a three-year nursing school program in Kansas because they liked the idea of being paid and wanted to buy a car. It may have been a light decision but it was one she never regretted. In the Army Nurse Corps she was given more responsibility and a greater variety of nursing experience than she would have received as a civilian. That, together with meeting her husband and wonderful friends, has made her wonder what her life would have been like if she and her sister had not wanted that car so badly.

Basic Training lasted from four to twelve weeks, depending on the branch of service and the needs of the country at the time. Some women took it in stride, but for others it was a harrowing experience. Margaret Schultz said the discipline didn't bother her. "I had made up my mind before enlisting that I would be given orders and I would follow them." Karen Buckley called her experience of basic training "deliberately hard" at the Navy base in Orlando, Florida. "All along we were tested as to whether we could take authority without question. I didn't rebel against it but some couldn't do that. We lost a lot of girls that way."

Probably Mary Ciolko had the easiest time. On her way to Hunter College in New York City, where training was to be held, she learned about the Waves Chorus. She was accepted after auditioning and sang in the chorus at Navy hospitals and at official public functions. Although it only lasted during the training period, Ciolko said it relieved her of some of the