



# Sects, Schisms, and Dissent

Dutchess County Historical Society  
2012 Yearbook

# Sects, Schisms, and Dissent

*Religious Factionalism  
in Dutchess County*

Dutchess County Historical Society  
2012 Yearbook • Volume 91



Roger Donway, *Editor*



Dutchess County Historical Society

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The Right Reverend Monsignor Patrick F. McSweeney;

Thomas Lake Harris, at about age thirty-two.



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## *Letter from the Editor*

“And what should they know of England, who England know?” So wrote Rudyard Kipling in 1891. After editing the 2012 yearbook of the Dutchess County Historical Society, I am tempted to paraphrase his line: “And what should they know of Dutchess, who only Dutchess know?”

Our cover story, Jack Conklin’s article on the Dutch Reformed Church “bolt,” though it prominently features men from Dutchess County, has its roots in Amsterdam and its termination in New Jersey. Dell Upton’s article on the Hicksite separation traces the devastating ways in which the Society of Friends in our county was rent by changing attitudes among commercially prosperous Quakers of urban Philadelphia and New York.

Tim Walch’s article on the Poughkeepsie Plan places in a national context Father Patrick McSweeney’s efforts to avoid a separatist, parochial school system, ultimately to no avail. In the case of Poughkeepsie’s Jewish community, the 2012 yearbook has chosen to publish two separate articles in order to make explicit the county’s wider links. The first, by Rabbi Paul Golomb of Vassar Temple, sets forth the national context of Jewish divisions in America; the second, by Lou Lewis, presents their local manifestation.

Russell La Valle’s article on Shaykh Daoud Ahmed Faisal’s *Medinah Salaam* in East Fishkill links our area to the whole history of Black Islam in America. But it is La Valle’s second article in this issue, on the spiritualist Thomas Lake Harris, that truly demonstrates how local historical incidents can have unending and worldwide ramifications.

Harris’s spiritualist movement, centered on a commune in Amenia, caused a member of the British Parliament—whom Sir Arthur Conan Doyle called “one of the most brilliant men of his generation”—to quit his parliamentary seat, travel to Dutchess County, and subject himself to humiliating subordination and manual labor. A Japan-born member of the commune later became his country’s first minister of education. Another member, also Japan-born, followed the commune’s guru to California, inherited his Sonoma County property, and turned it into one of California’s most prosperous wineries.

What do they know of Dutchess, who only Dutchess know?

*Roger Donway*

This issue of the Dutchess County Historical Society's  
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*Judge Albert Rosenblatt  
and his wife, Julia*  


*Lou and Candace J. Lewis*  


*Roger and Alisan Donway*  




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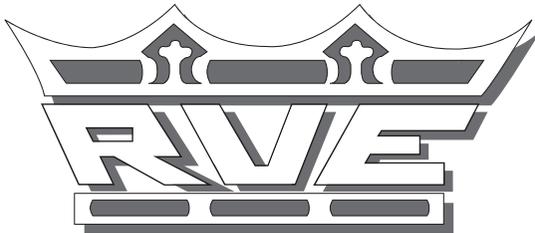
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FORUM





# John Concklin and the Dutch Reformed Church “Bolt”

*By John R. Concklin*

The 1700s were a frantic time for the Dutch inhabitants of Poughkeepsie and the Hudson Valley corridor. The rapid growth in population (especially the increase in English settlers), the stress of the “French and Indian Wars” (the local militia was called out twice in the 1750s), the movement for independence from England and the resulting Revolutionary War (requiring citizens to choose sides)—all contributed to a volatile era. But added to the above was a split in the Dutch Reformed Church, pitting the conservative “Hollanders” against the progressive American party.

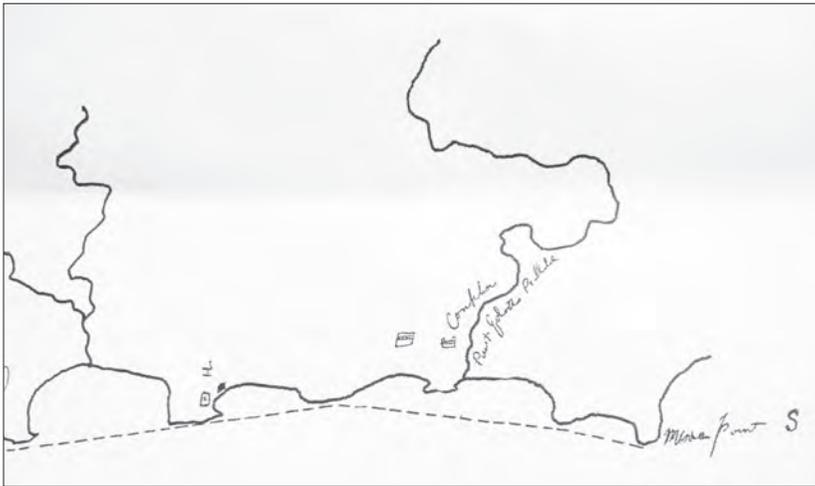
Two of my ancestors, a grandfather and his grandson, were right in the middle of it. In fact, one precipitated the split in the Poughkeepsie Church, and one negotiated the peaceful resolution of the conflict in America.

## *Captain John Concklin*

John Concklin and his wife, Annatje Storm, arrived in Poughkeepsie in 1725, having moved up river from Sleepy Hollow, or Philips Burgh as it was then named. Both were from prominent Dutch families; both had been born in Philips Burgh and baptized in the Dutch Church at Sleepy Hollow. They had a daughter and son when they bought 770 acres south of the present Poughkeepsie city limits, in what is now part of the Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery.<sup>1</sup> Captain John signed his last name with an added “c,” which was dropped by his offspring in the late 1700s.

John and Annatje had 10 children and 89 grandchildren. He was a conservative Dutchman, served as both a deacon and an elder in the Dutch Reformed Church in Poughkeepsie, was a captain in the Dutchess County militia, was among the twenty most heavily taxed landholders in 1771, and was a signer of the Patriotic Articles of Association in 1775.<sup>2</sup> Of his seven sons, four were members of the local militia and two saw service as officers in the Revolutionary War. Genealogists refer to him as “Capt John,” because of his military achievements in marching his militia company to repel the threat from the French advancing down from Lake George in 1755 and again in 1757.

An early map shows the Conklin house on the north side of the Rust Platts Killitie. The sketch shows two buildings, but perhaps the northern one is the Livingston house (the depicted windows are similar to a Livingston house in an 1870 photo). The Conklin house appears to have two chimneys, one on each end of the structure, in typical Dutch fashion. The tiny stream is very much present today and plainly marked on current maps of the Rural Cemetery. “Killitie” translates as “little stream” and indeed the stream is barely a trickle in the dry summer months.



**Figure 1.** Map #5, recorded in 1794, surveyed by Henry Livingston in approximately 1738, shows the Conklin property near the “Rust Platts Killitie.”

But what brings Captain John Concklin into the DCHS’s 2012 yearbook is the fact that he and Peter van Kleeck organized a “bolting” party that split the Poughkeepsie Reformed Church into two groups, each with its own minister—but both occupying the same church building.<sup>3</sup>

### *The Church Divided*

The controversy within the Dutch Reformed Church was not restricted to the local church in Poughkeepsie and Fishkill. It was a national matter, or at least a regional matter, which is best summarized as an argument about the authority for the ordination of ministers. The “Conferentie” party maintained that proper ministers could be ordained only in Holland by the Amsterdam Classis (assembly of elders). The “Coetus” party campaigned for the establishment of an American Classis to ordain ministers in the colonies. The issue started in 1754 and was not resolved until 1771, after 17 years of church strife.<sup>4</sup>

But even a brief history of the Reformed church in Poughkeepsie must begin with a 1716 deed to land across the street from the original Court House, on what is now Market Street. The Reverend Petrus Vas, pastor at Kingston, oversaw the raising of 1427 guilders for the construction of a stone building, which was completed in 1723. In 1731, the Poughkeepsie church was united with the Fishkill church and called its first minister, the Reverend Cornelius Van Schie, from Holland, to serve both congregations. In 1733, however, Van Schie moved to Albany, probably for better circumstances. The Poughkeepsie-Fishkill church went without a minister for 12 years, until 1745, when the Reverend Meynema was called and served until 1756. He was followed by Jacobus Van Nist, who was pastor for three years, from 1758 to 1761. In 1760, a new church building was erected on the north side of Main Street, Poughkeepsie, and it was in service until 1822. It was in this church, in 1764, that the local split was finalized. A quotation from Edmund Platt's *History of Poughkeepsie* details the event.

[When] Dominie [Pastor] Henricus Schoonmaker arrived in Poughkeepsie in 1764 for ordination, he found the church in the possession of the opposing (Conferentie or Holland) party and the service took place under a tree not far from where the present church is located, the officiating minister, Rev. John H Goetschius [of New Paltz], standing in a wagon. Elder Peter Van Kleeck and Deacon John Conklin of the Conferentie party organized a bolting consistory and called Rev. Isaac Rysdyck from Holland.<sup>5</sup>

From 1765 until 1772, the Poughkeepsie and Fishkill churches thus had two pastors.

### *Coetus and Conferentie Parties*

Coetus, a Latin noun, is defined rather broadly as “a meeting, political or illegal assembly, a society or company.” In church usage, it is better understood as an “ecclesiastical assembly.” An early petition to Amsterdam for a colonial “Coetus” occurred in 1738 and was refused. Proponents of the Coetus cause continued to contact the mother church on behalf of the colonial church and the objectives of the Coetus party. Finally, in 1748, permission for an American Coetus was granted, but its members still felt that their powers were unduly limited.

The major objectives of the Coetus party were (1) the ability to examine and ordain young men as the opportunity permitted; (2) the right to organize independently to meet the spiritual necessities of the people; and (3) the formation of a college or theological seminary to train young men for the ministry.<sup>6</sup>

Opposition to such national independence produced a second faction in the early 1750s: the Conferentie or “Holland” party. The Dutch word “Conferentie” is translated as “conference,” or further defined as “a discussion among participants who have an agreed serious topic” or “a prearranged meeting for discussion of a formal agenda.” The Conferentie party in America wanted continued spiritual direction from the mother church. Its main objective was to ensure that ministers of the local church were properly trained and ordained by Amsterdam.

Both parties were in communication with Holland, looking for support and recognition for their respective positions, but the Classis of Amsterdam refused to take sides and communicated with both factions. Finally in 1754, five prominent members of the Holland party seceded from the American Coetus and the strife began in earnest!<sup>7</sup> In the next year, 1755, the remaining members of the Coetus met on May 30th in New York City and assumed all the powers of an independent classis.<sup>8</sup>

In November 1766, the independence of the American church was furthered when the Coetus party won a charter for a College to be located in New Jersey.<sup>9</sup> Nothing materialized for several years, however, as discussions took place with Kings College (later Columbia University) and Princeton University to house a Dutch theological seminary. Finally, in 1771, Queens College opened in New Brunswick, New Jersey, as a private institution affiliated with the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>10</sup>

### *John Henry Livingston*

Captain John and Annatje (Storm) Conklin’s first-born child (of an eventual 10) was named Susannah Storm Conklin. She was baptized in the Dutch Church in Sleepy Hollow (Tarrytown) in 1724, and would eventually marry Henry Livingston, a grandson of Robert Livingston, founder of the Livingston family fortune in the Hudson Valley. But according to an article on Henry Livingston by J. Wilson Poucher, in the 1938 DCHS Yearbook, Henry’s courtship of Susannah did not go smoothly. Poucher, under a paragraph heading entitled “Henry Settles Down,” relates an interesting tale that was passed down to the Livingston grandchildren.

It appears that neither the Livingston “clan” nor Susannah Conklin’s parents were in favor of the courtship, which started when Susannah was “scarcely fifteen years old.” Then, one Sunday, when her parents were not in church, Susannah excused herself from her “governess,” slipped out in the middle of the service and rode off on horseback with young Henry. The

worried “governess” conducted a search but was unsuccessful. As Susannah was at that time 18, the couple managed to find a “domine” to marry them and then “demurely ambled home to supper”.

Captain John and his family could not have been too upset at this elopement as he sold his new son-in-law a substantial piece of property overlooking the Hudson River on which the couple could build their new home.<sup>11</sup> The property stayed in the Livingston family until 1870.

John Henry Livingston, born May 30, 1746, was the second son of Henry and Susannah. A bright child, he was tutored at home and entered Yale University at the age of 12. He graduated from Yale, with Honors, in July of 1762, at the age of 16. After studying law for a few years, he decided on a career in the church and sailed for Holland in 1766. His father provided financing, 400 pounds, which was deducted from John Henry’s inheritance upon his father’s death.<sup>12</sup>

John Henry was licensed and ordained by the Classis of Amsterdam in April 1770 and received his Doctorate of Divinity from the University of Utrecht in May 1770. He was the last minister from the colonies to be educated and ordained by the Amsterdam church. In that sense, he was the last true representative of the Conferentie party’s ideal.



**Figure 2.** *Susannah (Conklin) Livingston’s head stone in the Livingston burial plot. She was Captain John Concklin’s oldest daughter and the mother of Reverend John Henry Livingston.*



**Figure 3.** *The Reverend John Henry Livingston, of Poughkeepsie, who in 1771 healed the breach in the Reformed Church of America.*

While in Holland, John Henry worked out an agreement with the mother church that ended the controversy between the Coetus and Conferentie parties and brought peace to the Dutch Reformed Church in the colonies. In 1771, back in New York, Livingston organized the Union Convention to bring together the opposing parties. As a result of prior conversations and organizational acumen, he secured a unanimous agreement to the new plan. He won the support of the Conferentie party by his ordination in Holland and the support of the Coetus party for achieving their objectives. Not a single dissenting vote! It was a major accomplishment that cemented his position of esteem within the church.

John Henry Livingston was preaching in the Dutch Church of his grandfather John, in Poughkeepsie, in 1781 when the Revolutionary War effectively ended with the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown.<sup>13</sup> Until 1786, he was the sole pastor of the New York City church. In 1784, the New Brunswick Theological Seminary moved to shared facilities with Queens College and in 1810 John Henry Livingston became both the Professor of Theology and the fourth president of Queens College. In 1825, the year he died, the name of the college was changed to today's Rutgers University.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Genealogical Postscript***

Until recently, most genealogists traced the Conklin line to two brothers or cousins, John and Ananias, glassmakers from Nottinghamshire, England, who arrived in Salem, Massachusetts, about 1638. Both moved to Long Island and their offspring gradually moved west to the city and then upstate. Generally, they have been considered Captain John's ancestors.

Thus, in 1925, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of John Henry Livingston's death, a newspaper article quoted an "interesting review of Dr. Livingston's work and ancestry by the Reverend Charles Maar of Albany (formerly of Poughkeepsie)."<sup>15</sup> According to Maar: "On the maternal side,

Dr. Livingston was related to the Storms, Sees, Buckouts, and other Dutch families, although the Conklins were English, the American ancestor being a John Conklin who came from Nottingham to Salem about 1640, and ten years later settled at Southold, Long Island where one of his sons married a daughter of the pioneer pastor, John Young, and had a son John who was the grandfather of the John who made his home in Dutchess County”<sup>16</sup>

But in 2011, Honor Conklin published her research on Y-DNA studies involving the Long Island line of Conklins and the “Pre-1700 Westchester Conklins.”<sup>17</sup> Her paper revises many of the theories about the ancestry of Captain John and his parents. The Y-DNA study finds that there is no direct relationship between the Long Island Conklins and the Westchester line. In fact, her research can find no documentation at all for the origins of the pre-1700 Westchester Conklins.



**Figure 4.** *The Dutch Bible belonging to Captain John Concklin was bequeathed to his oldest son, John. The Bible, now 268 years old, has traveled through eight generations of Conklins and across the United States. In 1979 it was returned to Dutchess County from Texas and sits in a place of honor on the author’s library shelf.*

We know that Captain John Conklin’s father, Deliverance, and his mother, Engeltie Boeckhout, were married in the Dutch Church in New York City in 1695.<sup>18</sup> Genealogists have referred to Deliverance’s father as “John” and his mother as “Helena.” But Honor Conklin’s research, as reported in her 2011 paper, finds no evidence of the existence of either John or Helena. In short, at this point in the research process, the ancestry of the “Dutch” line of the Hudson Valley Conklins is frankly unknown.

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<sup>1</sup> Harry Tallmadge Briggs and John Greene Briggs, *The Colonial Ancestry of the Family of John Greene Briggsson of Job Briggs, and Patience Greene, and Isabell Gibbs De Groff, Daughter of William Soutenburgh De Groff and Susan Hopkins* (New York: Press of B.H. Tyrrel, 1940), p. 196.

<sup>2</sup> Briggs, p. 198.

- <sup>3</sup> Edmund Platt, *The Eagle's History of Poughkeepsie From the Earliest Settlements, 1683 to 1905* (Poughkeepsie, NY: Dutchess County Historical Society, 1987), p. 23.
- <sup>4</sup> Mark Bonnema, "How General Synod Began," <http://www.reformed-church.com/Pioneer/apr-81e.html>,
- <sup>5</sup> Platt, p. 23.
- <sup>6</sup> E. T. Corwin, *A History of the Reformed Church, Dutch; the Reformed Church, German; the Moravian Church in the United States* (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1895), p. 157. <http://archive.org/stream/americanchurchhi08scha#page/156/mode/2up>
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161
- <sup>10</sup> Rutgers University, "About Rutgers: Rutgers History: Past Presidents: "Jacob Rutsen-Hardenbergh," <http://www.rutgers.edu/about-rutgers/jacob-rutsen-hardenbergh>.
- <sup>11</sup> Newspaper article on the 100th anniversary of John Henry Livingston's death. 1925. In the possession of the author. Part of the article's headline reads "To Celebrate 100th Livingston Anniversary." Secondary headline reads: "Virtues and Record Praised of the Great father of Reformed Church in America"
- <sup>12</sup> "Henry Livingston, Sr. Will of 5 May 1786." <http://iment.com/maida/familytree/henry/bios/drhenrylivingstonsr.htm#will>
- <sup>13</sup> Platt, page 53
- <sup>14</sup> Rutgers University, "About Rutgers: Rutgers History: Past Presidents: "John Henry Livingston." <http://www.rutgers.edu/about-rutgers/john-henry-livingston>
- <sup>15</sup> Newspaper article. 1925. "To Celebrate 100th Livingston Anniversary."
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup> Honor Conklin, "Two Colonial Conklin Families in America: Y-DNA Analysis of the 'Long Island Conklins' and the 'Pre-1700 Westchester Conklins'." Albany, NY, 2011.
- <sup>18</sup> Briggs, p. 262.

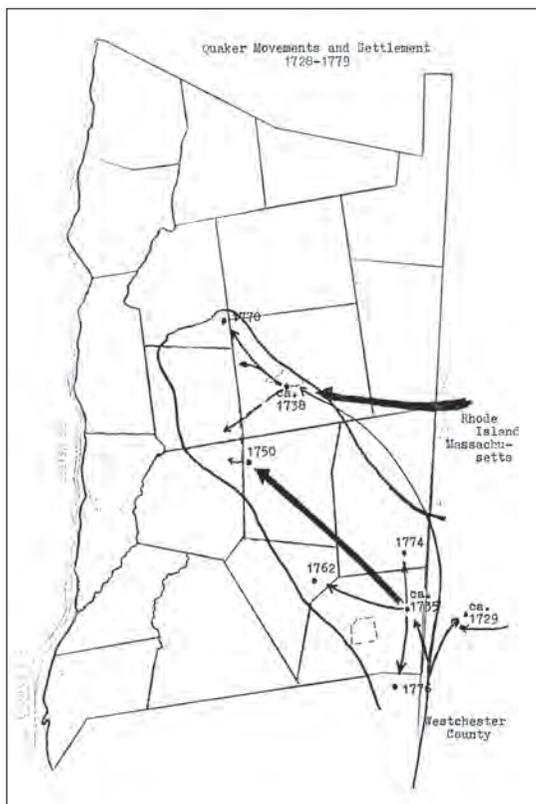
# Dutchess County Quakers and the Hicksite Separation of 1827–1828

By Dell Upton

*This essay is adapted and reprinted, with permission, from a History honors thesis, Colgate University, Hamilton, New York, 1970.*

The years from the inception of the Society of Friends, from the late 1640s to about 1725, were marked by an aggressive confrontation with the non-Quaker world. In a vigorous effort to attract converts, Quaker preachers of both sexes shocked their contemporaries by scathing denunciations of formal religious worship, of the sacraments, and of professional clergy, or hireling priests, as they were called by these early Quakers. “Publishers of Truth” they styled themselves, and they were persecuted for their troubles.

But persecutions only led them to more strenuous, and often more startling efforts to disseminate their messages. Several New England Friends followed the lead of Lydia Wardel, of Hampton, Massachusetts, who was moved to appear in church “as a naked sign” to the Puritans of the congregation at Newbury.<sup>1</sup> Others were imprisoned, fined, and even hanged for their faith.



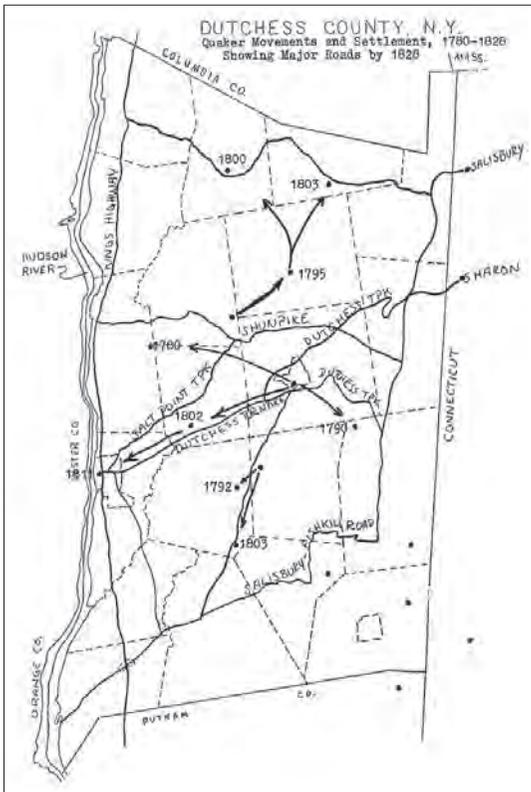
**Figure 1.** *Quaker Movements and Settlement, 1728–79. Large arrows show the directions of principal inward migration. Small arrows show the direction of secondary movement. Thin black line shows the bounds of principal Quaker settlement.*

By 1728, however, this persecution had ended. Connecticut enacted religious toleration in 1729,<sup>2</sup> and the last religious restrictions on Friends fell. With the ebb of persecution came a corresponding ebb in proselytizing, as Quaker ministers began restricting the expression of their gifts to other Quakers. It is only rarely in the records of the eighteenth century that one comes across a minute permitting a minister to appoint meetings among non-members.

The withdrawal from religious interchange was accompanied by a simultaneous withdrawal from secular life, especially political affairs. The situation progressed to the point where, by the end of the eighteenth century, meetings were required to inform their superior meetings whether “any friends have accepted posts of profit or honour in government.”<sup>3</sup>

### *The Quakers of Dutchess County*

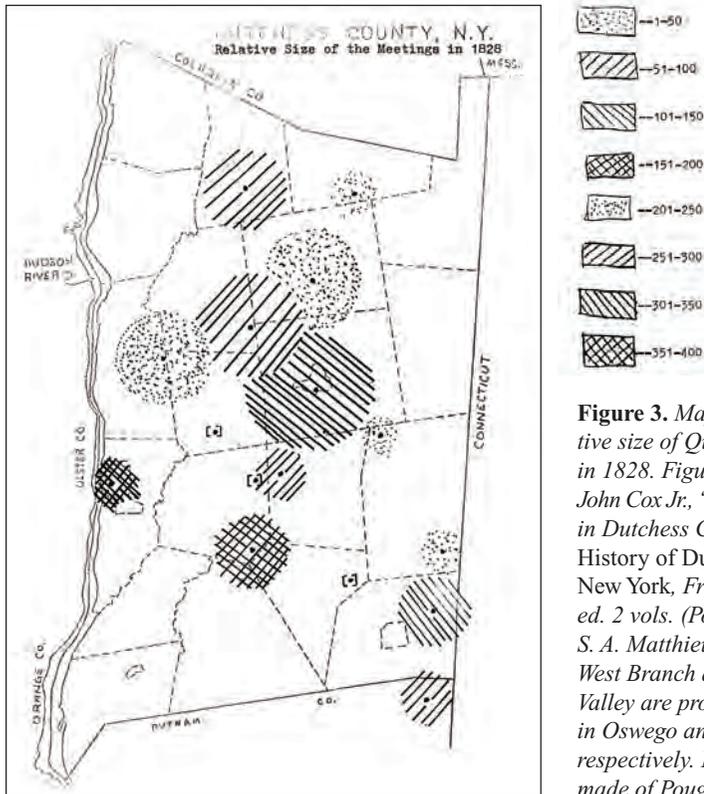
Southeastern Dutchess was essentially a wilderness when Nathan Birdsall, the first Quaker settler in the county, arrived from Danbury, Connecticut,



**Figure 2.** *Quaker Movements and Settlement, 1780–1828.* Dots indicate Quaker meetings. Dates refer to the first official mention of a meeting at a given location. Dots without dates are meetings established before 1780. Arrows show Quaker movements relative to roads existing by 1815.

in 1728. As such, the region fostered the type of outlook that was becoming predominant in the Society of Friends during that time—the attitude of an exclusive, self-contained religious community. Friends of the period desired, and maintained, little social, economic, or even governmental intercourse with outsiders. The “meeting” (the permanent organizational unit of the Quakers) supervised religious worship, social relations, economic welfare, and even legal difficulties among its members. The wilds of Dutchess County were congenial to this anchoritic [hermit-like] spirit, and as a result the county came to be the home of more meetings than any other county in New York State.<sup>4</sup>

No wonder. The primary consideration in the Quakers’ settlement was their desire for separation from non-Quaker society, and natural and economic conditions combined to make southeastern Dutchess County ideal for anyone with a propensity to aloofness like that of the Quakers. Not only was the county’s population concentrated in the west on the banks of the Hudson (the main thoroughfare of the province),



**Figure 3.** Map shows the relative size of Quaker meetings in 1828. Figures as given by John Cox Jr., “Friends Meetings in Dutchess County,” in *The History of Dutchess County, New York*, Frank Hasbrouck, ed. 2 vols. (Poughkeepsie, NY: S. A. Matthieu, 1909), p. 658. West Branch and Pleasant Valley are probably included in Oswego and Poughkeepsie respectively. No mention is made of Poughquag.

there was besides no major east-west road in Dutchess until 1802, and no major Poughkeepsie–Quaker Hill road until the Pawling and Beekman Turnpike was built in 1824. Additional isolation was afforded by the Taghkanic Mountains, which run from central to southern Dutchess County in a southwesterly direction, effectively cutting off the southeastern corner of the county from the remainder.

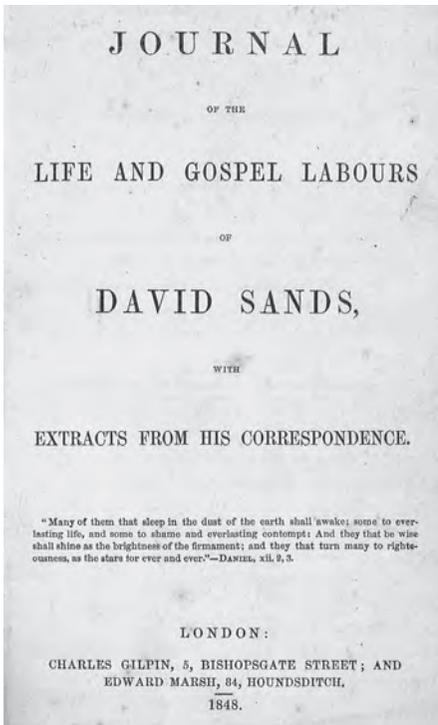
By 1780, though, Dutchess County had ceased to be the attractive frontier that the first Friends knew. The population of the county had jumped from about 1,000 in 1723 to nearly 25,000 in 1780. And the very factors that were drawing many of these people to the county were repelling Quakers. By the end of the Revolutionary War, therefore, Quaker immigration had dried up. As a result, an 1828 census found only 1,954 Quakers in a county that the U.S. census of 1830 said numbered 50,926 people. Even in the east of the county, they made up only 12 to 15 percent of the population, while in Poughkeepsie they made up only 4 percent.

But if the new era saw very little influx of Friendly outsiders, it did see intra-county movement northward and westward. And the move west, which began after 1800, was highly symbolic, for it represented the drawing of Friends into the mainstream of Dutchess County's economic and social life. An indication of this is that the major industry of early Pleasant Valley, a textile dying mill, was Quaker owned. Furthermore, among the early members of the Poughkeepsie Meeting were a prominent merchant (tanner Zadock Southwick) and the postmaster of Poughkeepsie (Levi McKeen).

### *Sources of Separation*

Thus, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, two parties were forming in the Society of Friends. Each of these represented a somewhat exaggerated version of one aspect of the sect as it had existed before the controversy. As Robert Doherty has said: "In many ways the history of the post-seventeenth century [post-1600s] Friends can be written in terms of [a] struggle between Quaker ideals and worldly practice."<sup>5</sup> Whereas equilibrium had previously been maintained between these two forces, circumstances in the early 1800s combined to make this balance no longer possible.

In the cities, Friends—especially upper-class Friends—were exposed to new pressures. All around them were temptations to exercise the influence their new wealth gave them. Yet, in their meetings, Quaker democracy prevailed. These Friends felt that their wealth was a sign of heavenly favor, and that they should accordingly receive privileges from the meeting. But



**Figure 4.** *Journal of David Sands, a member of the Nine Partners meeting, who was a leader of the Orthodox faction of Quakers, which shared many beliefs with conventional Christian denominations.*

many Quakers replied, in effect, “No, your wealth shows that you are too little concerned with religious affairs and too much concerned with this world. You shall remain on an equal footing with us.”

In defense, the city Friends began to follow a train of thought initiated by David Sands (1747–1818), a convert to Quakerism who joined the Nine Partners meeting in 1772. More and more, his evangelicalism seemed to suit their ends very well. By the time they had formulated their position, the one which (after the schism) became known as “Orthodox” Quakerism, they were full-fledged evangelicals. They affiliated with other evangelical groups; they adopted Sunday Schools; they instituted hymn singing. But that came after the schism. Before it, they

confined themselves to affirming such evangelical doctrines as the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus, the atoning power of his death, the infallibility of the Bible, and original sin and the depravity of man. In short, they adopted a theology that, in its belief in objective standards of holiness and in its emphasis upon salvation, admitted of their contention that success in the world measured spiritual progress. It was a position that would allow them to carry on their worldly activities with no misgivings.<sup>6</sup>

Their opponents became known as the Hicksites, not so much because they accepted the theology of Elias Hicks, but because they supported his open acceptance of many points of view. Elias Hicks had been born in Hempstead, Long Island, on March 19, 1748, and led the quiet life of a carpenter through his early years. But when he became a minister on his thirtieth birthday, he embarked upon a career of travelling that did not end until his death fifty-two years later, on February 27, 1830. His odyssey began in 1779 with a trip to the Hudson Valley Meetings. Thereafter, he

came to Dutchess County in 1781, 1783, 1790, 1791, 1792, 1793, 1795, 1803, 1807, 1808, 1818, 1819, 1823, and 1828, the frequency of his visits decreasing as his fame increased.<sup>7</sup>

Hicks's doctrine of the complete sufficiency of the Inner Light galled the elitists, for in allowing room for every man's conscience, it nullified the possibility that there could be any objective measure of holiness, and it implied that each man's conscience was of equal worth in the church. In addition, Hicks's doctrines appealed in an exaggerated way to the grievances that the predominantly rural, lower-class Hicksites held against their Orthodox brethren. Hicks rejected the world, modernity (e.g., science, railroads, the Erie Canal), and the city. He was thus against the worldly success of the Orthodox, the means by which the Orthodox had attained their success, and the general lifestyle of the Orthodox. He was a farmer who spoke out forcefully against arrogant upper-class Friends. The social nature of the conflict should not be overemphasized—there were many upper-class Hicksites (especially among the professions) and many lower-class Orthodox—but it is a significant factor. Even Elias Hicks recognized this, and he came to see himself as a representative of the democratic American spirit, battling the aristocracy. Conveniently, his battle became personified when a group of English Quakers came to America in 1826 to oppose him.<sup>8</sup>

One might ask why this controversy did not occur earlier. Before about 1800, it was easy for Friends to isolate themselves. However, the increasing difficulty of maintaining separation from the world, brought on by the transportation revolution (turnpikes, canals, railroads), aggravated submerged grievances—which had been controllable in a small, exclusive community—by exposing Friends to the possibilities and enticements of the outside world. Furthermore, the changing nature of American society presented opportunities to some Friends which they wanted to be free to take advantage of, while others were exposed to new hardships and resented the social and economic ascendancy of their co-religionists. The parties of Elias Hicks and David Sands provided the dissatisfied of both sides with a religious framework in which to express their unhappiness.<sup>9</sup>

A series of issues began to crystallize around the question of who should be a member, how the Society should be organized, how a Quaker seeks salvation, and to what extent Friends should accept the world. The Orthodox answers were that membership should be based upon assent to a group of doctrines; that the Society should be organized around the leadership of the holy (i.e., the wealthy); that a Quaker seeks salvation through assent

to the authority of the Bible; and hence that one is free to participate in the world, since purity is not required. For them, the membership was to be passive, “and let the problems of belief, membership, and salvation be resolved by those on whom God had granted his blessing in the form of material wealth.”<sup>10</sup> What they wanted, at least in part, then, was an official recognition of a condition that had long existed in the Society, especially at the higher levels. A large part of the Society was already passive and the wealthier members of many meetings already had *de facto* control of the decision making process. Many important decisions were made in the elite Ministers and Elders Meetings, regardless of what transpired in open business meetings. The Orthodox Friends wanted to have other Quakers recognize this situation as a proper one.

The Hicksites, on the other hand, felt that membership should be, as it had been in the past, contingent upon righteous behavior; that the Society should remain an openly controlled institution in theory; and that it should return to being so in fact. Lastly, they maintained that a Quaker seeks salvation by following the dictates of the Inner Light, which can be done only by withdrawing from worldly corruption.<sup>11</sup>

Much of the discussion of the two latter questions became centered on an argument over the place of the Bible in Quakerism. The nature of the theology of the Inner Light, and the institution of the unprogrammed (“silent”) meeting, quite naturally tended to relegate the Bible to secondary status in Quaker life. Many families did not even own a copy. Yet it was never altogether eliminated and most Quaker preachers and writers had recourse to it to support various statements they made. The Hicksite controversy polarized Friends on this issue. For the Hicksites, the Bible became even less important, although they explicitly denied that they had discarded it entirely. The Orthodox went in the opposite direction, asserting the infallibility of Scripture and, to a greater or lesser degree, its superiority as a religious authority over the Inner Light. One Isaac Crewdson, for example, wrote a pamphlet in 1835 in which he denounced the doctrine of the Inner Light as “delusive” and advocated recognition of the Bible as the sole authority for Christians. Much later, the Orthodox Yearly Meeting of Ministers and Elders declared in 1878 that “we repudiate the so-called doctrine of the inner light . . .” These were the extremes of a tendency that expressed itself in Dutchess County meetings in the establishment of committees to see that every family owned a Bible.<sup>12</sup>

Such were the conditions of the schism. The Orthodox somehow contracted the notion that they were the defenders of true Quakerism. The

Hicksites, they believed, were animated by a “Spirit of unbelief in some of the fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Religion as contained in the Scriptures of Truth and held to by our Society. . . .” A letter from the Orthodox Meeting for Sufferings to its subordinate meetings vividly depicts their image of themselves as defenders of the faith.

Assembled to discharge the duties which the Discipline of the Society had confided to us; and having from the nature of the concerns which have claimed our attention been led to survey the waste places of Jerusalem to view the breaches in her walls and the gates which are burned with fire, in this day of awful revolt, when great numbers like the Children of Israel formerly have estranged themselves from the law and the testimony and have set up a separate alter [sic] which their fathers knew not; and well knowing that great as the afflictions of those who feel bound to manifest their love to their holy Redeemer; and that many are the privations and painful the bereavements of those who keenly feel the wounds inflicted on the tender ties of nature & the diminution of the sweetness of domestic life—we have fervently desired that these may be supported by the remembrance that they suffer for the sake of Him. . . .

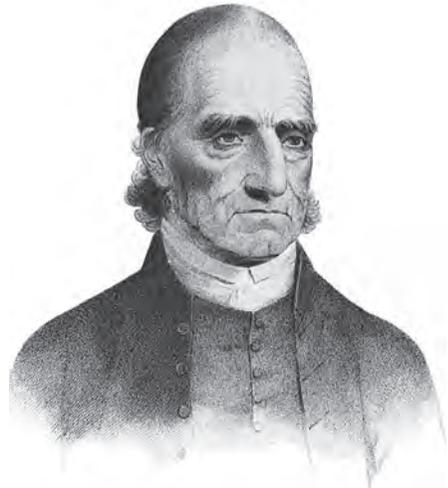
The Hicksites replied by charging the Orthodox party with “lack of love and forbearance, . . . oppressive denial of freedom of conscience, and . . . theological speculation.”<sup>13</sup>

### *The Split*

Opposition to Elias Hicks first surfaced in 1819, when he made his anti-slavery Pine Street Address in Philadelphia. His advocacy of abolitionism and of abstention from slave products did not please the conservative Quaker merchants of that city. But nothing really came of it and things were quiet until 1822, when another appearance in Philadelphia brought out his friends and his enemies in force. Some elders attempted to deal with him, but he dismissed their criticisms rather haughtily. The next year, the Yearly Meeting in Philadelphia included in its minutes a statement that was strongly evangelical in its thrust. There was not enough support to have it passed by the Meeting, but a way was found to have it included without endorsement. Many liberal Friends felt that they had been forced by chicanery to accept what they had rejected in open meeting.<sup>14</sup>

English Friends began to intervene in the conservative cause. Anna Braithwaite arrived in 1824 and attempted to correct Hicks but, again, he refused to yield. Then, in 1826, a group of British Quakers, led by Thomas Shillitoe

and including Anna Braithwaite, Elizabeth Robson, Richard Jordan, and George and Ann Jones, arrived in America for a three years' stay, which was the direct cause of the schism. Both sides of the controversy had been growing increasingly virulent. The English Quakers, however, initiated a policy of systematic repression of dissent, which the predominantly evangelical London Yearly Meeting had found useful in dealing with its liberal members. It was not an unknown tactic in America, for as early as 1801 David Sands had led a crusade to disown Hannah Barnard for saying that certain passages in the Bible, such as that in which God commanded Israel to kill its opponents, offended her conscience. But these English Quakers introduced the vilification, harassment, and expulsion of dissenters as a systematic method for dealing with discontent. They followed Hicks around the country, rising to attack him in every meeting in which he spoke. Ann Jones was most vitriolic. She called Hicks an "openly avowed" infidel, whose teachings were "diabolical and luciferian and damnable." At one meeting she was so violent that the elders felt constrained to ask her to leave since her actions were "inconsistent with gospel order . . . calculated to sow discord among brethren, and produce disorder in the church."<sup>15</sup>



**Figure 5.** *Elias Hicks of Long Island made numerous visits to Dutchess County. Engraving by Samuel Maverick after a painting by Henry Inman.*

The situation finally became intolerable to the liberals. They attempted to effect reforms, and were thwarted at every turn. Finally, at Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in 1827, John Comly led the liberal forces in a withdrawal from the meeting. He had attempted to work within the meeting but, although it was later found that the Hicksites, as the liberals came to be called, outnumbered the Orthodox in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting by 18,000 to 8,000, the conservatives controlled all the key committees and nothing could be done. The Orthodox Meeting sent representatives to force a confrontation in all the subordinate meetings, and the Hicksite Separation had begun. Splits occurred in four other Yearly Meetings; three remained undivided and identified themselves with the Orthodox Philadelphia Meeting. It is significant that although the Orthodox were most nu-

merous in terms of overall membership of Orthodox-affiliated meetings, they were vastly outnumbered in every Yearly Meeting that divided. Historian John Sykes believed that had a count been taken in the unseparated Yearly Meetings, the Orthodox would have been outnumbered, but that they maintained their control by expelling challengers to their leadership.<sup>16</sup>

This hard line toward dissenters was maintained after the division. The Orthodox New York Yearly Meeting urged speedy disownment of Hicksites, and refused to accept the offer of the Hicksite Yearly Meeting to divide all property evenly, preferring instead to take court action to win it all. The Hicksite New York Yearly Meeting, on the other hand, attempted to follow a conciliatory policy, directing that its subordinate meetings “carefully maintain our Christian Character, in the strict observance of Justice and Equity.” It directed that Orthodox Friends should be disowned if obstinate, but that arduous efforts should be made to reclaim them, and that any disowned members who desired to be readmitted could do so without apologizing for their conduct.<sup>17</sup>

Four other Yearly Meetings divided in 1828, although it is important to note that in the case of New York Yearly Meeting, the term “Hicksite Separation” is erroneous. It was the Orthodox who, in all cases, provoked a confrontation and then withdrew. The New York Yearly Meeting separated in May 1828. Thomas Shillitoe set the stage by pointing out the presence of certain Philadelphia Hicksites and demanding that they be excluded, since they had been “disowned” by the “true” Friends. The split occurred in a dispute over the record books. This set the pattern for the schisms in the lower meetings, as we shall see, for they usually took the form of a dispute over the possession of the record books, followed by the withdrawal of the Orthodox after they were refused permission to read their extracts [theological snippets from the yearly meeting]. The following is the account of the schism presented in an epistle from the Hicksite Yearly Meeting.

The Friend who usually acted as Clerk the last year, contrary to our usual custom, did not bring with him the book of minutes, and the papers belonging to the yearly meeting. Having, under these circumstances, taken his seat at the table, after some previous communications from brethren in attendance, he read an opening minute, and called over the names of the representatives from a strip of paper; (83 of whom answered to their names, of whose number about 20 absented themselves from our sittings.) . . .

The Clerk was repeatedly requested to proceed in regular order with the business of the meeting; and it was not till after much time had

been allowed him, and he manifested a fixed determination not to proceed in conformity with the mind of the meeting; that another Friend was appointed Clerk, and called to officiate. On his coming to the table the former Clerk, together with about 245 individuals being a small minority, which included many persons not members of this yearly meeting, withdrew from us, and have since we understand, set up a separate meeting under the character of a yearly meeting, retaining in their possession our books and papers. At the second sitting of the Women's Meeting, a number also withdrew from that body....<sup>18</sup>

### *Separation in Dutchess County*

The divided representatives went home to their June monthly meetings filled with what they had seen, somewhat bewildered but determined to uphold the party they had joined at the Yearly Meeting. For the Hicksites, the monthly meetings would be attempts to prevent a schism. The Orthodox were determined to dominate or leave. To this end, they had ministers of their party attend all the monthly and quarterly meetings to force a showdown. The accounts of the Hicksites present the story many times.

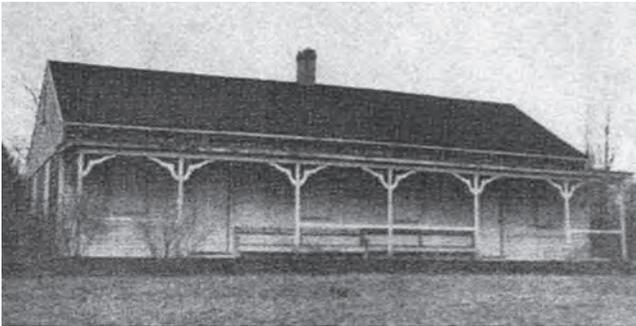


**Figure 6.** *Oblong Meeting House, Quaker Hill, Pawling, NY*  
Photo by Paul Taylor, 1960.

It happened in Dutchess County from June 18 to June 21, 1828. The sessions were stormy, tumultuous ones, a disgrace to the dignity of all concerned. One can imagine the feelings of anticipation of Friends on both sides, as each meeting in turn went through the ordeal, then waited to

hear news of the others. At Stanford, there were “divers members of the Society from neighbouring Monthly Meetings: who attended purposely, as it appeared, to abet and encourage such schismatick [sic] procedure: left the Meeting in a body . . .” Their presence is recognized in the Orthodox minutes as a committee which attended “to read the extracts as directed.”<sup>19</sup>

In Oblong meeting, the clerk, John Wing, was a Hicksite. The Orthodox faction rose and attempted to read their extracts. Suddenly, an unprecedented scene occurred, as normally sedate Friends shouted each other down. The Orthodox withdrew to Paul Osborn’s house, where they met until they constructed their own meeting house a year and a half later.



**Figure 7.**  
*The Oswego  
Meeting House,  
Moore Mills, NY.  
Photo by Paul  
Taylor, 1960*

At Oswego, the meeting attempted to proceed as usual, but “was repeatedly interrupted in a disorderly manner by some of the Separatists who were not members of our Moy Meet.g.” On the 18th,

The Clerk took his seat at the table, & read a minute opening the meet.g, then rose & informed the meet.g that the Books were not present, & offered for a reason, that he had understood there was a division of the Moy meeting anticipated; & that in order to give both parties an equal chance, the Books were placed where they would be produced, provided the meetg would come under certain restrictions, that is, to reject all extracts, & attend to the regular business that concerns the monthly meet.wg.

He was informed by Friends, they knew of no division of the Moy Meetg to take place & that it was improper for him to proceed, unless he produced the books & papers. This being expressed by the united voice of the meetg, after a time of consideration, they manifesting no disposition to produce the books & papers, agreeable to the mind of the meeting, Friends proceeded to appoint a Clerk for the day. Caleb Barker being named, was united with, & requested to sit by the table, which he did, & attempted to proceed to business, but was repeat-

edly interrupted in a disorderly manner by some of the Separatists who were not members of our Moy Meet.g. After considerable altercation, they endeavouring to press their extracts upon this meet.g, & being firmly rejected, they with a few separatists belonging to this mo,y meet,g, arose, & in violation of the discipline & established order of the Society, withdrew from the body: after which Friends proceeded to transact the business of the meet,g in a degree of brotherly love and condescension [sic].<sup>20</sup>

At Nine Partners, we have the advantage that both the Hicksite and the Orthodox records were preserved. That split occurred on the 19th. Said the Hicksites,

In consequence [sic] of a Separation which took place at our last Yearly Meeting when a number of friends withdrew, and contrary to our established order, Set up a new meeting, and presumed to call it the Yearly Meeting of friends held in New York, and amongst those who separated [sic] and left at that time were a few that are Members of the Monthly Meeting, who have again soon after the opening of the present meeting, gone off and left us, together with a few others who did not attend the Yearly Meeting, assigning as a reason for so doing that other friends who did not go with them, had derogated from the fundamental principles and doctrines held forth and acknowledged by our Society from the first rise of it—a charge we consider highly presumptuous [sic] and inadmissible—therefore this meeting concludes to record a statement thereof to shew its disapprobation of such misconduct. . . .

According to the Orthodox:

After our Meeting of friends at Nine Partners was opened on the 19th of 6th Mo [i.e., June 19. Quakers did not use the “pagan” names of the months] by Elias DaGarmo who was Clerk to the meeting and after a time of deliberations and expression of sentiments, it was refused to be accepted and directed . . . which appeared to be a manifest determination on the part of many friends not to continue any longer in subordination to our said Yearly Meeting the propriety and necessity of which was held forth and urged by some of said Committee [of the Yearly Meeting of the Orthodox] . . . the Clerk also gave it as his decision that it was the Judgment of the meeting that the aforesaid minute of extracts should not [be] read, and friends by reason of the opposition which was so prevalent being deprived of proceeding in their business . . . it was therefore (after stating that friends by their doing so did not relinquish any right to their property as related to the meeting house &c) concluded to move to the house where the Boarding school [was kept] to transact the business and by so doing having identified himself

with those who have departed from our principles and doctrine . . . and by thus so doing has caused a separation between we therefore release the Clerk . . . and Philip Hoag was appointed for the day the extracts as heretofore stated was read and their contents was satisfactory to us. . . .

Throughout the county, this pattern was repeated. Emissaries of the Orthodox Yearly Meeting tried to read their extracts, were raucously prevented from doing so, and withdrew, taking with them whatever property of the meeting (books and funds) their supporters possessed.<sup>21</sup>

After these four stormy days, the meetings realized what had happened, and began to set themselves in order. The first step was to attempt to recover the marks of the “official” meeting. Each side approached the officers who had supported the others, and demanded that they turn over the meeting property to its “rightful” owners, knowing that it would never happen. Real property, which remained almost exclusively in Hicksite hands, was sued for by the Orthodox, who lost in all cases. They were, however, able to retain possession of the Nine Partners Boarding School and of ten acres of land immediately surrounding it.<sup>22</sup>



**Figure 8.**  
*Nine Partners  
Meeting House,  
Millbrook, NY.  
Photo by Paul  
Taylor, 1960*

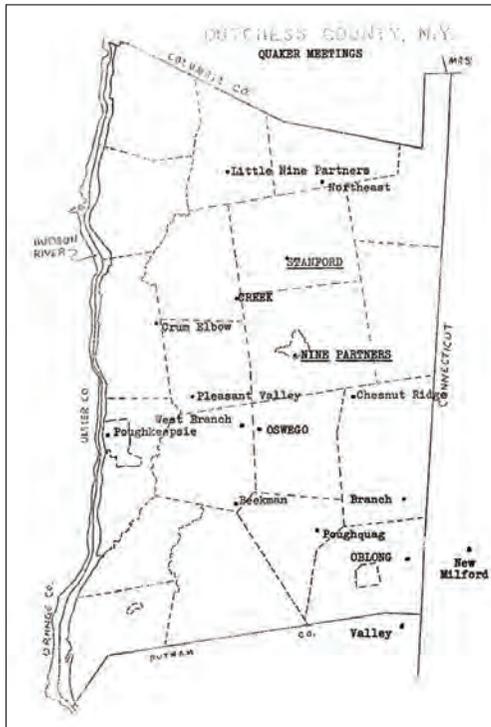
Both Yearly Meetings made provisions for disowning adherents of the other faction. The Hicksite Monthly Meetings of Dutchess County uniformly ignored disownment, noting usually that “this meeting unites in dismissing the Subject for the present.” As a result, the Hicksites of the county never disowned a single Orthodox Friend. The Orthodox party, on the other hand, entered into disownment with a vengeance, at every meeting expelling more Hicksites. This continued well into 1831.<sup>23</sup>

Each Yearly Meeting then ordered a census of all its Monthly Meetings, to determine the number of “Friends and Separatists,” or “Friends and Hicksites,” respectively. The final tally revealed that, in New York Yearly Meeting, Hicksites outnumbered the Orthodox 12,000 to 6,000. In Dutchess County, the proportion was even greater, with 1455 Hicksites to 558 Orthodox.<sup>24</sup> (See Table 1.)

The Census of 1829			
	Orthodox	Hicksite	Total
Oblong	25	95	120
Branch	15	35	50
Valley	1	58	59
Nine Partners	105	201	306
Ridge	9	42	51
Oswego	26	59	85
Beekman	68	89	157
Poughkeepsie	84	258	352
Creek	88	168	256
Little Nine Partners	40	45	85
Crum Elbow	0	204	204
Stanford	63	186	249
North East	34	15	49
Totals	558	1455	2013

**Table 1:** *NB. West Branch and Pleasant Valley are probably considered in Beekman and Poughkeepsie, respectively.*

Having assessed their situations, each faction found it necessary to “lay down,” or discontinue, some meetings in which the other party had captured most of the membership. The Hicksites lost North East, where Charles Hoag held sway, and Beekman. The Orthodox found it necessary to terminate their interests in Poughquag, Chestnut Ridge, West Branch, Pleasant Valley, Valley, and Crum Elbow Meetings. During the following twenty years, many others of the smaller meetings fell.<sup>25</sup>



**Figure 9.** *Map of Quaker Meetings in Dutchess County.*

Slowly, Friends recognized that the situation was a permanent one, and gave up hopes of swaying large numbers of the opposing parties to defection. Some of the Orthodox English Friends appeared in Dutchess County to solidify the schism. Thomas Shillitoe and George and Ann Jones all appeared at the Creek, as did the American conservative Stephen Grellet. Elias Hicks made one last appearance in the county, and drew the largest crowds ever. The Hicksites set up a new Nine Partners Boarding School and the Orthodox built their own meeting houses. Dutchess County Friends picked up the pieces

of their Society and settled into a period of decline which lasted the rest of the nineteenth century.<sup>26</sup>

## Conclusion

The Society of Friends in Dutchess County began as a small group of pioneers who, in the midst of the wilderness, built up a closely knit community which provided the discipline necessary to ensure the success of their enterprise. As the wilderness receded, as Friends grew more prosperous, and as their interests diverged, tensions developed. A sense of community was lost; many were mere professors of the faith, and the exclusive community was too rigid to cope with new situations. A schism developed.

During the nineteenth century, the Society declined. For many in both parties, Quakerism was a mere denominational affiliation, no longer a way of life. The upper-class Orthodox deserted the Society for more respectable denominations, such as the Episcopal Church, as befitted their social status. Others who were Orthodox because they were genuinely attracted

to evangelical thought found the flamboyant types of nineteenth-century religion enticing. As the author of *Quaker Quiddities* acutely observed: “Quakerism is declining because it is Quakerism, and not Epsicopalianism, Methodism, or Mormonism.”<sup>27</sup> By 1880, almost all the meetings in Dutchess County were dead.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rufus M. Jones, *The Quakers in the American Colonies* (New York: Norton Library, [1911], 1966), p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> Richard J. Purcell, *Connecticut in Transition: 1775–1818* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1963), p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> Jones, pp. 175ff.

<sup>4</sup> John Cox Jr., “Friends Meetings in Dutchess County,” in *The History of Dutchess County, New York*, Frank Hasbrouck, ed. 2 vols. (Poughkeepsie, NY: S. A. Matthieu, 1909), p. 651.

<sup>5</sup> Robert W. Doherty, *The Hicksite Separation: A Sociological Analysis of Religious Schism in Early Nineteenth Century America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1967), p. 22.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31. William Warren Sweet, *Religion in the Development of American Culture* (Gloucester, MA: P. Smith, 1963, [1952]), p. 231. Elbert Russell, *The History of Quakerism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942), p. 237. Joseph Belcher, *The Religious Denominations in the United States* (Philadelphia, PA: J. E. Potter, 1856), pp. 826–827. Doherty, p. 31.

<sup>7</sup> D. Elton Trueblood, “The Career of Elias Hicks,” in Howard H. Brinton, ed., *Byways in Quaker History* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill, 1944), pp. 78–79, 89.

<sup>8</sup> Doherty, p. 32. Russell, pp. 229–230, 324. John Sykes, *The Quakers* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1959), p. 222. Doherty, p. 28. Trueblood, p. 85.

<sup>9</sup> Warren H. Wilson, “Quaker Hill—A Sociological Study” (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1907), p. 76. Doherty, p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> Doherty, pp. 30–31. Sykes, p. 218.

<sup>11</sup> Doherty, p. 31.

<sup>12</sup> Sweet, p. 230. New York Yearly Meeting [Hicksite], Epistle from the Yearly Meeting, 1829 (New York, 1829).

<sup>13</sup> Creek Monthly Meeting [Men’s] [Orthodox], MS. Minutes, 6 mo. 20 [June 20], 1828 to 12 mo. 17 [December 17], 1841, Haviland Records Room, New York City, Meetings of 6/20/1828, 11/21/1828. Doherty, p. 19.

<sup>14</sup> Doherty, p. 28. Trueblood, pp. 83–84. Sweet, pp. 231–232.

<sup>15</sup> Trueblood, p. 85. Bliss Forbush, *Elias Hicks, Quaker Liberal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956) p. 225. Sykes, pp. 222–223.

<sup>16</sup> Doherty, p. 3. Sykes, pp. 224–226.

- <sup>17</sup> New York Yearly Meeting [Orthodox], *Extracts from the Yearly Meeting, 1828* (New York, 1828). New York Yearly Meeting [Hicksite], *Extracts from the Minutes of the Yearly Meeting, 1828* (New York, 1828).
- <sup>18</sup> Sykes, pp. 224–225. New York Yearly Meeting [Hicksite], *Epistle from the Yearly Meeting, 1828* (New York, 1828).
- <sup>19</sup> Doherty, p. 51. Oswego Monthly Meeting [Hicksite], 1828–1843, Meeting of 6/18/1828. Stanford Monthly Meeting [Hicksite], 1828–1867, Meeting of 6/21/1828.
- <sup>20</sup> Warren H. Wilson, *Quaker Hill in the Nineteenth Century* (Quaker Hill, NY: Quaker Hill Conference Association, 1907), p. 26. Oswego Monthly Meeting [Hicksite], 1828–1843, Meeting of 6/18/1828.
- <sup>21</sup> Nine Partners Monthly Meeting [Hicksite], 1820–1851, Meeting of 6/19/1828. Nine Partners Monthly Meeting [Orthodox], 1828–1850, Meeting of 6/19/1828. The significance of these events was obvious to Quakers immediately. The separation incidents were recorded in the minutes in much greater detail than any occurrence before or since the event. Minutes are ordinarily very cryptic and contain only a brief objective statement of the outcome of any discussion. If the separation had been recorded in the normal style, the minutes might have read: “Some friends having left our meeting, the meeting continued as usual.”
- <sup>22</sup> Nine Partners Monthly Meeting [Hicksite], 1820–1851, Meeting of 7/17/1828. Nine Partners Monthly Meeting [Orthodox], 1828–1850, Meeting of 7/17/1828. Stephen H. Merritt, “The Brick Meeting House at Nine Partners,” in *Dutchess County Historical Society Yearbook*, vol. 7 (Poughkeepsie, NY: DCHS, 1922), p. 17. Russell, p. 403.
- <sup>23</sup> Oswego Monthly Meeting [Hicksite], 1828–1843, Meeting of 8/19/1829.
- <sup>24</sup> Nine Partners Monthly Meeting [Orthodox], 1828–1850, Meeting of 11/19/1829. Sykes, p. 225. “Oswego Monthly Meeting,” typed sheet, Haviland Records Room, New York City. Stanford Monthly Meeting [Hicksite], 1828–1867, Meeting of 4/18/1829. Oswego Monthly Meeting [Hicksite], 1828–1843, Meetings of 2/18/1829, 3/18/1829, 4/15/1829. Nine Partners Monthly Meeting [Hicksite], 1820–1851, Meeting of 4/16/1829. Cox, p. 658.
- <sup>25</sup> Stanford Monthly Meeting [Hicksite], 1828–1867, Meetings of 3/21/1829, 10/17/1829. Cox, p. 657. Oswego Monthly Meeting [Hicksite], 1828–1843, Meetings of 7/16/1828, 10/15/1828, 11/19/1828. Cox, pp. 655–657. Creek Monthly Meeting [Orthodox], 1828–1841, Meeting of 11/7/1828.
- <sup>26</sup> Creek Monthly Meeting [Orthodox], 1828–1841, Meetings of 5/20/1829, 6/21/1829, 6/18/1830. Hicks, p. 428.
- <sup>27</sup> James Bunker Congdon, *Quaker quiddities; or, Friends in council, a colloquy* (Boston, MA: Crosby, Nichols, Lee, and Co., 1860), p. 6.
- <sup>28</sup> Since this essay was written, interpretations of the Hicksite Separation have changed. Those interested in current views of the Hicksite Separation should consult H. Larry Ingle, *Quakers in Conflict: The Hicksite Reformation* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986) as well as the journal *Quaker History*.

# Thomas Lake Harris and Amenia's Brotherhood of the New Life

*How Lady Oliphant and her Son,  
the Hon. Sir Laurence Oliphant, M.P.,  
were lured by a prophet-poet to a  
nineteenth-century Dutchess County commune*

*By Russell La Valle*

The history of nineteenth-century America is replete with accounts of people who renounced the conventions of their time and followed charismatic prophets into utopian communities, hoping to better their lives by self-abnegation and to instruct the world in the virtues of socialism. The history of such efforts was sympathetically described by John Humphrey Noyes, himself the founder of the Oneida Community in central New York.<sup>1</sup> His *History of American Socialisms* (1870), characterized such ventures as scientific studies in communist practicality:

This country has been from the beginning, and especially for the last forty years, a laboratory in which Socialisms of all kinds have been experimenting. It may be safely assumed that Providence has presided over the operations, and has taken care to make them instructive. The disasters of Owenism<sup>2</sup> and Fourierism<sup>3</sup> have not been in vain; the successes of the Shakers<sup>4</sup> and Rappites<sup>5</sup> have not been set before us for nothing. We may hope to learn something from every experiment.<sup>6</sup>

America's vast, cheap lands and republican principles provided a welcoming environment for these attempts to replace competitive capitalism with collaborative socialism. Indeed, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the notion that such trial communities could transform all of Western culture and society had attracted a significant number of adherents, not only in America but in Europe as well. One such dreamer was Thomas Lake Harris (1823–1906).

## *The Young Poet*

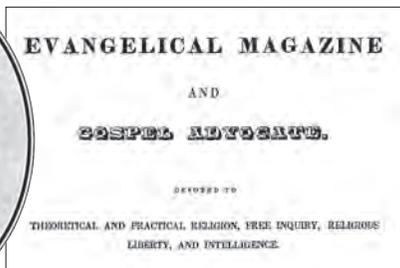
Harris was born into poverty in Fenny Stratford in Buckinghamshire, England. His father, Thomas Harris, was a deacon in the Baptist Church and observed strict Calvinist principles. When Harris was five, the family emigrated to Utica, New York, where his father kept a grocery store and also

worked as an auctioneer. His mother, Annie Lake Harris, died prematurely four years later, and her passing affected young Harris profoundly.

After his father remarried, his new stepmother proved to be a harsh surrogate, and Harris's home life became increasingly inhospitable to him—beginning a long period of estrangement from his parents. Over the next few years, he became more and more independent, “disassociating himself from his family, and spending much of his time alone with thoughts of God and mother.”<sup>7</sup>

A snapshot of Harris during this period was provided by Caroline White Soule, the widow of Henry B. Soule, a Universalist minister who had served in Utica during 1843–44.<sup>8</sup> (Much later, Caroline Soule would become a Universalist minister and missionary to Scotland):

The Rev. A.B. G[rosh]<sup>9</sup>, a Universalist minister, resident of Utica and editor of *The Evangelical Union* [she presumably meant the *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate*],<sup>10</sup> became much interested in the desolate young man...(and) got him some light work, I think, in the office of the paper, and made him a welcome visitor to his house. It was there that I met him...a quiet, bashful, unassuming young man, of very delicate physique, and in very delicate health—looking, indeed, a half-starved young fellow. Yet, when alone in the study...he showed a good deal of vivacity, even brilliancy, of conversational gifts.<sup>11</sup>



**Figure 1.**

Left  
*The Reverend  
A. B. Grosh.*

Right  
*The Evangelical  
Magazine and  
Gospel Advocate.*

The Reverend Aaron B. Grosh was a Universalist minister in Utica, New York. He was also the printer and associate editor of Utica's Universalist weekly newspaper. Later, he would become one of the seven founders of the Grange.

After a few weeks his health failed so [much], and he was so thin, that Mr. and Mrs. G[rosh] kindly took him into their house, and gave him a home there, free of board; and, as he there expressed a desire to

become a preacher, Mr. G[rosh] and my husband gave him a desk in their study, and offered to instruct him in theology, and by degrees got him appointments in small villages, where he earned a few dollars a Sunday. He was very poor.<sup>12</sup>

By the time he was eighteen, having completely abandoned his family and their beliefs and become a Universalist,<sup>13</sup> Harris had an epiphany. Returning home from an autumn stroll, his room became “illuminated with a soft moonlight radiance, full of sparkles of invisible gems,” and from inside this “waving, floating, coruscating light” his mother seemingly appeared, placed her hand on his brow and spoke “in a speech which flowed into expression in the soul.”<sup>14</sup> What his mother supposedly communicated to him is unknown, but of greater importance was the revelation to Harris that he was a spiritual medium—through whom various personalities and supernatural agencies would manifest themselves for the rest of his life.

Perhaps because of his supposed mediumistic powers, perhaps as a natural progression of his considerable “conversational gifts,” another aspect of Harris’s personality also began to assert itself at this time: poetry. He began contributing poems to various Universalist newspapers and periodicals, and as his reputation as a serious poet grew, so did his uncanny ability to improvise long, high-quality, fully formed poems to astonished observers. As Mrs. Soule observed first-hand:

Harris possessed in a wonderful degree the gift of improvising. I have never met his equal. When in Utica he would come to my sitting room of an evening, and sitting down in a rather high chair—one which allowed him to swing his feet rhythmically—he would compose poetry by the mile: and it was really poetry—exquisite thoughts exquisitely worded. My memories of these quiet hours are very beautiful . . . his eyes were very full of thought and expression, and his voice had a rare charm. . . . His poetic utterances were to me like views of sunrise and sunset, which we enjoy internally but cannot remember.<sup>15</sup>

More than twenty years later, the Quaker-turned-spiritualist author William Howitt would wax extravagantly about Harris’s oratorical command, which by that point had attained a mastery of seamlessly blending high art, social commentary, and prophetic theology:

His extempore sermons were the only realization of my conceptions of eloquence; at once full, unforced, outgushing, unstinted and absorbing. They were triumphant embodiments of sublime poetry, and a stern unsparring, yet loving and burning theology.<sup>16</sup>

### *Preacher in Search of a Pulpit*

In 1844, capitalizing on his religious apprenticeship and further developing his unique style of “poetical” sermonizing—not always a success with old-fashioned Universalists—Harris received his first appointment in a small town in the Mohawk Valley in upstate New York. He was only 21, and his tenure was brief. But during that period, he had the opportunity to visit the Soules, who had moved to Boston, and to preach in various pulpits of the city and surrounding communities. Having become better dressed and more refined in his manner, Harris was enthusiastically welcomed everywhere and soon was introduced to a number of Boston’s principal literary figures, in whose magazines and annuals he published new poems. These receptions buoyed his hopes of securing a position somewhere in the Boston area. However, Harris was thought of more as a rising poet than a budding theologian, and after a month he was not offered a pastorate anywhere in Massachusetts. It would be the last time he would see the Soules; nevertheless, he did tell them of his great love for a parishioner, Mary Van Arnum —“O, she has such beautiful arms.”<sup>17</sup>— his fiancée back in New York, whom he would marry in December of 1845.

In that same year, Harris became the preacher at the the Fourth Universalist Society in New York City, where Horace Greeley was one of several prominent parishioners. Greeley’s friend, Thomas Jefferson Sawyer, was just leaving the Fourth Universalist pulpit in 1845 to become the principal at the Clinton Liberal Institute in Clinton, New York—where Henry B. Soule had just recently been principal (and his wife-to-be Caroline White had been his employee). So we may sus-



**Figures 3 and 4.** *Henry B. Soule (born in Dutchess County) and his wife, Caroline Soule, became a second family to Harris and almost siblings. Henry Soule was only eight years older than Harris and Caroline was a year younger.*

pect that Harris’s good fortune in being offered the New York post owed more than a little to his “second family.” For reasons unknown, however, it was a position Harris would occupy for less than two years (being succeeded by the famous Edwin Hubbell Chapin).

During this time, Providence or Fate again stepped into Harris's life. Horace Greeley's New York *Tribune* published a series of "lectures" that had been dictated to two of Poughkeepsie's Universalist ministers by an 18-year-old boy in a trance. In 1847, these lectures were published as *Nature's Divine Revelation*. When Harris next appears on the public stage, it is as disciple of the young spiritualist-author.

### *The Poughkeepsie Seer*

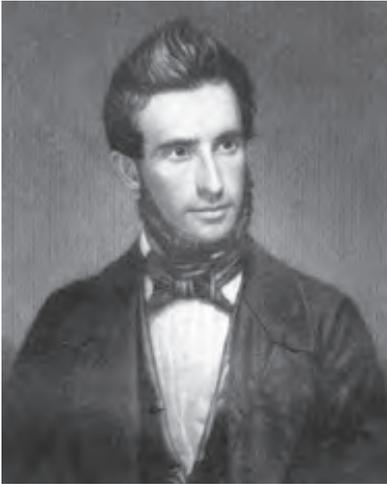
In 1826, Andrew Jackson Davis was born into desperate poverty in Blooming Grove (Orange County), New York. He was "a delicate child, given to somnambulism, hallucinations and, possibly, to epileptic fits."<sup>18</sup> And from the beginning, these states were often accompanied by voices "from the Beyond." Given Davis's physical frailty and dire family conditions, it is no wonder that one of the earliest voices urged him to "eat plenty of bread and molasses."<sup>19</sup>

When Davis was a teenager another voice instructed, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."<sup>20</sup> The aspiring spiritualist took this as a command to peddle yeast around the country, which he did—sometimes attending revivals along the way. In 1843, in Poughkeepsie, Davis was present at a series of lectures on animal magnetism—as hypnotism was then called—and it was there that he "discovered" his clairvoyant powers. Their spiritual messages (divinely inspired, he believed) would inform his life's work.

The following year, serving as a clairvoyant for two proponents of animal magnetism, Davis had a revelation—Galen<sup>21</sup> and Swedenborg<sup>22</sup> manifested themselves to him in a graveyard and revealed the secrets of healing. Davis promptly went to New York and established a practice as a "medical clairvoyant," a business that was wildly successful. Claiming the ability to look "through space directly into Nature's laboratory," he was able to diagnose medical problems and prescribe remedies—on one occasion prescribing the fat of thirty-two weasels as part of a cure. (The patient declined.)

Like Harris, Davis was drawn into the growing tide of spiritualism and soon found himself going into hypnotic trances and dictating whole books on a variety of subjects. Often the performances were witnessed by scientists, philosophers, and clergymen, and they marveled as the young man lay with his eyes closed and dictated to a phalanx of stenographers. Out of a series of séances in 1847, Davis composed *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations and a Voice to Mankind*—an 800-page

tome which reviewers likened to the works Kant, Hegel, and Goethe. It ran to thirty-four editions and was widely read until after the Civil War. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle called Davis “one of the most remarkable men of whom we have any exact record.”<sup>23</sup>



**Figure 5.** Andrew Jackson Davis, “*The Poughkeepsie Seer*,” preached a doctrine that sounded vaguely like Swedenborgianism and Universalism, perhaps because he was under the guidance of three successive Universalist ministers in Poughkeepsie.

Very quickly Davis was dubbed “the American Swedenborg” and a true medium of the Master, whose ghost Davis said continued to appear to him and to inspire him to develop a spiritualism whose roots were in traditional Swedenborgianism but whose expression was decidedly more American. It was, ironically, a development that led to the gradual lessening of Swedenborg’s influence in America after 1847.

Given the growing renown of Thomas Lake Harris and Andrew Jackson Davis as trance writers and spiritual mediums, it is no surprise that they would eventually cross paths. Despite being three years Davis’s elder, Harris promptly joined a band of enthusiastic disciples who gathered around the

magnetic leader—believing in the literal truth of his revelations—and who were eager to lecture on the wonders of Davis’s “harmonial philosophy.” For his podium, Harris established the First Independent Christian Society in New York, at a public hall called the Coliseum, at 450 Broadway, and again Horace Greeley was among his parishioners.

The Davis “philosophy” held, in essence, that “Father-God (Love) is united with Mother-Nature (Substance) in the ‘nuptial law’ (association)”<sup>24</sup> :

The masculine elements of Father-God and the feminine properties of Mother-Nature meet and appear (to a very limited extent) in the Man’s constitution; out of which they unroll progressively, and from which they bloom with an immortal beauty, in spheres beyond the stars<sup>25</sup>

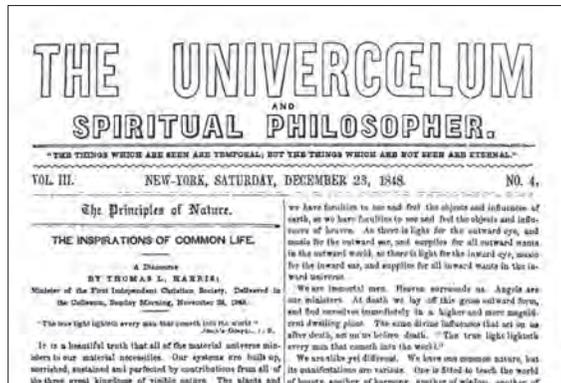
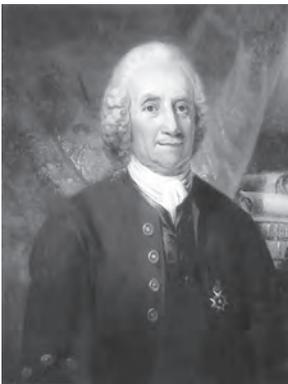
Davis’s cosmological scheme was intricate, but Harris’s prophetic imagination transformed it into a gripping gospel of spiritualism—a “disclosure from the interior”—that would supposedly lead to an extension of natural

science and philosophy and would become the fountainhead of a new social order in which man's powers, principles, and institutions would be carried out to perfection. Today, however, Harris's explication of Davis's thought sounds merely absurd.

In the beginning, God the Life, in God the Lord, in God the Holy procedure, inhabited the dome, which, burning in magnificence primeval, and, revolving in prismatic and undulatory spiral, appeared, and was the pavilion of the Spirit, in glory inexhaustible and inconceivable, in movement spherical, unfolded in harmonious disclosive.

After campaigning for months in Davis's cause, Harris found his mentor enmeshed in a scandal. Apparently, Davis's doctrine of made-in-heaven love, which said that married partners who found themselves no longer adapted to each other should separate and seek truer affinities, was becoming all-too-true. The 22-year-old Davis's "sister-spirit" and patroness, the 42-year-old Catherine DeWolf Dodge, was indeed separating from her husband, Joshua Dodge, a member of the U.S. diplomatic corps. Harris was appalled, and Davis was disappointed with his associate's position on the matter. Although the two reconciled after Davis married Mrs. Dodge in July 1848, the two men never again worked together.

Another shocked Davis disciple was Samuel B. Brittan, editor of the Davis-oriented newspaper *The Univercoelum and Spiritual Philosopher* (and later publisher of Harris's *An Epic of the Starry Heaven*). Brittan supported Harris and his break with Davis and encouraged him to concentrate on his



**Figures 6 and 7.** Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1771) was a Swedish polymath whose eight-volume *Arcana Coelestia* (1749–56) claimed to expound the “spiritual meaning” of *Genesis* and *Exodus*. He published thirty more religious volumes before his death. Harris edited a periodical, *The Univercoelum*, to expound Andrew Jackson Davis’s vaguely Swedenborgian philosophy.

poetic and mediumistic powers—and to continue to develop his religion of revelation. With Brittan’s urging and influence Harris came to believe that his trances and visions were, in fact, inspired by spirits.

According to Harris, the literal truth of his spiritual illuminations was proven in March of 1850, when early one evening as he entered his room, “a tall and majestic Spirit” appeared holding a book. The Angel said, “Do you perceive that all the knowledge which hitherto you have attained to, is far exceeded by the wisdom contained in the first and most minute of those hieroglyphs?” Harris answered yes and the Angel smiled and spoke with “paternal gentleness”: “Be faithful and obedient, and in four years this volume all shall be opened to you.”<sup>26</sup> The book closed and the Angel disappeared. This vision, Harris claimed, represented his formal initiation into the realm of spiritual sight and marked his entrance “upon the first level of direct revelation . . . the ultimatum in externals of the spiritual degree . . . of interior perception of the Divine.”<sup>27</sup>

The passing of Harris’s wife at this time (1850) grieved him deeply, as had the death of his mother, and proved to be another seminal event in the young prophet’s life. Finding himself a widower and the father of two small boys (John and Tom)—just after his break with Andrew Jackson Davis—Harris’s thoughts turned to ideas of devotion and conjugal love. He would write that he was with his wife the night of her “transition” and described how he saw her spirit ascend from her body, and once at “home,” she would visit him and all their sorrow was over. Throughout the rest of his career, the themes of “the divine love incarnate in the eternal union of the sexes” would infuse his teachings and poetry<sup>28</sup>

### *Mountain Cove Community*

Following the death of his wife in 1850, Harris left his new church and joined the Apostolic Circle, a community of rapping spirits in Auburn, New York. Headed by the Rev. James L. Scott, a Seventh Day Baptist preacher and “trance speaker” who believed he was the chosen vessel of St. John the Apostle, Harris soon began receiving messages (through an official medium in the movement named Mrs. Benedict) that he was to become the earthly channel for St. Paul. Fueled by such a prospect, he settled in Auburn and with Scott immediately began publication of a new periodical, *Disclosures from the Interior and Superior Care of Mortals*.

Shortly thereafter, it was announced that the community had discovered the original Garden of Eden (uninhabited since the fall of Adam and Eve)

in Mountain Cove, Fayette County, Virginia (now in West Virginia). It was here that the Mountain Cove Community was established as an agricultural cooperative, and Scott installed himself as the “perfect medium”—professing infallibility and absolute authority as God’s earthly representative, through whom the colony would operate with divine direction. From this idyllic setting, Scott promised his followers an escape from “the vales of death.”

There was trouble in Paradise, however, and soon many of the colonists became disillusioned, charging that Scott had demanded all their properties and possessions (in an attempt at complete communal ownership)—with the understanding that such conveyances were, in actuality, being “made to the Deity.” With dissent on the rise and a community breakdown threatening, Scott went to New York and implored Harris to help him quell the crisis. Not only did Harris come to the rescue, but he also prevailed upon several men of means to join them and buy back the disputed lands (and put the deeds in Scott’s and Harris’s names)—thus averting an insurrection. But with Harris installed as the representative of St. Paul, there were now two perfect mediums, and they wasted no time in exercising their autocratic influence over the congregation, as before.

Within two years it was over—as slander, distrust, and quarrels threw the collective into discord, and Scott’s and Harris’s claims of divine authority in temporal matters were challenged. In the latter part of 1853 the Mountain Cove Community came to its end—its members losing all their property as well as being disappointed with regard to the promised Second Coming of Christ at “Holy Mountain.”

### *An Epic of the Starry Heaven*

With the failure at Mountain Cove, Harris “resumed his wanderings. lecturing on spiritualism throughout the East and South.” It was during one of his visits to New York, from November 24 to December 8, 1853, that he dictated his first great poetic composition, *An Epic of the Starry Heaven*. As Samuel B. Brittan wrote in his introduction at the time:

The Poem . . . was spoken by Thomas L. Harris in the course of fourteen consecutive days, the speaker being in a *trance state* during its delivery. From one hundred twenty-five to two hundred fifty lines were dictated at each session, of which there were twenty-two in number, and the precise time occupied in communicating the whole was twenty-six hours and sixteen minutes. . . . The general appearance and

manner of the *improvisatore* while subject to the influence of Spirits, was much like that of a person in all ordinary magnetic sleep. . . . The voice of the speaker was deep-toned and musical, and his enunciation distinct and energetic. Occasionally he exhibited considerable vehemence, but when the nature of the subject required gentleness, his voice was modulated with great delicacy, and at times, his whole manner and utterance were characterized by remarkable solemnity and irresistible pathos.<sup>30</sup>

The *Epic* was quickly followed by *A Lyric of the Morning Land* (1854) and *A Lyric of the Golden Age* (1856), both dictated in similar states of trance but marking a departure from Andrew Jackson Davis's "harmonial philosophy" and its crude spiritualistic cosmology.

In *A Lyric*, Harris wrote of being in mental contact with a spirit called Lily Queen (or Queen Lily) of the Conjugal Angels, whom he marries. This "counterpart" marriage to Lily Queen was significant—as it marked a shift in Harris's spiritual development from his preoccupation with his own interior states to more objective interests of spiritual communion. (Later, he would come to regard it as his first step, or "round," in his seven rounds of development necessary to achieve immortality and deity.) Now by day, he was preacher, reformer, and man of letters, but at night in his sleep he was in heaven, in spirit communion, in conjugal bliss.



**Figure 8.** *Thomas Lake Harris, 32 years old in 1855, preached as a Swedenborgian at the Church of the Good Shepherd at New York University.*

In 1855, while on a lecture tour, Harris married Emily Isabella Waters in New Orleans, herself a practicing spiritualist, who not only condoned Harris's marriage to Lily Queen—wholeheartedly accepting it as the "spiritual mystery" he said it was—but also considered the spirit to be Harris's true soul mate. Until Emily's death in 1885, the earthly Harrises lived in celibacy.

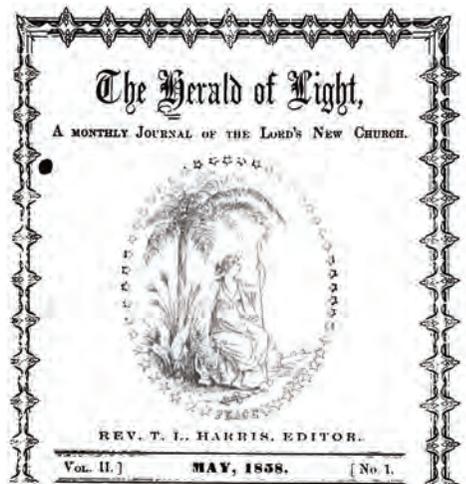
Harris's ministry was now called the Church of the Good Shepard with Sunday services held in the University Chapel of New York Univer-

sity, at Washington Square. Throughout the late 1850s, he continued to develop his “celestial philosophy,” especially his personal passion of sexual mysticism, which became the guiding force for his conception of a new design for society, a new family structure—uniting men and angels and ultimately man and God.

### *England and the Oliphants*

In 1859, so the story goes, the Lord appeared to Harris and instructed him to go and preach in England, and on May 5 he resigned from his New York congregation and sailed abroad with his wife. Once there, he was the guest of the religious reformer Dr. J. J. Garth Wilkinson and his circle of friends, who embraced Harris as a kindred spirit—as someone whose eloquence and colorful American ways they hoped would give inspiration to their cause, which was to break away from the orthodoxy and sectarianism of the European Swedenborgians and forge a more modernist movement of national Christian socialism.

Harris, however, appeared ignorant of contemporary English religious thought and was perceived as too mystical—his spiritualism, though fascinating, proving to be more of a curiosity than a serious gospel they were willing to follow. What did make an impression was Harris’s eloquence and poetic self-confidence, which gave him an evangelical appeal that swept over his rapt audiences with its apocalyptic power. In his travels around England and Scotland, he drew enthusiastic crowds of four to five hundred people, from whom coalesced a small core group of devout followers who ultimately inspired Harris to thoughts less of a church than of a community.



**Figure 9.** *Thomas Lake Harris’s publication during his New York Swedenborgian ministry was called The Herald of Light.*

As these thoughts germinated, Harris returned to London, and in March of 1860 he preached a number of fiery sermons at the Marylebone Institute and Steinway Hall, attracting sympathetic listeners to his new mes-



**Figure 10.** *Thomas Lakes Harris in England, in 1860, disappointed the Swedenborgians who had invited him, but his preaching attracted crowds.*

sage of personal regeneration by the Divine Breath—and, in time, the regeneration of all human institutions.<sup>31</sup> One of these listeners was Laurence Oliphant—a brilliant writer and politician who had returned to England after a distinguished career in the diplomatic service. Still in his thirties, Oliphant was a fabled, picaresque figure in England whose life was steeped in political intrigue, foreign adventure, and all the manly pursuits of society’s moneyed and privileged.

However, inside this maelstrom of activity, Oliphant labored under an ever-present cloud of guilt and self-examination about his life and the significance of human endeavor—causing him to question whether he lacked a proper spiritual foundation that could provide philosophical meaning and put the world into perspective. As a questioning soul looking for answers, Oliphant fell under the sway of Harris’s dazzling rhetorical brilliance and his message of a new revelation. Little did they know that their lives would intertwine profoundly until the aristocrat’s death in 1888.



**Figures 11 and 12.** *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, writing in his History of Spiritualism, was utterly perplexed by the hold that Thomas Lake Harris came to have over Laurence Oliphant, whom Doyle called “one of the most brilliant men of his generation.” The etching at left depicts Oliphant on a diplomatic mission to Tokyo, defending himself against a sudden attack by xenophobic warriors. The illustration at right is from Oliphant’s comic novel Piccadilly and was drawn by Richard “Dickie” Doyle, the famous illustrator-uncle of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.*

But how dissimilar they were! Oliphant—the wealthy world traveler, intimate with the great and famous, and Harris—the prophet mariner of the heavens, intimate with God and His angels. Yet there was no struggle of wills. Harris’s dominating personality overwhelmed Oliphant because the latter was ripe and susceptible to being dominated. The diplomat and sophisticate became at once the neophyte and seeker. Of Harris, Oliphant would remark years later, he “talked to me as never man talked before.”

From this brief meeting, Oliphant emerged emotionally charged—his long personal journey to surrender himself to God seemingly finding a home. In his excitement—and perhaps wanting parental approval—Oliphant spoke to his mother about Harris. Lady Oliphant herself was in spiritual turmoil after the death of her husband, Sir Anthony Oliphant, and in short time the trio was seen in and about London. Harris had reinforced Oliphant’s guilt-muffled cries, yet it would take another five years for the peripatetic “pet of society” to reach the emotional commitment necessary to apply for admission in Harris’s new community in America, a country Oliphant had always looked down upon with amusement.



**Figure 13.** *Laurence Oliphant was elected to Parliament in 1865 and, in the same year, began publishing in the pages of Blackwood’s Magazine a satirical novel about the fashionable society in which he moved.*

### *Wassaic and Old Amenia*

In 1861, allegedly to fulfill God’s call to create a New Jerusalem, Thomas Harris chose a small hill farm near the tiny village of Wassaic in Dutchess County, New York. The region (specifically Dover, New York) had been the birthplace of the Reverend Henry B. Soule, Harris’s surrogate brother in Utica and Boston. Had he praised the area to Harris? Possibly.

In any case, Harris started to build “a plain but sufficiently commodious house” (a “Breath-house”) to be the home of the Brotherhood of the New Life. Besides his family of four, he brought some faithful members from his former congregation in New York City—notably Jane Lee Waring (and

her estimated fortune of \$250,000–\$500,000) and Mr. and Mrs. James Requa, who would assume key positions in the new community. In all there were about twelve. Others would soon follow.

Sharing a faith in Christ and an intensely practical life in accordance with His commandments, Harris and the community—soon referred to simply as THE USE—operated on the principle that when a man is “born of the Spirit,” he is naturally drawn into communal relations—with the complete understanding that all his brethren “were of one heart and one mind, and had all things in common.” Under Harris’s exacting aegis, this unity of conviction was the guiding principle of The Use’s government, where members of a Council of Direction would have to agree unanimously on all matters pertaining to the governance of the community. Any new person applying for admission was subject to spiritual tests and a demanding probation period—preceded by unconditional surrender to God’s will, absolute chastity, and full acceptance of Christ as the one true God.<sup>32</sup> In time, as membership increased and the organization strengthened, programs beneficial to The Use’s intellectual and spiritual welfare were welcomed and encouraged, as well as practical industries and businesses to put the commune on sound economic footing.



**Figure 14.** *Jane Lee Waring was a wealthy follower of Harris and would eventually become his wife in 1892.*

Without question, the cardinal tenet underlying all theories, practices, and administrations of the Brotherhood was “open breathing,” also known as “open respiration” or “divine respiration.” As described by Oliver Dyer in the *New York Sun* on April 30, 1869:

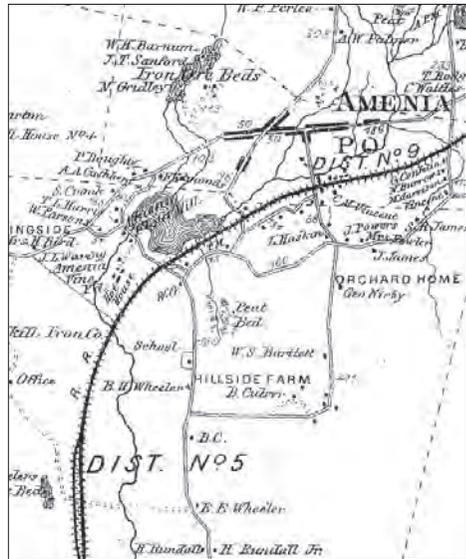
The starting point of the theory is, that God created man in his own image and likeness, and breathed into him the breath of life. That the breathing into man of the breath of life was the sensible point of contact between the divine and human, between God and man. That

man in his holy state was, so to speak, directly connected with God, by means of what might be likened to a spiritual respiratory umbilical cord, which ran from God to man's inmost or celestial nature, and constantly infused him with airs from heaven, whereby his spiritual respiration or life was supported, and his entire nature, physical as well as spiritual, kept in a state of godlike purity and innocence, without, however, any infringement of man's freedom.

Essentially, as the new respiration proceeds, this higher breath builds up the bodies of its practitioners—warring against disease and casting out hereditary maladies, thereby renewing one's health from its foundations—and remains “in the body as a sentinel against every plague.” In the process, it also becomes a guiding power inspiring a recipient's calling, training him for his work and coordinating his affairs in the larger scheme of his life. Ultimately, these phenomena work themselves into the larger group—reorganizing villages, workshops, manufacturing, agriculture—in effect, reorganizing mankind and “gathering human atoms from their degradation, and crystallizing them in resplendent unities.”

At the end of 1863, The Use moved from Wassaic to the village of Amenia proper four miles up the road, where a mill was purchased and the First National Bank of Amenia was founded under Harris's presidency. Here Harris prospered as a banker, farmer and wine-maker, and the Brotherhood continued to attract members—including a group of Japanese students he had met in England. But by far the most prominent among his converts was Lady Oliphant, who joined in 1865 after a short probationary period.

A widow and fifty-six years old, Lady Oliphant (Use name “Viola”) had been the wife of Sir Anthony Oliphant, chief justice



**Figure 15.** A map of Amenia in 1867 lists T. L. Harris and the Amenia Flour Mill, southwest of the town's center. J. L. Waring and the Amenia Vine Yard and hot house is listed just below. A note on the side lists J. A. Regu as the cashier at the First National Bank of Amenia. Map from the collection of The Amenia Historical Society.



**Figure 16.** *The First National Bank of Amenia was founded by Harris, with himself as president and his follower J. A. Requa as cashier. His vice-president was Gail Borden, the inventor of condensed milk. Photo from the collection of the Amenia Historical Society*

of Ceylon.<sup>33</sup> She gladly let go of her former life of entitlement and embraced her part in the washing, cooking, and cleaning of the large communal household, mending garments of the farm laborers, and later on managing a small grocery store. All this she accepted willingly, and having given herself completely to the community, could not conceive a life apart from it. “If they send me away, I should die a little way from the gate,” she would say sadly. Her only personal ordeal was being separated from her son Laurence. The intentional separation of the Oliphants was consistent with Harris’s

disciplining members for having once lived a privileged life, and breaking up relatives for long periods of time became a technique he used.

In 1865, having recently been elected representative to Parliament from Stirling Burghs, Laurence Oliphant formally applied to Harris for admission into the Brotherhood. Harris refused him and imposed a severe probationary period—to last until Oliphant could demonstrate his ability “to live the life” by giving up everything he had previously lived for. One unusual condition was that Oliphant had to maintain complete silence in Parliament, which understandably confounded his colleagues and contemporaries. This imposed self-denial would continue for two more years, until Oliphant resigned from Parliament and, finally, received Harris’s permission to join the community—with the understanding he would enter as the lowest novice. His arrival in Amenia did not go unnoticed:

One afternoon in the early autumn of 1867 the inhabitants of Amenia, New York, were surprised at the sight of an Englishman, elegantly and fashionably attired, who came to inquire the way to the Harris community. Consider what would have been their astonishment had they known of the empty seat in the House of Commons this man had left

behind and the life he had led previously. Oliphant had followed a long and devious route on his voyage of self-discovery, and he had been warned of what he must expect at Amenia, but he did not turn back.<sup>34</sup>

If Laurence Oliphant (“Woodbine”) thought his probationary period was harsh and exacting for an aristocrat in mid-nineteenth century England, he was in for a still ruder shock at his initiation into the Brotherhood of the New Life in the hinterlands of Amenia, New York. In his first letter home to friends back in England, he wrote of being assigned to build himself a “temporary encampment” out of vine boxes inside a large shed. After a brief period of reuniting with his

mother, he was not allowed to see her for another two years, nor was he allowed to see Harris (“Faithful”) or Miss Waring (“Dovie”). He was forbidden to speak with anyone, even the messenger who brought him his food. His days followed the same lonely isolation: “I get up at 5 a.m., breakfast, make my bed, do my room, etc. before 7 when I go to hoe in the vineyard until 12 when I dine. Then I go back to hoe



**Figure 17.** *The mill pond in Amenia where Harris's flour mill was located.*

again from a little after one till 6 p.m.”<sup>35</sup> When not hoeing, he mucked out cattle sheds, polished boots, curried horses, even peddled grapes in neighboring villages. But, he insisted, submitting to a discipline he had never before experienced taught him obedience, self-sacrifice, and the ability to concentrate on Divine things—all of which offered him freedom from worldly care and the endless possibilities of silence. Seeing the effects of open respiration in his mother —“The change in her is quite wonderful”—Oliphant soon believed that his breathing was more certain, his sleep sounder, his brain more rested, and his “magnetic” illnesses dissipating. He claimed to learn that Love and Joy are inseparable, and despite all the upheaval and difficulties he would face in the coming years, he maintained that life in The Use “was designed to produce the highest development of the spiritual nature.” All the gloomy solitary days and difficult labors were worth the revelations to body and soul.

## Salem-on-Erie

At the end of 1867, with the Brotherhood growing and becoming more prosperous, Harris and trusted member James Requa quietly began looking for another location to accommodate the commune and its widening operations. Having a friend who owned a farm in Brocton, New York<sup>36</sup>—a small village on the shore of Lake Erie below Buffalo—Requa journeyed there and was impressed with the grape culture in the region. Soon twenty pieces of contiguous property totaling nearly 1,200 acres, were purchased—financed in part by possessions in Dutchess County, including stock in the First National Bank of Amenia. Another eight hundred acres



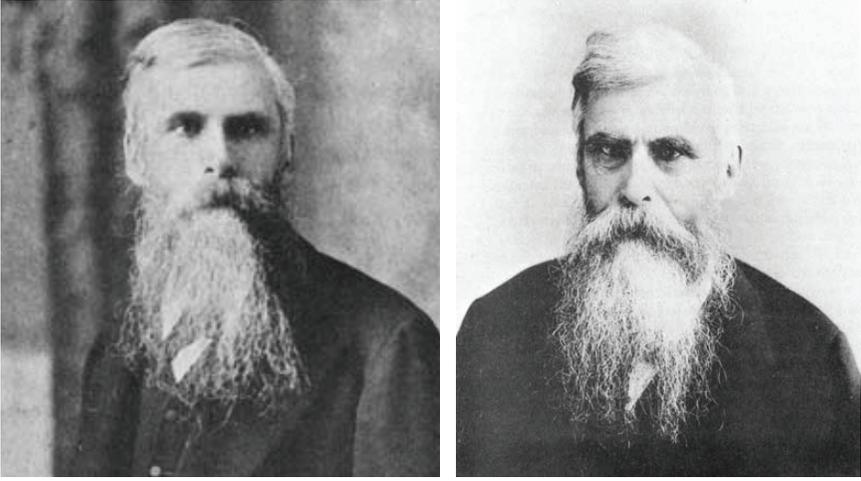
**Figure 18.** *A group of Harris's followers who had relocated from Amenia to Brocton, New York.*

were acquired when the Oliphants turned over approximately \$100,000 to Harris. Finally, all the pieces for Harris's grand scheme of creating a "Salem-on-Erie" were in place. As buildings were erected, members from Amenia would make the journey to their new home, bringing with them the "Salem" strain of grapes cultivated in their Dutchess County vineyard.

The symbolic end to the Amenia commune arrived when Laurence Oliphant was summoned to Brocton "to prune vines." As the time came to leave, it was reported, he "glanced about his room in the old barn, shed a tear, kicked a box and departed." For the remainder of his days, Amenia would hold a special place in his heart.

### **Epilogue:**

In 1870, Laurence Oliphant left Brocton and abruptly returned to England—one explanation being that The Use needed funds, and Oliphant (because of his former life) was the only Brotherhood member capable of generating large sums of money in the outside world. While in England, he oversaw the re-publication of his comic novel, *Piccadilly*, and he took a job as a correspondent for the *Times*, covering the Franco-Prussian War. In the summer of 1873, he returned to Brocton, bringing with him a new wife.



**Figures 19 and 20.** *Thomas Lake Harris at 63 and shortly before his death. Harris's Brotherhood of the New Life lived on, in Sonoma County, California. His death in 1906 was described by his biographer as "entire uplift from outward form of manifestation."*

In 1875, the Brotherhood established Fountain Grove, a second home, in Santa Rosa, California. The reasons for moving to Sonoma County ranged from the area's ideal climate for winegrowing to Harris's inability to withstand the severe winters on Lake Erie. Likely, too, certain followers close to Harris needed to be separated from others who seemed to drain their spiritual reserves.

After the migration to Fountain Grove, all properties and possessions in Brocton were liquidated, causing a schism between Harris and disgruntled members—Oliphant included—as to the distribution of assets.

Lady Oliphant's death in 1881, in Santa Rosa, was the last straw in the disintegration of the relationship between Harris and Laurence Oliphant. Oliphant charged Harris with fraud over the Brocton proceeds and was eventually successful in recovering the bulk of his money through legal proceedings. In 1886, two years before his death, Oliphant published *Masollam*, a novel whose main character, Mr. Masollam, was based on Harris.

On March 23, 1906, Thomas Lake Harris died. However, his faithful insisted that he was only sleeping—inasmuch as he had announced in 1891 that he had discovered the secret of immortality. Another three months would go by until it was publicly acknowledged that Harris had actually died, though the phrase chosen by his hagiographic biographer was "entire uplift from outward form of manifestation."

## *A Japanese Postscript*

After Harris's death, Fountain Grove passed to a small group of his followers, and, by the terms of the will it gradually came into the possession of Kanaye Nagasawa (1852–1934), who had long controlled its wine production. Nagasawa turned the property into one of the ten largest vineyards in California. But because of anti-alien laws passed in California in the early twentieth century, Nagasawa was unable to leave Fountain Grove to his chosen heir, his grand-nephew Kosuke Ijichi. Indeed, a few years after Nagasawa's death, Ijichi was sent to an internment camp during World War II, as the result of President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066. Nevertheless, Ijichi stayed on in the region after the war, and he was present in 2007, at the age of 88, when Santa Rosa dedicated Nagasawa Community Park.

Perhaps wisely, most of Harris's Japanese students deserted him early on and returned to Japan. Little was heard of their strange connection to American utopianism. Then, in March 1968 *The Harlem Valley Times* published a letter from Takaski Kakuma of the Japan Broadcasting Company, addressed to the Amenia supervisor Gary Honour. In it, Kakuma referred to the Japanese members of the Brotherhood who had attended the Harris Private School in Amenia so many years before—and credited Harris with making “a great contribution the development of education in Japan.” Among the students were Mori Arinori, the first Japanese ambassador to the United States (1871–73). In 1874, he founded The Meiji 6 Society to promote western ideas and ideals. He also served as Japan's first minister of education (1886–89). A Christian, Mori was assassinated by an ultranationalist for allegedly having once failed to follow religious protocol while visiting a Shinto shrine.

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<sup>1</sup> Noyes and his followers set up their community in Oneida, New York, in 1848, after being expelled from Putney, Vermont, in 1847. Noyes espoused “free love” and a system of “complex marriage.”

<sup>2</sup> Robert Owen, a wealthy Scottish philanthropist, coined the term “socialism” in 1835 to describe his political philosophy, which was based on a hatred of religion and an embrace of determinism. In 1825, he bought 30,000 acres in Indiana and founded a communalistic colony that failed within two years.

<sup>3</sup> The French utopian socialist Charles Fourier (1772–1837) propounded a bizarre scheme called “associationism,” under which communities of 1,620 people (“phalanxes”) would liberate their repressed passions and work for the common good. Editor Horace Greeley put up money to buy 3,000 acres in Pennsylvania and establish the Sylvania Phalanx in 1843, but the members proved incompetent and lazy, and the property was sold in 1849. Greeley lost \$12,000. Although Fourierism soon faded and collapsed, one relic lived on:

Fourier first coined the term “feminism” (*feminisme*) in his *Théorie des quatres mouvements et des destinées généralises*.

- <sup>4</sup> A celibate sect brought to America in 1776 by the English mystic Ann Lee Stanley (1736–84). Known as the “Shaking Quakers” in England, a small band of followers settled in Watervliet, New York (near Albany). Noted for their agricultural products and manufactured goods, Shakerism reach its greatest influenced in the 1840s with nearly 4,500 members.
- <sup>5</sup> The prominent German Lutheran Pietist George Rapp came to America in 1803 and established several all-German settlements. Numbering 1,800 at their peak, Rappites lived a strict life of celibacy and took the Bible as their guide (as Rapp interpreted it). After Rapp’s death, and with his celibate followers dwindling with age, the affairs of the community eventually had to be settled by the U.S. Supreme Court.
- <sup>6</sup> John Humphrey Noyes, *History of American Socialisms* (Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1870), preface.
- <sup>7</sup> Herbert W. Schneider and George Lawton, *A Prophet and a Pilgrim*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1942), p. 3.
- <sup>8</sup> Schneider and Lawton describe this letter as written by a Mrs. S—. Presumably, they do so because their source, Richard McCully, so described it in *The Brotherhood of the New Life and Thomas Lake Harris* (Glasgow; John Thompson, 1893). But whatever reason McCully had for using dashes in his work, there can be no mystery about the identity of Mrs. S—. She is surely Caroline Augusta White Soule. Utica had few Universalist ministers in the 1830s and 1840s, only two whose name began with the letter “S;” and only one whose wife later became a minister herself: Henry B. Soule.
- <sup>9</sup> Again, there is no mystery about the reference of “A. B. G—”. This is clearly Aaron Burt Grosh, a Universalist minister in Utica, as well as the printer and co-editor of the local Universalist weekly. He was later in life one of the seven founders of Grange (a/k/a The Order of the Patrons of Husbandry) and a high official in the Odd Fellows organization. He officiated at the wedding of his friends Henry Soule and Caroline Augusta White. His two sons discovered the Comstock Lode in Nevada, although they died before they could profit from their good fortune.
- <sup>10</sup> Caroline Soule’s mistake regarding the name of the Universalist weekly paper in Utica, N.Y., is understandable. She lived from 1824 to 1903, but her husband and she were in Utica only during 1843–44. The letter cited was written in 1892. Plus, the term “Evangelical Union” was prominent in Scotland, where she had long been a Universalist missionary and minister.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* p. 4. From a letter dated February 19, 1892, quoted in Richard McCully’s, *The Brotherhood of the New Life and Thomas Lake Harris*, pp. 21–23.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup> Originating in New England, Universalism became a rural denomination that appealed to the common people. Protesting against Calvinism—especially the doctrine of original sin and the belief that God had chosen certain people for salvation and others for damnation—Universalists earned their name for their declaration that all people would ultimately be saved. The Universalists founded Tufts University;. Dolphus Skinner, the editor of Utica’s Universalist weekly, was one of the three men commissioned to raise the necessary money for it.
- <sup>14</sup> Schneider and Lawton, p. 3.

- <sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 5. From a letter dated February 19, 1892, quoted in McCully's, *The Brotherhood of the New Life* and Thomas Lake Harris, pp. 21–23.
- <sup>16</sup> William Howitt, *The History of the Super-natural in all Ages and Nations, and in all Churches, Christian and Pagan, demonstrating a Universal Faith*, (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, 1863) p. 208
- <sup>17</sup> Schneider and Lawton, p. 5. From a letter dated February 19, 1892, quoted in McCully's, *The Brotherhood of the New Life* and Thomas Lake Harris, pp. 21–23.
- <sup>18</sup> Gilbert Seldes, *The Stammering Century*, (New York, The John Day Company, 1928) p. 321.
- <sup>1</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup> The most prominent physician and medical theorist of ancient Rome (A.D. ca.130–ca. 200).
- <sup>22</sup> A Swedish polymath (1688–1772) who abandoned science in the 1740s to devote himself to religious matters. After his death, his followers founded the New Church, first established in London in 1787 and brought to America in 1792.
- <sup>23</sup> Davis also inspired Edgar Allen Poe, whose attended Davis's lectures on mesmerism, and Edgar Cayce, who adopted Davis's "trance diagnosis." Davis's complete library is housed within the Edgar Cayce Library.
- <sup>24</sup> Schneider and Lawton, p. 6
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., quoting from Davis, *The Magic Staff*, p. 373.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 13.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 14.
- <sup>30</sup> Harris, *Starry Heaven*, p. vii.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid. pp. 107, 383.
- <sup>32</sup> For each member, Harris selected an "internal" or "use" name by which he was known within the group. For example, Harris's name was "Faithful." Others were "Earnest," "Blossom," "Seedcorn," and so forth. These names could be changed or dropped as a means of encouragement or discipline.
- <sup>33</sup> Margaret Oliphant W. Oliphant, *Memoir of the Life of Laurence Oliphant and of Alice Oliphant, His Wife* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1891), p. 5–6.
- <sup>34</sup> Schneider and Lawton, p. 124.
- <sup>35</sup> Undated letter to Mr. and Mrs. William Francis Cowper, Baron and Baroness Mount Temple, autumn 1867.
- <sup>36</sup> A possible connection: Ebenezer Winchester, who published the *Mountain Cove Journal and Spiritual Harbinger*, for Harris's Mountain Cove community, had earlier published the *Fredonia Censor*, a newspaper based about six miles from Brocton.

# “The Poughkeepsie Plan” and Its Impact on American Catholic Parochial Education

*By Timothy Walch*

The five decades from the end of the Civil War to the end of World War I were years of upheaval and social change within the Catholic Church. As the nation moved toward an urban base and an industrialized economy, it attracted millions of new immigrants from Europe. Since the majority of these new arrivals were both poor and Catholic, the American Church was a primary source of their support, both spiritual and corporal.

In addition to this challenge, the Church also was confronted by a new generation of American-born Catholics who were attracted to the fruits of American life and hoped to prepare their children for increasingly productive lives in American society. The loyalty of foreign-born Catholics to their native cultures and the strong desire of American-born Catholics to participate fully in American society pulled American Catholicism in opposite directions and affected the pattern of development of parochial education.<sup>1</sup>

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that parochial schools developed in different ways, depending upon the balance of the two groups within each Catholic community. In fact, the presence of both foreign-born and American-born Catholics in each diocese forced the Church to sponsor separate educational models for each faction and administer these models at the parish level.

During these decades three models predominated: the publicly supported parochial school, an experimental plan implemented in about a dozen small communities; the Americanized Catholic school, the most popular model utilized by American-born Catholics; and the ethnic Catholic school, which was the model developed by German Catholics and utilized by the Germans and other nationalities. Each of these models made important contributions to the evolving history of parochial education.

Of these three models, the publicly supported Catholic school generated the most controversy but educated the fewest students. From 1831 to 1916,

Catholics in at least 21 communities in 14 states attempted to bridge the gap between parochial and public education.

The specific terms of agreement between parishes and school boards varied slightly. In almost every community where the experiment took place, the school board leased a school from a local parish for a small sum and paid the salaries of teachers in those schools. The teachers were selected jointly by the school board and the parish pastor. The board regulated the curriculum, selected the schoolbooks, and conducted periodic examinations, but the parish pastor had the right to insure that all of the elements of the curriculum were acceptable to the Catholic Church. Most important, however, was the fact that the school day at these publicly supported Catholic schools was the same as at any other public school. No religious instruction was conducted until after classes were dismissed.

These schools were experimental and in most communities the experiment was short-lived. But in three communities—Lowell, Massachusetts, from 1831 to 1852; Savannah, Georgia, from 1870 to 1916; and Poughkeepsie, New York, from 1873 to 1898—publicly supported parochial schools educated several generations of Catholic children. Even though the number of Catholic children educated in these schools was small, the publicly supported Catholic school was an important grassroots effort to resolve the outstanding differences that separated many Catholics from public education.<sup>2</sup>

### *The Poughkeepsie Plan*

The publicly supported parish school in Poughkeepsie is worthy of closer attention not only because of its longevity, but also because it received national attention as the representative example of cooperative education efforts in other communities. The “Poughkeepsie Plan,” as all cooperative efforts came to be generally known, began when the Reverend Patrick F. McSweeney, pastor of St. Peter’s parish in Poughkeepsie, informed the local school board in May of 1873 that his parishioners could no longer afford to maintain St. Peter’s two schools. Starting in the fall, McSweeney noted, the 800 children who attended St. Peter’s two schools would enter the public school system.

This news must have caused grave concern among Poughkeepsie school board members. At the time there were only 1,600 children enrolled in all of the Poughkeepsie public schools and the board was not prepared for a fifty percent increase in enrollment. In fact, the board committee investigating the problem noted in its report that most of the Catholic children

who would enroll in the fall lived “in the lower part of the city where the school buildings are already occupied to their full capacity.” Clearly, the board faced an emergency that required extraordinary measures.<sup>3</sup>

It seems that Father McSweeney not only precipitated the problem, he also had the solution. With the permission of Archbishop John McCloskey of New York, McSweeney proposed that the school board lease his two school buildings for a dollar per year. In addition, the board would be required to keep the buildings in good repair and insure them against loss or damage. McSweeney proposed that the board use the buildings to conduct public school classes for the children of St. Peter’s parish “according to the [board’s] rules and regulations now or hereafter adopted.”<sup>4</sup> Religious instruction would not be part of the public school curriculum, but would be conducted in the building after normal school hours. Participation in religious exercises would be completely voluntary for all students

The new public schools were to be staffed by teachers selected, employed, and paid by the board “in the same manner as other teachers in its employ.” But McSweeney made it clear that the board should hire Catholic teachers for the schools so long as they met school board requirements. As if to underline the experimental nature of the agreement, McSweeney added that “either the board or the owners may terminate the lease at the end of any scholastic year by giving the other thirty days previous notice of its intention to terminate.”<sup>5</sup> McSweeney submitted these provisions to the school board at its June meeting and returned in July with additional information on his plan.

At the June meeting, the board referred McSweeney’s proposals to a committee and expedited the review.<sup>6</sup> The committee quickly reported back to the full board with a recommendation that it accept McSweeney’s plan, but the board was unwilling to make a decision at the July meeting. It was in August that the board agreed to McSweeney’s terms and further agreed that the parish school would retain unrestricted use of the building outside of regular school hours. A lease agreement was signed on August 21, 1873.<sup>7</sup>

McSweeney made one additional request of the school board that was conveyed in a conversation that he had with Dr. Edward Bolton, a member of the school board who had supervisory authority for the high school curriculum. McSweeney requested that the students attending the former Catholic schools be exempted from Bible and prayer services that were woven into the public school curriculum.



Not everyone was happy with this so-called “plan,” however. Several Poughkeepsie clergymen and the local lodge of the American Protestant Association objected to the plan and falsely accused the board of abandoning Bible reading for all students in the high school.<sup>8</sup> The ministers appealed to the board for a return to a curriculum that emphasized religion and morality as taught in the Bible. These clergymen further argued that abandoning the Bible would undermine the values necessary to transform young children into enterprising citizens.

One of the most vocal critics was the Reverend A.L. Culver, a Methodist minister in Poughkeepsie. In a sermon published in the *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle* on September 15, Culver praised the Bible as the “foundation of usefulness” for education, and excoriated those who would remove the Bible from the schools. He generally condemned the Catholic Church and made it clear that McSweeney was the problem.<sup>9</sup>

“Poughkeepsie has been drawn into the vortex,” Culver thundered in bombastic language. “Our Bible has been banished from the schools! Jesuit servants are appointed teachers and our Protestant servants are without redress.” Culver further went on to condemn the plan that the board had recently signed with McSweeney.

“Friends,” Culver concluded at the end of his sermon. “It has been asked, over and over again, have the Catholics no rights? Are they not entitled to some respect?” Culver was unequivocal: “When the Bible is at stake, Roman Catholics have no rights which the American people are bound to respect.”

The board took note of Culver’s comments and devoted a considerable amount of time discussing his comments.<sup>10</sup> That did not mean that the board was by any means contrite; in fact, several board members were critical of the “ignorance through false statements” manifest in Culver’s sermon. After “an exhaustive discussion,” the Board went on record stating that it had not excluded the Bible from the public school curriculum. Only Catholic students were excused from these exercises.

To further set the record straight, Bolton wrote to the editors of the *Daily Eagle* on September 27. He noted that his agreement with McSweeney was exclusive to the students attending the two schools that he had rented to the school board and to the Catholic students attending the high school. “It is well understood that there is no legal authority for religious instruction in Public schools,” Bolton wrote. “No religious services are held in schools No. 11 and 12 [formerly St. Peter’s schools] during the



**Figure 2.** Benson J. Lossing was a prominent local historian and an influential member of the Poughkeepsie community.

regular school hours, so that Protestant children may go there without being subjected to sectarian services.”<sup>11</sup>

That Culver was stung by the criticism of the board was evident in the sermon that he delivered on September 28 that was reported in the *Daily Eagle* the following day. Rather than respond in kind, however, Culver generally deferred. “I do not propose this evening’s discourse as a defense of the positions taken in my sermon on the ‘Bible in Public Schools and Taxation to Support Sectarian Institutions,’” Culver said. “As yet, I see no reason to defend them, though attacked,” he added. “My reply is: ‘That unlearned and ignorant men may speak the truth.’”<sup>12</sup> The board had no more to say in response to Reverend Culver.

Of greater concern to Dr. Bolton than the feelings of Reverend Culver were the comments of Benson J. Lossing, a scholar of some repute and a trustee of Vassar College. Lossing had published a “historical sketch” entitled “Bible Societies and their Enemies” in the same issue of the *Daily Eagle* that carried Culver’s tepid response. Lossing was widely respected and his views were of substantial consequence in Poughkeepsie.

In the sketch, Lossing reviewed the long history of attacks on the Bible, noting that the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church were responsible for many of these attacks. As he came to the end of his sketch, Lossing stressed why America in general and Poughkeepsie in particular should be concerned. “It is the intention of the Pope to possess this country, undoubtedly,” Lossing warned. “In this intention he is aided by the Jesuits and all the Catholic prelates and priests, undoubtedly, if they are faithful to their religion.”<sup>13</sup>

And to Lossing’s thinking, this plan was now afoot in Poughkeepsie. “The order has gone forth from the Jesuits, speaking for Pius IX,” concluded Lossing. “‘Abolish the Bible from the public schools!’ This mandate has been obeyed in the High School of Poughkeepsie! What’s next?” Lossing’s question hung in the air.

STOWANBRAE.

Poughkeepsie Oct. 11<sup>th</sup> 1873

Benson J. Lossing Esq  
Dr Sir

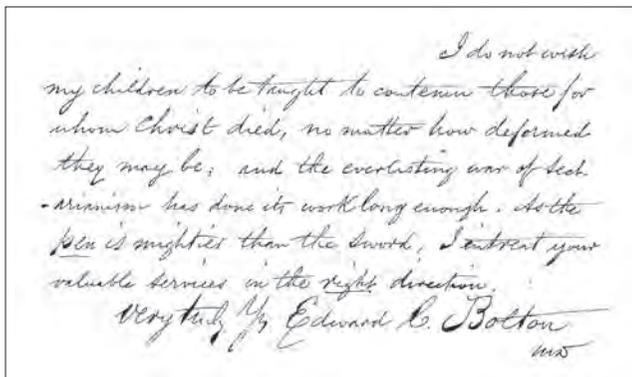
Your favor of the 1<sup>st</sup> inst. was duly received; and it was my intention to have replied to it earlier, but numerous engagements have prevented. Gratified that the misunderstanding between yourself and the President of the Board of Education has been happily adjusted, I do not intend to forego the privilege which I claim of replying to your letter, or the pleasure which I promised myself in doing so.

**Figure 3.** The opening of Edward C. Bolton's letter to Benson Lossing. "stowanbrae[?]  
[As Bolton is a prominent name in Scotland, this may have been Bolton's name for his home.] Poughkeepsie Oct. 11th 1873. Benson J. Lossing Esq. Dr Sir. Your favor of the 1st inst. was duly received; and it was my intention to have replied to it earlier, but numerous engagements have prevented. Gratified that the misunderstanding between yourself and the President of the Board of Education has been happily adjusted, I do not intend to forego the privilege which I claim of replying to your letter, or the pleasure which I promised myself in doing so."

Bolton believed that he had to respond directly to Lossing and he was given an opportunity when Lossing wrote to him on October 1 regarding Bolton's decision. Unfortunately, Lossing's letter to Bolton does not survive, but Bolton's response is extant. In his response on October 11, Bolton disabused Lossing of his belief that Bible reading had been abolished at the high school in Poughkeepsie. "Dr. McSweeney's reasonable request only applied to the Catholic schools (now numbers 11 and 12) and neither he nor any other Roman Catholic ever said one word to me with reference to the religious services in the high school."<sup>14</sup>

Bolton further went on to invoke Roger Williams's famous defense of the rights of conscience. "The feeblest Roman Catholic child in that common school," he added, "has rights which I, its committeeman, am bound to protect."<sup>15</sup>

Bolton also argued that his support for the Poughkeepsie Plan was part of a larger effort to transform foreign-born Catholic children into true Americans. "A far higher motive has actuated the Board of Education," Bolton



**Figure 4.** Closing of Bolton's letter to Lossing. "I do not wish my children to be taught to condemn those for whom Christ died, no matter how deformed they may be; and the everlasting war of Sectarianism has done its work long enough. As the Pen is mightier than the Sword, I entreat your valuable services in the right direction. Very truly  
Yrs Edward C. Bolton "

claimed, "... to bring 700 young children out from the prescriptions of sectarian influences and into the glorious liberty of our American boys and girls is a 'consummation devoutly to be wished.'"

Bolton's enthusiasm increased paragraph by paragraph in his eight-page response to Lossing. "Read them out of our schools in a way which is offensive to them," Bolton wrote referring to the Catholic children, "and what have you got? An alien race, opposed to a government that will not protect them, denationalized by popular antipathy, and devotees of a hierarchy that satisfies all their wants both in life and in death. But bring them out and scatter them among our own, and what will be the result? We will not proselytize them—oh no! But they will proselytize themselves!" Bolton closed his letter by asking Lossing to join him in this campaign. Unfortunately, Lossing's response to Bolton, if any, does not survive.

The agitation about the plan that so concerned the non-Catholic community in Poughkeepsie in the summer and fall of 1873, evaporated as the school year progressed. Local criticism of the plan faded in the face of the community-wide goal of assimilating the foreign-born into American society. The agreement between the school board and St. Peter's parish continued year after year without further criticism from the general public.

And there seemed to be little concern or consternation among the American people about such a cooperative relationship. Culver and Lossing to the contrary, no other critics of the plan emerged in New York State in

general or the City of Poughkeepsie in particular. In fact, the only article critical of the plan appeared in *The Christian Evangelist*, thirteen years after the arrangement had begun.<sup>16</sup>

The editors referred to the arrangement struck by McSweeney and the school board as “adroit,” but were skeptical of its value as a model for other communities. “This plan has a goodly outside,” the editors noted, “its simplicity is charming: let us break the shell and see how it smells and looks inside.”



**Figure 5.** Father James Nilan. Although Father McSweeney had been the instigator of the Poughkeepsie Plan, it was left to his successor, Father Nilan, to preside over it—and ultimately over its demise—after he became the rector of St. Peter’s in 1877.

The *Evangelist* editors did not like the “smell or sight” of what they found within the plan. “While a more cunning and efficient device than this for supporting Catholic schools at public expense has seldom been attempted, and while the rottenness is easily exposed,” wrote the editors, “the extension of this Poughkeepsie plan as ‘a very happy adjustment of relations between the Roman Catholic church and the public schools’ is earnestly advocated by President Bascom of the University of Wisconsin; the Reverend Dr. Peabody of Cambridge, Mass., and, of course, by several Catholic priests.” *The Christian Evangelist* had no more to say about the arrangement and no other publication took up the cause either

for or against until 1890. It seemed that what was good enough for Bascom and Peabody, et alia, was good enough for the rest of the country.

But renewed attention came to the Poughkeepsie Plan in 1890, at least in principle, thanks to the enthusiasm of John Ireland, the liberal archbishop of St. Paul. It was in that year that Ireland first discussed his “Fairbault Plan”—largely a copy of the Poughkeepsie Plan under a new name that he implemented in the cities of Fairbault and Stillwater, Minnesota.

A tireless promoter, Ireland championed the plan as the compromise that would resolve the conflict between the Catholic Church and the public school establishment across the nation. In effect, what had worked

in Poughkeepsie since 1873, could work in other communities across the nation, and Ireland intended to prove that point in these two small Minnesota communities.

Ireland's philosophy of education was but one aspect of his larger view of the relationship between the Church and American society. In fact, Ireland devoted his life to eliminating the sources of conflict between Catholics and non-Catholics and sought ways to unite the Catholic Church with American values.

To Ireland's thinking, most of the conflict between his Church and his nation had nothing to do with Church dogma or values, but was fostered by the cultural baggage of the foreign immigrants who dominated the American Church in the nineteenth century. As these immigrants became increasingly American, so also would Catholicism become an American religion. He used every means available to encourage Americanization among his flock.

One means to Americanization was education, and Ireland's views on education were the most liberal among Catholic Church leaders. Should the Church seek out cooperative educational ventures with the public schools or should parents be required to build and support parish schools?

Always outspoken, Ireland gave voice to a liberal viewpoint that alienated a conservative faction within the American hierarchy who sought to pressure Catholic parents to support only parish schools. As long as this issue was discussed in private, there was an uneasy peace between the liberals and the conservatives.

But in 1890, at the annual meeting of the National Education Association, Ireland spoke out on the relations between "state schools and parish schools" and the truce was broken. The speech precipitated a controversy that was a hallmark of misunderstanding and bitter feelings.

This came as a surprise to Ireland who was quite familiar with the rubrics of the Poughkeepsie Plan. Ireland followed those rubrics closely: use public funds to support Catholic teachers to instruct Catholic children on secular subjects in classrooms located in parish buildings. The hours from nine to three would be devoted to secular subjects; religion would be taught after the end of the school day.

Ireland never claimed that these hybrid schools were substitutes for parish schools, but he did hope that the plan would insure the religious as well as the secular instruction of children in parishes that would not or could

not support parish schools. He believed that this plan offered the hope of a viable working relationship between the public and the parochial schools. Anyone who doubted the viability of the concept could see that it was working perfectly well in Poughkeepsie.

What made Ireland's ideas so controversial was the enthusiasm and support the archbishop expressed for the principles of public education. The conflict came to a head in 1891 when Ireland actually implemented the plan in Faribault and Stillwater.

Although some Catholic conservatives saw Ireland's support for public education as a plot to undermine the existing parochial school system, Ireland himself saw nothing wrong with his pastors signing agreements with local school boards to implement cooperative educational programs. He took solace in the fact that Cardinal McCloskey had permitted Father McSweeney to do as much in Poughkeepsie.

The Vatican agreed with Ireland. After months of investigation and consideration, Pope Leo XIII issued a statement that acknowledged the fundamental righteousness of a separate Catholic school system, but also noted that that Ireland's compromise plan could be "tolerated."

Conservative Catholics protested with great vigor, but the response was a disappointment to them. In May of 1893, the Pope wrote to Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore to tell him and the other American archbishops that the Vatican saw no conflict between the Fairbault Plan and Church policy.

But after more than three years of acrimony, the differences between Ireland and conservatives remained. More important, the conservatives felt betrayed. They feared, with some justification, that Catholic children by the thousands would drift away from parish schools.

The pope's decision to tolerate the Fairbault Plan was more than a vindication of Ireland or a victory for the liberals. It emphasized the harmony that existed between the Catholic Church and the American ideals of public education. It was an extraordinary achievement for Ireland and marked an end to the combative educational policy instituted by Bishop John Hughes more fifty years earlier. It also implicitly reaffirmed the plan that Father McSweeney and the Poughkeepsie school board had implemented twenty years previously.

This is not to say that all of the Catholics in Poughkeepsie were pleased with the plan. In fact, German Catholics looked askance at any plan that would require their children to participate in the public schools. Conscientious

of their native culture, language, and religion, the German Catholics of The Nativity parish (founded in 1852) put their faith and their funds into their own parochial school as a way of preserving their treasured traditions.

The very thought of a cooperative education program that de-emphasized German language and culture must have upset the German Catholic community in Poughkeepsie. As late as 1896, 23 years after the implementation of the plan, the parish pastor at Nativity (the Reverend Gallus Bruder) warned his parishioners that “parents who send their children to public school thereby commit a major sin and cannot be absolved until they have taken their children out of that school.”<sup>17</sup> German Catholics were determined to maintain their own school regardless of the cost; they would have nothing to do with the Poughkeepsie Plan.

The eventual termination of the plan in 1899 was precipitated by factors far beyond the Poughkeepsie city limits. Throughout the 1890s, particularly during the controversy precipitated by Archbishop Ireland, the plan came under attack by conservative Catholic newspapers. Even though these attacks—and scattered criticism from Protestant journals—did not undermine the specific agreement in Poughkeepsie, they did create an air of tension and controversy throughout the period.

The plan held fast until 1895 when New York State School Superintendent Charles Skinner ordered the Poughkeepsie school board to break the agreement or lose state aid. Skinner based his actions on two grounds; the wearing of religious garb by nuns who taught as public school teachers in St. Peter’s school, and the long-term rental of parish buildings for the purpose of public education. The plan lasted three more years but it finally ended in January of 1899. It was the most innovative and visible effort to bridge the gap between parochial and public education.<sup>18</sup>

Although the formal plan ended in Poughkeepsie at the end of the century, the idea never died completely. Periodically, particularly during times of financial hardship, elements of the plan re-emerged in communities across the country. For example, in 1930, the Supreme Court permitted the use of public funds to provide free textbooks to parish schools. And throughout the hard times of the Great Depression, nearly 350 parochial schools received some form of public aid.

The most publicized example of the spirit of the Poughkeepsie Plan came in Vincennes, Indiana, in the 1930s. The hardship of the Depression forced a number of parochial schools in that city to close their doors. Faced with

the task of educating hundreds of Catholic students for the first time, the school board took over the former parish schools on an emergency basis and employed members of Catholic religious orders to teach the children assigned to these temporary public schools.

In most ways the new schools were conducted exactly like other public schools. The course of study and the schoolbooks were the same in all public schools. Religious instruction was prohibited during school hours. All teachers—including the religious—were certified by the state. No rent was paid for the use of the buildings, but the pastor was permitted to instruct the students in religion before the beginning of the school day and the religious pictures and religious dress that distinguish parochial schools and public schools remained the same. All salaries and maintenance costs were paid by the city. It was a compromise that the community could live with.<sup>19</sup>

But not everyone was pleased and the arrangement was challenged in state court in 1940. After due consideration of the circumstances and the nature of the compromise, the court concluded “that the board of school trustees of the said city, by their course of action, did establish public schools in the buildings formerly occupied by the various parochial schools and that the payment...to said teachers of salaries provided by contracts of employment was valid.”<sup>20</sup>

Since the cooperative schools had been utilized only on an emergency basis, few argued with the court’s decision. Even the editors of the *Christian Century*, a publication noted for its opposition to such plans, was conciliatory in its editorial: “There is no convincing evidence that the whole affair was not conducted in good faith by both sides.”<sup>21</sup> Not surprisingly, as the economy recovered and the country shifted its attention to world war, these cooperative agreements expired.

And yet the Poughkeepsie Plan is an idea that never disappeared completely. To be sure, it has been more than a century that the specific arrangement ended in Poughkeepsie. The spirit of the plan continues on in spirit, however, among Catholic educators and urban community planners who seek a practical, constitutional strategy for expanding educational alternatives to those citizens who can least afford them. One can only imagine what Father McSweeney and Dr. Bolton would think of their plan if they were able to come back to us today.

- <sup>1</sup> Among the general overviews of the different models of American parochial education are Timothy Walch, *Parish School: American Catholic Parochial Education from Colonial Times to the Present* (Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association, 2003), pp. 67–99; and Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1985), pp. 269–293. See also Robert D. Cross, “Origins of the Catholic Parochial School in America,” and Howard Weisz, “Irish American Attitudes and the Americanization of English Language Parochial Schools,” both republished in F. Michael Perko, ed., *Enlightening the Next Generation* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1988).
- <sup>2</sup> On the Lowell experiment, see Brian C. Mitchell, *The Paddy Camps: The Irish of Lowell, 1821–61* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); on the Savannah parochial schools, see Michael V. Gannon, *Rebel Bishop: The Life and Era of Augustin Verot* (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce Publishing Co., 1964). On Poughkeepsie, see Clyde and Sally Griffen, *Natives and Newcomers: The Ordering of Opportunity in Mid-Nineteenth Century Poughkeepsie* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), and Louis C. Zuccarello, “The Catholic Community in Poughkeepsie: 1870–1900,” in *New Perspectives on Poughkeepsie’s Past: Essays to Honor Edmund Platt*, ed. Clyde Griffen (Poughkeepsie, NY: Dutchess County Historical Society, 1987). A useful if brief overview is Thomas C. Hunt “Poughkeepsie Plan,” in Thomas C. Hunt et al., eds., *Catholic Schools in the United States: An Encyclopedia*, 2 vols. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 2:519–20.
- <sup>3</sup> Griffen and Griffen, *Natives and Newcomers*, p. 28.
- <sup>4</sup> *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle* (June 16, 1873).
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>6</sup> *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle* (July 4, 1873).
- <sup>7</sup> James A. Burns, *The Growth and Development of the Catholic School System in the United States*, pp. 256–58; Harold A. Buetow, *Of Singular Benefit* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 159–61.
- <sup>8</sup> *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle* (September 24, 1873).
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, (September 15, 1873).
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, (September 25, 1873).
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, (September 27, 1873).
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, (September 29, 1873).
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>14</sup> Edward C. Bolton to Benson J. Lossing, October 11, 1873.
- <sup>15</sup> Griffen and Griffen, *Natives and Newcomers*, p. 29.
- <sup>16</sup> *The Christian Evangelist* [St. Louis], (July 15, 1886).
- <sup>17</sup> Griffen and Griffen, *Natives and Newcomers*, p. 44. Gallus Bruder was the German-born pastor of The Nativity from 1879 to 1911.
- <sup>18</sup> Burns, *Growth and Development*, pp. 265–69.

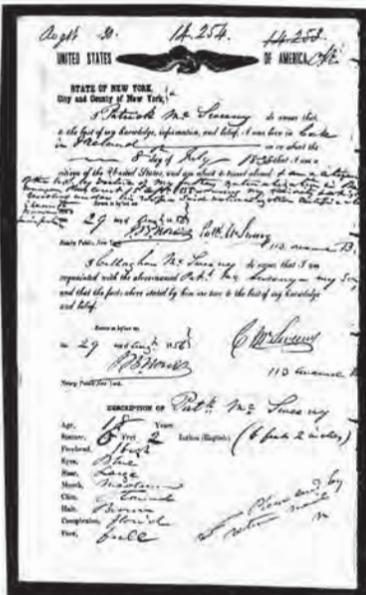
- <sup>19</sup> Sister Raymond McLaughlin, *A History of State Legislation Affecting Private Elementary and Secondary Schools in the United States, 1870-1945* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1946) pp. 166–68.
- <sup>20</sup> *Johnson v. Boyd*, as cited in *Ibid.*, p. 167.
- <sup>21</sup> Cited in Anson P. Stokes, *Church and State in the United States*, 3 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, 1950), 3:693

## The Life and Times of Father Patrick McSweeney

By Mary Regis McLoughlin and Angela O’Sullivan

Undoubtedly, it is a cliché to begin a sidebar with the words: “It was a dark and stormy night.” But it was.

From all information about that night, bequeathed to or uncovered by the descendants of the McSwiney family of Cork, eleven-year-old Patrick McSwiney and his father O’Callaghan were in the last hours of their weeks-long journey to Philadelphia on the sailing ship *Swatara*. Had the usual turn into Delaware Bay been made in the noonday sun in calm weather, their arrival in America would likely have been routine. But it wasn’t.



**Figure 1.** This 1856 passport application for the 18-year-old Patrick McSweeney shows him to have been an imposing man—6 feet, 2 inches in height.

On the night of April 23, 1849, the ship ran aground near Lewes, Delaware, and hundreds of immigrant passengers were in great danger. If the ship had not held through the storm, allowing its passengers to be rescued in the morning, this sidebar and the article itself would never have been written. But the ship did hold.

Following the rescue, Patrick McSweeney and his father (the spelling of the surname was changed in the United States and is seen both with and without an “e”) made their way to Philadelphia, where Patrick was placed in Villa Nova College while his father went on to Ohio, for work. Contemporary members of the family have long wondered what could possibly have made O’Callaghan think of Villa Nova. But not any more! A search revealed that the president of Villa Nova in 1849 was Father William Harnett, bearing the same last name as Parick’s mother, Honoria Harnett McSweeney. The exact relationship has not yet been determined, but surely it was there. He went on to study at the Jesuit College in Cincinnati.

Patrick was the eldest son of the family. Three girls preceded him and several boys followed him. In October of 1850, Honoria and the daughters and sons arrived in New York on the brig *Garland*, welcomed by O’Callaghan. The entire family, Patrick included, settled on Avenue B in Manhattan and, as Patrick’s nephew Francis McLoughlin put it, “became New Yorkers.”

Of the family of 14 children, eight survived to adulthood. Patrick and three younger brothers became priests of the Diocese of New York, all of them educated in Rome, and Patrick was ordained in 1862. Sad to say, two of the brothers died within a few years of ordination.

The surviving priest brother, Father Edward, was eventually assigned to Saint Mary’s Church in Poughkeepsie and in later years was a Professor of Theology and Church History at Mount Saint Mary’s in Emmitsburg, Maryland. The fifth brother, Daniel, was an Acting Assistant Surgeon in the Civil War, after which he completed his studies at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City. It is from Doctor Daniel that the name McSweeney has come down to this day.

The article, to which this is a sidebar, dwells on the work of Patrick McSweeney in the field of education. However, he was also well known as a parish priest. He first served at St. Joseph’s on 6th Avenue in Manhattan, then at the Cathedral Church on Mott Street. For eight months in 1871–72, he served at the Church of the Assumption in Peekskill, New York, and



**Figure 2.** *After being transferred to the Church of St. Brigid in Manhattan, Fr. McSweeney was granted the title of The Right Reverend Monsignor McSweeney.*

from 1872 to 1877 at St. Peter's Church in Poughkeepsie. From 1877 to the end of his life in 1907, he lived and served at the Church of Saint Brigid, known as the "Famine Church," in the East Village. His brother Father Edward speaks of Patrick's habits as "very simple" and his nature as generous. In that era of enormous immigration, Monsignor Patrick reached out to the newcomers. One Sunday afternoon, Edward relates, Patrick mounted the tail of a cart and preached in their own language to immigrants from Italy who were numerous in the area of East Twelfth Street. The many years of seminary studies in Italy came in very handy for Patrick's later work in New York.

As related by his brother, Monsignor McSweeney's funeral was as modest as possible for his ecclesiastical rank. Father Edward said: "When asked if he wanted a 'rough box' as a protection for his own coffin, he replied with

a sparkle of his Irish humor: ‘Oh, no; what’s the use? The coffin will not be needed again.... Let everything be simple. Get the parish undertaker who buries my people of the tenements.’”

Patrick’s lifespan brought him from birth in 1838 in Cork, Ireland, across the ocean to Villa Nova, to St. Francis Xavier College (Xavier High School) in New York City, back across the Atlantic to Rome, up the Hudson River to Poughkeepsie, and finally to New York’s Lower East Side. Today, may he be resting in the peace of Christ with his people of the tenements.



# The National Background: A Brief Overview

*by Rabbi Paul Golomb*

In the United States, all Jewish congregations are “free churches.” They are independent religious corporations, responsible only to themselves for Jewish issues of worship, education, and public ritual practice. In Judaism, there are no denominations, but there are Movements. Each congregation can freely affiliate with a national federation of synagogues that represent a certain approach to Jewish tradition and practice.

How these divisions and associations came about can first be traced to the Jewish experience in Europe in the nineteenth century. At the beginning of that century, the Jewish population in the United States was negligible, but there were substantial communities in central and western Europe who were affected by social and political modernization. Jews were given unprecedented opportunities in England, France, Germany and Austria-Hungary to participate in the economic and intellectual development of those countries. Mostly inward-looking and self-contained Jewish communities responded to these opportunities along a spectrum: from avid acceptance, to cautious reform, to skeptical conservatism, to reactionary orthodoxy. By the middle of the century, these positions began to coalesce into identifiable movements: basically the Reformers and the neo-Orthodox.

Also, by the middle of the century, Jews began to immigrate to America in larger numbers. They mostly came from central Europe, which experienced greater social and political upheaval than western Europe. While many of the immigrants might have thought of themselves as traditional in their Jewish outlook and practice, almost all of them were touched by the Reformist spirit to a greater or lesser extent.

With over a half-million Jews residing in the post-Civil War U.S., a group of synagogue leaders planned for the creation of a rabbinic seminary on American soil. In 1873, the Cincinnati-based Rabbi, Isaac Mayer Wise, convened a meeting of representatives of congregations from the East and Midwest in his centrally located city. They created a federation of synagogues, called the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, with the expressed purpose of establishing a seminary. Two years later, the Hebrew Union College was founded—also in Cincinnati. It ordained its first class

of American trained Rabbis in 1884. The principal term in both the name of the federation and the seminar was “Union.” The organizers believed they were establishing a unifying organization and academy that would promote and reflect a particularly American brand of Jewish thought and practice.

By the time of that first ordination class, the make-up of American Jewry was beginning to undergo a dramatic change. A large number of Jews from Czarist-controlled Eastern Europe immigrated. They had not been especially touched by the Reforming tendencies of the rest of Europe. Moreover, as principally Yiddish speakers, they did not mix well either socially or theologically with the mostly German- and English-speaking Jews already settled in the States.

Divisions among more liberal- and conservative-minded American Jews had already surfaced. By the eve of World War I, rival federations of synagogues and rabbinic seminaries had been established, creating three definitive streams of Jewish thought and practice in the U.S. The Cincinnati-based Union and its rabbinic College became identified specifically as Reform Judaism. The Jewish Theological Seminary, set up in New York City, became the center of a Conservative Judaism, with an attendant Union Synagogue of America federation of congregations. Finally, a minimally Americanized group of congregations formed an Orthodox Union and supported a rabbinic seminary that expanded into New York’s Yeshiva University.

Since World War II, the spectrum of Jewish religious practice in the U.S. has expanded further. Refugees of Hasidic and other ultra-Orthodox Jews have reconstructed their mostly self-contained and intensely traditional communities in America. The followers of the influential American Rabbi Mordechai Kaplan developed a Jewish Movement based primarily on religiously tinged sociological principles, which Kaplan called Reconstructionism. One can find synagogues associated with all these Movements within a twenty-mile radius of Poughkeepsie.

American Judaism is dynamic, creative and fluid. Two synagogues, even if affiliated with the same Movement, are rarely alike in presentation of worship or stated rules of ritual practice. Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist Judaism all have well-articulated sets of principles. As Movements, however, the differences are as much pragmatic and practical—issues of common liturgy and centrally trained religious professionals—as they are ideological.

# It Was Not All about the Organ

*Why a group of members of  
Brethren of Israel Temple (Vassar Temple)  
left that congregation to form Temple Beth-El*

*By Lou Lewis*

Elaine Lipschutz, a member of Vassar Temple since 1956, likes to tell the story of a meeting with Rabbi Erwin Zimet, the rabbi at Beth-El, after he heard of her then-new affiliation with Vassar. Elaine, who was a teacher, had been helping out with a class at the religious school at Beth-El for the previous two years, and Rabbi Zimet had hoped she and her husband, Robert, would become affiliated with Beth-El. The first question he asked was: "Is it because we don't have an organ?" Elaine hastened to explain that she had been raised in a Reform congregation in Philadelphia, spoke no Hebrew (she subsequently studied the language), and was more comfortable with the English language services at Vassar Temple.<sup>1</sup>

To this day, the Constitution of Temple Beth-El,<sup>2</sup> formally incorporated in 1927, contains a provision forbidding the performance of any musical instruments during services, while Vassar Temple continues to enjoy the services of the accomplished organist Joseph Bertolozzi.<sup>3</sup> Why the difference? Certainly, it was more than disagreements about musical taste that caused a group of Vassar Temple members to decamp in 1924. Indeed, there were far more issues: the conduct of services as recommended by a new



**Figure 1.** *View of Poughkeepsie's Main Street in 1869. The location of the building at Main and Washington where Vassar Temple held services is indicated by a dot. Photograph PH 361. Collection of the Dutchess County Historical Society.*

Prayer Book; the arrival of a new rabbi; different traditions and expectations between the German-American Jews who had founded Vassar Temple in 1845 on the one hand, and, on the other, more recent immigrants who were raised in the Orthodox or Conservative movements prevailing in Europe. There were also different comfort levels with varying degrees of assimilation.

Vassar Temple was formally incorporated on March 8, 1851, with the certificate of incorporation duly acknowledged and recorded in the office of the Dutchess County Clerk. But members of the group had been congregating for purposes of worship since 1845 and met at a place known as Pine Hall on Main Street in Poughkeepsie.



**Figure 2.** *Congregation Brethren of Israel (Vassar Temple) at Vassar and Mill Streets, in 1938. The building was originally constructed in the 1820s (by a Presbyterian congregation) according to the then-fashionable Greek-revival style; it was converted into the Vassar Temple in 1860. The Conservative congregation (Beth-El), after its formation in 1923, moved to new quarters—initially to the Fallkill Building in downtown Poughkeepsie and later to a former Quaker meeting house on Montgomery Street. In 1954, the now-Reform congregation at Vassar Temple moved into a newly constructed temple on Hooker Avenue. Photograph from the Poughkeepsie Star-Enterprise, Saturday, March 5, 1938. Collection of Vassar Temple.*



**Figure 3.** *A view of the interior of Vassar Temple on Vassar Street, in 1938. Not visible in this image is the organ built in the early nineteenth century when the building was intended for Christian worship. This Vassar Street structure is now occupied by a Baptist Church. Photograph from The Poughkeepsie Star-Enterprise, Saturday, March 5, 1938. Collection of Vassar Temple.*

The congregation's first permanent home was acquired in 1860: a building on the corner of Mill and Vassar streets. The structure had originally been constructed by a Presbyterian group who felt they were going to need it for expansion., but two years later, when the expansion did not occur, the Presbyterians sold it to a Congregational Church. In 1860 it was bought (organ and all) by Congregation Brethren of Israel,<sup>4</sup> with a mortgage in the amount of \$3,000 held by Mathew Vassar Jr.<sup>5</sup> In July 2012, the old organ at the Vassar Street location was demolished and sold for scrap by the building's current occupant: the Second Baptist Church. The organ was deemed too ancient to repair and has been replaced with electronic instruments.<sup>6</sup>

More significantly, in 1922, Vassar Temple adopted the Union Prayer Book for Jewish Worship, which had been edited and published by the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1908.<sup>7</sup> That Conference was in fact a Reform organization and had formed the Hebrew Union College, which by 1889 had graduated twenty rabbis.<sup>8</sup> One of their graduates was Rabbi Charles Mantinband.<sup>9</sup> He was employed at Vassar Temple in 1923, but it was his immediate predecessor, Rabbi Morris Clark, who actually traveled to New York City in 1922, his only year at Vassar Temple, and purchased one hundred copies of the Union Prayer Book.

In his memoir Rabbi Clark recounts the following conversation on the occasion of his interview somewhere in Poughkeepsie by a Mr. Goodman:

“Are you the Reverend Clark he said to me, as if he were anxious to get down to business. “I heard what a fine speaker you are, and we need a good, modern Rabbi and Sunday School Teacher.”

“Mr. Goodman, what kind of services would you like to have? The money question does not bother me. I am a modern Rabbi, I speak English and German, I would be glad to help you bring your Shul up-to-date.(sic) We must have discipline in the Temple, no talking during the services and no auctioneering during the Krias Hatorah.”

“Reverend, that's something like what we want ourselves, but you would have to go slow in the beginning. ... We ain't ready for no Reform Temple, but we want the ladies to sit together with their husbands, and we would like to have some of the prayers in English, and give us good sermons in English. If you can give us that, you are our man.”

“Yes, Mr. Goodman, I can give you all of that, and it's a deal...”

He then made out a check to Bloch Publishing Co. and handed it to me saying: “You go to New York and buy us a hundred Singer prayer books.”<sup>10</sup>

A close examination of the prayer book might give pause to even a modern member of a Reform congregation. There are references to a “Choir” and to leadership by the “Minister,” as well as alternate readings for “Minister and Congregation.”

The book itself opens from the left and proceeds in the fashion of most books published in English, which are read from left to right and are unlike a modern Reform prayer book, which opens from the right because Hebrew is read from right to left. Rabbi Mantinband’s tenure was short, and he left Poughkeepsie in 1926. In an unpublished manuscript, his wife reports that they were urged to stay by other congregations: “We don’t know why you are leaving, Rabbi but if it is a matter of money we would be glad to supplement your income if you could be persuaded to stay.” An *Eagle-News* article reporting his resignation was very laudatory. “His impending departure will deprive the community of one who has been very distinctly a force for liberality of thought, tolerance, and good feeling. His private and public acts have helped to bring Gentile and Jew into closer relationships, to break down prejudices, and to create a greater degree of mutual understanding in their stead.”<sup>11</sup>



**Figure 4.** *The dedication of the gate and fence of the Beth-El Cemetery in 1937. Left to right: Fred Perlmutter, Thomas J. Zimmer III, Joseph Perlmutter, Samuel Pressman, and Samuel Effron. Photograph. Collection of Temple Beth El.*

It is easy to understand that more recent immigrants, as well as those Vassar Temple congregants more familiar with an Orthodox or Conservative tradition, might have been uncomfortable with the liturgical innovations of 1923.<sup>12</sup> Some current long-time members of Vassar Temple recall that they had been told by their parents and grandparents that, in addition to the problem of the organ, many of those who departed were also taken aback by the fact that most male members

of Vassar Temple, at that time, did not wear yarmulkes<sup>13</sup> and that there was no requirement that someone on the bema wear a prayer shawl or

tallith.<sup>14</sup> More Conservative members may also have desired different burial practices.

There was, too, some degree of ethnicity in the schism: many of the members who wanted to adopt the new prayer book and officially join the Reform movement were second- and third-generation Americans of German descent who wanted to be fully assimilated in the country chosen by their parents and grandparents.<sup>15</sup> This was easier for them because they spoke English fluently. Although there were also German-American Jews in the departing group, some of the dissidents in 1923—as well as members who joined Beth-El later—were more recent arrivals from Poland, Romania, and other eastern European countries, who may have spoken Yiddish as a primary language and were still struggling with English. They therefore found comfort and solace in more traditional forms of worship.<sup>16</sup> This was perhaps already most apparent in the formation of two different Orthodox temples:



**Figure 5.** *The original Temple Beth-El, 110–112 Montgomery Street, Poughkeepsie. Photograph. Collection of Temple Beth El.*

Schomre Hadath, incorporated in 1888, which was founded by people who had come primarily from Russia, and Anshe Ungarn, founded in 1912, whose founders wanted to emphasize their Hungarian background.<sup>17</sup> These congregations merged in 1965 to form Congregation Schomre Israel.

Initially, the congregants of Beth-El held services in Rutherford Hall, a meeting room on the top floor of the Fallkill Building in downtown Poughkeepsie, owned by Isaac H. Spitz. George Rutherford, a well known dancing instructor

of the time, conducted classes there. In 1927, Beth-El purchased a small building at 110–112 Montgomery Street that had been the Meeting House of the Society of Friends.<sup>18</sup> (See Figure 5). That building is just to the east of Clinton School. Just to the west of Clinton School is a red-brick building that, in 1930, housed the first flour store of William Effron. His wife, Sadie Effron (mother of Jack, Ira, and Michael), recalls attending services both “downtown” and at the newly refurbished Temple Beth El on Montgomery Street. On those occasions when they needed a minyan, a messenger would arrive to summon Bill Effron to the temple.<sup>19</sup>

A fascinating aspect of this account is the transition of Rabbi Abraham Haselkorn in 1935 from the Rabbi at Vassar Temple (1931–35) to the first full-time spiritual leader of Beth-El. For the first eight years of its existence, following its incorporation, the new congregation had relied on itinerant rabbinical students who came up from theological seminaries in New York City. It is speculated that it was not until 1935 that the new Conservative congregation had grown to a sufficient size to afford the employment of a full-time rabbi. Also, it is believed that Rabbi Haselkorn may have previously supported the dissidents, and it is noted that one of his predecessors at Vassar Temple, Rabbi Sigmund Israel (1910–22), had also officiated at services in the Rutherford Building for the new group.<sup>20</sup>

It appears that Rabbi Israel was supplanted first by a place-holder, Rabbi Morris Clark (1922–23), and then by the arrival of Rabbi Charles Mantinband later in 1923. Accordingly, it is apparent that the movement to Reform and the struggle within the Vassar Temple congregation had been fermenting for some time, and the arrival of the new rabbi and the adoption of the new prayer book in 1923 was a significant impetus for the break-away that began in 1924. It was far more than the organ.<sup>21</sup>

In an account written many years later, in 1999, Mili Hecht Siegel remembered her involvement with Temple Beth-El:

In a move initiated by Joseph Perlmutter and Isaac Fleishman, some Vassar Temple members turned away from Reform and left that congregation in the 1920s. They began meeting for worship in each others' kitchens and living rooms. Descendants I spoke with are vague about reasons for their ancestors' dissatisfaction.

Perlmutter and Fleischman gathered the support of a total of thirteen men to sign the necessary papers for the new Conservative congregation. Weekend rabbis served the group until they could afford a full-time religious leader. Then, in 1927, Poughkeepsie's Conservative Jews

purchased the former Friends Meeting House on Montgomery Street and converted it into a synagogue, Temple Beth-El. Vassar Temple's Rabbi Abraham Haselkorn followed the Conservative congregation, becoming their rabbi.

The new Conservative temple, on Poughkeepsie's south side, attracted a significant number of members, but as a child I knew nothing of its existence. Temple Beth-El was very new then. Years would pass before I would know about it... and many more years before I would know that Temple Beth-El was a "Conservative" temple ...or what "Conservative" meant. I met some kids from Temple Beth-El at the Jewish Center and at school. But I probably thought they were from Schomre Hadath because they didn't go to my synagogue.

Several years later...when I was in high school and joined a sorority... I finally was aware that Poughkeepsie had four synagogues, and I learned which one each of my acquaintances attended. In the post-World War II years, Temple Beth-El became the largest Jewish congregation in Poughkeepsie. My husband and I joined there in 1958.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Elaine Lipshutz on August 25, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Article I Section 3(e): "An organ or other musical instrument shall never be used during or as a part of religious services."

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Eugene Fleishman, August 29, 2012. Interestingly, Gene Fleishman avers that he, as well as some other members of Beth El, would like to change the Constitution so as to permit instrumental music in the sanctuary during services.

<sup>4</sup> Eva Effron Acker Goldin, *The Jewish Community of Poughkeepsie, New York: An Anecdotal History* (Poughkeepsie, New York: 1982), p. 35–38

<sup>5</sup> But the informal name of the temple is taken from its location on Vassar Street.

<sup>6</sup> John Simon, the current minister at the church, was interviewed on September 20, 2012. But he is not sure if the organ that was demolished came with the structure.

<sup>7</sup> New York, Bloch Publishing Co. Copyright 1895.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ccarnet.org/about-us/ccar-history/>

<sup>9</sup> See dedicatory plaque in the entrance-way of Vassar Temple, which lists him as rabbi.

<sup>10</sup> Rabbi Morris Clark, *My Scrap Book*, privately published, n.d., p. 24, This volume was discovered for sale on the Internet by Roger Donway, editor of the Yearbook, who very kindly brought it to my attention. Efforts to more fully identify Mr. Goodman have been unavailing. The President of the congregation in 1921 was Henry Rosenmann. We suggest that Rabbi Clark's memory may have been hazy at the time he wrote the memoir or that he intentionally altered the name.

- <sup>11</sup> Marjorie Katz, *A Documented History of Congregation Brethren of Israel – The First 150 Years 1848–1998*. Clipping (no page number).
- <sup>12</sup> Mili Hecht Siegel “Ha-Gofen –To Transylvania...Poughkeepsie... and Beyond.” Typescript, copyright © 2000, p. 243–44.
- <sup>13</sup> “This is Your Temple” video in the collection of Vassar Temple, dated January 31,2001, featuring Matt Lampell.
- <sup>14</sup> Interview with Georgine Simon Dreishpoon and Muriel Kahn Lampell, August 20, 2012. The bema or bimah is the raised platform in a synagogue from which the Torah is read. A tallith is a shawl with fringed corners worn over the head or shoulders of Jewish men, especially during morning prayers.
- <sup>15</sup> Ha-Gofen, p. 243
- <sup>16</sup> Ha-Gofen, “Jewish Attitudes,” pp. 242–43.
- <sup>17</sup> Goldin, p. 40
- <sup>18</sup> Goldin, p. 42
- <sup>19</sup> Interview of Sadie Effron and Ira Effron on August 18, 2012. A minyan is the quorum of persons required for Jewish communal worship.
- <sup>20</sup> Goldin, p. 42. Interview of Dreishpoon and Lampell.
- <sup>21</sup> Today, most males in Reform congregations wear yarmulkes and many wear the prayer shawl as well. There is much more Hebrew in the services than when this writer attended in the 1950s.
- <sup>22</sup> Mili Hecht Siegel, “Ha-Gofen: To Transylvania, Poughkeepsie, and Beyond” (Poughkeepsie: 2000). pp. 243–44.

# Sheikh Daoud Ahmed Faisal and East Fishkill’s “Medinah Salaam”

By Russell La Valle

No one truly knows when the first Muslim set foot in America. There are apocryphal accounts (from Arabic sources) of adventurous men from Mali who outfitted hundreds of ships. But what is documented is the arrival of Muslims into the United States during the slave trade. One of the more celebrated instances is that of Ayuba Suleiman Diallo—referred to as Job ben Solomon—who was enslaved in Bundu near the Gambia River in 1730 in what is now Senegal; shipped to Annapolis, Maryland; and sold to a tobacco farmer. A proud, educated Muslim who had memorized the Koran, Solomon considered himself unsuited for work in the tobacco fields and was determined to fight his enslavement. After an unsuccessful escape attempt, he wrote to his father hoping that a ransom could be arranged. Though the letter never arrived, it eventually fell into the hands of James Oglethorpe, the founder of Georgia and a member of the British Parliament.



**Figure 1.** *Portrait of Ayuba Suleiman Diallo, also called Job ben Solomon, painted by William Hoare of Bath England, in 1733. Diallo, dressed in African clothes, wears a copy of the Koran around his neck. In 2009, the painting was sold by Christie’s for approximately \$890,000.*

Impressed by Solomon’s literacy and sensitive to his plight, Oglethorpe purchased his “bond” and brought him to England. There Solomon continued to impress—earning the patronage of the Duke of Montague, meeting the royal family, and finding support from the Royal African Company, who subsequently bought Job’s bond and set him free. Job eventually made his way back to Bundu; however, his father had died while he was away and the village had been destroyed by war. Yet, his children survived. Always trying to maintain contact by letter with his patrons back in England, Job’s fate, like that of untold Africans from the slave period, fell into obscurity and little is known about him after 1740. It is reported that he lived a long life and died in 1773 in his beloved land.<sup>1</sup>

The stories of Job ben Solomon and others like him—though often anecdotal and embellished in detail—are important in the record of Muslims and their experiences in America if for no other reason than they survive. Indeed, were it not for the influx of West African slaves during the Middle Passage, there would be little evidence of any Muslim presence in early America before the 1850s. One important reason is the issue of identity. Muslim slaves were often forced to renounce their names and religion on the pain of death.<sup>2</sup> This process of de-Africanization resulted in the development and establishment of a new African-American identity—one with little or no Islamic content. As slaves were forced to suppress their religion, they often adopted the religion of their masters—thus preventing Islam from planting any meaningful roots in emerging America.

Muslim influence was further lessened by the breakdown of slave families, owing to the large-scale sale and transport of African slaves across state lines. Between 1790 and 1860, over two million slaves were displaced—with the average slave enduring eleven sales of his family of origin, as well as his own immediate family. Often, when the mother was sold, any children remained with the slave master, and even if this were not done, as a matter of rule children were routinely separated from their mothers by the age of eight. Added to that, the fact that most husbands and wives lived on separate plantations, and the result was that any values—familial, religious, or otherwise—were virtually impossible to inculcate and pass on in any meaningful, traditional way.

Thus, despite the high potential for Muslim involvement in early American history, the fact remains that by the second half of the nineteenth century Islamic presence in the United States had been so systematically attacked and reduced as to be rendered inconsequential.

### *The Rise of Islamic Orthodoxy in New York*

Ironically, one of the earliest known orthodox Islamic groups in New York was established by a native of the Hudson River Valley: “Muhammad” Alexander Russell Webb (1846–1916), a white American Presbyterian who converted to Islam. Born in Hudson, New York, Webb edited newspapers in Missouri owned by his father, Alexander Nelson Webb, a leading journalist of his day. In 1887, while working as the assistant city editor for the *Missouri Republican* in St. Louis, Webb was appointed U.S. Consul General to the Philippines by President Grover Cleveland.

While it is impossible to trace Webb’s early interest in Islam or to know what precipitated his conversion, it is known that as early as 1881 he had

begun a search for a spiritual meaning in his life. In 1887, while on this personal journey, he had his first introduction to Islam through the works of Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement.<sup>3</sup> A year later, Webb formally declared himself a Muslim.

Soon Webb began publishing letters expressing his disdain for Christian practices and his desire to promulgate Islam in the United States. Several of these letters came to the attention of Hajji Abdullah Arab, a wealthy merchant from Saudi Arabia who had founded a missionary society in Bombay and had done similar work in Calcutta and Singapore before coming to the Philippines in 1892. Buoyed by Webb's bold ideas, Hajji Abdullah promised to commit one-third of his personal fortune to fund any initiatives Webb would undertake in North America. After a year-long odyssey studying and delivering speeches throughout the Islamic world, Webb quit the diplomatic corps and returned to the United States.

Back home he wasted no time in executing his plans—first in Chicago where he delivered two speeches—“The Spirit of Islam” and “The Influence of Islam Upon Social Conditions”—representing Islam at the World's Parliament of Religions. A conference organized in conjunction with the 1893 World Columbian Exposition (a.k.a. the Chicago World's Fair) had as its aim to create a global dialogue of faiths. Moving to New York City, Webb founded the American Moslem Brotherhood—the city's first Islamic institution, with headquarters on E. 23rd St. Soon after, he launched the Moslem



**Figure 2.** Alexander Russell Webb (1846–1916), was a Presbyterian from Hudson, New York, who converted to Islam in 1888 after arriving in the Philippines as U.S. consul.

World Publishing Company (a.k.a the Oriental Publishing Company), whose first order of business was to publish the journals *Voice of Islam* and *Moslem World*, the latter becoming the organ of the American Muslim Propagation Movement—“to spread the light of Islam in America.” In addition, he established Islamic study circles throughout the United States,

the last of which convened in Manhattan in 1943 and was attended by his daughter Mary Webb Alyea.

A larger than life character who wore Oriental robes and sported a red fez—some have even suggested that his former diplomatic service included espionage—Webb gained a brief national reputation as an influential religious mystic and bohemian; however, his dream of converting white, middle-class Americans to Islam never took hold and his organization and publications disappeared from public view.

At the time of his death in 1916, while America—partly influenced by Orientalist paintings—still held an idea of the Muslim world as violent, sexist, and fanatical, Webb and others had managed to promote an Islam of adventure and romance, yet morally authentic—tapping into the growing tide of voices railing against an American culture rampant with materialism and offering little spiritual sustenance.

### *Sheikh Daoud Ahmed Faisal*

One such voice was that of Daoud Ahmed Faisal, an Islamic visionary influenced by the long history and grand pageant of Islamic civilization, who offered a powerful orthodox message of transformation that he hoped would unite American Muslim converts with newly arrived Muslim immigrants—thus engendering a spiritual reawakening spreading from all corners of the Muslim world into the Western hemisphere.<sup>4</sup>

Born in 1891, Faisal's personal history is an amalgam of fact and legend difficult to separate. By some accounts he was born in Morocco, moved to Bermuda, and came to the United States as a young man, perhaps as early as 1907. The Moroccan connection, widely reported, seems to have its genesis from Faisal's own hand. In his 1965 edition of *Al-Islam: The True Faith, the Religion of Humanity*, he wrote:

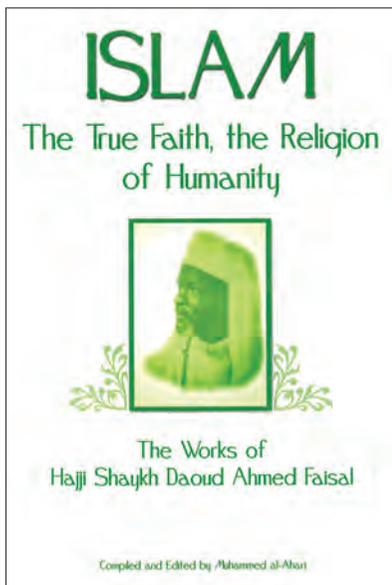
It is very encouraging indeed to know that at last illiteracy will be a thing of the past in a very few years for Morocco and the people of Morocco, which was denied our people for the past seventy-two or more years during the French rule. Personally, I have every reason to be grand and joyful. Because my grandfather, one of Africa's great chiefs and one of the wealthiest was a Moor, and so was my father whose mother was an east Indian, born in Mauritania.<sup>5</sup>

This claim is not without its critics. In his introduction to *Islam, the True Faith, the Religion of Humanity: The Selected Works of Sheikh al-Hajj*

*Daoud Ahmed Faisal Bey*, editor Muhammad al-Ahari cites an allegation by one detractor Nakim Makdisi:

Another Negro organization is the Islamic Mission headed by Sheikh Daoud Faisal, a controversial character who claims to be a Moroccan but judging from his features, language and mannerisms is an American Negro. . . . Sheikh Daoud, who boasts of having converted 30,000 Negroes to Islam, even advances the fantastic theory that most American Negroes were originally Moslems.<sup>6</sup>

Alternately, in his “A Tribute to Shaik Daoud Faisal,” Hajj D.A. Haroon (a.k.a. Faqir Abdul Ghani) has Faisal born on the island of Grenada, educated in the French and English colonial schools there, excelling in literature and the arts, and earning a music scholarship to New York City around the time of the First World War.<sup>7</sup>



**Figure 3.** *Many of Shaykh Daoud Ahmed Faisal's writings are brought together in this 2011 collection, including his plan for Madinah Salaam.*

the Moorish Science Temple (see endnote #8), and because of his title of “sheik,” possibly affiliated with the Ahmadiyyas—although this would contradict Daoud’s strict orthodox Sunnism.

Sifting through all these conflicting reports, the consensus of opinion seems to indicate that Faisal did have an ancestral connection to Morocco,

This musical connection has also proven problematic, as several sources place a young Faisal at the Juilliard School of Music in Manhattan, mastering the violin, and marrying jazz singer Dakota Staton—in the process creating a polygamous arrangement, as he was already married to Sayida Faisal, an Ahmadiyya from Cleveland. The problem is that the man being described is Talib Dawud, an Antiguan born as Alfonso Nelson Rainey, who played with Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, and was most notably associated with Dizzy Gillespie at the beginning of the “bebop revolution.”

Yet another account, consistent with the contention of a Moroccan birthright, has Faisal briefly involved with

most likely emigrated from Grenada, and appeared to hold a Trinidadian passport. But more important than his contradictory lineage was Faisal's definitive mission as a Muslim pioneer—to spread the teachings of Orthodox Islam throughout America.



**Figure 4.** *The Moorish Science Temple of America, founded in Chicago in 1925 by Timothy Drew, who later changed his name to Noble Drew Ali.*

### ***Islamic Mission of America, Inc.***

Once settled in New York City around the time of the First World War, Faisal immersed himself in the civic, cultural, and spiritual activities which would soon come to be recognized as the precursors of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and '30s. As he listened and studied among contemporaries such as Noble Drew Ali,<sup>8</sup> Fard Muhammad,<sup>9</sup> and Marcus Garvey,<sup>10</sup> Faisal found his own voice and became one of the founding fathers of The International Muslim Society—known as “303”—because its home at 303 125th Street (two blocks from the Apollo Theatre) was a popular meeting place for Muslims from around the world who came to New York City.

In 1928 (the date varies) Faisal founded “The Institute of the Islamic Mission of America for the Propagation of Islam and the Defense of the True

Faith” at 143 State Street in Brooklyn, near Arabtown along Atlantic Avenue. Incorporated in 1944, it came to be known as the Islamic Mission to America or the State Street Mosque and was the city’s second bona fide mosque and Brooklyn’s first. During these years, Faisal would become an indefatigable champion of Islam and one of its most courageous spokesmen. He wrote a pamphlet “Al-Islam: The Religion of Humanity”—exhorting Black-Americans to abandon the “Black Church” and embrace Islam as their original, authentic religion and learn their true, sacred language of Arabic. “You are Muslims, not Negroes. There are no such people or nationality called Negroes. Your nationality is the country of your birth. Return and worship the one true God, in Islam, it will free you from the companionship of the devil, from sin and enslavement.”<sup>11</sup>

From this base Faisal sought to defend Islam against all detractors, spread its word to every Jew and Christian throughout the United States (whom he exhorted to convert to Islam for their own salvation), and to enlighten and liberate those “whose ancestors were brought to the shores of the Americas and enslaved, and who are now being unjustly, wickedly, insultingly, wrongly and falsely nick-named Negroes and are now treated by other elements who themselves came and found shelter, and Islam in this God blessed country as though they are inferior creatures, and who have been denied the human rights and privileges they themselves enjoy.”<sup>12</sup>

Over time, as his stature and influence grew, Faisal administered to a 300-member congregation that included immigrants, diplomats, college students, and businessmen—always mindful of his calling to bring African-Americans and newly arrived Muslims together to promote harmony and interaction within New York’s growing Islamic community. Soon the Mission would establish the Institute of Islam, a year-round school that offered daily, two-hour, Arabic classes for children and adults (principally between 1950–1965). In addition, Faisal’s wife, known as “Mother Khadiyah”—the mosque’s co-founder and its longtime secretary and treasurer—led the Mission’s Muslim Ladies Cultural Society and travelled extensively around the country with her husband, addressing women’s groups on the virtues of Islam.

In December 1949, Faisal wrote a letter to the United Nations General Assembly (then at its temporary home in Lake Success, New York) entitled “The Formula for the Peace and Security of the People and Nations of the World,” outlining his belief in the truth and power of Islam over man’s affairs, and in the process declaring the falsity of many of Christianity’s claims. A little over a decade later, capitalizing on his fame and diplomatic

skills, Faisal successfully lobbied Arab delegates to grant observer status to his Islamic Mission. In a statement presented at the General Assembly in 1960, he advanced the theory that the U.N. would realize its ideals only when “its entire activities [were] guided by the Laws and the Command of the Almighty God in Islam.”<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 5.** *Daoud Ahmed Faisal at the United Nations, speaking with Malcom X.*

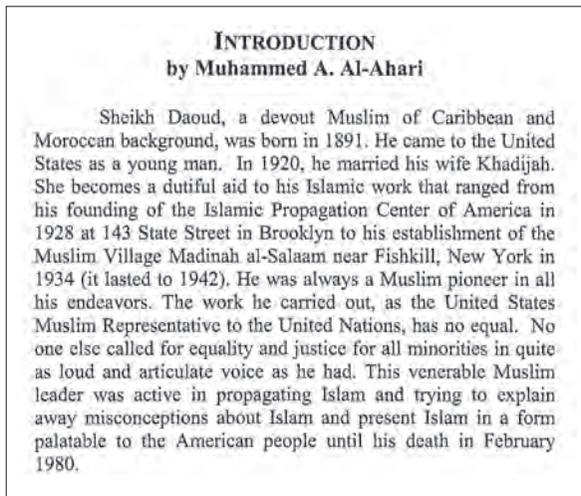
Throughout the early '60s, Faisal railed against “godless” communism and campaigned against socialist influences in the Civil Rights movement. Despite his unwavering belief in the necessity of an Islamic society in America, he rejected lawlessness and political subversion and exhorted his followers to adhere to all civil codes. In his capacity as the head of a legally registered religious organization, Faisal had the authority to perform all religious duties and in the process issued Muslim Birth Certificates, Muslim Certificates of Reclamation of Islamic

Culture and Religion, Muslim death certificates, and Muslim Missionary Certificates. For \$5 he offered a “Muslim Certificate of Community Identification,” which granted the bearer official acknowledgement as a member in good standing of the Islamic community and the Islamic Mission of America, Inc. He even went so far as to record the vital statistics of his American-born converts and register them at Brooklyn’s Borough Hall—everything signed, witnessed, stamped, and notarized, becoming legal documents acceptable in a court of law.

### ***East Fishkill’s Medinah Salaam***

Many pioneers in America’s communitarian movement dreamed of forming utopian societies based on their particular social and religious beliefs, and Daoud Faisal was no different. By all published accounts, in 1934 he sought to establish and maintain a “Muslim community with permanent residence for people of ‘Islamic Faith,’ where those who believe shall live peacefully and in harmony with each other, and in full accordance with the laws, the principles, the culture, the ethics and the philosophy of ‘Islam,’ the revelations of Allah, the Almighty God, containing His holy laws and commands for the universal government and guidance of mankind.”<sup>14</sup>

To fulfill his dream, he looked northward to the Hudson Valley, far from the welter and confines of Brooklyn and New York City—to a place where every Muslim man and woman would have equal rights; room to build Muslim homes and mosques and schools; where farms and businesses and industries would flourish; where a community treasury would maintain medical and dental clinics and establish a social aid system to provide emergency assistance to any Muslim in need; and where a cooperative community government selected by and for the people would work to ensure that any person of the Islamic faith (“and none other”) could find “spiritual, educational, social and moral uplift, and with economic security and stability.” This Eden, this *Madinah al-Salaam* (City of Peace), was to be on 135.5 bucolic acres along a country road bordering the Wicoppee Creek in East Fishkill, Dutchess County, New York. Armed with a personally written charter<sup>15</sup> outlining his mission statement, community policies, and government and management procedures, Faisal’s utopia was no longer a dream.



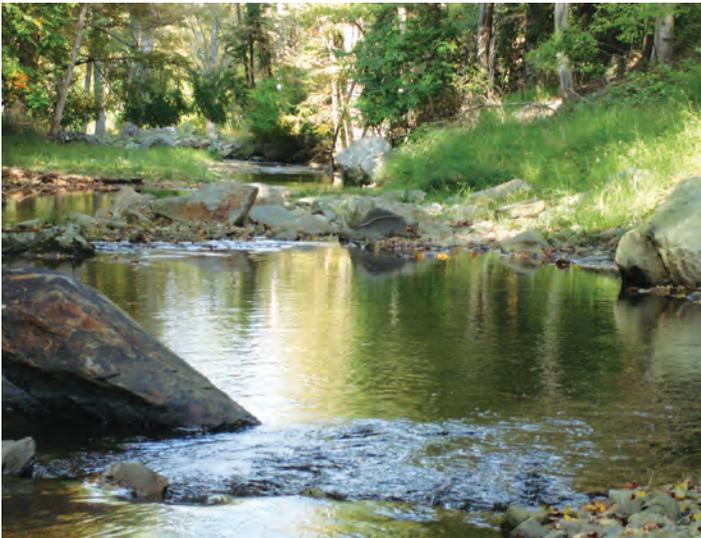
**Figure 6.** *The Introduction to Faisal’s book Islam clearly sets forth the standard account: that Faisal established the “Muslim Village Madinah al-Salaam near Fishkill, New York in 1934” and “it lasted to 1942.”*

To finance this enterprise, every Muslim man and woman would contribute \$1,000 over a period of five years that would “assist in the purchase, establishment and the maintenance of the community of ‘*Madinah Salaam*.’” This contribution would not afford any ownership to any part

of the community, and upon completion of payment, each individual would be presented with a “certificate of honor.” All monies generated by the collective would remain in the community treasury to be used solely for the benefit of *Medinah Salaam*.

As with many aspects of Daoud Faisal’s life and activities, *Medinah Salaam* remained a virtual mystery. As a fifteen-year-old in 1934, Robert Morgenthau—the former Manhattan District Attorney from 1975–2009—remembers riding along the country road on horseback, which was near to his family’s estate, but he does not recall any Muslim community nor does he have “any knowledge that anyone was living there.” Similarly, East Fishkill’s present Town Supervisor John Hickman; his father, the former supervisor; and the East Fishkill Historical Society have no knowledge or record of such a community being established during that time. All this is in stark contrast to numerous resource materials which clearly praise Faisal’s vision, adventurous spirit, and belief in *hijra*<sup>16</sup> that led him to purchase the “Talbot Estate” in 1934, turn it into a Muslim community, and sustain operations until 1942—when “it finally folded for financial reasons.<sup>17</sup> The fly in this ointment is that there is no official record of Faisal purchasing property in 1934 or of establishing any Islamic community there.

However, a check of the Dutchess County indenture records and a fortuitous conversation with a longtime local farmer has finally unveiled the



**Figure 7.** *The Wicoppee Creek area’s bucolic setting attracted Faisal as a site for his “City of Peace.”*

mystery. On April 15, 1955 (that is, 21 years after all published accounts date the beginning of *Medinah Salaam*), Harry and Edith Talbot did sell 135.5 acres along East Hook Road bordering the Wicoppee Creek in East Fishkill to the “Islamic Mission of America Incorporated, a corporation with its offices and principal place of business located at 143 State Street. In the Borough of Brooklyn, City and State of New York.”<sup>18</sup> This sale was signed by “Daoud Faisal, Spiritual Leader; Abdul Kareem, Grand Secretary, and Addelmonen Shaker, Leader in Prayer.”<sup>19</sup>



**Figure 8.** *This is apparently the house that Daoud Ahmed Faisal purchased to be the center of Medina Salaam. In the records of his endeavor, it is grandly referred to as “the Talbot Estate.”*

According to a farmer whose land was nearby (and who chooses to remain anonymous), the Mission’s property became a “weekend retreat” for Faisal and his followers—usually numbering about one hundred—who would arrive by bus from New York City to spend weekends in God’s country. He and Faisal, whom the farmer called “Sheik,” became acquaintances, and as far as the farmer could tell, Faisal and his group would stay in the small historic house already on the property and perhaps in the barn across the street leading down to Wicoppee Creek. No other structures were built, no *Medinah Salaam* was established, and Faisal and his congregation did not become part of the East Fishkill community in any manner—other than as absentee landowners.

The property remained in Faisal’s possession until 1958, when the Remont Realty Company purchased it for \$5,000 and assumed a \$39,500 mortgage,

plus taxes. In reality, Remont was the brainchild of two locals whose plan was to break up and develop the property, which they did. Faisal and his farmer friend last saw each other that same year, when the Sheik asked the farmer to truck the Mission's furniture down to New York City, which was delivered to a location on 125th Street in the Bronx.

So, how did all the reports of Faisal and his utopian community come to be so wrong? One possible explanation could be that it was mistaken for a community known as Jabul Arabiyya, a Muslim collective established in 1938 in West Valley, in upstate New York (near Buffalo) by a local steel-worker named Daoud Ghani.



**Figure 9.** Sheik Daoud Ghani established a rural farming community, near Buffalo, called Jabul Arabiyya, or Mountain of the Arabic-Speaking People.<sup>20</sup>

Then, too, there is Daoud Faisal himself. Even though by all accounts he was a serious man with a serious cause, he was also considered a bit of a showman. Described by some of his followers as a “vociferous” and “over-excitable orator”<sup>21</sup> who took an intense paternal interest in his flock, he was also a very private man who never saw the necessity of setting the record straight about his ancestry or personal life, e.g., his mistaken identity with Talib Dawud and his wife jazz singer Dakota Staton. Indeed, the history of communitarianism is filled with visionaries and idealists who seemed to embrace the mysteries that swirled around them—perhaps to add luster to their exalted positions within the community as the emissaries of God.

Even though Medinah Salaam never came to be, it is impossible to ignore the significance of Daoud Faisal's contribution as a seminal figure in the early Islamic revival in America and his attempts to provide a forum where African Americans could receive exposure to mainstream Islam from immigrant Muslims.

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- 1 Edward E. Curtis IV, *Muslims in America: A Short History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 1–4.
  - 2 Y. N. Kly, “The African American Muslim Minority: 1776–1900” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 10 (no. 1): p. 158 (1989). Also Kathleen Moore, “Muslim Commitment in North America: Assimilation or Transformation?” *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* II (no. 2): p. 226 (1994).
  - 3 A heretical sect founded by Ghulam Ahmad in British India at the end of the nineteenth century, it claims Ahmad to be a prophet—the “Promised Messiah” of Christianity and “redeemer” of Islam—conflicting sharply with traditional Islamic doctrine, which holds Muhammad to be the last messenger and final prophet of Allah. Subsequently brought to the United States, the Ahmadiyyah are known for their proselytizing zeal and insistence that they are the true exponents of authentic Islam. Today, the Ahmadiyya community has a presence in 200 countries.
  - 4 The correct method of referring to Sheik Daoud Ahmed Faisal is treated differently by scholars. Edward V. Curtis IV refers to him as “Faisal” (Curtis, pp. 66–67), and that is the approach taken here. Robert Dannin, however, refers to him as “Daoud,” perhaps because his followers referred to him as “Shaykh Daoud.” See Robert Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage to Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 63–67.
  - 5 Muhammad Al-Ahari, ed., *Islam, the True Faith, the Religion of Humanity: The Selected Works of Sheikh al-Hajj Daoud Ahmed Faisal Bey* (Chicago: Magribine Press, 2011), p. 10.
  - 6 *Ibid.* pp. 10–11.
  - 7 <https://sites.google.com/site/mancebomosaic/atributetshaikhdaoudfaisal>
  - 8 Born Timothy Drew (1886–1929), Ali was the founder of the Moorish Science Temple of America in New Jersey in 1913, which expanded rapidly during the 1920s to major cities across America. Tapping into the black American search for identity, Ali offered the belief that African-Americans were of Moorish ancestry. Within this framework, he presented an eclectic form of Islam that featured indigenous identity, self-determination, personal pride, civic involvement, and self-sufficiency.
  - 9 Wallace Fard Muhammad (1893?), the founder of the Nation of Islam, was identified in public records as Wallace Dodd Ford, an identification rejected by Fard’s successor, Elijah Muhammad. Of questionable background and ancestry, he served three years in San Quentin for selling drugs to undercover agents. When released in 1929, he joined the Moorish Science Temple of America in Chicago, while its leader Noble Drew Ali was awaiting trial as an accessory to the murder of his rival. A month later Ali was found dead in his home, and Ford/Fard declared himself the group’s new leader and the reincarnation of Drew Ali. He founded the Nation of Islam in 1933.
  - 10 A Jamaica-born political activist (1887–1940), Garvey was an outspoken proponent of the Black Nationalism and Pan-Africanism movements, which led to his founding the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA-ACL). Garvey also supported the Back-to-Africa movement, which advocated the return of those impacted by the African diaspora back to their ancestral lands.

- <sup>11</sup> Quoted in Robert Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage to Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 64
- <sup>12</sup> Muhammad Al-Ahari, ed., *Islam, the True Faith, the Religion of Humanity: The Selected Works of Sheikh al-Hajj Daoud Ahmed Faisal Bey* (Chicago: Magribine Press, 2011), p. 183.
- <sup>13</sup> Dannin, p. 64
- <sup>14</sup> Muhammad Al-Ahari, p. 189.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid. pp. 189–192.
- <sup>16</sup> A migration of Muslims and Muslim communities, in imitation of the emigration of Muhammad and his followers to Medina.
- <sup>17</sup> [http://sufibooks.info/Islam/Encyclopedia-of-Islam\\_Juan\\_Campo.pdf](http://sufibooks.info/Islam/Encyclopedia-of-Islam_Juan_Campo.pdf), p. 181.
- <sup>18</sup> Dutchess County Office of Records & Deeds. Liber 885, pp. 390–394.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid. Liber 970, p. 406.
- <sup>20</sup> Dannin, pp. 119–30.
- <sup>21</sup> Dannin, p. 64.

# *The Peace of Jerusalem: An 1845 Plea for Religious Humility*

*By Roger Donway*

The Reverend John Reed was rector of Christ Church, in Poughkeepsie, from 1810 to until his death in July 1845.<sup>1</sup>

In February 1845, five months before his death, Rev. Reed wrote as follows to the wardens and vestry of Christ Church: “Brethren—Such are my bodily infirmities that I can at present at least hope to perform no public service in the church. I must therefore beg you to make such arrangements for the public service, as your good judgment shall suggest, and in order thereto, I relinquish all claims to salary from the first of the present year. Be assured that whatever of council or of labor God shall give me abilities to perform, I shall ever most cheerfully render. I am, most affectionately, Your Brother in the Church, John Reed, pastor.”<sup>2</sup>

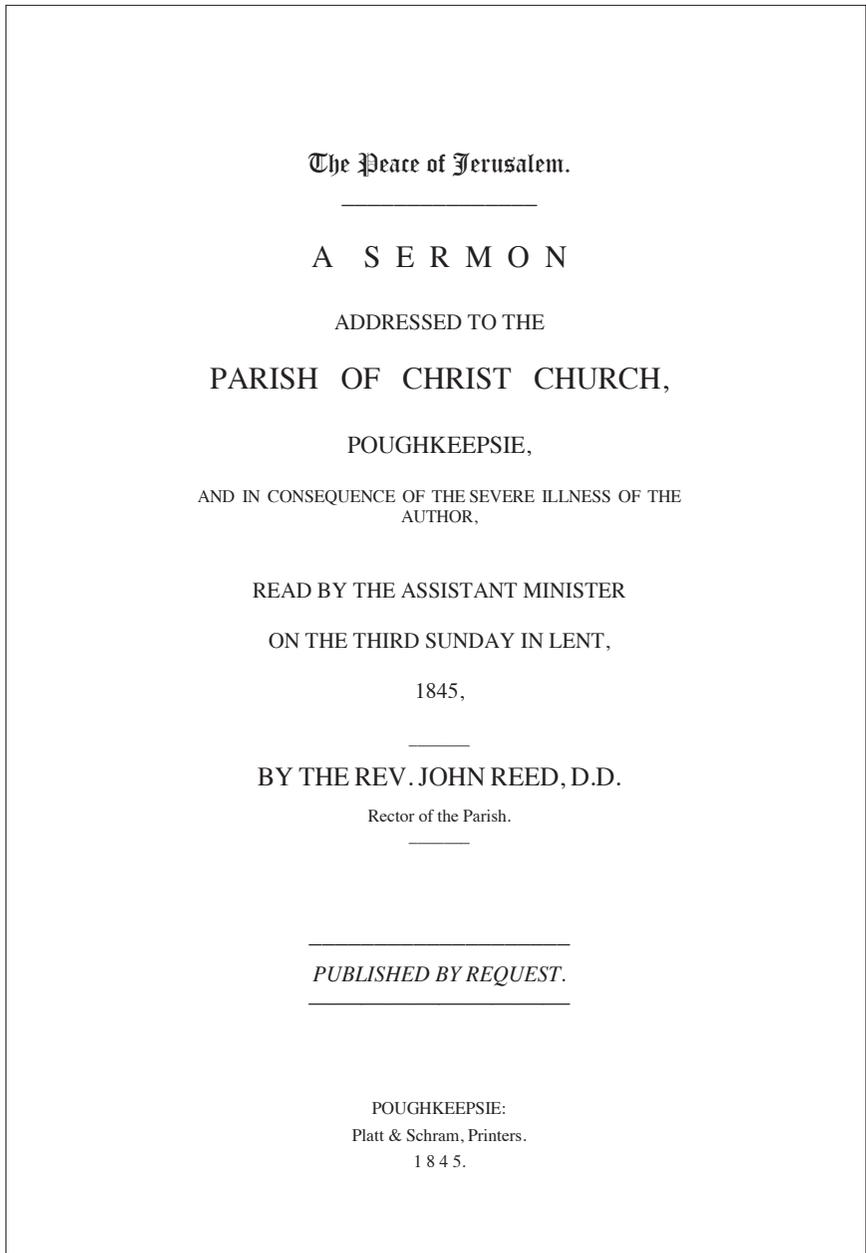
Nevertheless, the Rev. Reed did manage to write one last sermon, although he was too weak to deliver it himself. It was therefore read for him by the church’s assistant rector, the Reverend Homer Wheaton, on Sunday, February 23rd. As the Reverend Reed told his vestry, “Nothing but my great solicitude for the peace of the Church could have aroused me in my weak state to the effort of writing a sermon.”

The following passages, which constitute the opening three paragraphs of the sermon, therefore seem a fitting coda to the DCHS Yearbook’s 2012 Forum: “Sects, Schisms, and Dissent.”

## 122d PSLAM, 6th VERSE

### *“Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem”*

The holy Psalmist in the next verse follows this injunction with the prayer—“peace be within thy walls”—and the apostle under the same Divine influence exhorting his Phillipian brethren in all affection, says “the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” So the Church, moved by the truth and spirit of this apostolic assurance, empowers and commands her ministering servants to pronounce over all her members this benediction—“the peace of



**Figure 1.** Rev. John Reed's sermon "The Peace of Jerusalem" was produced as a booklet in the year of his death. This is a mock-up of its cover.



**Figure 2.** The Reverend John Reed, D.D. *Unknown artist and date. The painting was purchased by Christ Church of Poughkeepsie in 2010. Photograph by Al Nowak of On Location Studios.*

God which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always.” Fit, consoling, and instructive intercession. The fed flock goes forth from the sanctuary under the blessing of the Heavenly Father pronounced by His authorized servant, and must be in a state of peace and quietness, in which God’s Holy Spirit has all his power on the soul to sanctify, guide and confirm it in the ways of an holy life. And under the powerful influences here felt, can faith fail to work by love, overcome the world, and become more strong and habitual? Can the soul fail to call home her affections from the world and hold sweeter communion with her God? And, spirirtual enemies being conquered, can the love of God fail to abound more and more, and practical piety become more perfect? And he, who pronounces this benediction, remembering, in whose name, and by whose authority he speaks, and reflecting on the redeemed of God in whose behalf he is acting, must have his soul deeply solemnized, and must feel it to be the desire of his heart that when he shall be finally separated from his flock, he may leave the Chuch Militant, and

deliver up to his Master his spiritual charge with this benediction of his heart and tongue.

It has been under the calm and cheering influence of peace that art, science and all the improvements of life as well as religious knowledge and grace, have been fostered and enlarged. On the other hand, discord and contention always exert a blasting influence, and that on nothing more fatally than on religion.

Is it then enquired, is religious controversy unlawful? I answer, by no means. We are to “contend earnestly for the faith.” We are to drive away from God’s Church all strange and erroneous doctrine. But in doing this we must be guided by Christian principles and Christian prudence. Multitudes of examples, most worthy of our imitation are to be found in the history of our parent Church. Indeed, the whole movement in the Reformation was of this character. Throughout it was conducted with severe reason and prudent moderation. *Truth*, not *victory*, was the chief aim of the writers of that rich and glorious era. And our own church has not been wanting in this particular. Several stand forth in our history as praise-worthy examples of Christian courtesy in controversy. Amongst these, he who stands the highest is he who did the most. With the searching eye of almost intuition he viewed the citadel of error and acted with as much zeal to save those who defended it, as to destroy the citadel itself. He ever contended against the error, not the man.

*The great Hooker is reported to have often said, that “the Scripture was not writ to beget pride and disputations and opposition, but moderation and charity, and humility, and obedience, and peace, and piety in mankind—of which no good man did ever repent himself upon his death-bed.”*

<sup>1</sup> Helen Wilkinson Reynolds, ed., *The Records of Christ Church, Poughkeepsie, New York* (Poughkeepsie: Frank B. Howard, 1911), pp. 135–71. See also, William B. Sprague, D.D., *Annals of the American Pulpit, or, Commemorative Notices of Distinguished American Clergyman of Various Denominations, from the Early Settlement of the Country to the Close of Eighteen Hundred Fifty-Five*. Vol. 5 (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1859), pp. 506–9.

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. John Reed, D.D. *The Peace of Jerusalem: A Sermon Addressed to the Parish of Christ Church, Poughkeepsie, as in Consequence of the Severe Illness of the Author; Read by the assistant minister, on the Third Sunday in Lent, 1845* (Poughkeepsie: Platt & Schram, 1845), pp. 1–3.

# ARTICLES





# The Rest of the Story

*By Roger Donway*

In the 2011 DCHS yearbook, the editor presented a brief article on the inventor William Woodworth, of Hudson and Poughkeepsie, New York, whose planing machine produced astounding efficiencies in the preparation of planks needed for building houses.<sup>1</sup> Prior to Woodworth's invention, planing the planks for a one-and-a-half-story, one-room-deep house had required 70 man-hours. The Woodworth planer reduced the time to 3½-man-hours. That was not just an improvement in home-building; it was a revolution. No wonder the U.S. Congress said the Woodworth planer was "next to Whitney's cotton gin . . . the greatest labor-saving invention which has been produced in this country."

Last year's article called on the scholarly studies and personal cooperation of Carolyn Cooper, a research affiliate at Yale University and a leading expert on both the history of nineteenth-century U.S. technology and the patent system that governed it. In particular, last year's DCHS article drew on Cooper's essay about Woodworth's invention, "A Patent Transformation,"<sup>2</sup> and on her book *Shaping Invention*,<sup>3</sup> which discussed the life and career of Thomas Blanchard, one of America's greatest inventors of industrial machinery in the early nineteenth century.

This year, she has provided the 2012 DCHS yearbook with an article that covers "the rest of the story" concerning Woodworth's invention, specifically, the commercial application of his planer, the patent system that gave him and his heirs a monopoly over its application, and the fight over the U.S. patent system that the Woodworth monopoly provoked.

I am deeply grateful that so outstanding an historian of American technological history has agreed to write for our journal.

*P.S. Just as the yearbook was being edited, Carolyn Cooper discovered that the Hanford Mills Museum, in East Meredith, New York, has a horizontal planer and that it can be seen in operation, surfacing boards cut during weekly sawmill demonstrations. Alan Rowe, research and preservation coordinator at Hanford Mills, told her that there likely was a planer at the mills in the late 1860s [and so possibly a Woodworth machine] but the one in use now probably dates to the very early 1900s.*

PROPERTY OF W.W.WOODWORTH, HYDE PARK, N.Y.  
AS SURVEYED BY HENRY WHINFIELD, IN APRIL 1835, FOR THE OWNER.

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LOT No. 1,	Alexander Mac Clelland,	Lib. 57, p. 75.	
2,	do	do	
3	do	Lib. 56, p., 205	
4,	do	do	
5,	Wm. Parker	Lib., 61, p., 32	
6,	Richard D' Cantillon Stoutenburgh,	Lib., 61, p., 418.	
7,	John S. Stoutenburgh & John Williams,	Lib., 68, p., 219.	
8,	Jesse Colkrigg,	Lib., 57, p., 105.	
9,		<del>Lib., 57, p., 105.</del>	
10,	John Albertson,	Lib., 59, p., 267.	
11,	Alexander Mac Clelland,	Lib., 57, p., 75.	
12,	Caleb G. Tompkins,	Lib., 58, p., 121.	
13,	Thomas S. Parker,	Lib., 58, p., 105.	
14,	Ananias Terry,	Lib., 76, p., 182	
15,	do	do	
16,	John B. King,	Lib., 57, p., 100.	
17,	Joel Nelson,	Lib., 60, p., 223.	
18,	Wm. B. Outwater	Lib., 58, p., 217.	
19,	Richard, D' C. Stoutenburgh,	Lib., 58, p., 195.	
20,	do Veeder-Bird.	Lib., 57, p., 536.	12-3-1835.
21,	Benj. Delamater,	Lib., 60, p., 467.	
22,			
23,	Isaac L. Carpenter,	Lib., 79, p., 181.	
24,			
25,	Thos. S. Parker,	Lib., 64, p., 309.	4-10-1847.
26,	John Hinchman,	Lib., 60, p., 341.	
27,	do	Lib., 63, p., 129.	
28,	Wm. H. Mansing,	Lib., 77, p., 274.	3-22-1844
29,	Wm. E. Maight, (Wm. Hinchman)	Lib., 60, p., 230.	
30,			
31,	Wm. Hinchman,	Lib., 69, p., 465.	
32,	John Myers,	Lib., 70, p., 104.	
33,	Samuel Yates,	Lib., 60, p., 411.	
34,	John Calder, \$375.	Lib., 61, p., 217.	
35,			
36,			
37,			
38,	Andrew Phillips,	Lib., 61, p., 26	
39,			
40,			
41,	John Myers, Jr.,	Lib., 60, p., 224	
42,			
43,	Alethea Gibbs,	Lib., 63, p., 47.	
44,	John Myers, Jr.,	Lib., 77, p., 441.	
45,	Willitt Marshall,	do.	
46,	Willitt Marshall,	Lib., 60, p., 281.	
47,	John Albertson,	Lib., 57, p., 148.	
48,	Jesse Colkrigg,	Lib., 57, p., 105.	8-27-1835.
49,	Mansing T. Mowbray,	Lib., 67, p., 222.	
50,	do	Lib., 67, p., 220.	

Figure 1. A list of the property transactions of William W. Woodworth, according to a somewhat faded document unearthed by Alisan Donway, at the Town of Hyde Park Historical Society in 2012. The plots are keyed to the map shown in Figure 6 in the next article.

# The Patent and Its Politics: 1828-1856

*By Carolyn C. Cooper*

Mass meetings of outraged citizens, resolutions by state legislatures and town councils, reams of petitions to Congress, Washington lobbyists paid by interest groups to influence legislation, imputations in the press of fraud and corruption—all these modern manifestations of political action took place in the United States in the 1850s. Was it over Slavery? States' rights? Boundary disputes? Tariffs? Foreign entanglements? No, this uproar was about a patent that had been issued to William Woodworth in 1828 for the plank-planing machine he had invented.

In the nineteenth century, patents inevitably involved inventors with the government, and frequently also with politics. To obtain their patents, they had to apply to the Patent Office, in the executive branch of the federal government. To protect their patents against infringement, they often had to conduct lawsuits in the judicial branch. And sometimes they obtained an extended duration for their patents by getting a private bill passed through the legislative branch. But their lobbying to influence congressmen for this purpose often provoked counter-lobbies by opponents to their extension. Such opponents were usually either would-be patentees of similar devices or businesses who wanted to use the patented devices without paying royalties. As we shall see, the Woodworth planing patent provoked ire among lots of ordinary citizens, too.

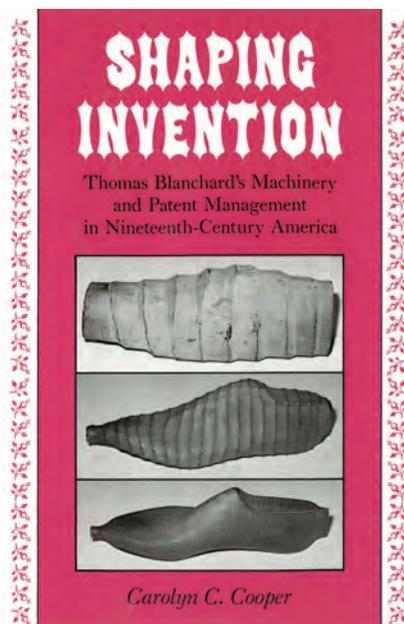
## *The Inventor and the Invention*

As last year's DCHS article reported, William Woodworth was probably born in Massachusetts in 1780 and migrated to New York before 1820. It is unclear exactly which woodworking trade he followed—carpentry, cabinetry, and coach building are possibilities—but we do know he was a competent draftsman and became interested in the use of machines for woodworking. In 1824 or 1825, he traveled as the agent of a “Mr. Van Rensselaer” to Springfield, Massachusetts, where he talked to Thomas Blanchard about constructing machinery for making wooden pulley blocks. Blanchard had patented a lathe that could make copies of irregular shapes for such things as wooden gunstocks and shoe lasts. So it seemed likely that such a lathe could shape wooden pulley blocks as well.

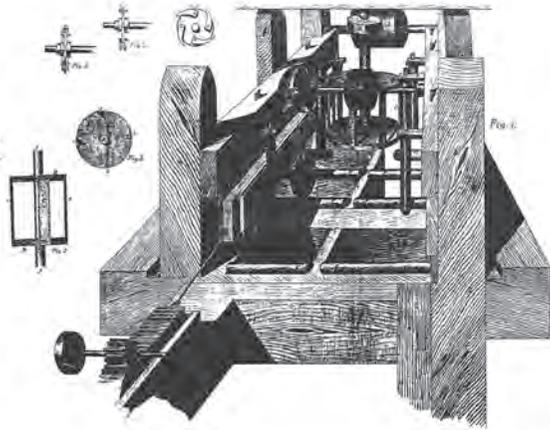
In 1826, Blanchard came to the Hudson River Valley and spent the summer setting up machinery for a water-powered pulley-block factory south of Hudson, New York. The factory, called the “Livingston Patent Block Co.,”<sup>4</sup> was owned by Herman Livingston in partnership with his older brother Robert LeRoy Livingston. But William Woodworth was the supervisor of the factory, and Blanchard naturally discussed with him the various kinds of rotating cutters that were useful in shaping wood.

Unfortunately, in a careless moment, Woodworth’s hand encountered one of those cutters—the “hooked knife cutter wheel” of the factory’s scoring machine—and it gouged away part of his hand. As the tale is told, however, he made constructive use of his ensuing absence from the factory, during a recovery that took more than two months.<sup>5</sup> His son, William W. Woodworth, came home from studying law and nursed his father during healing and convalescence. And as the son later testified, his father insisted on sitting up in bed to make drawings (necessarily one-handed) for a machine to plane boards. Later, when well enough, Woodworth *père* drew more sketches while sitting in a chair. To visitors, the patient raved obsessively about the machine that he was drafting on paper.

When he was finally able to get out and about, Woodworth hired Hudson mechanic David Dunbar to construct a wooden-framed machine according to the drawings and instructions he had made while convalescing. The machine used two kinds of rotary cutters: a cylinder set with blades for smoothing the face of a board or plank, and separate smaller cutters shaped to cut a groove and a tongue into its opposite edges, so that the plank would fit together tightly with adjacent boards or planks, a feature much valued for floors.



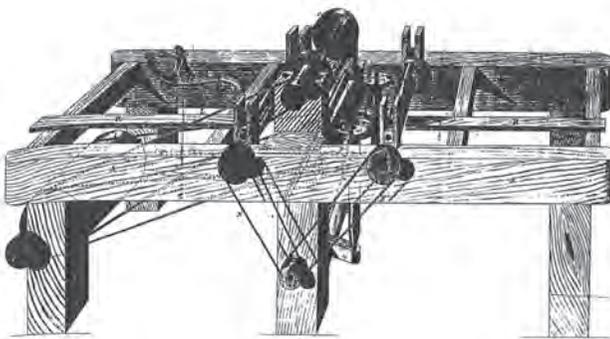
**Figure 1.** *Thomas Blanchard’s machinery and patents provided the background for the Woodworth planer and the decades-long patent fight over it.*



**Figure 2.** *The first Woodworth planer (1828) featured a rack and pinion that drew an upright board fastened to the carriage past the blades of the rotating planing cylinder. Simultaneously, the cutters for tonguing and grooving cut the edges of the board.*

### *The Patent*

The planing machine seemed to work when powered by a horse mill in Hudson, but Woodworth had grander aspirations. In addition to paying David Dunbar for his labor and materials, he faced expenses for improving the machine and for obtaining a patent. James Strong, the Congressman for Hudson, put up an initial \$1500 for these expenses in return for half of the patent right.<sup>6</sup> Woodworth and Strong took the machine to New York City, ran it with a steam engine at Dry Dock, and made important modifications that included moving the board through in a flat position instead



**Figure 3.** *The second Woodworth planer featured two sets of horizontal rollers, with the lower ones being driven by belts and pulleys. These rollers moved the board past the planing, tonguing, and grooving cutters.*

of on its edge, and repositioning the cutters. Woodworth and Strong spent another \$8000 in “further experimenting and putting up and running” two machines in New York City. Then four more machines, not all successful, plus three exhibition models, cost them additional thousands of dollars.<sup>7</sup>

By comparison, obtaining the patent was easy. Under the Patent Office rules then in force, it was necessary only to submit a statement averring the originality of the invention; a detailed description of it that could be understood by readers familiar with the relevant “art”; plus the drawings, a model if possible, and a registration fee of \$30. The Patent Office took the word of the inventor that no one had made his invention earlier. Proof of originality was left up to the law courts if anyone challenged the validity of a patent.

On the way to Washington, D.C., to submit his papers and fee, Woodworth stopped at Philadelphia and showed a model to the Franklin Institute’s Committee on Inventions. The committee was favorably impressed, and, by a happy coincidence, the editor of the institute’s journal, Thomas P. Jones, was concurrently the Superintendent of the Patent Office.<sup>8</sup> Woodworth received his patent on December 27, 1828.

### *Competition and Commercialization*

Even while exhibiting his machine at Dry Dock in New York, however, Woodworth had been challenged as to his future patent’s validity. Three men—William Tyack, Daniel H. Twogood, and Daniel Halstead—told Woodworth his machine had already been invented by one Uri Emmons, who had been planing boards with it at Syracuse in 1824 and was about to receive a patent. To avoid trouble, Woodworth and Strong agreed with Emmons and his three backers to combine their rights but divide the country into two geographical areas, with each group having one.<sup>9</sup> Emmons’s patent was issued on April 25, 1829.

As patentee of his invention, Woodworth could now do more than build planing machines and sell floor boards. He was in a position to make money from the patent without ever touching the machine itself. He with Strong—and Emmons with Tyack, Twogood, and Halstead—began to assign (that is, to sell) rights to the temporary patent monopoly to build or use the planer in specified territories. Both patents were assigned or licensed together, but the machine was called the “Woodworth planer.” Any assignee could subsequently also sell the monopoly right or license it (for use only) to others in his territory. The right could be divided and subdivided for parts of territories. For instance, one of the earliest assignees was James G. Wilson, who paid \$12,000 for the Woodworth patent right in part of New York, all of Vermont, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, and part of Massachusetts, on December 14, 1830. Six and a half months later he sold the right in that “part of New York” for \$25,000.

By the middle of 1831, various purchasers had bought ownership of Woodworth's and Emmons's merged patent in all the New England and Mid-Atlantic states, and those west to Ohio and south to North Carolina. By mid-1837, the right had been bought for a county in Florida; by mid-1838, for the state of Wisconsin.<sup>10</sup> Even Poughkeepsie was reported in 1836 to have a "planing factory," among a variety of other industries on the Fall Kill.<sup>11</sup> It likely had a Woodworth planer, operated by a sub-assignee of James G. Wilson or a licensee of the sub-assignee.

Perhaps stimulated by the rapid spread of Woodworth patent assignments, the number of new patents for planing machines climbed steeply. Fourteen planing machines had been patented in the United States in the 23 years before Woodworth's patent, but in the 6 ¼ years, from April of 1830 to early July of 1836, the Patent Office issued twenty-one such patents.<sup>12</sup> Where the Woodworth planer had a rotating planing cylinder, other planers had rotating planing discs or cones or even a set of stationary planing blades protruding slightly from a flat bed for meeting a board propelled lengthwise over it. The reason, of course, was that any patent issued for a planer with the "same kind" of cutters as Woodworth's would risk being sued for infringement.

Over time, the Woodworth planer became dominant over all others, partly on its own merits and partly owing to forceful litigation by assignees of its patent who would sue users of planing machines regardless of the type of cutters, and convince the judge they were basically "the same" as Woodworth's. Although Woodworth himself brought suit a few times, he proved not to be a forceful litigator.



**Figure 4**, left. Senator John Ruggles, a Jacksonian Democrat from Maine (1835–41), pushed through a reorganization of the U.S. Patent Office.

**Figure 5**, right. Henry Ellsworth served as the first superintendent under the reformed organization.

## *The Patent Office*

As manufacturing activity grew during the 1830s, the number of patents and patent law suits was also rising steeply. By 1835, the number of patents issued was up to 800 a year and was expected to reach a thousand the next year. This rise alarmed not only the Patent Office supervisor and his tiny staff, but also lawyers and politicians and citizens and inventors, who felt that many of the patents were useless or not original, thus cheapening the value of invention itself. Since the Patent Office supervisor had no discretion to reject a correctly written application for a patent, even if he knew it was not new or useful, some applicants for a patent simply copied existing models and then sold fraudulent licenses to ignorant buyers. It seemed clear that reform was needed.<sup>13</sup>

Under the impetus of John Ruggles (a new Senator from Maine) and with the assistance of Henry Ellsworth, the newly appointed Patent Office Superintendent, a thorough reorganization of the Patent Office and its procedures was drawn up and enacted into law on July 4, 1836.<sup>14</sup> From that date onward, the Patent Office was staffed by a growing cadre of “patent examiners” expert in the relevant technologies, who advised the Patent Commissioner not only whether an invention was described fully and accurately in the inventor’s application for a patent, but also whether it was both useful and original. No longer would the Patent Office take the inventor’s word for these important points. Of course, this required keeping an archive of international technological history to be consulted by patent examiners fluent in foreign languages, for “original” meant “first in the world” not just “first to apply in the U.S.A.” For ease of reference, patents henceforth were numbered in their order of issue. Also under the new 1836 rules, a seven-year extension of a patent could be granted by the Patent Office alone; it would no longer require a special act of Congress. The only condition was that a patentee had to show that he had failed within fourteen years to reap “a reasonable remuneration for the time, ingenuity and expense bestowed upon [his invention] and the introduction thereof into use.”

Perhaps just to be on the safe side, William Woodworth had at this point applied for a new patent with almost the same contents, which was duly examined by Charles Keller, the overworked first examiner appointed. It was issued on November 15, 1836, as number 80, and went very much unmentioned thereafter. After all, Woodworth’s patent of December 27, 1828, was still in force, and would not expire until December 27, 1842.<sup>15</sup>

But not all went well in the meantime. On December 15, 1836, less than half a year after the Patent Office's reorganization, the building housing the office burned down. "About 10,000 patents had been issued in 46 years, and they were all destroyed. . . every paper, book and model." Patentees, including of course Woodworth, had to be contacted and told to "restore" patents by sending back their own copies—the official ones they had been issued—to be reinstated at the temporarily re-housed Patent Office. Before Xerox, before fax, indeed before typewriters, that was a big job for everyone involved. By the end of 1837, 2,000 patents had been restored; eventually another 845 made their second journey to and from the Patent Office.<sup>16</sup>

### *William II and Wilson*

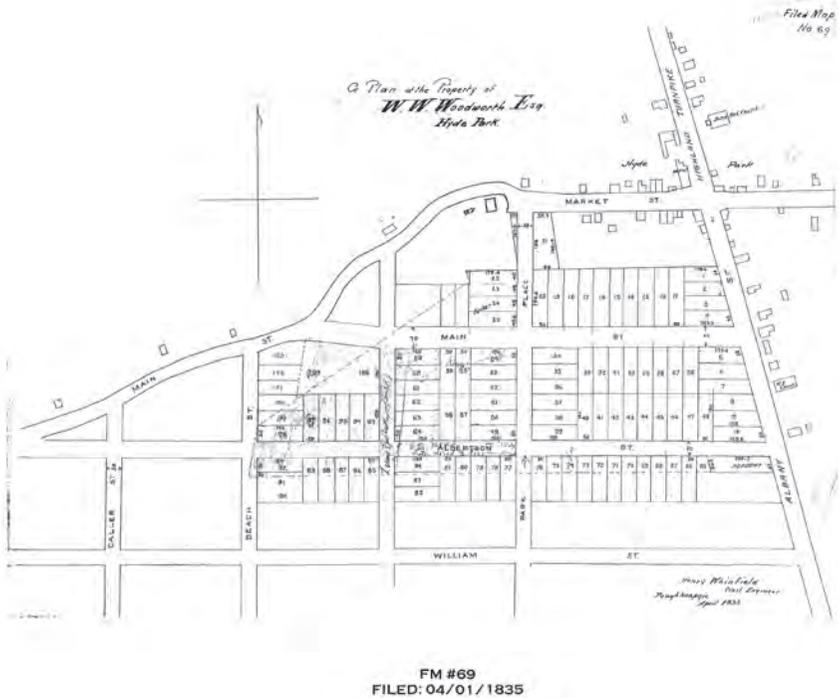
Even while dealing with the commercialization of his patent, Woodworth had apparently maintained an "interest" in the Livingston Patent Block Co. But he had clashed with Herman Livingston (1793–1872) on issues at least partly concerning the block factory, and they began suing each other in courts of equity and law. At the end of July 1834 they resolved their conflict by an agreement to abandon ("discharge and cancel") their suits forever. The agreement stated quite explicitly that Woodworth "does hereby release and discharge all right or claim of right of, in, and to the Block Manufactory situate in the County of Columbia and of, in and to the patent right."<sup>17</sup> No longer welcome at the block mill, Woodworth moved to New York City, leaving his adult children behind in Dutchess County. In 1836 came the destruction of the Patent Office. In 1837, a "bank panic" began several years of money scarcity that, one supposes, slowed down the hum of planing mills along with the rest of the economy. In 1838, his rival Uri Emmons died. According to one story, Emmons made a death-bed confession of a fraud instigated by Tyack, Twogood, and Halstead. Emmons said that he had not really invented Woodworth's planing machine before Woodworth.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps discouraged by it all, Woodworth died in New York City on February 9, 1839, at the age of 59.<sup>19</sup>

But Woodworth's son, William W. Woodworth, was not going to let his inheritance slip away easily. Having finished his legal studies, William W. took up real estate development in Hyde Park, having moved there in 1834. (See the map of his Hyde Park property in Figure 6.) He seems to have acquired competence in civil engineering: the 1836 New York *Gazetteer* says of Hyde Park, "Large additions have been made to the town plot, by the late Dr. Hosack and W. W. Woodworth, Esq., who have opened some streets and laid out many building lots." William W. became a supervisor

of Hyde Park in 1838 and was appointed judge of Dutchess County in the same year. Sisters Charlotte and Almira are also thought to have moved there in the 1830s.

After Woodworth's 1839 death, his three children inherited his property, including his intellectual property, the patent. William W. Woodworth, erstwhile nurse to his father during convalescence, was now a lawyer, engineer, mainstay of Hyde Park civic affairs, and the administrator of his father's estate. He bought out his sisters' shares. The cost of Almira's share of the patent (and so presumably of Charlotte's share also) was \$1500, as she later testified. The patent was probably losing market value at this point, since it was valid only for the remaining three years, to the end of 1842.

But one of Woodworth's early assignees, James G. Wilson—the one who had in 1830 more than doubled his return on investment in the Woodworth patent within six months—joined forces with young William W. in



**Figure 6.** Filed map No. 69 at the Dutchess County Clerk's record office is described as "A plan of the property of W. W. Woodworth, Esq. Hyde Park." According to notes on the map, it was drawn up by the prominent Poughkeepsie civil engineer Henry Whinfield.

1841 to remedy the discouraging prospect of the patent's expiration. They succeeded in persuading the Patent Office to extend the patent, under its 1836 powers, arguing that the patentee (in this case, W.W. Woodworth as administrator) had failed to reap his "reasonable remuneration." The extension to December 27, 1849 revived the patent.

Wilson, unlike Woodworth the inventor, was a fireball of energy and aggressiveness, a mover and shaker. The inventor's son, W.W. Woodworth, sold most of his patent right to Wilson and was apparently content to let Wilson take the lead in organizing an expanded network of assignees. Its members extracted an unusually large haul of pelf from the American wood-working industry, and therefore from citizens at large, who were paying to build new houses. Even brick or stone houses needed large quantities of planed planks, boards, and wooden-framed windows. In eastern New York, John Gibson of Albany was a major assignee in the network and owned a very large planing mill in Albany. Planing mill licensees paid royalties to the assignees; the assignees formed regional cartels that fixed the price of royalties, in some places as high as \$7.00 per thousand board feet. To licensees who objected, the assignees explained that it was cheaper in the long run to pay high royalties than pay for defense in a law suit. And indeed, the Woodworth patent network almost always won in court, so this was a credible threat. In short, the network became a more or less genteel extortion racket.

W.W. Woodworth's apparent role was as a figurehead defendant or plaintiff in lawsuits, telling his story in person or written deposition and as "administrator" of his father's intellectual property when dealing with the Patent Office or Congress. He thereby lent both pathos and legitimacy to the case for the validity of his father's patent beyond the lifetime of his father. Testimony about his father's hand injury also served to establish the date of his invention.

### *Politics and Opposition*

After being appointed judge of Dutchess County in 1838 and again in 1841 and 1843, William W. Woodworth's appetite for public office seems to have been whetted. He ran unsuccessfully to represent Dutchess County in the 28th U.S. Congress, but ran again and was elected on the Democratic ticket to the 29th Congress. (Technically, the Congress ran from March 4, 1845, to March 3, 1847, but its first session did not begin until December 1, 1845.)

Once in Congress, Woodworth *files* had the opportunity to make friends with congressmen who were on the Patents Committee, and with the staff of examiners at the Patent Office. In his two years as congressman, he made one speech, in favor of the Wilmot Proviso. That strongly suggests he was initially one of New York's Barnburner faction of anti-slavery Democrats, headed by Preston King (D-Ogdenberg). But after Woodworth failed to obtain renomination as a Democrat, he voted against the anti-slavery proviso, thus bringing down on his head the accusation that he had joined "A GLORIOUS TRIO OF INFAMY" in the state's congressional delegation.<sup>20</sup>

**Figure 8.** *William H. Seward (1801–72) had been governor of New York (1839–42) before he became a leading lawyer for the Woodworth patent holders and assignees. He would later become a U.S. Senator from New York (1849–61), first as an anti-slavery Whig and then as a Republican. After losing the presidential nomination to Lincoln, he joined the Cabinet as Secretary of State (1861–69).*



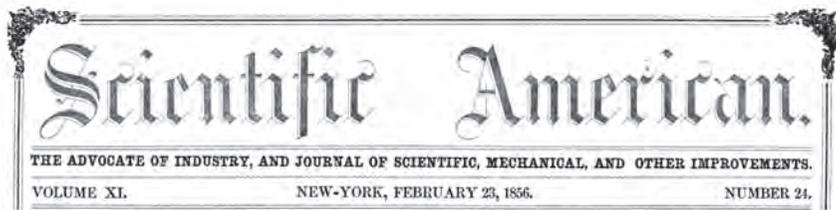
However, his time in Washington was not wasted. In 1845, only three years into the extended patent term, Woodworth, as "administrator" of his father's intellectual property, obtained from the Patent Office a reissue of the patent with somewhat differently worded specifications, and by special act of Congress, another seven-year extension, for the years 1849 to 1856.<sup>21</sup> These actions strengthened the monopoly's clout both in law courts and in the market for assignments and licenses. They also alarmed interested observers, who wondered just how Woodworth had convinced Congress so early in the second term of the patent that he still was not going to reap a "reasonable" return from the patent and therefore deserved a third term. Their suspicion of the reissued patent probably increased when they observed that Charles M. Keller, the senior patent examiner who handled the reissue, very soon resigned to become a private patent agent, and frequently testified in court thereafter on the Woodworth side of law suits.<sup>22</sup> In 1843, James G. Wilson had hired William H. Seward, former

governor of New York and future Secretary of State, on retainer. Already a general lawyer, Seward became an eloquent and effective patent attorney in suits against Woodworth's "infringers." Wilson also funded lawyers in top-notch New York law firms to argue cases in which Woodworth et al. consistently won.

From 1846, when Moses S. Beach and Orson D. Munn became partners in publishing the magazine *Scientific American*, they joined the observers who were surprised and increasingly indignant at what looked like skull-duggery in the Woodworth patent assignees' manipulation of the patent system and of Congress. Beach and Munn shared a mission to help inventors and ordinary mechanics, and quickly gained a wide circulation for the magazine. Through Munn's associated patent agency and the pages of the *Scientific American*, its editors gave practical advice to inventors and would-be patentees, and reviewed recent patents and technical ideas. The "Woodworth Monopoly" received increasingly negative coverage in the magazine, for instance, in a "letters" column encouraging a planing mill operator to resist a Woodworth agent who told him that he could be sued and lose even though his planer had a different patent and a different mechanism. Articles gave figures for the extremely large income of Wilson and other major assignees of the Woodworth patent. Millions of dollars were ascribed to the "monopolists," a term with increasingly dark connotations.

Across the country, awareness was spreading that something was amiss with the patent system, along with a suspicion that Congress and the Patent Office were somehow causing it. When the "Woodworth Monopoly" audaciously petitioned Congress for yet another extension, and this time for a full fourteen years beyond 1856, awareness and suspicion crystallized into overt opposition and action. Discontented carpenters and other participants in wood-based industries began to organize. They held "mass meetings" to discuss and plan what to do. Local newspapers reported what was happening; in various places local governments and state agencies took notice and wrote letters of inquiry to elected representatives and senators on state and federal levels.

The *Scientific American* composed an anti-Woodworth petition, printed a sample form for signing, and offered to send a copy to anyone upon receipt of six cents for postage. That initiated a prolonged deluge of signed petitions to the House of Representatives and Senate in Washington, D.C., urging them not to allow yet another extension of the Woodworth patent. Not all petitions had the same wording as the sample, but with varying degrees of vehemence they expressed the same denunciation



—♦—

**Ohio against the Woodworth Monopoly.**  
CLEVELAND, Feb. 8, 1856.

Messrs. Editors,—I am very happy to inform you that Ohio is ahead in opposing the further extension of the Woodworth monopoly, and that you may see what is doing I enclose you the report made by C. B. Giffin, Special Committee, and also the resolution which was adopted by the Legislature by an overwhelming majority.

While at your office in December last, I informed you that the citizens of this State were fully aroused to the necessity of putting an effectual extinguisher upon this odious and oppressive monopoly.

The remonstrances in circulation are filling up with the names of our best citizens; in fact, almost the whole community will give their names, if an opportunity is only afforded them to do so.

Your St. Louis correspondent expresses great fears for Ohio. Let the citizens of other States follow our example, and the monster monopoly will be effectually slain.

Mr. Cartier, chairman of the committee on patents in the House of Representatives, author of the famous adverse report of 1851-2, considers it impossible, in view of all the facts, to procure a further extension of this patent.

Yours truly, CHARLES L. SHEPARD.

THE RESOLUTION PASSED BY THE OHIO  
LEGISLATURE.

“WHEREAS, we believe the object of our present Patent Laws to be protection to the inventor, and not the establishment of a monopoly that may tax the industrial pursuits of the country at pleasure; and whereas, we be-

lieve the renewal a second time of the patent on Woodworth’s Planing Machine would violate the spirit and design of all our laws relating to patents, and fix an unjust and oppressive tax on mechanical pursuits of the country, therefore,

*Resolved, by the General Assembly of the State of Ohio,* That our Senators in Congress be instructed, and our Representatives in Congress requested, to resist, by all honorable means in their power, the renewal of said patent upon the application of William W. Woodworth, or any other person or persons in his behalf.”

Referred to C. B. Giffin.

[We hope this resolution will be adopted by every state legislature now in session. The time for action has arrived. Let the sovereign seal of public indignation against this monster be firmly and eloquently expressed everywhere, and let the remonstrances be sent to Congress without delay.

The following Representatives have been appointed by Speaker Banks as a Committee on Patents:—E. B. Morgan, N. Y.; C. C. Chaffee, Mass.; S. A. Smith, Tenn.; R. T. Paine, N. C., and J. R. Emrie, Ohio.

These are believed to be upright men, who will act honestly in the matter. All they require is the firm expression of public opinion against the scheme of the memorialist, and there will be no need of apprehension that the extension will be granted. Send on the remonstrances, and if more blanks are wanted we will supply them.

**Figure 9, top.** The masthead of *Scientific American* on February 23, 1856, the year of its great battle against “the Woodworth monopoly.”

**Figure 10, bottom.** A letter from Ohio reports on a resolution adopted by the state legislature instructing its representatives in the U.S. Congress to oppose the renewal of the Woodworth patent.

of the Woodworth cartel. Even the soaring rate of issue of new planing machine patents—73 from 1842 through 1856—seemed to thumb its nose at the monopoly.

The Woodworth cartel fought back, bringing suit against many smaller planing mills and sash-and-blind factories that had been spared earlier. Signers of petitions in favor of renewing the Woodworth patent were also marshaled in the fight, but they were few compared to the “anti” petitions, which kept coming in, year after year, because the cartel’s friends in Congress kept bringing up the bill for renewal of the patent. Elected representatives of the public finally recognized that it was their electorate writing to them on these petitions, and Wilson wailed to Seward that their friends in Congress were dwindling. The bill never made it out of committee to a vote, until the patent finally expired on December 27, 1856, held down to twice the normal length of a patent, instead of triple.

Meanwhile, W.W. Woodworth, having been the contractor for building a section of the Hudson River Railroad, had moved at the end of 1849 from Hyde Park to Yonkers with four of the children by his first wife. “Judge Woodworth” again took up real estate and laid out streets, one of which was named after him. In 1851 he was married again, to a woman 19 years his junior, and by 1860 had fathered three more children. That year’s Census enumerator listed him as a 50-year-old gentleman who owned real estate worth \$50,000. His household held nine Woodworths from two to 50 years old, plus four Irish servants, three women and one man. Woodworth also “engaged in banking” and had “interests in Cuba.” Before the patent died, these assorted occupations presumably kept him busy between calls to attend a certain lawsuit or to look up a certain old acquaintance in Congress. After the patent expired, he was elected to local civic offices: president of Yonkers in 1857 and 1858, and receiver of taxes in 1870.

### *Coda*

The demands on the United States patent system that the Woodworth patent managers made were much greater than those for other patents at the time, but not unique. Petitions against extending the patents of Samuel Colt and Cyrus McCormick, among others, were also arriving at the House and Senate in the 1850s. Somehow, inventor Thomas Blanchard managed to get his patent tripled in duration (1820–1862) without causing the uproar that Woodworth’s patent provoked. One important difference was that Blanchard stayed alive and did his own lobbying for his own patent, dying two years after it finally expired. Everyone knew that Blanchard-

the-owner-of-the-patent was Blanchard-the-inventor, whose ingenuity deserved reward. Another difference may have been the universality and visibility of the final product of Woodworth's machine and the clarity of its connection to the consumer's pocket book. Blanchard's last-making assignees also formed price-fixing cartels, but wearers of shoes generally didn't see the lasts on which they were made or know how much the lasts cost or how much they added to the shoes' price.

Another reason people were more outraged about the Woodworth patent was, I think, the boorish and arrogant behavior of many principal assignees, emulating the example set by James G. Wilson. Simple probity seemed beyond him. Even his son-in-law, recipient of Wilson's largess, considered their behavior "odious."

For these and probably other reasons, Congress took this experience to its collective heart, and in 1861 made changes in Patent Office rules. It lengthened the patent term from 14 to 17 years and no longer allowed the Patent Office to grant extensions. Congress did retain its own privilege of extending patents, but other Patent Office rule changes in the '60s and '70s very much diminished the number of reissues, which had been shown to be vulnerable to abuse.<sup>23</sup>

Thus the federal government, when faced with righteous indignation of its citizens, showed itself capable, slowly but eventually, of righting its own wrongs.

<sup>1</sup> Roger Donway, "Who Is Dutchess County's Second-Greatest Inventor?" *Dutchess County Historical Society 2011 Yearbook*, pp. 131–140.

<sup>2</sup> Carolyn Cooper, "A Patent Transformation: Woodworking Mechanization in Philadelphia, 1830–1856," in *Early American Technology: Making and Doing Things from the Colonial Era to 1850*, edited by Judith A. McGaw (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, /published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History, 1994), pp. 278–327.

<sup>3</sup> Carolyn C. Cooper, *Shaping Invention: Thomas Blanchard's Machinery and Patent Management in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Herman and Sarah Hallet Livingston Papers in the Livingston Family Collection, GEN MSS 680 at the Beinecke Library, Yale University, box 1, folder 8.

<sup>5</sup> This is according to later court testimony given by his son and by his doctor.

- <sup>6</sup> In those days, enlisting one's congressman as agent in applying for a patent was not unusual, "although whether they usually received a fee or settled for votes is not apparent." Kenneth W. Dobyms, *The Patent Office Pony: A History of the Early Patent Office* (Fredericksburg, Virginia: Sergeant Kirkland's Museum and Historical Society, Inc., 1994), p. 43.
- <sup>7</sup> William W. Woodworth, papers headed "Receipts" and "Account of expenditures & losses referred to in the annexed affidavit" in case file for *William W. Woodworth et al v. Hiram Casley et al*, U.S. Circuit Court, Mass. District, October Term 1849, National Archives Boston Branch, Waltham, Mass. The Dry Dock district was named for the nearby Dry Dock on the bank of the East River. Later known as eastern Eleventh Ward or East Village, in Woodworth's day it was an area of machine shops and supplies for repair and construction of ships.
- <sup>8</sup> Bruce Sinclair, *Philadelphia's Philosopher Mechanics: A History of the Franklin Institute 1824-1865* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), p. 71.
- <sup>9</sup> Later lawsuit testimony after Woodworth and Emmons were both dead provided strong evidence that Emmons's claim was fraudulent and inspired by his assignees Tyack, Twogood, and Halstead, who had considered buying assignments from Woodworth and Strong but apparently decided to muscle in on them instead. See note 18.
- <sup>10</sup> Table, "Abstract of Assignments," p. 15 in "Memorial to the House of Representatives from a Convention of Mechanics and others at the City of Syracuse in the State of New York," March 19, 1850. HR 31A-G 13.4 for Jan. 24 1850 to Aug. 8, 1850, National Archives.
- <sup>11</sup> Thomas Francis Gordon, *Gazetteer of the State of New York* (Philadelphia: T.K and P.G. Collins, Printers, 1836), p. 432. The list includes a "sash factory," in which the Woodworth machine could also be used for molding window frame components.
- <sup>12</sup> Compilation of U.S. patents for planing, jointing, and cutting mouldings in wood before and during Woodworth's patent period 1828–1856, from M. D. Leggett, Subject Matter Index of Patents for Inventions 1790–1873 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1874) pp. 1057, 1058, 1059. And from I.L. Skinner, *The American Journal of Improvements in the Useful Arts and Mirror of the Patent Office in the United States*, vol. 1, # 1 (Washington D.C., 1828).
- <sup>13</sup> Dobyms (note 6 above), p. 96.
- <sup>14</sup> Dobyms, pp. 97–101.
- <sup>15</sup> Dobyms, pp. 99, 105 Keller had begun work at the Patent Office as a child (his father was one of the clerks), and grew into being the Office's mechanical expert and was thoroughly familiar with the whole procedure before July 1836, when he helped Senator Ruggles write the new rules and after July 1836, when he was promoted to examiner. Dobyms, p. 99.
- <sup>16</sup> Dobyms, pp. 107–109, p. 111.
- <sup>17</sup> Herman and Sarah Hallet Livingston Papers (see note 4 above) box 1, folder 8.
- <sup>18</sup> Leonard Chester, deposition in *Jacob P. Wilson v. Daniel Barnum*, United States Circuit Court, Pennsylvania Eastern District, April session 1849, Equity Cases, National Archives, Philadelphia.
- <sup>19</sup> New York Herald, "DIED" column, February 12, 1839.

- <sup>20</sup> “Disciples of Corruption—Dough-faced Spaniels,” *The Corrector*, Sag Harbor, March 10, 1847.
- <sup>21</sup> Reissues were a feature of Patent Office procedure from its beginning in the 1790s: if a patentee decided—perhaps in the course of a law suit—that the wording of his specification was defective, he could withdraw his patent, reword the specification, and apply to get the patent reissued for the remainder of the original patent term. A patented invention was supposed to remain the same in a reissue; in fact, however, it provided unintended occasion for making changes in the scope of a patent. Re extension: “The following Bill for the re-extension of the Patent of WILLIAM WOODWORTH,...passed both houses of Congress on the 25th February, 1845, to take effect from and after the 27th day of December 1849.” 28th Congress, 2d Session: S.121...U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Patents.
- <sup>22</sup> For instance, Charles M. Keller, deposition June 1 1847, in *William W. Woodworth v. Lawrence Rogers et al*, U.S.C.C. Mass. District, May Term 1847, in file of *W.W. Woodworth et al vs. John Sherburne*, U.S.C.C. Mass. District May T 1850, at National Archives Waltham (Mass.) branch. Keller, having worked at the Patent Office since boyhood was the first U.S. patent examiner appointed under the Patent Act of 1836, and studied law at night to become a patent lawyer.
- <sup>23</sup> See Kendall J. Dood, “Pursuing the Essence of Inventions: Reissuing Patents in the 19th Century,” *Technology and Culture* 32 (October 1991): 999–1017.

# Robert Newlin Verplanck: Civil War Hero in Changing Times

by Harv Hilowitz

*Robert Newlin Verplanck was born at Mount Gulian, Fishkill Landing (now Beacon), New York, on November 18, 1842.<sup>1</sup> He was born into a family of extraordinary wealth, privilege, and social access. His was expected to be a world of “grand tours,” vast art and wine collections, and elegant teas and dinners given by the genteel ladies of the family. Interaction between the cosmopolitan worlds of politics, business, and high society in New York, Albany and Washington, D.C., was common for the Verplancks. At the same time, Robert also faced high expectations. He was groomed to be a gentleman of the landed gentry, classically educated and of good character, an heir to a famous family of Dutch, Huguenot, and Quaker predecessors who had been prominent in the establishment of the Republic and throughout the Federal period. Unfortunately, the Civil War destroyed the insulated world of high society into which R. N. Verplanck was born, and when he emerged from his decorated military service, although personally fulfilled, he apparently was never quite able meet his family’s “great expectations.”*

As we commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, the lives of noteworthy generals and the accounts of significant battles are often highlighted, leaving behind the stories of those who participated in unusual corners of that epic struggle. One such participant was Dutchess County’s own Robert Newlin Verplanck. This is a brief biography of his life, of his career as a Union soldier, and of the challenges he faced after the War.

## Ancestry

Robert Newlin Verplanck (generally referred to as R. N. Verplanck) was a ninth-generation Verplanck, descended from Abraham Isaac Verplanck, who was born in Holland and sailed to New Amsterdam about 1638 as a merchant.<sup>2</sup> In the 1680s, Abraham Isaac’s son Gulian (along with partner Francis Rombout) purchased a large tract of land in Dutchess County, known as the Rombout Patent.<sup>3</sup> The Verplanck family prospered and owned a colonial-era mansion on Wall Street in Manhattan, along with other properties in the city. Over time, they also acquired significant holdings in Dutchess, Ulster, Delaware, Orange, and Albany Counties.

By the time of the Revolutionary War, the Verplancks were among the wealthiest and most important citizens in the new nation. Robert Newlin Verplanck's great-great-grandfather, Samuel Verplanck (1739–1820), was a patriot leader who turned his summer home, Mount Gulian, in Fishkill Landing (modern day Beacon), over to the Continental Army, under which it became headquarters to patriot General Baron von Steuben in the post-Yorktown years of 1782 and 1783.

Robert's great-grandfather, Daniel Crommelin Verplanck (1762–1834), rose to great heights as an attorney, banker, president of Kings College (now Columbia University), and as a U.S. Congressman (1802–1809), representing Manhattan. Maintaining a residence on Wall Street, Daniel Crommelin Verplanck moved his family from Manhattan in 1804 to take up permanent residence at Mount Gulian. After serving in Congress, he was awarded a judgeship in Dutchess County, a post he held until he died in 1834.

### *Immediate Family and Boyhood*

With first wife Elizabeth Johnson, Daniel Crommelin Verplanck had only one child who lived past infancy: Gulian Crommelin Verplanck (1786–1870). Known as “Gil” and “G.C.” throughout his lifetime, he was Robert's grandfather, and likely the most famous of the Verplancks of any era.



Residing mostly in Manhattan and summering in Fishkill Landing (Beacon), he was the family patriarch until his death in 1870 and was known as the “Essential New Yorker,” the title of a biography written about him in 1951.<sup>4</sup> G.C. was a published writer on general philosophy, treatises about American national-

**Figure 1.** Daniel Crommelin Verplanck. *John Singleton Copley, 1771. Oil on Canvas. 49 1/2 x 40 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of Bayard Verplanck, 1949.*

ism, Shakespeare, and the ancient classics. He was also a New York State assemblyman and state senator, and a prominent U.S. congressman representing New York City (1825–33). G.C. was also an unsuccessful candidate for Mayor of New York City (1834), and a founder of the New York branch of the Whig Party, opposing Andrew Jackson and his forces. G. C. Verplanck was also very active in social causes such as prison reform, public education, and the development of public hospitals. However, regarding slavery, the flashpoint issue of his era, he was a “gradualist,” as he took the Whig position against slavery on moral and economic grounds, but believed that slavery was a decision constitutionally left up to the individual states.



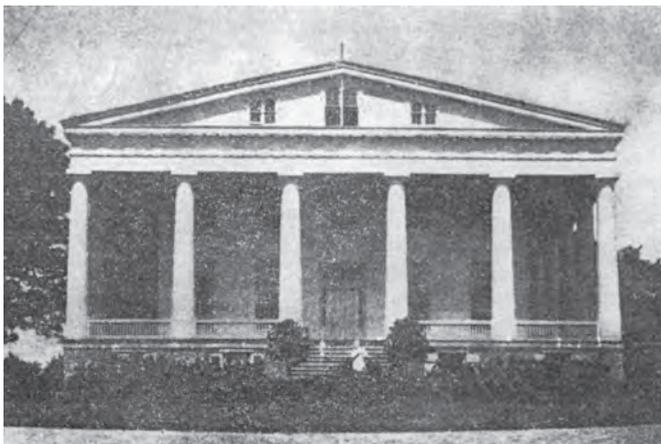
**Figure 2.** *Mount Gulian, the Verplanck family homestead.*

R. N. Verplanck’s father was William Samuel Verplanck, who was born in New York in 1812 and died in 1885. His mother was Anna Biddle Newlin (1813–83), a daughter of the wealthy Newlin family, who were close family friends and occasional business partners of the Verplancks. The Newlins were practicing members of the Society of Friends, or Quakers, known to be strong abolitionists and pacifists.

William Samuel Verplanck earned a law degree from Columbia in 1832, but he was not attracted to practicing law, banking, or politics. Instead, he initially embarked on the path of a dilettante, purchasing pieces of

expensive art for his father, becoming a wine collector, collector of elegant prints and expensive books, and brewer of beers. Eventually, in mid-life, he managed the Verplanck family estates and successfully went into business on his own. Until then, he lived primarily on generous stipends from his famous father, G.C. With his wife Anna, he raised a large family and built a new family home in 1846–47, called New Place, located near Old Castle Point Road, just north of Mount Gulian. Their family consisted of Robert (b. 1842), his older sisters Eliza (b.1838) and Mary (b. 1840); Daniel (b. 1845) died at age 9; Anna (b. 1846); Jeannette (b.1849); Gelyna (Lena) (b.1852); and William Edward (b. 1856).

Robert was born at Mount Gulian on November 18, 1842. As an adult, he stood five feet five-and-a-half inches, weighed 160 pounds, had brown hair, hazel eyes, and a light complexion, according to Union Army records. In the few extant photographs we have, he is shown sporting a full moustache.



**Figure 3.** *The Poughkeepsie Collegiate School, which R. N. Verplanck attended from 1855 to 1859.*

During Robert's era, the main purpose of secular education for wealthy boys was to prepare them to become citizens and gentlemen by developing their personal character, exposing them to a classical education, and teaching them spiritual and personal discipline. Robert was therefore enrolled in the elite Poughkeepsie Collegiate School (PCS), a private school located in a Parthenon-style Greek Revival building on McKean's Hill (later known as College Hill).

The Poughkeepsie Collegiate School was founded in 1836 and opened in 1837 as a college preparatory school for wealthy boys. It was considered

one of the finest schools in the Northeast and was an object of local pride. Robert was one of approximately 110 boarders, attending from 1855 until his graduation in 1859. The cost for attending during that time was \$240–\$270 per year, which included most classes, room, board, and certain items of uniform clothing. In order to supplement Robert’s meals, Mount Gulian employee James F. Brown’s wife, Julia, was intermittently hired as a personal cook for him while he attended the school.<sup>5</sup>

Trustee Reports from the PCS<sup>6</sup> in 1843 and 1844 clearly express the school’s emphasis on character development, morality, strict discipline, and deportment towards the instructional staff, but without corporal punishment, a unique attitude at the time. Regarding spiritual development, PCS was not run by a particular Christian denomination, but religious instruction and regular attendance at Sunday service was considered vital, if not mandatory, for the well-being of the pupils’ characters and souls.

The 1844 curriculum at PCS called for instruction in Greek and Latin literature, English, French and Spanish, mathematics, commercial knowledge, music, drawing, and painting. Geography, world and U.S. history, natural philosophy (the sciences), political economy (economics and political science), and civil polity (introduction to law and civics) were also taught. Physical activity in the form of gymnastic exercise was just getting an introduction into elite schools and colleges in the 1840s, in imitation of the ancient Greek and Roman dedication to the physique, martial arts, and physical courage.<sup>7</sup>

### *Student at Harvard*

Robert’s experiences and grades at the PCS are not known, but we do know that he was admitted to the freshman class at Harvard University “On Probation and on Condition,” in August 1859. In order to obtain entrance to the university, one had to pass an entrance examination, “produce proper testimonials of a good moral character,” and give a bond of \$400.00 that showed the ability of the family to meet financial obligations.

The admission examination of Harvard in 1858–59 tested expertise in Latin, Greek, arithmetic, algebra and geometry, and ancient and world history. The examinations were administered to Robert in July 1859, and his first day of class was September 1, 1859.<sup>8</sup>

During Robert’s four-year course of study, needed to graduate with a bachelor of arts (A.B.),<sup>9</sup> he would have covered the classics, the sciences

(botany, chemistry, physics, astronomy, mineralogy, biology, anatomy and zoology); mathematics, including trigonometry and advanced analytical mechanics; French, Spanish, and German; modern literature; history; and philosophy. At the time, A.B. degrees were generic, as all students followed a core curriculum and did not “major” in specific disciplines. Students could, however, take numerous electives or attend lectures in the arts, music, religion, law, languages, and medicine. In addition to the academic curriculum, attendance at daily prayer services and Sunday service was mandatory.

A letter from Robert, written at Harvard to his sisters Jenny and Lena states that he had received letters from Grandfather [family patriarch G.C. Verplanck] and Annie [sister Anna], “... both of which gave me good advice... Since then I have quieted down somewhat... I have no doubt about the matter and according to which I will try to act, although it is hard enough...”<sup>10</sup> The matter in question was not further elaborated, but the fact that Grandfather wrote to him suggests the issue

*Verplanck Robert A.* 1915

AGE	ENLISTED					SERVED IN					
	WHEN			WHERE	REG'T	WHERE			GRADE	COMP.	SER.
	Year	Day	Month			Day	Month	Year			
20	1	July	1863	New York	30 Reg't	3	July	1863	Private	A	22

LEFT THE ORGANIZATION					
HOW	WHEN			IN WHAT GRADE	EXPLANATION
	Day	Month	Year		
M.O.	24	July	1863	Private	went company at New York City not on muster in Roll

REMARKS:

Born \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ years. Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Cong. Dist. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Eyes \_\_\_\_\_ Hair \_\_\_\_\_ Complexion \_\_\_\_\_ ft. \_\_\_\_\_ in. high. Cr. \_\_\_\_\_ Sub. Dist. \_\_\_\_\_

**Figure 4.** Military records show that R. N. Verplanck enlisted on July 1, 1863, the first day of the battle of Gettysburg. Says author Harv Hilowitz: “This is the Holy Grail. It took me two years to locate it.” It is reprinted courtesy of the New York State Archives, Albany, New York.

might have impacted negatively on the family's good name if not addressed. R.N.'s letter also apologized about his writing a previous letter to his mother, which was "very foolish as it was about nothing except the war."

Most interesting regarding Robert's career at Harvard is his poor disciplinary record, as suggested by his Grandfather's letter. Notations from the Faculty Records of the University, 1860–63, show a history of disciplinary actions taken against Robert for the following infractions: "Numerous and repeated absences from Prayer; Failure to pass a Chemical Physics examination; Copying an exercise at Examination; Absences on Sundays; Absences from Chapel Services; Smoking in public and not reporting to administrators after repeating warnings about smoking; Copying in Mathematics Examination." For one unknown infraction he was "Required to study on vacation and recite to an instructor approved by the President [of the University]." Despite all of these issues, R.N. Verplanck graduated with an A.B. from Harvard College in the spring of 1863. He then headed home to Fishkill Landing to make a fateful decision.

### *Soldier at War*

At the time of Robert's graduation from college, America was engulfed in the Civil War—on the battlefields, in Washington, D.C., and on the home front. Eighteen sixty-three was perhaps the most critical year in the entire history of the nation, as Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, and, on March 3, 1863, signed the Enrollment Act of Conscription, beginning America's first national draft, which led to widespread protests and riots in Northern cities.

With the war going badly in the field, Lincoln was being urged by abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass and by Radical Republican officers to allow blacks into the Army as soldiers. Finally, on May 22, 1863, Lincoln signed General Order 143, creating the Bureau of Colored Troops. The Bureau created an entirely separate Army of black soldiers, led by white officers, to be called the United States Colored Troops (USCT). Eventually, over 180,000 black men and their white officers served in the USCT, including R.N. Verplanck.

July 1, 1863, was the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg. Ironically, on precisely that day, according to the official enlistment records, Robert N. Verplanck, age 20, enlisted in Manhattan as a private with Company A, 22nd Regiment of the New York State Militia, for a thirty-day period. The record shows that on July 24th 1863, he mustered out of that same

unit. One notation on a later Request-for-Pension document indicates that Robert then traveled to Washington, D.C., to try to enlist as an officer in the USCT.

Why did Robert make the fateful decision to volunteer with the Colored Troops? If drafted into the Army he could have easily bought his way out with a replacement, which was common practice at the time for a “swell.” If he wanted to volunteer, he could have easily joined one of the many all-white New York units, in which at least seven other Verplancks were serving. Instead, he volunteered for service in the USCT, although it was common knowledge that any white officer of the USCT captured by Rebel forces could be summarily executed. Perhaps Verplanck joined because of abolitionist fervor, or as a demonstration against the Whig “gradualists” in his family. Perhaps it was because he thought he would be promoted quickly in the USCT, although as indicated in his letters from the front, that was not to be the case.

In any event, sometime between late July and early September 1863, R. N. Verplanck traveled to the nation’s capital and enrolled in “Casey’s Board.” Major General Silas Casey, the author of a book on infantry tactics and a former division commander in the Army of the Potomac, served as president of the Washington, D.C., Examining Board, in charge of selecting white officers for the USCT. With Thomas Webster of Philadelphia, abolitionist and chairman of that city’s Supervisory Committee for Recruiting of Colored Regiments, they organized eleven all-black infantry regiments, to be outfitted at Camp William Penn, near Philadelphia. By the end of 1863, the Examining Board for USCT officers had interviewed 1,051 candidates, approving only 560, enough to fully staff sixteen infantry regiments. R.N. Verplanck was one of those approved in September 1863, earning a commission as second lieutenant.

Verplanck then headed to Camp William Penn, which was a large encampment and recruiting grounds for the newly formed black army. According to Army records, R. N. Verplanck enlisted on September 15, and was formally attached to Company H of the 6th Infantry Regiment, USCT, as a second lieutenant, “for a term of three years or the duration of the war.” His first letter home, one of a cache of 58 letters (now kept at the Adriance Memorial Library in Poughkeepsie), is dated September 17, 1863, Philadelphia. In every letter home, he signs off as R. N. Verplanck.

Verplanck saw action with the 6th USCT, in Virginia, but was transferred on November 23, 1864, to Company A, and later to Company G, of the

118th Infantry Regiment, USCT, where he was promoted to first lieutenant. In January 1865, he was promoted to Headquarters aide de camp, serving directly under General Truman Seymour, 3rd Division, 6th Corps, Army of the Potomac. Under General Seymour he was promoted to brevet captain, a field promotion, for service outside of Petersburg, on April 4, 1865.

In his letters, R.N. wrote of aggressively seeking more duties, promotions, and direct engagement in battle action, and he did work his way up through the ranks, from raw recruit to brevet captain. He and his units saw action outside of Yorktown, Virginia; at Charles City Courthouse in December 1863; at New Kent Court House in March 1864; at City Point, Virginia, in May 1864; at the Siege of Petersburg in May 1864; at Baylor's Farm, Virginia in June 1864; again at Petersburg from August 1864 to January 1865; and during the Siege of Richmond in April 1865.

R. N. was never wounded or captured, but he was seriously ill a number of times. Army medical records show he was officially unable to perform his duties due to illness at five different times, ailing with rheumatic fever and two bouts of typhoid fever, as well as other unnamed sicknesses. On December 10, 1864, he was granted a long-sought leave of absence, for thirty days, most likely for the upcoming Christmas holiday. A letter from his sister Jeannie, dated Friday, 27 January [1865], addressed to "My Darling Rob," says:

When you have seated yourself quietly in the [train] cars, which is taking you faster and faster away from those who love you most, you can bring out my little letter and read it. Dear, dear Rob, you do not know what sorrow it is to part from [you], but maybe you think when you see us crying that we want you to stay. No, that is not it, for it is with pride I can say that I have one who is the dearest of all things in all the world, fighting for the Right and his Country... Oh, Rob, do take care of your health, you know that you are not entirely well yet, do not expose yourself more than is necessary... Write often and tell us how you are doing and how you like your new Regiment... Good bye dearest. May God bless and preserve you, Ever your loving sister, Jeannie.

R.N Verplanck's war letters home to his mother and sister reflect a vivacious personality, an honest reporter, and a sympathetic voice for the plight of blacks in the Army. In his first letter, he states: "The regiment is composed of as fine a set of men as I ever saw in my life and if we officers do our duty they can be made great soldiers... I talked with some of my company and found them to be quite well informed men and as happy as could be and I know I shall like them first rate."<sup>11</sup> On November 26, 1863,

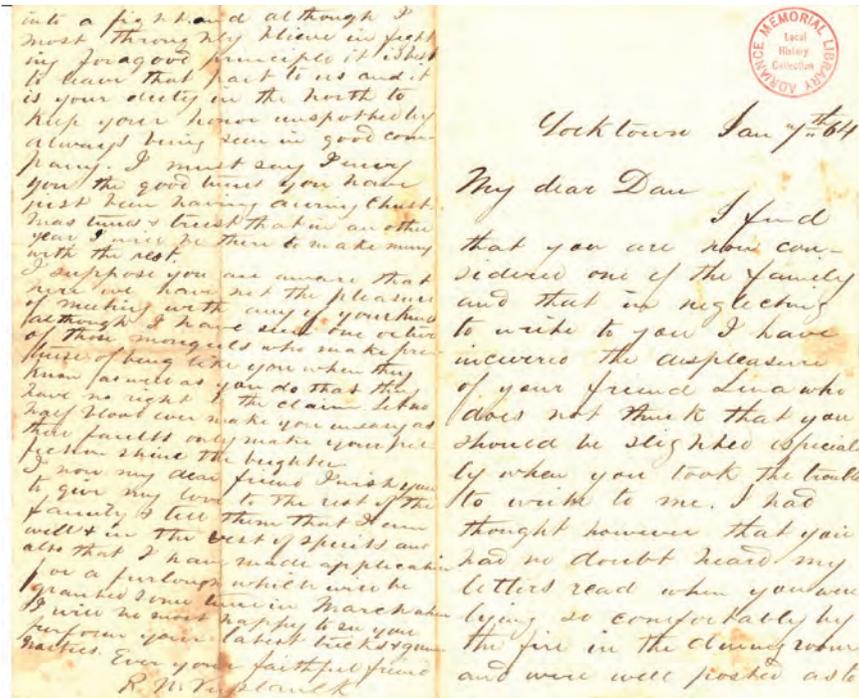


Figure 5. R. N. Verplanck's letter to his dog, Dan.

Verplanck reports to his mother that his men have refused the half-pay given to black troops.

Our pay master is to come today but the men will not take any money as the monthly pay is only seven dollars instead of the thirteen as they expected. It does certainly seem hard that they should not get full pay when they were promised it by the men that enlisted them at the North and for a drafted man it is certainly harder yet. The men are all hard enough up for money but they consider it a matter of pride and are willing to let the money go. One of our men said that if he was not to be put on an equality [sic] with white troops he was willing to serve the government for nothing... I must say I admire their spirit.

It is not recorded of Robert if he and the other white officers of the 6th USCT refused their own pay, in sympathy with the black troops, as was done in the famous Massachusetts 54th, but on April 22, 1864, referring to the pay issue being satisfied, he wrote, "The government has at last determined to give us our rights and I am as happy as a clam at high water."

R. N. Verplanck's letters are a treasure trove of insight, sly humor, and the intimate workings of an Army headquarters: the petty politics, the boring

routines, the expectation of an upcoming campaign, and the rigors of camp life. As a witness to unfolding history, he writes of more than twenty Union generals and mentions Rebel generals Lee, Pickett, and Beauregard. In a letter dated January 18, 1864, he mentions a speech made by Frederick Douglass, and on August 1, 1864, he writes of the panic that concluded the Massacre of the Crater, where surrendering black soldiers were surrounded, attacked, then murdered and physically mutilated by Rebel troops outside Petersburg. He writes of getting sick a number of times and having to go to a field hospital, of sending for and receiving French books for reading pleasure, and receiving blackberry syrup from home. Of course, he often asked about life back home. R.N. also writes home of his disappointments at not getting expected promotions, or being given leave home, and also of having a series of political arguments with a superior officer and his cronies, leading to an unexpected transfer to another unit. R. N. was apparently outspoken and independent as a soldier, as his earlier record at Harvard indicated.

The letters also clearly display an active wit and sense of fun. At times, he writes to his sister, making light fun of friends back home or teasing them about not taking their school lessons seriously, and so forth. He also writes an entire letter from the front to his dear dog, Dan, which is filled with irony and broad humor.<sup>12</sup> In it, he apologizes to the dog for not having written sooner, considering that the dog took the time to write him first.

Most poignant are his letters describing black troops liberating slaves in near-Biblical scenes of jubilation and humility. The Civil War ended in April 1865 but was tragically marred by the assassination of the President. Verplanck's



**Figure 6.** *In addition to copies of his letters and official War Department and USCT records, Mount Gulian's collection contains a Civil War photo of R.N. Verplanck in uniform (on the right), and his promotion document to Brevet Captain from the War Department, signed by Secretary of War Stanton.*

letters from April 1865 reflect the profound desolation and anger felt by the Army upon hearing the news of Lincoln's assassination by John Wilkes Booth. His calls in those letters for revenge against the South were not alone.

According to Army documents, on June 12, 1865, R. N. Verplanck was formally released from his duties as aide de camp for Brigadier Gen. Seymour, most likely heading home to Fishkill Landing. On June 21, 1865, he formally applied for his discharge from the Army from Fishkill Landing, and it was granted on July 7, 1865.

### *Postwar Life: The Long Aftermath*

When Lincoln died, Andrew Carnegie, 30, was already wealthy. J. P. Morgan, 28, was an experienced international banker. John D. Rockefeller, 26, ran one of the country's most profitable oil refineries. None of them had fought in the Civil War. None of them would have thought of doing so. But the future was theirs.

When Lincoln died, Robert Newlin Verplanck was not yet 23. Raised to become a landed gentleman, with a classical education, he had volunteered to fight for the Union and freedom for the enslaved. But the future was not his—and yet he would live for another forty-three years in a world he could never quite master.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the opportunities, through the extant records of his later life, we find hints of sadness as the result of business failures, family squabbles over the division of vast fortunes, and the gradual loss of his health.<sup>14</sup> We get the sense of a man who worked hard at a succession of careers but was mostly supported by his father. We also know that Robert raised a family and kept it intact during turbulent times, but not without marital tensions with his wife, the formidable Kate Brinckerhoff. Yet, there is also a clear sense that Robert maintained his sense of humor and perspective throughout his life, although towards the end there are indications that he turned rather cynical, perhaps not unnatural for one who has seen vast fortunes and opportunities slip through his fingers.

R. N. Verplanck apparently left New Place in Dutchess County and moved to New York City sometime in the latter part of 1865. There is good evidence that in the city, he lived in a series of well appointed rented rooms, from 1865 until 1871.<sup>15</sup> A letter written by him, to his sister Jenny, dated February 11, 1866, from New York, indicates he was involved in visiting a

social circuit of old family friends. We also know he travelled to Europe at least once during that time.

From the 1903 edition of the *Report of the Secretary of the Class of 1863 of Harvard College* (an intermittent publication that noted the whereabouts of alumni) and from the family's oral tradition, we know that at some point during the postwar years, R.N. owned a half-share in a New Jersey oil refinery, a budding business sector at the time. According to the class secretary's report:

He [Verplanck] narrates an instance of fortune's pranks, to show how narrowly he escaped the 'potentialities of wealth beyond the dreams of avarice.' When he sold his oil refinery in 1872 [to Standard Oil], his partner took cash, and he took one hundred shares in Standard Oil stock, which his father, badly advised, induced him to sell soon after. That stock in 1882 became twenty-four hundred shares, and is worth to-day [in 1903] \$1,680,000 and has paid \$700,000 in dividends.<sup>16</sup>

In 1875, the *Report of the Secretary of the Class of 1863* authoritatively states of R. N. Verplanck that "since April 1, 1871, he lived on a farm at Fishkill Plains, Dutchess County, N.Y. having sold out his oil refinery, and had the management of all his father's farms, and was especially engaged in the production of milk."<sup>17</sup> We know from later wills and real estate deed transactions that the farms mentioned here were the Wilde Farm, East Fishkill; Mott Farm, East Fishkill; Vermilye Farm, East Fishkill; Prospect Farm, Fishkill Plains; New Place Farm, Fishkill Plains; and Mount Gulian's farm, Fishkill Landing.

In addition to managing the farming operations for his father, R. N. Verplanck (according to the class secretary) "went into business in New York City on May 1, 1875 at No. 80 Pearl Street, [Manhattan]."<sup>18</sup> We know that Robert considered New Place, Fishkill Plains, as his permanent residence at this time, so the New York City address was most likely an office from which to assist his aging father's businesses. The class secretary's report of June 1888 refers to Verplanck's "being engaged in manufacturing in bonded warehouses there (New York City), from May, 1875."<sup>19</sup> No records indicate the nature of Verplanck's manufacturing processes or the types of industries he served in New York, although we know the family had a successful brickworks at Mount Gulian in Beacon.

There are no specific income records for R.N. Verplanck between 1875 and 1885, but it seems that he was deriving income from his father. The estate records give a clear account of income payments to Robert from

1887 to 1902, apparently for his management of the farms. The amounts varied annually, averaging around \$1100 per year, with a high of \$1744 in 1896 and a low of \$406 in 1889. These records also show that Robert received an unspecified parcel of land, deeded to him in May 1887 by his father's Trust.

It is recorded that Robert borrowed money from his father, and later from his Trust, and also from a "Mrs. Newlin" (perhaps his mother's sister) to run the farms and engage in other business opportunities. By 1887, he had debts of \$35,000 in notes, a staggering amount at the time. This indebtedness became rather chronic, as Robert's debts on these loans and other mortgages were noted as mostly undiminished into the early 1900s. In fact, a judicial settlement of June 7, 1900, shows that remaining debts on eight bonds worth \$8000 were secured by mortgages held by him.

### *Family Life*

On February 24, 1876, R. N. Verplanck married Katherine "Kate" Brinckerhoff, who had been born on February 24, 1857. Kate was the daughter of Matthew Van Benschoten Brinckerhoff of Fishkill Landing, and Mary



**Figure 7.** *R. N. Verplanck in old age.*

Willis Franklin of New York. The Brinckerhoffs were a large, old-line Dutch colonial family with many farm holdings throughout Dutchess and Ulster Counties.

It is clear from the record that Kate was a very active participant in the family's economic life. Over the years it was Kate, and not Robert, who had title to many of the farm properties he managed, and it was Kate who was directly involved in most of their numerous real estate transactions. Exactly why Kate had title to their properties and not Robert is left to speculation.

Robert and Kate had five children, all of whom were born in Fishkill, and all of whom lived into adulthood. They were Gulian Crommelin Verplanck (b. December 9, 1876); Judith Crommelin Verplanck (b. April 14, 1878); Mary Brinckerhoff Verplanck (b. September 28, 1881); William Samuel

Verplanck (b. May 20, 1884); and Robert Sinclair Verplanck (b. August 5, 1885).

The family stayed intact at least into the early 1900s, when Robert and Kate moved with their children to Orange, Essex County, New Jersey, for his retirement. The Harvard class secretary's report of June 1903 reported that "[Robert] is now living at Orange, New Jersey, having his family, who are employed in New York and its vicinity, with him." Oldest son Gulian Crommelin Verplanck was at that time, along with son William, employed by a Mr. Cromwell, a Harvard classmate of Robert's. Son Robert Sinclair Verplanck was then reportedly working in a "marine engine-shop."<sup>21</sup> Judith Crommelin Verplanck went on to a career in teaching, working in the Yonkers Public Schools in the 1920s. Daughter Mary Brinckerhoff Verplanck married a James Kent.

Based on the oral tradition in the family, it was said that Robert and Kate had a somewhat stormy marriage, he being rather "laid back" and she being demanding and fussy, especially about business matters. These notions seem to be corroborated in the actual record.

### *Declining Years*

In April, 1903, R.N. Verplanck and Kate began their quest to get a pension for his service in the Civil War, which at that time was not a guaranteed benefit. After medical examinations and numerous military and medical record reviews, a Pension of \$6.00 per month was granted in late 1904, later increased to \$12.00 per month in early 1907. An Accrued Pension Order was issued to Kate in July, 1908, but no additional amount was then specified.

On January 10, 1908, Robert Newlin Verplanck died of a sudden heart attack, at home in Orange, N.J., age 65. The photograph accompanying the obituary shows a somewhat sad but rugged man, balding, with a drooping mustache, wearing a high collar and a proper necktie. The notice reported him to be in rather good health before his death and stated he "took a keen interest in public affairs." Funeral services were held the following week in Trinity Episcopal Church, Fishkill, where he is buried.

From Robert's death in 1908 until Kate's passing, we get a picture of a feisty woman battling against all odds. Kate was involved in a number of real estate transactions after Robert's death and repeatedly petitioned the Pension Office, and later the War Department, and later the Veterans Administration,

for an increase in her widow's pension. On June 9, 1930, she began to receive \$40 per month, the maximum amount for Civil War soldiers at the time. After 1930, her repeated requests for additional pension money were all denied. In 1934 she wrote the Veterans Administration: "...but with the G.A.R. [Grand Army of the Republic] dying off, cannot the widows have more?" In April 1935, Kate Verplanck moved to Norwich, Chenango County, New York. She died there on March 28, 1944.

- <sup>1</sup> Mount Gulian was named for the first Gulian Verplanck, who was born on January 1, 1637, in New Amsterdam (later New York City). Gulian is the Old Dutch version of William. Naming the property "Mount" was a stylistic affectation of wealthy landowners in the 1760s. For example, Washington's Mount Vernon has no nearby mountain.
- <sup>2</sup> *The History of Abraham Isaacs Ver Planck, and His Male Decendants in America*, by William Edward Verplanck (Fishkill Landing [Beacon] NY: John W. Spaight Publisher, Fishkill Standard Office, 1892). The book, was republished by the Mount Gulian Society in 1998 with addendum by Charlotte Verplanck Willman,
- <sup>3</sup> Mount Gulian Historic Site archives, Beacon, NY. Details of the purchase can be found in *The Rombout Patent*, by Henry Cassidy (Poughkeepsie, NY: Dutchess County Historical Society, 1985).
- <sup>4</sup> *The Essential New Yorker: Gulian Crommelin Verplanck*, by Robert W. July (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1951).
- <sup>5</sup> The Journals of James F. Brown, 10 Volumes, 1829-1866, housed in the Collection of the New York Historical Society, New York, New York.
- <sup>6</sup> Catalogue of the Trustees, Teachers, and Pupils of the Poughkeepsie Collegiate School for 1843 and 1844; Catalogue of the Collegiate Military School at College Hill for 1863 and 1864, housed in the collection of the Adriance Memorial Library, Poughkeepsie, NY.
- <sup>7</sup> With the onset of the Civil War, the School changed its name to The Collegiate and Military School at College Hill, in August 1863. The School hired retired military personnel and introduced military drill, discipline, and the arts of war into the curricula, sometimes referring to its pupils as "cadets" in school literature. PCS formally closed at the McKeen Hill location in 1867 and seems to have undergone a number of re-incarnations. For example, the Greek-style building was turned into a series of unsuccessful hotels through the 1890s, until it was purchased by the City of Poughkeepsie and left vacant. The building was destroyed by fire on Feb. 11, 1917.
- <sup>8</sup> Harvard University Archives, Harvard University Library, Cambridge, MA.
- <sup>9</sup> Officially known by its Latin name Artium Baccalaureus, hence "an A.B."
- <sup>10</sup> The letter is dated September 9. The year is possibly 1862.
- <sup>11</sup> September 17, 1863.
- <sup>12</sup> January 7, 1864, Yorktown, Virginia

- <sup>13</sup> R.N. Verplanck's life after the war is known from intermittent reports of the secretary of his class at Harvard, from numerous family wills and Surrogate Court documents, from various Civil War pension requests made by Robert and his wife, from land deed transactions, and from obituary notices.
- <sup>14</sup> Papers of the Estate and Trust of William Samuel Verplanck; Papers of the Estates and Real Property of Robert Newlin Verplanck and Katherine Brinckerhoff Verplanck, Archives of the Offices of Real Property and Offices of the Surrogate Court of Dutchess County, Poughkeepsie, NY
- <sup>15</sup> According to a document from the Bureau of Pensions, filed on April 15, 1903, Robert N. Verplanck declared that he lived in New York City
- <sup>16</sup> Arthur Lincoln, *Report of the secretary of the Class of 1863 of Harvard College: June 1893 to June 1903* (Cambridge: John Wilson and Son, 1903), p. 116.
- <sup>17</sup> Arthur Lincoln, *Report of the secretary of the Class of 1863 of Harvard College: June 1863 to June 1888* (Cambridge: John Wilson and Son, 1888), p. 185,
- <sup>18</sup> Arthur Lincoln, *Report of the Secretary of the Class of 1863 of Harvard College: June 1869 to June 1875* (Boston: Alfred Mudge & Son, 1875), p. 58.
- <sup>19</sup> Lincoln, *Report of the secretary of the Class of 1863* (1888), p. 185.
- <sup>20</sup> Lincoln, *Report of the secretary of the Class of 1863* (1903), p. 116.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.



# DOCUMENTATION





# Jim and Joan Smith of Quaker Lane Farms, Hyde Park, New York

*Interviewed by Candace J. Lewis*



**Figure 1.** *Quaker Lane Farms, Ruskey Lane, Hyde Park, New York. Main house, barn, and out buildings after a winter storm in 2000 dropped 20 inches of snow. Photo by Joan Smith.*

**I**n 1998, Jim and Joan Smith, and their two sons, returned to Dutchess County after spending 14 years in South Africa, where Jim had been a corporate executive and the head of a company. On July 5, 2012, Candace J. Lewis, president of the Dutchess County Historical Society, interviewed them at their farm in Hyde Park, for the present yearbook's section on the farming life of Dutchess County, past and present.

**C. Lewis:** *Why did you and Joan make the decision to leave South Africa and return to Dutchess County?*

**Jim Smith:** Well, basically, we had had a great run in South Africa. We were there prior to the election of Nelson Mandela, through the election process, and then for four years afterward. And we had an opportunity to sell the company to a very, very large German consortium. And both our sons were in transitional periods. Our oldest son was about to start university and, while the decision was made to that he would complete his secondary education in South Africa, the intention was always to have him come back for university here in the States. Then our younger son was about to go into junior high school. So it made sense, that if we were going to move, it was the right time.

**C. Lewis:** *What kind of company did you have there?*

**Jim Smith:** We were involved in the production of industrial chemicals that we used in water and waste water treatment, the mining of gold and diamonds, and the cosmetic industry.



**Figures 2 and 3.** *Jim and Joan Smith at home. Photos by Candace Lewis, 2012.*

**C. Lewis:** *Why did you come to this farm in Hyde Park?*

**Jim Smith:** Well, both Joan and I were born in Poughkeepsie. We were in school together, kindergarten through high school. My family has been in Dutchess County for about a hundred years; Joan's family for over 200 years.

**Joan Smith:** (who joined us for a short while before leaving for an appointment): My mother's side of the family came from Sudbury, Massachusetts; then went to New Groton, Connecticut; and, from there, on to Pawling, New York. They arrived in Pawling about the 1760s. They were farmers.

At the time of the Revolutionary War, Lieutenant Caleb Haynes and other family members were buried in Pawling cemetery. Around 1900, part of the family moved to Poughkeepsie. On my father's side—we are not sure of the dates—the family moved from Tivoli to Red Hook to Rhinebeck to Poughkeepsie. That final move would have been in the 1920s.

**Jim Smith:** This farm in Hyde Park was owned by my grandfather, E.I. Hatfield. He actually had three farms here in Hyde Park that he farmed commercially. He ran them with tenant farmers. He was buying these farms in 1910, 1920, then finding people to work on them. While his business was real estate and insurance, he was also the State Senator for many years out of Dutchess County. So, for Joan and me, the intention was to retire back on the family farm.

**C. Lewis:** *Do you want to tell us about your grandfather?*

**Jim Smith:** Senator E.I. Hatfield ran an insurance business at 46 Cannon Street in Poughkeepsie. The Hatfield family was from Westchester County, where the family farm dated to 1680. In fact, they fought the Battle of White Plains on the family farm. And they captured John André, General Benedict Arnold's buddy, on the adjacent farm. The family goes back, on the Hatfield side, to a soldier in the East India Company and on my grandmother's side, back to the Mayflower.



**Figure 4.** Main house, Quaker Lane Farms (formerly known as Minge Farm), Ruskey Lane, Hyde Park, NY, 1910, shortly after it was purchased by E. I. Hatfield. Photographed by E.I. Hatfield. Photo collection of Jim and Joan Smith.

In the early 1900s, the farm was taken by the Kenseco Cemetery and Kenseco Reservoir. So my grandfather moved up to Dutchess County. He went to Eastman Business School, which was also quite an interesting thing. He started selling farm tractors. He had been a farmer most of his life; he started selling Ford tractors. That's how he got such an intimate knowledge of the farming community in Dutchess County. As a result of his interests, we have one of the most extensive photographic collections of early Dutchess County farms.

**C. Lewis:** *How did you find the transition from one line of work to another?*

**Jim Smith:** Well, the line of work that I was in—the chemical business—was the same as in the farming business. You have to look at the market. You have to run it profitably. I was not doing the heavy manual labor. I hired the hay guy to throw the hay bales.



**Figure 5.** Frank Silvernail, long-time farm hand, Hatfield Farm, Quaker Lane Farms, walking cows on Ruskey Lane and North Quaker Lane, Hyde Park, NY., 1939. Photo collection of Jim and Joan Smith.

My wife would not let me have any large animals. I had some fantastic connections from South Africa. We knew the King of the Zulus. We would have been the first to have the Nguni cow brought to this country. But my wife wouldn't let me. So we ended up with hay.

And then we were in the mushroom business until the economy changed. That happened in the crash of 2008. We had a very nice little business selling to the fancy restaurants in Dutchess County, supplying mushrooms fresh. These were high-end restaurants run by graduates from the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park. And it was a great business. But, after the crash, it didn't take much, and as soon as you knew it, this restaurant was out of business and that one was out of business. We did not have very many more customers. It was two weeks, then three weeks without orders. And mushrooms are perishable. So, they would go out to the compost heap and, eventually, the situation was such that we just couldn't keep the mushroom business going.

So now, I am still doing the hay, of course. But we started a new business after we abandoned the mushrooms. Now we grow game birds, which are

used by the sporting dog-training community. We grow bob white quail and chukar partridge. And while we have seen some effects from the economy, that business is going fine. We have a very close relationship with a farmer down the road who raises pheasants. He raises the pheasants and we raise the quail and the chukar partridge.

This county is blessed with a number of shooting preserves: Sandanona which is the Orvis place; Mashomack out in Pine Plains; Ten-Mile River in Dover; Tamarack in Amenia; and Pawling Mountain Club in Pawling. It is a large market in this area, these shooting preserves. We've got five or six of the top ones.

**C. Lewis.** *I know that family history was involved in your choices. Could you elaborate?*

**Jim Smith:** Well, obviously my grandfather was a commercial farmer and was very well known for three areas: his cattle—Jerseys and Ayrshires; and then he had sheep; and then he also had chickens. He was very actively involved in the Dutchess County Fair, even serving as President of the Fair for a while. If his stock did well at the Dutchess County Fair, he would take them over to the Eastern States Fair. He had some championships at the Eastern States. So the Hatfields out of Westchester County were farmers and we just kind of stayed in that line.

**C. Lewis:** *It sounds like he was the most important figure for you.*

**Jim Smith:** Well, he was, because he was the one I knew. And now I am in his home.



**Figure 6.** *Quaker Lane Farms. Façade of Main house, built 1802. Photo by C. Lewis, 2012.*

This was his homestead. The other two farms he owned were just commercial farms.

**C. Lewis:** *Could you tell us a little about this farm?*

**Jim Smith:** There were three farms. There was the farm that was my grandfather's home. Across the road was the Newnan farm. On this farm were twenty cows; across the road were twenty cows. And down Quaker Lane towards South Quaker Lane there was a third farm and we had forty cows on that property. When my grandfather passed away, all three farms were still in his possession. The farm on South Quaker was sold, because what happened was there were four legacies—my mother, my uncle, my brother, and myself. My uncle wanted to sell the property so we did a swap around.

We sold the third farm to Kirchoff. We wound up owning two properties, about 200 acres. This house, the one we live in, was built in 1802. My grandfather modified it with a kitchen and an office

As for the second farm, across the road: We rent the buildings on it to an oil company, the Nash family. They used to be in farming, but they could not keep up a profitable business, so they now have been in the oil business for well over twenty years—much more successful for them.

The farm, the actual farm here, the Hatfield Farm, was established in about 1784 by the Quakers. The Nine Partners Quakers formed a subsidiary unit, a cemetery and the Crum Elbow Meeting House, which is contiguous to our farms. Two farms were part of that Quaker contingent. So you had the Briggs farm, which was the one across the road, and Mingingy was the one here. Both of them were attached to the Quaker congregation. The farmstead here is on the National Register of Historic Properties.

The adjacent barn on the other property which dates to about 1790 is one of the earliest remaining English three-bay threshing barns. The center of the barn was where they would thresh the wheat and the sides had some storage for hay and space for the livestock. That barn was special. We received a grant from the Pataki Barn Grant, which goes back to when Pataki was governor. He established a program to save barns, because all the old barns were being torn down or converted to houses.

Governor Pataki was himself from a farming area. He got together with the Senate and they put together a sizable amount of funds to preserve old barns. We were fortunate enough to get a grant through that program

to do some restoration work on that barn. That barn is interesting in the sense that it has the “marriage marks.” You could take that barn down and rebuild it anywhere. If you go in that barn and look at the beams, they all are marked with Roman numerals and the adjacent piece would be marked to match. So you could disassemble and rebuild that barn very easily. It is not held together with nails. It is all pegged.



**Figures 7 and 8.** *English three-bay threshing barn at second farm, originally built 1790 (above). Jim Smith at barn door (right), Quaker Lane Farms, Hyde Park, NY. Photos by C. Lewis, 2012.*

Note: We went out to look at the restored barn. We were able to view the exterior, but, unfortunately, it was locked up tight and we were unable to see the interior.



It shows what happened with agriculture over time. The earliest group of farmers raised wheat and threshed the wheat in the center area of the barn. That was around 1800 to 1830. Then, as farmers moved more toward raising livestock, around 1830 to 1840, they would have had bulk hay; they didn't have baling hay. They would cut it and would bring it in on a wagon. Then, later, in the mid-nineteenth century, the farmers went to baled hay. About that time, the barn was expanded to accommodate the baled hay. And so, if you look at that barn, you can see the transition from the bulk to

the baled hay as well as the original period of threshing wheat. It is a neat barn. It was written up in the *Poughkeepsie Journal*.

John Adriance got the first grant here in Dutchess County. One of the considerations was tourism. His farm is right on 9G, so his barn is visible from the road. He has a field with little woolly sheep and the barn. It is beautiful. His barn is a spectacular barn, an early Dutch barn. Adriance was Adriance Farm Equipment; that is where their money came from, a wealthy family.

I was told to apply again for the grant to renovate my barn. So I applied to put the barn and the house on the National Register. Peter Shaefer from Albany came down and looked at the barn across the street. He said “great barn, but we don’t do barns. But this house, the one you live in, could qualify for the National Register.” We did the research and applied and that is how this house got on the National Register. Joanne Lukacher from Staatsburg did the research and writing for us. Not that it does anything for us; it is just nice to honor the house and the farm. Peter Shaefer told us:

You don’t get any tax money off your bill at the end of the year. The one thing you are going to have is that you own both sides of the road now with this National Register status. So, if someone wants to build a development complex with a hundred houses and seeks widen the road, you will be able to prevent them from expanding the size of the road. That is one benefit you may ultimately gain from this exercise.

If we want to develop the road, we can, but no one else can. We have to keep the façade of the house the same. We just wanted the house to be recognized for its historic value. The Dutchess County Historical Society supported us. They wrote a nice letter. The town of Hyde Park wrote a supporting letter also.

As for the grant, I applied over again. We put the whole package together again. This time we got the grant. It was matching funds. I had a corner that had to be rebuilt. A few beams had to be replaced. Some metal fixtures had to be replaced also; they were custom produced. A specialist, Bob Hedges, came and restored the barn. It was a big construction project. It took six months—maybe a year from start to finish. There were several inspections. It was a big, big project.

**C. Lewis.** *What can you tell us about farming here at this farm?*

**Jim Smith:** Out of the 200 acres, 70 acres are devoted to growing hay. We

go five fields back here. So you can get a picture of what this farm on this side of the road is like.

Talking about taxes, we are taxed at a farm rate. We have to generate at least \$10,000 of farm income in order to maintain our status as a farm for that rate. The farm has to be at least 50 acres. It is a challenge in this area, because you don't have a lot of options. It is very difficult to earn \$10,000. Everybody runs a tomato stand, but you have to sell a lot of tomatoes to generate that much money. We are doing about \$6,000, \$7,000 with birds. And we get the benefit, of course, of the hay. The tax is town tax; both property and school tax is supported by it. What happens sometimes is a New Yorker comes up here and starts a horse operation. If he is just raising horses for pleasure, he doesn't get the tax break, but if he runs a more elaborate breeding or boarding operation, then he can qualify. The benefits are there, but you have to go to an effort to use them.

**Note:** *We returned to the Main house where we continued our conversation on the open side porch. We sat on white wicker chairs, enjoying the soft summer air. Joan returned from her appointment and rejoined us.*

**C. Lewis:** *Continuing our discussion: What can you tell us about farming here at this farm?*

**Jim Smith:** Well, the way we run the farm, as a gentleman's farm, we are up early. The thing about farming versus the office is: it is not an everyday 9 to 5 routine. It might be mending a fence, fixing a stone wall. It might be looking at the hay. It is not something that necessarily happens continuously every single day.

When we are raising birds, we have a six-month season: from June to December. We start with small chicks and then it is more work, because that is the incubation stage. They have to be checked for temperature four to five times a day. If it gets too hot or too cold, the birds have a tendency to bunch and then some of them will be crushed and will perish. We have to be sure they are fed and watered. In June, when they are day-old chicks, we start them at an indoor facility at a farm nearby on Salt Point Road where the farmer has incubation room. That goes on for about six to eight weeks. Then we move the chicks up here to our farm to the growth pens. By eight weeks, they are pretty strong. The labor is much less. At sixteen weeks, we start to sell the birds. We have people coming to pick them up. So, at that point, we are busy again.

The hay is done by a contract farmer. We watch him, but that is all.

When we were doing the mushroom business also, we had a similar pattern. We had about half a day of pretty intensive activity. Then the rest of the day did not require a lot of work. So in both of the businesses we have had—the mushroom business and the game bird business—it is about a half a day of intensive labor.

But, the left-over time, that is the time to fix the fences, clean up the ponds, fix up the barns or the house.

**Joan Smith:** There is always something to do here. Also we are involved in civic activities. We like offering our time to a couple of not-for-profits.

**Jim Smith:** Having a little free time also allows us to do some traveling—particularly in relation to history. That is our special interest. We love American history.

**C. Lewis:** What have you learned about farming in Dutchess County as a result of your experience?

**Joan Smith:** Jim and I have known each other since being in grammar school together at Krieger School in Poughkeepsie. In Poughkeepsie High, we were boyfriend and girlfriend. To give you a sense of the time frame, we graduated in 1964. When Jim and I were in high school, we used to get in the car and drive up to Hyde Park to visit Jim's grandfather or, sometimes, just drive around the back roads of the county. It always seemed to take forever to get up there from Poughkeepsie.

The farmland, the countryside: all of it, it was beautiful. In those days, it seemed like the country began right at the city limits. You would see a lot of farm houses. But, they were getting very run down. Many of them were abandoned. I can remember on Salt Point, there were big farm houses and they were empty. The same was true in Rhinebeck and some other locations. Then the weekenders came up from New York City. This was some time after we left—probably in the 1970s. All of a sudden, when we came back to visit our families in Poughkeepsie and we would drive around the county again, we would see big changes in the farm houses. The weekenders were fixing the places up. I love that they have preserved these wonderful old houses. I believe we owe a debt to people who have come from outside the county, have recognized the beauty of our country homes, and have put time, effort, and money into preserving them. Without this movement, large numbers of these buildings would have been lost forever.

**Jim Smith:** Looking back, there wasn't a lot of money in farming. So the

kids left the farm. Some went to work for IBM. It was growing enormously in the years after World War II. When IBM was in its heyday in the 1950s and 60s, plenty of the farmers went to work there. The farmers were good, because they were adept at solving practical problems—geniuses mechanically—and they were incredibly hard working.

There has been quite a transition in terms of the landscape. For instance, on our farm, now you see a lot of trees. Well, in the 1960s, there wasn't a tree on the farm. And that was true of the all the farms, because the land was used for agricultural fields. We had no deer, no turkeys. There wasn't any naturally occurring vegetation. That has been a big change in terms of the look of farming over these last several decades.

One of the biggest changes that happened was in the 1960s, I think. It was when the government came to the area. At that time, there was a big surplus in powdered dairy milk. So the government offered to buy the local dairy herds. They wanted to get rid of cows. A lot of the farmers in Dutchess County sold their herds to the government. For example, the Nash brothers who owned the farm across the way, that is what happened to them. They decided to sell their dairy herd and start in the oil business. That was happening repeatedly in the county. It was very difficult to keep a dairy herd. It was almost impossible to make a profit. It was incredibly hard work. So, when people had the opportunity to sell their herds, they all sold them into the Strategic System and got out of farming.

That never came back. Once a farmer got out, the barriers to reentry were too high—too expensive to buy new cows, new equipment, and new barns up to code. It is \$100,000 for a tractor, \$50,000 for a baler just to bale hay. And, when you start talking about modifications to a barn to make it right for milking cows, there the costs are huge. Also all our farms here are pretty small and, because of the land, always will be. We cannot have giant farms. The milk industry moved out to the Mid-West and to California where farmers can have as many as a thousand cows in one operation. Truck transport made that possible.

The other big transition in farming is that, in the current environment, everybody in the farming industry is looking for niche businesses. Locally, we have had more interest in vegetable production, because of the price of gas. There is an opportunity for our farmers here to capitalize on producing perishable foodstuffs for the large municipal markets like New York City. Here in Dutchess County, if you have a farm, you are likely to be into several enterprises. You may be growing some Christmas trees. You may

have flowers and vegetables. You may have a small herd of grass-fed cattle to produce high-end beef. Around Hallowe'en, you may have entertainment for families in the form of a hay maze, fresh cider, and other food. You may become more than just a farmer.

Or, another route may be searching for unique niches such as growing heirloom vegetables for sale to restaurants in New York City or aficionados here in Dutchess County. There are also farmers, like Sprout Creek Farm, who are making artisanal cheeses. There's a little restaurant out in the eastern part of the county. Their niche is that they grow and produce a range of specialty wheats and grains, a little grass-fed beef, maple syrup in the winter. They have a restaurant to offer their wares to the public. You may have specialized sheep—a small herd of Merinos, for example—to produce wool for a niche yarn market. There are three farmers whom we know who are raising specialized sheep. This is completely different from the way my grandfather raised sheep, because he took the wool from his sheep and sold into a general pool in Albany. That's where the farming market is in Dutchess County.

# Memoir of Charles F. Beck Sr., Immigrant Farmer

*Transcribed by Teresa Beck Knapp and Tom Beck*

**Editor's Note:** *The following document is the first-person narrative of Charles F. Beck Sr., written in 1959. A German immigrant who arrived in Poughkeepsie in October 1897, at the age of 12, Beck became an important farmer and entrepreneur in his new community. He died in 1962. I am especially grateful to two of his grandchildren, Tom Beck and Terry Beck Knapp, who alerted me to the existence of this memoir and helped prepare it for publication.*

**Note from Terry Beck Knapp:** *“My uncle Bill Black, Helen Beck’s husband, gave me my grandfather’s original hand-written account in 1987. I have copied his account to make it more readable, but I left his original spellings and punctuation because I feel it is part of his story. I am happy to share this bit of Poughkeepsie history. My first twelve years of life in Poughkeepsie are an important and cherished part of my own history.” Charles Beck’s handwritten manuscript and Terry Knapp’s handwritten transcription of it have been offered to the library of the Dutchess County Historical Society.*

Sarasota Fla., 1959.

I am hereby trying to write my diary and history of my life to the best of my memory, having had many experiences which may prove useful to those who care about knowing same.

I was born in year 1885. Oct. 7th, in Hedelfingen, near Stuttgart, Württemberg Germany, the first son, having 3 older sisters; the oldest was Carrie Deissinger; 2nd Lizzy [Louise] Pfisterer and Rosy [Rose] Pfisterer dec[eased]. Starting my schooling in April 1892 I recall it snowed all day. Also our family on the same day moved into a new location of our town with a garden in front of the house. The same house they lived in until they sold it in Dec 1906 when the family choosed [sic] to come to the U.S.A.

My school from 1892–1897 were [sic] more or less eventful, as there was quite a rivalry about who sat in no. 1 bench.

Lessons came real easy, especially arithmetic and memorizing, wich [sic] in Germany was a must. Also, oral arithmetic and Bible history was taught along with reading and writing. We were taught 2 alphabets, the german Script and the English or rather the Latin; which came as a great help when I started to go to School here at the age of 12. In my 4th year of school our class was divided as we had 7 classes in 4 rooms with 4 teachers. The teachers were all men teachers. Some married, some single. One of my teachers conceived the idea of selecting a number of his pupils and make up a play named "the sleeping beauty and the Prince". I felt happy to be chosen one of them. We all were 10 and 11 years old. We gave a number of performances in one town Hotel for the benefit of needy people. I still have a picture of our group up in the attic trunk.

The same teacher wanted me to become a teacher. Today I feel grateful that I became a farmer instead. At the age of 10, I earned my first cash by tramping "crushing" grapes which was the main cash crop grown in our community. The school children would get 2 weeks vacation during grape harvesting, also 3 weeks vacation during grain harvesting and 2 weeks for "hazing" [haying]. The farmers all depended on their own familys [sic] for work. We raised some vegetables which mother sold in Stuttgart on a public market 3 days a week during summer. On different occasions I helped push a handwagon to market for her.

Besides school, after 9 years of age, I would help work with father in the vineyards which was his cash crop, also on land where we raised grain for flour as well as vegetables, potatoes. I also helped in hazing [haying] and learned to milk at an early age.

It was in the Summer of 1897 that Uncle Christ. [Christian] Bahret, a brother in law, came to visit us and asked if I would like to come to America? I got the nod from father and mother and my mind was made up.

Sister Louise came at same time. I knew of Aunt Luise, then Mrs. Gottlieb Bahret, Mother's sister, with whom I was to make my home here in Poughkeepsie. I was happy to come over. My last day of School was Sept. 2nd, A national holiday in Germany at that time. I happened to be the only Scholar in School able to recite poetry in memory of the victory of the German Army over the defeat [of the French army] at Sedan in 1870 and was commended by my teacher. My age was 11 years, 11 months; being under 12, I was allowed my trip at 1/2 price. The price of my trip including railroad was \$27.00. We left home Sept. 8 early in the morning. Our traveling companions were Mr. Christ. Bahret, Mr. Gotthilf Bahret, a

brother, sister Luise Pfisterer, a cousin, Marie Hohl, and a young man from Garmstadt [Darmstadt?] who landed with Fred Bahret living next door to my new home.



**Figure 1.** Eventually, the extended family of Charles F. Beck, Senior, was able to reassemble in Poughkeepsie, with all their new additions. Top row: Lizzie Beck Pfisterer. Albert Pfisterer. Martin Deissinger (baby). Carrie Beck Deissinger. George Deissinger. Second row: Ernest Beck. Herman Beck. Charles F. Beck (Sr.). Gustav Pfisterer (brother of Albert Pfisterer) Third row: Paul Beck. Elizabeth Link Beck (wife of Paul Beck). Emilie Beck. Rose Beck Pfisterer. (married to Gustav Pfisterer). Minnie Beck. Fourth Row: Pauline Beck. William (Bill) Beck. Christina Beck. Fifth Row: Gertrude Deissinger (daughter of George and Carrie Deissinger). Mary Deissinger. Caroline Hohl Beck (wife of Jacob Beck). Henry Pfisterer (son of Albert and Lizzie Pfisterer). Adolph Pfisterer (same). Jacob Beck (father of Charles F. Beck Sr.). Florence Pfisterer (daughter of Albert and Lizzie Pfisterer). Sixth Row: Helen Beck (first daughter of Charles Beck Sr.). Louise Beck (daughter of Paul Beck).

Our trip took us from Stuttgart to Cologne, where we saw the beautiful cathedral; from there to Amsterdam, Holland; to London where we enjoyed the City of London for 1 day; from London to Southhampton [sic] where we boarded the American steamer St. Louis (which was Admiral Dewey's fastest cruiser against the Spaniards May 1898). We left Southhampton [sic] Sat [October 2], 1:00 [in the after]noon and sailed past the Statue of Liberty friday evening [October 9] at Sunset. It was a remarkable, smooth, and fast trip for that time.

Coming steerage, we were held on the steamer until Sat. A.M. We all had dinner in New York and arrived in Poughkeepsie by train about 5 P.M. We had supper at Christ. Bahret's home and later went to the home of my new foster parents Mr. and Mrs. G. H. Bahret on the Creek road. Mrs. Bahret was mother's sister or an aunt. I must say I enjoyed this country from the beginning, better food.

I soon learned to adopt [sic] myself into a new life. The work consisted of doing chores, taking care of a horse and a cow. I used to take a soap box to stand on to clean the horse's head and put the bridle in his mouth. He was tall and I was rather short for my age. After being here 2 weeks I started at school. It was the little old school on the northeast corner of Creek Road and East Dorsey Lane. There were over 30 pupils from 6–16 years of age. One young man came to school with a horse and buggy and crutches. He nursed a broken leg (John Armstrong). When the teacher asked me my age, I did not understand her. A boy named Charles Stengel (sp?) came to my rescue and translated for me. There are still a number of my classmates living around as well as a teacher living in Rhinebeck. She is in her 80's. Have had the pleasure of visiting her. For my homework a Geman-English dictionary came handy.

The English print we were taught in Germany (Latin) along with German. After two months I could understand quite some and the School became easy as I had 6 grades of Schooling in Germany. Sundays I would attend Sunday School regular in the same building upstairs. It was a mile [and a] 1/4. Sometimes I walked on stonewalls on account of snow.

When Summer started, I did farmwork at home, mostly hoeing and picking strawberries, redcaps, blackcaps, also currants. After July 1st the two greenhouses were planted and I spent quite a bit of time working on violet plants watering and picking bad leaves which was practiced most of the time. The year 1898 was full of excitement. In [On] Feb. 4 the American battleship (Maine) was blown up. [In fact, the sinking occurred on Febru-

ary 15.] The Spanish were blamed for it. May 1 Admiral Dewey had his big victory by sinking the Spanish fleet in Manilla [sic] harbor and later the American troops fought in “The Philipines”? [sic].

One Sunday afternoon I had the choice of riding over to Violet Ave. with Uncle and Aunt to visit my cousins Fred & Rose Bahert [sic] as well as a 15 year old young man who came with me on the steamer from Germany—or go to Sunday School walking 1 1/4 miles. I choose [sic] the latter. At 6 o’clock I was home milking the cow when Uncle came home and told me that Fred Bahret and Emil Biederman had both drowned in the State Hospital lake near their home. Fred Bahret jumped in first and slipped and called for help. The older one tried to save him. The Bahret boy grasped the older one’s feet and both were pulled out locked into each other. It was an awful experience which I have always remembered. (But for my going to Sunday school I no doubt would have been amongst them. As I have never learned to swim. I felt it was the hand of the Almighty.)

After this tragedy things seemed to go along smoothly. Started to go to school again in Sept. and went all of 98 and Spring of 99. By that time I had mastered the “English” real well. In the winter of 1899-1900 I was to go to school for about 3 months but after going 2 months, one afternoon while skating on a pond near our school a young “tuffy” from Poughkeepsie butted in our game uncalled for. I gave him no argument. Without a warning he struck me in the face. I came home with a good (“shiner”). Uncle gave me a good look and told me to bring my books home next day and go to work, which I kept up for the better part of my life. I was in my 15th year and work was not a “drudge” regardless what it was. I got to be expert at violets picking as well as strawberry picking. The wages at 15-16 were ten (10) dollars a month and days were from sun to sun. When it came to hard work I could keep up my end with the best. In the summer of 1901 Uncle and Aunt took a trip to Germany. He got the loan of “George De-issinger” from Uncle Christ. Bahret to help me in the work. Sister Lizzie (Mrs. Pfisterer) kept house for us. The following year in Sept. Aunt Louise underwent an operation in a New York Hospital which turned out fatal. She died Sept. 1902. A dear good soul. The same time I had send [sic] the money for brother Paul’s passage to the U.S.A. I went to New York for the first time to meet him. He came to work for my oldest sister Carrie who was then Mrs. George Deissinger. They lived on the next place to us by what was later known as the “Thorn Elm swimming hole.) The same Fall my boss bought the Corner of Violet Ave. and Cottage Road. I helped the mason to make a 2 family house out of it. The following year Violet Ave.



**Figure 2.** *Charles F. Beck Sr. as a young man in his new country and city.*

was built. It was the first hard surfaced road in the county. 1903.

It was during the same summer of 1903 that the Bahret and Knauss familys [sic] were stricken with an epidemic of Tyhpooid [sic] fever. Several cases proved fatal. Mr. Christian Knauss father of George Knauss died. Also a 12 year old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Gottlieb Knauss. My boss G.H. Bahret was one of the patients. He came down with it very sudden and was taken to Vassar Hospital. It was up to me to carry on the work of 2 greenhouses chores and general farm work. I used to get up at daybreak and work till dark

like a good trooper. Mr. Bahret was at Vassar Hospital about 2 months. Violets came through in fine shape. My wages were 15.00 per month. I got 5.00 per month extra during his sickness. Sister Lizzie became married to Albert Pfisterer that same fall. At her wedding I imbibed in beer and cigars wich I was not used to, and became good and drunk wich was the first and last. I guess it was a good cure.

G.H. Bahret was a widower at the time. The following Jan[uary], he married his second wife, formerly Sarah Craven (sp.?). He died in 1936. Mrs. Bahret is still living. The winter of 1904, Uncle Christ. Bahret chose to take a trip to Palastine [sic]. He asked G.H. Bahret to let me work on his place as foreman while he was away. So I advanced myself to 25.00 per month. Uncle Christ. [Bahret] had 12 greenhouses. Some very large ones. There were 5 men employed. 4 of them lived in 2 tenant houses. 1 man worked by the day. It was a responsible job. I had to see that the violets were picked and shipped to the different customers (florists) in different Cities, New York, Albany, Buffalo, Chicago, and Cincinatti [sic]. The watering of the greenhouses and fumigating after each picking. Also supervising the heating of the greenhouses. For Easter week that spring we shipped 160,000 violets. They sold at \$1.00 per 100.

Three nights we worked till 10 o'chlock [sic]. It was my responsibility to see each order went out on time and place. But everything turned out fine. The adresssing [sic] of tags I wrote on my own time evenings. Uncle Christ. praised me for my work when he returned from his trip.

I visited my old boss several times. On one visit he offered me a share of his income to work for him again. I accepted and went back with him

for one year. Having an incentive for work I naturally did my very best all through the year. The following winter he asked me about my intentions for the next year. I told him I was satisfied. My wages were \$20.00 per month or the promise of 15% which I knew by then would come over that sum. He withdrew his offer and offered \$20.00 for summer and \$18.00 in winter. I was stunned at the moment and told him I would let him know the 1st of the month (March).

The following Sunday I had an ad in the Sunday Courier for a milk route. I received an answer from a man in Arlington named Fishbough. George Deissinger loaned me his horse to go see the man. He sold me his business. It included about 175-200 quarts of milk business 40% wholesale, a horse, wagon, harness, a sleigh, a vat for 16 milk cans and a smaller vat for butter. Most milk was sold loose the price was 6¢ per quart. The price was 600.00. With the bonus I had coming from Mr. Bahret I had the sum of 250.00. Gustave Pfisterer who later became a brother-in-law loaned me 500.00 which gave 150.00 working Capital.

This was a new milestone in my life.



**Figure 3.** Charles F. Beck with his milk and a milk wagon proudly bearing his own name. The job required him to rise at 1 A.M. every morning, seven days a week.

The operation of milk business was an entirely new venture. First I had to adapt myself to leading a life on my own, second to getting use to new hours. 1 O'clock till noon. The bottling of milk I had to do evenings as farmers did not bring their milk till after the evenings' milking, as not many housewives had iceboxes, no electric refrigerators. I

was fortunate to get a good location. Corner building of Manchester Road and Pleasant Valley Road using the rear of brick building for my milk room. The front of the building was used for a blacksmith shop. I boarded upstairs with the owner of the building Mr. and Mrs. Charles Baker. They had six children. The man was a heavy drinker. Mrs. Baker was a lovely person. She tried to make life pleasant for me. The mother of Mrs. Baker was also living with them, a fine old lady.

I started my business Mar. 21, 1905. The first day we had snow and sleet. I had a fine initiation. I stopped at a harness shop (Housmans) and bought a storm blanket for my horse also a good brush and curry comb. I saw the horse needed cleaning. Within 4-5 days I learned all the stops with the former owner along. Then I was really on my own. My main stop was the NY Central RR Restaurant 60-80 qts daily at 1 1/2 -2¢ profit daily. Also got a breakfast daily (leaving the manager his milk and cream for free). The business kept increasing. Members of the little Methodist Church of South Bridge St., where I was a member, patronized me encouragingly. During the summer I had my milk wagon painted . Also the horse improved in looks, as I have always had a big heart for animals. By Christmas of the first year I paid off my 500.00 debt. With interest and a bonus (25.00). I felt grateful for being helped.

During my second year I bought a new horse, a beautiful dabble [sic] gray mare with white tail and mane for 225.00. Sold the old mare to Mr. H.S. Marshal for 50.00. Business kept increasing. My route was mostly in the 2nd, 1st and 4th wards. The 2nd ward was mostly German. Three German Churches were located there within 2 city blocks. I still have many friends among the older people.



**Figure 4.** *Charles Beck, right, and his family, reassembled in America.*

In the fall of 1906 Uncle Christ Bahret came to me one day telling me he had bought the Schryver farm on “Dutchess Hill”. He thought it could make a good farm for our family if they had any desire for coming to this country. I told him he could give me no better news if he were an angel from heaven.

This was the same farm I dreamed and wished for, for years. I used to go to School with the Schryver children (The man that sends me the nice calendar from Mass. is a son of this family, George Schryver).

My next letter home to Germany brought the good news. The family did not need much encouraging to make up their mind to sell their property and come to America where the family could be reunited. They arrived here on Christmas Eve 1906. Christmas day was my first reunion with

them at Christ. Bahrets home (one of my most joyous days in my whole life). Uncle Christ. Bahret sold the farm to our father at cost price (certainly a fine deed which the Beck family should always appreciate).

The day they arrived it was bitter cold as it was most of the winter. They got themselves settled on the farm. I remained at Arlington with my milk business until Apr. 1, 1907 at which time I moved my business home on the farm. I sold father my team of horses and bought a new team. I soon found that was a bad mistake. My former team were "trusty." The new team were "faster," but turned out troublesome "runaways." So I traded my team to father at a loss of \$100.00 and took back my favorite horse Nellie and bought another new trusty horse named old "Pete." I was happy to have this team. They served me well until I sold my milk business in Nov. 1912.

The milk that was produced by father on his farm I paid the same price [for] as other farmers received who delivered it there. Mother I paid my board for 2 years. The ice needed to cool the milk I furnished at my expense as well as feed for my 2 horses. So we got along well together. The distance was 5 miles to Poughkeepsie. It made long days. 1 o'clock AM in summer until 12 noon, nights the milk had to be bottled, 1 hour more work 7 days a week, but did not mind it as I was happy to see the progress of my own business as well as the folks with their farm. In winter the work was a hard grind as the roads used to be bad. Especially in the spring.



**Figure 5.** *A rising young businessman, Charles Beck stands with a pony behind the house he had built at 230 Mansion Street.*

The mud used to be awful. During the 2nd year on the farm, I bought a building lot in Poughkeepsie at 230 Mansion St. and had a 2 family house built, with a barn to stable 3 horses and wagon room with a brick milk house along side of it. The same place is still owned by brother Paul Beck. I also bought Mr. David Van DeWater milk route in the spring of 1909 at about the same time my house was being finished. I hired a married man to

operate my own route, while I took over the new addition and boarded with Ernest Duncan's family. Our work was now made lighter. We put both routes together. Each man had his own part of the town to cover. The farmers delivered their milk to our new place of business. But our new arrangement did not last long. My man E. Duncan was not used to this type of work. I paid him 10.00 a week, a brand new home to live in and 5.00 a week for my board, plus free milk (Wages in factorys [sic] were 9.18). Also David Van DeWater was "homesick" for his milk route again.

So I spoke to E. Duncan about the situation. He came home one Sat. night and told me he had a new job at the Separator works. I went to the Tel. and informed Mr. Van DeWater that he could have his route back the next morning. It all worked out well. A nice young man "Sammy Rosini" (sp?) used to be my helper. I was forced to lay him off when I made the "Switch." So I took him back and he was glad to come and work for me again.



**Figure 6.** 230 Mansion Street today.

After 2 years he quit working for me and went to Charleston, S.C., where I have paid him a visit several years back and found him a prosperous businessman. I now boarded with a Swedish family (after Mr. Duncan left me) who lived upstairs in my house, being short of rooms I had a new attic built for myself. There were 2 other young Swedes boarding there. They were painters by trade. One of whom is living in a T.B. Hospital at Oneonta, N.Y. He has been a T.B. patient for over 30 years. Have paid him a visit last summer.

It was in Jan. 1909 that I met my dear wife at the Schoolhouse near our farm where she was teaching. I had the pleasure of getting a date for the following Sunday. I had a good rubber tire buggy. To my dissepiment

[sic] it snowed about a foot and I had no sleigh. Brother Paul owned a Cutter [a light, horse-drawn sleigh]. I asked him for the use of it but no was the answer. I offered him 2.00 rent, no go. So I was forced to buy it from him. But have never regretted the deal. The following winter I bought a new Cutter and sold his to him, had a fine Buffalo Robe, wich [sic] we enjoyed as long as we kept horses. Our courtship lasted 1½ years. We were married July 6th 1910 and lived at our new house at 230 Mansion St. For our honeymoon we spent a week at Niagara Falls. Elizabeth and I enjoyed our home. She used to get up for my breakfast early mornings, while I was loading the milk wagons. Business had grown to a second wagon with Sammy driving the no. 2. Our first child was born to us (Helen) May 23, 1911. It was the hottest summer I have lived to experience. One day the temperature reached 104 in the shade. Even horses dropped from the heat. Sundays we spent regularly driving to Elizabeth's home at Manchester, visiting her folks. She had father, mother, an older sister Anna. Also a married brother with wife and daughter Hilda, who today lives on her father's place a widow with a son Billy. Hilda's husband was a school comissioner [sic] before he passed away several years ago. Her mother Anna, Elizabeth's sister-in-law, is still living with her.

By Nov. 1912 I desired to go out of the milk business. Continuous work of 7 days a week started to tire me out. I sold a good business with a good income for the sum of 1000.00 to 2 brothers, Paul and Ernest Beck. Ernest had been driving one wagon for about 10 months. Paul still operates the milk business. Ernest operates a good fuel oil business. I did not have anything else in view. So I took my first good vacation which lasted about 6 months. But being unoccupied soon wore on my nerves. It was only a short time before I looked around and bought a corner building which was occupied as a grocery store. At N Clinton and Thompson St. The following spring I went to have it remodelt (sic) in a



**Figure 7.** Elizabeth Schaefer Beck, wife of Charles F. Beck.

new store going in Partnership with August Foershler (a butcher) and operated under the firm name of Beck & Foershler. (During the winter I used to work on ice for the form of work). I kept one good horse to drive around with "old Pete". We opened our store May 1913. I was disappointed for several reasons. It was not paying as well as milk business and I did not like being housed in. The grocery was My end. We also kept a delivery with driver. It lasted one year. I sold my share of the business to my partner and bought Manchester Road farm. [This would be the land where Beck's road stand was located on Manchester Rd., including Spy Hill and parts of McIntosh Dr.]



**Figure 8.** Charles Beck dated the beginning of his farm business to 1914.

I bought my farm against the advice of uncle Chris. Bahret. But used my own judgement, which proved to be good. The farm was run down in general. The house needed repairs very badly. We closed the deal May 4th. I went to have the house repaired at once, spending 700.00 before we moved in. The price of the farm was 7250.00. The land was worn out and needed building up. It was June 18th before we moved from our home at 230 Mansion St. The former owner of the farm was Robert McConaghy. He had 6 children grown up. I bought a good pair of horses, farm wagon and whatever farm machinery was necessary [sic]. My crops the first year were oats, corn, some tomatoes and planted 10,000 strawberry plants. Some people gave me the ha ha when they saw all the strawberry plants. The next night they were all in the ground. Brother Paul and Ernest gave me a hand in the afternoon with 2 other men helping.

The house on Mansion St. I owned until 1917 when I sold it to brother Paul for 7500.00 including barn wagon, shed and milk house. On the farm the work was hard with long hours. The help was mostly single men whom we boarded. One "Mark Van Klack" another "Herbert Cross." Both are still living and friends. Prices of crops were very low, tomatoes selling as low as 20-25¢ cents a peach basket. Apples were out the first years they were not sprayed, mostly Baldwins which bear only every 2 years.

In the spring, 1915, our second child was born Mar. 14th, named Mildred. It was an early spring. The day after Mildred arrival I started plowing and could stick to it until Apr. 4th Easter Sunday. The Sat. before Easter it snowed so hard I could not take our nurse home as was intended. The snow did not last. It turned out to be a wet summer. The strawberry patch I planted the year before were my best crop selling at 8-10¢ a quart. Elizabeth took care of the Pickers and crating same. We planted a new patch each year, plowing under the old bed after the 2nd year. I also had about 150 bbl. [bushel baskets] of apples selling then at \$1.10 a BBL. It was a struggle to make ends meet at these low prices.

The winter of 1915-16 was cold and snowy. Had one hired man "Mark Van Klack" a good farmer and teamster. During that winter he hauled coal with my team for Collingwood and Seaman for \$4.00 a day. His wages was 25.00 per month with board, room and washing. The following year things started to get somewhat better. I had about 700 BBL of potatoes to sell, also about 200 BBL of apples. "Mark" left me in the fall. I suppose the cold weather and handling coal the year before was too much for him.

Our land improved as I bought horse manure from stables in Poughkeepsie which became a regular farm job until horses went out. We also hauled the manure from "Dairy Lea" stables for years. Our orchard got better and prices on farm products improved due to the first world war. 1918 strawberries I sold the crop at 14¢ a qt. thinking that it was a good price, but in NY City prices were double that amount.

It was in 1917 I bought my first auto. A "Tin Lizzie" price was 368.00. It had a kerosene tail light. 1919 we had the first good year on our farm. R. U. Delapoma [R.U. Delapenha & Co.], who operated a canning factory where the I.B.M. plant is located now, contracted for my strawberry crop at 25¢. We sold 12,000 qts. from about 2 1/2 acres, at \$3000 worth. Also raised tomatoes for him at 24.00 a ton. Sold red raspberries at 12¢. a pt. We also had a peach crops [sic] with about 250 trees and had about 300 BBL apples. Selling same to Mohican Co. for about 5-6.00 a BBL.

That fall I could buy a new Ford truck and a Brisco [Briscoe] car. Sold 1917 Ford for 350.00 after 2 years wear. We could loan brother Ernest a sum of \$2000.00 on a house he bought. So farming looked bright Due to the war.



**Figure 9.** *Moving up the world, Charles Beck bought himself a Briscoe automobile, probably similar to the one shown here.*

But 1920 the picture changed. I had an accident with my truck damaging a

new car which cost 100.00 (Had no insurance). Later in July 14th a terrible Accident happened. We started mowing grass. I had a good young farmer "Hubert Cross" driving the team. He had just started to mow on a side hill. It had been a very snowy winter and mice had damaged some young apple trees. I had inserted "grafts" at the bottom of the trees in the spring.

By haying time the grafts were whips tall enough to show through the grass. I felt I should walk ahead of the machine the first time around as we had an old stone fence around the field so the driver would not get hurt. We came to a wash out gully caused by heavy rain. I told the driver to take his machine out of gear. It was in a hollow. I started walking forward to knoll where the whips showed in the grass. Not thinking about the danger, I stopped to warn my man about the 4 whips in the grass. I turned around and the machine was right behind me (one horse was new and very head-strong). I yelled, the man did the very best to stop the horses and take his machine out of gear. The knives hit my right leg severing the Artery.

Fortunately, there were people near by picking raspberries. Elizabeth was there. I told her not to come near me (she being 7 months pregnant). She went to the house to call a doctor. Another woman bandaged my leg with a corset cover. We had a market wagon nearby with a horse hitched to it. I intended to pick my first sweet corn that afternoon. The doctor said Afterwards that the main artery had twisted itself about. An Act of God. I was taken to the house waiting for the doctor. Wilson Pancher [Presumably, Dr. J. Wilson Poucher, one of the founders of the Dutchess County Historical Society]. He called the police ambulance. St. Francis Hospital did not have their own ambulance at that time. Putting me on a stretcher and the ride to the hospital opened the wound as I had no regular bandage [sic]. I bled heavy and by the time I was in the hospital I felt myself out. It was

an Emergency operation. I feel grateful to-day to the Lord and Dr. Pancher for his skill. He said it would have been easier [sic] to take off the leg than to repair it. The mowing machine cut part of the large bone and damaged the cords (in the back of leg). But I had kept the use of my leg after being in the hospital 4 weeks.

It was during my stay at the hospital that the man Wm. Smith who held a 2200.- mortgage on our farm asked Eliz. for 500.00 and demanded another 500.00 a month later. Whether he expected to play a “squeeze” on me, I never found out but when I was out of the hospital and checked my bank balance I had the pleasant surprise [sic] of finding \$500.00 more than was recorded in our check book. A deposit made on the day of the accident was overlooked in the excitement. So Instead of meeting Mr. Smith with 500.00 I paid him the full amount of my mortgage. In spite of being hospitalized. What a glorious feeling. It taught me that we are not as important as we may feel. (The sun can keep shining without us). It has given me a different outlook on life.



**Figure 10.** *Charles Beck as family man. From left to right: Charles Beck, Helen Beck, Mildred Beck, Charles F. Beck Jr., Elizabeth Beck.*

Just a month after coming home from St. Francis, Elizabeth went to Vassar Hospital for the birth of her baby. It was happy news when it was a boy, Charles, Jr. We were very happy as we had two girls, 9 and 5. So what seemed a tragedy ended in joy and happiness.

As for myself I could walk on crutches and drive my car depending on my emergency brake. I went to the Market again, having a driver to handle my

truck. We sold a lot of vegetables, also had a good crop of apples which Mohican Co. bought a second time in a row. They furnished the barrels and a man to help pack them. The drops we took to a cider mill and sold sweet cider to store customers. This how I got the Idea of getting in the sweet cider business. 2 years later I had a new building put up which to this day houses our cider machinery with living quarters for 2 families overhead. Farm prices in general were good during The Twenties. The fall of 1922 we started on our new venture Sweet Cider business. I hired a special driver to deliver 5-10 gal kegs to stores wich [sic] we furnished new with faucets without deposit. Gal and 1/2 [gal] jugs soon followed. We had 2 large vats to store the cider which had to be treated with Benzoate of Soda to keep it from fermenting.



**Figure 11.** *Beck's roadside stand in the early 1920s.*

During 1921 a neighbor across the road claimed the water from my hill damaged [sic] him and brought suit against me. We were in court when the Supreme Court Judge Joseph Morshausser decided to settle the case on our farm. We had a lawn party of lawyers as well as the Judge. The court decided to change the course of the runoff water. Mr. Smith, being the plaintiff, had to dig a big ditch and store it up on his ground to take care of the runoff water. I paid my lawyer Mr. Mulvey. 2 years later he [Smith] sold me his land adjoining me, about 9 acres, for the sum of \$2700.00. I borrowed the money and paid 6% interest on it for nearly 20 years. Although it paid off well. We increased our orchard and sold some land off in building lots, known as McIntosh Drive. The lots are now all sold.

The apples sold well in 1921. The Spring of 1922 I started out with new ambitions. I had bought the cider mill equipment from Mr. Brower living off Noxon Road for the prize [sic] of \$400.00. I received an old fashioned gasoline driven outfit. I modernized it some with elevator and conveyer. We had to build what is our cider mill, a large frostproof cellar 28 by 48, using steel girders and other steel rods, about 6 tons, which was formerly a bridge over the Wappingers Creek at Red Oaks Mill. Fred Van DeWater, our Supervisor, sold it very cheap. We used only steel and concrete on the 1st floor. The cement was all mixed by hand. 75 team loads of gravel and 23 tons of cement were used. The foundation with 8 inch floors was done in 4 days with 4 men. One man put up the forms. Philipp Finkheimer [sp?] The carpenter for the building was Henry Van Rosentaal. [Van Rouwendaal] His son has been Poughkeepsie's building inspector many years. On the second floor where the help was housed I have now 2 families living, paying rent. The cider business meant a lot of extra work. An extra man driving the truck for for about 4 months of the year. We used to grind for good many farmers besides making our own. We had a concrete caal [canal?] with a good stream of water driven by a large pump that conveyed the apples up the elevator. Washed apples.

The summer of 1923 I bought the land from my neighbor wich [sic] had sued me over water 2 years earlier. Spring 1924 I hired a local house mover and had the old house moved to the new land we had bought. It now is occupied by Joseph Engelhard. Had to spend quite a sum for moving and improvements, such as well drilling, installing bathroom and heat to make it saleable. The land was all planted to orchards, apples and peaches. On the foundation of the old house. We had our present home built, living over the cider mill while moving of old house and building of new house was going on. Mr. Van Rowendaal [Van Rouwendaal] was the carpenter. A fine mechanic. We feel proud of our home. Our orchards kept increasing in size as well as Production.

In 1925 in Feb. there was a total Eclipse of the sun. It got terrible cold while it lasted. I did not think our peaches would survive such cold. But when we examined our buds we found on the upper half of our hill they were not hurt much. Our best bearing peach trees were on top of the hill. So we came through with a 2/3 crop. Prizes [sic] were the best I ever had. That proved to me that high ground is the best location for fruit, even apples.

The two girls were going to Poughkeepsie schools. Helen was clamering [sic] for a pony to drive to School. It was a long hike so I bought her a nice spotted pony. (She called it Beauty) with a woven (sp?) pony cart. She

harnessed it and took care of it while she used it. The men cared for it at home. We used to send our surplus milk to town with her. 2 brothers operated a milk business. We paid tuition for several years. As our fruit trees grew larger and about all my own land was occupied I had the chance to rent land below us, now known as Henmon [Henmond] Boulevard, from Herman Zijsh to help out growing vegetables. Also rented the land from Elizabeth's father now know as Shady Brook Traylor [sic] Park. So we kept expanding. For years we sold our crops to the leading stores in Poughkeepsie. My truck was loaded evenings and went to Market regular, getting up 4 AM. We used to sell at Clinton Square. In later years the Farmers Market at Smith St. was started with a market manager.



**Figure 12.** Beck's roadside stand in the early 1930s.

I always enjoyed my work selling, also help in picking peaches. Strawberries were always picked by the qt. Elizabeth was "boss" in the berry patch. Also crated the berries with help when needed. The working of the land, plowing and cultivating, was done by good reliable men. In 1926 I bought a 2 family house at 127 Winakee Ave.[Winnikee Ave.] and had a grocery store added to it. We still own same. It has proven itself a good investment as well as giving the children the privilege of good city schooling. We financed it by mortgaging our farm [for] 4000.00.

The following year we started Beck's Swimming and Recreation Park. The whole family had a hand in it. The girls used to collect for the cars 25¢ cents. Charles, Jr. job was to clean the lockers and toilets. Mother also helped Sundays when there [were] crowds. It was well patronized for quite a number of years. After the girls left high school the place was rented to Betros Brothers. 1946 I sold the place to a Mr. Puskas. It is now operated as a nice trailer Park.

We bought the place in 1929 from Elizabeth's father. It was only a grass lot at first. Had to spend quite a sum to improve it, cleaning and widening the creek on 3 different occasions. High water did considerable damage. The worst flood was Sept. 1938. (This was the worst flood ever known in these parts). It rained for 3 days, the last day accompanyd [sic] by hurricane winds. We worked part of the land for cropping, raising potatoes and sweet corn. The flood in 1938 damadged [sic] it very bad. In the following Spring I contracted with V. Constanzi to have it repaired. The price was 1200.00. When I applied to the [Poughkeepsie] Savings Bank for that amount Mr. Frank Gardner, the President of the bank wanted to "blanket mortgage" my farm along with the Swimming property, even though I had paid 5000.00 for the property. Elizabeth's share from her father's estate was 2800.00. The other 2200.00 I had paid in cash to her brother Tony and her niece Hilda. Interest rates then were 5 1/2 %. Mr. Ruben Rosenthal the Produce dealer came to my rescue and loaned me the money. (I am explaining this to show how hard boiled Bankers can be.) (This is the only time in my business career I was ever refused cash when I was in need of same).

I have to retrace back to the 20's. In 1923 Germany had their money inflation. One former school friend David Heim asked me to help him come to this country. I loaned the sum of 250.00 to pay for the his trip with wife and a 12 year old son. He was a mason by trade and got a job working on the Lucky Platt new store at that time. I also financed Mrs. Wilhelm



**Figure 13.** *Beck's roadside stand in the 1950s.*



**Figures 14.** *Beck's roadside stand from the air, perhaps in the 1950s.*

Wilderman and her 2 boys the same year. Her husband was helped out by our father and was working on my farm for a short time. The children were all going to Poughkeepsie Schools, Helen was in high, Charles and Mildred in grade school. Helen's first pony wore out of old age and had to be killed. We bought her a second one, somewhat taller, which lasted her until she was eligible to drive a Ford on a School license. After High School she went to New Paltz Normal to study for teaching. Mildred followed in her footsteps. Both became good teachers. Helen's first job was near Webutuck. I will always remember going there one morning at 30 below temperature and driving her home. She taught also at Viola School . . . .

# A Farmer's Almanac: The Journal of Benjamin J. Hall

By Margaret G. Duff

**A** Benjamin Hall from England left Long Island during the Revolutionary War, because he was a Quaker who wished to practice his creed's pacifism. Hall moved up to Dutchess County, which was then a Quaker stronghold. His son, Joseph Hall (1790–1867), settled in the Clinton Corners area, on what is now Pumpkin Lane, and married Aveline Rowe (1801–1875). Their son, Benjamin Joseph Hall, was born there in 1825, and it is B. J. Hall who is the author of this journal.

At the time of these journal accounts, 1851–1859, Benjamin and his wife Lavinia (née Preston) were living with Benjamin's parents. At some point, Benjamin bought a farm in Shunpike that belonged to Lavinia's family, and in 1879, their son Preston W. Hall (1855–1936) and his wife Gertrude moved there. In 1886, when Benjamin Hall could no longer farm his own land, he moved to the Shunpike farm, which was renovated to make room for two families. And there B. J. Hall died in 1896.



**Figure 1.** Benjamin J. Hall kept a journal on the farming life of mid-nineteenth-century New York. It is now in the collection of the Dutchess County Historical Society.

What did a farmer have to do to be successful in the 1850s? To answer that question, I began by lining up the years, month by month, and found that Hall's life tended to repeat itself, with major variations due only to the weather. So, although there is also some evidence of increasing mechanization, the following list shows the skills and routine of a mid-nineteenth-century farmer month by month, and year by year.

## *In January, he*

Ground sausage, salted pork and  
boiled brine

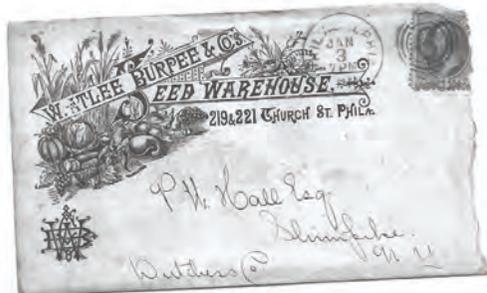
Returned J. Gildersleve's  
sausage grinder

Went to Wymen's wood bee

Cut sticks of timber for a shed and drew over 200 rails from Wm. Hicks  
Butchered beef, salted down the beef and killed 4 turkeys  
Thrashed 700 sheaves of oats with Harrison and his horse helping  
Helped father clean oats and put 21 bushels in a cask for himself  
Went to Poughkeepsie to sell oats and turkeys and to Rhinebeck  
for 1/2 ton plaster  
Bought a cow and made and hung a gate south of the barnyard.  
Also, Lavinia made soap

***In February, he***

Made a grindstone bench, partly made 1/2 dozen flail caps  
and made a harness pad  
Fixed the old saddle, Lavinia's shoes, and the stable door  
Made a hovel, cut wood and timber for a shed and drew stalks  
Got 4 loads of stone for shed  
Drew hay for sheep and sawed logs  
Went to Shultzville saw mill with 6 logs  
Corned the broomcorn  
Went to Hiram Mosher's vendue [a public auction]  
and bought a harrow  
Went to mill with 4 bu. corn  
Took the gammons [side of bacon] out of the brine and hung up the  
little gammons to smoke  
Went to J. Irelands to get a gander  
Caught 5 rats  
Also, Lavinia and mother dipped 225 candles



**Figure 2.** *In January, Preston Hall received a letter from the Burpee Seed warehouse in Philadelphia.*

*In March, he*

Went to Rhinebeck after plaster; they had none  
 Went to R. Shadbolt's and W. Haines vendues and at H. Mosher's  
 vendue of household furniture, bought a gun  
 Stopped the mouse holes in the kitchen chamber  
 Sorted the apples  
 Finished Mary Ann's work box and mended boots  
 Tore away the old hovel, moved the threshing machine in the barn,  
 and stowed away the cutters, etc  
 Shelled seed corn and sold the oats and bought clover seed  
 Chopped wood pile and sawed logs with the cross-cut saw on the  
 wood pile Put 10 sheep in the orchard  
 Made a grate door to the south barn  
 Went to mill and to Rhinebeck to pay for glass  
 Got a skep [hive] of bees for Lavinia  
 Made stone fence and drew rails to fence a potato patch  
 Cut straw and plowed corn stubble  
 Drew a load of straw for bedding  
 A calf and sheep died last night  
 Went to Seely and left a calfskin to have Lavinia & mother each  
 a pair of shoes  
 Engaged S. Cornelius to make the running part of a lumber wagon  
 for \$44  
 Washed the lumber wagon for painting  
 Made milk shelves  
 Sat mother's goose on 18 eggs

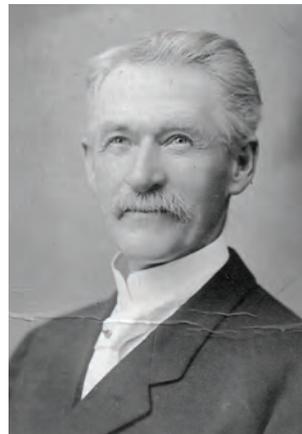
*In April, he*

Mended his boots and trimmed the locusts in the door yard  
 Made Lavinia a basket and put rockers on a chair for her  
 Bought a piece of window paper  
 Whitewashed kitchen and scraped the north yard  
 Fastened the turkeys in the door yard  
 Went to mill and to Shultzville to get horse shod and a wagon wheel  
 Did chores

Drew 4 loads of stones and 10 loads of manure  
Drew hay and made fence  
Counted 20 lambs  
Went to Poughkeepsie for harness leather for \$4.82  
and cut out plow harness  
Put a beam in the plow and made a whiffletree  
Plowed, plowed sod, and harrowed  
To Poughkeepsie to buy clover, sowed clover and fenced potato patch  
Screened 20 bu. of oats for sowing and sowed 10 bu. of oats  
Fixed hotbed

*In May, he*

Finished marking for planting, made garden  
Plowed the potato and cabbage patches  
Planted 2 quarts of peas, watermelons and dahlias, potatoes and corn  
Sowed 5 quarts of white beans, worked in garden, fixed fence  
Plowed the oats and finished plowing sod  
Plowed with one team of 3 horses  
Drew stumps and harrowed  
Went to Shultzville to get Molly shod,  
and bought a plow share  
To Rhinebeck after a load of plaster and  
some shad—no shad there  
Got boards to fix the dog churn and  
tinkered at the dog churn  
Salted shad and painted a wagon  
3 hens hatched (about 30 chickens)  
Top-poled fence and fenced swamp  
Planted corn a.m. and broom corn p.m.  
L Whitehead gave him the broom corn  
seed and is to make the brooms.  
Sowed plaster-2 1/2 tons and worked in  
the garden  
Laid wall by the road  
Worked on the road (as path master—got others to help)  
Washed sheep and sheared sheep  
Sold one (sheep) for \$4.50 after sheared and sold 44 lambs



**Figure 3.** *Preston W. Hall. Generations of Halls farmed together: Benjamin first with his father Joseph and later in life with his son Preson.*

*In June, he*

Went to Poughkeepsie to carry wool  
 Finished dog churn and fixed the horse-rake  
 Painted Mary Ann's wagon  
 Drew manure, laid wall and covered up the old well  
 Worked on line fence  
 Taking several days each, plowed corn, potatoes, commenced hoeing  
 corn and plowed & hoed potatoes  
 Got 100 beet plants  
 Plastered the corn with ashes  
 Went to Rhinebeck and got the returns for 1 tub of butter  
 Drew Aunt Jenny a load of wood, and went to help B. Conger tear  
 down his barn

*In July, he*

Went to B. Conger's barn raising  
 Plowed corn for the last time and had green peas for dinner  
 Put five teeth in the horse rake and commenced cutting harvest  
 Mowed on the hill and raked hay  
 Gathered 25 loads of hay during the week and put up 2 stacks of hay  
 Found I. Allen proving very poor help, paid and discharged him  
 Mowed in the school house lot  
 Finished raking wheat and  
 raked most of the stubble  
 and got 2 bu. of wheat  
 Father threshed the wheat  
 and went to mill with it  
 Worked at oats,  
 commenced cradling  
 rye and finished haying  
 Fenced 4 hay stacks  
 and cleaned the  
 spring, the drouth  
 having become severe  
 Topped a stack; spread an  
 old stack bottom  
 Raked and bound the rye



**Figure 4.** *The Shunpike house in 1885, when Benjamin J. Hall was 60 and son Preston was 30.*

*In August, he*

Gathered the oats he sowed on shares  
Cleared the barn floor and fixed the drain for the penstock  
Worked in the barnyard and drew manure  
Went to David Hicks dung bee  
Tinkered at upper swamp, cut bushes and drew 125 rails  
Sorted the lambs and drove 38 lambs to the Hollow  
Went to get wool carded, made some ropes, and spun the yarn  
Commenced plowing with three horses  
Finished breaking up the fallow and plowed oats stubble  
with two teams  
Dug potatoes  
Painted the kitchen floor  
Worked at a cart box, fixed a wheel barrow and oiled harness

*In September, he*

Bought lumber and helped raise the hay barn; there was  
about 25 here to help  
Made harrow teeth  
Took the one horse wagon to have the tire set which I busted  
Went to Salt Point for 1/2 ton of plaster  
Went to Poughkeepsie, bought 6 bu. timothy seed,  
1/4 barrel of mackeral,  
Picked stones  
Cross plowed a little of the N.W. lot  
Marked out for sowing  
Sowed rye and harrowed it in & timothy  
Cutting corn and threshed wheat for grist and seed  
Sowed 4 1/2 bushels of wheat  
Harrowed the wheat  
Cut buckwheat and threshed the buckwheat  
Cleaned out the north stall preparatory to putting a granary there  
Worked at the granary  
Wed, commenced ditching on south meadow by plowing  
and throwing the dirt out;  
Ditched with pick and spade

To Whaley's pond to fish, caught 160 sun-fish  
 Dug potatoes, picked apples and drew a load of pumpkins  
 Lavinia had a quilting

### *In October, he*

Picked 2 bu. quinces and cider apples (one load sweet)  
 Made cider, about 8 barrels  
 Gathered chestnuts and pulled about 10 bu. turnips  
 Husked corn and sorted corn and put 20 bu. apples in the cellar  
 Drew 6 loads of corn from the barn to crib  
 Stacked stalks and fenced a stalk stack  
 Went to the county fair  
 Drove the cow to Stoutsburgh Landing  
 Fixed a broken wagon and the siding of the corn-house  
 Bottomed boots, hooped barrels and made a tube  
     and set out the stove  
 Plowed and harrowed  
 Went to buy sheep and sold 13 turkeys  
 Killed hogs



**Figure 5.** John Hallenbeck and Hiram Hollis were copartners in a New York City-based business engaged in the buying and selling livestock on commission.

### *In November, he*

Cut turnip tops and cleaned rye  
 Fixed the manger in the south stable  
 Went to Schultz's raising  
 Bought 2 pigs and sold steers

Butchered 9 hogs; carried to  
Rhinebeck, sold  
Carried 2 sheep to Sherow, 4 bushels of wheat  
and 2 bags of corn to mill;  
got the pork money  
Set the threshing machine and threshed wheat  
Cleaned the wheat and carried to the mill  
Threshed 1700 sheaves of oats and cleaned up 32 bushels of oats  
Drew 3 loads straw and made a straw pen in N.E lot  
To Rhinebeck with a load of oats and bought 1/2 ton plaster  
Got Jacob sharp shod and bought 50 clams  
Broke colts to threshing machine  
Made a box for the grindstone and two axe handles  
Sprouted bushes  
Puttied the cracks in the south door

*In December, he*

Chopped wood in the woods  
Drew in the chips and picked up wood  
Helped lay wall round the barn yard  
Cut a floor in the in the alley of the south barn and made  
a door to the alley  
Made the foundation of the lean-to  
Fixed bridge, and fixed the sheep yard  
Made a fire board and a mop  
Fixed the cellar window and banked the house with gravel  
Found the calf which strayed off yesterday in Mr. Sands field  
Butchered 11 geese and carried them to E. Sherow  
Went to Rhinebeck to get a cask hooped  
Killed hogs and got salt to salt pork  
Hooped a half barrel  
Cut up pork and put the brine on the hams  
Shelled 4 bu. corn & put up 6 bags in ear, & took 1 bushel buck  
wheat, 2 of oats and took them to mill  
Cut down the smaller black walnut tree and burned brush  
Caught two pigeons for a pie

# ADDENDA





# Contributors

Tom Beck is the son of Charles F. Beck Jr. and the grandson of Charles F. Beck Sr. He is a resident of Austin, Texas, where he has lived since 1970. From 1948 to 1968, he was a resident of Poughkeepsie and graduated from Arlington High School in 1966. “My years in Poughkeepsie have provided me with many fond memories,” he says, “particularly those associated with Beck’s Farm Market, the orchards off of Salt Point Road (now Peach Hill Park), and growing up in the environs of Spy Hill/McIntosh Dr. (with Wappinger’s Creek nearby) in the 1950s and early 1960s. It was a special time and place and remains a central part of who I am.”

John R. “Jack” Conklin, a native of Dutchess County, was brought up on the family dairy farm, established by an ancestor in 1751. The property was part of Water Lot #1 in eastern Hyde Park. After graduating from West Point and serving a tour of duty with the 101st Airborne Division, he began his civilian career as an engineer with Proctor and Gamble in Cincinnati before returning to Dutchess County. Here, he was involved in either a management or board of directors role with DeLaval, Standard Gage, Fargo, Dutchess Bank, and several non-profit organizations. Now retired, he is devoting time to researching local history.

Carolyn C. Cooper is a historian of technology with a particular interest in the mechanization of woodworking and the patent system of nineteenth-century America, as well as the gun manufacture of that period. She has written a book about the woodworking inventions of Thomas Blanchard; co-authored others about the U.S. Armory in Springfield, Massachusetts, and the Eli Whitney Armory in Hamden, Connecticut; and contributed articles to books and journals on related topics in American industrial history. Her PhD from Yale University was awarded in 1985, and she is currently a visiting fellow at the Yale Department of Economics.

Margaret Graham Duff is a daughter of Ruth Hall Graham (1911–2007), who was the eldest of three daughters of Benjamin Virgil Hall (1881–1963). Now retired, she has been at times a housewife and a teacher. Although her family lived mostly in California and Pennsylvania, on one vacation to her family’s Shunpike farm in Dutchess County, she found an old chest that contained the farm journal of Benjamin Joseph Hall, as well as other items that he had put away for posterity. She has graciously donated these items

to Dutchess County Historical Society, so that others can benefit from the information they give about rural life in Dutchess County in the 1800s.

Rabbi Paul Golomb has been at Vassar Temple since 2000, prior to which he worked for four years as executive director of the Canadian Council for Reform Judaism of the Union for Reform Judaism and as Director of the Association of Reform Zionists of America. From 1991 to 1996, he was senior rabbi at a congregation in Connecticut. Rabbi Golomb was ordained from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in 1975, following which he directed the Hillel Foundations at Ohio State University and the University of Buffalo.

Harv Hilowitz is a consultant to the Mount Gulian Historic Site in Beacon. He is the owner of Arc Business & Writing Services, a business development, research and writing expertise firm in the Hudson Valley. Hilowitz is also the author of the acclaimed *Revolutionary War Chronology & Almanac*, as well as numerous articles and essays on a variety of topics. He is also a local lecturer on themes of contemporary importance and engages in local volunteer work.

Terry Beck Knapp, the last grandchild of Charles Beck Sr., became a registered nurse. She lives near Dallas, has been married for 35 years, and has three adult children plus two grandchildren. She writes: "I have very fond memories of growing up in the orchards and open fields of Spy Hill and Manchester Road. The Market was the center of my universe. I remain friends with the children of the first houses built in my grandfather's former vegetable fields. We also share memories of the cider mill and the old barns. It was a great place to grow up and to play and to learn a strong work ethic in the process."

Russell La Valle is a freelance writer and screenwriter, living in New Paltz. His work has appeared in the *Washington Post*, *Village Voice*, *New York Times*, *New York Daily News*, *Newsday*, *American Thinker*, *Poughkeepsie Journal*, *Sheet Music Magazine*, *Observer*, and many other publications. He has also scripted feature films that have appeared on HBO, Showtime, Cinemax, and The Movie Channel. In addition, he was a contributing editor to *The New Individualist*, the flagship publication of a Washington-based philosophical think tank, where he wrote articles on issues of the day. La Valle's work has been picked up nationally, internationally, and anthologized.

Candace J. Lewis is an art historian with a PhD in the field of early Chinese art and a secondary area of specialty in nineteenth-century art in America and Europe. She is a long time member of the Dutchess County Historical Society and became a trustee in 2008, assuming the society's presidency in 2010. She has lived in Poughkeepsie with her husband, attorney Lou Lewis, since 1970.

Lou Lewis is the senior member of the Poughkeepsie law firm Lewis & Greer, which he founded in 1978. He has practiced law in New York since 1969 and is a past president of the Dutchess County Bar Association (1992–93), as well as a former trustee of Marist College (1971–91). He has been a member of Vassar Temple since 1952 and currently serves as President of the Jewish Federation of Dutchess County.

Mary Regis McLoughlin, who claims that she only “pulled together” the sidebar on Father Patrick J. McSweeney, is a resident of Brooklyn and the great-granddaughter of McSweeney's sister—Mary Frances McSweeney McLoughlin. She writes: “Input came from the writings of Monsignor Patrick's nephews as well as from today's descendants, including first-, second-, and third-cousins and, yes, a fifth-cousin once-removed. In our joint search to learn about our long-gone ancestor, we have strengthened the family love among the living.” Co-author Angela O'Sullivan, who lives in South Carolina, adds “The family-history-buff descendants of the McSwineys of Cork are immensely grateful that the Dutchess County Historical Society searched for us, found us, and asked us for insights into the personal life of Monsignor Patrick Francis McSweeney.”

Dell Upton is a professor of architectural history in UCLA's department of art history, studying the history of architecture, cities, and material culture. His books and articles treat subjects ranging from pre-Revolutionary American architecture to critiques of New Urbanism and heritage tourism. Professor Upton received his B.A. from Colgate University in 1970, his PhD from Brown University in 1980. His book *Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia* (1986) won the John Hope Franklin Publication Prize of the American Studies Association; the Alice Davis Hitchcock Book Prize of the Society of Architectural Historians; and the Abbott Lowell Cummings Award of the Vernacular Architecture Forum. In 2000, Professor Upton was a consultant and principal catalogue essayist for the Metropolitan Museum of Art's exhibition *Art and the Empire City: New York, 1825–1861*.

Timothy Walch, PhD, is the Director Emeritus of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, one of thirteen such libraries that are part of the National Archives and Records Administration. He is also the author or editor of seventeen books including *Parish School: American Catholic Education from Colonial Times to the Present* (National Catholic Educational Association, 2003). Andrew M. Greeley refers to *Parish School* as “the best summary review of the history of Catholic education in the last half century.” With Thomas C. Hunt, Walch edited *Urban Catholic Education: Tales of Twelve Cities* (Alliance for Catholic Education Press, 2010).

## Call for Articles: 2013 Yearbook

The 2012 yearbook of the Dutchess County Historical Society was late going to press for one principal reason: It is extraordinarily difficult to persuade people to write articles about our county's history. But why? Is it an inability to think of an interesting topic? I have dozens of fascinating topics that I would love to assign. Is it a lack of time? The average American watches 34 hours of television per week—just 6 hours shy of a full-time job.

Or is it the question: What's in it for me? Well, first, as publications director of DCHS, I offer a modest honorarium of \$250 for full-length (3000+ word) articles that are accepted for publication, if they involve original research and a minimum of editing. That is not a lot of money, I know. Last time I checked, though, it still bought a meal for two at the Culinary Institute of America, wine included.

But that, if you will pardon the pun, is pure gravy. The real profit in writing an article is the sheer fun of it. To prove the point, I asked author Russell La Valle to write up an account of the experiences he had on just one of his two assignments: How Black Islam came to East Fishkill. His tale immediately follows this "Call for Articles," and it is entitled "The Joys of Historiography." Russ took the assignment only as an act of friendship ("Well, if you're really desperate..."), but I do believe that he has been dining out on it ever since.

In 2013, as in 2012, the yearbook will have a variety of sections. The Forum section, which will have at least half a dozen articles, will be entitled: "A Government of the People, by the People, for the People: The Pursuit of Law, Self-Government, and Liberty in Dutchess County." It may include topics from the most abstract issues of political, constitutional, and judicial philosophy down to the most concrete topics in legislation and law enforcement. In addition to Forum articles, the 2013 yearbook will welcome articles and documents on any worthwhile topic concerning Dutchess County history.

Finally, if you have an article idea that you are doubtful about, just write to me at [dchseditor@hotmail.com](mailto:dchseditor@hotmail.com), and I will be happy to discuss it. Once again, however, I am hoping to have first-drafts of all articles in hand by May 31. — *Roger Donway*

# The Joys of Historiography, Or, the Long Road to Medinah Salaam

*By Russell La Valle*

The danger of accepting writing assignments involving history is that “the facts” may prove difficult to discover, impossible to verify, and ultimately contradictory. When all three things happen, the writer is faced with a perfect historiographical storm—and forced to write a story where none exists.

Just that was what I seemed to be facing in the autumn of 2012, as I tried verify the story, repeated in many published volumes, that Shaykh Daoud Ahmed Faisal, a well-known Islamic cleric from Brooklyn, had purchased “the Talbot Estate” in East Fishkill in 1934, in order to establish an orthodox Islamic community. It looked as though it would be the “how-I-didn’t-get-the-story” story to end all “how-I-didn’t-get-the-story” stories,

## *History as Mystery*

Calling the East Fishkill Historical Society, I spoke with its director, Malcolm Mills, who was intrigued by the idea that such an exotic man and his utopian dreams could have come to his town. However, he had never heard of Faisal or Medinah Salaam or the Talbot Estate. He suggested I call Willa Skinner, the Town of Fishkill Historian, who should know because, well, Willa knew everything.

Unfortunately, Ms. Skinner had no idea what I was talking about. However, she did consult a map that she thought was from the 1930s, which indicated a Talbot Property on East Hook Road, not far from the Morgenthau Estate. She also suggested I call East Fishkill Town Supervisor John Hickman, whose grandfather or uncle (Lyndon Hickman) had been supervisor at that time and had lived on West Hook Road.

Mr. Hickman reported back that he hadn’t had much luck. His father had a recollection of a house on what he thought was the old Talbot property when it was owned by a Bill Olm [in retrospect, he was most likely referring to W.E. Oram, who owned adjoining land according to a 1934 U.S.

Geodetic Survey], but he didn't remember any community. He suggested that I try to contact someone from the Olm family, who his father thought owned a bar in Beacon. Not finding any Olms in the Fishkill/East Fishkill area, I called every bar owner in Beacon—none of whom had ever known or heard of Bill Olm.

Mr. Hickman also sent me a copy of an inquiry he made to Robert Morgenthau (the former District Attorney for Manhattan), who wrote that he remembered riding his horse along East Hook Road—"along the Wicopee Creek, south of Fishkill Farms"—when he was 15-years-old, but had no knowledge that anyone, much less a Muslim, was living there and was surprised to hear that there might have been an Islamic community. Buoyed by the prospect of talking to someone who actually knew something about the property in question, I tried calling Mr. Morgenthau at his office in Manhattan. Regrettably, he was vacationing on Nantucket and was incommunicado. However, I was told that, if I wanted to ask him any questions, I should put them in writing and forward them to his personal assistant, who would pass them on. I waited a week for a response that never came. Calling back, I was told they would remind the assistant of my initial email inquiry, but, just to make sure, please send the email again, which I did—just before my computer was dealt a fatal blow by a blue screen death prompt. Using a back-up laptop that did not have a record of any of my previous emails, I tried as best I could to move the Faisal story forward—still with virtually nothing to go on.

### *The Kindness of Strangers*

Then one night at nine-thirty I received a call from "Bob Morgenthau," who at 93 proved to be sharp, affable, forthcoming, and generally interested in trying to help me get to the bottom of my mystery. However, all



my questions about the Talbot Estate, its owners past and present, its exact location, and so forth, weren't things he could answer definitively. But he did supply me with the names of people who might know some things he didn't—land owners who owned property along East Hook

**Figure 1.** *Former Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau, who grew up in East Fishkill, called one night to offer the author assistance. Morgenthau's father, Henry Morgenthau Jr., was Franklin Roosevelt's Treasury Secretary; his grandfather, Henry Morgenthau Sr., was Woodrow Wilson's ambassador to the Ottoman Empire.*

Road at one time or another; a local historian who seemed to know everything; even a local character who was a cross between Elmer Gantry and a WWII German spy. None of these leads panned out.

I called the Town of East Fishkill and spoke to the Town Clerk, Town Assessor, and others, who seemed genuinely sorry they could not help me. I was supplied with new names of other locals who might know something, but ultimately they didn't either. To make matters worse, their land records only went back to 1958, and if I wanted to check property rolls before that, I would have to go the County Office Building in Poughkeepsie.

In another stroke of bad luck, while trying concurrently to cobble together the supposed story of Daoud Faisal and his history leading up to Medinah Salaam, I was discovering that the cleric's personal history was as slippery, impenetrable, and contradictory as the history of his so-called utopian Islamic community. Now I was wrestling with research chimeras on two fronts.

With my deadline looming, I tried to find the answer, any answer, on the second floor of the County Office Building—Deeds and Records Office—among the warrens of file cabinets, old ledgers and computers holding, hopefully, all of Dutchess County's ancient secrets. Alas, nothing revealed itself. In 1934 (or in 1933 or 1935) there was no record of any land bought by or sold to Shaykh Daoud Ahmed Faisal or his Brooklyn Corporation, Islamic Mission of America, Inc.

Then fate smiled upon me—or, at least, grinned—in the person of Bradford Kendall, Dutchess County Clerk, who somehow sensed that I was floundering around in his domain. Appearing out of nowhere and approaching me with a smile and an offer of assistance, he went about helping me navigate the resources of the records office, trying to uncover the elusive ghosts of Faisal and Medinah Salaam. Unfortunately, we came up empty.

Suddenly Brad saw someone on the other side of the room and his face blossomed. If anyone would know anything about any this, it would be Don Cooksey, an independent title examiner who had an encyclopedic knowledge of deeds, land sales, grantors, grantees, and so forth, in Dutchess County and environs. Lo and behold, Don remembered a transaction somewhere involving the Islamic Mission! Dropping what he was working on, he began crisscrossing the records office, expertly combing ledgers and computers, with Brad and me following anxiously in his wake.

Suggesting leads for us to follow independently, the three of us continued apace—until 30 minutes later Don dropped a heavy liber onto a countertop, slapped the opened page, and said, “Here it is.” He walked away like the Lone Ranger of research. His work was done. On to the next title mystery. No “thank you” necessary.

And there, at last, in the fluorescent light of day was an indenture—made the 15th day of April, 1955, between Harry and Edith Talbot and the Islamic Mission of America Incorporated for 135.5 acres of land in the Town of East Fishkill, County of Dutchess and State of New York. Finally, officially, the “City of Peace” did have a home. But exactly where it was and why it occurred twenty-one years after all published reports said it occurred were questions still to be explored.

### *In the River-Wended Vale, the Tale Ended*

Armed with my first concrete evidence of a story, I called the Town of East Fishkill’s assessor’s office—for directions to Medinah Salaam. They couldn’t help me. There was no address, no lot number, no identifying information on the deed other than indicators like “the West side of the big meadow,” “a fence that now stands to a stone wall,” “due East through the woods . . . until it strikes a hemlock tree . . . near a small brook.” All the names of landowners and former landowners surrounding, abutting, or contiguous to the Islamic Mission property didn’t ring a bell. They were sorry.

The next day, deed in hand, I drove to East Fishkill determined to find what was left of Shaykh Faisal’s dream. Stopping at Fishkill Farms, half-hoping to find Bob Morgenthau, I announced myself to a cheery salesgirl and asked to speak with Josh Morgenthau, Bob’s son and general manager of the farmstead—at the very least, to tell him my story and to get a local’s knowledge of the land along East Hook Road. She returned saying Josh was too busy—with the instructions that if I wanted to speak with him, I should make an appointment.

I stormed off to East Hook Road. After spending an empty hour driving back and forth, looking for telltale meadows, stone walls, and babbling brooks, I finally reached the end, where an historic-looking house seemed a likely place to ask questions about old-time neighbors and New York City Muslims in their midst. Lucky again, I encountered Connie Mayer, a friendly and engaging woman who has called East Fishkill home for many years and whose late husband, an influential lawyer, had done extensive

work throughout the area. Gracious enough to talk to a stranger with an improbable story, Ms. Mayer patiently reviewed the Islamic Mission deed, remarking about the names she recognized and suggested that I speak with a local farmer down the road who might be able to help.

As I got out at the farmer's house, he emerged and gave a wry smile at the mention of Faisal and his followers. Sure, he remembered "the sheik" and the big buses that would arrive to spend an occasional weekend on the neighboring property. Extending an overworked arm in the direction of East Hook Road and Wiccopee Creek, he proceeded to tell me about those days in the late 1950s and what became of the short happy dream of Medinah Salaam.

# Dutchess County Historical Society

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## The Year 2012

We are publishing our annual Yearbook, maintaining a tradition established in 1914 with the founding of the Dutchess County Historical Society. This year the featured theme is *Sects, Schisms, and Dissent: Religious Factionalism in Dutchess County*.



Thanks to the intervention of State Senator Steve Saland, we received a NY State grant of \$55,000 to provide proper heating and air conditioning for the second and third floors of the Clinton House, along with some electrical upgrades. We completed the work in January 2012. According to the terms of the grant, the Empire State Corporation could not pay us until after the work was completed. Therefore, as we needed to have monies available to pay contractors, we obtained an interest-free loan from a very kind anonymous lender. The anonymous lender has been repaid. We have received our payment from the Empire State Corporation. The Clinton House building is now functioning much more efficiently. This was a big project, supervised by Julius Gude, Trustee, Head of Facilities.



The Common Council of the City of Poughkeepsie has voted to allocate \$50,000 towards a new roof at the Glebe House. That project is planned to begin by the beginning of November. Some other moneys dedicated to the Glebe House at the City may also be available to rebuild the portico.



We received a grant from the Lillian Cumming Streetscape Fund at the Rhode Island Foundation for \$13,000 (\$3,000 for curatorial services and \$10,000 for the general fund). For the general fund: We have just received grants from the Community Foundation of Dutchess County: the Denise M. Lawlor Fund for \$8,000, from the Dean Family Fund \$5,000, and the Stevens Family fund for \$1,500.



Work in Collections has expanded considerably this year with more donations and continuing accessioning and cataloguing of our incoming and existing items.



In the spring, we ran an adult lecture series at the Clinton House and the Glebe House which was very popular.

Also in the spring of 2012, we initiated a new program called the “Living with History” series in which homeowners opened their houses to invited guests and a special lecturer spoke about an historical topic.



Second year of a new program: As part of the Big Read sponsored by the Poughkeepsie Public Library District, the Society is sponsoring an essay contest for Middle and High School students.



The annual Fall Foliage Road Rallye was held in Stanfordville on Saturday, October 13. It was a beautiful crisp autumn day. Barbara Van Itallie had organized delightful historical clues for the ride around the countryside and participants showed up, many of them in vintage cars. Seventy-seven people attended.



*Dutchess County Historical Society leadership at Springwood during 1927 pilgrimage to Hyde Park.  
Left to right: John J. Mylod, trustee; Helen Wilkinson Reynolds, trustee; William Platt Adams, president; Eleanor Roosevelt; Franklin D. Roosevelt, vice-president.  
Photograph from Wide World Photos. DCHS collection.*

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Drew A. Nicholson	Mary Westermann
Mary Jo Nickerson	Laurie Winfrey
E. Richard O'Shea	Judy Wolf
Janice Parker	Dr. Louis Zuccarello

The Society encourages the use of memorial donations to remember a loved one, or the gift of a special donation in honor of one's birthday, anniversary, or special occasion. Please be assured that all such remembrances will be appropriately acknowledged with a special letter from the Society expressing our sincerest thanks.

It has been the policy of the Dutchess County Historical Society to print only the categories seen above due to space limitations. We certainly value all of our members and donors, including Lifetime, Individual, Family, and Organization. We appreciate each and every one of you. Thank you for your continued support as we move forward toward one hundred incredible years.

# Municipal Historians of Dutchess County

## County Historian:

Will Tatum  
*(appointed and confirmed Oct. 2012)*  
wptatum@gmail.com

## City Historians:

**Beacon:**  
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1 Municipal Plaza,  
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**Poughkeepsie:**  
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**East Fishkill:**  
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Millbrook 12545  
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Millerton (Town and Village)  
and North East:  
North East-Historical Society  
P.O. Box 727  
Millerton 12546

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Pawling (Village)  
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Pine Plains:  
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Historical Society  
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Pine Plains 12567

Pleasant Valley:  
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Rhinebeck (village)  
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Unionvale:  
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Wappingers Falls (Town)  
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Wappingers Falls 12590

Wappingers Falls(Village)  
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Washington:  
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Millbrook 12545  
ngreenwd@aol.com

# Historical Societies of Dutchess County

Amenia Historical Society  
P.O. Box 22  
Amenia, NY 12501

Beacon Historical Society  
P.O. Box 89  
Beacon, NY 12508

Clinton Historical Society  
P.O. Box 122  
Clinton Corners, NY 12514

Dover Historical Society  
N. Nellie Hill Road  
Dover Plains, NY 12522

East Fishkill Historical Society  
P.O. Box 245  
Hopewell Junction, NY 12533

Fishkill Historical Society  
P.O. Box 133  
Fishkill, NY 12524

Hyde Park Historical Society  
P.O. Box 182  
Hyde Park, NY 12538

LaGrange Historical Society  
P.O. Box 112  
Lagrangeville, NY 12540

Little Nine Partners  
Historical Society  
P.O. Box 243  
Pine Plains, NY 12567

North East Historical Society  
Millerton, NY 12546

Historical Society of Quaker Hill  
and Pawling, Inc.  
P.O. Box 99  
Pawling, NY 12546

Pleasant Valley Historical Society  
P.O. Box 309  
Pleasant Valley, NY 12569

Egbert Benson Historical Society  
of Red Hook  
P.O. Box 1813  
Red Hook, NY 12571

Rhinebeck Historical Society  
P.O. Box 191  
Rhinebeck, NY 12572

Roosevelt/Vanderbilt  
Historical Association  
P.O. Box 235  
Hyde Park, NY 12538

Stanford Historical Society  
Stanfordville  
NY 12581

Union Vale Historical Society  
P.O. Box 100  
Verbank, NY 12585

Wappingers Historical Society  
P.O. Box 974  
Wappingers Falls, NY 12590

Town of Washington  
Historical Society  
551 Route 343  
Millbrook, NY 12545

Dutchess County Historical Society  
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Poughkeepsie, NY 12602  
845-471-1630  
Email: [dchistorical@verizon.net](mailto:dchistorical@verizon.net)  
[www.dutchesscountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.dutchesscountyhistoricalsociety.org)

## JOIN AS A MEMBER

Throughout the year, the Dutchess County Historical Society sponsors historical trips, lectures, seminars, and workshops about a broad array of topics.

Help support the work of the Society.

## MISSION STATEMENT AND GOALS

The Society is a not-for-profit educational organization that collects, preserves, and interprets the history of Dutchess County, New York, from the period of the arrival of the first Native Americans until the present day.

Furthermore, The Society aims:

- To collect, catalogue, and preserve artifacts that make visual and tangible connections to the history of Dutchess County.
- To create permanent and temporary exhibitions, programs, and publications to stimulate interest in the history of Dutchess County.
- To develop program partnerships with other historical, educational, and governmental groups to promote community involvement with the history of Dutchess County.
- To administer Clinton House and Glebe House so as to meet The Society's educational and interpretive goals as well as to preserve the structures and landscape thereof.
- To serve the needs of researchers, educators, students, DCHS members, and members of the general public who wish to study and use the collection.



*Glebe House*



*John Beardsley, first occupant of the Glebe House in 1767 (played by Steve Wing, 2010).*

**LEVELS OF MEMBERSHIP**

Millennial Circle.....\$1,000  
*Two tickets to the Gala Awards Dinner, Silver Ribbon House Tour.*

Sponsor..... \$500  
*Two tickets to the Silver Ribbon House Tour (Launch Party and Tour).*

Patron..... \$250  
*Two tickets to the Silver Ribbon House Tour.*

Sustaining..... \$100  
*Listing in Awards Program.*

Family/Contributor..... \$75  
*Free library access, annual year book, newsletters,  
and invitations to programs and events.*

Individual.....\$50  
*Free library access, annual year book, newsletters,  
and invitations to programs and events.*

**JOIN DCHS TODAY!**

Millennial Circle.....\$1,000  
Sponsor.....\$500  
Patron.....\$250  
Sustaining..... \$100  
Family/Contributor..... \$75  
Individual.....\$50



Dutchess County Historical Society

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Please send your matching grant forms with your donation.  
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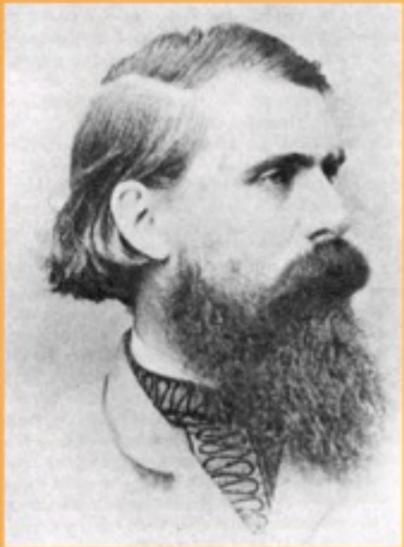
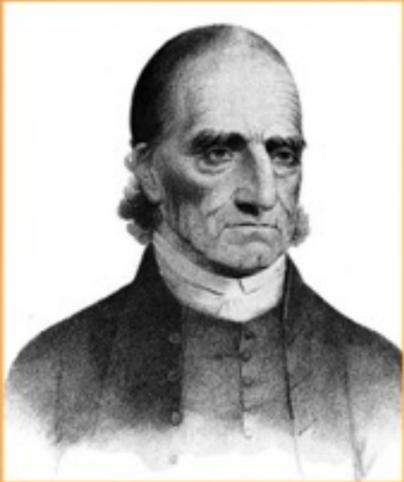
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# Sects, Schisms, and Dissent

Dutchess County Historical Society 2012 Yearbook



## Forum: Sects, Schisms, and Dissent

The United States was conceived during the Reformation, born during the Enlightenment, and baptized during the Romantic Era. Small wonder, then, that the religious history of Dutchess County shows more of factionalism than unity. The Society of Friends split over the growth of commercialism. The Catholic Church split over different visions of Americanization. The Jewish community split over its accommodations to modernism. Meanwhile, the spirit of American entrepreneurialism produced charismatic spiritual leaders, sometimes orthodox but often bizarre, who gathered around themselves coterie of ardent followers.

## Articles: The Commercial Republic

During the nineteenth century, rural America grew to be a thoroughly commercial republic, affecting different people in very different ways. In this issue of the yearbook, an article on the political capitalist William W. Woodworth portrays a man totally in harmony with the new order, while an article on the landed aristocrat and Civil War hero R. N. Verplanck portrays a man who could never quite adapt to the change.

## Documentation: The Farming Life

Few syndromes so afflict the modern world as rural nostalgia. In this issue, the yearbook documents the realities of the farming life as it is lived and has been lived in Dutchess county.



Dutchess County Historical Society

Dutchess County Historical Society  
P.O. Box 88, Poughkeepsie, NY 12602  
[www.dutchesscountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.dutchesscountyhistoricalsociety.org)

\$20.00

