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MERCHANTS AND ARTISTS:

THE APOLLO ASSOCIATION AND THE AMERICAN ART-UNION

by

ARLENE KATZ NICHOLS

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

2003

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

MERCHANTS AND ARTISTS: THE APOLLO ASSOCIATION AND THE AMERICAN ART-UNION

by

Arlene Katz Nichols

Adviser: Professor Kevin Murphy

The American Art-Union (1839-1852), a New York-based organization run by volunteer merchant-managers, succeeded in spreading a national awareness of American art by means of its lottery, free gallery, the wide distribution of etchings and medals, and its illustrated *Bulletin*. Founded as the Apollo Gallery in 1838 by James Herring, an entrepreneurial Mason, portraitist, and former Secretary of The American Academy of The Fine Arts, it boasted over 18,000 subscribers at its height in 1849. By 1852 it had run its course.

The Art-Union experience has been frequently summarized in the literature as a merchants' initiative. More recently, its actions and choice of art and artists have been examined as expressions of the class and political interests of its leadership. In this dissertation I have attempted to look beyond the labels to understand the reality of the Art-Union in the context of its times.

I closely examine its managers and their world, positioning the Art-Union as one

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of a series of New York City fine art initiatives. I consider how New York men of affairs used Enlightenment texts to create an intellectual justification for the involvement of merchants as fine arts patrons. I analyze the Art-Union's antecedents in James Herring's 1830s series of folios, published as *The National Portrait Gallery*, and in Herring's experience with the American Academy and the Apollo Gallery which preceded the Apollo Association. The Art-Union papers provide the material for establishing the nature of Herring's vision for the organization and the tenor of his relationships with artists. I conclude with a discussion of the Art-Union's political agenda. James Herring was a patriot who hoped to encourage a truly American school of art. As events played out, this generalized patriotism turned to a more specific purpose, the hope that a shared art would be a source of national unity as America moved inexorably closer to Civil War. By the time the courts ruled against the Art-Union's lottery mechanism for art distribution, it had become clear that art would not hold the nation together. The energies of the amateur merchant-managers turned elsewhere.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Completing a dissertation, it seems to me, requires a lifetime of gratitude. No one gets this far without a great deal of help. I thank the faculty and administration of the graduate program in Museum Studies at the Fashion Institute of Technology, State University of New York, Dean Robert W. Gutman, Hugh Crean, Martin Eidelberg, Marilyn Johnson, the late Rachel Kemper, Catherine Lynn, the late Richard Martin and George Szabo. They admitted me to their program, a middle aged mother of three children, long out of college, who had never taken an undergraduate Art History course and they opened, through their inspired teaching, a world of possibility.

After two years of studying the history of decorative arts, it seemed reasonable to extend my inquiry to painting, sculpture and architecture. I was fortunate indeed to enter the Art History doctoral program at the Graduate Center of the City University. Here, at an urban public institution, welcoming to a variety of mature students pursuing their passion for education and professional advancement, I was given access to a dazzling faculty of teachers and scholars. I thank H. Barbara Weinberg and the late Eugene Santomasso for their sound, insightful, and engaging instruction in American art and architecture. Most of all, at the Graduate Center, I thank Professor Emeritus William H. Gerdts, though thanks hardly does justice to my debt to Dr. Gerdts, a renowned scholar in the field of American Art. His boundless intellectual curiosity and encyclopedic knowledge, his high standards, respect for fact, and resistance to the fads and fashions of the academic world set an example to his students that is inspiring if not readily

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attainable. I have been honored indeed to be his advisee for most of my graduate academic career. I wish to thank Professor Kevin Murphy for serving as my advisor at the end of the dissertation process. He has been unfailingly supportive and contributed numerous suggestions which have improved the present manuscript. Lauren Frederick-Bowen has been a friend and confidante in the Art History Department office. Sally Webster and David Jaffee read this lengthy dissertation and served on my supervisory committee. I owe a special thanks to Professor Jaffee, a recruit from the History Department who graciously agreed to this task, entailing no small commitment of time for a student he had never met. Carol Lees, in the slide library, produced illustrations at a frantically frazzled moment. Lauren Young offered a jump start at an especially low point. The late Dr. Jess Shenson gave fellowship support in a way that made me believe my project was worthwhile.

My very heartfelt thanks goes to Curtis Matthew, Circulation and Reserve Manager at the Mina Rees Library of the Graduate Center. For this project I read and photocopied extensively the sixty-four reels of microfilm that contain the Art-Union records at the New-York Historical Society. Much of this reading was done on antiquated machines whose behavior was maddeningly erratic. Curtis was always there to help. He knew the machines and he saw me through the process. The many times that I ran to him for help, he came promptly and with good grace. He never, never gave me that look that said, "You again, can't you see I have more important work to do?" I really couldn't have finished this project without him. He is a prince.

Colleagues in the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and my

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friends at the Graduate School have been a constant source of support. Thank you to Carrie Rebora, not least for suggesting the Art-Union as a suitable dissertation topic. Thanks also to my friends, N. Mishoe Brennecke, Susan Larkin, Thayer Tolles, and the late Catherine Hoover Voorsanger. At Hirschl & Adler Galleries, where I have worked as a researcher for the past seven years, I want to thank Stuart Feld and Eric Baumgartner for readily accommodating my need for flexible hours and for putting up with a certain distracted quality that goes with the territory of graduate student life. It has been an incredible advantage to me to have access to the Hirschl & Adler library as well as to have had the luxury to be able to think about the same topics at work as I did in my studies and my research. I also want to thank my gallery colleagues, friends, fellow graduate students, and fellow Hirschl and Adler researchers Zachary Ross and Thomas Parker (even though Tom has "graduated" to the sales staff). Their good advice, good research leads, good cheer, and valuable opinions, art historical and otherwise, have made days at work a source of jollity. And I thank Hirschl & Adler for adding to my life a good friend and great support, Linda Swanson.

Last, there is always family. I work at a desk presided over by a vintage photo of my paternal grandparents, Meyer and Anna Katz. The distance between the circumstances of their life and the reality of my life is vivid testimony to the opportunities that America has given to the children of immigrant Jews. I would like to think that my experience validates, long after the fact, their struggles. I am the only child of my parents, Harold Katz and the late Lillian Katz. They wanted for me more than they ever achieved for themselves, and they indoctrinated me with the belief that I could do anything I wanted

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and on my own terms – left-handed, female, stubborn, and smart.

I have been bolstered by the unwavering support of my friend of forty-plus years, Zane Berzins. We met at Barnard as freshmen, an improbable pair; Zane is my chosen sister. My three amazing children, Daniel, Sara, and Gabriel (now amazing young adults), served as constant reminders of what really matters in life. And finally, there is Jeff, without whom . . . . From the Civil Rights movement to protesting the war in Vietnam to protesting the war in Iraq, to nursery school boards and public school parents' leadership, we have been comrades and consorts; raising a family, fully engaged in the world around us, and finding sustenance at home in our unity. Jeff is the only reason I have been able to go to graduate school; his financial and emotional support for my pursuit of this Ph.D. has been unconditional and unquestioning, even when I had serious doubts. We met at a unionization drive at Columbia University in 1964. I was a senior at Barnard; he was a freshman at Columbia. His presence in my life is the most convincing proof that I have been, indeed, providentially blessed.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used for reference to sources frequently cited in the text:

AAU-NYHS	American Art-Union Papers at the New-York Historical Society
NAD	National Academy of Design
DAB	*Dictionary of American Biography*
ApCab	Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography
NatCab	*National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*

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ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Charles L. Elliott, *John Wakefield Francis.* President of the Apollo Association, 1839, 1840, 1841. Reproduced in Cowdrey, *American Academy & American Art-Union.*

2. John Blake White, *Gen. Marion in His Swamp Encampment Inviting a British Officer to Dinner.* Apollo Association 1840 engraving. Picture in United States Capitol. Engraving reproduced in Mann, *American Art-Union.*

3. Daniel Huntington, *Sibyl.* First and only purchase for the permanent gallery. New-York Historical Society.

4. George H. Comegys, *The Artists Dream.* Apollo Association 1841 engraving. Reproduced in Mann, *American Art-Union.*

5. John Vanderlyn, *Caius Marius on the Ruins of Carthage.* Apollo Association 1842 engraving. Reproduced in Mann, *American Art-Union.*

6. Charles L. Elliott, *Daniel Stanton.* President of the Apollo Association 1842, 1843. Reproduced in Cowdrey, *American Academy & American Art-Union.*

7. William Sidney Mount, *Farmer's Nooning.* Apollo Association 1843 engraving. Reproduced in Mann, *American Art-Union.*

8. Henry Peters Gray, *William Cullen Bryant.* President of the American Art-Union 1844-1846. Reproduced in Cowdrey, *American Academy & American Art-Union.*

9. Daniel Elliott, *Prosper Montgomery Wetmore.* President of the American Art-Union 1847, 1848, 1848, 1850. Reproduced in Cowdrey, *American Academy & American Art-Union.*

10. *The Gallery of the American Art-Union.* Reproduced from the *Bulletin of the American Art-Union*, May 1849 in Cowdrey, *American Academy & American Art-Union.*

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13. George Cooke, *Cataline's Conspiracy* after Salvator Rosa. Reproduced in Keyes, *George Cooke, 1793-1849.*

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17. John Gadsby Chapman, *A Lazy Fisherman.* 1844 Art-Union prize. Reproduced in Campbell, *John Gadsby Chapman: Painter and Illustrator.*

18. Charles Bird King, *The Grandfather's Hobby.* Possibly version purchased by Apollo Association in 1839. Reproduced in Cosentino, *The paintings of Charles Bird King (1785-1862).*

19. Charles Bird King, *Self Portrait.* Painted in 1815. Possibly exhibited at Apollo Gallery in 1838 as *Portrait of Charles B. King by himself.* Reproduced in Cosentino, *The paintings of Charles Bird King (1785-1862).*

20. Emanuel Gotlieb Leutze, *Senator Hugh Lawson White.* Painted for *The National Portrait Gallery.*

21. Thomas P. Rossiter, *The Artists' Conversazione, containing Portraits of all the American Artists at Paris, in March 1841.* Exhibited at the Apollo Association 1841, for sale. Reproduced in Groft and Mackay, *Albany Institute.*

22. Henry Inman, *Prosper Wetmore.* Painted near the time Wetmore spoke at the Mercantile Library. Wetmore Papers, Firestone Library, Princeton University.

23. William Page, *The Young Merchants.* Submitted to 1842 competition. Reproduced in Taylor, *William Page.*

24. William Page, *Charles F. Briggs.* Reproduced in Taylor, *William Page.*

25. William Page, *Governor William Learned Marcy.* Reproduced in Taylor, *William Page.*

26. Joshua Shaw, *A Scene in the Olden Times: The First Arrival of a Ship in the Waters of the Hudson.* Submitted to 1842 competition. Sotheby's, New York.

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INTRODUCTION

THE AMERICAN ART-UNION

In 1849, the American Art-Union in New York City, in an unprecedented effort, purchased 460 works from 184 artists at a total cost of $45,386.77, which it distributed by lottery among 18,960 subscribers. Its annual meeting and art distribution was a major social event of the Christmas season. Its free gallery (1842-1851) was a landmark of New York cultural life. Its expanded and illustrated semi-monthly *Bulletin*, mailed (beginning April 1, 1850) to members all over the United States and in Europe, was the first American periodical devoted exclusively to art. Its specially commissioned etchings and engravings, distributed as universal membership bonuses, and its commemorative medals, distributed by lottery, put "art" into thousands of parlors and sitting rooms throughout America. Founded as the Apollo Gallery in 1838 by James Herring, an entrepreneurial sometime portraitist, publisher, book dealer and former Secretary of The American Academy of The Fine Arts, it had reached this pinnacle in only eleven years time. And yet, by 1853 it was gone, struck down by a New York State court under provisions of state law banning lotteries.

The life-span of the Art-Union was brief but intense. Its astounding success deeply impressed contemporaries and it has never entirely disappeared from the pages of American art history. Henry T. Tuckerman (1867), the founders of a second American Art Union (1884), Worthington Whittredge (1908), and Suzanne LaFollette (1929)

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recorded and recalled it with respect and affection.[1] A detailed history of the organization has been widely available since 1953, when The New-York Historical Society published Mary Bartlett Cowdrey's *American Academy of Fine Arts and American Art-Union*, drawn from original documents and archival materials owned by the Society.[2] The basic study of the American Art-Union remains Charles Baker's essay in Volume 1 of this two-volume set. Baker's essay is, by definition, narrow in scope, grounded almost entirely on New-York Historical Society archival materials. Working from these sources, Baker assembled a richly detailed digest of facts that relate the history of the American Art-Union, weaving a narrative both topical and chronological. Baker's essay has proved crucial to all subsequent Art-Union scholarship. Carrie Rebora's exemplary 1990 Ph.D. dissertation, "The American Academy of the Fine Arts, 1802-1842," vividly illustrates

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[1]Henry T. Tuckerman, *Book of the Artists* (New York: G. P. Putnam & Son, 1867); "The Old Art Union: First Paper," "The Old Art Union and the New One," *The Art Union* 1 no. 3 (March 1884): 62-63, 58-61; "The Old Art Union: Concluded from the March Number," *The Art Union* 1 no. 5 (May 1884): 101-104; Worthington Whittredge, "The American Art Union." *The Magazine of History* 7, no. 2 (February 1908): 63-68; Suzanne LaFollette, *Art in America From Colonial Times to the Present Day* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1929), 124-125.

[2] Mary Bartlett Cowdrey, *American Academy of Fine Arts and American Art-Union*, 2 vols. (New York: The New-York Historical Society, 1953). Volume One of this invaluable set of books contains a recreated Exhibition Record for both groups. The contents of Volume Two are as follows: James Thomas Flexner, "Forward, " v-x; Theodore Sizer, "The American Academy of the Fine Arts," 3-94; Charles E. Baker, "The American Art-Union, " 95-240; Mary Bartlett Cowdrey, "Publications of the Art-Union," 241-294; and Malcolm Stearns, Jr., "Sale of Art-Union Holdings, 1852,"295-311. These essays will be cited separately hereafter. Related to this body of work is Maurice Bloch, "The American Art-Union's Downfall," *The New York Historical Society Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (October 1953): 331-359, an article that appeared in the same year as the published volumes.

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how the Society's material can serve as a basis for new interpretations and insights.[3]

References to the Art-Union appear in numerous narratives, specialized and general, that deal with the rise and development of art in America.[4] Scholars have examined specific aspects of the Art-Union experience as it pertains to broader topics.[5] In 1977 the Whitney Museum mounted an exhibition of prints and medals distributed by

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[3] Carrie J. Rebora, "The American Academy of the Fine Arts, New York, 1802-1842" (Ph.D. diss., Graduate Center, City University of New York, 1990). There are three academic studies that examine the Art-Union. Sara Elizabeth Gunn, "Art in a Domestic Society: Studies in the Transformation of American Culture, 1830-1860 (B. A. Honors essay in American Studies, Mount Holyoke College, 1985) devotes a chapter to the Art-Union. Erika Louisa Fowler, "The American Art-Union: Public Constituencies and the Production of National Identity," (Master's Essay, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1996) discusses the American Academy and the Art-Union. See also Mary Natale, "The American Art-Union, 1839-1851: An Advocate for Preserving National Cultural Identity and National Political Unity," (Masters of Liberal Arts essay, Harvard University, 1993). I am indebted to Zachary Ross for calling my attention to these last three essays.

[4] Lillian Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism: The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in the United States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), especially Chapter 14, "The American Art-Union," 160-172; James Thomas Flexner, *That Wilder Image: The Painting of America's Native School from Thomas Cole to Winslow Homer* (Boston, Little Brown and Co., 1962; New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1970); Oliver Larkin, *Art and Life in America* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1949; rev. and enl. ed., New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960); Neil Harris, *The Artist in American Society: The Formative Years, 1790-1860* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966; rev ed.., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); James T. Callow, *Kindred Spirits: Knickerbocker Writers and American Artists, 1807-1855* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1967).

[5] Two examples are Jay Cantor, "Prints and the American Art-Union, " in *Prints in and of America to 1850* , ed. John D. Morse (Charlottesville, Virginia: The University Press of Virginia, 1970), 297-326 and Carol Troyen, "Retreat to Arcadia: American Landscape and The American Art-Union," *The American Art Journal* 23, no. 1 (1991): 20-37.

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the Art-Union.[6] In addition, frequent references to the Art-Union appear in monographic studies of artists whose careers intersected the life of the organization.[7]

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[6] In conjunction with that show, Maybelle Mann published *The Art-Union*, a small book containing a summary overview of the organization as well as a catalog and brief biographies of the artists represented. Maybelle Mann, *The American Art-Union* (Otisville, New York: ALM Associates, Inc., 1977; rev. ed., Jupiter, Florida: ALM Associates, 1987). This show was facilitated by the fact that the work it exhibited was issued in duplicates, and was thus readily available. There has been no attempt to mount an exhibition of paintings and individual sculptures associated with the Art-Union. This is partly because the organization did an excellent job of dispersing its prizes across the length and breadth of the land. It would still be possible to gather a collection of Art-Union canvases in major museums and private collections. But this would present a very skewed view of (mostly) paintings whose artists remain well-known and highly valued today. More difficult to do, but much more faithful to the tenor of the original exhibitions would be to locate some of the legion of obscure paintings by obscure artists that passed through the Art-Union lottery and to combine them in an exhibition with better known and regarded work.

[7] This list includes, but is by no means limited to: Patricia Hills, "The Genre Painting of Eastman Johnson: The Sources and Development of His Style and Themes" (Ph.D diss., New York University, 1973); David Lawall, "Asher Brown Durand: His Art and Art Theory in Relation to His Times" and "Asher B. Durand: A Documentary Catalogue of the Narrative and Landscape Paintings" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1966); Franklin Kelly and Gerald L. Carr, *The Early Landscapes of Frederic Edwin Church, 1845-1854* (Fort Worth, Texas: The Amon Carter Museum, 1987); Franklin Kelly, *Frederic Edwin Church* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1989); Maybelle Mann, "Francis William Edmonds: Mammon and Art," (Ph.D. diss., New York University [American Civilization], 1972); H. Nichols B. Clark, *Francis W. Edmonds: American Master in the Dutch Tradition* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian University Press, 1988); John Francis McDermott, "George Caleb Bingham and the American Art-Union," *New-York Historical Society Quarterly* 42 (January 1958): 60-69; John Francis McDermott, *George Caleb Bingham: River Portraitist* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959); E. Maurice Bloch, *George Caleb Bingham: The Evolution of an Artist* (Berkeley, California: The University of California Press, 1967); John Francis McDermott, *Seth Eastman: Pictorial History of the Indian* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961); Alfred Frankenstein, *William Sidney Mount* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1975); Joshua C. Taylor, *William Page: The American Titian* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957); and Lynda Joy Sperling, "The American Art Union, the Duesseldorf Art Union and American Landscape Painting," in "Northern European Links to Nineteenth Century American Landscape Painting: The Study of American Artists in Duesseldorf" (Ph.D. diss., University of

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Most recently the Art-Union has attracted scholars studying the history of American art-patronage. In "Mapping the Venues: New York City Art Exhibitions," Carrie Rebora Barrett includes the Art-Union as one of a number of art-venues of the period in New York City.[8] Edward Ladd Widmer, Rachel Klein, Patricia Hills, and Joy Sperling, have all addressed the issue of how the makeup of the officers and managers of the Art-Union influenced the direction of the organization and its taste in art.[9]

California at Santa Barbara, 1985), 228-346. In this chapter Sperling looks especially at George Hall, who went to Düsseldorf at the urging of Andrew Warner, Corresponding Secretary of the Art-Union, and was dissatisfied with his experience there, and ultimately, with the Art-Union.

[8] Barrett's essay in *Art and the Empire City: New York, 1825-1861* ed. Catherine Hoover Voorsanger and John K. Howat (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2000), 47-82, appeared midway through my project. It is an exemplary model of a discussion that increases understanding of the Art-Union by locating it within a broader historical context. Employing an informative and evocative mix of specific information and contextual detail, Barrett identifies and describes the Art-Union as one of a number of art-venues of the period in New York City. In fact, the topic of this dissertation was suggested to me about eight years ago by Barrett. It is a logical follow up to her own dissertation research on the American Academy of the Fine Arts. At the time she made the suggestion she was also beginning to think about the Art-Union in connection with the essay cited above. The book accompanied the exhibit of the same name at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the year 2000.

[9] Edward Ladd Widmer *Young America: Democratic Cultural Nationalism in Antebellum New York* (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1993), and Edward L. Widmer, *Young America: The Flowering of Democracy in New York City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Patricia Hills, "The American Art-Union as Patron for Expansionist Ideology in the 1840s," in *Art in Bourgeois Society, 1790-1850* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Andrew Hemingway and William Vaughan, eds., 314-339; also Patricia Hills, "Picturing Progress in the Era of Western Expansion," in *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), William H. Truettner, ed., 97-148; Rachel Klein, "Art and Authority in Antebellum New York City: The Rise and Fall of the American Art-Union," *The Journal of American History* (March 1995), 1534-1561; Joy Sperling, "'Art, Cheap and Good:' The Art Union in England and the United States, 1840-60, " *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 1 No. 1 (Spring 2002) at http://www.19th-

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It is little wonder that the American Art-Union has been a lodestone to historians of American art, culture, and politics. It championed, in 1840s New York, what had been a marginal, diffuse, cultural activity – the production and distribution of American fine art – and placed it, front and center, in the public eye. By vastly increasing public awareness, it created a market demand and thereby encouraged and justified a much increased supply of American art. By means of the democratic device of a lottery, it made fine art a consumer possibility to Americans who never could have afforded to become purchasers. For the vast majority of subscribers who never won "prizes," it utilized the latest technologies for the mass reproduction of graphic images to make every subscribing member a small-scale "collector."

A quintessentially mercantile scheme, devised by men who, in private life, were successful New York businessmen, it did not have profit as its *raison d' être*. It was, rather, a civic enterprise, aimed at nothing less than the encouragement of a native school of fine art and the creation of a national gallery of American art in New York City. The entrepreneurs and merchants who shaped and guided the course of the American Art-Union understood (although they could never articulate it in precisely these terms) that the fine arts would find a place in America based on an urban and mercantile model. The revolutionary-era vision of an agrarian America peopled by country gentry and yeoman farmers, dotted by strategically place small towns that served as trading centers, had supported a fine arts community consisting of generations of itinerant portrait painters.

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cartworldwide.org/spring_02 accessed 12/1/2002.

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In 1830s America a new society was emerging, with power beginning to shift to cities and to commerce. New York merchants saw themselves as the prototypical Americans of the future (not, as they were cast in the agrarian model, as a necessary evil). From their Manhattan vantage point, linking all sections of the nation with all the areas of the globe by means of the exchange of goods, these New York traders and businessmen felt a special mission (and a special economic interest) to preserve and protect a national union which had created them and caused them to prosper. The Art-Union managers understood art as a commodity and artists as a special kind of entrepreneur – a class that required support and encouragement to bring it to the point of assuming a full role in the glorious future that Americans of the 1840s envisioned for their nation.

The Art-Union vehicle offered an opportunity for emerging artists and emerging patrons to engage in a dialogue and to shape together a refined and a popular art for a democratic nation. This was how merchants, who made their fortunes as intermediaries between supply and demand, understood the world. The national art that would be created through this dialogue would speak to and for the entire United States of America. It would be the unifying voice of a new yeomanry – an expansively and inclusively defined middle class with a rightful place for the merchant, the professional, and the artist, as well as the farmer and the large landowner, a middle class whose members, like the Art-Union subscribers, lived in every city, town, village, settled countryside, and rugged frontier in America.

If the demise of the American Academy was symptomatic of the passing of Federalist and Knickerbocker New York, then the rise and success of the Art-Union was

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to some extent a response to the same forces that produced Jacksonian America.[10] I have tried, then, to understand the American Art-Union as a cultural and political phenomenon of its time; to position it as an inheritor of organizations, experiences and discussions that preceded it; to describe it as a major institution in antebellum New York consciously engaged in attempting to create a homogenized national culture in the face of bitter political struggles and sectional fissures; and to briefly consider it as a shaper of events and institutions that came after.

A Gloss of the Literature

Tuckerman discussed the Art-Union in the "Introduction" to his 1867 *Book of the Artists*, understanding its significance as well as anyone has since. The Art-Union, he wrote, "is characteristic of the age; it exhibits the alliance between luxury and work, society and culture – the fusion of interests so peculiar to later civilization. It emphatically marks the era when Art, emancipated from the care of Kings and Popes, finds sustenance by alliance with commerce and the people." Tuckerman described the

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[10] David S. Reynolds, *Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1995). Reynolds applies a methodology of invoking a broad social context to illuminate a literary artist who was contemporary with the Art-Union. Whitman was a young journalist in New York during the Art-Union period and maintained an interest in the visual arts that is discussed in Ruth L. Bohan, "'The Gathering of the Forces': Walt Whitman and the Visual Arts in Brooklyn in the 1850s," in *Walt Whitman and the Visual Arts*, ed. Geoffrey M. Sill and Roberta K. Tarbell (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 1-27. For Whitman's March 31, 1851 address, entitled "Art and Artists" before the Brooklyn Art Union, see Emory Holloway, *The Uncollected Poetry and Prose of Walt Whitman* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1921), 241-247. Whitman's remarks, reprinted in this source, were published in the Brooklyn *Daily Advertiser*, April 3, 1851.

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organization as "a most successful medium for the direct encouragement of native art," which tendered "eminent service" through its "seasonable commissions" to "several American artists who have since achieved high and prosperous careers."[11] In 1884 the founders of the second, short-lived American Art Union praised the work of their predecessors in their eponymously-named journal:

> Its influence . . . did not end with its death. In thousands of households its engravings, paintings and publications still acted as refining influences and kept alive the art interest that the Union had awakened throughout the country. Many an artist had been assisted by the Union in the early portion of his career, when he most needed assistance, who was now able to take care of himself -- thanks to the patronage he had received and the demand for art works which had been caused by the efforts of the Art Union. In twelve years the Art Union did more for the Art of the country, more for the artists of the country, more for the refinement of the country than probably would have been accomplished in fifty year had it not existed.[12]

Worthington Whittredge wrote, in 1908, that for sixty years a copy of the American Art-Union's engraving of "The Signing of the Death Warrant of Lady Jane Grey" had hung in his bedroom, serving as "an excellent example of the art of engraving." Whittredge credited the Art-Union with the encouragement of genre painting in America. It had spurred "the artists to look for subjects at their own doors; such subjects as they had had in their hearts all their lives, but had never before been encouraged to paint."[13] By 1929 the historical notice awarded the Art-Union had settled

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[11] Tuckerman, *Artists*, 17.

[12] *The Art Union* (May 1884): 104. These unsigned articles may have been written by the editor of the journal, a notable figure in the history of American art, Charles M. Kurtz.

[13] Whittredge, "Art Union," 63, 66.

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comfortably into the kind of formulaic but friendly account offered by Suzanne LaFollette. The "Art Union . . . did much to stimulate popular interest in art." Although it paid low prices, "the artists profited by the opportunity to get their works before the public."[14]

The recent attention that focused on the Art-Union is largely interpretive and recalls, to some extent, the contention that marked its existence. Edward Widmer's study of Young America explores a Jacksonian political and cultural thrust of the 1830s and 1840s that addressed issues of national identity in art, literature, and in the formulation of an American legal system. Widmer identifies personal and ideological connections between some of the Art-Union managers and officers – notably Charles Frederick Briggs, William Allen Butler, Francis William Edmonds, William Cullen Bryant, and Evert Duyckinck – and Young America. In Widmer's view, the Art-Union was expansive in its aims and anti-elitist in its purposes, sharing nationalist rhetoric and institutional goals with the Young America Movement. By encouraging a taste for American genre painting, the Art-Union supported the "department" of painting that embodied Young America's ideology and values.[15] Widmer sees, in the Art-Union's later

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[14] LaFollette, *Art in America*, 124-125.

[15] Sir Joshua Reynolds, President of the Royal Academy in London, employed the word "department" to differentiate and rank the different kinds of painting, e.g. history painting, landscape painting, portrait painting, etc. See Sir Joshua Reynolds, "*Discourses on Art*," University Classics (Chicago, Illinois: Packard and Company, 1945), "The Third Discourse," 127. Reynolds delivered this lecture on 14 December 1770. For a brief discussion of the history of hierarchies of painting and their enduring influence in America, see William H. Gerdts, *Painters of the Humble Truth: Masterpieces of American Still Life 1801-1939* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1981), 21-23.

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emphasis on landscape painting, a retreat from its earlier mission of embodying an insurgent Jacksonian spirit in art towards a safer and more conservative stance. While Widmer may overemphasize the aspects of the Art-Union experience that make the best case for his argument, his analysis makes an original and worthy contribution to a contextual understanding of the significance of the Art-Union.

Rachel Klein, a historian, analyzes the occupations and religious affiliations of the Art-Union officers and managers and finds them "a cohesive group" dominated by "conservative Whiggery" aligned with conservative Democrats. She describes the Art-Union leadership as "a staunch preserve of male control" upholding "old Federalist notions of patrician stewardship" under the leadership of an Episcopalian "core group."[16] From this it follows, for Klein, that the managers translated their conservative values into a selection of pictures which reinforced traditional gender roles. While Klein's research on individual Art-Union officers and members is useful, her conclusion seems to have preceded and outstripped the weight of gathered evidence. Klein and Widmer taken together appear to be participants in a historical "wise men and the elephant" exercise. The Art-Union, of course, is the elephant. Despite their diametrically opposed conclusions, both scholars make useful observations.

The same cannot be said for the most recent published work on the Art-Union, Joy Sperling's on-line essay comparing the London and American Art Unions. Sperling's article has the dubious distinction of recreating the tone of bile and vilification that plagued the Art-Union during its lifetime. Her comparison of the two organizations (a

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[16] Klein, "Art and Authority," 1537, 1545, 1537.

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topic which could be worthwhile if insightfully done) is shallow. With regard to the American Art-Union, she sums up the experience in these words: "Shamed and disgraced, the AAU dissolved, and its committee members -- several of whom had made exceedingly good purchases at the 1852 sale – fled from its taint and erased it from their biographies." Sperling's work is a-historical, a hodge-podge of inaccuracies and misreadings, with bold accusations based on negligible and questionable "evidence." On the one hand it deserves to be refuted; on the other hand, to do so would waste energy in responding to the unproductive line of inquiry that Sperling has fashioned.[17]

Patricia Hills, who has examined the Art-Union on a number of occasions since her original work on Eastman Johnson, occupies a reasonable middle ground between Widmer and Klein. Hills takes as a given that the Art-Union was the creation of an elite group of New Yorkers whose values and tastes represented their personal, economic, and class interests. Invoking Raymond Williams's concept of cultural hegemony, Hills calls the Art-Union period of the 1840s "pre-hegemonic," meaning that the elite was not yet cohesive enough to impose its cultural values on the larger society. Hills finds that the Art-Union officers and managers "were divided themselves, and caught up in the flux of

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[17] It may be noteworthy in this regard that Sperling is one of three scholars who have written on the Art-Union as a logical extension of their doctoral dissertations. Maybelle Mann wrote on Francis Edmonds before she turned to the Art-Union. Patricia Hills studied Eastman Johnson before examining the Art-Union. Sperling comes to the Art-Union via her studies of the American painter George Hall whom the Art-Union supported during his student years in Düsseldorf, Germany. Edmonds was an artist and an Art-Union officer who left the organization on good terms. Johnson went to Düsseldorf with Hall and later expressed amicable feelings toward the Art-Union. Of these three, only Hall quarreled with the Art-Union and only Sperling, acting as the avenging angel of her aggrieved artist, has felt obliged to take a muckraking approach to the organization.

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history at the same time that they attempted to shape it."[18] These recent, politicized readings of the Art-Union may well serve to attract a continuing stream of scholars drawn to the Art-Union as a topic in the social history of nineteenth-century America.

The Present Project

In short, except for Charles Baker's essay, which continues to serve as the basis for all subsequent discussion, the American Art-Union has never been the primary focus of an extended scholarly examination. It has been my intention, then, to approach the topic straight-on, to attempt to restore the Art-Union to its proper historical context, to find a way to understand the Art-Union as it might have appeared to its contemporaries, and not as it has been argued over, eulogized, or tailored to fit subsequent versions of history. To concentrate on a topic is necessarily to distort it, to position it as more pivotal to its culture and more central to the lives of its protagonists than it likely was. By casting a wider net, I hoped to establish a sense of the whole of which the Art-Union was a small, though not an insignificant part. To that end I have ranged widely, attempting to position the organization in its broader context as a significant episode in American cultural history and not simply as a subject of concern to art historians. I have looked in some detail at the group of men who constituted the officers and managers, at how they came to interact, at ideas that underlay their cultural assumptions, and at the scope of their activities outside the Art-Union, both with respect to the fine arts and in regard to their professional and civic lives. These aspects of the present project consider the Art-Union

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[18] Hills, "Expansionist Ideology," 314.

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experience through a macro lens.

At the same time, I wanted to look very closely at the origins of the Art-Union and at its reality as recorded and revealed in its papers and publications. This was a search for the factual underpinnings of an analysis of the Art-Union that would shed light on what the Art-Union did and why, on the extent to which it succeeded and/or failed in its own terms, and tantalizingly, on why its prosperity was so short-lived. The organization's dramatic end stunned its supporters, delighted its enemies, and has attracted and perplexed subsequent generations of commentators. I decided early in my research, that there had to be markers along the way, internal, structural factors which would, once identified, shed light on the final events. The focus here shifts from macro discussions of context to micro examinations of topics drawn from the history of the Art-Union. As my study evolved, the diffuse material that I read through began to sort itself into some thematic, usable shapes. It became clear that I would have to hone my discussion into manageable form. The reasonable way to do that has been to focus on the early days – on the founder, James Herring, on his Apollo Gallery and its successor, the Apollo Association, up to January 1844 when the name of the organization was officially and legally changed to the American Art-Union.[19] I have chosen to look closely at the early

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[19] The hyphen is not used in the title page of the annual *Transactions* until 1846 (published in early 1847). The question of the hyphen appears to have delayed the name change for a year. According to the 1843 *Transactions* "one of the [State]Senate Committee . . . considered the name Art Union to be an ungrammatical compound, and he refused to . . . [report] a bill in its favor" (6). After some lobbying, he was persuaded to give way, but too late for action in the 1843 legislative session. Presumably the delay had to do with the issue of the hyphen. The Managers of the Art-Union consistently used the hyphen, but the legal documents vary. The New York State Charter as amended on 1 December 1847 spelled the name Art-Union two different ways – hyphenated in the title,

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history for two reasons. First, this period has been less examined in that it predates the glamour of the flood-tide years of high visibility and large membership that characterized the Art-Union in the late 1840s. Second, and crucial to my own understanding of the Art-Union, the strengths and weaknesses that determined both the rise and the fall of the organization were indeed present from the very beginning and reflect, in fact, the Art-Union's creditable attempt to grapple with real and enduring problems in the development of American visual culture.[20]

In an attempt to weave a coherent narrative I have interspersed these macro and micro topics. By way of introduction, Chapter One narrates the history of the Art-Union while Chapter Two sketches the broader context of city, nation, and world that shaped the daily lives of New York merchants. Chapter Three takes a closer look at fine arts initiatives in New York City in the first half of the nineteenth century, preparatory to Chapter Four which explores James Herring's career through the 1830s to Herring's founding of the Apollo Gallery in 1838.

In Chapter Five, I sketch the officers and managers of the organization and

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but not in the text. (I have not personally examined the legal documents, and there remains the possibility that transcription errors or "typos" account for some of the inconsistencies.) The Art-Union itself was consistent in using the hyphen. The hyphen lives on today at the New-York Historical Society (but not at the New York Society Library).

[20] The only major casualty of my decision to concentrate on the Apollo Association period of the Art-Union has been the loss of any good opportunity to discuss the lottery issue as a key factor in contributing to the Art-Union's demise. The lottery *per se* does not arise as an issue of contention in the early correspondence, though it was an important problem later on and could easily account for a chapter-long discussion of its own.

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attempt to trace the complex web of interrelationships they shared in their metropolitan lives. This essay is supplemented by Appendix One, a series of capsule biographies of the men who passed through the Apollo Association and the Art-Union in the course of its existence. Chapter Six considers the six exhibitions held at the Apollo Gallery from October 1838 through February 1840 and highlights select correspondence bearing on Herring's relations with artists. Chapter Seven examines evidence of early strains and problems in the Apollo Association as revealed in correspondence between James Herring and his successor in New York, John Ridner.

In Chapter Eight I step back to examine the development of a theory of cultural legitimacy that emboldened New York merchants to put themselves forward as patrons and connoisseurs of the fine arts. Beginning with DeWitt Clinton's evocation of David Hume in a landmark lecture of 1814, the chapter considers popular adaptations of ideas explicated by Hume, John Locke, and Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu. These adaptations reflected and contributed to an evolving ideology that I sum up as "merchant culture." For the Art-Union this impetus culminated in the decision, taken in 1849, to transform its previously modest *Bulletin* into an ambitious monthly publication, the enlarged and illustrated *Bulletin of the American Art-Union.*

Chapter Nine, finally, identifies the Art-Union as the intended agent of a political purpose so important that it knit together the diverse group of New Yorkers who constituted its leadership and management over the years: the creation and nurture of national school of American art that would aid in the struggle to preserve the Federal Union. The Conclusion gathers together salient findings in the nine preceding chapters

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and offers, additionally, suggestions for further study that might yield deeper insight and understanding of this pioneering art initiative. In all of these discussions I freely refer to incidents and episodes from later days of the Art-Union that are illuminated by the earlier material.

A Word on Methodology

Faced with the challenge of "writing" history, I found methodological clarification of thought in articles written by the late, lamented Stephen Jay Gould for *Natural History*. In "Jim Bowie's Letter & Bill Buckner's Legs," Gould considered our human propensity to corral wayward bits of information and observation into canonical narratives that answer our need for pattern and causal explanation, along the way editing messy details, willy-nilly, to support neat conclusions.[21] That, it seems to me, has been the thrust of most of the recent analyses of the Art-Union. In a second set of articles, "Lyell's Pillars of Wisdom," and "Pozzuoli's Pillars Revisited," Gould revisited two approaches to geologic history, "catastrophism" and "gradualism." "Catastrophism," as propounded by the Swiss/French paleontologist Georges Cuvier (1769-1832), posits (in Gould's paraphrase) that "Most moments . . . feature no local wars or deaths and certainly no global cataclysms. So we do not properly credit these potential forces as agents of history, even though one global paroxysm every few million years . . . can shape the pageant of life on earth." The answering theory, gradualism, was formulated by

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[21] Stephen Jay Gould, "Jim Bowie's Letter & Bill Buckner's Legs," *Natural History* 109 no. 4 (May 2000): 26.

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British lawyer Charles Lyell (1797-1875). Gould summed it up as the understanding that "grandiose or catastrophic events really occur by a summation of small changes." A corollary of this relates to the nature of evidence. The evidence that remains from the past is biased in favor of the spectacular. Small accretions leave no record, or so little record that we fail to notice them."The past preserves only its catastrophes."[22] The standard accounts of the Art-Union have tended toward the catastrophic. The organization appeared; it soared; it crashed. Fascination with its "sudden" demise began early and has never faded. For such a startling event, someone must have been to blame. In 1853 the New York State Assembly held public hearings into the closing of the Art-Union to satisfy the public need to find someone to blame. The officers testified. *The New York Daily Times* covered the hearings at length. The State printed the full transcripts.[23] No wrong-doing was uncovered; no blame could be fixed, and the penny press moved on to fresh scandals. While the end of the Art-Union certainly had immediate precipitating causes, it is my intent, in my "micro" analysis, to restore the balance and identify some of the small accretions, over a period of time, that caused the structure to tumble.

In all of what I have written, I have tried to keep in mind the "history" in my discipline of art history. Art History, despite its seductive uses to enliven pages in dry

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[22] Stephen Jay Gould, "Lyell's Pillars of Wisdom," *Natural History* 108 no. 3 (April 1999): 28; "Pozzuoli's Pillars Revisited," *Natural History* 108 no. 4 (May 1999): 24. The quotes come respectively from "Pozzuoli:" 90, and "Lyell:" 33, 88.

[23] "The American Art-Union: Proceedings of the Committee of Investigation," 17 May 1853, 3. This is a transcript of the tenth day of the investigation, 16 May 1853, when Abraham Cozzens, the last President of the Art-Union was sworn and examined. The full transcript and findings are published in *Documents of the Assembly of the State of New York, 76th Session, 1853* vol. 6, no. 115 (Albany: 1853).

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texts, does not merely supply the pictures that illustrate other historians' narratives. The art that individuals in societies create and support is as telling a record of their values, their intellect, their emotions, and their actions, as any other form of evidence. While connoisseurship studies comprise an important element in the field of art history, they are not the whole. Nor, it goes without saying, are they the area of my greatest interest. I have been concerned, as I have studied and written, with the methodology of history.

I have hoped to apply a sound historical methodology to art history, which deserves to be restored to its parent muse, as legitimate an offspring as political history or military history or economic history, religious history, history of philosophy and on and on. To that end I have prefaced a number of these chapters with quotations from Marc Bloch's *The Historian's Craft* (originally and much more eloquently, *Apologie pour l'Histoire ou Métier d'Historien*).[24] It is a small book and remained unfinished when its author, a dean of French medieval historians fighting in the service of the French Resistance, was captured and executed by the Gestapo in 1944 . To read Bloch is to be reinfused with a sense of the urgency and the majesty of history, and to be reminded of why it is worth even a feeble effort to do it well.

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[24] Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (Paris, France: Librairie Armand Colin, 1949 as *Apologie pour l'histoire; our, Métier d'historien*; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1953).

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION: THE COURSE OF EVENTS, OR, "A KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR TRACKS"

"Knowledge of all human activities . . . is. . . a knowledge of their tracks."[25]

From its early days, the American Art-Union displayed an institutional self-consciousness, an awareness of its own historical importance. In a series of regularly published documents which included annual Transactions, frequent Catalogues, engravings, and, finally, Bulletins that combined the functions of the Transactions and Catalogues, it chronicled its activities for its public and for posterity.[26] These publications contain a core narrative buried in a blizzard of words and images, which,

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[25] Bloch, *Craft*, 54-55.

[26] These are the sources for the information in this chapter and are as follows: *Transactions of the Apollo Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in the United States at the First annual Meeting, December, 16th, 1839* (New York, 1839); *Transactions of the Apollo Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in the United States for the Year 1840* (New York, 1840); *Transactions of the Apollo Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in the United States for the Year 1841* (New York, 1841); *Transactions of the Apollo Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in the United States for the Year 1842* (New York, 1842); *Transactions of the Apollo Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in the United States for the Year 1843* (New York, 1843); *Transactions of the American Art Union for the Promotion of the Fine Arts for the Year 1844* (New York, 1844); *Transactions of the American Art Union for the Year 1845* (New York, 1845); *Transactions of the American Art-Union for the Year 1846* (New York, 1847); *Transactions of the American Art-Union for the Year 1848* (New York, 1848); *Transactions of the American Art-Union for the Year 1849* (New York, 1849); *Transactions of the American Art-Union for the Year 1850* (New York, 1850)

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extricated and supplemented by a few additions from corollary sources, supplies the facts which reveal in outline the history of the enterprise. The purpose of this chapter is simply to provide a concise chronological narrative account of the Art-Union to serve as a factual scaffolding for the more detailed discussion that follows. While the present study concentrates on the early days of the organization, when it was still the Apollo Association, the reason for looking at the Apollo is to better understand and evaluate the Art-Union experience. What follows, then, is an overview of the whole, with illustrations of the first four Presidents, and selected images of engravings and works of art, again, emphasizing the Apollo period.[27]

In October 1838 James Herring opened an ambitious art exhibition at his Apollo Gallery at 410 Broadway, on the east side of the street between Walker and Lispenard Streets.[28] Herring gathered 260 works including paintings by ninety-six American artists

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[27] Dr. John Wakefield Francis, Daniel Stanton, and Prosper Wetmore were painted by Charles Loring Elliott. William Cullen Bryant sat in 1850 for Henry Peters Gray. These portraits remain in the collection of the New-York Historical Society. I have not found a portrait of Abraham Cozzens, the fifth and last President.

[28] There are two accounts of the founding of the Art-Union which differ in significant detail. In an unsigned article "The History, Plan, and Position of the American Art-Union," in the first issue of the quarto-size expanded and illustrated *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* (April 1851 no. 1): 17-20, the author, likely the editor William Jones Hoppin, asserted that "the example of the London Art-Union in the Fall of 1838 suggested to a few gentlemen in New-York the possibility of doing something for art in a similar manner in New-York." This account, which describes in some detail the early travails, says that the original name of the organization was the Apollo Association, but offers no explanation as to why, omitting the name of James Herring and his Apollo Gallery. The second account, first published in Thomas S. Cummings, *Historic Annals of the National Academy of Design* (Philadelphia: George W. Childs, Publisher, 1865; reprint New York: Kennedy Galleries, Inc. and Da Capo Press, 1969),147-150, contains Cummings' direct quotation of a document submitted to him by Herring. Cummings, no friend of the Art-Union, gives a somewhat even-handed account of the organization,

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representing nine States, intending to make the Apollo Gallery a regular venue for the display and sale of contemporary American art. He optimistically projected that from the profits of a revolving exhibition, he could finance the beginnings of a permanent collection of American art. Despite enthusiastic press notice, the art did not sell, and the costs of maintaining the gallery outpaced Herring's modest income from admission fees.[29]

After casting about for an alternative path toward the same goals, Herring invited an eminent group of New Yorkers to the Gallery on 8 January 1839 and put forward his plan designed to promote the growth of "the Fine Arts in the United States."[30] With Dr. John Wakefield Francis (fig. 1) in the chair for the evening, and Aaron R. Thompson acting as secretary, Herring offered a founding text based on the prospectus of "The Edinburgh Association for the Promotion of Fine Arts in Scotland," calling his proposal "The Apollo Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in the United States."

Though a considerable number of changes were made over time, most notably when the Association severed its link with the Apollo Gallery, Herring's basic plan, modeled on the Edinburgh prototype, remained the template that later served as the basis for the American Art-Union. For five dollars a year each subscriber was guaranteed "free

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prefaced with the caveat that "its origin and originator are but imperfectly known, and in course the credit not often correctly awarded." Baker largely relies on Herring's account, which, even with a discount for ego gratification, better explains the founding than the Art-Union's own "Herringless" version.

The only known image of Herring is a self portrait which he exhibited at the first Apollo Gallery Exhibition. Its current location (and existence) is unknown.

[29] Baker, "Art-Union," 97-99 discusses the critical response.

[30] Ibid., 100.

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admission for himself, wife and children" to the exhibitions at the Apollo Gallery. These exhibitions would consist, insofar as possible, of the works of American artists sent by the artists, and available for sale at prices set by the artists. If the works did not sell after a month's time, the Association could choose to purchase them with the proceeds of its subscription fees. Apart from disbursements for necessary expenses, and reserving the right to produce an engraving for the members "*provided always* that a sufficient number of purchases shall have been previously made," all income from subscriptions would be devoted to the purchase of works of art. The works would continue to be exhibited until the third Monday in December, when, at an annual meeting, they would be distributed among the subscribers chosen "by lot publicly drawn." The members present would choose the leadership for the coming year to consist of "fifteen gentlemen who are not Artists" for the Committee of Management "and a Secretary and Treasurer, who shall be, *ex officio*, members of the Committee." Shortly thereafter, in January, the Association would publish an annual report, stating "the principles that guided them in the selection of the works of Art they may have purchased for the Association."[31] Herring's proposal was adopted, and, on January 16, the first meeting of "The Apollo Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in the United States" was convened, voting into office a Committee of Management and enrolling 200 charter members or subscribers. Dr. Francis served as its first President, a post he retained for three consecutive years. Thus the Apollo Association was launched.

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[31] "Constitution of 'The Apollo Association for the promotion of the Fine Arts in the United States" *Transactions . . . 1839*, 3-4; facsimile, Baker, "Art-Union," 100.

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In its first year, 1839, the Apollo Association remained closely tied to the Apollo Gallery, with four shows organized by James Herring acting in the name of the Association. In order to fill the walls in late Winter and early Spring (that is, immediately), Herring assembled a potpourri of works, including (purported) Old Masters, works by European artists, and portraits. Many of these pictures had been held over from 1838 Apollo Gallery exhibition. Some of the canvases were on loan from private collections; many were available for sale. The Transactions published by the Association on the occasion of the first annual meeting, held at the Apollo Gallery on 16 December 1839, describe the first year. Eight hundred and fourteen subscriptions were taken. Three honorary secretaries were appointed, one each in Philadelphia, Boston, and Baltimore, for the purpose of enlisting members in those cities. The Association distributed by lot thirty-six pictures by twenty-four different artists. On the one hand, these results must have proved heartening – an auspicious debut for the fledgling venture, promising a bright future.

On the other hand, the new arrangement notwithstanding, the gallery had continued to lose money in 1839. To compensate James Herring for his losses the Association allowed him $814 ($1, or a 20% commission) for every membership, a sum which, nevertheless, failed to make up "the deficiency of the receipts to meet the expenses of the year."[32] With respect to the question of producing an engraving for the 1839 subscribers, the Committee, in its Transactions, professed itself "unable to unite in the selection of a subject," and, by deferring the decision, in fact decided in the negative.

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[32] *Transactions . . . , 1839*, 2.

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The year 1840 brought changes. John Ridner, an original member of the Committee of Management, was appointed to the salaried position of Superintendent, in charge of mounting and maintaining the Association's exhibitions and recruiting New York City members. Ridner, in effect, replaced Herring as the public face of the Association in New York City. Herring, although he retained the title "Corresponding Secretary," undertook the job of traveling secretary, visiting Washington D. C., Virginia, Baltimore, and Philadelphia with letters of introduction from the well-connected New York managers. Herring signed up subscribers, enlisted honorary secretaries, and scouted for pictures to send back for exhibition in New York. The fifth exhibition, organized by Ridner in February 1840, was the last to be held at the Apollo Gallery. Ironically, the Association left the Apollo Gallery forever shortly before it received, on 7 May 7 1840, its official charter from the New York State Legislature naming it "The Apollo Association" after a home to which it would never return.[33] Although James Herring officially served as corresponding Secretary through 1841, correspondence of 1840 indicates strains between Herring and Ridner.[34] Ridner organized the sixth exhibition,

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[33] According to the "Report" of the Committee of Management in 1840, "During the former year [1839], the Apollo Institution was simply an association of gentlemen, organized for the promotion of a highly important public interest, without the aid of express legislative sanction. It was connected with a private institution seeking similar objects [i.e. Herring's Apollo Gallery], by means of a series of popular exhibitions of Works of Art" (*Transactions . . . 1840*, 13). The Charter granted to the Apollo Association named as incorporators John W. Francis, James Herring, John H. Gourlie, George Bruce, Augustus Greele, John P. Ridner, John P. Nesmith, Thomas N. Campbell and Prosper M. Wetmore.

[34] Herring and Ridner traded accusations in 1840, each blaming the other for the fall-off in subscriptions. This situation is examined in greater detail in Chapter Seven, "A Vision Codified."

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which opened in September 1840, in rooms at Clinton Hall, lent without fee by the National Academy of Design.[35] The *Transactions* of 1840 put a brave face on a disappointing year. Subscriptions declined from 814 to 686. Of these, Herring was credited for 310 , with the remainder primarily from New York City.[36] At the Annual Meeting held at Clinton Hall on 30 December 1840, only fifteen pictures by twelve artists were distributed by lot to the subscribers.

Reduced numbers, however, did not mean reduced ambition. In 1840, the Apollo Association sponsored two lectures, arranged for John Sartain of Philadelphia to produce a mezzotint for its members of John B. White's *General Marion in His Swamp Encampment Inviting a British Officer to Dinner* (fig. 2), and expanded its list of Honorary Secretaries to sixteen gentlemen, representing eight states and the District of Columbia. The *Transactions* informed subscribers that

with the funds intended by the donors for the purchase of works for a permanent

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[35] Clinton Hall, at 9 Beekman Street (between Beekman and Nassau Streets), was built in 1830 for the Mercantile Library Association and served as an exhibition hall until 1869, when it was taken over by the auction house of Leavitt. From 1831 to 1840 it accommodated the annual exhibitions of the National Academy of Design. The NAD lent the space to the Apollo as its ten-year lease was about to expire and it was about to move uptown to space in the Society Library Building at Broadway and Leonard Street (Cummings, *Annals*, 352). For a fuller discussion of the Mercantile Library Association and Clinton Hall, see Chapter Eight, "Enlightenment Ideas and New York Merchants.

In its *Transactions . . . 1840,* 17, the Apollo thanked the NAD profusely for the use of the exhibition rooms in Clinton Hall. Although all was sweetness and light in public, in fact the association had already received a copy of an NAD. resolution, signed by President Samuel F.B. Morse, laying out points of collision between the two organizations. See Chapter Nine, "The Art-Union's Political Agenda," for further discussion of relations between the two groups.

[36] These numbers and the official account of Ridner's appointment and Herring's traveling mission were published in *Transactions . . . 1840,* 14.

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> gallery, the Committee have selected an original painting of a Sybil, by D[aniel]. Huntington, a beautiful specimen of art, destined, as they would fondly hope, as a nucleus, around which will be formed, at no distant day, a collection of paintings, which shall do honour to ourselves, our city, and our country.[37]

This, the first (and only) work purchased for the projected permanent gallery, remained the property of the Art-Union and endures as part of its physical legacy in the collection of the New-York Historical Society, Daniel Huntington's *Sibyl* (fig. 3).[38] Meanwhile, the Association had begun its long course of strained relations with the artist-run National Academy of Design. The Academicians believed that the association's exhibitions presented competition both for pictures and audience with their own annual Spring Exhibition, whose admission fees were the Academy's most important source of revenue.[39] For the remaining course of the Art-Union's brief lifetime, relations with the NAD waxed and waned, providing a leitmotif to the Art-Union's relationship with its

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[37] *Transactions . . . 1840*, 15.

[38] Huntington's *Sibyl* was exhibited in 1840 and purchased by the Apollo Association for the permanent gallery at the meeting of 28 December 1840, on a motion by Prosper Wetmore. Although provision for a permanent gallery was included in Article III of the Apollo Constitution published in the 1840 *Transactions* (5), it was no longer present in the "Constitution of the American Art-Union" as amended 23 December 1843 and published in the 1844 *Transactions* (48-51). The Association always retained the right to purchase pictures and determine their appropriate use – that is, it could have kept them for a gallery, if it so chose, but was under no obligation to do so.

[39] Predictably, Baker, "Art-Union,"who generally takes a pro-Art-Union stance, "proves" that Art-Union exhibitions did not, as alleged, actually injure the finances of the National Academy. See "Relations with the National Academy of Design"176-201 and especially the comparative chart "National Academy Receipts 1826-1864 in Thirteen-Year Periods: Before, During and After the Art-Union" (196). Cummings, *Annals*, who always saw other institutions as threats to the NAD, takes the opposite stand. Whatever the truth of the matter, the Academicians certainly believed that the quality of their exhibitions and the income derived from them were sorely threatened by the Art-Union.

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artist-constituency. Since the NAD was an organization run by artists for artists, periods of bad feeling between the Art-Union and the NAD seemed to prove, de facto, that the Art-Union's interests were at odds with those of the artists, appearing to confirm the correctness of an antagonistic attitude to the Art-Union held by a steady, but growing minority of artists.[40]

Not daunted, the Apollo Association mounted its seventh and eighth exhibitions in March and October 1841 in rooms it engaged at the Granite Building at Broadway and Chambers Street. Ridner, who was a lumber merchant by trade, negotiated an arrangement that reduced his annual pay to $500, which allowed the organization to hire an assistant Superintendent to aid in organizing and running the exhibitions, and also to canvass for members. Despite a growing cadre of forty-four Honorary Secretaries in eighteen states, Washington D.C., and London, England, the year ended with only seven works by seven artists purchased for distribution – six paintings and a sculpted portrait bust of Sir Walter Scott by Chauncey B. Ives (1810-1894), a copy of a work by famed English sculptor, Sir Francis Chantrey (1781-1841). The reduced number of prizes reflected higher prices paid to artists in 1841 than in 1840, a decision for quality over quantity. The association spent $1,120 in 1840 for fifteen works and $1,059 in 1841 for seven works, although the number of subscribers rose to 937.[41]

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[40] For further discussion of the Art Union and the artists during the Apollo period, see Chapter Six, "James Herring and His Artists."

[41] See Baker, "Art-Union," 161 for a useful table comparing year by year from 1839 to 1851, the number of works purchased, the total cost, the average price paid per work, and the number of artists involved.

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It is arguable as to whether 1840 or 1841 marked the low ebb of the organization. At any rate, two years of struggle resulted in a substantial personnel change on the Committee of Management for 1842. In the April 1851 issue of the *Bulletin of the American Art-Union*, these dark and precarious days looked so much like ancient history that they were the subject of a public recollection tinged with gallows humor:

> The exhibitions, while they were all that we desired in character, greatly disappointed us in the receipts; and our funds, small at best, were so diminished by expenses that little was left to be divided between even a cheap mezzotint engraving and the purchase of a few paintings. The country subscriptions did not increase and the city list was with difficulty kept up. Convulsive but ineffectual efforts were made to rally the people and the public press in favor of the institution. The committee of managers at their own expense prepared a costly entertainment, to which the press and the friends of art were invited, that, being brought together, their sympathies might be excited in favor of art. Not one soul came to cheer the committee in their thankless labor! . . . The committee was discouraged, and at the next annual election they declined to be re-elected, with the exception of one or two who still had faith. . . .[42]

Among the departed was James Herring, gone forever from the organization he had called into being. Also gone was John Ward, the man who had been hired as John Ridner's assistant superintendent. Ward had been dispatched to South Carolina to recruit Honorary Secretaries and subscribers, but left the country owing the Association $300, which he claimed as unreimbursed expenses, a claim that seems to have been accepted more in sorrow than in anger by the New York Committee.[43] The Apollo Association,

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[42] *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* (April 1851), 17.

[43] For the official account of Ward's defalcation, see *Transactions . . . 1841,* 7. "The Committee are satisfied that he had no premeditated plan of defrauding us. . . . It is but justice to him to state that he attributes his desertion to depression of spirits, from his ill success, and mortification in not being able to refund the monies he had appropriated to pay his expenses. . . . It is to be regretted that he had not the firmness to return with an honest statement of his case, and throw himself on the liberality of the Association."

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despite initial high hopes and an ambitious beginning, had run into the same kind of financial difficulties that had dogged Herring's Apollo Gallery.[44] In a choice precisely suited to the tenor of the times, the Committee decided to engrave, for the 1841 members, George H. Comegys' *The Artists' Dream* (fig. 4), a trompe l'oeil work that commented bitterly on the hard lot of the artist in America. In the *Transactions*, the Association described its selection as

> an original work of the imagination, one of the last and most admired productions of the unfortunate Comegys, . . . [a] gifted and aspiring young Artist. . . . His ardent spirit sunk under frequent disappointments, till at length reason forsook her throne, and he is now dead to the Arts – a mental wreck.[45]

Despite straitened circumstances, the organization held its course to the best of its ability. The *Transactions* of 1841 concluded with a note on behalf of the 1842 Managers announcing the temporary end of formal exhibitions, giving as a reason the financial drain they entailed. Just as important, but not publicly stated, was the desire of the Managers to mend their institutional relations with the artists of the National Academy of Design. The Managers further explained that the Association had made arrangements to provide "a suitable and convenient room, open to the public, and under the charge of a competent person, where pictures, or other works of Art may be advantageously exhibited either for public inspection or for sale." On a wholly positive note, the Association declared its intention to engrave John Vanderlyn's (1775-1852) prize-winning *Caius Marius on the*

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[44] Disappointing revenue from art exhibitions was the rule rather than the exception in New York. It is a refrain that occurs repeatedly in histories of art initiatives through the period. It dogged the American Academy and the National Academy of Design for years.

[45] *Transactions . . . 1841*, 6.

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Ruins of Carthage (fig. 5) for 1842 members.[46] It announced, as well, a competition for artists, offering a prize of $500 for a picture "suitable to engrave, for the year 1843," which would be added to the 1842 lottery, retaining, however, the right to engraving.[47]

The new year brought new faces and renewed enthusiasm to the Apollo Association. Of the four officers and fifteen men who constituted the governing body for 1842, only five holdovers remained – John Austen, Daniel Elliot, John H. Gourlie, and Prosper Wetmore, all of whom continued on the Committee of Management, and John Ridner, who replaced James Herring as Corresponding Secretary. Daniel Stanton (fig. 6), a new recruit, assumed the presidency. The brave face of the 1841 *Transactions* proved justified. In the 1842 *Transactions* the organization noted that "to spread a knowledge of the Institution and its objects and to increase the number of its subscribers" it had hired W[ellington]. S. Solomons as a traveling secretary.[48] This strategy, supplemented by paid New York City collectors, proved successful in the coming years.

The managers also acknowledged the anomaly of their name, informing the members that they would apply to the State Legislature to amend their charter and change their name to the "American Art-Union," reflecting both the severance of their connection

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[46] *Marius Amid the Ruins of Carthage* (1807, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco) was painted by Vanderlyn while he was in France. In 1800 he had been the first American to exhibit at the Paris Salon. In 1808 *Marius* was awarded a Gold Medal, a signal honor for an American artist. See Lois Marie Fink, *American Art at the Nineteenth-Century Paris Salons* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 10-13, 18-20. The work was copied for the Apollo Association by Asher B. Durand and engraved by Stephen Alonzo Schoff. Durand's copy was distributed as a prize in 1842.

[47] *Transactions . . . 1841*, "Notice," following page 20.

[48] *Transactions . . . 1842*, 30.

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with the Apollo Gallery, and their kindred relationship with similar European organizations, most notably the very successful London Art Union.[49] In the same document, the managers also looked forward to 1843, reporting that Jonathan Sturgis had lent the use of his *Farmer's Nooning* (fig. 7) by William Sidney Mount for engraving and distribution to members. The promised competition, however, had come to naught. The *Transactions* reported that the premium offered "for a cabinet picture, illustrative of the history, literature, or manners of the country, to be engraved for distribution among the members of the Association" had not been awarded. "But four pictures were offered, and none that were thought suitable for the object aimed at."[50] At the fourth annual meeting held on 23 December 1842 in the Lecture Room of the New-York Society Library, thirty-five pictures by twenty artists were distributed by lot among the 1,120 paid subscriptions.[51]

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[49] With regard to the issue of the hyphen, the name is published here with the hyphen. The hyphen is not used in the title page of the *Transactions* until 1846 (published in early 1847). The question of the hyphen appears to have delayed the name change for a year. According to the 1843 *Transactions* "one of the [State]Senate Committee . . . considered the name Art Union to be an ungrammatical compound, and he refused to . . . [report] a bill in its favor" (6). After some lobbying, he was persuaded to give way, but too late for action in the 1843 legislative session. Presumably the delay had to do with the issue of the hyphen. The Managers of the Art-Union consistently used the hyphen, but the legal documents vary. The New York State Charter as amended on 1 December 1847 spelled the name Art-Union two different ways – with the hyphen in the title, but without the hyphen in the text. The London Art Union appears not to have used the hyphen.

[50] *Transactions. . .1842*, 6.

[51] This reflected $5600 in paid subscriptions divided by five, representing slightly under 1100 individuals allowing for a few multiple subscribers. After James Herring's departure there is no further reference to the permanent gallery, nor to subscriptions solicited for it and not included in the lottery drawing.

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The crowd that gathered a year later at the Lecture Room of the New-York Society Library on 18 December 1843, had every reason to feel festive. On this night, the Apollo Association distributed forty-six paintings by thirty artists, in addition to five plaster casts of a miniature equestrian statue of George Washington by Horace Kneeland (1808-60), among 1,452 subscriptions.[52] This was far and away its best year to date, "an increase over any year since the founding of the Institution of more than one third."[53] The Association had expanded to include seventy Honorary Secretaries in twenty-two states and Canada. Moreover, in the Spring of 1843, during a brief period of friendly relations with the National Academy of Design, it had been the sole purchaser of paintings from the Academy's annual exhibition. The *Transactions* revealed three more pieces of news. Members for 1844 would receive an engraving of Francis W. Edmonds's *Sparking*. The organization planned to return, on 1 May 1844, to its previous home, "the well lighted and eligible Gallery, No. 322 Broadway, opposite the [New York] Hospital." And lastly, as of 29 January 1844, by two-thirds affirmative vote of the State Legislature the original act of incorporation of 7 May 1840 was amended to rename the organization, henceforth to be known as the American Art Union [sic].[54]

In 1844 the internationally famous poet and New York newspaper editor, William

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[52] Kneeland did not enjoy a major career and remains obscure today. Wayne Craven, *Sculpture in America* (1968: rev. ed. Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware Press; New York and London: Cornwall Books, 1984), 169 identifies him as "an unknown portrait sculptor of New York City." The equestrian Washington is unlocated.

[53] *Transactions. . . 1843*, 3.

[54] *Transactions . . . 1843*, 37-38. Art Union is not hyphenated in this text.

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Cullen Bryant (fig. 8), assumed the president's chair. The Art-Union grew to 2,080 members for whom it purchased ninety-two works of art, including an original marble bust of the late, revered artist Washington Allston by Edward Augustus Brackett (1818-1908), a Boston sculptor. In addition to the already promised engraving of Edmonds's *Sparking*, members for 1844 would also receive an etching of the *Escape of Captain Wharton*, a Revolutionary War scene drawn by Thomas Frederick Hoppin (1816-72) and derived from a passage in James Fennimore Cooper's 1821 novel, *The Spy*.[55] The return to the exhibition space at 322 Broadway had marked the resumption of a more ambitious exhibition policy. The *Transactions* of 1844 promised , as a benefit of membership, access to

> a fine gallery, the walls of which are at all times hung with paintings, either purchased by the institution or placed there by the owners for sale, which is under the care of the superintendent, and is free to all the members with their friends, and others interested in the progress of Art.[56]

The Art-Union remained in this space until 1847.

The ascending arc of growth and prosperity continued in 1845. At year's end the Art-Union boasted 3,233 members among whom were distributed 123 paintings by forty-five artists. Subscribers received an engraving of Asher B. Durand's 1834 history

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[55] Thomas Hoppin was the younger brother of William Jones Hoppin, who joined the Committee of Management in 1843. While twentieth century notions of the necessity and propriety of arms-length transactions do not appear to have been in force in the mid-nineteenth century, the fact that the Art-Union awarded a major commission to the brother of one of its managers could certainly have given credence to persistent allegations of "favoritism" in art patronage by the officers and managers.

[56] *Transactions. . .1844*, 45.

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painting, *The Capture of Major Andre*.[57] When Wellington Solomons, the traveling secretary since 1842, resigned, the Managers decided not to replace him, but to rely, instead, on the network of 105 Honorary Secretaries to stimulate nationwide participation. Robert F. Fraser had replaced John Ridner as Corresponding Secretary, but Ridner continued with the organization as a member of Committee of Management. The *Transactions* listed with pride the seven engravings published by the Art-Union and distributed to its members since 1840, including *The Capture of Major Andre*, which, it admitted with chagrin, was not yet ready to be distributed to the 1845 subscribers. Nonetheless, it promised 1846 members an engraving after Emanuel Leutze's *Sir Walter Raleigh, Parting with His Wife*, and illustrated the work, by way of advertisement, as the frontispiece of the *Transactions*. For its end-of-the-year annual meeting and lottery drawing, the Art-Union moved from the sedate precincts of the New York Society Library, where it had roosted for three years, to the imposing space of the Broadway Tabernacle, adding a dramatic dose of spectacle to its December proceedings.[58]

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[57] Durand was approached by the Art-Union for permission to engrave his picture. He consented to the proposal, agreeing to revise the picture for engraving. He was paid a fee of $100 for his part in the process. The work was engraved, at a cost of $1500 by Alfred Jones and James Smillie. Management Committee minutes 14 January 1845, AAU-NYHS Vol. 1, Reel 1.

[58] The Broadway Tabernacle was built at Broadway and Worth Street in 1835 to house the crowds attracted to preaching of the evangelical Presbyterian minister, Charles Grandison Finney. It featured "a great rotunda, with tiers of pews rising steeply from the central pulpit, [which] served to focus all eyes on the preacher and carried his voice clearly to the throngs that came to hear him." Edwin C. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 530. The Presbyterians sold the building to the Congregationalists in 1840. The building was demolished in 1856. In addition to serving as a religious space, the Tabernacle was available as a venue for a variety of mass meetings. In addition to the Art-

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At the end of 1846, when William Cullen Bryant completed his three-year tenure as President of the American Art-Union, he retired from an organization in flourishing condition. The Art-Union had grown to 4,457 members who shared 145 paintings in the year-end lottery. The *Transactions* brightly contrasted the robust health of 1846 with the dire condition of 1841, when in valedictory words, "this institution was at a point of extreme depression, quite in discredit with the public, and apparently ready to expire."[59] Members for 1847 could look forward to two engravings, *The Jolly Flatboat-men*, after the picture by George Caleb Bingham, and *The Sybil*, after Daniel Huntington's picture owned by the Art-Union.

The Art-Union continued to grow in 1847. Prosper Wetmore (fig. 9), a manager of the Apollo Association since 1839, assumed the Presidency of the institution. On 8 October, the organization moved into its splendid new gallery (fig. 10) and office building, 497 Broadway (at Mercer Street). The Committee of Management fine-tuned the Charter, Constitution and by-laws to reflect an optimal mode of functioning. By the end of the year the Art-Union was represented outside of New York City by 303 Honorary Secretaries. At the ninth Annual Meeting held at the Broadway Tabernacle on Christmas Eve, Wetmore pointed with pride to a membership of 9,666, "a noble aggregate" that nearly doubled the 1846 total.[60] The prizes for the year numbered 574,

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Union, it housed meetings of feminists, abolitionists and temperance reformers. Ibid., 819, 857.

[59] *Transactions. . .1846*, 7.

[60] *Transactions. . .1847*, 13.

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including works in watercolor, oil paintings, statuary, 250 bronze medals and fifty silver medals, executed by 105 artists. The glittering social event was documented by Art-Union artist Tompkins H. Matteson.[61] In 1848 the Art-Union distributed a limited edition of lithographs based on Matteson's work, *Distribution of the American Art-Union Prizes, at the Tabernacle-Broadway, New York; 24th Dec. 1847* (fig. 11) to its Honorary Secretaries. The Art-Union promised its members for 1848 a line engraving of Daniel Huntington's *The Signing of the Death Warrant of Lady Jane Grey* and announced that major paintings by Emanuel Leutze and Asher B. Durand had already been purchased as prizes for the coming year. Additionally, subscribers would receive a six-plate set of etchings designed by Felix O. C. Darley of *Illustrations of Rip Van Winkle* with eleven pages of text by Washington Irving.

In 1848 Andrew Warner replaced Robert Fraser as Corresponding Secretary, and the Art-Union Committee of Management expanded from fifteen members to twenty-one. At the Tenth Annual Meeting on 22 December 1848, again held at the Broadway Tabernacle, the Managers reported 16,475 "subscriptions in hand," an astounding 6,890 more than in 1847. This surge reflected the allure of the Art-Union's sensational prize offering for 1848, Thomas Cole's four-canvas series, *The Voyage of Life*. With these numbers the American Art-Union proudly exceeded in subscribers the size of the London

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[61] Tompkins Harrison Matteson (1813-1884) was a history and genre painter who sold works to the Art-Union beginning in 1845. He became an Honorary Secretary when he left New York City for the upstate town of Sherburne in 1850, which he subsequently represented in the New York State legislature. His image was commissioned by the Art-Union, lithographed by Sarony and Major, and published by John Ridner. It was distributed to Honorary Secretaries for use as a promotional device. Cowdrey, "Publications," 288-89.

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Art Union. The managers also pointed with pride to the maintenance of their free gallery. The association planned to distribute, in 1849, an engraving of *Youth*, the first picture in Cole's quartet, and announced that it retained full rights to produce engravings of the entire series in the future. The Union would continue its foray into metallurgy with a John Trumbull medal. In 1847 the semi-monthly catalogue had been expanded into a semi-monthly bulletin, a change which was so well-received that the association planned to expand the publication into a journal. Included in the distribution that evening were 497 paintings, 450 bronze medals of Washington Allston and Gilbert Stuart, and twenty-five portfolios of the complete published engravings of the Art-Union. Following the success of Darley's *Rip Van Winkle* line drawings of 1848, subscribers for 1849 were promised a similar production of *Illustrations of the Legend of Sleepy Hollow.*

When the American Art-Union convened its Annual Meeting at Niblo's Garden on 21 December 1849, it prepared to distribute 460 works by about 184 artists to the holders of its 18,960 subscription tickets.[62] These members had been recruited by a network of 625 Honorary Secretaries, a significant increase over the 393 secretaries of 1848. The Union had further enlarged its gallery space at 497 Broadway in October and boasted, with justification, that it was the pre-eminent Art-Union in the world. Subscribers for the year 1850 were enticed with the promise of an engraving of Charles

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[62] Niblo's Garden, owned by William (Billy) Niblo, was built in 1828 at Broadway and Prince Street. It became a favorite recreational site for the city, with a garden and a theater. In 1833 President Andrew Jackson visited. In 1843 it hosted the American premier of Gaetano Donizetti's 1835 opera, "Lucia de Lammermoor." Destroyed by fire in 1846, it was rebuilt in 1849, the year that the Art-Union chose it for its eleventh annual meeting. In 1848 Niblo was the theater manager who leased the Astor Place Opera House to present the English tragedian, Charles Macready.

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Leslie's painting of 1825, *Ann Page, Slender and Shallow. A Scene from the Merry Wives of Windsor*, lent for the purpose by Manager Philip Hone. Moreover, the Art-Union undertook to supply each member with a small-size folio of five engravings comprised of Richard Caton Woodville's *The Card Players*, Asher B. Durand's *Dover Plains*, Thomas Cole's *Dream of Arcadia*, Emanuel Leutze's *The Image Breaker*, and Francis Edmonds' *The New Scholar*. These constituted the first part of a promised series entitled *The Gallery of American Art*.

In 1850 Abraham Cozzens succeeded Prosper Wetmore as President of the Art-Union. During the summer the Art-Union closed its gallery for renovations, reopening on September 4, with a gala reception marked by the celebrity appearance of Jenny Lind, "the Swedish Nightingale," escorted by her impresario, Phineas T. Barnum.[63] Despite an increase in the number of honorary secretaries to 780, year's end saw a slight diminution in the organization's numbers. With 16,310 subscriptions in hand, the Art-Union distributed over 400 original works by 130 artists. This, as events subsequently played out, was the last lottery distribution that the Art-Union held.

For most of its course, 1851 followed a pattern that was both distressing and familiar. The Art-Union continued to recruit Honorary Secretaries, reaching, by year's end, the one-thousand mark. Subscriptions came in slowly, as they always did until the Autumn, with the Art-Union obliged to buy pictures in anticipation of the traditional December surge of members. What distinguished 1851, however, was that the late-year

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[63] Members of Barnum's family served as Art-Union Honorary Secretaries in the Barnum hometown of Bethel, Connecticut.

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membership rush failed to swell to its accustomed and expected number. By the intended date of distribution, 19 December, only 11,643 subscriptions had been received. The managers determined to postpone the distribution until December 31. The second date proved no more attractive than the first and the managers decided to aim for the number 15,000. That figure was never attained. In the end, 13,578 subscriptions were received, but by the time that the Art-Union determined to hold the distribution, which it finally scheduled for 15 March 1852, the legality of its lottery mechanism was under attack in the courts. The law suit dragged on until 22 October 1852, when the New York State Court of Appeals (the highest state court) finally ruled against the use of the lottery device.

Unable to dispose of its collection of pictures as promised, the managers resorted to a mechanism they knew very well. On 15, 16, and 17 December 1852 the Art-Union offered its 1851 inventory of fine art at auction, realizing enough on the proceeds to satisfy outstanding debts and to complete the promised engravings for 1851 subscribers. These included a full size print of Woodville's *Mexican News* and five folio-size works comprising the second part of *The Gallery of American Art*: Jasper Cropsey's *American Harvesting;* William Sidney Mount's *Bargaining for a Horse*; William Ranney's *Marion Crossing the Pedee*; John Kensett's *Mount Washington from the Valley of the Conway*; and Richard Caton Woodville's *Old '76 and Young '48*. After disposing of its real estate, the Art-Union gave to the New-York Gallery of Fine Arts in 1858 the portraits of its first four presidents, along with the only work acquired for its projected permanent gallery, Huntington's *Sibyl*. These the Gallery of the Fine Arts passed along to the New York

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Historical Society where they remain along with the Art-Union papers and assorted prints and medals.

These are the numbers that tell the story. In fourteen years time the American Art-Union evolved from an inauspicious beginning as an unsuccessful New York art gallery to an organization that was the major patron of living American artists and the vehicle for the distribution of art images to tens of thousands of Americans in cities, in towns, in frontier villages, on plantations, in military camps, in short wherever Americans lived. The discussion that follows establishes a context for the Art-Union and then focuses on the early days which were difficult and uncertain as the institution struggled to find its way. My analysis is primarily concerned with looking for origins and examining inherent strains and weaknesses. Let it be said at the beginning, then, that the point that is resoundingly made in the narrative contained in this chapter is that early struggles were rewarded with unprecedented success. The American Art-Union created what was unimaginable before its existence – a mass audience for American art and a group of professional artists large enough to supply it. Despite the brevity of the Art-Union's tenure, despite subsequent Civil War, foreign wars, and cyclic economic upheavals, the foundation has held. The audience once created, and the artists, once summoned into being, have continued to flourish as a permanent feature of the American cultural landscape.

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CHAPTER 2

THE AMERICAN ART-UNION: A PANORAMA OF "ITS MOMENT IN TIME"

> "A historical phenomenon can never be understood apart from its moment in time."[64]

In the spirit of an examination of a topic in the history of visual art in America, imagine, if you will, the period of the Art-Union as a moving panorama, as a *tableau vivant*, or as a stage setting offering a bustling crowd scene where attention will be fixed on one small figure (the Art-Union), moving quickly through the entire setting, now here, now there. Or, alternately, imagine an Art-Union insignia, worn by many different figures in every section of the whole, indicating the diversity of interests of the men of New York City who came together to make up the Art-Union.[65]

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[64] Bloch, *Craft*, 35.

[65] The sources for New York City history are vast. The lodestone for modern students continues to be I.N. Phelps Stokes' magisterial six volume compilation of primary source documents and commentary, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909* (New York: R. H. Dodd, 1915-1928). The most useful general contemporary accounts for the present discussion have been Edward Spann, *The New Metropolis: New York City, 1840-57* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991); and Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*. Among published diaries and memoirs of the period, that of Philip Hone, contained in two volumes edited by Alan Nevins, *The Diary of Philip Hone,* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1927) is a universal favorite both for Hone's incomparable central position and his quotability. Texts focusing on more specific topics include Robert Greenhalgh Albion, *The Rise of New York Port, 1815-1860* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939); Robert Ernst, *Immigrant Life in New York City, 1825-1863* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1949; reprint, Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994); Thomas Bender, *New York Intellect: A History of Intellectual Life in New York City, from 1750 to the Beginnings of Our Own Time* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., Borzoi Book, 1987; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Paperbacks, 1988); Dixon Ryan Fox, *The Decline of the Aristocracy in the Politics of New York, 1801-1840* (New York:

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At the beginning of the nineteenth century, New York stood second to Philadelphia in population in the new nation. Its 60,489 citizens focused their collective effort on trade and commerce within the framework of the newly established and decidedly experimental American republic.[66] As the century progressed, New York became, in all respects except the political, the first city in America, and New Yorkers found themselves living in a swirling world of flux and realignment in politics; of dizzying developments in technology and science, affecting especially transportation, communication, and manufacturing; of tremendous population growth due both to immigration and to significant internal population movement; and of cyclical economic swings, to name some of the areas of major change. At the same time, New York artists,

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Columbia University Press, 1919; reprint, edited by Robert V. Remini, New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., Harper Torchbook, 1965); Philip S. Foner, *Business and Slavery: The New York Merchants & The Irrepressible Conflict* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1941; reprint New York: New York: Russell & Russell, 1968); Perry Miller, *The Raven and the Whale: Poe, Melville, and the New York Literary Scene* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1956 as *The Raven and the Whale: The War of Words and Wits in the Era of Poe and Melville;* reprint, Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City & the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Ira Rosenwaike, *Population History of New York City* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1972); Stanley Nadel, *Little Germany: Ethnicity, Religion, and Class in New York City, 1845-80* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990; and Elizabeth Blackmar, *Manhattan for Rent, 1785-1850* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1989). The period is also described in its various aspects in a series of essays contained in The Metropolitan Museum of Art (MMA), *Art and the Empire City: New York, 1825-1861* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2000).

[66] This number and those following from Rosenwaike, *Population*, 17, Table 2, "Population Comparison of New York State and New York City with Pennsylvania and Philadelphia, 1790-1850."

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writers, academics, and public-spirited citizens struggled to create an American cultural presence that would earn them the respect of their European cousins, a respect essential to their developing *amour propre*. While any examination of the American Art-Union is manifestly a foray into American art history, a balanced understanding of the institution requires a sense of its context – a sketch in broad strokes that describes the city, the country, and the world of which the Art-Union was an integral part.[67] The men who managed the Art-Union were "men of affairs," activists engaged in every aspect of their social, economic, political, and cultural milieu.

International Developments

Like the Venetian merchants of earlier centuries who gathered on the Rialto to share international news, New Yorkers kept their fingers on the international pulse, aware that no event was so far distant that its ripples might not wash on their piers and pilings. Events in Europe registered with personal immediacy on the daily life of New Yorkers. The economic repercussions of the failure of the Irish potato crop in 1845 set in motion a mass migration from the Emerald Isle to the shores of America. Three years later, in 1848, a variety of liberal agitations reached fever pitch in Europe.[68] These movements,

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[67] The problem of creating a historical narrative is the ultimate exercise in virtual reality. Marc Bloch makes this point in his discussion of critical examination of the varieties of evidence. No one person at any time sees the whole picture in an objective fashion. That includes the historian. Moreover, since history is written from the vantage point of knowing more or less the nature of subsequent events that cannot be known to participants, the relative weight given known facts is inevitably distorted.

[68] Manifest as Chartism in England, which was by and large peaceably contained, in France, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Hungary, the "Revolutions of 1848" were

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while they engaged the sympathies of proudly republican New Yorkers, ultimately resulted in increased emigration to America, a development by no means greeted with unequivocal approval.

American Territorial Expansion

During the period of the Art-Union, America's political boundaries expanded to include the breadth of the North American continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans as well as the length from the 49th parallel in the North West to the Rio Grande River in the Southwest. After years of border unrest, Secretary of State Daniel Webster negotiated the configuration of the Maine/New Brunswick border with his British counterpart, Alexander Baring, the 1st Baron Ashburton in the Webster Ashburton Treaty of 1842. In 1844 James K. Polk, a Virginia Democrat, defeated Whig Henry Clay for President, campaigning with the slogan "Fifty-Four Forty or Fight," a reference to the long disputed boundary line between the United States and Canada in the Pacific Northwest. The phrase "manifest destiny" first appeared in print in 1845, coined approvingly by John L. O'Sullivan, the feisty editor of the *New Democratic Review* and a literary associate of Evert Duyckinck. The boundary dispute that had fueled Polk's campaign was settled peaceably on June 15, 1846, with the signing of a treaty establishing the border line along the compromise 49th parallel. Philip Hone, a once and future member of the Art-Union Committee of Management, enjoyed a celebratory dinner

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far more disruptive. Democratizing forces achieved spotty and temporary victories on the continent, which were, by 1850, largely swept away in a tide of reaction and repression.

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on that very day in Washington D.C. at the home of the British Minister James Pakenham in the company of Senator Daniel Webster.[69]

The situation with regard to the southern boundary, however, drew America into its second war of the young century.[70] The Mexican-American War (1846-48) was the immediate consequence of the admission of the Republic of Texas to statehood in 1845.[71] The Americans captured Mexico City in 1848, ending the war with the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, under whose terms Mexico ceded to the United States all its land claims north of the Rio Grande River, including the state of Texas and the territories of New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, Colorado, and California.[72] Although some New

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[69] Hone, *Diary*, 2:767.

[70] The first was the War of 1812, in the course of which the British burned Washington, D. C. The conflict was brought home to New York by the British naval blockade which caused the New York militia to mobilize and keep close watch on New York harbor.

[71] In 1835 and '36, Anglo (that is to say, American) settlers in East Texas had rebelled against Mexican rule. In 1836, Americans riveted their attention on the dramatic events in Texas. On March 6, the Alamo, a fortified Spanish mission in San Antonio, fell to Mexican troops with the loss of all of its defenders, including two legendary figures, Davy Crockett and James Bowie. Six weeks later, on April 12, a rag-tag and outnumbered army led by General Sam Houston, a former congressman and governor of Tennessee, defeated the Mexican General Santa-Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto. Texas declared itself an independent Republic, which it remained until 1845, when it entered the Union as the 28th state.

[72] The final terms of the treaty were slightly modified in 1853 with the addition of 29,000 square miles of land in present day Arizona and New Mexico known as the Gadsden Purchase.

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Yorkers had been engaged in real estate speculation in Texas since the mid-1830s,[73] the Mexican War was bitterly opposed by Northeastern Whigs and sparked talk of secession.

By the 1840s Americans had already begun to settle in the lands along the Pacific coast, from Mexican-held California north to the Oregon Territory. The first organized transcontinental wagon train left St. Joseph, Missouri for California in 1841. In 1847 New Yorker William Aspinwall organized the Pacific Mail Company to carry postal service cargo from the Pacific side of the Isthmus of Panama to the west coast settlements of California and Oregon. The boat line that carried the mail from the east coast to Chagres on the Atlantic side of the Panama Isthmus was owned by a New Yorker, Marshall O. Roberts, a close associate of Prosper Wetmore, arguably the single most influential manager of the Art-Union. Roberts himself served as a member of the Committee of Management from 1846-51.[74] Just as Aspinwall inaugurated his government-subsidized service, news of the California gold strikes turned both maritime

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[73] These appear to have principally been Democrats and included members of the Jarvis family, some of whom settled permanently in Texas. Benjamin Jarvis and Nathaniel Jarvis, Jr;.both served as Recording Secretaries of the Art-Union.

[74] See Spann, *Metropolis*, 282 for connections between New York and San Francisco (largely after the gold rush began) and Albion, 364-66, for information on the Atlantic and Pacific mail contracts. Albion points out that Aspinwall was a nephew of the Howland brothers, and had been running the family business, G. G. & S. Howland, with his cousin, William E. Howland, for ten years prior to organizing the Pacific Mail Company. Roberts, more interestingly is described by Albion as the son of a Welsh doctor, whose "active politics stood him in good stead in business; his fortune is said to have dated from some contracts, at prices higher than those of bidders of the wrong party, thrown his way by a friendly navy agent." In 1847-49 Prosper Wetmore was a navy agent. Basil Rauch, *American Interest in Cuba: 1848-1855* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948) includes discussion of Roberts and Wetmore, in his discussion of the "steamboat crowd" (192-94, 214-15, 259).

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mail ventures into a bonanza. New York thus became the major east coast port for men and goods bound for the California gold fields.

A Growing Nation at Loggerheads Over Slavery

America was growing and that growth simultaneously reflected and affected a surging economy. Increased population produced both the necessary natural resources and the consumer market for an American industrial revolution. In 1776, Adam Smith wrote in *The Wealth of Nations* that, "the most decisive mark of the prosperity of any country is the increase of the number of inhabitants." After considerable debate the Congress authorized, in 1850, the first "modern" census.[75] A landmark event, it was the first census to go beyond population and geographic distribution and attempt to describe Americans with regard to "the moral, social, and industrial condition of our people . . . their religion and education, their newspapers and libraries, their charities and crimes, their occupations, wages, and profits, the yield of their fields and factories, the revenues from their realty and commerce."[76] For Americans at mid-century, these numbers were not cold facts on a printed page, but quantifications of experienced reality; a census of their private and public life. They both reflected and shaped the theory and practice of

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[75] As quoted in Margo J. Anderson, *The American Census: A Social History* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1988), 7. Anderson's account of the history of the census and the issues involved in fashioning the 1850 legislation is very useful. North, 166 credits the size and wealth of the American consumer market as creating the impetus for American industrial growth.

[76] David Saville Muzzey, *The American Adventure* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1927), 1:467-68.

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merchants in New York and of the American Art-Union. Despite technical and organizational problems and notwithstanding its being caught up in the endless jockeying in Washington over the slavery issue, the census of 1850 succeeded in documenting American society to a far degree than had ever before been attempted. It was, in itself, evidence of the growing self consciousness of the nation.

The West grew rapidly.[77] The advance corps of hunting and farming log-cabin pioneers was soon followed by enterprising townsfolk, principally drawn from New England, and to a lesser extant from the Middle States, who created an important western economy. By 1846, Cincinnati was a substantial city with a population of 75,000 people. Chicago tripled its modest population of 5,000 in 1841 to 15,000 in 1846. These new towns and cities offered a challenge and an opportunity to culturally-minded local citizens and to the Art-Union in New York. While America remained a predominantly rural nation until the end of the nineteenth century, the towns that became local regional centers of trade and commerce were most often situated on rivers or lakes with transportation links to New York (or, alternately, New Orleans). Local merchants and professionals developed relationships with their New York counterparts and supplied the corps of volunteer Honorary Secretaries who constituted the national presence of the Art-Union.

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[77] In 1830 (with slaves counted as 3/5 of a person), the Federal census had enumerated 12,820,868 Americans. There were 17, 019, 641 in 1840, and 23,067,262 in 1850 – that is, nearly double the number of Americans in 1850 as in 1830. The population increase was accompanied by population shift. In 1830, 23.2% of Americans lived in the west. This percentage rose to 32.5% by 1850 with the southern share declining slightly (about 2 percentage points), while the northeastern population percentage declined markedly from 47.3% in 1830 to 40.3% in 1850.

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The overarching issue of the day, however, which inserted itself into every discussion of public policy and private morality, was the question of slavery, the "peculiar" institution. It was the flash point over arguments about which territories should be admitted to the Union and when. Issues of territorial expansion and international affairs mixed together with slavery to provide a potent stew in the furor that followed the admission of Texas to statehood in 1845. In 1846, David Wilmot, a representative from Pennsylvania, tacked a rider onto a House appropriations bill that would have forbidden the extension of slavery into any territory gained as a result of the Mexican War. The so-called Wilmot Proviso passed the House of Representatives, but was defeated in the Senate. In the wake of the defeat of the Wilmot Proviso, and as a consequence of the treaty ending the Mexican War, the Free Soil Party was founded in 1848 as a coalition of anti-slavery forces from the Democratic and Whig parties. Thus, the old Jacksonian/anti Jacksonian dichotomies fell by the wayside, replaced by the beginning of a new sectionally defined party structure with the issue of slavery as a litmus test.

Henry Clay's five part "Compromise of 1850" was a last-ditch effort by the nationally beloved and respected southern Whig to hold the union together. New York merchants, Prosper Wetmore prominent among them, worked strenuously for the passage of the legislation.[78] Clay's Compromise was the vehicle through which California, a prize

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[78] This topic is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Nine, "The Art-Union's Political Agenda." For a detailed account of the efforts of New York merchants including Prosper Wetmore, Philip Hone, Robert Kelly, Marshall Roberts and James Brady, see Foner, *Business and Slavery*.

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of the Mexican War, entered as a free state. Another of Clay's proposals, however, the so-called "Fugitive Slave Law," which was intended as a concession to the slave-owning states, served principally to fuel abolitionist fervor in the North and West. The abrupt end of the American Art-Union was a consequence, in part, of the failure of the Compromise of 1850.

National Party Issues and Politics

Closer to home, a variety of essentially economic issues underlay the hard-fought political debates of the day.[79] These included the disposal of public lands, the role of cotton, internal trade between the West and South, internal trade between the West and Northeast, the issue of a protective tariff, the controversy over the second national bank, the expansion of the railroad and canal systems (internal improvements), immigration to the United States, the progress of American agriculture, and the progress of American manufactures, both of these last with tariff implications. The Art-Union years saw the spread of the Industrial Revolution.[80] Capitalist economic theory took shape empirically as merchants, manufacturers, and bankers felt their way to fashion new legal and financial

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[79] I have borrowed this list of issues from Douglass C. North and Robert Paul Thomas, *The Growth of the American Economy to 1860* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Harper Torchbooks, 1968), Chapter VII, "General Introduction to the Period 1814-1860," sections 48-58.

[80] "Industrial Revolution," in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed., dates the first phase of the industrial revolution from 1760 to 1830. The movement began in England and spread to the European continent and America at different times depending on local conditions. North, ibid., 155-56, sees the first signs of the industrial revolution in America as the development of the manufacture of cotton cloth in New England beginning in the early 19th century, and acquiring a critical mass in the 1830s.

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institutions for a new economy.

The managers of the Art-Union were quintessentially political men. The Committee of Management included two former mayors of New York, Philip Hone and Cornelius Lawrence, as well as numerous others who had served or would serve in a variety of elected or appointed positions.[81] Hone and his friends were staunch Whigs; indeed, Hone takes credit in his diary for giving the party its name.[82] Lawrence was a Democrat. Andrew Jackson, "Old Hickory," began his first term as the seventh President of the United States in 1829 and was re-elected in 1833. He was succeeded in 1837 by his Vice President, Martin Van Buren, a Knickerbocker from Kinderhook in the Hudson Valley, who was the leader of the New York State Democratic Party and had many friends in the City. While historians continue to debate many aspects of the so-called "era of the common man,"[83] there is no doubt that Jackson's election victory reflected the substantial expansion of the right of suffrage in America in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.[84] Many New York merchants and financiers were Whigs,

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[81] See Chapter Four, "Interrelationships and Confusions," for a synopsis of the managers' political careers and Appendix One for more detailed biographical sketches.

[82] Hone, *Diary*, 1: 487 wrote in his entry for June 18, 1840 of "all the good men of the country who are banded together under the name of Whigs (a name, by the by, to which I stand godfather, having been the first to use it at a political meeting of which I was president at Washington Hall) . . . ."

[83] Edward Pessen, in *Riches, Class, and Power Before the Civil War* (Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1973) focuses on enduring social and economic class distinctions during the period, and also offers a useful historiographical gloss on the literature of the period in his brief "Introduction," 1-6.

[84] This is the general theme of Fox's *The Decline of Aristocracy in the Politics of New York 1801-1840*, passim.

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strong supporters of Daniel Webster and Henry Clay, and sworn enemies of Andrew Jackson, and especially of his perceived vendetta against the National Bank. But there were also New York businessmen and bankers who were Democrats, the Art-Union's Francis Edmonds prominent among them, in a line that extended (albeit, with considerable convolutions) from Thomas Jefferson through DeWitt Clinton. Moreover, in some New York banking precincts, the National Bank was seen as Nicholas Biddle's creature, pouring the profits of the federal levies collected in the Port of New York into the pockets of Philadelphia bank directors, a galling reminder to New Yorkers of the old mercantile rivalry with Philadelphia, a rivalry which they had ostensibly won.[85] Democratic control of federal patronage during the 1830s helped to create and cement a loyal party cadre that included leading merchants and lawyers. Among the men who led the Art-Union, Prosper Wetmore, William Cullen Bryant (both Art-Union Presidents) and Frances Edmonds had strong public identifications with the Democratic Party.[86]

The Whigs turned three times during this period to military heroes in order to gain victory. William Henry Harrison was the beloved victor of the Battle of Tippecanoe. More problematic were Generals Zachary Taylor and Winfield Scot, both of whom made

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[85] For a convincing discussion of the role of New York bankers and businessmen, and especially Martin Van Buren, in bringing down Biddle's Philadelphia bank, see Bray Hammond, *Banks and Politics in America from the Revolution to the Civil War* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), esp. 351-366.

[86] Wetmore held the coveted post of naval agent during the administration of Democratic President James K. Polk, 1846-1849. His brother and business partner, Robert, was naval agent as a Whig during the Harrison/Tyler administration.

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their names in the bitterly opposed Mexican War. When both Harrison and Taylor died in office, the party found itself with Vice Presidents who had been picked for strategic political reasons, but who did not support key party positions nor, as importantly, reward party stalwarts. All of this was avidly followed in New York, with each twist and turn affecting both federal patronage positions in the powerful port of New York and national banking policy.

New York, Mercantile Capital of America

From its very beginnings, Manhattan has been the land of the deal; the getting, the having, and the keeping of money has been as defining of its identity as the bedrock that rises from the harbor to provide a home for its striving citizens.[87] New Amsterdam was founded as a trading post by the Dutch East India Company. Since that time, with no exceptions, the city has lived in a global economy. Dutch and then British policies during the colonial period shaped the contours of this essentially mercantile outpost. The American War of Independence caused severe economic hardship in New York, but the city rebounded decisively in the Federal period. Closer to the discussion at hand, international developments before and during the Art-Union years had direct consequences for New York's merchants and workers. In 1815, at the end of the War of 1812, the British chose New York as the port of entry through which they dumped a vast

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[87] Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, xiv-xvi point out, in this regard, the appropriateness of New York's founding myth, that is, the "purchase" of Manhattan Island from the Lenape Indians for some equivalent of $24, as contrasted with its degree of truth.

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quantity of accumulated manufactured goods, primarily textiles, into the American market. This decision fostered a thriving auction system for distributing goods throughout the middle states, the south and the west. The auction system, which dominated New York commerce through the 1820s, was itself dominated by two major houses, that of the brothers John and Philip Hone, and that of the partnership of John Haggerty and David Austen.[88] Both Philip Hone and the sons of David Austen, George and John, later became key figures in the American Art-Union. Duncan C. Pell and Cornelius Lawrence were Art-Union Committee members who also had connections with the auction trade.[89]

In the decade between 1815 and 1825, New York consolidated its position both as the premier American port for foreign imports and domestic exports, and, concomitantly, the mercantile supplier to America. The city's commercial impetus was underlined and consolidated by the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, which firmly established an interior shipping route between New York City and the burgeoning markets and suppliers of the American West.[90] As Albion describes it:

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[88] For the auction system see Albion, *Port*, 12-13, 60-61, 276-280, 410; Wilentz, *Chants*, 150-151; and Fox, *Decline*, 354.

[89] Rachel Klein, "Authority," Table I in the Appendix,1561, offers a convenient summary identifying the Art-Union managers by the nature of their employment.

[90] The opening of the Erie Canal has long enjoyed benchmark status as marking the beginning of New York's commercial domination of America. Witness most recently, the Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition, cited above, that defines the period of the "Empire City" between the completion of the Canal and the outbreak of the Civil War.

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> That triumphal opening of the Erie Canal was the event which captured the public imagination more than the Black Ball packets, the "cotton triangle," or the extension of the steamboat service. Yet without those other examples of New York initiative in that decade, "Clinton's ditch" alone could not have made New York what men were already calling it -- "the great commercial emporium of America" Only then did the other ports awaken to all that New York had been quietly accomplishing and by that time it was too late for them to catch up.[91]

Burrows and Wallace observe that "the web of canals , steamboats, and packets that New York flung out across the world in the 1820s and 1830s captured a wider and wider share of the nation's import business – from 38 percent in 1821 to 62 percent in 1836.[92]

Prosperity Built on Trade

A number of significant economic consequences flowed from New York's commercial primacy. In a nation without a standardized monetary or banking system, New York merchants and bankers functioned as seasonal lenders and as a central clearing house for local currencies, positioning the city to assume the leading national role in banking and finance. In 1829, under Governor Martin Van Buren, the State had established a safety-fund banking system intended to protect depositors and note holders against bank defaults. When this system proved insufficient to weather the Panic of 1837, the state responded with the New York Free Banking Act of 1838, arguably the most influential banking legislation of the pre-Civil War era, and one which, with emendations,

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[91] Albion, *Port*, 15.

[92] Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 435. Because of the general endnote method adopted by the authors, it is impossible to locate the precise source of these numbers.

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became a model for the federal National Banking System established in 1862.[93] The State also moved, in 1848, to encourage the formation of corporations, with legislation that guaranteed limited liability to corporate shareholders. The competitive scramble for ever more efficient trade made New Yorkers keen participants in the expansion of railroad and canal links to the increasingly distant corners of the expanding nation. The concentration of capital in New York gave New York businessmen the financial means to initiate, construct and operate the railroads that began to cris-cross America in the decades of the 1840s and 1850s. By 1851, New York City had two railroad links to the ever-expanding West – the New York Central, which proceeded north to Albany and west to Buffalo and Lake Erie, and the Erie Railroad, which took a more southerly route. It was also connected by rail to New Haven and Boston. New York's transportation links to the nation made it the logical location for book publishers, who needed to ship their heavy products over great distances. The capital available in the city also fostered the growth of local manufactures, primarily consumer goods and ready-made clothing.

Shopkeepers from all over the nation visited New York in annual or semi-annual buying trips, providing a steady domestic tourist trade. These were men with money to spend on hotels, theaters, restaurants, prostitutes, and luxury consumer goods as well as the retail stock they came to replenish. Charles A. Stetson, the popular proprietor of New York's leading hostelry, the Astor Place Hotel, across from City Hall, served briefly on

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[93] This is the argument advanced by George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution, 1815-1860* The Economic History of the United States, Vol. IV (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1951; Harper Torchbooks, 1968), 314-318.

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the Art-Union Committee of Management in 1843. At the same time, New York became a magnet for the publishers of national journals. The expansion of the telegraph in the decade of the 1840s, spurred by the technological prowess and entrepreneurial energy of New Yorker Samuel F. B. Morse, enabled the city to consolidate its position as an information center. In May, 1848, a consortium of New York newspapers pooled their resources to found what became, in 1856, the New York Associated Press.[94]

Thus did trade provide the basis for a variety of New York fortunes. With the exception of those few who grew rich solely from real estate (mostly the descendants of patroons or English crown land grant recipients), almost every substantial man of business in New York was somehow involved in activities that related to foreign or domestic trade, whether directly, as in buying, selling, or brokering, or indirectly, as in port regulation, insurance, banking, boat building, railroad and canal building, or the legal and political apparatus that regulated and sustained all of these. Commercial activity not only pumped fortunes into the city, but also affected the way that New Yorkers thought of themselves, did business, and viewed the rest of the world. The nature of these economic activities shaped a local culture that was distinctively New York: fast thinking, fast talking, innovative, inclusive, appreciative of diversity, cosmopolitan and culturally ambitious.

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[94] Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism: A History of Newspapers in the United States through 260 Years: 1690-1950.* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942; rev. ed. New York: Macmillan Company, 1950), 251.

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Population Growth

Karl Marx might well have written his Communist Manifesto of 1848 posted at a window of the City Hall of New York, looking out onto lower Broadway:

> Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social relations, everlasting uncertainty and agitation, distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned and men at last are forced to face . . . the real conditions of their lives and their relations with their fellow men.[95]

In the 1840s (as before and after), New York was characterized by transformative increases in the size of its population, accompanied by concomitant physical expansion. This combination resulted in a host of social, political, and economic repercussions complicated by the necessity of absorbing a wide diversity of newcomers. Population figures tell a story of quantitative change so great that it became qualitative change.[96] While the city continued to attract ambitious young men from New England, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania as well as "upstate" New Yorkers, what is most striking about the

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[95] As quoted by Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 21 from Karl Marx's 1848 *Communist Manifesto*. As Berman goes on to explicate, the phrase applies to more than the physical changes in the city. With regard to the Art-Union, it describes the psychological landscape of the participants, which gave them the freedom and the necessity to invent new forms and new responses for situations which had no precedent.

[96] The decade between 1800 and 1810 saw a population increase in excess of 50%, from 60,489 people to 96,373 people; in 1820, the number increased to 123, 706. By1830, there were 202,589 New Yorkers, while, in 1840, there were 312,310. The federal census of 1850, an arbitrary endpoint for the present discussion, enumerated 515,547 New Yorkers. Between 1820 and 1830, 92, 884 immigrants arrived at the Port of New York; between 1830 and 1840 there were 407,716 foreign immigrants, and from 1840 to 1850 1,146,241 newcomers arrived.

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population growth of the period was the extent to which it was fueled by European immigration. While not all the immigrants who landed in New York remained in the city, and while population increases also reflect domestic population shifts, the inescapable fact is that foreign immigration transformed the city. Whereas in the decade 1820 to 1830 there were 10.5 immigrants from Britain or Ireland for every German, by the period 1846 to 1850 that ratio had changed dramatically to only two and one third British or Irish, that is, English-speaking, immigrants for every German.[97]

The Physical City

Obviously such a dramatic increase in population had an equally dramatic effect on the physical nature of the city. New York, in 1800, had not expanded very far from its original Dutch boundaries. The Battery was still the focus of civic activities, while urban settlement petered out just north of the present City Hall (1803-1811) except for an area strung along the Bowery and the nearby East River shore line.[98] By 1804, however, it was clear that the city would continue to expand into the bucolic northern precincts of the island. In general, the movement was uptown, as previously residential neighborhoods gave way to commerce, and landlords transformed formerly grand houses into working

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[97] These figures are reported in Ernst, *Immigrant Life*, 187, Tables 7 and 8, in Appendix II, derived from United States Industrial Commission Reports of 1901. It is not clear from Ernst whether the 1901 figures defined New York City as Manhattan only (which it was until city consolidation in 1898) or included all five boroughs (which was the definition of the City in 1901).

[98] Paul E. Cohen and Robert T. Augustyn, *Manhattan in Maps: 1550-1990* (New York: Rizzoli, 1997), 100-105.

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class warrens. This was accompanied by a breaking up of the old farmsteads and estates into residential lots which were then covered with speculative housing.[99]

It was a commonplace observation of the period that the city was in a constant state of tearing down and building up. In December 1835, the so-called Great Fire devastated the commercial heart of the city, burning over seventeen blocks, destroying more than six hundred buildings and resulting in losses of an estimated seventeen million dollars (with, miraculously, no loss of life). Though viewed as a great calamity at the time, before the smoke cleared the city was already rebuilding on a grander scale. I. N. Phelps Stokes commented, less than a century later, that

> with this fire passed almost all of the old Dutch city that had survived. . . . On the whole, however, the fire can scarcely be considered a disaster. The sale of lots soon afterwards showed that the burnt district was little impaired in value, and capitalists seemed to regard the removal of the old building as an improvement to the locality and an advantage to the city at large.[100]

The flurry of building activity given impetus by the fire extended well beyond the burned-out blocks. In 1834-36, John Jacob Astor built the city's first luxury hotel, a five-story building on Broadway between Barclay and Vesey Streets, just south of City Hall. In the 1840s and early 1850s, hotels lined Broadway between Canal and 14th streets. Strategically located so that out-of-town buyers could easily visit the nearby premises of New York merchants, they were equally convenient to the fashionable shops that made Broadway an internationally-known shopping street. In 1846, Alexander Turney Stewart (1802-1876), an Irish Protestant immigrant, opened his "Marble Palace" drygoods

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[99] See Blackmar, *For Rent*, for a thorough discussion of real estate practices.

[100] Stokes, *Iconography*, 3:524.

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emporium on Broadway between Reade and Chambers Street, wedding the latest merchandising techniques, including competitive pricing, to an opulent and gracious experience intended to make shopping a social event.[101] The Art-Union, at its various locations, always remained close to this area of hotels, shops, and nearby well-to-do residential neighborhoods, in much the same way that art galleries continue to position themselves to be convenient to a mix of well-heeled visitors and locals alike.

Moving Day: A Population in Flux

Numbers document the story but can't convey the sense of dislocation that accompanied such rapid change. By local custom, May 1 was the annual moving day. Old leases expired *en masse* on April 30 and, on Mayday, New Yorkers loaded their belongings into the mode of transport appropriate to their station and moved to their new homes. Philip Hone walked around his old neighborhood on May 1, 1839 and wrote in his diary.

> There is a great deal of moving in the streets out of Broadway, in the upper part of the city, but less I think than usual amongst the tenants of good houses. But the pulling down of houses and stores in the lower parts is awful. Brickbats, rafters, and slates are showering down in every direction. There is no safety on the sidewalks, and the head must be saved at the expense of dirtying the boots. . . . In Wall Street . . . it looks like the ruin occasioned by an earthquake. . . . My poor dear house at 235 Broadway [the Hone family home from 1821 to 1837, just south of City Hall at Barclay Street, since 1911 the partial site of the Woolworth

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[101] Spann, *Metropolis*, 97-98 describes Stewart's store in evocative language. For a wonderful pictorial architectural tour of Broadway, lot by lot, see David. W. Dunlap, *On Broadway: A Journey Uptown Over Time* (New York: Rizzoli,1990). The Stewart store later became the office of the *New York Sun* newspaper and still stands today, city-owned and occupied by municipal back offices with its formerly grand ground floor rented to discount merchants.

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> Building] will be incontinently swept from the earth. Farther up, at the corner of Chambers Street, a row of low buildings has been removed to make way for one of those mighty edifices called hotels – eating, drinking, and lodging above, and gay shops below; and so all the way up. The spirit of pulling down and building up is abroad. The whole of New York is rebuilt about once in ten years.[102]

As New York grew in size, old neighborhoods changed character. While many buildings were torn down and replaced, sometimes repeatedly in one person's lifetime, others remained and devolved into frightful slums. At the same time, and establishing a pattern that is still a hallmark of New York, splendid public and private buildings shared streets and neighborhoods with hovels; the "quality" lived (albeit uncomfortably) cheek by jowl with their most unfortunate and, at times, degraded fellow New Yorkers. By 1829, neighbors were already petitioning the city for amelioration of the conditions at the infamous intersection known as the Five Points in Manhattan's overcrowded Sixth Ward.[103] In 1832, a third of all the city's reported cholera cases were in the Ward, which lay directly north and east of City Hall (including parts of today's Soho, Chinatown, and Lower East Side). Charles Dickens visited the neighborhood in 1842 and reported his observations in colorful Dickensian language in *American Notes*. The area regularly

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[102] Hone, *Diary*, 1:394-95.

[103] For a discussion of one particular aspect of life in the Sixth Ward, see Graham Hodges, "Irish and African Americans in the Sixth Ward, 1830-1870," in Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher, eds., *The New York Irish* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Paperbacks, 1997) especially the easy-to-read map of the ward as of 1846, 111, which clearly shows the five points. The volume contains a series of informative essays on the topic of New York and the Irish and serves both as a useful introduction to a large topic and as an invaluable bibliographical resource. Blackmar, *For Rent*, 172-180 has an extended discussion of efforts to "clean up" the five points.

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attracted writers of popular pulp fiction (and pornography), who fashioned their observations into the stuff of crime and sex genre. Ned Buntline (the *nom de plume* of E.Z.C. Judson), inspired by the spectacular international success of Eugène Sue's *Mysteries of Paris* (1842-43), published, in 1848, his sprawling, episodic melodrama of sin-soaked New York City life, calling it *Mysteries and Miseries of New York City.* Buntline set his most debauched scenes against the background of the Five Points and challenged readers, if they doubted his lurid description "to go to the place which we describe and see for themselves."[104] The five volume set sold about 100,000 copies. Imagine, then, the *Bulletin of the Art-Union* sitting proudly in the parlor for all the world to see, and on a carefully chosen shelf out of public view, five volumes of Buntline's lurid and titillating stories, a thrown-together stew of fact, half-fact and fiction,[105] that represented what was purported to be the "true" New York to Americans in every far-flung corner of the continent.

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[104] E. Z. C. Judson, *The Mysteries and Miseries of New York,* (New York: 1848), I:116, in Peter George Buckley, "To The Opera House: Culture and Society in New York City, 1820-1860 (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1984), 441. Buckley devotes an entire chapter of his dissertation to Buntline, "Words, Signs and Gestures: The Ordeal of Ned Buntline," 411-468.

[105] Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, offer a succinct description of this literature in their section, "Mysteries of the City," 697-700. They claim that Harper Brothers Publishers issued Buntline's work in the Harper Family Series, while Buckley, ibid., says that it was Sue whose work was pirated and distributed by Harpers. Either way, the observation is valid that Harper "promoted" these sensational texts "heavily in small-town and rural America as a testament to urban wickedness" and that this literature "helped mold perceptions of the metropolis."

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Suburban Sprawl

While New York City was defined as the island of Manhattan until the consolidation with four adjacent counties in 1898, the 1840s saw the accelerating growth of surrounding settlements, most notably in Brooklyn but also in Westchester, and nearby New Jersey.[106] The real estate fever that gripped Manhattan spread to these adjacent areas as they strove to attract both the wealthy class escaping from a variety of "unhealthful" conditions in the city, and a working class segment of the population, seeking affordable modest housing that they could own. That is to say, the 1840s saw the development of a litany of real estate complaints that have remained familiar ever since – changing neighborhoods, overcrowding, too-high rents (and its variation, lack of affordable housing) and lack of open space. The concern for fresh air and greenery, which was perceived as both healthful and morally restorative, resulted in the movement which led to the construction of Central Park, not an original feature of the grid plan. The idea of a great park was first broached in July of 1844, by William Cullen Bryant, Editor of the *Evening Post* (and President of the American Art-Union). By 1850, in its annual report, the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, fretted that "many of the rich and prosperous are removing from the city, while the poor are pressing in," a refrain that

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[106] Census records quantify the rapid development of nearby areas: Brooklyn nearly tripled in population in the ten years between 1840 and 1850 growing from 46,600 people in 1840 to 138, 900 in 1850. Hudson County, including Jersey City, Weehawken and Hoboken, doubled, going from 9,500 people to 21,800. Essex County, site of the nearby city of Newark, grew from 44,600 people to 74,000. These population figures continued their steep ascent during the decade of the 1850s. Spann, *Metropolis*, 433, Appendix IX "The New York Metropolitan Area, 1840-1860." These tables are extracted from United States' Census Data. Spann devotes an entire chapter to this subject, "Escape to Suburbia," Chapter 8, 176-204.

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also echoes through the decades.[107]

The Extension of Suffrage

Dixon Ryan Fox long ago described "The Decline of the Aristocracy in the Politics of New York," choosing as his dates 1801 to 1840. This process was inextricably bound up with the extension of suffrage in New York State. The extension of the right to vote from a relatively narrow core group defined by property, wealth and thus social class, to universal white male suffrage, was a cataclysmic change. Americans on both sides of the class divide felt the ground shifting. By 1826, all white male citizens in New York State had the right to vote with minimal property restrictions.[108] The reality of easy access to the ballot box for white males gave a sense of urgency to a phalanx of reformers who were anxious, not to say desperate, to create a God-fearing, hard-working, sober, literate, law abiding, and cultured electorate.[109] The increasing size of the voting population reflected the effect of immigration on the political system, as well as the futility of efforts to "control" or "shape" the electorate. While 39, 341 votes were cast in

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[107] Ibid., 191, cited in footnote 38, p. 471.

[108] Property restrictions on voting remained substantial, however, for Negroes, who were all free by July 4, 1827, the end point of New York's gradual emancipation legislation.

[109] Stokes, *Iconography* describes the dramatic expansion of suffrage as a result of the changes made by the New York State Constitutional Convention of 1821 and further liberalized in 1826 in vol. 3, Chapter V, "The War of 1812, 1812-1815; Period of Invention, Prosperity and Progress, 1815-1841, especially pp. 515-516.

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the 1838 mayoral election, in 1852, 58, 058 were counted.[110] Stokes comments that "the presence of large numbers of recently arrived immigrants, in combination with the lax enforcement of election and naturalization laws, furnished the very material needed to build up a corrupt political machine." The two Jackson administrations had rationalized the naming of political appointees to government positions, a practice known since as "the spoils system" after the comment by New York Senator William L. Marcy, "To the victor go the spoils of the enemy."[111] In the period of the 1840s political corruption continued to evolve and become more systemized, more entrenched, and more the accepted way of behaving regardless of party affiliation. (George William Curtis, who spent one year on the Art-Union's Committee of Management in 1850 as a young man, is best known in American history as the father of the American Civil Service.) Corruption and political favoritism permeated all of New York municipal life during the Art-Union period.[112]

The Irish and the Germans

New York City had a small, but significant Irish population from its earliest days.

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[110] See Jackson, *New York City*, 735 for a useful table, "Returns of Mayoral Elections in New York City, 1834-1994."

[111] *Britannica*, s. v. "Marcy, William Learned."

[112] See Fox, *Decline*, for a discussion of the evolution of suffrage in New York State, including a discussion of Negro voting especially 269-70 on Negro voting and 273-4 on the final expansion of voting rights with only age and residency requirements as restrictions.

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Overwhelmingly Protestant, this group included the Clinton and Duane families. The Treaty of Ghent (1815) proved a second time to produce an unforeseen consequence for New York. In the wake of economic distress in Ireland, a flood of emigrants came to America in the years following the lifting of the war-imposed Embargo. These new arrivals were poorer, drawn from the laboring class, and overwhelmingly Catholic, a preview of the generation of the 1840s.[113] Welcomed by DeWitt Clinton and his political associates, these Irishmen supplied the labor that built the Erie Canal. Their presence in significant numbers exposed an internal community fault line, transplanted from Ireland, between Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants.

The rapidly growing Catholic presence in New York made many Protestants uncomfortable and moved some to embrace an anti-immigrant, nativist, anti-Catholic position which was a constant factor in New York politics through the Art-Union period. Irishmen found unskilled, menial work, while Irish women supplanted native-born black and white women as domestic servants. Not all the immigrants became productive citizens. In 1836 Philip Hone grumbled:

> There arrived at this port, during the month of May, 15,825 passengers. All Europe is coming across the ocean; all that part at least who cannot make a living at home; and what should we do with them? They increase out taxes, eat our bread, and encumber our streets, and not one in twenty is competent to keep himself.[114]

These sentiments had already crystalized into political action by the time that Hone wrote.

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[113] This last point is made in Walter J. Walsh, "Religion, Ethnicity, and History: Clues to the Cultural Construction of Law," in Bayor and Meagher, *Irish*, 61.

[114] Hone, *Diary*, 1:209.

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In 1836, Hone declined the Mayoral nomination of the anti-immigrant Native American Democratic Association. They nominated, instead, the artist, polemicist, and inventor, Samuel F. B. Morse, who lost decisively. In 1844, however, anti-immigrant forces combined with political reformers to successfully elect the publisher, James Harper, as mayor. He served only one term.

The political unrest on the European continent that culminated in the failed revolutions of 1848 expressed nationalistic, romantic, and reformist ideals that found correlates in America. Their dramatic failure had the tangible effect of triggering a different torrent of immigration, especially from southern Germany. Rural Germans often passed through New York City to settle in western farmlands, establishing significant German enclaves in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Illinois and Ohio. The German population that remained in New York was disproportionately composed of "artisans, shopkeepers and skilled workers," a highly literate (albeit, in German) group which included a significant population of intellectuals, musicians, and artists.[115] The German influx is reflected in an increasing number of artists, honorary secretaries and members of the Art-Union with German surnames in the late 1840s, the years that coincided with heavy German immigration and the Art-Union's greatest size.[116]

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[115] Ernst, *Immigrant Life*, Table 11, 190, "Avowed Destination of German Immigrants Landed at the Prot of New York in 1855." Although this is a late date, these immigrants were traveling to locales that already had sizable German populations.

[116] Although the estimation of ethnicity by surname may seem crude, it is actually a major tool of population studies of this period in the absence of more reliable data, which was not collected until after 1850. Some general numbers serve to give an idea of the impact of immigration on New York In all, 1,796,000 immigrants arrived in New York between 1847 and 1854 of whom 848,000 were Irish and 686,000 were German; the

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What seems most remarkable when considering the history of the Art-Union juxtaposed against this scenario, is the nearly absolute absence of reference to immigration or immigrants in any of the Union's private or public papers. The managers of the Art-Union lived in the same city, but not in the same world as their struggling immigrant neighbors. We can, however, infer that the impetus for developing a distinctive American art, and for wishing to encourage an American iconography in art was, at least in part, a reaction to the flood of "others" pouring into the city and the nation.

Local Politics

City politics, like national politics, presented an increasingly chaotic face. Even with the national constitution as a fixed star, Americans still struggled to find the appropriate forms for democratic government. American cities had no constitutions and no political models. The mayor of New York, at first an appointee of the colonial governor, then of the state governor, was, by 1820, chosen by the Common Council. The first direct elections for mayor in New York City were held in 1834 and were marred by rioting between Whigs and Democrats. Democrat Cornelius W. Lawrence emerged triumphant and won re-election in 1835 and 1836. Lawrence later served on the Art-

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Irish-born population of New York City was 133,730 in 1850; the German , 56,141. In 1850, 45.7 per cent of New Yorkers were foreign-born.The source for these numbers is Spann, *Metropolis*, "Appendix, IV, Immigration," 430. He cites Albion, *Port*, 418 and Rosenwaike, *Population*, 41-2 as his sources.

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Union's Committee of Management in 1848-1849. Mayoral elections in this period were generally close contests between the Whig and Democratic candidates with the outcome often determined by the presence of minor party candidates in the field or by factional defections.[117]

Civic Issues: Safety, Education and Water

Everyone, politician and citizen alike, was aware that the governing apparatus was inadequate to address the problems it faced -- insufficient protection against crime and fire, faulty mechanisms to address problems associated with extreme poverty, serious deficiencies in public sanitation, public health, education, regulation of piers, markets, and common carriers, as well as the endemic problem of political corruption. Taxes rose, while services appeared to decline. In 1846, the City began to struggle with charter reform, finally adopting a new Charter in 1849, with decreased power for the members of the City Council and some enhanced authority for the Mayor. The hope was that a stronger central authority could impose organization on services and policies and eliminate the worst abuses of political corruption and patronage.

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[117] Lawrence was succeeded in 1837 and 1838 by Aaron Clark, a Whig; followed by Democrat Isaac Varian in 1839 and 1840. Robert H. Morris, a Democrat and grandson of the second Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Richard Morris, was elected to three one year terms in 1841, '42 and '43. James Harper, the publisher served one term, in 1844, under the banner of the American Republican Party, a coalition of nativists, temperance reformers, and disaffected Whigs. Without Whig support, he lost to Democrat William F. Havemeyer, a wealthy sugar refiner in 1845. Andrew H. Mickle, a Democrat, served in 1846, followed by the Whig William V. Brady in 1847. Brady was defeated in 1848 by the Democrat and former Mayor, William Havemeyer. In 1849, Whig Caleb Woodhull was elected, followed in 1850 by another Whig, Ambrose C. Kingland.

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In 1845, the inherited and much patched system of maintaining law and order – a jumble of marshals, constables, and night watchmen – was finally replaced with a professional police force. But the police, like the volunteer fire brigades and the sanitary inspectors, were appointed and controlled by local aldermen whose political favoritism powerfully contributed to crippling law enforcement, fire protection, and compliance with public health regulations. In the end, the politicians lacked the will to strip themselves of the power to abuse, and, in truth, no one really knew the way to make the city work. Charter reform and a professional police department were both steps in the right direction, but they did not begin to reach far enough. While the Art-Union was fitting up splendid new galleries with extended evening hours and offering its rooms as an elegant and genteel evening destination, New Yorkers did not feel safe on the streets. Spann observes that

> even the long term Chief of Police, George W. Matsell, confessed that during the first half of 1852 crimes of violence had so increased that citizens were afraid to venture out of their homes after dark, a situation which he blamed on the too prevalent carelessness, indolence and cowardice of his force. Although it is impossible to prove that the police had failed to prevent an increase in crime, there is no doubt that they failed to dispel the public apprehension that crime – especially crimes of violence – had increased faster than the city's population.[118]

In the 1840s, Horace Mann, using his position as the Massachusetts Superintendent of Education (1838-1848), gave shape, and energy to a nationwide movement for the public common school. The push for free elementary school education for all children resonated for New Yorkers, faced with rising crime rates, and the imperative need for an effective vehicle to assimilate immigrant children to American

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[118] Spann, *Metropolis*, 315-316.

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society. The Free School Society, established in 1805, had, over the years, assumed the lion's share of responsibility for educating New York's poor children.[119] In 1825, the Society successfully attacked municipal aid to religious-sponsored schools as a violation of separation of Church and State, and thus became the sole receiver of public funds for education, changing its name to the Public School Society. In 1834, the Public School Society absorbed the seven African Free Schools. In 1840, however, Father John Hughes (soon to become Bishop Hughes) appealed to the New York Common Council for public money for church-supported schools. Supported by parallel requests from Jewish synagogues and Scotch Presbyterian congregations, Hughes charged that the schools run by the Public School Society were themselves sectarian and discriminatory. A prolonged and heated political battle ensued, with Hughes' bold move giving fresh fuel to anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant sentiments

In 1842, the Democratic state legislature passed the Maclay Act, which was signed into law by Whig Governor William Seward. The legislation cut through the bitter sectarian argument by establishing a civic agency, the Board of Education, to establish and administer a public school system. In 1847, the Board established a program of evening schools to make education available to would-be students already in the workforce. In the same year it established the Free Academy (later City College), to offer free secondary and college level education to talented graduates of the public schools who could not afford the costs of private higher education. Education was a civic issue

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[119] See Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 383-84 for an account of the founding of the Society.

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that engaged the same group of men who were drawn to the Art-Union, notably Prosper Wetmore, Townsend Harris, Erastus C. Benedict, James Gerard, George Curtis, and Robert Kelly.

The establishment of a public school system was a major, long-term political achievement of the period, but it lacked the element of popular drama. The completion of the Croton water system , in 1842, however, served as the focus of an orgy of civic pride and self congratulation. On October 12, Philip Hone recorded that

> Nothing is talked of or thought of in New York but Croton water. . . . It is astonishing how popular the introduction of water is among all classes of our citizens . . . . Water! Water! Is the universal note which is sounded through every part of the city, and infuses joy and exultation into the masses. . . .[120]

If Hone was somewhat jaundiced about the "enormous expense"of the project ($12 million, in borrowed money), and the diversionary effect it had with respect to "the vexed question of the confused state of the national currency," two days later he was duly impressed by the well mannered, sober, and splendid public celebration when a jubilant citizenry greeted the arrival of Croton water to a decorative fountain in City Hall Park. Hone, as a former Mayor, had a place of honor in the five-mile long parade that took three hours to complete its triumphal line of march from the Battery north on Broadway to Union Square and then south along the Bowery and back to City Hall.. "It was certainly a great affair. . . .The moral as well as the physical influence of water pervaded everything. . . . It was a day for a New Yorker to be proud of." [121]

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[120] Hone, *Diary*, 2:624.

[121] Ibid., 625.

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Social Fault Lines - Religion, Class, and Politics

While New York City continued to attract and retain men of wealth, the surging population figures of the period largely represent an increase in the number of middling and poor New Yorkers. Mob violence, a recurrent form of political expression since colonial times, continued; in 1834, between antagonistic Irish Catholic and Irish Protestants, and a second time between Whigs and Democrats on the occasion of the city's first direct mayoral vote canvas; in 1837, as a protest against high grain prices; and most notably in 1849, at the Astor Place Opera House where nativist supporters of the American tragedian Edmond Forrest battled police and militia in an attempt to keep the English actor Charles William Macready from performing.[122]

Macready's performances in New York had already been disrupted by nativist Forrest partisans. He had decided not to complete his New York engagement, but was persuaded to go on by a public petition signed by "forty-seven of the most prominent citizens of the city" assuring the actor that "the good sense and respect for order prevailing in this community will sustain you on the subsequent nights of your performance." Among these forty-seven signers were eight present or former officers and managers of the Art-Union including John R. Bartlett (1847), George Bruce (1839, Treasurer 1840-41), David C. Colden (1848-49), Evert A. Duyckink (1848-51), John W.

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[122] For a detailed discussion and analysis of the Astor Place riot see Buckley, "Opera House." Buckley's description of the signers together with a full list including information as to age, occupation, and home and business addresses appear on pp. 62-3. The letter is quoted from the *Herald,* 9 May 1849.

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Francis (President 1839-41), Moses H. Grinnel (1848), Duncan C. Pell (1839) and Henry J. Raymond (1847-50). The General in charge of the New York State militia, which was called to contain the crowd at Astor Place was Charles W. Sandford, an 1847 member of the Art-Union Committee of Management, while the jurist who presided over the conspiracy cases of the organizers of the event was Judge Charles P. Daly, a leader of the Irish Catholic community and an Art-Union Manager from 1848-51.

Sean Wilentz, in *Chants Democratic: New York City & the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850,* chronicles the changing circumstances of the working classes in Manhattan preceding and during the period of the Art-Union. It is the story, in broadest outline, of the end of the small workshop, a tradesman system evolved from the medieval guilds and mythologized into the stuff of the "artisan republic." New York became a manufacturing center in this period, with its principal products related to shipbuilding and ready-to-wear clothing, natural outgrowths of its commercial activities. (Although interestingly, the single largest factory employer was the publishing firm of Harper Brothers.[123]) The advent of the industrial revolution in New York ushered in a new factory model whose narrow profit margins in a cut-throat, competitive market place relied on sweated labor on the premises, or piecework exploitation in slum housing. These developments generated constant labor unrest.[124] By 1850, Sean Wilentz describes

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[123] Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 632.

[124] Wilentz, *Chants*, passim. There was a short-lived Working Men's Party from 1829 to 1831 that regrouped between 1833 and 1836 into the General Trades Union, whose affiliates were involved in more than 40 labor strikes, including some led by women. New York assumed a leading role in the organization of the National Trades Union, the first attempt at a national labor organization. In 1837, in the grip of the

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New York as

> a center of working class action and labor radicalism in the industrializing republic. . . New York remained the focal point of the American economy, a manufacturing center that generated staggering wealth and sharp inequalities, a haven for radical émigrés, an immigrant metropolis. For millions of Americans, New York was becoming an alien, menacing, almost un-American place . . . .[125]

The Urge to Reform

The mid-century period was marked by a wave of reform enthusiasms, manifested nationally and locally. These attempts at social amelioration took place at the juncture of two major historical movements, at the points where the Enlightenment belief in the continued incremental upward motion of progress toward the goal of human perfection intersected with the myriad social dislocations and exploitation that accompanied the beginning of the industrial revolution. If it was unclear how a republican form of government, local, state or national, could or ought to respond to the pressing social issues of the time, there was no hesitation on the part of Americans to band together privately and act.

Reform crusades for a variety of causes reached deeply into all strata of American society and were an important element in public and political discourse. In a reconstruction of the tenor of the times, it is necessary at least to visit them briefly. There is a more direct interest, as well. The managers of the Art-Union derived from the same

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financial panic of 1837, starving New Yorkers rioted for bread, sacking the grain warehouse of Eli Hart. In 1850, 2000 tailors struck, resulting in the first labor union fatality.

[125] Ibid., 389.

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class of merchants, professionals, and men of letters who filled leadership roles in the abolition and temperance movements. Although the Art-Union men temperamentally and politically eschewed such "extremist" stances, in fact, in rhetoric and action they were evangelicals for art, adapting the methods of the religious and tract societies to spread the gospel of the civilizing, refining, and educative – that is, redemptive – powers of fine art throughout America. Horace Greeley, the crusading editor of the *Tribune*, captured the emotional immediacy of the period's reform agitations when he wrote, in 1845, "Full of error and suffering as the world yet is, we cannot afford to reject any idea which proposes to improve the Moral, Intellectual, or Social condition of mankind."[126]

First and foremost, the slavery debate was all-pervasive, gaining in urgency and stridency with every attempt to silence it. Anti-slavery sentiment was nothing new in America, but beginning in the 1830s it had acquired an increasing tone of crisis.[127] The so- called gag rule, that forbade the discussion of slavery or the abolition of slavery in the House of Representatives, was adopted in 1836 and remained in effect until 1844. Needless to say, it did nothing to dampen or suppress anti-slavery agitation.

By 1852, the year that Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-96) published her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in book form (it had originally been serialized in the Washington, D.C. abolitionist newspaper, the *National Era*), the fabric of society was torn beyond

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[126] As quoted in Mott, *Journalism*, 277 for 10 April 1845.

[127] In 1831, the same year as Nat Turner's slave rebellion in Virginia, New England editor, William Lloyd Garrison (1805-79), founded his unequivocally abolitionist journal, *The Liberator*. In 1835, Oberlin College in Ohio, became the first American institution of higher learning to admit students "irrespective of color."

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repair. The situation in New York, an indisputably Northern city, was considerably more complicated than one might suppose. New York was positioned in the mercantile middle between manufacturing New England and the agrarian South. Thus, its economic interests, like the individual consciences of its citizens, swung both ways. The city and its environs were home to many abolitionists who offered numerous hiding places for fugitive slaves (i.e., "stops" on the "underground railway") on the way to safety in Canada.[128] New York merchants, however, had extensive business ties to the South.[129] These not only conferred significant financial benefits, but were often accompanied by warm personal relations and sometimes family links. Philip Hone spoke for many conservative New Yorkers when he described abolitionists as "incendiaries" and "fanatics" willing to destroy the American nation to achieve their end.[130] This inexorable march to disunion ultimately doomed the Art-Union, as it vainly struggled to unite disparate elements of a far-flung and increasingly contentious nation under its cultural banner.

The abolition movement was not the only widespread and urgent crusade of the period. Americans were large consumers of hard drink. In 1825 the American

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[128] For a recent popular discussion of stops on "the underground railway" in New York City, see Sandee Brawarsky, "Safe Havens on the Freedom Line, "*New York Times*, 19 January 2001, 37, 46 (E).

[129] New York's mercantile ties to the South are the subject of Phillip S. Foner, *Business and Slavery: The New York Merchants and the Irrepressible Conflict* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1941; New York: Atheneum House, Russell and Russell, 1968).

[130] Hone, *Diary*, 1:172.

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Temperance Society was founded in New York City. Not the first such group, it was far and away the wealthiest, established with a $25,000 grant from John Tappan, a philanthropic merchant whose brothers Lewis and Arthur were prominent abolitionists. With Tappan's money, the Society proposed to take the tract model of organization and use New York's "central position and commercial prominence" to flood the country with anti-alcohol literature, reinforced by visits from traveling agents.[131] The merchants of the Art-Union adapted, from their crusading mercantile colleagues, that same tract model to disseminate their own art gospel. The temperance movement gained popular momentum in New York City in the 1840s. In 1842, a temperance concert drew 4,000 people to the Broadway Tabernacle, 2,500 of them women.[132] Taking a more global approach to abstinence, Sylvester Graham preached against the deleterious effects on health of tea, coffee, meat, refined flour, sexual activity, and the commercially available diluted milk. Inspired by his exhortations, his followers (restricted to men) established so-called Graham Boardinghouses, following all of the above proscriptions and prescriptions in addition to beginning every day at 5:00 A.M. with a cold bath. and ending it promptly at 10 P.M. after vigorous exercise.[133]

Women were, of course, caught in the crosscurrents of the times. Catherine

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[131] Ian R. Tyrrell, *Sobering Up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America, 1800-1860* Contributions in American History, Number 82 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1979), 63.

[132] Ibid., 169.

[133] Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 533-34.

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Beecher, the sister of abolitionist preacher Henry Ward Beecher, and an early advocate of female education, published *A Treatise on Domestic Economy* in 1841. It proved a great popular success, and was reprinted every year until 1856.[134] This manual cast the middle class woman as a domestic executive, charged with the efficient administration of a household with a mission to ensure the physical, moral and spiritual health of its inhabitants. The same Victorian ideology that made married women the moral lynchpins of a family-centered universe, firmly anchoring them to the home, ironically also gave them a key to the prison door. They could, as a logical extension of their domestic roles, participate in moral crusades outside the home. Thus they assumed active (albeit secondary) roles in the Abolition movement, the Temperance movement, and a variety of charitable and religious activities that moved them inexorably into the public sphere. In 1848, Frederick Douglass, renowned abolitionist and former slave, joined with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott at the founding convention of the women's rights movement in Seneca Falls, New York.

Then as now, "crusades" like abolitionism, temperance, and women's rights existed at the margins of polite society. Well-to-do New Yorkers were much more comfortable devoting their energy to the founding and maintenance of a plethora of worthy institutions devoted to undeniably good causes. A gloss of the 1850-51 New York

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[134] Kathryn Kish Sklar, "Catharine Beecher's *A Treatise on Domestic Economy*: A Document in Domestic Feminism," in *Portraits of a Nineteenth Century Family: A Symposium on the Beecher Family*, ed. Earl A. French and Diana Royce (Hartford, Connecticut: The Stowe-Day Foundation, 1976), 29-51. This collection of essays offers a valuable overview of the extended Beecher family.

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City Directory lists about 100 "Institutions and Societies" devoted to a wide range of projects most, but not all, under religious sponsorship.[135] These ranged from art organizations, educational institutions, and libraries to emigrant aid organizations (separate ones for the Irish, Germans, Italians, and Hebrews) to the forerunners of the modern social work agency, such as the American Female Guardian Society, the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, the New York Society for the Promotion of Education among Colored Children, and the Prison Association of New York.

Enthusiasms and Beliefs

Americans of this period prized great orators, whose skillful, sweeping, dramatic rhetoric and expansive emotionality motivated and entertained audiences across the country. This was the stock-in-trade, as well, of actor, Edmund Forrest. His bold and exaggerated style, leaving nothing to the imagination, seemed quintessentially "American," much to the disgust of more refined, Europeanized tastes. Henry Clay, the hero of the Whigs, regularly whipped his audiences to partisan frenzy, no less than Andrew Jackson, his Democratic nemesis.[136] Charles Grandison Finney, a leading voice of the Second Great Awakening, thundered from his pulpit at the Broadway Tabernacle,

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[135] *Rode's New York City Directory, for 1850-1851*, 30-32. This is a separate list from the much longer inventory of churches, which are listed by denomination.

[136] Reynolds, *Whitman*, 174. For a discussion of Americans' love of oratory, see F. O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941; New York: Oxford University Press paperback, 1968), "Eloquence," 14-24.

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motivating thousands of New Yorkers to renewed Christian vigor which, among other activities, resulted in the founding of what is now Union Theological Seminary.[137] In 1847, Henry Ward Beecher accepted the pulpit of Brooklyn's Plymouth Church and drew crowds of worshipers, giving rise to the aphorism, "If you want to hear Henry Ward Beecher preach take the ferry to Brooklyn and then follow the crowd."[138]

America was a nation of seekers and believers and New Yorkers fully shared the national taste for transporting experiences and extra sensory explanations. Johannes Gaspar Spurzheim arrived in America in 1832 and made a convincing case for his pseudoscience of phrenology. In 1848, two upstate New York sisters, Margaret and Katherine Fox, claimed to have communicated with the spirits of the dead through a series of rapping sounds elicited through seances. They initiated an enduring vogue that became known as spiritualism and attracted adherents including William Cullen Bryant, James Fennimore Cooper,William Lloyd Garrison, and Judge John Edmonds, brother of Francis Edmonds.[139] The theories of Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815), buttressed by the reasonable urge to find plausible explanation for the undeniable phenomenon of hypnosis,

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[137] The first Great Awakening swept the colonies in the mid-eighteenth century. For a general overview of this large topic see two chapters, "The Awakeners," and "The Awakening and the Churches," in Richard Hofstadter, *America at 1750: A Social Portrait* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 217-293. For a discussion of Finney and the Second Great Awakening in 1820s and 1830s New York, see Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 529-32.

[138] Quoted by Joseph S. Van Why, "Crusaders of the Pen and Podium: Henry Ward Beecher, Thomas K. Beecher and other Family Members,"French and Royce, *Beechers,* 112.

[139] Ibid., 262.

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also attracted the attention of Americans looking for quick cures and extra sensory explanations of phenomena.

Americans had a will and a willingness to believe, born of real psychological and social needs for repose, order, pattern, evidence of intentionality, and above all control, both human and divine, of a turbulent world.. This was a salient characteristic of the public whom the managers hoped to reach. The Art-Union offered American art, which is to say art plus patriotism, where others offered religion, temperance, abstinence, cold showers, phrenology, mesmerism, or spiritualism. These enthusiasms often co-existed in the same person, the nineteenth-century American seeking definition and transcendant meaning for his or her own life.[140] As merchants, the Art-Union managers had a visceral understanding of the ability of the thing, the product, in this case the art, to transcend mere function and to trigger, when established as a feature of everyday life, a rush of pleasant emotions connected with grace, ease, and noble aspirations.

The Daily Press

The rise of the penny press in America was facilitated both by an increase in the size of the reading public (reflecting increased population) and by a high degree of public gullibility, or susceptibility. The confluence of these factors is well illustrated in the famous 1835 series of articles in the New York *Sun*. The paper reported to its readers the

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[140] While some sources of certitude and solace are specific to their own time (e.g. substitute Feng Shui for phrenology), others endure, testimony to the enduring need that generates them. Art, religion, and patriotism are constants across time and cultural boundaries.

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news of a sighting, by a powerful telescope set up in South Africa, of life on the moon, said to take the form of "a strange amphibious creature of a spherical form, which rolled with great velocity across the pebbly beach."[141] The article was well-written and authoritative in tone; it exuded an air of credibility sufficient to lead scientists to investigate. The public was fooled until the hoax was gleefully revealed by a rival paper. While there was indignation in some circles, Frank Luther Mott notes that "the public in general accepted it all in good nature. The *Sun* took some credit to itself for 'diverting the public mind, for a while, from that bitter apple of discord, the abolition of slavery.'" The episode spawned a generation of imitators, but none were as successful as the first.

The penny paper in America followed London prototypes, initially made possible by the invention of the steam driven press which allowed for cheap and rapid printing, and aimed at the audience of workers energized by the Chartist movement. Before the advent of the penny paper, American newspapers had been largely commercial, political or religious sheets, not intended for a popular readership. The commercial papers consisted mostly of business news and advertisements and were sold by annual subscriptions, costing eight to ten dollars. The first successful "new" paper in America was the Boston *Transcript*, established in 1830. It cost four cents a day, and was a model of good taste, covering the lively Boston culture scene, while championing the rights of

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[141] The discussion that follows is generally from Mott, *Journalism*. For his account of the *Sun* hoax, see 225-26.

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Irish immigrants.[142]

New York had to wait until 1833 for its first penny paper (which really did cost one cent), when Benjamin Day launched the New York *Sun*. Day's innovation was to sell the paper using the "London" method. He employed an army of newsboys who hawked the paper on the streets for one cent or developed their own delivery routes. By 1836, Day was making a profit of $20,000 a year. He sold the paper in 1837 to his brother-in-law, Moses Y. Beach, who ran it until 1848, when he passed it on to his sons. The *Sun* was the perpetrator of the 1835 hoax and remained New York's largest circulation newspaper until the 1850s.

Day's success encouraged others to join the field. In 1834, the New York *Transcript* appeared, more sensational than the *Sun* and relying heavily on patent medicine advertisements. It published until 1839. In 1835, James Gordon Bennett founded the *Herald*. He was an energetic and combatative Scot who claimed that the role of the press was to offer the reading public the information it needed to make informed decisions, thereby aiding reform. "I speak on every occasion the words of truth and soberness," he wrote in 1836.[143] In fact, Bennett's paper played freely with fact and emphasized crime stories and gossipy accounts of high society. Ironically, Bennett wrote

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[142] The *Transcript* was founded by the Harvard graduate son of a Boston merchant, Lynde Walter, and remained under his supervision until he died in 1842 and was succeeded as editor by his sister, Cornelia Walter, who edited the paper until she married in 1847. The *Transcript* endured until 1941. Ibid., 217.

[143] Quoted in Ibid., 232, from the *Herald*, 26 July 1836.

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a daily money column that made the paper essential reading for businessmen, its vulgar tone notwithstanding.

In 1841 Horace Greeley, a printer and editor with a strong Whig affiliation, decided that New York could support a Whig penny paper. He had been publishing the *New Yorker*, a Whig literary weekly since 1834. On April 10, 1841 he established the *Tribune* as a daily penny paper. He reconfigured the *New Yorker* and his Harrison campaign paper, the *Log Cabin*, into the New York *Weekly Tribune* which circulated nationwide. Greeley was sympathetic to a variety of reform movements, including the cause of the working poor, temperance, abolitionism, and free common-school education. He campaigned against tobacco, prostitution, gambling, and capital punishment. In his opposition to the Mexican War, and with his support for internal improvements and a protective tariff (which he understood as protecting the position of American labor), he advocated defining Whig positions. The daily *Tribune* enjoyed a modest success, running third in circulation behind the *Sun* and the *Herald*, while the weekly edition made Greeley a spokesman for judicious reform-minded citizens in small towns throughout New England and the West.

On September 18, 1851, Henry Raymond, together with two business partners, founded the New York *Daily Times* ("daily" was part of the paper's name until 1857). Raymond was a journalist who had worked for Horace Greeley. He saw an opportunity in New York City for a literate and factual penny paper, full of news, Whig in its politics, but free of the "'isms' and eccentricities of doctrine" that Raymond felt were flaws in

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Greeley's *Tribune*.[144] The *Daily Times* was thus the last of the penny papers to appear in the Art-Union period. Competition among the cheap papers was bitter and nasty, characterized by name calling and actual physical violence. Bennett, of the *Herald*, was the object of much vilification (e.g., he was described as an "obscene vagabond," "polluted wretch," and "venomous reptile" among much else), while Greeley, at one point, dubbed Henry Raymond "a little villain."[145] In 1841, Benjamin Day's *Sun* newsboys launched street attacks on the newsboys selling Greeley's newly-founded *Tribune*.

Penny papers were by no means the only New York press of the period. They joined a group of relatively long-lived journals also led by strong editors. Two of the most important papers were the *Evening Post*, a Democratic newspaper (until 1848 when it defected to the Free Soil Party), owned and edited by William Cullen Bryant, and the *Courier and Enquirer*, edited by Col. James Watson Webb, which had been a Democratic paper until it broke with Jackson in 1832 and allied with the Whigs. Bryant, famed as the preeminent American romantic poet, was, as an editorialist, perfectly capable of sharp-tongued rhetoric and more. In 1831 he had avenged an insult by rival editor William L. Stone, of the *Commercial Advertiser*, by attacking Stone on the street with a whip.[146] Webb, a veteran of the War of 1812, who stayed on to fight Indians in the Northwest,

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[144] Ibid., 280.

[145] Ibid., 237, 280.

[146] The assault took place at 8:00 A.M.. on Broadway in view of the front windows of Philip Hone, who witnessed it as he was shaving, thereby recording an eyewitness account for posterity in his diary. Hone, *Diary*, 1:40.

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had an affinity for violence. He twice beat James Gordon Bennett (a former employee) on the street; was involved in a duel in which his second killed the man who had offended him, Congressman Jonathan Cilley, of Maine, and was sentenced to two years at Sing Sing prison for violating New York's anti-dueling law in an altercation with Congressman Thomas F. Marshall of Kentucky. Only a pardon from Webb's Whig ally, Governor William Seward, kept him from serving the term.[147]

Then, as now, newspapers stoked controversy to sell their sheets. The managers of the Art-Union were keenly aware of the importance of favorable press coverage and devoted considerable energy and attention to obtaining it. In the end, however, the organization became a political football in the penny press wars and suffered for it. While that is a much longer story, it will be noted here that James Watson Webb, proprietor and owner of the Whig commercial paper, *The Courier and Enquirer* was one of the original Committee of Management in 1839. The Art-Union's most notable connection with the daily press was certainly its association with William Cullen Bryant, editor of the *Evening Post*, who served on the Committee of Management in 1842 and 1843, and was President of the organization in 1844, 1845, and 1846. In 1847, Henry Raymond arrived on the Committee of Management and served four terms through 1850, when he left to found the *Daily Times*. Raymond was a Whig who had worked both for Horace Greeley and then Col. Webb, before founding his own paper. Like Bryant, who moved the *Evening Post* from the Democratic Party to the Free Soil Party over the issue of slavery, Raymond, too, soon moved the *Daily Times* from the Whigs to the Free Soil Party and later to the

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[147] Mott, *Journalism*, 261.

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Republican Party. Thus, though the Art-Union included prominent Democratic and Whig newspapermen in its leadership, by the end of the period these party distinctions were blurred by the political realignments leading up to the Civil War.

The Periodical Press

Surveying the flood of periodicals from his editorial vantage point at the *Broadway Journal* in 1845, Charles F. Briggs wrote that "the whole tendency of the age is magazineward.[148] He might have added that the tendencies of the publishing business were "New Yorkward." The brothers George and David Bruce contributed their mechanical skills to this attraction. Born in Scotland, they became the city's pre-eminent typefounders and printers early in the century, improving the printing process with numerous refinements of their own devising. George Bruce was a member of the 1839 Apollo Association Committee of Management, and served as Treasurer in 1840 and '41. Harper Brothers began as printers in 1817, but went on to dominate the American publishing business. D. Appleton & Co. began as dry goods merchants with a book department before devoting themselves solely to book selling and publishing. William Appleton, Daniel's son, served on the Art-Union Committee in 1850.

The roll call of magazines published is staggering. Although many were short-lived, a significant number endured, while some of the short-lived ones are remembered still for their excellence. While the worlds of the newspaper and the magazine

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[148] Ibid., 341 as quoted from the *Broadway Journal*, 1:139 (1 March 1845).

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intermingled, the magazines tended to be closer to the literary lights of the day because of the nature of the material they published.[149] The chief literary journal of the period was the *Knickerbocker* (1833-1862), edited by Lewis Gaylord Cass. Among its contributors were Washington Irving, James Fennimore Cooper and William Cullen Bryant. Charles Frederick Briggs, novelist, humorist, and member of the Art-Union Committee of Management from 1842 through 1845 was a frequent contributor to the *Knickerbocker* before he established his own *Broadway Journal* (with Edgar Allan Poe) in 1844. Briggs was a Whig who later worked with Henry Raymond at the *Times*.

Another New Yorker who blended magazine work with literary interests was Evert A. Duyckinck, a genuine Knickerbocker (i.e. of Dutch descent), son of a Manhattan book seller, who was at the center of a literary group that engaged in ongoing rivalry with the circle around the *Knickerbocker*. Duyckinck was thoroughly devoted to literature, but his friends and close associates were ardent Democrats. He joined the Art-Union Committee of Management in 1848 and remained until the end. In 1840-41 he had published *Arcturus, a Journal of Books and Opinion,* with his friend Cornelius Mathews which printed work by Nathaniel Hawthorne, William Longfellow and James Abbott Lowell. In 1847, Duyckinck briefly edited the *Literary World*. In October 1848, that is, concurrent with his membership on the Art-Union Committee of Management, he purchased the magazine (with his brother George, an Episcopalian clergyman) and both

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[149] For the classic account of the New York literary scene see Perry Miller, *The Raven and the Whale*. The period of Poe, Melville and Hawthorne is extensively discussed in American literary criticism and generally described with Matthiessen's phrase, "*American Renaissance*."

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brothers served as editors until the magazine ran its course in 1853.

In 1846, George Pope Morris and Nathaniel Willis founded the *Home Journal*, a gossipy, literary, flippant, magazine that related goings on about town.[150] Willis, a dandy and aesthete, later built the *Home Journal's* circulation with attacks on the Art-Union. Joseph G. Cogswell, an Art-Union Committee member 1841 served for a time as editor of the *New York Review*, a scholarly journal which published from 1837 to 1842. New York was home to religious journals, as well, with 52 such magazines published in the city in 1848.[151]

Popular Culture – Music, Literature, and Art

One effect of the expanding print media was the widespread dissemination and diffusion of American culture. In the Art-Union period this culture was rich and varied, addressing a full range of tastes and purses and constituting a major presence in everyday life. A wide and growing array of cultural diversions were available to relieve monotony

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[150] See Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1938-1968) 1: 349-55, for a synopsis of the history of this magazine, and a brief description of its two editors, General George Pope Morris, a writer of popular songs, and Nathaniel Willis, a literary aesthete and flaneur. For a view of Willis in his role as Hudson River gentry, see Adam Sweeting, *Reading Houses and Building Books: Andrew Jackson Downing and the Architecture of Popular Antebellum Literature, 1835-1855* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1996) in which Willis plays a prominent role. *Home Journal* with numerous transmigrations along the way survives today as *Town and Country.*

[151] Mott, *Magazines*, 370.

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and offer entertainment, distraction, comfort and/or intellectual stimulation.[152] The nation rang with music of all sorts ranging from the homemade to professional, from church to music hall, from the backwoods banjo-picker to the opera and concert hall. In 1842, the New York Philharmonic Society was founded at the Apollo Gallery, the very premises only recently vacated by the Apollo Association. Indeed, the Art-Union frequently made its gallery space available for evening concerts of classical music. In rather different precincts, in 1843 Millet's Music Saloon in New York City patented the song "Old Dan Tucker." 1843 was also the year in which Pittsburgh native Stephen Foster (1826-1864) began to write a series of songs that continue to be a staple of American music. [153]

In 1846, Edwin Christy (1815-1862) brought his "Christy Minstrels," a troupe of black-face musicians, to Palmo's Opera House in New York City where they played to popular acclaim. In the late 1820s New York-born Dan Rice invented his stereotypical colored man, "Jim Crow." Rice made the jumping and shuffling figure the centerpiece of a musical review which toured the nation and made "Jim Crow"a staple of American popular culture. On a rather different level, Ole Bull, a Norwegian violin virtuoso,

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[152] A general survey that covers the field in straightforward fashion is Carl Bode, *The Anatomy of Popular Culture 1840-1861* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1959). Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988) discusses the use of culture to refine and define class differences, positing a thesis that early American popular culture was directed to a wide audience and mixed high and low elements together, while the tendency of the nineteenth-century, as it progressed, was to refine and separate high and low elements and use cultural taste as a marker of class status.

[153] Foster's "Oh Susannah," written about 1846 and copywrite in 1848 (not by Foster, but by a music publisher named Peters), gained rapid popularity, becoming the anthem and a marching song for the California migration, and making Foster famous.

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arrived in America and took the country by storm, touring throughout the nation between 1843 and 1845, and returning four times thereafter. Jenny Lind, the "Swedish Nightingale," arrived in America in 1850, her tour arranged by the impresario, Phineas T. Barnum. Lind's success in America was legendary. Among her activities in New York was a visit, accompanied by Barnum, to the gallery of the Art-Union.

The Hutchison Family Singers from New Hampshire began touring in 1843, singing a mix of religious, sentimental, patriotic and abolitionist songs. Americans were not only listeners, but participants, as well. From 1829 to 1869, Lowell Mason, a Boston native, adapted, arranged, and composed a series of hymns and secular songs which he annotated and published in readily accessible form, with words and music suitable for amateur singers, accompanied or *a capella*.[154] His song books were best sellers of the time.[155]

Despite a puritan residue of hostility to the theater, America had a long running, well-established and lively theater tradition, chronicled in 1832, by William Dunlap's *History of the American Theater*. Americans flocked to multiple variations on the plays of Shakespeare, as well as a full menu of patriotic, adventure and melodramatic fare. The fact that William Dunlap is both the father of American art history and the father of

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[154] Mason was a crusader for the cause of singing, and his devoted effort to creating a music curriculum for elementary education and for the training of music teachers, has given him the sobriquet "father of music education."

[155] See Margaret C. S. Christman, *1846 Portrait of the Nation* (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996). This catalogue of an exhibition celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Smithsonian Institution offers a useful and largely visual capsule of the period, focusing on 1846. It has served as a general resource in compiling material for this discussion.

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American theater is no accident. Numerous fine artists found work in theatrical activities, Dunlap prominent among them. Thomas Sully, born into a theater family in England, came to America with his acting parents, while [William Thompson] Russell Smith, a regular contributor of works to the Art-Union, enjoyed a stellar career as a theater decorator and scene designer. In the Art-Union period, theaters were not the sanctum of the elite, as they are now, but locations where the whole of society mixed freely, if not comfortably.[156] Opera enjoyed wide popularity as touring European opera troupes joined classical musicians and English thespians in ambitious and successful American visits. There was always a tension between home-grown entertainment and imports, with the imports tending to represent "higher" culture.

The Museum was also a popular American institution, a hybrid intended fully as much for entertainment as for edification. Apart from the Peale Family's various well-known ventures in the field, Hiram Powers began his career in Ohio working for a museum, as did the sculptor Thomas Ball in Boston.[157] The museum, in these incarnations, was not an art gallery, but a collection of remarkable objects and exhibits.[158]

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[156] Levine, *Highbrow Lowbrow*, emphasizes the mixed nature of early nineteenth-century theater audiences, enjoying an eclectic stew of musical and dramatic entertainment. John Searle's famous watercolor rendering of the Park Theatre, November 1822, with its audience of New York's high society recognizable in individual portraits documents the centrality of theater-going in early nineteenth-century New York. (1822, New- York Historical Society) Illus. ibid., 58.

[157] For Ball, in his own words, see Thomas Ball, *My Threescore Years and Ten: An Autobiography* (Boston: Roberts Bros, 1892; reprint Garland Pub., 1976).

[158] The Oxford English Dictionary suggests that the term museum to apply to a fine arts gallery is American and French usage, while the English term continues to be more inclusive. The early museum experience in America is evoked in Charles Willson

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The earliest permanent gallery of fine arts that survives to the present was established at Yale University in 1833 by John Trumbull, primarily to show his own works. The Art-Union keenly felt the lack, in New York City, of a fine arts gallery dedicated to American art, and, in its early days, made the establishment of such a gallery a key priority.

The Visual Arts and Architecture

In 1834, William Dunlap published his two volume *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, proof that there was already a lot to write about.[159] By the 1840s American fine art had already gained widespread public recognition, although (then, as now) these arts attracted as much notoriety as appreciative attention. Much of the early negative repute centered around public problems with nudity in art or the perceived pretentiousness of neoclassical forms. John Vanderlyn's nude rendering of *Ariadne Asleep on the Island of Naxos* (1812, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia) caused a scandal for its maker when he exhibited his Paris-born work in New York in the 1820s.

The sculptor Horatio Greenough, a Harvard graduate working in Florence, Italy,

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Peale's painting, *The Artist in His Museum* (1822, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts). It is also worth recollecting that Peale's *Exhumation of the Mastodon* (1805-08, The Peale Museum, Baltimore City Life Museums) documents an expedition of 1801 that was undertaken for the purpose of bringing the mastodon skeleton back to Peale's Museum for exhibition.

[159] William Dunlap, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*. 2 vols. (New York: George P. Scott and Co., 1834; New York: Dover Publications, 1969).

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encountered opposition on two counts. Greenough was commissioned by James Fenimore Cooper, whose daughters were inspired by the singing *putti* in Raphael's "Madonna del Baldacchino" in the Pitti Palace in Florence, to sculpt a related topic. Greenough's finished work, the *Chanting Cherubs*, disappointed the literal-minded Boston hometown folks when it arrived and was exhibited in 1831, as the cherubs had no mechanism to allow them to sing. The reception in New York, however, was worse, as Greenough's fat little cherubim were given hastily devised aprons to cover their nakedness in the interest of public decency.[160] Sad testimony to the public's familiarity with Greenough's work is that it could be referenced in shorthand fashion to be used as an insult. James Watson Webb did just this in the *Courier and Enquirer* when he sneered at the notion of poet-newspaper editors, calling William Cullen Bryant and his associate, William Leggett, "the chanting cherubs of the *Post*." [161] Greenough's public profile was further sharpened, but not, alas, enhanced, with the negative reception given his colossal bare-chested neo-classical statue of George Washington, which arrived in Washington, D. C. in 1841. American painters had a somewhat easier time with regard to public respect and popular acceptance. By the Art-Union period, Benjamin West, John Singleton Copley, and Charles Willson Peale were respected trailblazers, while the living artists, Gilbert Stuart, Thomas Cole, Washington Allston, John Trumbull, and Thomas Sully were highly regarded.

The 1840s saw the deaths of Trumbull, Allston, and Cole, the latter two marked

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[160] There is a brief account of the episode in Craven, *Sculpture*, 90, 103-104.

[161] Mott, *Journalism*, 258. No date for the quote is given.

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by public mourning and a national sense of loss. These were all artists whose names were common currency among cultured Americans. From 1836 to 1839 George Catlin toured the United States with his gallery of Indian paintings, finally finding patronage in England. In 1839 John James Audubon exhibited his original drawings for the *Birds of America* in the Natural History Lyceum on Broadway.[162] In the 1840s the issue of paintings to decorate the capital in Washington, D. C. was a topic of ongoing debate. Between 1837 and 1853 four paintings were executed for the walls of the Capitol Rotunda. Politics was the order of the day in the commissioning of John Vanderlyn's *Landing of Columbus* (1842-44), Robert Weir's *Embarkation of the Pilgrims* (1837-40), John Chapman's *Baptism of Pocahantas* (1837-42), and William H. Powell's *Discovery of the Mississippi River by De Soto* (1848-53). Vanderlyn and Weir were both New Yorkers; Vanderlyn one of the old guard in New York art circles, while Weir, still a young man, was a Scots immigrant who held the position of drawing instructor at the United States Military Academy at West Point. Chapman was a Virginian with close ties to New York and the Art-Union. Powell was a little-known westerner, chosen for his regional identification.

Technical advances in picture reproduction led to a spate of mass produced visual images in the period, from the popular gift books filled with sentimental poetry and pictures to match, to the veritable flood of lithographs and, after 1840,

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[162] Stokes, *Iconography*, 1761.

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chromolithographs produced to adorn polite parlors coast to coast.[163] The Art-Union saw this area as a major opportunity for the improvement of taste and embarked upon an ambitious program of mass produced images for subscribers. In 1844, Matthew Brady opened his Daguerrean Miniature Gallery at Broadway and Fulton Street, directly across from Barnum's Museum. The possibilities for photography seemed endless, as the process underwent a continuing series of technical improvements, American and European, that rendered it better and more accessible. Parallel to the readily- available images on paper of founders and heroes of the American republic were a variety of domestic-sized popular sculptures that found a popular audience.[164]

Americans, in this period, intensified their interest in the built environment. Charles F.Briggs, a journalist and member of the Committee of Management from 1842 to 1845, published a series of article in the late 1840s on the topic of New York architecture, which he gathered together and published in 1849 as *The Architect.*[165] Horatio Greenough formulated a functional architectural aesthetic for America in

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[163] A useful examination of this topic is Peter C. Marzio, *Chromolithography 1840-1900 The Democratic Art: Pictures for a 19th--Century America* (Boston: David R. Godine, Publisher, 1979), particularly Chapter 3, "New York and Düsseldorf: Mecca and Inspiration," and Chapter 4, "The Giants of New York Lithography." For the classic account of graphic art in America, see Frank Weitenkampf, *American Graphic Art* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912, rev. ed. 1924). Weitenkampf was the long time curator of prints at the New York Public Library.

[164] Francis Edmonds's *The Image Pedlar* (1844, New-York Historical Society) records the popularity of these figures. The painting depicts a traveling salesman of small sculptural figures, showing his wares to an obviously intrigued and delighted rural household. Edmonds showed the work at the NAD in 1844.

[165] Bender, *Intellect*, 163.

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Remarks on American Art, a series of essays serialized in the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* beginning in 1843 (collected and published in book form as *The Travels, Observations, and Experience of a Yankee Stonecutter* in 1852). Greenough wrote that "Beauty is the promise of function." He urged that "instead of forcing the functions of every sort of building into one general form, adopting an outward shape for the sake of the eye or of association without reference to the inner distribution, let us begin from the heart as the nucleus, and work outward." Greenough independently stated the precise impetus that propelled the Art-Union when he wrote, "I believe that these [United] States need art as a visible exponent of their civilization. They call for it as a salvation from merely material luxury and sensual enjoyment, they require it as the guide and ornament of inevitable structure and manufacture."[166] Greenough's publisher was George Palmer Putnam, who had earlier served as the Art-Union's honorary secretary in London, England.

Unaware of, or unfazed by Greenough's functionalist critique, Americans of the Art-Union period moved away from Greek revival for their houses of worship, and turned to Gothic forms. Richard Upjohn and James Renwick, Jr. produced a series of splendid Gothic Revival churches in New York City, while Renwick was the architect for the turreted castle built to house the Smithsonian Institution constructed from 1847 to 1855.

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[166] For a brief, contextual discussion of Greenough as art critic, see Arlene Katz Nichols, " Clarence Cook and *The House Beautiful*, " unpublished paper, City University Graduate Center, 1989 in the collection of the author. The quotes from Greenough are from Harold A. Small, *Form and Function: Remarks on Art by Horatio Greenough* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1947). Sources for the quotes are as follows: "Relative and Independent Beauty,"76; "American Architecture," 61-62; "Aesthetics at Washington," 5-6.

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Alexander Jackson Davis had already practiced architecture with the distinguished neo-classical architect Ithiel Town, when he joined Andrew Jackson Downing to contribute illustrations to Downing's magazine, *The Horticulturalist*. Davis also supplied illustrations for a series of landscape and design books written by Downing that promoted the romantic notion of picturesque architecture in America.

Downing, a self educated gardener from Newburgh, New York, gained international renown initially as a horticulturalist, and then as a proponent of an idealized genteel, rural life-style adapted to American requirements. His books, *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adapted to North America* (1841), *Cottage Residences* (1842), *The Fruits and Fruit Trees of America* (1845), *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850), and *Rural Essays* (a compendium of editorials from *The Horticulturalist*, published posthumously) made him the prophet of a do-it-yourself country gentleman lifestyle, rooted in the rolling hills of the Hudson River Valley.[167] When Downing died tragically in a steamboat explosion on the Hudson River in 1852, he had been engaged to design and landscape the mall in Washington, D.C. Downing served as Art-Union honorary secretary for Newburgh, New York for a number

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[167] There is a vast literature here. A recent work on Davis is *Alexander Jackson Davis: American Architect 1803-1812* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992) issued in conjunction with a show of the same name at the Metropolitan Museum in New York with essays by multiple authors. Adam W. Sweeting, *Reading Houses,* offers an overview of the movement of which Downing was the central figure. He discusses the collaboration between Davis and Downing on pp. 52-53. Sweeting's work also features as a major character Nathaniel Parker Willis, the publisher of the Art-Union's most serious literary nemesis, *The Home Journal*. Willis, emerges, in Sweeting's essay, as a thoroughly reprensible character, a vain phony who attempted to squelch the literary career of his impoverished sister, in short, just the sniveling, pretentious, effete, and hypocritical cad that the Art-Union defenders portrayed.

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of years.

The Reading Public

Americans were readers, relying on the written word to expand their knowledge of the world outside the relatively constricted physical boundaries in which the vast majority of lives played out their days.[168] In 1850, ninety percent of white American adults were literate as compared with a rate of 60% in England. [169] The same desire for an American presence in the fine arts that was a rallying cry for the Art-Union had its counterpart in literature with the call for an American voice in English-language literature, championed by the Young America movement.[170] Evert Duykinck, a key figure in the Committee of Management from 1848 to 1851, was the key literary figure in Young America.

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[168] Frank Luther Mott, *Golden Multitudes: The Story of Best Sellers in the United States* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947) is an invaluable survey of American reading habits. Its parameters, however, which exlude bibles, textbooks, cookbooks, how-to-books, serials taken as a whole and poems and pamphlets issued independently, limit its use as an indicator of what Americans were truly reading.

[169] Reynolds, *Whitman,* 309. This information is not footnoted here, but the figures for America, at least, can be extracted from the 1850 census which contained a question about literacy. Margo J. Anderson, *The American Census: A Social History* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1988), 37.

[170] Young America also lobbied for international copyright protection for authors, a subject also dear to the heart of Charles Dickens. Such protection not only benefitted all living writers, but would have acted as a kind of protective tariff for American authors, whose work would be more attractive to American publishers if the publishers could not continue to pirate and publish for no cost at all the work of European writers.

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The Art-Union period is marked, at its end, by the appearance of one of the all-time literary best sellers in American history, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Literary critic and historian F. O. Mathiessen called the years from 1850 to 1855, the "American Renaissance," in his seminal study of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne.[171] Washington Irving was already an established favorite from an earlier period, as was America's pre-eminent romantic poet, William Cullen Bryant. Melville lived in New York City for a time and visited the Art-Union gallery. His early work was championed by Evert Duyckinck and the Young Americans. William Hickling Prescott, a distinguished historian, was a literary lion in a different circle. In 1847 Philip Hone joined a dinner party celebrating the publication of *The Conquest of Peru* whose other guests included, besides Prescott himself, former Governor William Seward, Clement Clark Moore, James Watson Webb, Henry Brevoort, and Ogden Hoffman. If Whig luminaries gathered to honor Prescott, Democrats were not without their own historian. Prosper Wetmore was a close friend and political advisor to George Bancroft, whose ten volume *History of the United States* was published between 1834 and 1874.

The "American Renaissance" works that have achieved canonical status were not necessarily the popular reading of their time. Americans, then as now, consumed great quantities of "how to" manuals , religious literature, novels, and melodramatic, domestic, or sentimental novels (a genre that prefigures the modern "romance") subsumed under the

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[171] F.O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance*, passim.

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classification of "women's literature" which, notably, were actually written by women.[172] The Art-Union was keenly aware, throughout its history of the broad parameters of American popular taste as well as the influence of women in the consumer public. The managers were ever mindful of the fine line they sought to walk, seeking and distributing art that was at one and the same time both accessible, uplifting, and, by their own lights, not offensive to "the fairer sex."

An Organized Approach to Science and Professional Practice

If we characterize the Art-Union period as a believing, gullible and emotive age, a time when personal charisma carried as much persuasive power as fact-based argument, we can also find in the time the dialectical opposite of this tendency. With its origins in an ongoing Enlightenment movement, but accelerating in the 1840s, scientific and professional men moved in deliberate fashion to establish uniform standards in a variety of fields. Prizing rationality, clarity, and logical organization, they created educational

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[172] A blockbuster of the period was Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World*, published by George Putnam in 1850. Warner had offered her sentimental manuscript to numerous publishers with no luck. George Putnam was not impressed either, until he handed his mother the neatly written manuscript and she shed tears over it, directing him if he never published anything else, he must publish Warner's story. Fortunately for Putnam's purse, he listened, on this occasion, to his mother. The popularity of this woman's genre caused Nathaniel Hawthorne, a "serious" male author to write in disgust in 1855, "America is now given over to a d- - - - d mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash – and should be ashamed of myself if I did succeed."Hawthorne to George Ticknor, a publisher as quoted in Mott, *Multitude*, 122. The Putnam anecdote is on page 124.

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settings to facilitate the pursuit of serious scientific inquiry.[173] In 1847 Congress finally managed, after protracted debate and maneuvering, to establish the Smithsonian Institution, thus carrying out the expressed will of James Smithson.[174]

The Passing Scene

The New York man of affairs lived in a large, bustling, fast-moving world, and he kept up with all of it in order to play an active role. But he also lived in New York City, a place that had its own daily rhythms, it own idiosyncracies, and its own great civic events that marked the passage of a lifetime. New York in the 1840s had already developed characteristics that remain perfectly recognizable today. If there is any doubt, read this litany of complaints published in 1838 in the *New York Mirror:*

> First the running of large hogs, who are the true aristocrats of our sidewalks, and manifest considerable ingenuity in dashing between the legs of inoffensive foot-passengers or spattering them with mud. Second, throwing all rubbish into the

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[173] In 1839 the American Statistical Association was founded, a new organization for a new science. In 1840, the American Society of Dental Surgeons was founded, followed in 1846, by the American Association for the Advancement of Science; in 1847, both the American Medical Association and the New York Academy of Medicine; in 1852, the American Pharmaceutical Association, and also the American Society of Civil Engineers. The Association of American Geologists, initially founded in 1840, reconfigured itself as the Association of American Geologists and Naturalists in 1843, and, in 1848 became the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Louis Agassiz, the renowned Swiss naturalist and geologist arrived in America in 1846 to lecture in Boston and Charleston. In 1847, Abbott Lawrence, a New England industrialist who made his fortune in cotton mills, endowed the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard University and Agassiz was prevailed upon to remain in America and accept a professorship at Harvard.

[174] Smithson was the illegitimate son of the Duke of Cumberland, who, without ever visiting the United States, left the nation a bequest in excess of $515,000 to be used for "increase and diffusion of knowledge among men." See Christman, *Portrait*, 12.

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> street. . . . Third, the villainous noise made by the milkmen . . . [made] the more abominable because we have it during divine service, morning and evening, on the sabbath. Fourth, smoking on the street, a blackguard custom. Fifth, allowing wheelbarrows and handcarts on the sidewalk. Sixth, dogs running at large. Seventh, awning-posts on narrow sidewalks. . . . Eighth, iron gates at Battery Park, instead of iron posts. . . . Ninth, firing squibs or [fire]crackers in the streets, contrary to law. Tenth, street beggars by the thousand; hand organ and monkey, singing girls, etc.[175]

While there were many national and international, political, financial and cultural considerations that had to be kept in mind and in view, a series of local events shaped the daily experience of New Yorkers of the time.[176]

The Art-Union period begins with the panic of 1837. This financial upheaval made newspaper headlines, affected families involved in business, and ultimately resulted in prolonged financial hard times for the entire population. The citizens lived very much on the streets, that is to say, that crowds would easily gather, out of curiosity, to celebrate, or to riot. In 1838 the arrival of the *Sirius* and the *Great Western* drew crowds of watchers, New Yorkers who understood in some sense that the arrival of these transatlantic steamers was an opportunity to witness history. On 30 April 1839 New York celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of Washington's inauguration with Revolutionary War Veterans among the invited guests.

In January 1840, Father John Hughes began the fight for public funding of Catholic Schools. Also in 1840, a series of public exhibition of Daguerrotypes began,

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[175] Stokes, *Iconography*, "Chronology: Addenda, 55, July 13, 1839, XVII, 23.

[176] A good way to get a good sense of the quality of daily life in New York is to read through the annual chronologies that Stokes compiled for Volume 5 of the *Iconography*. Though Stokes is a secondary source, he is reliable guide, relatively close in time to the primary source material he cites.

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showing images of New York City buildings including the City Hall. On the morning of 25 January 1841, New Yorkers felt the ground rumbling beneath them, an earthquake. In March of that year the city closed down and went into mourning to mark the death of President William Henry Harrison. In July 1841, a riot between two rival fire companies on Houston Street resulted in one fatality. In December 1841 P.T. Barnum purchased Scudder's Museum, renamed it and relocated at Broadway and Ann Street, just south of city hall. January 1842 marked the visit to New York of Charles Dickens, a social event of the first magnitude. On 14 January, New Yorkers hosted "The Boz Ball" at the Park Theater in Dickens' honor. The invitation had been personally delivered to Dickens, while he was in Boston, by David Colden, later an Art-Union committee member. In March, Ralph Waldo Emerson delivered a series of six lectures at the Society Library.

In October 1842, the city staged its mammoth celebration to mark the beginning of Croton water. On 23 April 1843, the City watched with some curiosity to see what terrible natural disaster might validate the prediction of William Miller. Nothing materialized.[177] In April 1844, 3000 people gathered at the Broadway Tabernacle to protest the proposed annexation of Texas. A few days later the New York City police force was reorganized. In January 1845, Congress set a permanent day for the United

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[177] William Miller, a charismatic religious revivalist, predicted the end of the world on April 23, 1843, to be followed by the Second Coming of Christ. His followers blanketed the nation with four million broadsides, dispersed their worldly goods, and dressed themselves in white robes for the great day. When that day passed uneventfully, Miller revised his calendar and offered October 23, 1844. One Millerite preacher did influence the future course of events. She was a freed slave named Isabella Van Wagenen, who changed her name to Sojourner Truth and later turned her talents to the abolitionist movement. Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 628.

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States presidential election to be the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. On 19 July 1845 a fire destroyed over 300 buildings in the business district and burned for over four days. The economy was in such robust condition by then, however, that the fire was seen as a form of urban renewal, with capital bursting to rebuild the area. In September of that year two rather different forms of reading matter appeared within a week of each other, the first issues of the *Scientific American* and *The National Police Gazette.*

By 1846 New York had three Daguerrean Galleries. In 1847 Stokes lists twenty-five "principal hotels," in alphabetical order. On 8 February, Colonel John Frémont announced the annexation of California by the United States, with himself as Governor. In May of 1847 the "New York Committee for the Relief of Ireland" sent "four ships, five barks, and four brigs . . . with 21,731 barrel s of Indian meal and corn" to Ireland. In July of 1847 the police were instructed "to take charge of any and all swine found at large."[178] In September of 1847 the city began to acquire title to the lands that would become Central Park, a process that lasted until 1852. In October 1847 Professor Louis Agassiz gave a series of lectures at the College of Physicians and Surgeons. On November 18, 1847 the Astor Place Opera House was opened to the public.

The power of New York's attraction to journalists and writers is well captured in a series of quotes. In 1839, Horace Greeley wrote in the *New-Yorker*:

> New York has become the metropolis, in our country, not only of commerce, but of literature and the arts. Like Tyre of old, she has covered the sea with ships, and her merchants are princes. . . . No man well acquainted with the

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[178] Stokes, *Iconography*, 5:1804.

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> history of Literature and Art in our country during the last ten years, can refuse to acknowledge that New York has towered above her sister cities.

Briggs, in 1845, saw much the same scene as Greeley:

> Broadway is confessedly the finest street in the first city of the new World. . . . All the dealers in intellectual works are here centered; every exhibition of art is found here. . . . New York is fast becoming, if she be not already, America, in spite of South Carolina and Boston.

The *Democratic Review*, in 1847 saw New York "daily becoming more metropolitan in character, and what is more worthy of remark, more generally acknowledged as the metropolis of art in America." And, what is perhaps icing on the cake, is the comment of the *American Agriculturist*, responding to the question of why they choose to publish in New York: "More farmers and planters resort here than to any other city in the Union."[179]

Panorama

We return, at the end to the panorama. This discussion has encompassed a dizzying array of issues and activities, ranging widely across a spectrum of concerns and interests. What unites them is that they would all have been familiar to the ever-alert man of affairs in mid-century New York. Some would have been the stock of everyday gossip and conversation. Others were recent enough history to remain in the contemporary inventory of necessary background information. I use commercial terms because New York was a mercantile city, and it was the business of New Yorkers to know as much as

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[179] All of the above quotations are from Mott, *Magazines*, 376-77. Citations are as follows: Greeley, *New Yorker* 7 (23 March 1839); Briggs, *Broadway Journal* 1 (4 January 1845): i; *Democratic Review* 20 (April 1847): 373; *American Agriculturist* 1 (2 April 1845).

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they possibly could and to be aware of everything within their ken, whether or not they had an immediate direct interest. In a sense, I have tried, selectively, to recreate a world.

The men of the Art-Union men were distinguished by interests and involvements across a wide spectrum of the topics we have touched upon, with overlapping and complementing areas of expertise. What united them across a variety of backgrounds and specialties was a concern for cultural improvement, and for the encouragement of the fine arts in particular. That concern had a long history in New York City. It was, in fact, a part of the panorama, but of such particular interest to the present study, that it is worth recounting in some detail.

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CHAPTER 3

FINE ARTS INITIATIVES

Though the American Art-Union has been understood as a Jacksonian-era vehicle for art patronage, what is striking in examining the patterns of association of the Art-Union officers and managers is the continuity of New York practice from the mid-eighteenth century through the Art-Union period. While the Art-Union men ultimately blazed a new trail, they did so from their positions within an established New York City tradition of encouraging and supporting the fine arts. The Apollo Association and the Art-Union need to be understood as episodes in an ongoing effort. The institution's officers and managers were drawn from a cadre of cultural activists who had worked for generations to establish a fine arts presence in New York society.

These men participated in what Thomas Bender has characterized as "interlocking patterns of membership characteristic of a society with a multifunctional elite."[180] Richard

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[180] Bender, *Intellect*, 58. Bender discusses the topic of elite associations at length in his introductory chapter, "The Emergence of City Culture in New York," 9-46. In his analysis of The Friendly Club (1793-98), he cites as one of its identifying and important characteristics the "close association of men of letters, professionals, and businessman" (28). Bender finds that "the learned circle of New York developed out of a social experience of familiar fraternity at the upper levels of society" who shared a "class-based social network"(37). Bender also comments on the limited role of women in this New York society, noting "their exclusion from the male-oriented, public, learned culture of the city." "Women were not involved in the learned culture of New York" (38). With regards to shared Masonic affiliations and varying political orientations, Bender notes: "If Masonry seems to have united the cultural improvers of early republican New York, party loyalty seems not to have divided them" (60). Frederic Cople Jaher, *The Urban Establishment: Upper Strata in Boston, New York, Charleston, Chicago, and Los Angeles* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1982) studies elites and finds that in New York "the . . . magnitude of speed of social and economic change. . . encouraged a circulation

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Hofstadter offered a perceptive and useful description of this society in his chapter on "Business and Intellect" in *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*. Describing "the genteel culture that flourished largely in the East," Hofstadter observed:

> This culture had its limitations, but . . . it was the only high culture the country knew. To a considerable degree, it leaned upon the support of a commercial class.
>
> The backbone of this class was mercantile wealth – wealth, it is important to say, in the hand of men who did not invariably consider the pursuit of business and the accumulation of money an all-sufficient end in life. . . .
>
> The slow pace of business transaction in the days of the sailing ship, which was so soon speeded up by the increasing rapidity of mid-nineteenth century communication, made the successful pursuit of business consistent with a life of dignified leisure. . . .
>
> The early nineteenth century inherited this ideal of the man of business as a civilized man and a civilizing agent. Spokesmen of this ideal did not feel any inconsistency in preaching at the same time the Puritan values of dedication to work, frugality, and sobriety , and the gentlemanly ideals of leisure, culture, and versatility.[181]

Hofstadter's evocation of an earlier mercantile class is as cogent today as when it

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and fragmentation of elites. . . . The demise of the colonial-federal families, . . terminated aristocratic control over a broad range of urban activities. Subsequent elites controlled or contended for control of trade, politics, culture, or fashion, and some overlap existed among these groups, but none developed into an aristocracy by prolonging its multifaceted leadership for several generations" (159-160). This analysis (buttressed by considerable detail) predates Bender and prefigures Bender's later description. Cople's reference to "the demise of colonial-federal families" recalls the political phenomenon described many years earlier by the seminal historian Dixon Ryan Fox in *The Decline of Aristocracy in the Politics of New York, 1801-1840*. Jaher (68-71) challenges the methodology (specifically for Boston) that Edward Pessen employed in Pessen's *Riches, Class, and Power Before the Civil War*, and questions Pessen's conclusions. Nonetheless it would be hard to imagine Jaher's later study without the example of Pessen's pioneering and valiant attempt to organize a mass of unruly material, analyze it, and give it meaning. Pessen tends to see the elite as largely undifferentiated, an extended family united by ties of kinship and business interest. Rachel Klein, in her study of the Art-Union managers, "Art and Authority," goes further and and finds in these patterns of association, proof of "a cohesive group" (1537).

[181] Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Knopf, 1963), 244-245.

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was written in 1963. It serves as a reminder of the considerable gulf between the modern American business culture that developed after the Civil War and throughout the twentieth century and the social situation that prevailed in the eighteenth century through the mid-nineteenth.[182] The negative associations summoned by the phrase "merchant-run organization" are the fruit of more recent experience. The leaders of the Art-Union inherited a model of gentlemanly involvement in public affairs that identified them as members of a nobility based on service. They were educated (or self-educated) amateurs before the tendency toward professionalization limited their spheres of expertise. The arts activities that they pursued offered diversion, added beauty, and gave meaning to their everyday lives.

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[182] Hofstadter's point, which posits a change in business culture as the nineteenth century progressed has been taken up and corroborated by subsequent scholars. Most recently Sven Beckert uses the mid-nineteenth century point as his divide in his look at New York City elite class and culture in *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850-1896* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Beckert makes much of distinctions between mercantile and manufacturing cultures, a development briefly noted by Hofstadter, ibid., 249. There is general agreement among Hills, "Expansionist Ideology,"Paul DiMaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: the Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America," in *Media, Culture, and Society* 4, no.1 (January 1982): 33-50, Bender, Beckert, and Jaher that major social and cultural changes occurred within America's urban elite in the second half of the nineteenth-century.

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"To Cultivate the Finer Arts"[183]

James Herring's Apollo Association was one of a series of fine arts initiatives that enlivened the New York City cultural landscape beginning in the waning days of the eighteenth century. To properly understand the Apollo and its successor, the American Art-Union, it is useful to revisit this institutional context, looking at the felt needs and broad issues that competing and complementary fine arts organizations addressed in early nineteenth-century New York City. This proves to be more than an exercise in summoning historical antecedents. What is striking, as the narrative unfolds, is the continuity among the primary actors with an interest in art matters and literary pursuits from the beginning of the nineteenth century to well past its mid-point.[184]

Fine arts activity in New York was generated by an extended group of individuals – civic-minded patrons, laymen with keen and broad interests in cultural matters, and artists who met and mingled in a variety of professional, social, civic, religious, and political settings. Over the course of more than fifty years a recognizable core of men

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[183] As quoted in Hofstadter, ibid., 244 from Albert Henry Smith, ed., *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1905-7), 2: 228. The full quotation as given is "The first drudgery of settling new colonies which confines the attention of people to mere necessaries is now pretty well over; and there are many in every province in circumstances that set them at ease, and afford leisure to cultivate the finer arts and improve the common stock of knowledge."

[184] As complicated as this story is, it becomes even more so when literary history is added to the mix. Through the years an eminent group of scholars has addressed these issues. F. O. Matthiesson, *Renaissance*; Perry Miller, *Raven*; James Callow, *Spirits*; and David Reynolds, *Whitman*, have all examined New York literary history of this period, often touching tangentially on the fine arts. Despite their separation into different academic disciplines, it must be kept in mind that early nineteenth century New York popular art, fine art, music, theater, and literature are intimately related topics.

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founded and shaped a variety of organizations. This New York art world was small; its protagonists knew each other well. Generations did not so much give way as meld, yielding an intricate mesh of tangential relationships. By the late 1820s the leading figures of the 1840s – patrons and artists alike – were already active players on the stage and well-known to one another. A group of names appears and reappears in this context. Dr. John Wakefield Francis (1789-1861), Philip Hone (1780-1851), William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878), John Ludlow Morton (1792-1871), Abraham Cozzens (1811-1868), Francis William Edmonds (1806-1863), Asher Brown Durand (1796-1886), Samuel Finley Breese Morse (1791-1872), Thomas Seir Cummings (1804-1894), and Thomas Cole (1801-1848) are among the most prominent.

In 1791, as New York struggled to its feet in the early Federal period, Archibald Robertson (1765-1835) arrived in New York from his native Scotland. Trained as a painter in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and London, Robertson had been recruited, through Scottish intermediaries, by Dr. John Kemp of Columbia College to provide first class drawing instruction to artistically inclined New Yorkers.[185] Accordingly, he established the Columbian Academy of Painting, which he ran with his brother and fellow artist, Alexander Robertson (1772-1841), who followed him to New York in 1792. A few Robertson students made their way into the art profession – Francis Alexander (1800-

[185] For the Robertsons see Edith Robertson Cleveland, "Archibald Robertson, and His Portraits of the Washingtons," *The Century Magazine* 15, no. 1 (May 1890): 3-13. The author was a descendant of the artists.

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1880), John Vanderlyn (1775-1852), and John Crawley (1784-after 1842).[186] Most, however, were amateurs from well-to-do families. The Robertsons taught Washington Irving,[187] members of the Ogden and Macomb families,[188] and one particularly serious student, John Robert Murray (1774-1851). Murray, described in art dictionaries as "an amateur artist and lithographer,"[189] was a businessman whose mercantile career, amply supplemented by inherited wealth, enabled him to become one of America's major early art collectors. For nearly fifty years Murray demonstrated his commitment to art by participating in and lending his name to a succession of fine arts organizations.[190]

In 1801, just as Chancellor Robert R. Livingston was about take up his post in Paris as Thomas Jefferson's Minister to France, he conceived the idea of creating in New

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[186] For Crawley see William Dunlap, *History*, 2: 233-34, 261, and also William H. Gerdts, *Art Across America: Two Centuries of Regional Painting 1710-1920* (New York: Abbeville Press, Publishers, 1990), 2: 24, 35.

[187] Callow, *Spirits*, 3.

[188] Lillian Miller, *Patrons*, 147.

[189] As is often the case this phrase apppears in George C. Groce and David H. Wallace, *The New-York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America, 1564-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), in a recent edition of Mantle Fielding, *Dictionary of American Painters, Sculptors & Engravers* (Philadelphia: Printed for the Subscibers, 1926; rev. ed. Poughkeepsie, New York: Apollo, c. 1983); and most recently in the latest edition of *Who Was Who in American Art 1564-1975: 400 Years of Artists in America* editor-in-chief Peter Hastings Falk (Madison, Connecticut: Sound View Press, 1999). The two latter sources have been frequently revised and build on one another (and Groce and Wallace, as well), revising old text as new material becomes available.

[190] Murray was a founder of the American Academy, a member of the Apollo Association Committee of Management in 1840, and an Honorary Member of the National Academy of Design from 1840-1851. He is listed in artists' dictionaries including Groce & Wallace, and *Who's Who*. Lillian Miller mentions Murray a number of times. *Patrons*, 92, 94, 146-48, 225, 276.

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York an organization based on the model of the Royal Academy of Art in London.[191] The group convened in 1802, led by Robert's brother, Edward Livingston, the Mayor of New York. The founders were a circle of well-to-do gentlemen recruited by the landed, wealthy, and politically-active Livingston family and included a heavy concentration of members of their extended kinship and social circle. Each patron subscribed a substantial $50 for life membership – the funds to be used for the purchase of plaster casts in Europe. With some difficulty, the desired casts were obtained and shipped to New York where they served as the basis of instruction in an art academy. Initially called the New York Academy of the Fine Arts, the organization was incorporated in 1808 as the American Academy of Arts. In 1817, reflecting John Trumbull's (1756-1843) energy and ambition, it legally amended its name to the American Academy of the Fine Arts. [192]

After its initial burst of energy, the Academy fell into a period of torpor. It awakened around 1816, the chosen vehicle for the energy of John Trumbull, a Connecticut native who was, at one and the same time, a prickly patrician and a

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[191]The Royal Academy in London was a relative late-comer as European art academies went, founded in 1768. By 1802, the American expatriate painter, Benjamin West, had already served tenof his twenty-seven years as its President. (West led the Academy from 1792 to 1805 and from 1806 to 1820, his term interrupted as the result of a factional dispute.) For a useful summary of European art academies, see Nikolaus Pevsner, *Academies of Art Past and Present* (Cambridge, England, 1940: reprint Da Capo Press, New York 1973), especially pp. 183-187 for the Royal Academy in London. Pevsner does not discuss America.

[192] The records of the American Academy of the Fine Arts were donated to the New-York Historical Society in 1874 by the Academy's last Secretary, noted architect Alexander Jackson Davis (1803-1892).

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politically-connected artist.[193] Under Trumbull's guidance the American Academy adopted, in 1817, a twenty-page governance document laying out a set of by-laws closely modeling it after its British prototype.[194] Among the active members of the revivified Academy was the patron John Robert Murray, who served as Vice President from 1815 to 1824 and as a Director from 1825 to 1835; and the artist Alexander Robertson, who was a Director in 1816, the Secretary from 1817 to 1825, and the Keeper from 1820 to 1835. Despite the new beginning, the Academy never quite prospered, but it did endure, charting a bumpy course until the late 1830s, by which time it was clear to friend and foe alike that its time had passed. It ended its argument-riven span quietly in 1842, but not before it had involved an impressive number of artists and patrons in its cause and made art the stuff of local newspaper controversy. Most significantly for this account, from 1831 through 1836, the Academy was the vehicle that James Herring chose as the focus of his attempt to create a first class art gallery in New York City.

In 1825, chafing at the supercilious attitudes of the Academy's management and at the very limited access that the Academy allowed to its vaunted collection of casts, a group of young artists and art students left the Academy school and set out on their own. These men rallied round a champion every bit as prickly, patrician, and Connecticut-Yankee as Col. Trumbull – the painter (and future inventor) Samuel Finley Breese

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[193] For the most complete list of members, officers and directors of the Academy, see Rebora, "Appendix A," "Academy," 495-531.

[194] Ibid., 64.

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Morse.[195] After attempts at reconciliation between the Academy and the offended artists failed, the artists, who included Durand, Cummings, William Dunlap (1766-1839), and Henry Inman (1801-1846), formed the artists-only National Drawing Association which became, in 1826, the National Academy of Design.[196]

In the never-ending back-and-forth struggle for control of art institutions, the Robertsons' initial school was modest, private, artist-owned, and long-lasting, succeeding in what it set out to do for almost thirty years. The American Academy of the Fine Arts was conceived of as a patron-controlled organization (although the Academy finished its span run by a group of artists different from the ones at the National Academy). The National Academy of Design was the creation of professional New York artists, directed entirely by artist-Academicians. The American Academy and the National Academy of Design were essentially competing institutions. Both sponsored schools and both looked for funding to meet ongoing expenses by drawing the public to their pay-to-view art exhibitions. Both were intended by their founders to be the preeminent fine art institution

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[195] Samuel Morse was the Yale-educated son of the prominent Connecticut minister and geographer, Jedidiah Morse.

[196] There are two histories of the National Academy: Thomas Seir Cummings, *Historic Annals of the National Academy of Design New-York Drawing Association, Etc., with Occasional Jottings by the Way-Side, from 1825 to the Present Time* (Philadelphia: George W. Childs, Publisher, 1865; reprint New York: Kennedy Galleries, Inc., 1969); and Eliot H. Clark, *The History of the National Academy of Design, 1825-1953* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954). More recently the Academy is placed in historical context and discussed in Lois Marie Fink and Joshua C. Taylor, *Academy, The Academic Tradition in American Art: An Exhibition Organized on the Occasion of the One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the National academy of Design: 1825-1975* (Washington, D.C.: National Collection of Fine Arts; Smithsonian Institution Press, 1975).

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in New York City. In this context the Apollo Association has been seen, in its simplest contours, as the successor to the Academy, a patron-directed organization. Indeed, punning on the fact that the crushing blow to the American Academy was a fire that gutted its premises in 1839, Theodore Sizer commented that "The Apollo Association [was] born in 1839 out of the ashes of the Academy."[197] The Apollo left art instruction *per se* to the care of the National Academy and reserved for itself the role of dispensing largesse and guidance at the direction of the Committee of Management, which was constituted to be specifically artist-free. The Apollo inherited, however, the major bone of contention that had existed between the American Academy and the NAD. Like the artists' organization, the Apollo wished to exhibit the best new American art and defray its operating expenses thereby. This overlap in territory proved to be the cause of considerable friction that was both complicated and smoothed over by a significant group of leaders common to both groups. Moreover, all the principal players in the Apollo/Art-Union and the National Academy, friends as well as enemies, knew each other very well. Indeed, the patron/artist relationship is, by definition, symbiotic and fraught with the power issues inherent in that kind of symbiosis.

One more fine arts organization completes the picture through the mid-century period. It also was generated out of the familiar nucleus of individuals. In 1844 friends and admirers of the late grocery merchant and patron of American art Luman Reed (1785-

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[197] Sizer, "Academy," 60.

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1836) established the New-York Gallery of Fine Arts.[198] The founders of the New-York Gallery intended to preserve Reed's esteemed collection and to extend the exhibition plan he had tentatively begun, making his collection the basis for a permanent free gallery.[199] Led by Jonathan Sturgis, Reed's junior partner in the grocery business, and Thomas Allen, Reed's son-in-law, they banded together to purchase the art from Reed's estate.[200] In 1845 they obtained a New York State Charter and the free use of the Rotunda in City Hall Park for an exhibition space. After the City reclaimed the Rotunda in 1848, the Gallery was without an exhibition space until 1850, when it moved to the rooms of the National Academy, which it occupied except for the six-week period of the annual

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[198] For the New-York Gallery of Fine Arts see Winifred E. Howe, *A History of the Metropolitan Museum of Art with a Chapter on The Early Institutions of Art* (New York 1913; reprint Arno Press 1974), 62-67. Howe appears to have been the earliest scholar to examine the manuscript materials held in the Historical Society. In the same preliminary chapter, "Introduction: Early Institutions of Art in New York 1787-1864," 2-93, she also discusses the American Academy of Fine Art and "The Apollo Association Later Called the American Art Union." More recent discussions are Maybelle Mann, "The New York Gallery of Fine Arts: 'A Source of Refinement,'" *The American Art Journal* 11, no. 1 (January 1979): 76-86; Wayne Craven, "Luman Reed, Patron: His Collection and Gallery, *American Art Journal* 12, no. 2 (Spring 1980): 40-59; and Abigail Booth Gerdts, "Newly Discovered Records of the New-York Gallery of Fine Arts," *Archives of American Art Journal* 21, no. 4 (Winter 1981): 2-9. The full list of officers and trustees is printed in the *Catalogue of the Exhibition of the New-York Gallery of the Fine Arts* (New York: James Van Norden and Co., 1844).

[199] For a full discussion of the Reed collection, see Ella M. Foshay, *Mr. Luman Reed's Picture Gallery: A Pioneer Collection of American Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990), a publication that accompanied the re installation of the Collection at the New-York Historical Society.

[200] Among the founding Trustees of the New-York Gallery who had direct or indirect ties to the Art-Union were William H. Appleton, John. H. Austen, William Cullen Bryant, Stephen M. Chester, Francis Edmonds, William H. Johnson, Charles Leupp, Eleazar Parmly, Jonathan Sturges, Thomas Tileston (who was Paul Spofford's business partner), and Charles A. Stetson.

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Academy Spring show. The New-York Gallery managed to stay on friendly terms with both the Art-Union and the National Academy. With the New-York Gallery intended to be the nucleus of a free permanent art exhibition, by 1844 the Art-Union no longer talked about establishing a permanent collection. And since the New-York Gallery was not buying work from current artists' studios for exhibition, it posed no threat to the National Academy. In 1848, with no exhibition space of its own, each of its subscribers was given a free pass for the season to the exhibit at the Art-Union. At the Art-Union's final dissolution, the remaining managers gave its assets to the New-York Gallery. But the Gallery was already faltering by the time that the Art-Union made its bequest. In 1858, its trustees bequeathed all of its assets and holdings to the care of the New-York Historical Society.[201]

Properly speaking, the Society was not a fine-arts organizations in this period. It had received its first painting, a Charles Willson Peale portrait of Alexander Hamilton, in 1841. In 1858, however, when it accepted the collection of the New-York Gallery of Fine Art, it backed, de facto, into its function as a public art gallery.[202] In fact, though assets

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[201] For an account of the New-York Historical Society, see R. W. G. Vail, *Knickerbocker Birthday: A Sesqui-Centennial History of The New-York Historical Society, 1804-1954* (New York: The New-York Historical Society, 1954). The Society was the reasonable repository both for the Reed Collection and the Art-Union legacy insofar as many of the men who were involved in both organizations were also active members of the Society.

[202] The New-York Historical Society has colloquially been nicknamed "New York's attic," for the tendency, over almost two-hundred years, of New York's elite to give to it whatever currently had no other home but seemed worth saving. By the end of the twentieth century the Society found itself so rich in collections and poor in constituents that it almost closed its doors. It is now in the process of trying to re-invent itself and find its "market niche" in the world of New York museums and cultural

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were transferred from the Art-Union to the New York Gallery to the Historical Society, the same extended group of leaders exercised stewardship at all three institutions. Among the six members of the Historical Society's art committee in 1862 were Abraham Cozzens, Andrew Warner, Jonathan Sturgis and William Hoppin, Art-Union figures all. As late as 1873, William Cullen Bryant, Hoppin, Evert Duyckinck, James W. Beekman, and Warner constituted five of the eight officers of the Society.[203]

At the same time as these complementing, competing and conflicting institutions marked the New York artscape, a parallel set of institutions evolved in club rooms and parlors, less formal and more social venues that allowed artists, patrons, literary men and men of affairs, friends and enemies, to meet on equal footing. The first of these was initiated by James Fenimore Cooper, the son of a prominent upstate Federalist politician and landowner, Judge William Cooper of Cooperstown.[204] Cooper was a financially independent gentleman who, in 1811, had married Susan De Lancy, a member of a prominent New York family. In 1821 he published his second novel, *The Spy,* to popular and critical acclaim. In 1822 Cooper moved from the town of Mamaroneck, in Westchester County, to New York City.

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institutions. The case in point of the origins of its art collection illustrates the kind of mechanism that has contributed to the Society's identity crisis.

[203] Vail, *Knickerbocker*, 144-45.

[204] There were earlier literary and academic clubs in New York, but they did not include painters and sculptors, per se. See Bender, Chapter 1, "The Emergence of City Culture in New York," *Intellect*, 9-45. For a personal account, see William Dunlap's recollections in his diary, Dorothy C. Barck, ed., *Diary of William Dunlap (1766-1819)* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1931). Dunlap was part of this society, but not in his persona as an artist.

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What Cooper created, after he moved to Manhattan, was essentially a New York salon. He invited a select group of writers, artists, and Knickerbocker professional and business men to join him in a club, informally called "the Lunch" and later, the "Bread and Cheese Club."[205] Cooper's group was diverse and idiosyncratic, ranging from the eminent Federalist/Whig jurist James Kent, to the ardent Democratic editor, William Cullen Bryant. The Bread and Cheese Club included artists and patrons whose paths would cross again, twenty years later, in the Art-Union. Among these were Bryant; two prominent physicians, Dr. John W. Francis and Dr. John Stevenson;[206] the retired auctioneer, stalwart Whig and one-term Mayor, Philip Hone; and a number of artists, including Asher B. Durand, Samuel F. B. Morse, and Thomas Cole.[207] Although no precise membership records exist, the club eventually grew to include about thirty-five men who met regularly at the stylish Washington Hotel. The gathering faltered and then faded after Cooper's defection for Europe in 1826. (He left for the education of his son

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[205] The Club was named, not for its habitual menu, but for its method of deciding upon new members. According to Dr. Francis Wakefield, members voted yea or nay on new admissions by balloting with bread and cheese. Bread was a yes vote. One cheese, or no vote, was sufficient to turn back a candidate. John Wakefield Francis, *Old New York; or Reminiscences of the Past Sixty Years being An Enlarged and Revised Edition of the Anniversary Discourse Delivered Before The New York Historical Society, (November 17, 1857) by John W. Francis, M. D. , L.L.D.* With a Memoir of the Author by Henry T. Tuckerman (New York: W. J. Widdleton, 1866: facsimile edition New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1971), 291.

[206] Dr. John B. Stevenson was included in Herring's original Committee of Management, but declined to serve, creating the vacancy that was filled by Prosper Wetmore.

[207] Bender, *Intellect*, 134-5. The definitive source for the Bread and Cheese Club remains Albert H. Marckwardt, "The Chronology and Personnel of the Bread and Cheese Club," *American Literature*, 6 (Jan. 1935): 389-99.

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and daughters and did not return until 1833.) The Bread and Cheese Club offered an attractive model, a select social group where literary men, artists, and culturally inclined professionals and merchants met in a convivial setting.

In 1829, to fill the void left by the decline of the Bread and Cheese Club, a group generated out of the leadership of the National Academy founded the Sketch Club.[208] The Sketch Club limited its maximum number of members officially to twenty-one, the reasonable upper limit for even a commodious parlor. It foreswore ostentation in entertainment, apparently a discomforting feature of the old Bread and Cheese gatherings. Artist members of the Sketch Club included a nucleus from the Bread and Cheese: Thomas Cole, Asher B. Durand, Samuel Morse, John L. Morton, and later, Francis Edmonds. Among the Club's collectors and friends of the arts were Bryant, Reed, Sturgis, Abraham M. Cozzens, and Charles Leupp. The necessary size restriction, however, rendered the Sketch Club insufficiently elastic to include men who ought logically to have been invited and whom the members wished to include as the years progressed.

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[208] Nineteenth century discussions of the Sketch Club are found in histories of its much larger successor, The Century Association. See John H. Gourlie, *The Origin and History of "The Century"* (New York: William C. Bryant, 1856), and John Durand, *Prehistoric Notes of the Century Club* (New York: n.p. 1882). See also Frederick G. Mather, "Club Life in New York City," in James Wilson Grant, ed., vol. 4, *The Memorial History of the City of New-York, from its First Settlement to the Year 1892* (New York: New York History Co., 1982-93), 232-262. The Sketch Club minutes are in the Archives of the Century Association. Both Bender and Callow (12-29) discuss this period in New York cultural history, Bender in the context of intellectual history, Callow from the point of view of literary history. Bender (135) suggests that the Sketch Club consisted of artists and writers with a generally Democratic orientation, while the more conservative business men who were members of Bread and Cheese formed the Literary Club. Foshay also describes the Sketch Club members as "generally of a liberal frame of mind" (*Gallery*, 30). Neither of these descriptions fit Samuel Morse.

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Moreover, as it grew, its artist component became too dilute to sustain the original intention of producing either a visual or literary sketch at each meeting, making its name anomalous. This situation gave rise, in 1844, to the so-called "Artists' Sketch Club," an artists-only group, consisting of Edmonds, Cole, Durand, Charles C. Ingham (1796-1863), Morton, Cummings, and John G. Chapman (1808-1889). It met in the rooms of the National Academy of Design for two or three years. At each meeting members sketched for an hour on a topic announced by the rotating member-in-charge for that meeting, who collected for himself the evening's sketches.[209]

In 1846, a group of Sketch Club members founded the Century Club, originally named for its anticipated maximum number of members. The overlap between Centurions and Art-Union managers and officers over time was prodigious.[210] The Sketch

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[209] The group is fondly recalled by Cummings in *Annals*, 175-76. With regard to the role of the sketch in artists' practice, see Eleanor Jones Harvey, *The Painted Sketch: American Impressions from Nature 1830-1880* (Dallas: Dallas Museum of Art, 1998). Harvey makes a number of interesting points in her "Introduction." The sketch played an important role in European treatises on academic training for artists. America had no systematic academic training to rival Europe. Morse and Durand "worried about American artists' striving to reach artistic maturity without rigorous formal schooling" (18). The National Academy had been founded primarily to address this very deficit. The sketch, though, was more than the foundation of academic practice; it was the vehicle that revealed the genius of artistic inspiration. "The term *sketch* connoted a work engendered by the brief, explosive moment of untutored genius, a highly charged, intensely personal response to a scene or event. . . . The sketch harbored ideas only the artist could translate into intelligible form . . . " (18). The sketching opportunities described above were social, convivial, and informal, but, as Harvey's text describes, they also reflected the awareness of a more serious underlying purpose.

[210] For the Century, see Allen Nevins, "The Century, 1847-1866," in *The Century: 1847-1946* (New York: The Century Association 1947), 3-24 Nevins, whose family dates back to the period under investigation, was a distinguished American historian and (not incidentally) a Centurion. The book is a chatty "insider" celebration, and not a critical history. Membership in the Century and service in the Art-Union did not always

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Club did not, in fact, disappear into the Century. It carried on sporadically and with diminished importance until 1869. By the time it finally faded away it must have seemed a quaint and nostalgic relic of pre-Civil War innocence.

All of these groups shared overlapping rosters of members and leaders, nearly all male.[211] Over the course of half a century, membership in these groups exhibited a kind of quasi-familial continuity, extended and sprawling, intricately inter-connected, and multi-generational. There were inevitable departures, but also a steady stream of additions, as new men came of age or arrived in New York City. The out-of-towners drawn to this group, as for example, William Cullen Bryant, were a relatively select few who came to the City looking both for economic opportunity and for the cultural advantages that only a metropolis could offer.

What spurred these generations of New Yorkers to join together in so many different variations to make a place for the fine arts in their society? Simply put, they were completing the American revolution. Political independence was only the beginning of a protracted process. Economic independence took longer, but Americans had no doubts about their abilities to generate wealth (although it was not until the Civil War that America had a unified and regulated currency system of its own). That James Fennimore

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coincide. The volume also contains very useful listings of "Founders, Officers, Honorary Members" (299-302) and "Centurions: 1847-1946" (363-413). With regard to the overlap between the Art-Union Committee and the Century Club, the point, though, is not to document simultaneous affiliation but to underline congruent social circles.

[211] The American Academy listed some females among their group of patrons, admitted no doubt by virtue of membership in the influential Murray and Livingston families.

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Cooper decamped to Europe for the education of his children was telling. So long as Americans felt obliged to go to Europe to educate their children, so long as the new nation offered no significant experience of the fine arts, independence remained incomplete. James Herring articulated this notion in 1831 when, in explaining his idea for the multi-volume *National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans* to his colleagues at the American Academy of the Fine Arts, he described as his prospective subscribers, the gentlemen, the lady, and the patriot interested "perfecting the independence of his country."[212]

Sociologists have written in detail and in depth on the uses of culture in defining social status. Pierre Bourdieu, in his extended study of "the social uses of art and culture" examines the uses of "cultural capital" and says that "art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences."[213] What is true for the individual is equally true, in this case, for the society. In independent America and in striving New York, national patriotism and local pride both required an American school of fine arts. Without that kind of "cultural capital," nations and cities can aspire to nothing better than second-class status. Americans had already fought one war to escape that condition. In order to assume a full and equal role in the international "aristocracy of culture,"[214] Americans had to cultivate

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[212] Rebora makes this point and quotes Herring in "Academy," 400, 446 fn.257.

[213]Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), xi, 7.

[214] Ibid. Bourdieu uses the phrase "Aristocracy of Culture," as the title of his first chapter, with subheadings "The Titles of Cultural Nobility," and "Cultural Pedigree." All

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native schools of art and literature. The society was new. The most efficacious means was unclear. But generations of New Yorkers persisted in the effort.

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of these phrases suggest the attraction of cultivated taste to citizens of a new nation.

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CHAPTER 4

JAMES HERRING: *THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY* TO THE APOLLO

This chapter looks at James Herring (1794-1867), tracing his activities in New York art life in the 1830s; his founding of the Apollo Gallery; and his inspiration to adapt the European art union model to New York as a device to save his Apollo Gallery by transforming it into "The Apollo Association." Herring's understanding of the state of American art and artists was perceptive. His understanding of the uses of a variety of organizing devices to marshal financial resources for the support of art institutions and artists was shrewd. Twice in the 1830s he looked to Europe for models – in his *National Portrait Gallery* project and in the formation of the Apollo Association. In both cases his creative syntheses left lasting impressions on the course of American art. Although he was gone from the Apollo Association by the end of 1841, and had no known contact with the American Art-Union, James Herring was, as we shall examine, the institution's founder and shaper.

Herring, the entrepreneur whose initiative summoned the Art-Union into being, was a dynamic presence in his time whose historical trail today proves sketchy and obscure.[215] William Dunlap, in his chronicle of the evolution and progress of American

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[215] There are two major primary sources for James Herring's biography, both of which end well before the creation of the Apollo Association. Herring's own incomplete manuscript autobiography is at The New York Historical Society. The earliest published source of information about Herring is contained in Dunlap's *History* , 2:296-99. Dunlap was a generation older than Herring, but would have known him well from New York artist circles. Both men were active members of the American Academy of the Fine Arts. Since Dunlap's mode of operation was to send letters to contemporaries asking for

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art until 1834, *History of the Arts of Design in the United States,* described Herring as an "intelligent and very enterprising gentleman," a man of "uncommon energy."[216] Dunlap was an older contemporary of Herring and a fierce partisan of the National Academy of Design, while Herring was an active member of the rival American Academy of the Fine Arts. Both men were controversialists in the small world of early nineteenth-century New York art. They had already, in 1833, faced each other across the conference table in futile talks to merge their two institutions and would do so again, with the same lack of result in 1836.[217] But Dunlap was respectful of Herring's energy, and with good reason.

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autobiographical information, it is most likely Dunlap's Herring information came directly from Herring. The only modern discussion that focuses on Herring is Cynthia Seibels, "James Herring, American Portraitist," *The Magazine Antiques* 112, no 1 (January 1978): 212-220. There are Herring entries in the DAB, and William R. Denslow, *10,000 Famous Freemasons* (Missouri: Board of Publication, Transactions of the Missouri Lodge of Research, No. 15, 1958), 2:221. Robert G. Stewart has written twice about James Herring and *The National Portrait Gallery.* In 1969 he curated and wrote the catalogue for a *National Portrait Gallery* exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. which includes his prefatory essay, "Introduction." Robert G. Stewart, "Introduction," *A Nineteenth-Century Gallery of Distinguished Americans* (Washington, D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1969), 1-10. That same essay was reprinted (and minimally tailored to suit the purpose) as the "Introduction," to a 1970 reprint edition of the four-volume work. Robert G. Stewart, "Introduction," to James Herring and James Barton Longacre, *The National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans* 4 vols. (New York: 1834-37, 1839; reprint, New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1970), 1:iii-xi. (If this seems confusing, it is.) Most references will be to Stewart's "Introduction" to the reprint edition, indicated by lower case Roman Numerals. Stewart references with Arabic numerals are to the National Portrait Gallery Catalogue.

[216] Dunlap, *History* 2:296.

[217] In January 1833, Herring had worked with Pierre Flandin, a merchant, and Dr. David Hosack, to try to reach a detente with the National Academy of Design, but the plan put forward did not suit John Trumbull, the venerable artist-president of the American. In 1836, after Trumbull vacated the presidency, another effort was made, this time with Herring plus the full slate of officers, including President Rembrandt Peale,

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In 1830 Herring had established a 10,000 volume circulating library at 389 Broadway (near White Street), which he christened the Enterprise Library. Dunlap reported that the library was a thriving operation which yielded Herring a very respectable $1,500 annual income. Herring was a portrait painter by profession, born in England and raised in New York. By 1830 he was a well-known figure in the city, partly for his work as a portraitist (though he was never a top-rank practitioner in this field), but also for his activities as a very public member of a very private but powerful and omnipresent secret society, the International Order of Free and Accepted Masons (Freemasons).[218] Herring had joined the Masons in 1816 and was an active and vocal member of the fraternity. Skilled both as a speaker and a writer, he turned a natural flair for controversy to use, serving as a public defender of the brotherhood during the anti-Masonic agitation that followed the murder of William Morgan in 1826.[219] Later he focused his penchant for

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Vice-president Ithiel Town, Secretary Alexander Jackson Davis, and Treasurer Pierre Flandin representing the American; who met with their National Academy counterparts, President Samuel F.B. Morse, Vice President William Dunlap, Recording Secretary Asher B. Durand, Corresponding Secretary John L. Morton, and Treasurer Thomas Seir Cummings. No agreement was forthcoming. For a detailed explanation of the dynamics of the American Academy in this regard see Rebora, " Academy," 311-312, 463-465.

[218] Matthew Craske, *Art in Europe 1700-1830: A History of the Visual Arts in an Era of Unprecedented Urban Economic Growth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) says "Freemasonry . . . attracted artists all over Europe," 40.

[219] Morgan was a renegade Mason who was mysteriously murdered in upstate Ontario County in September 1826. His murder became a political issue and was used, notably by Thurlow Weed and William Seward, for the creation of an anti-Masonic political faction in the complicated politics of the times. The anti-Masonic movement spread from New York throughout the Middle States, New England, and Ohio. It was generally in opposition to the Democrats, since John Adams was not a Mason, but Andrew Jackson and Governor DeWitt Clinton were. For a brief explanation of the situation as it developed in New York, see Fox, *Decline,* 337-343. Herring acted as a

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argument on Masonic factional disputes. Herring served as Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of New York from 1829 to 1846, a period which encompassed his activities with the Apollo Gallery and the Apollo Association.[220] Early in his career, the Masonic affiliation had proved an invaluable asset for a young, itinerant portrait painter.[221] Later, in New York, Herring's Masonic membership gave him entree into the very center of New York political and professional society and proved a ready-made networking basis for the foundation of the Apollo Association.[222]

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public spokesman for the order in the years of the anti-Masonic agitation.

[220] There is a handwritten synopsis of Herring's Masonic career in the Herring papers at the New-York Historical Society excerpted from an obituary notice which appeared in a publication of the St. John's lodge (New York City).

[221] Seibel's article is the most complete discussion of Herring as a portraitist. While she emphasizes Herring's Masonic affiliation, she does not discuss what if any Masonic connection his portrait subjects might have had. I suspect that, except for portraits done in connection with the *National Portrait Gallery* project, most of Herring's portrait commissions came from fellow Masons and their families. The Masonic library on West 23rd Street in Manhattan has a number of unidentified and unattributed portraits that may very well be works by James Herring, based on the known qualities of his style as illustrated in Seibel's article.

[222] Because the Masons were a quasi-secret order, it is very difficult, two hundred years later, to know what the strength and effect of Masonic ties were on the early history of New York. So many prominent figures were Masons that the effect may have been so dilute as to be minimal. There are tidbits of information in the Masonic literature, but I have thus far not found any scholarly discussion that addresses the issue. David Bjelajac, *Millennial Desire and the Apocalyptic Vision of Washington Allston (1779-1843)* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988) treats the subject of Masonic imagery in Washington Allston's painting, but that is a rather different topic. Margaret. Jacob has written on the relationship between Masonry, science, politics and the Enlightenment in England and on the European continent. I have found no comparable work that considers America. It is certain that many very prominent men of the Revolutionary, Federal, and Jacksonian periods were Masons, including, of course, George Washington, DeWitt Clinton, and Andrew Jackson.

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Though a largely self-taught artist (he colored mezzotints in John Wesley Jarvis's studio for a while), Herring was not shy about promoting his talents. In 1824 he entertained a high enough opinion of his skill to compete for the portrait commission offered by the New York City Common Council to paint the Marquis de Lafayette on the occasion of his triumphal visit to New York.[223] The Council chose Samuel F. B. Morse, whose portrait of the marquis remains in New York City Hall. In 1825 Herring took on the aspiring painter, William Page (1811-1885), as a student apprentice. Page soon moved on to Morse's studio.[224] In 1826 Herring was represented by three portraits at the first exhibition of the newly established National Academy of Design.[225]

In 1830, the year that he founded the lending library, Herring was also elected to membership in the American Academy of the Fine Arts. By that time the venerable Academy was no longer exclusively the preserve of wealthy patrons but jointly managed by patrons and by a circle of artists loyal to the Academy rather than to the insurgent four-

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[223] Paul J. Staiti, *Samuel F.B. Morse* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 117. Staiti notes that this "most prestigious portrait commission of the decade, lured the nation's most eminent panters: Sully, Jarvis, Vanderlyn, Rembrandt Peale, Charles Ingham, Samuel Waldo, Henry Inman, James Herring, and Morse. . ."

[224] See Joshua C. Taylor, *William Page: The American Titian* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 2-4.

[225] Herring never really became an active participant at the NAD. After 1826, he cast his lot with the American Academy and did not show again at the NAD until he exhibited portraits there again in 1844, 1845, 1848, 1849 and 1853. These seem largely to have been privately owned, presumably by their subjects. Herring was never made an associate of the Academy, despite the active presence there of his old friend, John Gadsby Chapman.

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year-old National Academy of Design.[226] Herring was remarkable at the American Academy for being of a younger generation than its stalwarts, who numbered among them the long-time President John Trumbull, the brothers Alexander and Archibald Robertson, and Samuel Lovett Waldo (1783-1861). Herring joined the American Academy at a period of low ebb in its fortunes. Always motivated and innovative, he immediately assumed an active role, serving as the Academy's Secretary from 1831 to 1835, curating its exhibitions, and, in the process, making connections with artists and lenders.

In 1831 Herring proposed to his new colleagues at the American Academy an ambitious project intended to revivify the American Academy, reap profit and renown for himself, and, at the same time, provide a patriotic service to Americans and American artists.[227] This scheme, *The National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans*, is of interest, not only for itself, but because it prefigures, in a number of significant respects, Herring's later initiative for the Apollo Gallery and the Apollo Association. In both instances, Herring took the lead, but joined with another artist. His partner in *The National Portrait Gallery* was James Barton Longacre (1794-1869), an established portrait engraver located in Philadelphia, a city where Herring had spent time as a young map colorist and where he had begun his career as an artist. Herring's intended collaborator in the conception of the Apollo Gallery was John Gadsby Chapman (1808-

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[226] See Rebora, "Academy," 315-316, and 456-458 for a discussion of this group.

[227] The details of "The National Portrait Gallery" proposal were published under James Barton Longacre's signature in a flier dated March 1, 1833, reproduced in Stewart, "Introduction,"vii-viii.

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1889). Chapman withdrew for personal reasons before the Apollo opened.[228]

In advancing both *The National Portrait Gallery* and the Apollo Association, Herring was inspired by successful models in his native British Isles. On October 15, 1831, he wrote the Directors of the American Academy telling them that "There is at this time a work publishing in London under the title of the National Portrait Gallery, which on account of the beautiful style of the engravings, has an extensive sale in the United States."[229] Herring's idea was to produce an American variant of *The Gallery of Portraits: With Memoirs*, a series of volumes that appeared from 1833 to 1837 under the aegis of the London-based Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. Herring hoped to ground his American effort upon the support of the American Academy. This linkage of a project with an institution was repeated later in the relationship between the Apollo Gallery and the Apollo Association, although in that case roles were reversed with the institution (the Association) intended to support the project (the Gallery).

Herring also hoped to revivify the school of the American Academy, offering that "all the original portraits and miniatures expressly painted for the National Portrait Gallery shall be deposited in the Academy for the use of artists and students under the direction of the Board. "[230] Later in the decade, Herring was still seeking a permanent

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[228] When Chapman returned as an active participant in the New York City art scene in the mid-1840s Herring was already gone from the Apollo Association, and Chapman became an active member and officer of the National Academy, serving as its Secretary from 1844 to 1848.

[229] As quoted in Stewart, v. Rebora also cites this document, 446, n. 257 and refers to an advertisement Herring ran on October 17 in the *American*.

[230] Ibid.

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gallery of American art in New York City in his vision for the Apollo Gallery and then as a feature of the Apollo Association. In all instances the permanent collection proved the least successful and most elusive of Herring's stated goals. Finally, both proposals involved payment by annual subscription that would underwrite the production of original works by American artists. *The National Portrait Gallery*, of course, was devoted to portraiture and the commissioning of high-quality engravings, while the Apollo Gallery welcomed a full range of artistic production.[231] Even the dollar amounts were similar (indicating, perhaps, a similar group of anticipated patrons) – six dollars a year for the National Portrait Gallery and later, five dollars a year for the Apollo Association.

The Academy accepted Herring's proposal and appointed a committee which included Stephen Van Rensselaer, Frederick C. De Peyster and Dr. David Hosack to work with him, choose the subjects, and arrange for the brief biographical entries. The social eminence of these men signal that this was not a working committee, but a policy group whose famous names also served to provide introductions to the subjects. The work of producing the volumes fell to Herring and his collaborator, Longacre. Herring's understanding of the uses of this kind of high-profile sponsoring committee was certainly echoed in 1838 when he selected and assembled his initial group to launch the Apollo Association.

The National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans appeared in monthly installments and in four bound volumes published between 1834 and 1839. With Herring

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[231] Although the Apollo Gallery had no component providing for the dissemination of high-quality engravings, which was a key part of the Portrait Gallery project, engravings were restored as part of the plan for the Apollo Association.

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and Longacre's names as co-collaborators, these books remain James Herring's tangible monument. Herring contributed original portraits to the project as well as copies of portraits by other artists to serve as the bases for engravings. He wrote some of the biographical entries himself and served as overall editor.[232] The project got off to a promising start. In 1833, Herring, in charge of the American Academy's Annual Exhibition, proudly hung the first twelve specimen engravings executed from portraits.[233] The first bound volume appeared in timely manner in 1834. In the prefatory "Address" Herring emphasized the significant difficulties attendant on the undertaking. He pointed to the dilemma posed to American art and artists by the widespread presence of European art in America, commenting on "how severe a test the infant arts of our country are tried, from the general circulation among us of the *chef d'oeuvres* of European art."[234] At the end of the decade the continued need for support for American art and artists generated

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[232] Ibid., vii.

[233] They were numbers 142 to 153 in the Exhibition. Stewart, National Portrait Gallery "Introduction," 6. Rebora, "Academy, "408.

[234] Herring, "Address," *The National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans* (New York: Monson Bancroft, 1834; reprint New York: The Arno Press & The New York Times, 1970), 1: 3-4. Each of the four volumes was prefaced by an "Address." These were all signed by both Herring and James B. Longacre. Longacre's name came first in Volumes One and Four; Herring's came first in Volumes Two and Three. I have no idea what significance, if any, this has. I am presuming that Herring, as the principal writer on the project, composed all of these brief essays. With this complaint about "*chef d'oeuvres* of European Art" competing in America with home-grown artists, Herring reiterates David Hume's point in "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences," that "it may not be for the advantage of any nation to have the arts imported . . . in too great perfection" Hume, 136. DeWitt Clinton did not specifically cite this caveat in his Discourse. It would have been entirely in character for Herring, an artist, an Englishman, and the owner of a circulating library, to have been familiar with Hume and with this essay in particular. That remains a point of speculation.

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the Apollo Gallery and the Apollo Association.

Herring and Longacre published Volume II in 1835. In the "Address" for that compendium, Herring exulted in the national support for the project and boasted:

> [T]he Portrait Gallery has been a school for the best talent of the country: no Artist of respectable qualifications has been refused employment, and every one employed has been encouraged to strive for the mastery, by his best exertions being rewarded *according to his own estimate of their value* [italics original][235]

The condescending paternalism audible in Herring's wording of this statement persisted through the era of the Apollo ventures and into the Art-Union period. It remained a chronic and constant irritant to artists.

The third volume of *The National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans* was delayed in its issue because of a devastating fire at the New York City bindery in August 1836. Fortunately the stereotypes were in Philadelphia and a reconstituted Volume III did finally appear. Volume IV was due in 1837, a year of international financial distress felt especially keenly in the banking centers of New York City and Philadelphia. The book finally saw the light of day in 1839, but by then James Herring had already moved on. Despite Herring's best efforts, the American Academy was not resurrected. Tireless in his efforts to get around what could not be gotten over, Herring gave up on the moribund Academy and embarked on an independent course.

The financial panic of 1837 had severe consequences in New York manifest at every level of society.[236] In February, a crowd, angry at the high cost of bread, attacked

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[235] Herring, "Address," (1835) 2:3.

[236] Information about the Panic of 1837 is readily available. The following facts have been culled from Stokes's *Iconography*, a convenient clearinghouse of references

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two flour warehouses and smashed their contents to protest what they saw as the hoarding of flour.[237] Philip Hone noted the distress of individual New Yorkers, from members of the merchant class to more modest householders:

> One of the signs of the times is to be seen in the sales of rich furniture. Men who a year ago thought themselves rich, and such expenditures justifiable, are now bankrupt. . . . Brooms the price of which, time out of mind, has been twenty-five cents are now sold at half a dollar; but corn is scarce. Poor New York.[238]

After New York banks suspended specie payment in May, Hone wrote in his diary that "A deadly calm pervades this lately flourishing city. No goods are selling, no business stirring, no boxes encumber the sidewalks of Pearl street."[239] The *New York Evening Post* wrote with concern in July that "children are suffered to roam about the streets without any definite object, and some cannot go to school for the want of bread to eat."[240] The paper was equally concerned about the upwards of one-hundred-twenty Wall Street financial houses that had failed.

> Such a state of things is unexampled and we fear the worst is to come. It is really painful to hear of the distress of business men, who have always lived in affluence. This will be appreciated by those who know that the furniture of the

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gathered from a variety of primary sources which Stokes takes care to identify. For a discussion of the consequences of the Panic, see Samuel Rezneck, "The Social History of an American Depression," *The American Historical Review* 40, no. 4 (July 1935): 662-687).

[237] Stokes, *Iconography*, 5:1745.

[238] Stokes, *Iconography*, 5:1746; also Hone, *Diary* 1:250.

[239] Stokes, *Iconography*, 5:1748; also Hone, *Diary,* 1: 260.

[240] Stokes, *Iconography*, 5:1748 quoted from the *Evening Post*, 28 July 1837.

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Joseph's was sold at auction yesterday.[241]

Whigs understood the financial crisis as a direct response to Jacksonian banking policies. Philip Hone chaired a meeting of his Whig cohorts at the Masonic Hall at which it was decided to send a delegation to Washington to petition the Democratic President Martin Van Buren to repeal the so-called Specie Circular.[242] A few days later Loco Foco Democrats met and demanded lower city expenses, increased municipal relief efforts, and a program of public works to employ workers idled by the economic troubles.

But the gloom was not unrelieved, nor was the economy equally dire in all precincts. In the midst of this distress, Hone's attention was pleasantly diverted from his own substantial losses as he recorded the delightful details of the first dinner served on the premises of the newly-founded Union Club. "It is well fitted up," he observed, "the furniture neat and handsome; the servants are good, and above all, there is a most *recherché chef de cuisine.*"[243] By September 1837, the *Evening Post* optimistically divined light at the end of the tunnel:

> We are gratified to perceive that the streets of this city begin to present a cheerful aspect. We learn that trade has very sensibly improved within a few days, and jobbers now have hopes of doing a respectable fall business. This . . . is . . .

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[241] Stokes, *Iconography*, 5:1746.

[242] The Specie Circular, issued by President Jackson on 11 July 1836, required that the federal government be paid for western lands in metal currency (i.e. "specie"), and not by bank notes. This had the effect of contracting available credit and casting doubt on the worth of the bank notes issued by western banks. Stokes, *Iconography*, 5:1747.

[243] Ibid., 5:1748; also Hone, *Diary*, 1:263.

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encouraging for the future.[244]

Meanwhile, Oxford University Professor of Botany Charles G. B. Daubeny visited New York, and though impressed by much of what he saw, noted "an absence of taste," with no "picture galleries or museums on the plan of European cities to be met with."[245]

Economic troubles compounded the normal vicissitudes of the artist's life as the disposable, discretionary monies that fund art purchases largely evaporated. It was in this financial and cultural climate that the intrepid Herring decided to open the Apollo Gallery. He moved his Enterprise Library a block north to 410 Broadway, and also offered prints and art books. The site he chose was a distressed property on the southeast corner of Broadway and Canal Street. Built as the Euterpean Hall, a music venue (Euterpe was the muse of music), it had brief-lived uses as the Broadway Theater, and the Apollo Amusement Rooms run by Mario Bragaldi and Ferdinand Palmo.[246] Taking space in the

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[244] Stokes, *Iconography*, 5:1749 as quoted from the *Evening Post*, 16 September 1837.

[245] Stokes, *Iconography*, 5:1749.

[246] Ferdinand Palmo was an Italian impresario who ran a café at 289 Broadway. He later opened the Italian Opera House on Chambers Street. Mario Bragaldi was listed in the Longworth's *City Directory* for 1840-41 as an artist at 348 Bowery, corner of Great Jones Street. In 1839 he was listed as a patron of the American Academy of the Fine Arts. Other than that nothing is known about him, except to surmise that he and Palmo were fellow Italians in New York. Stokes (5:1748) quotes the *Evening Post* (28, 29 August 1837) saying that the Broadway Theater, on the East Side of Broadway on the corner of Canal Street had opened, replacing Euterpean Hall. There is some confusion. On September 4 Stokes (5:1749) quotes Philip Hone's diary with respect to Euterpean Hall. Giving a summation of New York theaters, Hone marveled that "in these times of distress . . . there should be nine of these money drains in operation." Hone included in his list "the Euterpean Hall, Broadway, below Canal Street" commenting "short-lived also, I suspect" (Hone, *Diary*, 1:272-73). He was right. By December 4, 1837 Stokes (5:1750) quotes the *Evening Post* again reporting that "The Apollo 'is a new amusement opened by

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building, Herring appropriated the Apollo name for his gallery. From the start Herring intended The Apollo Gallery of the Fine Arts as a permanent showplace for the works of American artists. It was to be self- sustaining on the basis of paid admissions, so that artists could show their works without cost. The plan was for a rotating exhibition, constantly refreshed by the substitution of new art for that which had sold. Ambitiously, half of the profits from the venture were to be set aside for the purchase of works that would found a permanent gallery of American art.[247] Despite a glowing review in the October 1838 *Family* magazine, the Apollo Gallery proved a financial disappointment.[248] Expenses outstripped feeble income from admission fees, and no buyers stepped forward.

The Apollo Gallery exhibition of 1838 has been treated as a great departure. The walls of the old American Academy had reflected that institution's obeisance to the art of the European old masters, encouraging American works that followed in the European tradition. The National Academy presented a full menu of portraiture. James Herring did indeed do something visionary when he circularized artists all over America offering

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Messrs. Bragaldi and Palmo, at 410 Broadway, where a house has been elegantly fitted up. The performances are by figures worked by machinery called Italian Marionetts.'" Stokes says that "This was formerly the Broadway Theatre." The Apollo name thus seems to have come from Palmo and Bragaldi. James Herring did not alter it when he leased the premises for his own gallery and bookstore. After the Apollo Association left the Apollo name continued to identify the premises. The space was used for meetings, exhibitions, and performing purposes. In 1842 the New York Philharmonic was founded and gave its premier performance there. In 1870 it was home to a faction of anti-Tammany Democrats called the Apollo group. Herring may have retained some space in the building. In 1851 his son, Frederick William Herring, also a portrait painter, exhibited a portrait at the National Academy and listed his address as "Appolo [*sic*] Rooms, Broadway."

[247] Baker, "Art-Union," 98.

[248] Baker, "Art-Union," 99.

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them a free New York venue with no gauntlet of Academicians or patron/owners to vet works that artists wished to sell.[249] The reasons, however, for the Apollo's oft-noted failure are not hard to find. Despite the fact that Herring announced his Apollo Gallery exhibition of October 1838 as "the Works of Modern Artists," New York audiences may be forgiven for sensing that they were being treated to old wine in a new bottle. There was, in fact, significant continuity between Herring as an exhibition organizer at the Apollo Gallery, and Herring, as he had been an exhibition organizer at the American Academy.

Though a group of American artists availed themselves of the opportunity to try to sell their works, these by no means dominated the sprawling exhibition of 260 items, either visually or in respect to works for sale. The walls continued to be hung with a large assortment of European works. Paintings attributed to "Old Masters" by their American owners were presented to the public at face value. No one in New York began to approach the level of connoisseurship required to seriously address issues of authenticity. Some of these pictures were loans, the boastful and consciously "improving" evidences of the wealth and taste of elite New York art patrons. Others were available for purchase, a suggestion perhaps of attempts to recoup troubled fortunes by the sale of dubious "treasures" to a gullible public. There were also a number of frankly acknowledged

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[249] This impulse to offer artists a free and free-form exhibition space in Manhattan was long-lived and found its most impassioned champion in the early twentieth century in the charismatic figure of Robert Henri who organized exhibitions under the battle cry "no jury – no prizes." The Henri literature is large, but for this aspect of his career, see especially, Milton Brown, *The Story of the Armory Show*, 2d. ed. (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, 1963; New York: Abbeville Press, 1998), 48.

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copies, a perfectly respectable nineteenth-century practice, especially approved for young artists seeking to learn the tools of the trade, but hardly a clarion call for the dawn of a new age in American art. As always, portraits were welcome and eminent visages stared at visitors from their pride of place on the walls. There was room also for the work of serious amateurs. The American artists in the exhibition included many who were known to Herring through former associations in Philadelphia, through his efforts on behalf of *The National Portrait Gallery*, and from the American Academy. Under these circumstances it must have been difficult, indeed, for the overwhelmed gallery visitor to have made the distinction between the same old failed exhibitions at the venues New Yorkers were used to – the American Academy and the National Academy of Design – and the "new" exhibition at Herring's Apollo Gallery.

As the Apollo Gallery faltered in late 1838, all of John Herring's previous experience was brought to bear to devise a way to keep the project afloat. Herring's work on *The National Portrait Gallery* served him in good stead. He had developed relations with artists and subscribers throughout the nation. His network of acquaintance included many prominent citizens (or their descendants) included in the volumes. Moreover, Herrings' own professional skills, growing since his modest limner beginnings, had significantly improved. Herring's 1838 portrait of Dr. John Wakefield Francis, eminent physician and *bon vivant*, was executed in a thoroughly professional manner (fig. 12).[250]

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[250] Seibels, "Herring," 210 fig. 10 illustrates this portrait. It was executed for the fourth and last volume of *The National Portrait Gallery* and was engraved by the New York engraver John Francis Eugene Prud'homme (1800-1892). Prud'homme was elected an Associate of the National Academy of Design in 1838 and an Academician in 1846. From 1845 to 1853 he served as Curator at the National Academy. This portrait may be a

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Ever resourceful, Herring devised yet a new plan. Always alert to innovations in Great Britain, Herring had seen an appealing leaflet describing the Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland, founded in 1834 in Edinburgh.[251] New Yorkers felt an affinity with the Scottish capital, whose educational, medical, and literary institutions had long served as models for emulation.[252] Herring decided to adopt the Edinburgh plan to New York, taking entire sections of the Scottish prospectus verbatim, and translating the annual fee of one pound sterling to its approximate American equivalent of $5.00. He convened a meeting of friends and acquaintances at the Apollo Gallery on January 8, 1839 "for the purpose of considering a plan of operations for the promotion of the Fine Arts in the United States."[253] The gentlemen, a handpicked group, were amenable, and adopted a Constitution for "The Apollo Association for the promotion of the Fine Arts in the United States." A week later, on January 16, 1839, as specified in *Article 10th* of the founding constitution, the Apollo Association was launched. It held its first meeting, elected the first year officers and Committee of Management, and enrolled as subscribers "upwards of two hundred gentlemen."[254]

What kind of idea had Herring seized upon, in late 1838, to rescue his lofty

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copy by Herring of an earlier Francis oil, as Seibels speculates, or Francis may have sat for Herring. The portrait is in the collection of the New York Academy of Medicine, of which Dr. Francis was a founder.

[251] Miller, *Patrons*, 163.

[252] Bender, *Intellect*, 25, 94, 131.

[253] As quoted in Baker, "Art-Union," 100.

[254] Ibid., 102.

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ambition from insolvency and oblivion? *The Art Union Journal*, a London publication that was friendly to, but independent of The London Art Union, published an early account of the origins of the art-union movement in its inaugural issue of February 15, 1839.[255] According to this account, the forerunner of the first art union was developed in France around 1799 by a Monsieur Hennin. By 1816 it had assumed a recognizable form and organized itself as the "Société des Amis des Artes." The timing clearly indicates that the device was intended to fill the void in art patronage caused by the post-revolutionary prostration of the previous major classes of patrons, French royalty, aristocracy, and the Church. The art union idea spread to other cities in France, including Rouen and Lyon. Similar organizations sprouted in Germany where they were called "Verein der Kunst Freunde" (the same literal name as in French). The *Art Union* article listed art unions in Cologne, Düsseldorf, Mayenne, Strasbourg, Darmstadt, Mannheim, Karlsruhe, Munich, Vienna, Berlin, Hanover, Halberstadt, Nuremberg, Stuttgart,

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[255] The *Art Union Journal* was friendly to, but not affiliated with the Art Union of London. In 1849 it changed its name to the *Art Journal*. "Introduction: Survey of Art Unions," *Art Union Journal: A Monthly Journal of the Fine Arts* 1, no. 1 (February 1839): 2-3. The introductory article in the first edition of this journal offered a summary history of art unions. The discussion continued in the March 1839 issue (vol 1, no. 2) with details of the plan in France, which, being denied the use of the lottery by law, had devised a complicated distribution method which was not strictly speaking a lottery. The French organization was aided by Minister of the Interior François de Neufchâtel and had a written constitution by 1816. For a capsule history of the London Art Union see Elizabeth Aslin, "The Rise and Progress of the Art Union of London," *Apollo* 85, no. 59 new series (January 1967): 12-16. Aslin makes the interesting point that though the Art Union of London continued in existence until 1911, its best days were over by 1860 (15-16). Lyndel Saunders King, "Taste," offers a dissertation-length discussion of the Art Union of London, that is to say, more depth and less breadth. (The London Art Union did not use a hyphen.) For a brief discussion of German Art Unions, see William Vaughan, *German Romantic Painting* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1980; 2d ed. 1994), 18-21.

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Frankfurt am Main, and the province of Westphalia. Great Britain was slow to follow, only beginning in 1834 with "The Association for the Promotion of Fine Arts in Scotland" in Edinburgh. A small art-union was founded in London, but this was quickly absorbed into the much more ambitious and energetic London Art Union which made its debut in 1837. The founding of the London Art Union was in part the consequence of hearings convened by a Parliamentary Committee that examined the German Kunstverein model with respect to its usefulness in encouraging the growth and improvement of art in Britain.[256] Once rooted, the idea flourished in England, Scotland and Ireland. By 1839, there were Art-Unions in Liverpool, Dublin, and Birmingham. Bristol, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Cork, and Norwich soon followed. All of these organizations were vehicles for the development of middle class patronage of art, the cultivation of popular taste, and the encouragement of local artists. While accounts of the origin and proliferation of art-unions differ in minor detail, the salient features of the story remain the same.[257] A collective body of patrons would combine their resources either to purchase works of art or to fund art purchases. The art or the prize money would then be dispersed by lottery among the members of the group. In addition these organizations might also distribute engravings and embark on publications for the improvement and edification of their

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[256] King, "Taste," 35.

[257] In 1848 *The Knickerbocker* claimed that "Art-Unions were invented in Germany." It quoted as its authority Count Edward Raczynski (1786-1845), a Polish nobleman and scholar who was a correspondent of Sir Charles Eastlake. The article described the scope and popularity of the German Art Unions as an historical preface to its discussion of the American Art-Union. "The American Art-Union," *The Knickerbocker* 32 (November 1848): 442-447.

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subscribers/ticket holders.

The art unions employed a variety of different disbursement mechanisms. The Parliamentary Committee of 1835 was told that the use of the lottery device had originated in Germany.[258] Herring's prototype, the Edinburgh model, distributed in its annual lottery works of art which had been purchased by a committee of managers. The London Art-Union awarded its lottery winners cash prizes with the stipulation that they had to be used toward the purchase of pictures exhibited in a specified set of London venues. This allowed the winners to choose their own prize and also to add their own funds, if they wished, to be able to afford a "better" (i.e. more costly) work of art.

The English and Scottish Unions sparred continuously over which method of prize was superior. London supporters found the Edinburgh model too controlling in that it privileged the taste of the managers above that of the subscribers and tilted art patronage in the direction of those artists favored by the managers.[259] The London model,

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[258] Aslin, "London Art Union, " 12.

[259] *The Art Union Journal* offered another criticism of the Scottish method which points out the necessity of looking to England before assuming that anything that was said in America was necessarily "American." Criticizing the Edinburgh Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland for paying unknown artists too generously and major artists too little, the magazine went on to say: "The procedure on the part of the Committee this year has been . . . extremely questionable. . . . A spirit of parsimony seems latterly to have taken hold of the committee, and it appears that a pedlar's bargain of striking off at least one third of the sum demanded, is the favourite proceeding of the day . . . . Is it merely a part of the system of jobbing which has been the bane of Scotland as well as her disgrace for centuries?" The American Art-Union also offended artists by supporting little known beginners and by generally bargaining artists down. In New York it was attributed to the narrowness of the mercantile mentality. In London, it looked more like the national stereotype of the tight-fisted Scot (vol 2, no. 3 [April 1840]: 53).

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however, presented other difficulties. Even its defenders admitted that with their system of cash prizes, the artists knew they had a captive audience of buyers and therefore charged more for their works than a normal market would merit. This debate was echoed in America between the Philadelphia Art Union, which adopted a variation of the London model, and the American Art-Union, which continued to follow the Edinburgh plan. The issue became a favorite for later critics of the American Art-Union, an alliance of aggrieved artists and enemy journalists, who shrilly accused the Art-Union managers of dictatorial control and personal and sectional favoritism.[260] As in Europe, where art-unions proliferated in provincial cities, in America, art-unions were subsequently founded in Cincinnati (the Western Art-Union, 1847), Philadelphia (1848), Newark (the New Jersey Art-Union, 1850) and Boston (the New England Art-Union, 1851). Despite attempts to sell their lottery tickets nationwide, all of these institutions focused on local subscribers and patronized, to the greatest possible extent, local artists. Only the New York-based American Art-Union was seriously national in its scope.[261]

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[260] As with many arguments, there was a good deal of truth on both sides and no one plan was suited to all circumstances. The London model could only work in a market where members could easily come to the exhibition center to negotiate with artists and choose their prizes. Otherwise art unions would be restricted to a largely local market both in terms of participating artists and subscribers. This was not necessarily seen as a criticism by local boosters who wanted to develop their own talent and their own patron constituencies. The London system assumed a concentration of artists and exhibiting venues in the capital city.

[261] Although ostensibly friendly toward all other Art-Unions in America, the New York group was less than pleased when the Philadelphia Art-Union and the Western Art Union diminished its regional subscription bases, circularized its honorary secretaries to act also for the local Unions, and competed for good works of art by near-by artists.

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The four exhibitions of 1839 and the first one of 1840, held under the auspices of the newly founded Apollo Association were James Herring shows. Of necessity, the exhibition of January 1839 opened with many of the same works on the walls as that of the Apollo Gallery of a few months earlier, except that there were even more works – 271 items in all. By the time of the final exhibit of 1839 the gallery was hung primarily with the work of living artists, although they were not all American. Of the hundreds of works hung in 1839, the Apollo Association chose thirty-six for purchase, perhaps leading subscribers to second guess purchase decisions and be unimpressed with the number of works actually belonging to the organization among so many others for sale or loaned.

The record for 1840 was not substantially different. Two shows were mounted with 158 and 164 works each, but only seven works were purchased. In January 1840, Herring's last show and the last to be held on the Apollo premises, Herring resorted again to self-proclaimed "Old Masters" to fill the walls of the substantial gallery space, borrowing heavily from the collection of Monsieur Charles La Forest, the French Consul.[262]

It is not possible to say that the contours of the exhibition changed dramatically when John Ridner took over as the gallery manager in July 1840. In an attempt to fill the walls with more American material Ridner borrowed major works from The Boston Athenaeum and the not quite defunct American Academy of the Fine Arts. He also continued to give places to European works with no guarantees of authenticity, some of

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[262] Charles Delaforest was listed in the city directory as living at 72 Greenwich Street and doing business at 93 Greenwich Street, only a few blocks from the house and gallery that Luman Reed had built at 13 Greenwich Street in 1831-32.

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which were offered for sale by their lenders. To cite one example among many, a visitor to the October 1841 Exhibition could have purchased *Singing Party*, consigned by an unidentified owner, and attributed to the English artist William Hogarth (1697-1764). Only after the successive financial failures of these early shows forcibly delivered the organization from the obligation of filling large gallery spaces, were the managers free to concentrate their exhibition efforts on the exclusive display of the works of living American artists. That did not happen until the beginning of 1842.

Accounts of the American Art-Union generally date its beginnings to Herring's Apollo Gallery of October 1838, or, a few months later, to the meetings of January 1839 when the idea was officially proposed and adopted with a founding constitution. There is some confusion about the extent to which the Apollo Gallery should be considered part of, or prologue to, the history of the Art-Union. There is also confusion as to the relationship of the Apollo Association to the Art-Union. All of this confusion is a natural consequence of the course of events.

At the Committee of Management meeting of February 2, 1839 Messrs. Thompson, Greele, and Gerard were appointed a committee to discuss "fiscal arrangements" with James Herring. At the next meeting held on March 2, Gerard reported that before fiscal arrangements could be discussed they had to "ascertain the views of Mr. Herring as to whom the Exhibition belongs." Herring, who was present, was all apology, replying that he

> regretted that the subject had been introduced. That whatever tended to promote the object of the Association [he] would cheerfully consent to. That in the "Announcement of the Exhibition" to the papers he had called it the "First

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> Exhibition under the Committee of Management" etc. and he was willing it should continue as heretofore."

Apparently that answered enough uncertainty so that at the meeting of April 13 the fiscal matters were resolved and Gerard successfully proposed that "the Corresponding Secretary [Herring] have a vote on the Committee on all questions in which he is not interested."[263]

The name "Apollo" belonged to James Herring by virtue of the fact that he had rented gallery space in the Apollo building. The gallery was Herring's alone. All of the Apollo Association shows held in the Apollo Gallery were organized by Herring, the four shows of 1839 and the first show of 1840. At the beginning of 1840 the Association, which had been an informal organization in its first year, sought to regularize its status by applying for a State Charter of Incorporation. The Apollo Association vacated Herring's gallery space at the close of the exhibition of February 1840, but continued to use the name Apollo, only receiving the New York State Charter with its anomalous name after the close of its last exhibition in the Apollo Gallery. James Herring remained involved in the Apollo Association for three years. He left on the losing end of a struggle with John Ridner (who was presumably supported by a majority of the managers). His sole communication with the organization after 1841 centered around a final financial

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[263] Apollo Association Management Committee Minutes, 2 February 1839, 2 March 1839, 13 April 1839. Reel 1, "Records of the American Art-Union, New-York Historical Society" (Hereafter all references to these papers will be indicated as AAU-NYHS. All of the Management Committee Meetings are contained on Microfilm Reel 1, so that information will not be repeated..) There is a "Guide to the Records of the American Art-Union 1838-1860" on the internet at http://dlib.nyu.edu/affiliates/NYHS/findingaids/americanartb.html

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reckoning in 1843.[264] Despite the general tendency, common to many organizations, not to commit to the official record indications of internal discord, some of the terms of the tumult seep through in the correspondence preserved at the Historical Society and will be examined in Chapter Seven. In July 1840, John Ridner assumed curatorial responsibility for the Apollo Association as well as responsibility for registering members in New York City, while Herring traveled South to recruit artists, Honorary Secretaries, and subscribers for the Association.[265] Herring served officially as the Apollo's Corresponding Secretary through 1841, although, in fact, Ridner, in his capacity as gallery manager conducted a great deal of the organization's correspondence.

In 1842, Herring's name was no longer included among the list of managers and officers. With Herring no longer affiliated, the organization undertook to change its name officially, but this process, requiring the assent of the State legislature in Albany, proved cumbersome, and was not concluded until January 1844 when the name American Art-Union became official. Thus the name Apollo belonged really to Herring, but outlived his tenure with the Institution.

The evolution from the Apollo Gallery to the American Art-Union occurred in stages. It began when Herring founded the Apollo Association and ceased to be in complete control. It progressed through 1839 and 1840 when the Apollo Association

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[264] On March 20, 1843, the Committee of Management voted to make a final payment to James Herring of $15.79 "for services rendered to the Apollo Association and at the same meeting voted to reimburse $34.20 to Daniel Elliott and Abraham Cozzens for monies they had advanced to Herring as travel expenses. Reel 1, Vol. 1, AAU-NYHS

[265] This is described by John Ridner in his letter of 19 December 1840 to the Committee of Management. Reel 8, Vol. 1, AAU-NYHS

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finally received its New York State Charter, and accelerated when Herring left New York to travel for the Association in the summer of 1840. Herring's departure at the end of 1841 coincided with the arrival of a new group of managers and officers for 1842, and the decision, as well, to give up large exhibitions and the costly rental of a large exhibition space.[266] Free to chart its own course, the Apollo Association succeeded, by the end of 1843, in changing its name and finding its footing.

These early days of the Apollo Gallery and the Apollo Association have been generally glossed over, except to note that the venture got off to a slow start. The assumption is, somehow, that the idea took a while to catch hold. In fact, the Apollo evolved, changing more than its name to achieve the success of the mid-century Art-Union. There were significant shifts in personnel, in program, in the nature of the public exhibitions, and in the shape of art patronage before the Art-Union hit upon its winning (if short-lived) formula. But there were also significant features of the venture that remained constant, from James Herring's Apollo to Abraham Cozzens's Art-Union. The organization that has caught the fancy and the interest of present day historians did not begin to emerge until about 1842, when the lingering effects of the 1837 panic were finally receding.[267] In 1843 The Apollo Association finally broke through to a dramatic

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[266] Baker, "Art-Union," 183 makes the case that the Apollo Association gave in to pressure from Francis Edmonds (and possibly Charles Leupp) to end its free exhibitions and so accomodate the NAD which keenly resented the competition for pictures. That may very well have been true. However, while the decision doubtless pleased the NAD, it seems also to have been the reasonable choice for the Apollo Association. When they resumed their exhibition program in 1844 they were a much stronger organization.

[267] In searching for causes for the Art-Union's fluctuating fortunes, the first place to look is fluctuating economic circumstances. As will be discussed later, the Art-Union

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increase in its subscription list. In 1844, when William Cullen Bryant assumed the presidency of the re-christened American Art-Union, the national economy had entered into a boom cycle, New York was prospering again, and the Art-Union was on the high road to a crescendo of popular support that reflected the optimism born of good times. Though James Herring was two years gone by then, important elements of what he put in place endured.

This chapter begins to illustrate a theme that will be identified and traced in a variety of circumstances in the discussion to follow. The American Art-Union, as it evolved, embodied the sum of previous experience – that of James Herring and all of its leaders. That is a truism. More important, the elements that were present at the beginning, largely put in place by Herring when the organization was an uncertain fledgling venture, continued to the end. That is to say, the "successful" American Art-Union shared fundamental features with the "unsuccessful" Apollo Association. These features were a

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mechanism was exquisitely sensitive to economy and currency fluctuations. Rezneck, "Depression," uses 1843 as the end date of the economic downturn set in motion by the Panic of 1837. William Graham Sumner in *A History of American Currency* (New York: H. Holt and Company, 18741 reprint New York: August M. Kelley, Publishers, 1968) writes (speaking of the American economy), "From 1844 on, things began to mend." (167). Sumner also notes later in the same text that "[B]efore 1851 the currency set towards the financial centres," resulting in "contraction and stringency" in the rest of the country. This confirms the validity of complaints by Honorary Secretaries in 1851 that subscriptions were diminished because money was scarce. Sumner follows with a description of financial activity in 1851, concluding that it ended with "a sharp contraction and great suffering" (175). This was part of a general pattern in which the money supply tightened in the Fall. The Art-Union suffered particularly from this. When money was relatively available in the Spring and Summer, would-be subscribers put off paying, thinking there was no rush. When it came time to lay out the money in the Fall, they often found themselves short. To quote an aphorism from the 1992 George Bush/Bill Clinton Presidential election attributed to James Carville, "It's the economy, stupid."

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mixture of Herring's individual tastes and practices and the realities of the times. Herring was English by birth, proud of his heritage, and perfectly comfortable with appropriating European institutional forms, but savvy about adapting them to America.[268] This is also reflected in his Masonic activities. The relationship between America and Europe is never far from center stage in discussions of American cultural initiatives in this period. In this chapter I have looked at the history of *The National Portrait Gallery* project, the effect of the financial crisis of 1837, the founding of the Apollo Gallery, and the creation of the Apollo Association, with a side excursion into the background of the art union movement in Europe. The aim at the end, of course, is a better understanding of the phenomenon that was the American Art-Union. One of Herring's most astute adaptations of the Art-Union model lay in his assembling of the group of men to serve on the Apollo Committee of Management.[269] That group, as it began and as it evolved over the life of the institution, is the subject of the next chapter.

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[268] Herring's pride in his origins is apparent, and a source of considerable frustration in his manuscript biography at the New-York Historical Society. He never progresses past his early manhood in the manuscript, and spends an inordinate amount of energy "proving" that the family name derives from their early occupation as herring fishermen.

[269] There is no way, of course, to know that this group was Herring's alone. It is perfectly reasonable that it reflected additional names suggested by the early group that Herring contacted. One can assume, however, that the early men were all people Herring felt he could work with, and that he appreciated the strengths they would bring to his venture.

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CHAPTER 5

INTERRELATIONS AND CONFUSIONS: THE MEN WHO MADE THE ART-UNION

"In the last analysis it is human consciousness which is the subject-matter of history. The interrelations, confusions, and infections of human consciousness are, for history, reality itself."[270]

The American Art-Union has always been described as an organization made up of New York merchants. There is more than a whiff of condescension here. These men were the American cousins of Napoleon's "nation of shopkeepers."[271] James Gordon Bennett, the sensation-seeking owner and editor of the *New York Herald*, is reported to have said of the founders of the New-York Gallery of Fine Arts, "Why, these people know more about pork and molasses than they do about art!"[272] While Bennett had no pretensions to a highly developed critical eye himself, merchants with pretensions to art connoisseurship offered an irresistible target for his ridicule. Had they heard it, Bennett's jibe would have elicited a fervent "amen" from artists, who have ever chafed at taking

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[270] Bloch, *Craft*, 151.

[271] The Art-Union was, in its management, a strictly male preserve. The topic of gender and the Art-Union with respect to female honorary secretaries (not allowed), female members (warmly, if patronizingly, welcome) and female artists (encouraged and included) merits its own consideration. The word "men" here is used literally, and not as an incorrect description of the human species.

[272] This hearsay attribution is reported in John Durand, *The Life and Times of A.B. Durand* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894; reprint New York: Da Capo Press, 1970),128. Durand would have heard this from his father, Asher B. Durand, who might have heard it directly from Bennett or from one of the gentlemen present on the occasion. All of which is to say, that this quotation is not likely verbatim, but either approximate or even apocryphal.

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direction from those whose sole claim to cultural legitimacy lay in their control of the purse-strings. But the term "merchants" is too general to be useful. As Foner usefully observes, "[B]y 1850, in New York City, bankers, capitalists, brokers, commercial lawyers, railroad speculators, and manufacturers referred to themselves as merchants."[273] If the Art-Union was its officers and managers, then to understand the Art-Union we need a better understanding of these nineteenth-century New Yorkers.[274]

From 1839 to 1852, eighty-three men served as managers or officers of the Apollo Association and the American Art-Union.[275] United with regard to gender and a shared

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[273] Foner, *Business*, vii.

[274] The biographical information in this chapter is a gloss on the more detailed sketches contained in Appendix One, where it is also footnoted. For general material I have used sources which are known to be unreliable. Pessen, *Riches*, "Appendix B: Moses Beach Revisited : A Critical Examination of His *Wealthy Citizens* Pamphlets," 310-319 makes a convincing case for the weaknesses of this source, which appeared in pamphlet form in twelve editions between 1842 and 1845. (Beach's position as owner of the penny paper, *The Sun*, serves to underscore the "importance" he placed on truth and accuracy). Pessen also discusses the historiography of the examination of factual deficiencies in *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography* as well as the better regarded DAB ("Biographical Encyclopaediae, 338). Nonetheless, for the present project, all of these sources seem reasonable. They indicate that my subjects were men of sufficient substance and position in New York City to appear in their pages, and, without basing any major points on details that appear only in these sources without additional corroboration, they indicate, generally, the types and ranges of activities of the subjects.

[275] Baker, "Art-Union," 104, uses the number eighty-two, omitting John L. Morton who was elected to the Committee of Management on January 16, 1839 and did not resign until September and also Dr. J. B. Stevenson, whose resignation was received at the first meeting. Morton was present at that meeting on January 19, and never thereafter, although he was elected (in his absence) to the Executive Committee at the second meeting held on January 22, along with Messrs. Gerard, Pell Greele, Ridner and James Herring, *ex officio* in his position as Corresponding Secretary. Prosper Wetmore was elected on February 2, 1839 to replace Dr. Stevenson. Klein, "Art and Authority," 1537 counts eighty-three men including Morton but not Stevenson.

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identification with what could be loosely characterized as a New York elite, they were otherwise a varied lot: The group included men of letters; men of wealth; descendants of patroons; Whigs and Democrats; merchants, bankers, lawyers, and doctors; one Jew and at least four Roman Catholics; young men on the verge of distinguished careers, and revered elders finishing out active lives. Some were well-known in their time and barely traceable now, while others remain distinct figures in nineteenth-century New York history. While they never constituted a cohesive whole, they met and mingled in a web of intersecting relationships that, upon examination, yields both a fascinating glimpse into the structure of New York society in the decade of the 1840s, and a clearer understanding of the organization they shaped and served. At the same time as these men maintained numerous and diverse ties with one another, they also participated in relationships that radiated out into precincts of the larger society that had the potential to add strength and breadth to the local and national reach of the Art-Union.

When James Herring summoned the Apollo Association into being, he assembled a group of eminent citizens to serve as charter members for his new venture. Herring's choices of initial founders are fascinating. He absolutely understood the value of diversity and broad-based support in a society that was not characterized by the controlling dominance of any one group.[276] Herring first consulted a few "philanthropic friends of

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[276] Bender calls New York "polycentric"(*Intellect*, xiv). Frederick Cople Jaher, *The Urban Establishment: Upper Strata in Boston, New York, Charleston, Chicago, and Los Angeles* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1982) says much the same thing, finding in New York "a circulation and fragmentation of elites" (159).

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the arts, sciences and public education."[277] These included Dr. John Wakefield Francis and Joseph Cogswell. Francis was one of the best-known, best-loved and best-connected men in New York. Once recruited, he remained to serve as President of the Apollo Association in 1839, 1840, and 1841.[278] Cogswell was, in 1839, an eminent intellectual who had graduated from Harvard, taught there, and made connections with the international intellectual community when he toured Europe. The larger group that Herring convened on January 8, 1839 to adopt his proposal and give its assent to a brief founding Constitution constituted itself as a Committee of Management with a slate of officers, presumably largely of Herring's choosing.

Some of the members of Herring's founding committee were likely choices in that they were merchants who were also collectors and/or art patrons themselves. John P. Ridner, a mahogany merchant, was a friend and portrait patron of William Page, an artist who had studied briefly with Herring. Augustus Greele, James W. Gerard, T. N. Campbell, Benjamin Nathan, and Aaron R. Thompson all owned works that they lent to Apollo shows. Gerard had inherited a mercantile fortune and was an eminent lawyer in

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[277] Cummings, *Annals*, 148 directly quoted from James Herring's own account.

[278] Francis's memoirs do not allude to his service as President of the Apollo Association, but, in fact, he served as Chair out of an expansive sense of civic duty, likely coupled with the assurance that need not be intimately involved in shaping the organization. Francis attended three meetings of the Committee of Management in 1839. In a life crowded with major events, this episode was of only passing interest. Herring and the Apollo Association are noted briefly, but in approving fashion by Francis in his autobiographical essay, *Old New York; or Reminiscences of the Past Sixty Years being An Enlarged and Revised Edition of the Anniversary Discourse Delivered Before The New York Historical Society, (November 17, 1857) by John W. Francis, M. D., L.L.D.* With a Memoir of the Author by Henry T. Tuckerman (New York: W. J. Widdleton, 1866: facsimile edition New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1971), 280.

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his own right. Nathan's presence was of particular interest. He was a businessman and the grandson of Simon Nathan (1746-1822), a revered Revolutionary War patriot who loaned money to the American cause. His father, Seixas Nathan, was one of the founders of the New York Stock Exchange. Nathan was a leading member of the New York Jewish community, with family ties to well-to-do Jews in Philadelphia and in Charleston. His very visible role as the first Recording Secretary of the Apollo Association served as public notice that Jews were welcome.[279] Although Nathan remained only three years and was the only Jew to serve on the Committee of Management, the Art-Union, even after Herring's departure, continued to associate itself publicly with a member of America's small and close-knit Jewish community. From 1842 to 1845 Wellington Solomons was employed by the Art-Union as its traveling secretary, responsible for recruiting subscribers and honorary secretaries.[280]

Philip Hone was arguably as well-known as Dr. Francis, a close friend of the

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[279] Herring would have been accustomed to dealing with Jews on a fraternal basis from his activities as a Mason. Simon Nathan was a Mason, and it is likely that Benjamin Nathan was also a Mason. Jews in America were enthusiastic Masons and founded lodges wherever they had substantial communities.

[280] Solomons was a member of a well-known Jewish family. The sur-name was identifiably Jewish. Wellington Solomons brother, Adolphus Simeon Solomons, was a publisher and stationer who was among the founder of Jews Hospital (Mount Sinai) with Benjamin Nathan. He later moved to Washington, D.C, where he was active in politics and among the founders of the American Red Cross, whose first meeting was held in his home. When Wellington Solomons left the Art-Union in 1845, he went to Boston to go into the stationery business. There is a partial Solomons family genealogy in Malcolm H. Stern, *Americans of Jewish Descent* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Hebrew Union College Press, 1960), 199 which contains the information that Wellington Solomons had a son whom he named Evert. This strongly suggests a cordial relationship of some sort between Solomons and Duyckinck, whose periods at the Art-Union did not overlap.

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Doctor, a former Mayor, and an art collector himself. George Bruce was the leading voice of the master mechanics in the city. James Watson Webb was a newspaper editor. William Kemble was an importer of iron, a profession related to his brother Gouverneur's business – the gun foundry in Cold Spring Harbor across the Hudson River from West Point. Kemble was also the best friend, advisor, and sometime business agent of John Gadsby Chapman, the artist who had originally intended to join Herring in founding the Apollo Gallery. Duncan Pell was an auctioneer connected to a prominent family with branches in Westchester County and Rhode Island. Eleazar Parmly was a dentist whose interest in art became a family affair when the artist Thomas P. Rossiter married his daughter. John Ludlow Morton was an amateur artist and the long-time secretary of the National Academy of Design. His father, the Revolutionary War General Jacob Morton, had been a patron of the American Academy since 1816. Morton, like another of Herring's original choices, Dr. John B. Stevenson, never actually served. Stevenson resigned before the first meeting, and Morton attended only the organizing meeting before resigning in September 1839. Francis William Edmonds, like Herring, was both a man of business (a banker) and an artist.

In the relatively small but varied world that constituted the New York elite, none of these men were strangers to Herring, and most were likely acquaintances either from his Masonic affiliations or from his previous artistic or commercial activities. The officers for the first year were Francis in the Chair, Edmonds (with his financial expertise) as Treasurer, James Herring as Corresponding Secretary, and Benjamin Nathan as Recording Secretary. There were a few changes to the committee as initially

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constituted. Prosper Wetmore was elected to replaced Dr. Stevenson; John H. Austen filled the seat created by the early resignation of James Gerard; and John P. Nesmith replaced John Morton. Austen was an art collector and an auctioneer. Nesmith was a merchant and Wetmore was an art patron, a friend of Henry Inman, and a merchant, as well as a published poet, an occasional journalist, a municipal activist, a former Democratic member of the State Assembly, and the Paymaster General of the State Militia. He was as much a commanding figure in his own circle as Francis and Hone were in theirs. Herring's group of influential civic and business leaders drew men from across the political spectrum, united by a demonstrated interest in the Fine Arts and a willingness to use their contacts to build the institution.

The pattern of inclusion and eclecticism that James Herring set with the initial group of managers and officers remained a constant characteristic of the Art-Union. The minutes of the Management Committee and the Executive Committee (kept separately after 1846) reveal who truly exerted influence inside the Apollo and the Art-Union, who attended meetings, who served on committees, and who made motions.[281] But these are somewhat different issues. Insofar as the Officers and Management Committee members constituted the public face of the organization, it is not surprising that some were chosen as much for who they were as for what leadership they might exercise.[282] A substantial

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[281] These are included in the papers at the New-York Historical Society, reproduced on microfilm reels 1 and 2. While there is a full run of Committee of Management meeting minutes, the preserved Executive Committee minutes do not begin until 1846.

[282] That this is the case is indicated in a series of motions of February and March 1839. At the Management Committee meeting of February 2 James Gerard moved that

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number of Herring's 1839 Committee, including Dr. Francis, Philip Hone, John Morton, James Gerard, William Kemble, George Bruce, and Eleazar Parmly, were well-known figures whose social, political and professional prominence conferred instant respectability and invaluable connections for a start-up venture. This appreciation of the power of a "celebrity" name endured after Herring's departure. William Cullen Bryant's service as President of the Art-Union from 1844 through 1847 was a public relations coup of the highest order.

It would be a mistake to think of the Art-Union as the vehicle of Philip Hone, Dr. Francis, or even William Cullen Bryant. These men, though highly visible, were never the energy that propelled the venture. The hard-working stalwarts of the organization prove, however, less easy to describe. Some were moderately prominent and can be tracked through their various public affiliations. A significant number, however, were true merchants in this so-called "merchants" organization, businessmen like Augustus Greele and Thomas N. Campbell, Jr. of Herring's original group and others who followed on subsequent Committees. They lived within the parameters of a mercantile world whose details have failed to interest subsequent generations of historians. Consequently their

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any committee member who had missed three consecutive meetings unless for "good cause" such as "sickness" or "absence from the city" "be considered as having vacated his place on this committee unless being so notified . . . he shall signify his intention to remain and attend the meetings." On Thompson's motion this proposal was tabled until the next meeting. At that time (March 2) Morris moved that Gerard's original motion be "indefinitely postponed"which seems to have happened. This automatic mechanism would have deprived the Committee, in its first year of the eminent Dr. Francis, who attended only three meetings, and of Philip Hone, who appears to have never graced the committee room with his presence (although allowance has to be made for incomplete attendance records). The value to the Apollo Association of these men's public presence more than compensated for their lack of participation.

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lives are much harder to track.[283] The likelihood is that all of them had some interest in art or they would not have served on the Committee. Some, who are otherwise obscure, we know were collectors or patrons, even if on a modest scale; their names appear in indices of owners from the exhibition records of the American Academy, the Apollo Association, and the National Academy of Design. For these men, service on the Committee of Management was a way to encourage and direct the course of American Art without the financial commitment involved in becoming a major patron. From Herring at the beginning, to Cozzens at the end, this mix of nabobs, of civic activists, and of business people with a sense of duty and an interest in art characterized the management of the Apollo Association and the Art-Union.

The Art-Union was a merchant's organization in a merchant's city. Indeed, the managers liked to boast that the organization was run on mercantile principles, applying the methods of a successful business operation to the encouragement of American fine art.[284] In an era before the vast majority of officeholders were lawyers, these New York

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[283] Greele was a paper merchant. By 1845 he was listed in Moses Yale Beach's *Wealth and Biography of the Wealthy Citizens of New York City* as having left an estate in excess of $500,000. Thomas N. Campbell, Jr., is even more obscure. Possessed of a common surname, he was listed in the 1838-39 city directory as a customs house broker doing business at 23 Pine Street and living at 25 Mercer Street. He was a collector and is likely the Thomas Campbell that Rebora, "Venues,"67 identifies as a "picture dealer" at 25 Pine Street in 1851-52. That is all that I have found about him. Even specialized sources on business history only include the names of principal individuals. While there may be revelations to be unearthed here, historians have not tended to dig. This kind of research has been left to the astounding persistence of devoted genealogists, but their research is spotty, not systematic and tends to be self-interested, that is, linked to their own families or communities.

[284] The notion that sound business practice is applicable to any and all situations continues to be a cornerstone of the American mantra. This is an enduring idea in

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merchants were actively involved in the political life of their day.[285] Various commentators who have sought to characterize the Art-Union have noted this involvement in politics, generally with an intention to posit a cause and effect relationship between the taste and program of the organization and the "class interests" of the managers. As with businessmen today, the Art-Union managers were members of both of the major parties of their time – Whigs and Democrats. In the 1850s the Whig party disappeared, and in a realignment centered around the slavery issue, most Art-Union Whigs and one notable Democrat, William Cullen Bryant, went over to the newly forming Republican Party. All of the Art-Union Democrats who remained with the party subsequently became ardent War Democrats.[286]

A number of Art-Union officers and managers had held, did hold, or would hold elected office in the course of their careers.[287] Three of them, Moses Grinnell, Cornelius Lawrence, and Henry Raymond, served in the United States Congress, Grinnell as a Whig

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America. Witness, President Dwight Eisenhower's Secretary of Defense, Charles Wilson, largely famous for his equation of the interests of America with the interests of General Motors. To move forward fifty years, New York City now has a mayor, Michael Bloomberg, whose chief qualification for his position was that he was a self-made successful businessman.

[285] New York did not invent this model. Founding Father John Hancock was arguably the richest merchant in Boston.

[286] The organization was disproportionately Democratic, a fact whose significance is discussed in Chapter Nine, "The Art-Union's Political Agenda."

[287] Again, as with the discussion of "Fine Arts Initiatives," I have ignored linear chronology in sketching this web of relationships. I am interested in general career trajectories and multiple points of intersection, rather than specific cause and effect situations.

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from 1839 to 1841, Lawrence as a Democrat in 1832, and Raymond as a Republican in 1864. Two members of the Committee of Management were former Mayors, the Whig Philip Hone who served one term as Mayor in 1825, and Cornelius Lawrence, a Democrat, who was the first popularly elected Mayor of the City, barely winning the riot-scarred election in 1834, and then re-elected in 1835 and 1836.[288] Marshall Roberts failed in his Republican Mayoral bid in 1865. Managers served at various times as members of the New York State Legislature. William Beekman went to the State Senate as a Whig in 1850 and as a Republican in 1862. Erastus Cornelius Benedict, also a Whig-turned-Republican, was elected to the New York City Common Council in 1840 and to the State Assembly in 1848. In 1850 he was elected to the newly formed Board of Education and again to the Assembly in 1863. In 1872 he was elected to the State Senate as a reform candidate. Henry Raymond served as a Whig in the State Legislature from 1849 to 1851 and was Lieutenant Governor in 1854 before he went on to become a founder of the Republican Party in 1856. Prosper Wetmore was elected as a Democrat to the State Assembly in 1834. Charles Patrick Daley, also a Democrat, served in the Assembly in 1843 and declined an opportunity to run for Congress.

The United States Customs Service, under the jurisdiction of the Treasury Department, was both a major source of national revenue and a major location of political

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[288] Hone and Geer, of course, were Mayors before the office was elective and thus were appointed to the position by the City Council. Seth Geer, the father-in-law of Prosper Wetmore's brother and business partner, Robert Wetmore (a Whig), was Mayor in 1832.

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patronage before the Civil Service reforms of the late nineteenth century.[289] Nathaniel Hawthorne was a famous political appointee, a Democrat whose government employment waxed and waned with the Washington tides, carrying him from the Salem wharves to the consul's post in Liverpool. New York was the major port in the nation and the customs' office in the City had its full share of political officeholders, all of whom profited from a system intended to enrich them. A number of lucrative and highly sought-after posts were awarded at the discretion of the President, while scores of lesser positions were distributed at the discretion of the principal office holders. Philip Hone's long political career was capped when finally, in 1849, Zachary Taylor awarded the faithful New York Whig the long-sought-for position as Naval Officer for the District of New York, a coveted political patronage position.[290] Hone's diary (which he maintained from 1826 to 1851, shortly before his death) describes his political career in some detail. Hone, a devoted and partisan Whig, was elected assistant Alderman from 1823-24, but lost a bid for Alderman in 1825. Later that year, benefitting from a Democratic factional split, he served a one-year term as Mayor of New York, in time to preside over the celebration that marked the opening of the Erie Canal. In 1839 he lost a race for the State Senate. In 1840, still very much affected by the 1837 financial debacle, Hone hoped for a lucrative federal appointment – Postmaster for New York City – from the newly elected Whig

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[289] The theory of government service in the early days of the Republic (to which we seem to be returning) was that officeholders were independent contractors who could legitimately charge for the services they performed and thus not be financed on the public payroll. This is now called "privatization" or "outsourcing."

[290] Hone, *Diary*, 2: 864-66.

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President, Benjamin Harrison.[291] Harrison's early death proved the danger of naming a vice presidential candidate who was not a trustworthy party man. John Tyler (or "Mr. Accidental President Tyler" as Hone dubbed him) failed to appoint a disappointed Hone.[292] When Hone finally received his position in 1849 he promptly replaced the

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[291] Here is a revealing explanation of why Philip Hone was so eager for the appointment as New York City postmaster and why generally, patronage positions were so sought after. "The Marshal's office, on an average, is worth about fifteen thousand dollars a year. It is a very genteel office, and the duties are nearly all discharged by a Deputy. The profits have been as high as Eighteen thousand Dollars. But there is some talk in Congress of cutting down the fees to five thousand. If the fees should not be reduced, this is the most desirable office in the city. The regular proceeds of the Collectors office in ordinary times and when administered more with a view to the public good than to private Emolument, I believe is rated at an average of Twelve thousand. But as I said to you, the income can be largely increased by the *Storage System* [all italics original], as it has been practiced by Mr. Hoyt. He has also been in the practice of making many Seizures. In consequence of these additions – it is believed that Hoyt's income has been from 17,000 to 20,000 Dollars per Annum. But under the new order of things it will probably fall down to Twelve Thousand. The office of Collector is very arduous, requiring the whole time of the Collector, and is brought into continual contact with the merchants, every day, upon nice legal points, and a thousand vexatious questions. The next important Office is the Post Office – I have taken great pains to ascertain all about this office, and so has my partner, Mr. Hall – who is also your friend. Mr. Hall, you know, has, all his life, had a great deal to do with the Post Office. And as it is now conducted, both Mr. Hall and myself think it the very best office in the City. The boxes now produce *Eight Thousand Dollars* per annum. The Salary is *Two Thousand Dollars*. The City Letters produce an average of *One Thousand Dollars* a year. This makes the clear income *Eleven Thousand Dollars per Annum.* But this is not the best part of it. There are *two Post Offices.* The lower Post Office costs the Post Master fourteen hundred dollars a year, and its clear income is more than *ten thousand Dollars*, as I am informed. This, then is the best office in the City. With its duties you are perfectly familiar. The labor can in a great measure be done by Deputy. It is a far better office than the collectors, with not a hundredth part of the labor and responsibility." As reprinted in Leonard D. White, *The Jacksonians: A Study in Administrative History, 1829-61* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954),390-91, from a letter of William L. Stone to General Solomon Van Rensselaer dated January 23, 1841, as quoted in Catharina V. R. Bonney, compiler, *A Legacy of Historical Gleanings*, 2d ed., 2 vols. (Albany: J. Munsell, 1875), 2: 149.

[292] Hone, *Diary*, 2:563-64.

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Democrats in the office with men of his own party, including his nephew, Isaac Hone, and his son, Robert Hone. This was an entirely legitimate and accepted procedure of the day.

Hone was only one of a number of Art-Union men to hold port positions. Cornelius Lawrence was rewarded for his efforts on behalf of the Democratic Party with the powerful post of Collector of the Port, which he held from 1846 through 1849 during the administration of Democrat James K. Polk. Prosper Wetmore and his brother Robert Wetmore both served as Navy Agent, Robert in the Whig administrations of Harrison and Tyler, Prosper during the Polk regime.[293] Both men conducted their official duties out of the dry goods business that they ran together at 85 Water Street. Prosper Wetmore was Navy Agent from 1847 to 1850, coinciding with his years as President of the Art-Union.[294] Moses Grinnell was the Collector of the Port of New York in 1869 and 1870

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[293] NatCab claims that Marshall Roberts was appointed Navy Agent by President Harrison in 1841, but this seems unlikely and appears only in the one source.

[294] The Navy Agent purchased supplies for the United States Navy and was allowed a commission on the purchases. Wetmore resigned as President of the Art-Union partly because he was accused, at the beginning of the Taylor administration of having charged the government inflated sums and was forced to defend himself in a lengthy audit process. Wetmore's papers relating to this period are at Princeton. It is impossible to tell from this distance and without considerable research whether there was any merit to the charges, or whether they were simply politically motivated. Either or both are possible. It is interesting that Wetmore was purchasing supplies from Art-Union Committee members involved in the import of marine products including William Kemble, the Nathaniel Jarvis who was a ship chandler, and Marshall Roberts, with whom Wetmore had shared financial interests. There are conflicting accounts of the origins of Roberts's fortune in shipping. The version that dates his good fortune to the period of the Mexican War when he was awarded a government shipping contract, despite the fact that he was not the low bidder, due to the friendly intercession of an official in New York port, points in the direction of Prosper Wetmore.

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and served in 1871 as Naval Officer of Customs in the Grant administration. Charles Briggs held a post in the Customs House during the Whig Fillmore administration while he was associated with Henry Raymond's *New York Daily Times* in the early 1850s.

Prosper Wetmore's political career bears special notice. It is clear from his correspondence that he was a political creature through and through, relishing the tumult and the intrigue of the political process. Wetmore's political career was intimately tied to that of his friend and mentor, William L. Marcy (1786-1857), Governor of New York State from 1833 to 1839. He was a key member of Marcy's Gubernatorial staff and maintained a frequent correspondence with Marcy through the Art-Union period, reporting political news from New York while Marcy was in Washington, D.C. as Polk's Secretary of War during the Mexican-American War. Wetmore was also a good friend and regular correspondent of the historian and Democratic activist George Bancroft (1800-1867), who served as Collector of the Port of Boston (appointing Nathaniel Hawthorne to his position) and Secretary of the Navy from 1845-46, in the same Polk administration that employed Marcy. Wetmore and Bancroft together advocated for another political friend, Townsend Harris (1804-1878), who was finally rewarded for his Democratic party loyalty with an appointment as the first American Consul to Japan in 1856, a Buchanan administration post that Harris held until 1861. Harris acquitted himself handsomely, negotiating the first Japanese-American trade treaty in 1858.[295]

The diplomatic service, then as now a party enclave, attracted three other Art-

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[295] For a general biography of Harris, see *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed., s.v., "Harris, Townsend. There are a number of letters relating to Wetmore's efforts on Harris's behalf in the Wetmore papers at Princeton.

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Union Committee members in addition to Harris. John Bartlett was sent by Zachary Taylor to adjudicate the Mexican border from 1850 to 1853. When Bartlett returned to his native Rhode Island he served as Secretary of State from 1855 to 1872 and Acting Governor in 1861-62. James Watson Webb was Lincoln's Minister to Brazil and remained in that post through the Grant administration from 1861 to 1869.[296] Sam Ward went on diplomatic missions to Paraguay in 1858 and to Nicaragua in 1862, serving under both Democratic and Republican administrations. From 1876 to 1886 William Hoppin held the post of secretary to the American Legation in London through three Republican administrations.

Courts and civic offices offered opportunities for lawyers. Charles Daly, after one term in the State Legislature, made a distinguished career as a judge. Always a Democrat, he was not a Tammany man, but so far above partisan activities that he was eventually endorsed by all parties. He was a delegate to the 1867 New York State Constitutional Convention. James Brady held office briefly. A devoted Democrat, he was appointed District Attorney of New York in 1843 and was briefly corporation counsel in 1845. Brady was the most famous defense lawyer of his day and made the decision to eschew a political career in favor of private legal practice. He departed from that path only one more time, when, in 1860, secure in the knowledge that he would not win, he ran for Governor of New York so that his "hard-shell" (i.e. pro-Southern) wing of the Democratic party would have a gubernatorial candidate supporting the Breckenridge

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[296] An earlier appointment as Minister to Austria in 1849 was rejected by a vote of the Senate.

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Presidential candidacy against Lincoln and Douglass.[297] When the time came, Brady was a strong War Democrat. He turned down the Tammany nomination for Mayor in 1861. After Brady's death, his brother John became a Judge. When Erastus Benedict first came to New York as a young lawyer in 1824 his first position was as a deputy clerk in the Southern District Court. Doubtless he was meritorious, but that was not the sole criterion for the position. We can presume he was a Federalist. Andrew Warner, a Democrat and protege of Prosper Wetmore, enjoyed a steady salary as a Deputy Clerk in the Manhattan County Clerk's Office from 1832 to 1851, a position which enabled him to study law and gain admittance to the Bar in 1836. In 1853, he was selected by the New York State Legislature as the first Clerk of the Court of Common Pleas, a post he retained for only a year before devoting his full attention to banking. The Jarvises, Benjamin and Nathan, not only held legal clerk positions themselves, but were members of an extended Jarvis clan that occupied numerous political patronage positions at the disposal of Tammany Hall.

Not all the political connections of Art-Union men were direct. As has been noted, Robert Wetmore, Prosper's brother, was an active Whig. Robert's father-in-law, Seth Geer, was the unsuccessful Whig candidate for Mayor in 1836. Charles Leupp's father-in-law, Gideon Lee, was the last appointed Mayor of New York in 1833 and a Democratic member of Congress from 1835-37. Lee and Leupp were the Democratic patrons of a Democratic artist, William Sidney Mount. Leupp was also the traveling companion of another well-known Art-Union Democrat who never sought elective office, William

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[297] His "soft-shell" Democratic opponent in this race was William Kelly, brother of Robert Kelly. Both men lost to the Republican, Edmund Morgan.

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Cullen Bryant. The two men visited Europe together in 1845, and traveled together again in 1849 and 1852-1853. Lee's Democratic bank employed Francis Edmonds. Edmonds held one minor political position, as New York City Chamberlain in 1853, but his brother John had a long political career as a Democrat, and Edmonds was well known as a Democratic banker.[298] William Allen Butler's father, Benjamin Butler, was Andrew Jackson's Secretary of War and Attorney General. William Butler was a member of the Duyckinck social circle. He bridged the literary interests of the Duyckincks with the political interests of the Young America movement. William Kemble's brother, Gouverneur Kemble, served two terms in Congress as a Democrat from 1837 to 1841. Abraham Cozzens' father, William B. Cozzens, was a New York City Alderman in 1844 and ran unsuccessfully for Mayor on the Native Party ticket in 1846.[299] Andrew Warner's maternal uncle, Daniel Tiemann, served one term as Mayor of New York in 1857, elected as an independent.

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[298] Edmonds's position as Chamberlain ended his banking career, when enemies accused him of unethical behavior.

[299] The evidence for Abraham Cozzens being the son of William B. Cozzens is the assertion in John Durand's biography of his father, that "Mr. Abraham Cozzens, of hotel celebrity," was "'posted' on the history of art, by his son, Mr. A. M. Cozzens" when the elder Cozzens was an alderman prepared to argue in favor of giving the New York Gallery of Fine Arts the free use of the city-owned Rotunda. William B. Cozzens was an alderman in 1844 and 1845. The City Directory for 1844 lists the residence of Alderman William B. Cozzens as the American Hotel at 229 Broadway. This means that Abraham Cozzens was a member of the West Point Cozzens family and also a first cousin to Frederick Swarthout Cozzens (1818-1869), wine merchant and *Knickerbocker Magazine* contributor. John Durand has apparently confused the father's name with the son's. Despite the name confusion, the relationship is likely to be accurate since Asher B. Durand, a contemporary of both Abraham Cozzenses, knew them both well. John Durand, *The Life and Times of A.B. Durand* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1984; reprint New York: Kennedy Graphics, Inc., 1970), 129.

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Perhaps the most interesting Whig political career in the Art-Union circle was that of Erastus Cornelius Benedict (1800-1880).[300] It was Benedict, not Hone, who was the true foil to Wetmore at the Art-Union. Hone was window dressing. Benedict was the long-time chairman of the Executive Committee while Wetmore was President. The two men had, of necessity, a close working relationship. After his early Federal Court clerkship whetted his appetite for maritime law, Benedict devoted himself to a lucrative private legal practice. In 1840 he was elected Assistant Alderman from the elite Fifteenth Ward. He was a member of the State Assembly in 1848, and again in 1864. In 1872 he was a successful reform candidate for the State Senate and served on the court of impeachment, hearing charges against judges caught up in the scandals involving Boss Tweed (including Benjamin Nathan's brother-in-law, Tammany Democrat Judge Albert Cardozo). Benedict was an advocate for orderly city planning and rationalized urban mass transit. In 1851 he published a pamphlet, *New York and City Travel: Omnibus and Railroad. What Should Be Done*, in which he pointed out that New York lost middle-class citizens and significant tax monies to suburban Brooklyn. This was an arena where good government met rough and tumble politics. Franchises for coach lines and street cars were a traditional area of municipal favoritism and corruption. Wetmore and Benedict met outside the political arena in their shared concerns for education and as fellow activists at the New-York Historical Society. In 1843 they both served on the

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[300] The entry for Benedict in the DAB is long and detailed and gives references to other sources. Benedict enjoyed a substantial civic career and is mentioned in Spann, *Metropolis*;105, 185-6, 192, 215, 290-91, 295, 483-4.

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Historical Society Executive Committee.[301]

As partisan as politics was, political divisions did not necessarily translate to personal gulfs (although Philip Hone, in the privacy of his diary, described Prosper Wetmore with some animus as "a regular Loco-foco" in a diary entry devoted to ceremonies attendant to the death of former President Andrew Jackson in June 1845).[302] Prosper Wetmore's brother and business partner, Robert C. Wetmore was a Whig. Robert Wetmore's father-in-law, Seth Geer was also a Whig who unsuccessfully challenged Cornelius Lawrence in the Mayoral election of 1836, in a contest which included a third candidate, Samuel F. B. Morse, running for the Native Party. Prosper Wetmore maintained a long personal and business relationship with Marshall O. Roberts. Roberts was originally a ship chandler whose personal fortune was said to have begun in 1841 when "the Navy agent, a prominent Whig, had thrown his contracts at a rate 30 to 40 per cent higher than normal market rates to" him.[303] That presumably would have been

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[301] As recorded in "New York Historical Society," *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 12, no. 59 (May 1843): 558.

[302] Hone, *Diary*, 2: 733. Hone described Wetmore's tribute to Jackson at a meeting of the New-York Historical Society. It is not clear that Hone was correct in this assessment. From his own vantage point as a Whig, any Jacksonian might have looked like a "loco-foco" to him. The loco-focos were an anti-Tammany faction and I have not clarified where Wetmore stood on this question, except that his political interests tended to be more State and National than municipal.

[303] Albion, *Rise*, 233. Albion says with respect to the Navy Agent post that it was "one of the particularly lucrative political plums. . . . [which] handled the purchase of supplies for the Navy at the port, which was one of the chief centers of procurement." Roberts is described by Albion as the son of a Welsh doctor, whose "active politics stood him in good stead in business; his fortune is said to have dated from some contracts, at prices higher than those of bidders of the wrong party, thrown his way by a friendly navy agent."

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Robert Wetmore. Later Roberts was additionally enriched when he received a government contract for shipping mail even though he was not the lowest bidder. That would have been Prosper Wetmore. Basil Rauch claims that Wetmore joined Roberts as a business partner after Wetmore's actions as navy agent were called into question.[304]

Some civic affairs were political; a few were genuinely non-partisan or bi-partisan. In 1835 a large number of civic leaders served on a special committee to investigate the New York fire of 1835. Among those on the committee were Mayor Cornelius W. Lawrence, Prosper Wetmore, Jacob Morton, John Haggerty (auctioneer and partner of the Austens), Andrew Warner, James Watson Webb, Philip Hone, Robert C. Wetmore, Seth Geer, and David Austen.

The men who passed through the ranks of managers and officers of the Apollo Association and Art-Union were, taken as a group, leaders and joiners whose interests converged and diverged in a plethora of overlapping activities. Their impressive political careers and connections were only a beginning. Categories of other shared interests and activities included education, kinship ties, literary activities, professional and business commonalities, charitable institutions, the New York State Militia, the law, poetry, civic reform, publishing and journalism, Rhode Island connections, scientific and professional societies, the New York Society Library, the New-York Historical Society, and the Century Club.

It is no surprise that so many of the Art-Union activists also devoted considerable

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[304] Rauch, *Cuba*, 192-94, 214-15, 259, includes Roberts and Wetmore, in his discussion of the "steamboat crowd."

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time to the cause of education in general. Joseph Cogswell was the principal teacher and educational reformer of the group, although Erastus Benedict also taught briefly as a young man.[305] Prosper Wetmore was appointed to the New York State Board of Regents by Democrat William Marcy in 1833; Benedict joined him as a Regent in 1855, appointed by Republican Governor Myron Clark. Benedict served as Chancellor of the Regents from 1878 until his death. Robert Kelly, a Democrat, was also a Regent as was George Curtis, a Republican who also served as Chancellor. James Gerard was a local school trustee and inspector who spent his retirement years making daily visits to the public schools in his district. Benedict was a member of the New York City Board of Education and served as its President, as did Robert Kelly. Kelly was also a trustee of Rochester University and was the among the organizers and the first President of the Columbia College Alumni Association. Benedict served as a Trustee at his alma mater, Williams College. Townsend Harris, as a member of the New York City Board of Education, is credited with the creation of the Free Academy of the City of New York, the predecessor of City College. Philip Hone was a member of the Columbia Board of Trustees as was Evert Duyckinck, while the Butler family was active in the founding of the University of the City of New York (now New York University), and particularly involved in the founding of its law school. William Allen Butler was among the early graduates of the University and served for over thirty years on its Board of Trustees and as its President in 1897 and 1898.

The Art-Union attracted a wide variety of men with literary and journalistic

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[305] It was through this connection that he came to the Art-Union. One of his pupils at the Round Hill School in Northampton, Massachusetts was Sam Ward, son of Samuel Ward of New York City. Cogswell came to the city as tutor to the Ward household.

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interests, beginning with Prosper Wetmore, who was literary editor of the *Courier and Enquirer* in the late 1820s. James Watson Webb, the owner of the *Courier and Enquirer,* was a manager in 1839. Joseph Cogswell published a literary journal, *The New York Review* (financed by Sam Ward), from 1839 until 1842. Charles Briggs edited *The Broadway Journal* (with Edgar Allan Poe) in 1845, and later edited *Putnam's*, and two newspapers, the *Brooklyn Union* and the *Independent.* Evert Duyckinck was involved with a string of literary ventures. While he was on the Art-Union Committee, he owned, with his brother, *The Literary World.* William Appleton was Duyckinck's sometime publisher. Duyckinck was also was involved in collaborative projects with William Cullen Bryant in 1844 and again in 1878.[306] George Curtis edited *Putnam's* and later *Harper's*. Henry Raymond, best remembered as the founder of the *New York Times*, also worked for Horace Greeley, James Watson Webb, and *Harper's* before he founded the *Times* in 1851. Far and away the most famous literary and journalistic figure associated with the Art-Union was William Cullen Bryant, poet and long-time editor and owner of *The New York Post.*

All of these editors and owners were also writers. A number of other Art-Union officers and managers found their way into print. John Brady, John Gourlie, Samuel Ward, and William Allen Butler published light poetry, as did Prosper Wetmore. Butler had a somewhat embarrassing popular success with a satiric poem he published anonymously in 1857 entitled "Nothing to Wear," which poked fun at the clothing mania of the women in his own rarified social circle. Erastus Benedict published works on civic reform topics, but also translated mediaeval German poetry and wrote a foundation (and still-consulted) text

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[306] Brown, *Bryant*, 294, 502.

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on American marine law. John Bartlett specialized later in his career in Rhode Island history, while Charles Daly published legal treatises and John Ridner produced a book on artists' colors.

Through the 1840s New York businessmen significantly expanded the uses of their capital in banking, insurance, and railroad activities. Among the managers who held positions in banking and insurance were Charles Leupp, Robert Kelly, Benjamin Nathan, Paul Spofford, Moses Grinnell, Philip Hone, Jonathan Sturgis, Samuel Ward, Cornelius Lawrence, Prosper Wetmore, William Kemble, and Joseph Alsop. Andrew Warner, Ebenezer Platt, William Johnson, Benjamin Winthrop, and Francis Edmonds were bankers by profession. George Curtis's father, also George Curtis; Samuel Ward's father, also Samuel Ward; and William Brown's father, James Brown, were all prominent and wealthy bankers.

The historic core of New York's mercantile prosperity derived from shipping and it would have been odd indeed if the Art-Union did not have its share of men involved in that area. William Brown owned a ship yard next to the iron works of his brother-in-law, George Allen, whose manufactures also were used in the building of boats. Joseph Alsop, Marshall Roberts, Paul Spofford, Townsend Harris, Prosper Wetmore and the Jarvis family also had interests in shipping. Townsend Harris sailed as supercargo to the Far East on a ship he owned after he left the Art-Union. Richard Demill, a minor figure at the Art-Union, was an agent for a line of Savannah, Georgia packets. The major representative of New York's shipping community on the Art-Union committee was Moses Grinnell, of the firm Grinnell and Minturn. The Art-Union Committee also boasted two of the most

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eminent marine lawyers in the city, Erastus Benedict and William Butler. In 1851 Butler married Mary Marshall, the daughter of Captain Charles Marshall, owner of the Black Ball Line. The development of railroad lines became an increasingly important area of economic activity as the century progressed and a number of Art-Union men were investors and/or officers in the new mode of transportation. These included Joseph Alsop, Jonathan Sturgis, Francis Edmonds, William Kemble, Charles Leupp, Benjamin Nathan, Marshall Roberts and Charles Sandford.

In the early nineteenth century the New York State Militia was an elite social organization (as well as a vehicle for State political patronage), given to gala public displays of military plumage and private opportunities for good fellowship and useful networking. In a "classless" society, titles of military rank were much prized and commonly transferred to civilian life. Three managers, John Morton, Francis Edmonds, and James Watson Webb, had fathers who were Generals. Webb spent time in the regular army as a young man. Prosper Wetmore and Andrew Warner had substantial militia careers. Warner remained connected with the militia until 1854 and attained the rank of Colonel. Wetmore served in the predecessor to the Seventh Regiment and was appointed Paymaster General of the State Militia by Governor William Marcy in 1838, a position he held for many years. Wetmore used the title "General" all his life and maintained a keen interest in military affairs. Warner was customarily addressed as "Colonel Warner." Abraham Cozzens and Charles Stetson also were occasionally referred to with rank indications attached to their names, presumably related to Militia activities. The longest active militia career belonged to Charles Sandford, who was the commanding general

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when the militia was called out to quell the flour riots in 1837, the Astor Place riots in 1848, municipal riots in 1857 and the Draft Riots of 1863. He saw brief voluntary service at the beginning of the Civil War guarding the federal depot at Harper's Ferry.

A number of managers were involved in scientific or professional societies and published scholarly treatises in their areas of expertise. John Francis was among the founders of the New York Academy of Medicine and Eleazar Parmly is regarded as one of the pioneers of professional dentistry in the United States. Both men taught and published in their fields. Joseph Cogswell was a Professor of Geology and Mineralogy at Harvard. Moses Grinnell was a major financial supporter of the second Kane expedition to find a Northwest Passage to the Pacific coast. John Gourlie was a member of the American Geographical Society, while Charles Daly served for many years as its President. John Bartlett founded the American Ethnological Society together with Albert Gallatin. William Allen Butler was a President of the American and the New York Bar Associations in the 1880s. Prosper Wetmore and Moses Grinnell were fellow officers from 1843 to 1848 at the New York Chamber of Commerce. John Gourlie was President of the New York Stock Exchange in 1856, while Francis Edmonds was instrumental in founding the New York Clearinghouse (a city-wide banking organization) in 1853.

The Art-Union Committee had a significant concentration of lawyers, practicing and non-practicing. While James Beekman, Evert Duyckinck, Joseph Cogswell, William Cullen Bryant, William Hoppin, and Andrew Warner made minimal use of their legal training, other managers counted among the most celebrated lawyers in the town. James Gerard, Erastus Benedict, James Brady, Charles Patrick Daly, Charles Sandford, and

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William Alan Butler all practiced actively and enjoyed positions of eminence in the profession. Nathaniel and Benjamin Jarvis were both Tammany-connected lawyers who had patronage positions. Frederick Coe, David Colden, Cornelius Kane, Abner Benedict, William L. Morris, and Thomas Tucker were also lawyers.

The Art-Union men were also familiar faces in the director's rooms of a range of early health-care institutions including the Society for the Deaf and Dumb (Wetmore and Beekman), the Bloomingdale Asylum (Hone), the New York Dispensary (Beekman), The Women's Hospital (Francis and Benedict), Jew's Hospital (now Mount Sinai, Nathan), Lying-In Hospital (Warner), New York Hospital (Hone and Beekman), and the State Inebriate Hospital (Francis). James Herring was a founder of a Masonic Hospital in upstate Utica. James Brady had a particular interest in insanity and did pioneer legal work on the use of insanity pleas for the defense. James Gerard was the founder of the Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents and its related House of Refuge. Among the Art-Union colleagues who served with him were John Gourlie, Charles Leupp, David Colden, Andrew Warner and especially Robert Kelly. Erastus Benedict was a founder of the Association for the Improvement of the Condition of the Poor.[307]

Some Art-Union officers and managers faced straitened economic circumstances as young men that kept them from college attendance. Among these were Philip Hone, Prosper Wetmore, Townsend Harris, Francis Edmonds and Andrew Warner. William Cullen Bryant left Williams College for lack of money. Charles Daly spent two years as a

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[307] For a critical analysis of "charitable" activity in this period generally see David J. Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and disorder in the New Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971).

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seaman and then apprenticed in a law office. While this group may have entered the workforce prematurely, none of them can be said to have been without friends or connections that helped them to their subsequent positions of success. Other Art-Union men were the sons of very rich fathers whose professional lives offered them the opportunity to add to their affluence or not, as they wished. James Beekman inherited a large fortune at a young age. James Gerard, Robert Kelly, John Morton, John R. Murray, Joseph Alsop, and Samuel Ward were sons of wealthy merchants and businessmen. Evert Duyckinck's father was a successful book seller and publisher. Gerard, Beekman, Duyckinck, Ward, and Benjamin Jarvis all graduated from Columbia College, the school of choice for the New York elite. John Francis, although initially apprenticed to a printer after his father's death, managed nonetheless to graduate from Columbia in 1809.

Generally, the Art-Union managers were not susceptible to the causes or enthusiasms that swept America in this period – abolition, prohibition, religious revivalism, the Millerites (an apocalyptic cult), feminism, spiritualism, and so on. They tended overwhelmingly to be Episcopalians or Presbyterians and not Shakers, Quakers, or Mormons. Their energies were generally invested in working for reform through mainstream institutions. One exception to this was Townsend Harris, who later in his life became an active temperance man (in the wake of problems with alcohol that followed the death of his mother). A number of the officers and managers were closely associated with civic or political reformist causes. James Gerard campaigned successfully for a uniformed municipal police force. William Cullen Bryant is among those credited with the creation of New York's Central Park. Moses Grinnell was also involved in the creation of the park,

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which was said to have been given impetus by the the enthusiasm of Mrs. Robert Minturn, the wife of his business partner. Grinnell was a member of the original Park Commission and Charles Briggs also served as a Park Commissioner. Erastus Benedict lobbied for rational city planning including the development of affordable public transit. George Curtis (who spent two years at Brook Farm as a young man) is generally credited as the father of the American Civil Service. When the Civil War broke out, former Art-Union men were among the most involved champions of the Union. Townsend Harris, Prosper Wetmore, James Brady and Charles Daly were prominent War Democrats. Daly advised the Lincoln administration on legal matters. Wetmore was an officer of the Union Defense Committee along with Moses Grinnell.

There were other circles of affinity on the committee. Over the years it had a strong coterie of men who had been involved in the auction trade. Philip Hone and the Austens, John and George, represented the two most powerful New York auction firms. Cornelius Lawrence and Duncan Pell also worked as auctioneers. Additionally, James Gerard's brothers were involved in the auction trade as well as William Appleton's brother-in-law, James E. Cooley, a leading book auctioneer. Some Art-Union men continued to identify themselves primarily as merchants, although their economic interests were not necessarily confined to the buying and selling of goods. These included three of the five Presidents, Daniel Stanton, Prosper Wetmore, and Abraham Cozzens, as well as Joseph Alsop, Augustus Averill, Abraham Bininger, Stephen Chester, D. A. Comstock, William Deen, Richard Demill, Augustus Greele, Townsend Harris, Jonathan Hunt, John Nesmith, John Ridner, Daniel Seymour, Jonathan Sturgis, Aaron Thompson, and George Tredwell. While

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these men constitute a large group, with the exception of Wetmore, Cozzens, Ridner and Sturgis, they were generally not among the most active or influential managers and many of them served relatively briefly.

It is curious (and of unknown significance, if any) that a number of Art-Union managers had strong family ties to Rhode Island. Both William Hoppin and Samuel Ward had forebears who had been governors of the State. Hoppin's family continued its political prominence in Rhode Island during the Art -Union period. Abraham Cozzens had Rhode Island family connections. George Curtis was born and raised in Rhode Island. John Bartlett returned to Rhode Island and enjoyed a substantial intellectual and political career there. Duncan Pell also returned to Rhode Island and served in 1865 as Lieutenant Governor. Charles Russell's connection to the state was striking. In 1842 this conservative New York businessman was so outraged by the so-called Dorr's Rebellion that he volunteered as an aide-de-camp to the Rhode Island Militia general charged with putting down the rebellion.

Various members of the Committee had ties to each other not only of affinity, but of family. Samuel Ward's mother was a sister to Mrs. John Francis, and thus Ward was Francis's nephew. A daughter of Philip Hone married a son of Charles Russel. Prosper Wetmore was likely related to George Tredwell and perhaps also William Johnson. The Austens were brothers, while the Jarvises were close relations of each other (a generation apart, they could have been brothers, cousins, or uncle-nephew). Nathaniel Jarvis was married to James Brady's sister, making the men brothers-in-law. George Allen and William Brown were similarly brothers-in-law.

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Three cultural institutions where Art-Union managers frequently mingled and mixed were the Society Library, the New-York Historical Society, and the Century Club. Charles Leupp, John Gourlie, James Beekman, Evert Duyckinck and Francis Edmunds were all involved with the Society Library. Benedict, Warner, Wetmore, Beekman, Winthrop, Bryant, Hoppin, Bartlett, Russell, and Francis, all held posts at the Historical Society or served on its Executive Committee, while Hone, George Austen, Cozzens, Daly, Duyckinck, Sturgis, and Edmonds were active members. The list of Art-Union officers and managers who were Centurions makes the early Century Club seem like an extension and expansion of the Art-Union committee rooms.[308] The men who served the Art-Union had ample opportunity for years to come to meet and mix socially in the convivial precincts of the Century Club.

This discussion offers a sampling but by no means exhausts the list of common affiliations outside of the Art-Union that officers and managers shared. It omits, for example, membership in the private clubs that dotted the social landscape of the period.

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[308] It includes (listed aphabetically with their years of Century membership): George F. Allen (1847-1863),William Henry Appleton (1847-1899),George W. Austen (1851), John R. Bartlett (1847-1849), James W. Beekman (1852-1877), William Cullen Bryant (1847-1878),William Allen Butler (1857-1902), Frederick A. Coe (1851), David C. Colden (1847-1850), Abraham M. Cozzens (1847-1868), George William Curtis (1851-1892), Charles Patrick Daly (1851-1899), Francis W. Edmonds (1847-1863), Daniel Giraud Eliot (1868-1915), John H. Gourlie (1847-1891), Townsend Harris (1863-1876), William J. Hoppin (1847-1895), Robert Kelly (1847-1856), William Kemble (1847-1881), Charles M. Leupp (1847-1859), John R. Murray (1858), Eleazar Parmly (1847), Charles A. Stetson (1859), Jonathan Sturges (1847-1874), Samuel Ward , and Daniel Seymour (1847-1850). Many of these were founders, while Bryant, Leupp, Kemble, and Appleton were four of the seven incorporators of the club together with Gulian Verplanck, Asher B. Durand, and John Kensett. Nevins, "Centurions: 1847-1946," *Century*, 363-413.

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For one example, George Allen, William Appleton, James Beekman, Abraham Bininger, William Butler, James Gerard, John Gourlie, Moses Grinnell, Townsend Harris, Marshall Roberts, Charles Russell, Paul Spofford, James Webb and Benjamin Winthrop were all members of the Union Club, which, according to an 1873 account was "from its inception . . . the representative organization of the old families."[309] The texture of New York City life was rich and varied. The Art-Union officers and managers were men of wide interests and wide acquaintance. This preliminary sketch of a web of connections is intended only to suggest the flavor of the lives that these active New Yorkers led and to underline the poverty of the simple description "merchants."

There are multiple explanations for such a frenetic level of community, social, charitable, and political involvement on the part of this diverse elite. Certainly some of these activities were compensation for the loss of power that the old New York leadership had exercised over a finite and manageable society. Even the Art-Union figures who retained political influence by being Tammany men were not at the core of Tammany leadership. The control over "cultural capital" represented an area where the Art-Union men were not threatened by the wave of urban poor and immigrants and could continue to distinguish themselves as apart from the crowd and "superior."[310] The Art-Union was an especially attractive vehicle for leaders threatened in this way because it was not a total

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[309] For a fascinating contemporary introduction to nineteenth-century New York Club life, see Francis Gerry Fairfield, *The Clubs of New York* (New York: Henry Hinton,1873; reprint New York: Arno Press, 1975). The discussion of The Union Club begins on p. 60.

[310] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, passim.

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retreat. It engaged the changing nature of America, while trying to direct it in one specific area, the area of public taste and support for the fine arts. It utilized the professional and personal skills of men who were accustomed to leading, but were being displaced in areas of public life and also commercial life by the rapidly changing landscape of the world in which they had come to maturity.

There is also some possibility that looking beyond New York to a nationwide constituency provided a modicum of relief to a beleaguered elite. Gotham was certainly spinning out of control, but other parts of the country were not so changed from what earlier society had been and remained perhaps more amenable to traditional patterns of leadership. Certainly the Art-Union Honorary Secretaries all over the country represented an extension of the ethos and class values of the New York managers. They consisted largely of local merchants (often booksellers or publishers), professionals, and a smattering of politicians.

In the end, speculations about motive, I believe, offer little understanding of the conduct or programs of the Art-Union. Any speculation about motivation, individual or group, operating in any circumstance, can ultimately be reduced to issues of control. The Art-Union managers, in their roles with the Art-Union, were sincere in their purposes and honest (by the terms of the period) in their methods. The patterns of behavior illustrated in this chapter reflect the a prevailing belief that American society could be reformed through the "improvement of the individual."[311] Ralph Waldo Emerson, looking back in

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[311] This phrase is from David Brion Davis, "From Jackson to Lincoln: Democracy and Dissent," in *From Jackson to Lincoln: Democracy and Dissent* (New York: The Pierrepont Morgan Library, 1995), 16. Beckert, *Metropolis*, discusses this characteristic

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1880, described the critical feature of the thought of his transcendentalist generation of the 1830s and 1840s. "The mind had become aware of itself," Emerson wrote :

> Men grew reflective and intellectual. There was a new consciousness. The former generations acted under the belief that a shining social prosperity was the beatitude of man, and sacrificed uniformly the citizen to the State. The modern mind believed the nation existed for the individual, for the guardianship and education of every man. This idea, roughly written in revolutions and national movements, in the mind of the philosopher had far more precision; the individual is the world[312]

Emerson's insight that in this period the personal became the political explains the impetus among cultural workers to refine the taste of the American people so as to shape and to save the soul of the nation. The Art-Union, with its distribution of engravings and later its profusely illustrated *Bulletin,* cast itself as the Johnny Appleseed of art. (John Chapman [1774-1845]), it should be remembered, scattered not only apple seeds, but Swedenborgian tracts.) In spreading the gospel of art an image at a time, it hoped to reap a harvest of cultural refinement, a notion very much linked to moral improvement. There is little wonder that it appealed to the same men who involved themselves in so many other organized aspects of New York life. As James Beekman told the New-York Historical Society in 1849, "God is doubtless to be glorified by active duty."[313]

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of New York society. The "elite saw themselves as stewards of the community" (75). "[T]hey saw themselves as the moral center of the community with duties to their fellow men" (76). "In the 1850s. . . bourgeois men and women did not run these organizations in the name of their class, but in the name of God" (76).

[312] From Ralph Waldo Emerson's one hundredth lecture before the Concord Lyceum, 1880, as published in *Historic Notes of Life and Letters in New England* and quoted in Perry Miller, ed., *The Transcendentalists: An Anthology* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1950), 461.

[313] As quoted in Beckert, *Metropolis*, 75 from James Beekman, *Proceedings of the New-York Historical Society* (October-December 1849), 254.

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In examining the busy lives of these Art-Union men we let them speak across the generations. They were not generally the richest men in New York. By distinguishing themselves as civic-minded tastemakers, they performed a useful public function. Their descendants remain a recognizable American cultural elite class today – occupied chiefly with assuring themselves a comfortable income and believing when they succeed that their good fortune reflects their personal virtue. They privilege education, engage in voluntary charitable activities, unite to protect the environment, fill seats in concert halls, support literature, champion public broadcasting, purchase theater tickets, visit art and science museums all over the world, and read the newspaper that Henry Raymond founded to help sort out what to make of it all.[314]

[314] The major exception to this is the political arena which has generally become professionalized under the aegis of the legal profession.

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CHAPTER 6

JAMES HERRING AND HIS ARTISTS

At the beginning, the Apollo Gallery was an artist-centered initiative. As Rebora describes in her discussion of New York City art venues, there were a variety of cobbled-together ways in which artists might bring their works before the public. But there was nothing that resembled what Herring proposed, a purpose-made space, in a prime location available free to artists all over the country. All they had to do was send their work and set their price. Herring would earn a fair living from the admissions generated by so attractive an exhibition in addition to his profits from the sale of assorted art-related materials and the proceeds from his Enterprise Library. Everyone would benefit. The Art-Union, as it evolved, put the artists in a very different position. They became the producers selling their works to a powerful retailer whose job it was to create a market demand to support the supply. Many artists chafed in this position, and a variety of faults have been attributed to the Art-Union. In fact, many of the difficulties that marked the relationship of the Art Union with its artists were endemic to the artist-dealer relationship and were present from the very beginning, from the days of James Herring and his high-minded attempt to maintain a gallery for American art in New York City.

The six exhibitions that James Herring organized under the Apollo banner – the first in 1838 for his own Apollo Gallery, four in 1839 for the Apollo Association at the Apollo Gallery, and a last one in January/February 1840 at the Apollo Gallery for the Association – bear a closer look. Herring's choices of living artists and his interactions

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with them, as indicated in surviving correspondence, illuminate both the circumstances of contemporary American art and artist's life in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, and also the enduring legacy of James Herring to the American Art-Union. That legacy was to be personal and somewhat idiosyncratic in patronage decisions. Herring supported artists for a variety of reasons – they were friends or acquaintances; they were not New Yorkers, and therefore represented a wider geographical distribution and their work was fresh to New York audiences; they were respected elders with recognized names; and, presumably, their work had merit in his eyes.

These are criteria entirely reasonable for a gallery owner, and, indeed, still prevail in private galleries. When the Art-Union became a major force in the American art market it did so partly on the strength of rhetoric that cast it as a quasi-public institution. Its activities and decisions could no longer be justified on the basis of private preference; they were considered legitimate areas for public examination. In 1849 when the Art-Union purchased its largest number of works, distributing 460 prizes, it had selected these from over 1800 that were offered.[315] The numbers foretell the problem. As it prospered and became increasingly powerful, the Art-Union left in its wake a small army of rejected artists all over the country who believed they had cause to complain about favoritism and unfair practices.

Herring's Apollo Gallery Exhibition of 1838 provided the template for the five that came after. The 260 works of art that Herring assembled for the 1838 exhibit offered him

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[315] There is a useful table containing Art-Union purchase information in Baker, "Art-Union," 161.

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wide latitude to stamp the show with his own idiosyncratic tastes. Three artists contributed an aggregate of seventy-one of the 260 works, accounting for more than twenty-five per cent of the total. John Gadsby Chapman, the "universal genius" who had planned to join Herring in the Apollo venture, sent an astounding thirty-five paintings.[316] George Cooke (1793-1849), a stalwart of the American Academy from 1834 to 1836,[317] was represented by twenty-three pictures; while little-known Stewart (or Stuart) Watson (active 1834-1858) was represented by thirteen paintings. Five additional pictures were the work of a close associate of Cooke and Chapman, the veteran Washington, D.C. artist, Charles Bird King (1786-1862).

Cooke was a year older than Herring. He was an artist through sheer grit. A Maryland native who failed in the grocery and crockery trade before he turned to art, Cooke studied with King in Washington, D.C. and then went west and took up work as an itinerant portrait painter. By dint of constant traveling and hard work, he succeeded well enough to go to France and Italy where he remained from 1826 to 1830.[318] He returned home a better painter than when he left and resumed his travels, painting old master copies and European scenes for friends and patrons all over the country. Cooke exhibited in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Boston, Richmond, Virginia and New York City before finally

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[316] This description comes from James Herring. He used it in his account of the founding if the Apollo Gallery and the Apollo Association that he sent to Thomas S. Cummings for Cummings' history of the National Academy which Cummings reprinted verbatim. Cummings, *Annals*,148.

[317] Rebora, "Academy," 456.

[318] Dunlap, *History*, 2:346-7.

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settling in New Orleans. While he was living in New York in 1834 and 1835 he served as a Director of the American Academy alongside James Herring. From 1833 to 1838 he was an Associate Member of the National Academy, but showed only six pictures there (one in 1833; five in 1834). Cooke's affiliation with the Apollo Association did not survive Herring's departure. The Association chose two of his works for purchase and distribution, *Interior of the Ducal Palace at Florence* from the May 1839 exhibition and *Interior of the U.S. Senate Chamber* from the October 1839 exhibition.[319] Among the works that Cooke showed were two of which he was especially proud, his *Catiline's Conspiracy*, a copy of a work by Salvator Rosa that hung at the Pitti Palace in Florence (fig. 14) and *The Transfiguration* (fig. 15) Cooke's copy of Raphael's original in the Vatican in Rome. These were complicated figural works, virtuoso displays of draftsmanship and color that demonstrated what an American artist who went to Europe could accomplishment. Their prices, $450 and $600 respectively, reflect the artist's estimation of his achievement.[320]

John Gadsby Chapman was a native Virginian and a Mason who studied with

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[319] The Apollo Association paid Cooke handsomely – $125 for the *Ducal Palace* and $200 for the *Senate Chamber*. The latter was won by Herring in the 1839 drawing, while the former went to William Cullen Bryant. Cooke would be nearly obscure today were it not for a happy accident of fate that gave him an enthusiastic patron late in life. Daniel Pratt, of Prattsville, Alabama owned a New Orleans warehouse where he provided Cooke with a studio and gallery. Cooke also substantially filled the private gallery that Pratt attached to his home in Alabama. The artist is buried in the Pratt family plot in Alabama. See Gerdts, *America* 2:49, 69, 83-84, 100-101; and Donald D. Keyes, *George Cooke, 1793-1849* (Athens, Georgia: Georgia Museum of Art, 2002).

[320] The pictures were offered for sale in the exhibitions of January and May 1839. Presumably they did not find buyers.

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Charles Bird King and George Cooke.[321] He spent the years 1827 to 1831 in Italy, traveling and sketching with his old teacher and mentor, Cooke, and with Samuel F.B. Morse. As had Morse many years earlier, Chapman discovered upon returning to America that he could earn a living as a portraitist, but not as a history painter, the "higher" calling to which he aspired. Chapman drew the sketch of Montpelier, James Madison's Virginia plantation, that J. F. Prudhomme engraved to serve as the frontispiece for Herring and Longacre's *National Portrait Gallery* (fig. 16). Chapman's best known work today is also the source of his less-than stellar historical reputation, the 12 foot by 18 foot *Baptism of Pocahantas*, in the Rotunda of the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C (fig. 17).[322] Chapman moved to New York City in 1834 where he found success as a book illustrator. Between 1843 and 1846 he executed designs and drawings for Harper's *Illuminated Bible*, and also produced, beginning in 1843, his *American Drawing Book.* Always plagued by a frail constitution and money troubles, Chapman went to Rome for his health in 1848 and

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[321] For a brief biography of Chapman emphasizing his Masonic affiliation, see the website for the George Washington National Masonic Memorial, http://www.gwmemorial.org/Collections/TheMastersCarpet.htm (visited 5/9/01). The major source on Chapman remains William P. Campbell, *John Gadsby Chapman: Painter and Illustrator* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1962).

[322] After intensive lobbying Chapman was awarded the "southern" commission to paint a large historical canvas for the Capitol building in Washington, D.C. His *Baptism of Pocahantas*, the 12' by 18' painting in the Capitol Rotunda, executed between 1837 and 1840, remains a living reminder of the dangers inherent in substituting a geographic politically correct quota for merit in the award of public art commissions. (Although, in fact, there is no likelihood that the work of any American nineteenth-century history painter would have met a kind reception from twentieth century critics. Tastes have changed.) Chapman had a major nineteenth century career as a history painter and illustrator, but is now relatively obscure, remembered, when he is remembered at all, for being the unworthy "politically correct" choice for a plum federal commission.

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found it so congenial that he effectively expatriated, only returning to America in 1884 to live out his final years with his artist-sons.

Herring and Chapman crossed paths in 1835 when Chapman exhibited four works at the American Academy and twelve at the National Academy. In 1836 he exhibited sixteen pictures at the National Academy, and in 1837, he sent eleven. His thirty-five works at the Apollo in 1838 were supplemented by seven in the same year at the National Academy. This pace, combined with Chapman's Capitol commission and compounded by a bout of ill-health, was the reason he left New York before the Apollo Gallery opened. When Chapman returned to active participation in New York in 1843, he returned to the fold of the National Academy. [323] As with many other artists, however, he contributed work to both the Art-Union and the Academy. In 1844 the Art-Union distributed his *A Lazy Fisherman* (fig. 18). The Art-Union bought steadily from Chapman in every year omitting only 1846, 1849, and 1850 (the latter two years when the artist had just gone to Italy), in all purchasing eighteen of his works for distribution. The final three of these were purchased for 1851 and sold in the 1852 auction.

Consistent with his championing of Cooke and Chapman, Herring also included five pictures by Charles Bird King in the 1838 Apollo Gallery Exhibition.[324] King, the

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[323] Chapman was a New York art "insider" in a way that his friend, James Herring, never was. He was a member of the Sketch Club and is credited in Cummings's *Annals* for suggesting what became the Century Club, of which he was a Founder (198). Chapman was a Member of the Council and of the Committee of Arrangements at the NAD from 1844 to 1848. He served as Recording Secretary in 1845, and Corresponding Secretary in 1846, '47, and '48.

[324] For King see Andrew J. Cosentino, *The Paintings of Charles Bird King (1785-1862)* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1977).

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senior member of the Cooke-Chapman Washington, D.C. nexus, was a well established American artist who functioned as "artist-in-residence" to the parade of (mostly) portrait painters drawn to the capitol district.[325] He had painted two portraits that were engraved for *The National Portrait Gallery*.[326] Two of King's pictures were purchased by the Association and distributed in 1839. One of these, *The Grandfather's Hobby* (fig. 19), was a sentimental genre subject that King painted a number of times in his long career. Curiously, it was copied by King's friend, Thomas Sully, and exhibited at the same Apollo Exhibitions as King's works, available for sale at $500 while the Apollo paid King $150 for his original. King's picture was described in the Apollo Catalogue as having been "engraved several times in Europe and the United States." King also sent to the initial Apollo exhibition a self portrait (presumably not for sale) which may have been his view of himself as a dashing thirty-year-old, painted in 1815 (fig. 20).[327] King did not show

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[325] The descriptive phrase is Cosentino's and is used as a chapter subheading in his text. King was primarily a portraitist who lived in Washington, D.C. from 1819 until his death. He was a native of Newport, Rhode Island and maintained close ties to family there. Cosentino says that in Washington, King "was eminently successful both as an artist and as a social figure" (41). Gerdts says that King "became to Washington what Benjamin West had been to London," a preeminent artist and "host and doyen to visiting artists. . . ."William H. Gerdts, in *Art Across America: Two Centuries of Regional Painting* 1 (New York: Abbeville Press, 1990), 343. King, who studied with West from 1805 to 1812, was a good friend of Thomas Sully. He is less well-known today than might be expected because of a combination of personal reticence and a scarcity of located works exacerbate by the catastrophic loss of a group of his pictures in the Smithsonian Museum fire of 1865.

[326] King's subjects were Senator Josiah S. Johnston (1: 245-256) and William Pinckney (3:273-279), engraved by James Barton Longacre and Edward I. Wellmore, respectively.

[327] The only other located self portrait shows King as a elderly gentleman, painted 1856-58. There is a record of an unlocated miniature, possibly a self-portrait.

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either at the Apollo Association or the Art-Union after 1839.[328]

Stewart Watson was active between 1834 and 1860 when he is believed to have gone to Edinburgh, perhaps his native city. No one has added significantly to the information about Watson that was available to Dunlap:

> *Mr. Watson* is a gentleman who originally painted miniatures in Edinburgh, but has devoted his talents to oil pictures, with success. He has exhibited an historical picture at Clinton Hall, of uncommon merit. Mr. Watson came to this country by way of Canada, with a view of retiring as an agriculturist [329]

Watson contributed a versatile mix of landscapes, figure paintings, genre, history paintings, and copies of European masters to the Apollo Exhibitions. This mastery of a wide variety of genres further suggests that he was European-trained. In 1839 the Apollo Association purchased two of his pictures for distribution, paying $50 each for *The Girl pleading for her condemned lover before the Doge of Venice* and *The Cavalier's Adieu.* Watson was listed as an Associate Member of the NAD from 1837 to 1858 and an Honorary Member for two years thereafter. At the NAD he showed mostly portraits and seems (by the indication of ownership) to have enjoyed support among New York's eminent and well-to-do citizens, making a specialty of equine and canine studies.[330]

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[328] King did not choose to maintain a New York presence, although he was an "Honorary, Professional" member of the NAD. from 1827 until 1860. He only exhibited there twice, showing one portrait each in 1837 and 1838. Both were Indian subjects, a specialty of his, and both were owned by J. G. Chapman.

[329] Dunlap, *History*, 2:456.

[330] Watson's painting of *Mexican Dogs*, exhibited at the NAD. in 1835 was owned by Dr. Hosack. He exhibited a portrait of Mrs. Augustus Ludlow in 1835. A painting entitled *Portrait of "Old Rock,"* (presumably a beloved dog) exhibited in 1836 was owned by H. Ludlow, while two genre works that he exhibited in 1839, his last year at the N.A.D. were owned by H. H. Schieffelin. The Schieffelins, Ludlows, and Dr. Hosack

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Watson disappears from New York venues after 1839. When Herring hung Watson's work at the Apollo Gallery in 1838, he was already gone, described as "now in Europe." From 1843 to 1848 he lived in London where he showed at the Royal Academy and the British Institution. By 1858 Watson had gone to Edinburgh. Nothing is known of him thereafter.

Cooke, Chapman, Watson, and King each represent a type of artist given exhibition and sales opportunities, first by James Herring, and later by the Art-Union. Cooke, like Herring, was a self-made artist and a portraitist with minimal local exposure to instruction. Although he could have continued on a limner path, he deliberately sought a wider experience. The Art-Union always stood ready to aid artists with proven ability who nurtured ambitions for self-improvement. If they were regional artists, so much the better. Herring was acquainted with Cooke from their days at the American Academy, and personal connections never hurt. That Cooke had left New York and was living in Washington, D.C. by the time he exhibited at the Apollo Association recommended him all the more to an organization consciously seeking to become truly national.

John Chapman was an ambitious young man when he showed his thirty-five works at the Apollo Gallery. They advertised through their subject matter that he had gone to Europe and that he had come back to paint history. He was prolific, and his career appeared to be moving in an upward arc. It could be read as favoritism that Herring showed so much of Chapman's work, and later the Art-Union was commonly accused of playing favorites. Both Herring and the Art -Union understood the necessity of purchasing

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were all well known and wealthy patrons.

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(or showing) pictures in quantity, of becoming the substantial patron that an artist required to launch a career. One picture a year would neither keep the wolf from the door nor make a reputation. In the Apollo Gallery exhibition of 1838 Herring gave Chapman the equivalent of a one-man (though certainly not a solo) show. Later, the Art-Union picked artists it believed were worthy of support, bought their works in quantity, and deliberately nurtured their careers.

King was an old timer. He had studied with Benjamin West in London and was a close friend of Thomas Sully. His family in Newport was well-off and he had prospered in Washington, D.C. as a portraitist and an investor in real estate. His home and studio were the first port of call for artists visiting Washington. Herring, and the Art-Union after him, understood the importance of showing respect, of linking the institution's name to known artists, and of providing exposure and sales opportunities to the elders, so long as their painting skills remained intact.

Watson offered a fourth variation. The support that Herring provided in 1838 was presumably based on the assumption that Watson would return and be an American painter, all the better for his European sojourn. Despite a nativist political climate, the Art-Union, from beginning to end, was inclusive in its definition of American art.[331] Recognizing that American artists and the American art audience were enriched by the presence of a steady stream of trained European artists, some who came to stay and some who returned home, the Apollo Association welcomed work "executed by Artists in the

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[331] Herring, after all, was English-born himself, as was the highly esteemed "American" painter, Thomas Cole.

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United States, or by American artists abroad," the wording from *Article 6th* of the 1839 Apollo Association Constitution. The definition was essentially reiterated in Art. X. of the 1847 Art-Union Constitution: "By works of American Art are meant the Works of Artists resident in the United States, or American Artists abroad."[332] Just as Herring showed Watson's work at the Apollo, the Art-Union welcomed the wave of German immigrant artists who appeared in New York after 1848.[333] James Herring had no way of knowing in 1838 that Watson's trip to Europe would prove permanent. This willingness of Herring to exhibit works which conveyed the fruit of European training, combined with a conscious policy of patronage aimed at facilitating the plans of American artists desiring to go to

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[332] See respectively *Transactions . . . 1839,* 4 and *Transactions . . . 1847,* 11.

[333] Among the artists with identifiably German or Dutch names whose work was purchased by the Art-Union after 1848 were Charles Baum (1851), G. H. Bruckman (1849), G. H. Brueskner (or Brueskler) 1849-50, Theodor Creutznach (1850), Johann Culverhouse (Dutch, 1849-51), F. Dewchet (or Dewhert, Hungarian?, 1849-51), Carl Emil Doepler (1849-50), George Wilhelm Fasel (1850), Charles Gildemeister (an architect of the New York Crystal Palace, 1849-50), R. Grahl (1849), Marinus Hartung (Dutch, 1849-51), Guenther Hartwick (1849), J. Heilman (1852), Wilhelm Heine (1849-51), Franz Heinrich (1849-51), Joseph Helff (1850-51), B. Hess (1851), (Johann) Adolf Hoeffler (1850-51), W. Huntzinger (1851), E. Knecht (or Krecht, 1849, Robert Kohler (1849-50), Julius Hermann Kummer (1850-51), Henry Müller (1851), Charles Christian and Hugo Wilhelm Arthur Nahl (1849-51), Johannes Adam Simon Oertel (1850-51), Frederick Raab (1849), Martin Reisner (1849), Severin Roesen (1848-51), N.T. Rosenboom (Dutch, 1849), John F. Runge (1849, 1851), Fridolin Schlegel (1848, 1850), J. G. Schwartze (1849, 1852), Joseph Vollmering (1849-50), Edward Weber (1848), Paul Weber (1849-50), August Wenderoth (1849-51), John Wengler (1851), A. H. Wenzler (1849-50), and Ralph Zahner (1849-50). A recent source for this information, compiled from a variety locations, is Peter C. Merrill, *German Immigrant Artists in America* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 1997). Given that Andrew Warner was an active member of the German-American community (he led a German-American militia regiment), and that the Art-Union had close ties with Emmanuel Leutze in Düsseldorf, this remains an impressive list. Moreover, the Art-Union purchased multiple works from a number of these artists.

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Europe for further study, remained an enduring feature of the Art-Union. Herring showed paintings by Thomas Rossiter, John Casilear, Henry Peters Gray, and Emanuel Leutze, all young artists who enjoyed Apollo Association patronage that preceded and partly funded trips to Europe.[334] Later the Art-Union became more systematic in its support of American artists studying abroad, offering commissions for artists about to embark, and purchasing generously from artists in Europe (although typically, their addresses while in Europe were listed as "not given"). Among the artists who enjoyed substantial Art-Union patronage were Leutze, George Hall, Eastman Johnson, Jasper Cropsey, and Christopher Cranch [335] All of which is to say that the American Art-Union, that most loudly nationalist

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[334] In 1839 Herring described Gray as "now in Italy."

[335] The practice of the Art-Union to deliberately support American artists abroad by purchase of works sent back and/or by commissions arranged before departure is the reason that the Art-Union was so incensed at the promise by the International Art-Union in 1849 to provide an annual scholarship for an American artist to go to Europe to study "in the best schools" for two years. The Art-Union had been doing that, in effect, for years, and on a much larger scale, but had not trumpeted its actions. Baker, "Art-Union," 145. The practice is reflected both in the correspondence and the Committee of Management Minutes. On 1 March 1847, Jasper Cropsey wrote to the Art-Union describing his plan to go to Europe and requesting a commission. At the Committee of Management meeting of 3 March Cropsey was voted a commission "to paint for this institution two pictures at a cost of $150 each." Robert Fraser communicated the good news to Cropsey in a letter of 13 March, specifying "the subject and size of the pictures to be left to your own choice." That was generous, but not as generous as the commission voted to Leutze at the same meeting. The Philadelphia German-American painter resident in Düsseldorf was voted a $1,000 commission, "the communication thereof to be transmitted through Mr. A.M. Cozzens."Cozzens was a good friend and major patron of Leutze. The Art-Union has the historical reputation of having supported the nascent Hudson River School of painting, which found its muse in the American landscape. It is equally true, however, that the organization distributed many European landscape scenes, the bread and butter production of American artists traveling in the old country, as well as European landscapes and genre pictures painted by artists newly arrived in America. AAU-NYHS

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of art patronage organizations, was generous in its definition of American nationality in art and welcoming to pictures depicting European subjects or scenery.

A distinctive feature of the Apollo Exhibitions was the presence of a considerable group of Philadelphia artists. While this might at first have represented Herring's personal ties to the city, the Art-Union continued through its existence to patronize Philadelphia painters. They were a concentration of active first-rate artists who were largely excluded from the NAD because they were not New Yorkers. Thus, they represented an especially attractive group for Art-Union patronage. Herring had spent time in Philadelphia as a young artist, and he retained friends and acquaintances from the experience. These ties must have been renewed and extended by Herring's partnership through the 1830s with James B. Longacre.[336] In the Apollo shows Herring included a group of Philadelphia artists whose relationship with the institution did not survive his departure. Among these were three members of the Peale family, all of whom showed still lifes for sale in 1838 and 1839 – James Peale, Jr. (1789-1876) and his cousins, the already-deceased Raphael Peale (1774-1825), and the very much alive Rembrandt Peale (1778-1860). Herring knew Rembrandt Peale personally when Peale was a Director (1835) and then President (1836) of the American Academy.

Herring also gave gallery space to Robert Matthew Sully (1803-55) and Rosalie Kemble Sully (1818-1847) Thomas Sully's nephew and daughter respectively.[337] The

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[336] Longacre was active in Philadelphia artists' circles and, from 1844 to his death in 1869, served as Chief Engraver of the United States Mint in Philadelphia.

[337] I am including Robert Matthew Sully in a discussion of Philadelphia connections, even though he lived in Richmond, Virginia. His claim on James Herring's

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Apollo Association purchased R. M. Sully's *Portrait of an Indian Girl* for its 1839 distribution. Sully, who lived in Richmond, Virginia, was strapped for cash. Of another of his works, *The Truant Boy*, which he offered for sale with an asking price of $60 in 1839, he wrote "pray remit whatever you can get for it. I have no wish to see it again. Everything here is dull, stale, flat and unprofitable."[338] Thomas Sully wrote to James Herring on behalf of his daughter in December 1839, "Let the five Landscapes painted by my daughter go at any price -- She says she is tired of owning them." In that same letter Sully observed that "I have not seen during thirty years of my residence here a worse state of entanglement in money affairs." He commiserated with Herring on the continuing financial travail of the Apollo Association: "I am – by long experience – taught not to be sanguine in my expectations of success in any scheme for the benefit of the arts, but for your failure in the present instance, I am truly sorry."[339] Sully himself, whose history of participation in New York venues was sporadic, exhibited works for sale at the Apollo from 1838 through 1841, but not thereafter.[340]

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affections, presumably, was mediated through his uncle, Thomas, of Philadelphia.

[338] R.M. Sully to Apollo Association, letter of 10 January 1840 from Richmond, Virginia. AAU-NYHS

[339] Thomas Sully to James Herring, 3 December 1839. AAU-NYHS

[340] Sully was a prolific painter, but primarily a portraitist. He was in England in 1837-1838 with a commission to paint Queen Victoria. His letter to Herring suggests a personal acquaintance. Herring's departure from the venture, Sully's own commitments in Philadelphia, and the subsequent policy of the Art-Union against showing portraits may have all contributed to Sully's absence from further participation. Sully, however, remained by choice a Philadelphia painter. In the Art-Union period he showed only four works at the National Academy of Design (two owned by A.M. Cozzens), six pictures at the Boston Athenaeum, and more than 100 paintings at the Pennsylvania Academy and

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One last Philadelphia artist whom Herring heavily patronized, hanging twelve of his works in 1838 and 1839, was Robert Street (1796-1865). The Apollo Association purchased and distributed Street's *Child with flower, "Oh, they are all upset"* in 1839. On 4 December 1839 Street addressed a letter to Herring in New York in response to a Herring letter of the previous day in which Herring must have described the continuing financial distress in New York. Street commented that:

> The picture you have so vividly drawn is one to be deplored. We are in the same dilemma in this City and I can address you from actual observations and direct intercourse with the largest houses here that they live on the verge of a volcanic crater . . . . A particular friend of mine informed me early yesterday that he had four thousand dollars borrowed money to return that day and not one dollar as yet toward it . . . .

The letter ended with the artist saying "My reliance is on God, and his providence, to whom I commend you and yours." A subsequent letter of 29 December went on in the same vein, bringing the matter home:

> Whatever the Committee may do for me will be thankfully received. My family is large and expenses heavy – besides I have an aged mother, brother and sister who are poor to assist. What I do I do cheerfully and if by sending these pictures to the Apollo I have aided the Arts and in any way the interests of the Institution, I have my reward. I am willing to take $150 for the Flower Girl of the Committee that "One good turn deserves another" shall be my future care.[341]

Street went on to describe how his friends were urging him to hold an exhibit of his works in Philadelphia. He solicited Herring's advice on this, saying "I will risque nothing." He did indeed show two hundred of his works in 1840 at the Artists' Fund Hall in

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the Artists' Fund Society.

[341] Both of these letters Reel 8, AAU-NYHS.

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Philadelphia.[342] Despite his efforts, Street remained a portraitist. The same was largely true for George Cooke. In purchasing Street's genre picture for his ample asking price, one hundred and fifty dollars, Herring and the Apollo Association assumed for themselves the mantle of Street's angel of Providence. That was the end, however of Street's connection with the Art-Union. While not the first and certainly not the last artist in duress to appeal to this attractively-funded New York group, few begging artists met with such largesse.[343]

In 1838 James Herring, explaining the impetus behind the Apollo Gallery, expressed in *Family Magazine* his concern for the "vast amount of artist talent not known or appreciated, because it had no means of expansion."[344] Herring specifically alluded to the problem that European-trained American artists experienced in finding markets for their considerable skills, no doubt thinking about Chapman and Cooke. But his experience traveling for the National Portrait Gallery project had also brought to his attention the vast potential of young, unformed and untrained artistic talents living outside the major cities. The Apollo was, from the beginning, welcoming to the work of the promising beginner, and offered a New York sales venue to young artists. Herring showed the work of the

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[342] This information is contained in the entry for Street in George C. Groce and David H. Wallace, *The New-York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America 1564-1860* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1957) and also in the Thieme-Becker entry for Street. Ulrich Thieme und Felix Becker, *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann, 1907-1950).

[343] John Rubens Smith's groveling appeal for patronage addressed to the Art-Union in 1846 fell on deaf ears, the result perhaps of his earlier irascibility. John Rubens Smith letter of 25 September 1846. AAU-NYHS

[344] As quoted in Baker, "Art-Union," 97.

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German-American Philadelphian, Emanuel Gotlieb Leutze (1816-1868), at his Apollo Gallery show, beginning a relationship with the institution that was maintained after Herring's departure by Abraham Cozzens and lasted through the life of the Art-Union.[345] Herring showed Leutze's *Portrait of the Hon. Hugh L. White, U.S. Senator from Tennessee* commissioned for Volume IV of the *National Portrait Gallery* and owned by J. B. Longacre (fig. 21), as well as *Cupid with a Dove* which the Apollo Association purchased from the artist in the Spring of 1839 and distributed among its first group of prizes[346] Leutze was a "find." He had already made his mark in Philadelphia, as "the most promising young Artist" at the 1837 Artists' Fund Annual Exhibition, but was unknown in New York.[347] He didn't show at the National Academy until 1843.

Other young artists showed both at the Apollo and at the National Academy. Herring exhibited a picture by Charles Deas (1818-1867) in 1839. The Apollo Association purchased a Deas canvas, *Fishermen making a haul*, from the September 1840 exhibition. Though they paid Deas a modest forty dollars, this was one of only eight works distributed in that gloomy year. Deas also showed at the National Academy, where he became an Associate Member in 1840. In 1839 Herring hung *View from West Point, looking towards Newburg*, a work for sale by a young West Point army officer, Seth Eastman (1808-1875).

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[345] Cozzens was a major patron of Leutze and a friend. The artist named his first-born son Eugene Henry Cozzens Leutze (1847-1931) in honor of the New York supporter.

[346] Leutze was paid $50 for this work, $10 less than his $60 asking price.

[347] As quoted in Ellen Wood Ramsay, "The Artists' Fund Society of Philadelphia 1835-45" (M.A. diss., University of Iowa, 1990), 55. I am indebted to Zachary Ross for locating this source.

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Eastman had also shown at the National Academy, but never became more than an "Honorary Member, Amateur," there, and only exhibited at the NAD once after 1840. In contrast, the Art-Union went on to become a major patron of Eastman's early career.[348] Thomas Pritchard Rossiter (1818-1871) was a Connecticut native living in Troy, New York in 1839 when Herring showed two of his paintings from literary topics. He had already showed at the National Academy and was well on his way to a New York reputation. On the eve of his trip to Europe in 1840, Rossiter was represented by six works in the last Herring show at the Apollo, as well as five works at the National Academy.[349] Rossiter was elected an Associate Member of the Academy in 1841, while he was in Europe John Ridner kept up Apollo support for Rossiter after Herring's departure, hanging three works which the artist sent from Europe available for sale in the October 1841 exhibit. One of these, exhibited as *The Artists' Conversazione, containing Portraits of all the American Artists at Paris, in March* 1841 (fig. 22) (now called *A Studio Reception, Paris 1841*, Albany Institute of History and Art) documents the presence in Paris of Rossiter, John Frederick Kensett (1816-1872), Asher B. Durand, Daniel Huntington (1816-1906), John William Casilear (1811-1893), and George Peter Alexander Healy (1813-1894), all artists who were already enjoying the support of the Apollo

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[348] Two of the works Eastman showed at the N.A.D. in 1838 were owned by W.B. Cozzens, father of Abraham Cozzens.

[349] He traveled to Europe with Asher Durand, John Kensett, John Casilear, and while there shared a studio in Rome and traveled with Thomas Cole. Rossiter remained in Europe until 1846.

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Association.[350]

James Herring's willingness to show the work of young artists from out of New York City remained a defining feature of the American Art-Union. The vast correspondence testifies in part to the fact that the Art-Union remained a beacon to young, hopeful would-be artists all over America. Sometimes they sent works which were respectfully considered and occasionally purchased. Often they wrote simply seeking advice as to how to go about becoming an artist. These queries were answered with good wishes, good sense, and a forbearing and kind patience by a succession of Corresponding Secretaries. Andrew Warner, especially, who wrote thousands of letters during his tenure from 1848 through 1851 always made the time to respond thoughtfully to would-be artists.

James Herring cast a wide net in his search for American artists and did not shy away from those who might prove prickly in his pursuit of "good" art and "recognizable" names to ornament his shows. The correspondence between Herring and Thomas Doughty offers a case in point.[351] Doughty wrote to Herring from Newburgh on 10 December 1839,

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[350] For the Rossiter picture, see Thomas B. Brumbaugh, "A Venice Letter from Thomas P. Rossiter to John F. Kensett,"*The American Art Journal* 5, no. 1 (May 1973): 74-78; and Tammis K. Groft and Mary Alice Mackay, *Albany Institute of History and Art* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1998), cat. no. 24. The Apollo Association had hung some of John Kensett's engravings in 1840. Healy, who enjoyed a career as a successful portraitist exhibited his self-portraits at the Apollo in 1838 and 1839 as well as a portrait of the artist George Harvey in 1840.

[351] The primary source for Doughty remains Frank Goodyear, *Thomas Doughty, 1793-1836: An American Pioneer in Landscape Painting* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1973). There is an unpublished biographical essay by Howard Doughty, the artist's great-grandnephew, at the New-York Historical Society. By the time that James Herring founded the Apollo Gallery in 1838, Doughty was already a veteran American landscape painters, just returned from a two year sojourn in England. A member of the Pennsylvania Academy since 1824, he had been named an Honorary

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revealing a curmudgeonly personality that surfaced periodically in his extensive dealings with the organization. The artist declined Herring's proposal to allow his five pictures for sale in the October 1839 show tour the South and West as Herring had apparently proposed. Doughty professed himself "indifferent" as to whether any of them sold, asserting he could get "very near" his price elsewhere. Herring must have described the Apollo Association idea to Doughty, as he had to Sully, but with quite a different response. "As to the end and aims of the association, I have but a small opinion of it, and after the present year has expired you will please erase my name from the list of

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Member of the National Academy of Design in 1827, shortly after its founding (honorary, because he did not live in New York City). Doughty was a Philadelphia native who moved to Boston in 1832 where he remained until he went to England in 1837. The years of Doughty's relationship with the Apollo Association and then the Art-Union marked a period of artistic decline and failing health. Although he was based in New York, Doughty moved around in restless fashion, seeking fresh scenery to paint and fresh venues in which to sell his works. Returning from England in 1838, Doughty settled briefly in New York City, before moving in 1839 to Newburgh, New York, fifteen miles upstream on the Hudson River. By 1841 he was back in New York where he remained until his second trip to England in 1845-46. He returned again to New York, but in 1852 set out to western New York State on the Susquehanna River, where he stayed until 1854. The final two years of his life were spent in New York. Between 1838 and 1851 Doughty showed or sold a substantial number of works, in excess of eighty, to the Apollo Association and the Art-Union. He was one of James Herrings original artists, represented by thirteen works (all available for sale) in Herring's first exhibition at the Apollo Gallery in 1838. In the early years, when the Apollo customarily exhibited works that were already in private collections, three exhibited works were owned by Apollo "insiders" (1841 March Exhibition, *Landscape, Early Winter* no. 111 owned by David Austen, relation of John Austen and no. 133 *Landscape* owned by Committee of Management member A[ugustus] Greele, and October Exhibition 1841, *Landscape*, owned by Charles Toppan of Philadelphia, one of the three original Honorary Secretaries). Doughty's correspondence with the organization was substantial and offers insight both into the circumstances of a respected, but aging artist and the problem for the organization of dealing with an established figure, a well-known name who was also widely perceived as past his prime. All correspondence quoted is found in AAU-NYHS.

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associates." Doughty told Herring that he planned to go to Albany with a group of his pictures including any that did not sell at the end of the present exhibition, "and make a raffle with them." He ended with a feeble olive branch, observing to Herring that "This decision is not made, however, from any ill-feeling towards yourself, I do assure you. I think that I can do better with them at Albany."

Over the course of a long correspondence Doughty's tone varied considerably, depending on what he wanted. On February 16, 1840, only two short months later, the artist was Herring's and the Association's best friend and conspirator. He wrote to offer two pictures for the next Apollo Exhibition and assured Herring that he would "of course [all underlines original] give the Association preference." In this letter Doughty took delight in stoking the already present rivalry between the Apollo and the National Academy, assuring Herring that "if the Association can weather the present times, it will put the other down completely, and 'no mistake.'" He professed himself eager to hear how the Association was doing, and promised to visit soon, ending with the observation "do not think the country will answer – shall consequently try city life again."[352] This was a far cry, indeed, from his tone of December. While the organization bought many pictures from Doughty, he was, as the tone in these early letters attest, a difficult man, and, in the end, an angry and disappointed artist. The Art-Union, no less than the rest of the world ultimately failed him.

On December 9, 1840 Doughty addressed Herring, who was still the

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[352] Doughty was perpetually dissatisfied. He moved around from place to place looking for the proverbial (and possibly literal) greener pastures and better markets.

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Corresponding Secretary, in a lengthy discussion of the price the Association had offered for a work of his. Doughty's discussion is worth quoting at some length because it is a good statement of an issue which dogged the Art-Union until the end of its days. Doughty began by expressing surprise that "the gentlemen composing your committee would so far wound the feelings of an artist as to offer him a price so far below the value of his production."

> I had "laid the flattering unction to my Soul" that your committee, as professing to be gentlemen of taste, would scarcely offer me a smaller sum than the one I placed upon the picture as my lowest price – and . . . , as a Member of that Association, I must enter my solemn protest against such proceedings that will prove ruinous to the interests of the Institution whatever Gentlemen may think to the contrary. Your Committee may place in extenuation of such conduct the extreme hardness of the Times. But will liberal minded men allow the validity of such a plea? No Sir, they will not. If the Times are hard, do not add to their severity by permitting the works of your Artists to be sacrificed for little more than one half of their value!!! Had Your Committee passed my picture by and declined purchasing it, I should not have uttered a word of Complaint. Indeed I should have possessed no right to do so, as your Committee have done me the honor already to purchase one of my pictures -- the stand that I now take, Sir, is based upon broader principles, than those which involve mere personal feeling. I wish to see the Arts held in their due estimation. I wish to see the Artist getting what might be considered a fair price for his production, nothing more. In regard to the price which the Committee have offered . . . I must beg leave to decline. At the same time I am not insensible to the honor which they have conferred by selecting one of my pictures, and regret that I cannot discharge the obligation to their entire satisfaction, but I owe a higher duty to my family. That duty I cannot discharge if I am obliged to sacrifice my best works.

Discounting Doughty's disgruntlement, the issues he raised were compelling and cogent. Firstly, haggling over the price of a picture was not the same as negotiating over a bolt of cloth or a carton of crockery. The price offered for a picture was taken by the artist as a reflection of the estimate of his or her personal worth. Secondly, Doughty was disingenuous in saying that he would not have complained over an outright rejection.

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Artists who did not complain about rejections simply nursed wounds too deep and personal to air. Third, the issue of fair price would recur over and over again. Artists continually sought adequate recompense for materials, expenses and labor, elements of a work that did not necessarily figure in the determination by patrons of a fair market price.[353] Fourth, even in the middle of a strong censure, Doughty stopped, to assure his listeners of his profound respect for their organization, unwilling to bite all of the hand that fed him. Fifth, Doughty, as would many after him, reminded the committee of his responsibility to his family, a personal note touching on sacred territory. Sixth, and last, Doughty made a point of telling the Association that the work he had sent was not just what he happened to have laying around his studio, but a selection of his "best work."

The Apollo and the Art-Union encouraged artists to send the works that represented their higher aspirations and best efforts. It particularly encouraged portraitists to extend themselves into genre and history painting. For many artists, as it had for Samuel Morse, portraiture represented the only way to make a living, despite aspirations to more ambitious artistic callings. In 1843 Thomas Mickell Burnham (1818-1866), a Boston painter, wrote plaintively to the Apollo, "I am sorry that it is not in my power to paint compositions altogether, but portrait painting [underlines original] seems to be my doom."[354] This made the actions of the Committee, when they were perceived as ungenerous or rejecting, even harder to bear.

Doughty concluded his letter by offering two smaller pictures for $200 "in order,"

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[353] This issue was spectacularly explored in the Whistler v. Ruskin trial of 1878.

[354] Burnham to Apollo Association, 1843. Reel 8 AAU-NYHS.

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he wrote, "to be accommodating." Though this was hardly an accommodating letter, it was respectful, a great deal more so than were other letters that the Committee would see in the future from similarly aggrieved artists. This is the first of very many such letters from artists and indicates an early departure from Herring's initial intention to sell works at the artist's own asking price. On 20 January 1843 Doughty wrote a letter showing just how far he had been converted to the wisdom of the idea of an Art Union. Living at the time in Boston, in search of new markets for his work, he asked for copies of the Constitution and By-Laws of the Apollo Association, as well as proceedings and records of distribution of pictures. "I want to make an effort to get up a 'New England Art Union" in Boston – this shall be done sooner or later – or the fault shall not be mine."[355] Doughty's tone was admiring here, not hostile or threatening. He promised to send a picture and inquired if there would be an exhibition.

Prosper Wetmore took up the relationship with Doughty after James Herring departed, and between 1840 and 1852 the organization purchased over fifty works from the artist, some at substantial prices. When the purchases fell off in 1851, however, Doughty twice attacked the Art-Union in vitriolic letters to the *New York Herald*, which James Bennett no doubt took great delight in sharing with his readers.[356] For Doughty, the seventeen purchases of 1850 no longer signified. He had been ill; he remained the

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[355] It was done later, and not by Doughty. For a discussion of the circumstances leading up to the founding of the New England Art-Union in 1850 see Leah Lipton, "The Boston Artists' Association," *The American Art Journal* 15 no. 4 (Autumn 1983): 45-57.

[356] Doughty's letters to the editor appeared in the *Herald* on 27 November 1851, p. 2 and on January 6, 1852, p. 2.

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somewhat shaky support of "a family dependent on my exertions for their bread;" and, in 1851 the Art-Union had purchased only two pictures from him.

Despite Doughty's bitter assertion that he had been cast aside "so that some younger aspirants can rise on my ruin," the Art-Union often stood by old friends. In 1845 the Committee of Management voted Henry Inman a $250 commission "to paint a Landscape or a picture of design for this Institution . . . to be paid for on receipt of the picture." Unfortunately ill health prevented Inman from carrying out the commission. The artist died in New York on 17 January 1846. The Committee of Management convened a special meeting on 26 January 1846 to mourn Inman's passing, to express condolences to the family, and to extend the free "use of the gallery" "for an exhibition of pictures for the benefit of the family of the deceased." The exhibition, which represented a joint effort by the Art-Union and artists of the NAD, opened on 10 February 1846 and was a financial success.[357] As James Herring had been respectful of Charles Bird King and loyal to George Cooke, the Art-Union rallied to the support of Henry Inman.

Doughty was not the only "difficult" artist among James Herring's connections. Joshua Shaw (1777-1861), an Englishman like Herring, was an accomplished Philadelphia-based painter who specialized in landscapes and seascapes. He was a divisive

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[357] Inman had been in England since June 1844. By the beginning of 1845 he was in need of funds, doubtless prompting the Management Committee's offer of a commission. The artist's health, which had briefly improved, was again failing. Inman arrived back in America in April 1845 and passed away on 17 January 1846. Management Committee Minutes, 10 February 1845, 26 January 1846, Reel 1 AAU-NYHS. For the most complete discussion of Inman see William H. Gerdts and Carrie Rebora, *The Art of Henry Inman* (Washington City: The National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 1987).

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force in the Philadelphia artist community, and argued bitterly with John Neagle.[358] An "Honorary Member" of the National Academy since 1828, Shaw showed only a limited number of pictures at the NAD, and took eager advantage of the opportunity to exhibit works at the Apollo Gallery and Apollo Association, and later to sell works to the Art-Union. He showed a total of twenty-six pictures there from 1838 to 1848, fifteen of which were purchased for distribution. But Shaw was not an easy man to deal with, as his letter of April 10, 1839 clearly indicated. Happily for Herring, the Philadelphia artist assumed that Herring was a friend in a generally hostile and dangerous world. Shaw revealed his pain at "the hard hit" in the New York press "of my picture sold by you of the wreck. This is so hard it appears to be the work of some enemy of mine." Shaw asserted that he had no problem with "fair criticism," but wrote that he would "sooner keep . . . pictures shut up in the house than expose them to be so treated." Doubtless reflecting his struggle with Neagle, he went on to rail against "pretended friends." Even if Shaw was paranoid and hyper-sensitive, he correctly understood the profound psychological effect of adverse criticism on the attempted sale of a work. Of a picture which he had kept out of sight for many years, he wrote: "Had the public been allowed to see the picture while these severe remarks were looking them in the face, I should never have sold the picture." Shaw understood, as well, the significant potential benefit of flattering press notice. "It is always well to get the start if possible which one or two friendly notices will always secure." This

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[358] See Ramsay, *op. cit.* 57 and following for an extended discussion of Philadelphia artist's politics. More accessible is Robert W. Torchia, *John Neagle, Philadelphia Portrait Painter* (Philadelphia: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1989), esp. 62-68.

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letter, early in the history of the endeavor, illustrates the difficulties the Art-Union elicited by rejecting so many submitted works. In order to maintain its credibility with the public, and attempt to urge artists on to "better" work, the Art-Union needed to be critical. This need always had to be weighed against the tender egos, lurking paranoia, sensitivities, and real needs of American artists, who, as a group, had much about which to be insecure.

Herring's relations with some artists were disrupted by administrative problems. On 7 November 1840 Joseph Ord (1805-1865) wrote from Philadelphia inquiring after two pictures, both copies, one after Murillo, another after Greuze, that he had sent for sale and exhibition in 1838. They had been exhibited in 1838 and 1839 and since then the artist had heard nothing, nor had the pictures been returned. Ord had initially dealt with Herring, whom he believed was the irresponsible party, but now threatened a lawsuit against the Association if the pictures were not returned. Ord wrote that "I cannot help but express surprise" that "you stated that the Apollo Association 'never in fact had an Exhibition of its own until January last.'"[359] Ord went on to ask, reasonably enough, if Herring was not acting for the Association in 1839, why had it paid him? He concluded that, as the Association was unincorporated, he would hold any individual acting for the organization liable for the value of his missing pictures. Despite the heated tone of the exchange, a New York venue was a New York venue, and out-of-town still-life painters were not offered pride-of-place at the NAD. Ord exhibited at the Academy only once during the entire course of his career, three still lifes and a figural work in 1835. Thus,

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[359] Joseph Ord to John Ridner, 15 November 1840, in which Ord quotes directly from Ridner's letter of the ninth (which is not included in the Art-Union Records). .

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with good will and good reason on both sides, and with Herring gone, the issue must have been resolved amicably enough, because Ord sent two *Still Lifes* for sale in 1841 and had *Fruit Pieces* distributed by the Art-Union from 1844 through 1848. Herring was aware of his failing with regard to Ord. He complained that he had not had time to attend to "Ord's & the other pictures," said the office clerk knew about them and asked Ridner to look after the business.[360]

John Peter Frankenstein (1817-1881) had an even stranger tale to relate in his letter of 23 May 1841. The eldest of the Frankenstein brothers, he had exhibited two busts, one of Willis Gaylord Clark, and one of a young boy, at the Apollo in 1839 and 1840.[361] As of the writing of the letter, these had not been returned. Frankenstein reported that he had seen the bust of the boy "at the music rooms of Mr. Ives. . . at the Stuyvesant Instititute."[362] Because he had multiple copies of the Clark, he was not concerned, but desired the boy back, as "it is the original from the live model" and moreover, "it is a likeness of a boy in whom I feel a keen interest." The letter also asked the Association to send his picture, *Marino Faliero*, which had been for sale, to Lewis Gaylord Clark, but the frame back to him in Philadelphia "as it does not belong to me." Framing issues comprise a leitmotif that

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[360] James Herring in Richmond, to John Ridner, 27 August 1840. Reel 8. AAU-NYHS.

[361] Clark was a prominent Philadelphia journalist and the twin brother of the long-time editor of *The Knickerbocker*, Lewis Gaylord Clark. He died of consumption in 1841, but not before becoming a New York literary celebrity for his column's written for his brother's journal, signed with the non de plume"Ollapod." See Miller, *Raven*, 12, 13, 112, 324.

[362] Letter of Frankenstein to John Ridner, 23 May 1841. AAU-NYHS.

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ran through the course of the correspondence. The Art-Union was particular about the frames of the work it exhibited. Frames, however, were expensive, and often hard to come by outside of major cities. Artists who sent work on approval to the Art-Union could not afford the financial risk of framing pictures that might be returned to them. It is not so surprising, then, that Frankenstein would have sent a work in a loaned frame.[363] Unlike Ord, Frankenstein did not blaming the Association for the strange peregrinations of his sculptures. He asked politely that someone "kindly attend to this matter provided it comes within your sphere, or gaining the attention of those whose duty it is or was, to the subject, I shall feel myself your debtor."

To cite one more instance, on 4 January 1840 James Earle, an engraver, artist's agent and close associate of Thomas Sully, wrote to John Ridner. complaining bitterly about Herring's failure to return to Philadelphia two landscapes by Thomas Birch and a Niagara Falls view by Gustavus Grünewald. The pictures had remained in New York for a long period of time without any notice of their having been purchased or refused.[364] This was an early problem that became a chronic problem, sometimes due to office inefficiency, sometimes because of delays caused by the later committee purchasing

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[363] The major discussion of framing in the correspondence centers around the framing of Art-Union engravings. Robert Fraser was a professional framemaker who conducted his private business out of the Art-Union offices at the same time as he served as Corresponding Secretary from 1845 through 1847. He offered his services to members and would then arrange to have their engravings shipped framed from New York. Ultimately this developed into enough of an obvious conflict of interest to contribute to Fraser's departure from the organization. It also raised the possibility that artists who sent their works unframed to New York and paid for Fraser to frame them might somehow enjoy preferential status in purchasing decisions.

[364] James Earle to John Ridner, 4 January 1840. AAU-NYHS.

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system, sometimes because of a lack of available funds to commit to purchases. The Art-Union, for all its rhetoric about being run on a business model, would not have satisfied a management specialist. Delays in decision-making, especially if works were ultimately rejected, appeared to the artists to result in lost opportunities for sales. After all, if a work sat in New York and was not ultimately acquired, it could not, at the same time, be offered to other patrons. Additionally, each time there was a personnel change in the Gallery and with the arrival of each new Corresponding Secretary, the correspondence of the next few months echoed with apologies for matters that had not been properly attended to. All of this suggests that James Herring's registrarial talents fell far short of realizing his ambitious vision of a nationwide constituency of artists.

With regard to the artists whose works James Herring hung in his Apollo Exhibitions, the point is neither to indict Herring's taste nor to praise it, but to understand a constant, begun by Herring, but following through the entire life of the Art-Union. Discounting the copies, the portraits, the borrowed European works and the efforts of amateurs that filled the walls in the early Apollo exhibitions, for every artist whose work was shown who is moderately or highly regarded today, there were more who are now disregarded, obscure, or completely unknown.

The Apollo Association and the Art-Union, by buying and distributing the work of a group of young American landscape painters who became the so-called second generation of the Hudson River School, aided in the creation of the first genuinely American school of art. As we have seen, it supported Casilear, Kensett, and Rossiter early in their careers. It later supported Sanford Gifford (1823-1880), Fitzhugh Lane (1804-

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1865), and George Inness (1825-1894). That has made it seem prescient. It also generously purchased work from Thomas Hewes Hinckley (1813-1896) and De Witt Clinton Boutelle (1820-1884), two artists whose work is considerably less valued today. Landscapes were an attractive option for the Art-Union because they were generally well-received by the public and, importantly, inexpensive to purchase. They were easier to paint than figural studies and their production required far less professional training than was necessary for the making of a history painter. Similarly, the Art-Union has been congratulated for encouraging the painting of American genre subjects. It purchased works from William Sidney Mount, Francis Edmonds, George Caleb Bingham, Charles Deas and Richard Caton Woodville. It also continued to purchase quantities of canvases depicting the sentimental genre represented by King's *Grandfather's Hobby*, works that today we consider nineteenth-century kitsch. The pressure on the managers to purchase sufficient pictures every year, within their budget and irrespective of the quality of the supply meant that as critics claimed, many unworthy pictures were selected. It also meant that the Art-Union remained open to promising beginners, like Emanuel Leutze. Though the managers strove, in their selections, to satisfy a variety of tastes, one problem with the lottery mechanism was that it provided no way to match the object with the winner.

The strains with artists that surfaced in James Herring's early correspondence reflected real issues. They were doubtless exacerbated by the personalities involved, but they were not generated by stupidity, venality, excessive irresponsibility or ill-will. Herring's vision was larger than his capacity for execution. The kinds of problems he encountered with artists had also to do with the vagaries of communication and transport

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as well as artistic egos and the occasionally desperate need for all involved to earn a living in hard economic times. As the Art-Union continued to wend its way through the 1840s, it dealt repeatedly with all of these issues, experimenting as it went to formulate policies based on ad hoc circumstances. Sometimes its efforts were successful; sometimes not. Even as the organization moved from the personal (James Herring) to the corporate (purchase decisions made by committee), individual preferences continued to play a role. Managers could and did strongly recommend artists or pictures. In some instances there was confusion as to whether works were commissioned for the Art-Union or for a particular manager/collector who visited an artists' studio. It is remarkable that Herring, as he had assembled a varied group of managers for the first year of the Apollo Association, also hung the work of a wide variety of artists in his Apollo exhibitions. That eclecticism continued through the period when the Art-Union purchased works behind the anonymity of a committee.

In sum, Art-Union practice with regard to its relations with artists varied, but was not profoundly different from what James Herring began in his role as curator at the Apollo Gallery. As will be examined in the next chapter, Herring's early experiences with the structure of the organization also raised issues, exposed problems, and laid down directions that reflected underlying realities through the brief. history of Art-Union.

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CHAPTER 7

A VISION CODIFIED: DEFINING STRUCTURES, ENDEMIC PROBLEMS, ENDURING ATTITUDES

When James Herring initiated his Apollo Gallery in 1838 he was an artist helping other artists. By the time he ended his relationship with the Apollo Association in 1841 he was an organizer attempting to devise a national system for art patronage based in New York City and supported by semi-autonomous local centers throughout the nation. Our ability to shine a light on some of the issues and strains that Herring and the Apollo Association faced in its early years is greatly aided by the fact that in Summer 1840 James Herring began to travel for the Apollo Association. While on the road, he kept in touch with New York in a series of letters in which he revealed his vision for the institution and vented his concerns and frustrations. Herring floated short-term strategies and long-term proposals in the letters and in conversations during intervals in New York. These were expressed in the context of what appears to have been a personal struggle between Herring and his successor, John Ridner, as each man sought to blame the other for the Association's lackluster performance of 1840.

The correspondence not only sheds light on the factors that resulted in James Herring's departure from the Apollo Association at the end of 1841, but also illuminates issues which appeared early and dogged the organization even in its most successful days. Insofar as the concerns identified in this correspondence were raised, not by malevolent outsiders, but by the very men who shaped the institution, it is all the more evidence that they reflected problems endemic to the structure itself.

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The correspondence is particularly valuable in that it was not subject to the self-censorship that characterized the official minutes. It therefore gives insight into the rare occasions when the minutes of Committee meetings indicate disagreement among the managers. Some of the problems were particular to the shape and purpose of the institution. The challenges of recruiting subscribers and honorary secretaries; the problems involved in dealing with artists to find appropriate pictures at suitable prices both to exhibit and to purchase; and the difficulty in choosing the "right" themes for engraving were early and ever present concerns. Other problems would have faced any initiative attempting to establish itself nationwide, though New York was already, even at this early period, a magnet both for admiration and residual resentment. Apart from the hornet's nest of inter-city and sectional rivalries, there was the inadequacy of the postal service and shipping capacities; the shortage of adequate roads; the certainty o f bad weather; and the lack of a universally accepted national currency. All of these issues appear in various guises in the correspondence. They were further complicated by the nature of interpersonal relations among the managers, who were participants in a coalition called into being by shared interests and not members of a pre-existing cohesive group seamlessly united for one purpose.

John Ridner must have been angry indeed when he wrote a letter to the Committee of Management on 19 December 1840, knowing that to commit his argument to paper would render it a permanent part of the official record, but also aware that it would place on the record his version of the course of events in precisely the language he wished:

> As several of you have at different times expressed your disappointment at

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> the result of my efforts in obtaining subscribers to the Apollo Association during the time for which my services were engaged as superintendent, and the Corresponding Secretary having taken occasion in several instances to intimate, if not openly avow, that I had not made sufficient exertions to raise the number, to the standard of last year, and that the same number could have been realized with proper exertions . . . . I feel that in justice to my own feelings as well as to the association to which my services have been devoted some reply is due from me, . . and I trust I shall be excused for trespassing upon your time for a few minutes while I lay before you a few facts and my opinion of the cause of the ill success in obtaining subscribers for the present year.

He went on to recapitulate the fact, without mentioning Herring's name, that in the course of the early winter exhibition of 1840, there had been little attempt to contact and re-register local subscribers, with the result that "very few collections had been made except such as were attended to by the Committee." After Herring's arrangement with the Association lapsed on the first of May, it appeared even to those who might have subscribed "that the Institution had virtually ceased to exist." The organization had only just received its State Charter and "the committee having been so unexpectedly thrown upon their own responsibility . . . were at a loss to know what course to pursue." It was finally decided to engage Ridner and attempt to open an exhibition. He described his motivation for accepting and the situation he encountered:

> I accordingly commenced my duties in the first of July last with the fond hope that my labors would be useful and satisfactory to the association, and agreeable to myself. The Fine Arts had long been a favorite hobby with me, and with most of the artists I had formed a favourable acquaintance and many of them I numbered among my best friends. It is not necessary then for me to say that I entered upon my duties with much alacrity, not dreaming but that with the efforts I was determined to make the subscription list could be increased even at so late a period to the number of the first year. But I soon met with many obstacles, some of which I did not much anticipate. With most persons "the time" was a common excuse for not encouraging such an object many on account of changes in their circumstances could not afford the expense, or would not from a matter of principle expend money for anything they could do without though the great and most formidable

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> difficulty that I had to encounter was the unpopularity of those who had the management and superintendence of the exhibitions the last year. I have been told a great many times by different persons such stories as this: "that the first time I went to the exhibition I was treated in such a manner that I would never go again, and determined to tell my friends not to go," and others of a similar character, that it may not be necessary to repeat, . . .

Ridner averred that he spoke "without any disrespect to Mr. Herring" but felt obliged to clear his own name. He then went on to make a point with regard to the difficulty of signing up subscribers that would resonate through the life of the institution:

> There is still another reason why many of the subscribers of the past year have not continued their names – it has ceased to be a novelty, and New Yorkers are – you probably know, particularly fond of novelties. . . . From my own experience in this business I am fully convinced that nine tenths of all the subscribers must be obtained during the first two or three months of the year, so that each one may have the full advantage of all the exhibitions and other privileges.[365]

When James Herring left New York in July 1840, he turned away from a scene of some disarray and considerable frustration. The exhibition, still large and a grab-bag of uneven quality, had continued to be a money-losing proposition. Worse, subscriptions to the Apollo Association from New York City residents, which required only a visit to the gallery to accomplish, had fallen off. Moreover, the correspondence cited in the previous chapter from artists Joseph Ord and John Frankenstein indicate that Herring was neither efficient in returning art that had not sold nor in keeping artists informed as to the current status and whereabouts of their consigned works. It is little wonder, under such circumstances, that travel seemed a welcome change of pace for Herring.

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[365] John Ridner to the Committee of Management 19 December 1840, Reel 8 AAU-NYHS. All of correspondence cited in this chapter and written between April 1838 and January 31, 1843 is found, in chronological order, on Reel 8 above, and will not be separately footnoted.

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Travel was something that came naturally to the American artist. Itineracy has always been a major commercial strategy in the United States. The traveling salesman is the stuff of folklore legend and jest. Significant quantities of retail goods penetrated from the cities to the hinterlands in packs and wagons. The artist was among the crowd on the road. In particular, portraitists below the first rank (and even some of the best) had to keep moving to find new patrons. Since most of those who supported themselves through art in America could only do so as portraitists, the rigors of the road were a familiar feature of American artists' life.[366] Indeed, the promise of ventures like the Apollo Gallery and later the Art-Union was, that by providing suitable commercial venues, they might enable artists to find audiences for works other than portraits and thus earn a living and enjoy a more settled existence. How far this was successful is measured by the transformation by the second half of the century from an artists' life of nearly constant itineracy and the practice of portraiture exclusive of all else, to the pattern of artists' life characterized by summer sketching trips and winters spent in well-fitted studios. That lay largely in the future in 1840.

Herring's understanding of the dynamics of the situation in New York seems to have benefitted by distance. We have just cited written proof that Ridner was unhappy

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[366] There has been considerable discussion of the topic of itineracy, both generally and specifically with respect to art. See, for example, David Jaffee, "Peddlers of Progress and the Transformation of the Rural North, 1760-1860," *Journal of American History* 78 no. 2 (September 1991): 511-535; and David Jaffee, "The Age of Democratic Portraiture: Artisan-Entrepreneurs and the Rise of Consumer Goods," in *Meet Your Neighbors: New England Portraits, Painters, & Society, 1790-1850*, ed. Caroline F. Sloat (Sturbridge, Massachusetts: Old Sturbridge Village, 1992), 35-46. For a broader view see *Itineracy in New England and New York: Annual Proceedings of the Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife*, ed. Peter Benes (Boston: Boston University, 1986).

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indeed at having to deal with criticisms of shortcomings that he had inherited from his critic. Ridner's accusations about Herring's rudeness to gallery visitors in 1839 and 1840 are admittedly an *ad hominem* attack. Their credibility, however, is buttressed by what is known about Herring's Masonic activities. While Herring was, by the evidence, a natural leader of men with what must have been impressive powers of persuasion, it is also the case that he engaged in a lifelong series of factional controversies. The man must have combined, in his person, a disarming mixture of charm and abrasiveness.

More important than the testimony to warring egos in Ridner's letter, however, are a number of observations that indicate Ridner's awareness of problems that, in 1840, he blamed on Herring. As hindsight unhappily proved, Herring may not have helped, but he certainly did not cause the problems. Ridner asserted that "nine tenths of all the subscribers must be obtained during the first two or three months of the year." Despite massive efforts throughout its existence, the institution never achieved this desired goal. The frantic onslaught of late subscriptions was a permanent feature of the rhythm of the year, from Apollo to Art-Union. The rush of last minute subscribers drove the officers and managers to despair (and created the need to resort to loans, often from the Managers, early in the year). It also proved the proximate cause of the Art-Union's failure to hold an 1851 drawing, when the anticipated December membership did not materialize, though the art had been purchased in expectation of a greater number of subscribers. The postponement of the drawing into 1852 paved the way to the Art-Union's end.[367]

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[367] In brief, when the December 1851 subscriptions fell substantially short of the 1850 levels, the Managers voted to postpone the year-end lottery a number of times, finally stating that they would dispose of the prizes when subscriptions reached the

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The officers and managers tried a variety of incentives to encourage early subscriptions. Every year the Corresponding Secretary in New York urged Honorary Secretaries to swift exertion. The organization added a financial bonus for the Secretaries, paying higher commissions for members recruited before 1 July. The Art-Union attempted to distribute its annual engraving in order of the receipt of subscriptions.[368] In 1849, when the Art-Union initiated its highly regarded and greatly coveted journal, *The Bulletin of the American Art-Union*, it published monthly from April through December. The journal was sent free only to paid members and was not otherwise available for purchase.[369] Nothing availed. The organization continued to be plagued with late subscribers. Every November and December witnessed a mad scramble with money

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15,000 level. They never reached this number. By the time that they determined to hold the lottery the issue of the legality of the lottery device was before the courts, and they could not proceed as they had planned. Ironically, James Herring's solution to the problem of disappointing subscription in 1840 was to cancel the lottery and hold over the 1840 members into 1841, adding new ones to make a proper subscription list. In 1840 this suggestion was decisively defeated. The failure to hold a timely lottery would have identified the Apollo Association with a plethora shady lottery schemes that abounded. If the Art-Union had held its drawing in 1851, they could have distributed their art. But they would have then finished the year in debt with no legitimate means of making up the deficit. They had no good options. If they had chosen to "remove" already purchased art from the drawing, and hold it over to 1852 in order to balance the books, they would have disappointed, or worse, misled 1851 ticket holders who might have joined on the basis of withdrawn pictures.

[368] The shipping of engravings was an incredibly complicated matter that was never satisfactorily worked out. It generated a great deal of correspondence. The issue was made more urgent by the belief that early impressions of the engraving were of better quality than later ones, and by a paranoia all over the country that someone else, or some other region was being favored in the distribution process.

[369] This provision also created an immense correspondence, with all kinds of maneuvering and special pleas to obtain back issues for late subscribers.

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pouring in, deadlines extended, and the managers frantically buying art at the last minute in order to have an adequate supply to distribute to a daily increasing membership, all of whom were eager to have their names entered into the end of the year lottery.[370]

In his correspondence, James Herring addressed concerns with the quality of the works that the Apollo acquired for distribution as well as the prices paid to artists. In a letter of 27 August 1840 Herring wrote from Richmond, Virginia:

> One thing I wish to impress on your mind. There must be no bad pictures purchased at any price. I have seen many pictures of Fisher's [Alvan Fisher, 1792-1863] here which cost about $100 each, very good indeed, not quite so good as Doughty's best, but such as would be very acceptable. Mayr [Christian Mayr, c. 1805-1851] is popular here, his pictures would do to scatter through this section.[371]

On 4 September, from Petersburg, Virginia, Herring again expressed his anxiety with regard to the quantity and quality of the pictures exhibited and purchased by the Association:

> There must be some good paintings to be distributed, or we shall be in worse

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[370] The subject of the Art-Union and the lottery is large and remains for a future investigation. It is a major topic that is not foreshadowed in this early correspondence. Partly this may reflect the fact that at this early date, it was not clear how important a role the lottery would come to play in the history of the organization. Also Herring was writing from the South, the region that had the least problem with the lottery device. Objections to the lottery were most pronounced in New England and the Middle States.

[371] In 1841 the Apollo Association did indeed purchase a painting from Fisher. But unlike the work he exhibited in Herring's show of 1839, *Travelers attacked by Wolves*, which the artist offered for sale for $35, the 1841 picture that was purchased, *Landscape, View near the White Mountains*, cost the Association $250, not at all the course of action Herring was advocating. Fisher was a Boston artist and did not show at the Apollo or the Art-Union after 1841. With respect to Mayr, he had showed ten works, all for sale, in the October 1839 Apollo Exhibition. Two of these, *The Remarkable Scholar* and *The Raw [or Awkward] Recruit* were offered for sale for $35 each and purchased by the Association as separate prizes, with the former going to William Kemble, a member of the Committee of Managers.

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> repute in Virginia next year than now. The extent of purchases must depend on the New York subscription, the success of the Exhibition, and the consideration of the Artists in the prices of their pictures. We intended last year to be liberal, I am satisfied that we were too much so, and that this year the liberality must change places. . . . I had a dream two nights ago which vexed me. I was in the Exhibition, and you had only 40 pictures and none of them good. . . .

Again, from Baltimore, in October, Herring wrote "The more pictures bought this year the better, but they must also be good. . . . We paid too much last year for some pictures and kindly bought some which we should be ashamed to send . . . ."

Herring's awareness of the complicated problems of price, quality, and the need to nurture developing talent go back at least to the *National Portrait Gallery*. In the "Address" to Volume II, he boasted that "no artist of respectable qualifications" had been turned away and that each artist had been paid his asking price.[372] When Herring initially proposed the Apollo Association he was still concerned with protecting the artist. The first "Constitution" provided in *Article 3d*, with regard to works sent for exhibition, that "the price shall be fixed by the Artist," and, should the Committee of Management choose to purchase, "the Artist shall be immediately paid."[373] Both price and speed of payment were obvious sore points with artists, and initially Herring hoped to meet the very real needs of artists for income. After six exhibitions worth of buffeting experience, he came to understand these problems from a gallery owner's point of view. The promises with respect to size and timeliness of payment were dropped in subsequent revisions of the by-laws.

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[372] Herring, "Address 3 (1836), 3.

[373] Baker, "Art-Union," 101.

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The issue of quality as a consideration in and of itself and as it stood in relation to price remained a constant concern. From its beginning to its end, the institution was importuned by artists to purchase their works. Charting a course that supported established artists while encouraging talented beginners without the appearance of personal, political, or regional favoritism posed a constant challenge. Herring, who had purchased from Robert Street, had good reason to know that a purchase made out of "kindness" to an artist was no favor to the institution when the lottery distribution rendered every work a *de facto* emissary of the Association. But "quality" was no simple matter. Issues of taste came into play. The works purchased had to occupy a common ground between the best judgments of the merchant-connoisseurs who made the choices and the often unformed (and uninformed) predilections of the members who received the fruits of their decisions.

Fair recompense to artists remained among the most vexing questions that faced the Art-Union. An artist himself, Herring was incensed at what he saw as the greed and short-sightedness of his comperes.[374] In his letter of October from Baltimore he wrote: "The artists must be made to understand that they ought rather this year to give 50 pictures to secure this important effect promised, than to insist upon large prices." The Apollo Association, and later the Art-Union, could do no right in this regard. When it paid very generously it was accused of subsidizing "favorite" artists who could not earn a living if left to the tender mercies of the market place. When it turned, in 1840, to the policy of

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[374] Even Thomas Seir Cummings, the Secretary of the National Academy of Design and chronicler of its early history, admitted that "some [of the artists] were unreasonable" with regard to money. Cummings was admittedly an early and constant foe of the Art-Union. Cummings, *History*, 149.

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bargaining artists down, the result was a disgruntled group of artists who became overt or covert enemies, as well as a perception by the public that the Art-Union would buy any picture so long as it was cheap.

James Herring was the organization's first traveling secretary, a paid position that was later occupied by John Ward, Wellington Solomons, Theodore Foster, and D.A. Barhyd. Herring set the prototype for the post. The traveling secretary was, in fact, both a traveling salesman and, as the organization named local Honorary Secretaries, a traveling supervisor. He was the emissary of a New York-based institution recruiting both subscribers and local Honorary Secretaries, and, if there already were Honorary Secretaries, checking on them and offering whatever support they might need. While juggling these roles, it was also necessary to maintain a collegial stance. The organization, in theory, belonged to its subscribers wherever they lived. The New York managers were not directors, but servants and caretakers. No one for a minute believed this, but it was a founding fiction and commanded a body of rhetoric.

Herring's correspondence from the road offers, on a personal level, a fascinating preview of subsequent leitmotifs in the vast correspondence of Honorary Secretaries and Traveling Secretaries that was generated throughout the history of the organization. Some recurring concerns are mundane, but serve as a cogent reminder that the Apollo Association and the Art-Union were very much human undertakings. Bad weather and bad health were constantly slowed progress. From Petersburg, Virginia, on September 4, 1840, Herring wrote, "Here I am shut up by a wet and uncomfortable day with no prospect of being able to get out." The third of May 1841 found Herring in Norfolk, Virginia, where

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"I have been very unwell, having taken a violent cold in Washington, and about one third of the time it has been so stormy as to seriously impede my out of door operations."

Some Honorary Secretaries were entirely successful. Others began in a burst of enthusiasm but failed to devote sustained effort to the project. These were local men chosen for their station in the community and, once designated, they could rarely be gracefully displaced. As Herring proudly observed on 27 August 1840, "I think I have been very fortunate in securing the services of the best men in every place." A year later, from soggy Norfolk, Herring wrote: "I have been to Portsmouth, and gave an Engraving to the Honorary Secretary there, though he did nothing last year. But if he makes any exertions at all, he cannot fail this year."

Herring's correspondence also begins what remained a constant theme of endless variety. Ridner had also encountered the same refrain. No matter when representatives of the Association approached likely members, it was a bad time. The prospective subscribers had no money. They were about to leave town. They were too busy to think about it. Floods, fires, cholera, crop failure, money shortages, bank defaults – all of these were elements of life in nineteenth-century America that kept art-loving citizens from laying out $5 in cash. A letter of 22 July 1840 from Washington D.C. describes the situation Herring found:

> I came here at a most unfortunate hour, and I found it impossible to get the attention of the members [of Congress]. A day and a half only remained of the session and they were watching each other like cats the movements of their adversaries. Besides which, most of them were without money to pay their little debts in the city.

A variation on this theme came in Herring's letter from Richmond of 27 August: "I have

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obtained many names when I could not obtain the money," he wrote, "but all are good for it and will pay." The organization learned early that such promises often proved more wishful thinking than plan of action and refused to issue membership certificates until money was received. Sometimes Honorary Secretaries laid out their own money to expedite the process. They did not always collect from their neighbors.

Ridner, after he blamed Herring for driving likely subscribers away from the gallery, touched on another issue that continued to plague the organization throughout its life: the precarious balance between novelty and stability the institution had to maintain in order to appear, at one and the same time, trustworthy and exciting. At the point of initial contact potential subscribers had to be informed of the program and convinced of its value and merit. Herring described this process, which could be arduous and lengthy, in his 3 October 1840 letter: "The subject is new and the extension of information is attended with expense." Once the subject was no longer new, the organization was left to contend with its lack of novelty. American society was subject to waves of enthusiasm that built, peaked and then subsided, leaving meager traces of former strength. Periodic religious revival movements, and vogues for phrenology and spiritualism illustrate this tendency. This is one way to view the peculiar history of the American Art-Union.

Herring was proud to be able to send back from Washington in 1840 the names of some eminent subscribers – President Martin Van Buren, a New Yorker, but also Secretary of War Joel Poinsett from South Carolina and Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, Roger Taney. These names were needed ballast, just as those of Dr. Francis and Philip Hone in New York. Herring's boast of signing on the "best men" as

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honorary secretaries reflected partly, of course, the snobbery and elitism attached to the fine arts. But it also reflected the ongoing necessity, wherever the Art-Union attempted to establish itself, of attracting the public endorsement of the most eminent citizens in order to prove its "respectability" in a society that was rife with bogus lottery schemes.[375]

Herring was particularly concerned, during 1840, with the progress of New York subscriptions. He knew full well the distance that had to be covered to recoup from the disastrous early part of the year. Out-of-towners needed to be assured that New Yorkers, who were presumably close enough to evaluate the worth of the institution for themselves, were enthusiastic backers. The falling off of 1840 could have been taken to reflect a lack of confidence in the organization's integrity. Herring's correspondence reveals that he was driven to distraction by what he perceived as the unwillingness of the New York managers to divulge their progress. He explained the situation in a way that was intended to absolve his responsibility for the diminished city lists:

> There is no question I am asked so frequently as that which I have asked, but have not had the favor of an answer to, and therefore cannot answer myself, which is, how many subscribers are there in New York? Mr. Greele and you, both say I have been successful. The continuation of that success, and its increase, is what I most fear, as that depends not upon any efforts of mine, nor on the good will of the present subscribers if things come out right at the end of the year, but it is on that result alone, the future character and success of the Institution depends - And

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[375] In early 1851 a bogus lottery calling itself "The World's Fair Art-Union, Under the Management of the New York Art-Union Company incorporated by the Legislature of the State of New York" caused major mischief for the American Art-Union. Obviously intended to suggest a relationship to the American Art-Union, the scheme was a complete hoax and the promoters were ultimately prosecuted. Leaflets that were distributed prompted secretaries and subscribers to write to the American Art-Union asking if there were any relationship between the two organizations. The flyer can be found preserved with the Art-Union correspondence, Reel 34, Vol. 53 AAU-NYHS near January 29, 1851.

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your hopes and mine are to be realized or blasted.[376]

Herring had other worries about what was happening in New York, particularly as it affected his work out of the city. He urged an active program of advertising both in New York and in the local press in towns where he attempted to recruit secretaries and subscribers. On 4 April 1841 he wrote: "Wonder is expressed that so little publicity is given to the Exhibitions. It is said here that it is no wonder they don't pay, because, unless people actually hunt them up - up to the very door - they are uncertain whether they are open or not!"[377] The thorny issue of press relations remained a major theme in the Art-Union story. Honorary Secretaries pressed for advertising budgets. The Committee of Management responded in a case-by-case manner and attempted to buy favorable press outside the city by enrolling local publishers as Honorary Secretaries and by sending free copies of the annual engraving, and later the *Bulletin* to the local press. Herring proved unhappily prophetic when he urged Ridner on 27 August 1840: "You must patronize the Herald. It is the only paper from N.Y. I meet everywhere, and Bennett has always favored us, and should be kept in a good humour. I sincerely hope New York will be true to itself in sustaining the Institution.. . . " On 4 September Herring again wrote: "You must feed the Herald. It is the most read of all the N.Y. papers. . . ." Indeed, insofar as the *Herald* enjoyed a national readership, Bennett's later enmity to the Art-Union registered a telling

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[376] James Herring from Petersburg, Virginia letter of 4 September 1840. Augustus Greele was the Chairman of the Apollo Association's Executive Committee.

[377] This has got to be read as a direct criticism of Ridner, and a none-too subtle attempt to point out that Ridner was doing no better in getting New York subscribers than had Herring.

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blow, confirming and stoking the worst fears of local paranoia by validating it with a supposedly genuine, first-hand witness.

Herring knew very well the problems attendant on mounting and sustaining exhibitions. On 18 July 1840, he wrote to Ridner from Washington, "I hear of no circular to artists yet. Do you have an exhibition or not?"[378] Ridner could not have circularized artists because at the time that Herring wrote, the Association had no location for an autumn exhibit, a fact that Herring ought to have known. On 20 July, the National Academy of Design came forward to offer its space in Clinton Hall. On 24 July Ridner wrote to artists, attempting to recruit appropriate works. Away from the stress in New York of mounting the Apollo exhibitions, Herring was able to understand that they were not worth the sacrifice of the entire institutional vision. In his October 1840 letter from Baltimore he wrote to Ridner and the New York managers:

> The present exhibition will prove the expediency of adhering to the system of successive exhibitions. That is, it will prove whether they will be expensive or profitable. But there are considerations which have presented themselves to me, in various places, of sufficient importance to merit serious deliberation. One of the greatest objections urged to becoming members is the exhibitions. If they prove this year a serious tax the objection will be universal, and properly so. Still they ought not to be abandoned in toto.

Although the exhibitions were an important source of publicity and constituted a physical presence for the organization, the deficits they incurred consumed the funds of out-of-town subscribers who reaped no benefit from a commodious New York gallery.

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[378] Again, this was Herring attacking Ridner and trying to make him look inadequate, the better to deflect criticism that had doubtless been heaped on Herring. Herring had just left town and well knew that the Apollo Association was temporarily homeless, having left the premises of Herring's Apollo Gallery.

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The issue of spending nationally-raised funds on New York activities surfaced periodically as a criticism of the organization. Herring was already aware of it when he wrote in his 18 July 1840 letter, "The advantages still secured to the members of our Association resident in N.York which others cannot partake of, I hear is still harped upon by [Charles Bird] King and [John G.] Chapman."

Herring's correspondence also reveals his unhappiness with the degree of support he received from the Committee in New York. The Managers devised procedures designed to keep a firm control on the lottery mechanism, but it resulted in a cumbersome modus operandi. Herring chafed considerably, for instance, over the fact that he was not allowed to travel with blank certificates that would empower him to commission honorary secretaries and to give them blank membership certificates/lottery tickets that they could immediately issue upon receipt of subscription monies. On 22 July 1840 Herring wrote bitterly of an Honorary Secretary whom he had named in Washington. "He ought to have taken his commission blanks with him, but the privilege being refused me of exercising that power, which I certainly expected to have, the opportunity has passed ." Clearly Herring wanted the Honorary Secretaries to have the power to issue certificates for cash payment on the spot. As the case stood, subscribers had to pay their five dollars first, and then wait to receive their lottery ticket receipts. The subscribers then had to have considerable faith in the rectitude and the efficiency of the Honorary Secretary. On 1 August 1840, from Alexandria, Herring wrote, "I have done enough here to prove that if the committee had sustained me in the thing I could have gone far beyond my calculation." Later that month on 27 August, Herring complained to Ridner about his own inadequate

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documentation, saying "I wish I had my parchment commission as it would put people in mind of presenting us books & etc. about which I can say nothing. Do get it signed if you can."

A related issue hints at what became a major theme in later correspondence – the difficulty in moving money around a nation that had neither a standardized currency nor a unified banking system. James Herring pressed for a great deal more autonomy for himself than the Committee was willing to grant, but also seems to have envisioned considerably more local autonomy than the New York managers ever intended. On 22 July 1840 he urged the appointment of a local "Treasurer" for Washington, D. C. because "they have all sorts of money here, and it will serve many purposes, especially if we have to make payments here." A month later, he had established an account in the Bank of Virginia at Norfolk into which he deposited local subscription money "which will do to spend anywhere south of the Delaware at par."[379] This was ingenious and would have solved a problem that the Art-Union never overcame. Local monies and drafts on out-of-town banks were regularly discounted in New York when they were accepted at all. If money could have been deposited regionally, it could have been used to pay the expenses of traveling secretaries and also local artists, who suffered discounts on drafts drawn on New York banks.[380] This would have substantially decentralized the organization, however, and weakened both its control over funds and its ability to maintain control over

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[379] James Herring from Richmond, Virginia letter of 27 August 1840.

[380] This does not address a later problem for artists, that the Art-Union began to issue drafts payable from one to six months ahead. When these could be deposited they were always discounted.

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the lottery mechanism which was subject to abuse. It remained the case that all monies passed through New York and that subscription funds had to be received in New York before membership certificates were issued and sent. While Honorary Secretaries continued to be voted on by the entire Committee of Management, later Traveling Secretaries and also officers and managers, who sometimes traveled for the Art-Union in the course of private business, had a freer hand in appointing local secretaries. This was not necessarily a negative comment on the trust that Herring commanded, but a function of the acceleration in the number of Honorary Secretaries appointed. The paperwork, however, always came from New York.

Herring indicated an awareness here of a major problem that the New York managers never truly appreciated. In order to build a national organization, it was necessary to sponsor local activities that would encourage a sense of local cohesion and identity. Herring was enthusiastic about lectures for this purpose. He pointed out that lecturers could speak anywhere under the auspices of the Apollo Association and have their remarks published and distributed to a nationwide audience. Local lecture events would attract would-be members, and the talks, published and widely distributed as an educational service and a benefit of membership, would unite the name of the organization with the names of eminent lecturers. His first suggestion was the Hon. William C. Preston of Columbia, South Carolina, widely regarded as one of the finest orators in the United States Senate, whom he had just recruited as an Honorary Secretary.[381] He also suggested paying expenses for lecturers to come to New York. Herring also wanted the Apollo to

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[381] Herring letter of 3 October 1840. AAU-NYHS.

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circulate works in traveling shows throughout the country. [382] Although the Apollo did sponsor lectures in New York and had them printed, they were never widely distributed. Later, the *Bulletin* served the educational function that Herring envisioned. However, nothing ever served the organizational function that such decentralized activities might have provided. If Herring's organizational insight had been acted upon, it is possible that out-of-town subscribers would have identified themselves more as members of the organization and the lottery aspect would not have become so central.

By Autumn 1840, it was clear to Herring that, just as Apollo gallery receipts had failed to cover expenses, his initial financial arrangement for traveling had been similarly inadequate. Unless there was improvement in "the provision made for me" he would not continue in his traveling capacity in 1841.[383] This raises an issue that bedeviled the organization until the departure of Robert Fraser in 1848. Herring was, at one and the same time, landlord, employee, officer, artist, and sometime art-dealer – hardly what we would consider today an arm's-length arrangement. This might not have been unethical by nineteenth-century standards, but it continued to prove awkward. In hiring John Ridner to replace Herring in New York, the Apollo also turned to a member of its volunteer Committee of Management. Ridner engaged in complicated salary negotiations for the years he remained an employee and further, made it clear that if the Apollo rented suitable

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[382] Thomas Doughty in Newburgh, New York to James Herring 10 December 1839. Doughty rejected the offer, possibly made when Herring was already contemplating traveling and might have been looking for works to take with him as a recruiting device.

[383] James Herring letter 3 October 1840. AAU-NYHS

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space, he had an interest in moving his business to the Association's rooms.[384] Robert Fraser was Corresponding Secretary for 1845, 1846, and 1847, while he was also a salaried employee. Additionally, Fraser conducted his framing business out of the Art-Union rooms, which left the Art-Union vulnerable to charges of favoritism in the distribution of engravings toward Fraser's framing customers. Fraser left the organization on less than amicable terms due to apparent conflicts of interest involving both the framing and his activities as an artists' agent. Ridner, similarly, though he remained with the Art-Union until the end, continued to rent his commercial space from the Art-Union, to act as an artists' agent, sometimes offering works to the organization, all while he served as an influential member of the Committee of Management. These relationships doubtless contributed to charges of favoritism periodically leveled against the organization. The template for this confused situation comes from the very beginning, with the confusion about the status of James Herring vis-a-vis the Apollo Association.[385]

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[384] Although Ridner was originally a mahogany merchant, his association with the Apollo Association coincided with a change of merchandise. He became the proprietor of a "Repository of Fine Art," which included ultimately dealing in artists' supplies, books and periodicals, art-union subscriptions, prints and paintings.(See various advertisements in *The Literary World* during 1847). At the beginning, however, in a letter to the Committee of Management of 11 January 1841 Ridner simply indicated that if the Committee engaged rooms in the building at Broadway and Chambers Street, part of his willingness to continue as superintendent was "on condition that" he would be allowed "to occupy" rent-free "the small room in the building . . . as a place of business for myself to dispose of articles connected with the Fine arts." *Longworth's City Directory* for 1841 shows Ridner doing business at 73 Chambers, corner of Broadway. In 1844 and '45 he was listed again as a mahogany merchant. When the Art-Union moved into its final home on 497 Broadway Ridner was the major commercial tenant with his "Repository of Fine Arts."

[385] All of this has to be seen in the light of nineteenth century government practice. Holders of Federal positions were not salaried, but were expected to charge the recipients

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Herring's criticisms both of Ridner and of the Committee reverberate throughout his correspondence. Although they include a number of serious policy disagreements, they also reflect the frustration inherent in the fact that, by mid-1840, James Herring no longer controlled the organization he had called into being. A flashpoint of disagreement centered around the Committee's decision to engrave George H. Comegys' *The Artists' Dream* for 1841 members. Herring had been an early proponent of Comegys (1816-1852), a Philadelphia artist, whose career was cut short by mental illness. Nonetheless, Herring's support of Comegys emphatically did not extend to the Apollo's decision to engrave *The Artist's Dream*. On 4 April 1841 Herring wrote:

> I would recommend that you write to Chapman for a copy of the picture painted by him for the U.S. [Capitol] for the Engraving of this year. 'The Baptism of Pocahantas' would be a popular subject, and if he has no objection, and does not intend to publish it himself I could possibly make a copy.

That did not happen, but Herring did not give up. He wrote a month later on May 4, 1841 from Norfolk, describing the tremendous popularity in the South of the Association's 1840 engraving, John Blake White's, *Gen. Marion in His Swamp Encampment Inviting a British Officer to Dinner*:

> The subject of the old Engraving pleases every one, but the subject proposed for the next I have not dared to mention to a single person, and hope that some historical illustration will be adopted instead. Chapman mentioned Weir's Landing

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of mandated services to pay for the cost of providing them. The Art-Union was not out of step with its time, but encountered some of the same problems that later resulted in the establishment of the Civil Service. The Art-Union announced in its *Transactions* for 1848 that with regard to works of art purchased by the Art-Union, henceforth "the Committee have now made it a fundamental law of their action, that none of the officers, or those entrusted with the management, shall receive any compensation, commission, or gratuity, upon such purchase." (41) Although this pronouncement was occasioned by the activity of Fraser, it applied equally to Ridner.

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> of Henrick Hudson belonging to Mr. Verplanck – his Jamestown views – and Weir's Columbus disputing with the Doctors upon the spherical form of the earth painted for Mr. Ball of S.C. . . . [Chapman or Weir] would be so far better than the Dream that I hope earnestly the latter can be suspended if now contracted for. . . . My object I wish you not to lose sight of. So important do I consider that something Historical should be engraved, that although I have written many things, that is the only thing of importance about which I intended to write.

Herring's vision of a national organization mandated a continuation of history painting for engraving choices. Moreover, these were almost invariably popular.[386] The New York managers ignored Herring's argument on this issue and chose a work that was far more romantic and, not accidentally, set the artist, and by extension the art lover, above the taste of the vulgar, unappreciative larger public.[387] The subscribers subsequently voted with their print requests after the Art-Union instituted a policy of allowing subscribers to choose the print for the current year or to choose from among previous year's prints. This provision allowing for choice generated a great deal of subsequent correspondence. It is a testament to the *Marion's* enduring popularity that in 1849, the Art-Union spent $300 to

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[386] History painting had a double allure for the organization. Not only were paintings depicting themes from American history patriotic, but they also aspired to the highest department of painting in the traditional hierarchy as set forth by Sir Joshua Reynolds in his "Discourses on Art." The production of history paintings was a *sine qua non* of a first rate national school of art. The Art-Union encouraged American history painting in numerous instances, especially with its generous patronage of Emanuel Leutze in Düsseldorf. History painting, however, a particular branch of figure painting, required the greatest level of skill and the greatest commitment of time. It virtually required European training, and the canvases, once produced, were, of necessity, very expensive.

[387] An argument can be made that the Comegys' picture, certainly a pictorial expression of artistic depression, appealed particularly in 1841 to a depressed Committee of Managers, struggling to keep afloat a seriously troubled fine arts initiative.

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restore its mezzotint plate.[388]

Herring lost another argument when he proposed postponing the drawing for the year and conflating the years 1840 and 1841. Ridner took strong exception to this suggestion in his 19 December letter:

> With respect to the proposition of the Corresponding Secretary presented at the last meeting, I beg leave to say, I am of the firm conviction that if the plan is carried out, or adopted (and I do not believe it can be constitutionally) it will serve to dilute the interest of those who are now interested in the success of the Institution here and do it no real good abroad.

Ridner was not alone in rejecting this idea. When Herring brought it up it was tabled, on the motion of Prosper Wetmore, and defeated at the next meeting.

All of these problems, present at the very beginning, were aggravated by a structure that mandated that the organization reinvent itself every year. The Art-Union has been portrayed as the victim, in the end, of the successful machinations of its enemies. That analysis is true, but offers only partial explanation. It is the part of the story that conforms to the catastrophic-cause theory of history. In fact, when the Art-Union rode the crest of popularity, it seemed invulnerable. As this correspondence has revealed, the institution contained, built into its structure and not readily visible, a collection of unresolved problems that provide building blocks for a gradualist explanation of its stunning

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[388] Cowdrey, "Publications," 286. In a letter of 25 May 1842 artist John Blake White asked if "persons joining as members of the society . . . for 1842 [could] obtain the Marion print?" On 6 June 1842 the Committee of Management responded promptly giving subscribers their choice of Association prints. Subscribers obviously like this option and used it extensively, although it created the opportunity for a great deal of confusion in as to shipping and who requested what. It would be interesting to track popular preferences by print choice, although this would be complicated and the data would not necessarily be conclusive.

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denouement. Logistical difficulties, a diffuse membership with no strong bonds to hold it together that had to be reassembled every year, the daunting task of both leading and satisfying popular taste, the fearful shoals of sectional strains, the difficulties in finding work of good quality combined with the necessity of making enemies among artists whose paintings were rejected, a press that fed on scandal to increase its circulation (and would create it, if it couldn't find it), the contradictory priorities in being both a local New York organization and a national presence – these, and many other stresses inherent in this volunteer-led organization were addressed *ad hoc* when their issues became emergent, but never entirely resolved. When the Art-Union stumbled (or was tripped), the aggregate of these simmering problems proved, like opportunistic infections in a weakened host, fatal.

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CHAPTER 8

ENLIGHTENMENT IDEAS AND NEW YORK MERCHANTS: A GUIDE FOR ACTION

In *A Room of One's Own* Virginia Woolf asked, "What is meant by reality?" Her question was posed to the would-be writer of fiction, but insofar as it addresses the issue of getting to the heart of the matter in any narrative involving human agency, it speaks to the historian as well. "Reality," thus

> would seem to be something very erratic, very undependable -- now to be found in a dusty road, now in a scrap of newspaper. . . . It lights up a group in a room and stamps some casual saying. It overwhelms one walking home beneath the stars and makes the silent world more real than the world of speech. . . . Sometimes, it seems to dwell in shapes too far away for us to discern what their nature is. But whatever it touches, it fixes and makes permanent. . . . [It is] what is left of past time and of our loves and hates.[389]

Students looking back on the course of the American Art-Union have puzzled for years over its abrupt disappearance. The historical evidence does not seem to support the denouement. We are left to wonder, "What were they thinking?" And that is precisely the right question. Any attempt at understanding must at least consider the complicated interrelation between belief and action.

The American Art-Union served a variety of purposes. On its face it was intended to foster a love for the fine arts in America, improve the national taste, expand the market for Americans seeking to earn a living as artists, and facilitate the creation of an American school of art. In pursuit of this last goal, the Art-Union hoped to plant an art standard that

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[389] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1929; New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1991), 120-21.

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would serve as a rallying point for national identity and national pride. The program of activities that the Art-Union initiated was intended as the means to these ends. A large and diffuse documentary trail of evidence can be marshaled to describe and to quantify what the Art-Union did. The evidence provides the basis upon which to argue how well the Art-Union succeeded or fell short of its aims. This is history at the level of "how?" and "what?"

To inquire further, however, about the "why?" and "wherefore?" is to enter upon a speculative venture. The reconstruction of a past reality that addresses what men were thinking is a slippery business at best. But how else to ask these questions? What did it mean for the Art-Union that it was an organization run by New York merchants? Did the Art-Union have an ideology or a political agenda? And, of course, why did the Art-Union disappear so dramatically and so suddenly?

Merchants were keenly aware that they were viewed collectively as a money-grubbing lot, pale from confinement in their counting rooms, narrowly focused on the getting and the keeping of profit without any appreciation of "the finer things," the very antithesis of Jefferson's noble agrarian American. The Art-Union was one among a number of initiatives devoted to disproving this notion. New York merchants particularly could find in the mirror of their own status as "vulgarians" a reflection of the way that America was perceived. Through the cultivation of the fine arts New York merchants could elevate both themselves and their homeland.

Fortunately there was a body of already canonical literature that could be appropriated and adapted precisely to the circumstances of Manhattan merchants that

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would provide them with an intellectual framework upon which they could justify their large ambitions to be the arbiters and the keepers of high culture. New Yorkers found in the works of David Hume, John Locke and Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, the requisite materials to construct an argument that as merchants they were in the ideal position to be the agents of cultural improvement for all of America. Importantly, by applying Montesquieu's theory of "douceur" to internal American affairs, New York merchants, with extensive business ties to the American South, could plausibly believe that the threads of the cotton trade could knit the Union together. The fine arts, in this scheme, would serve both as a "softening" agent and a source of national identity in a decade in which relations between sections became increasingly strained.

From its beginnings as The Apollo Association, the organization viewed itself as a vehicle through which merchants could boldly assert that the commercial class was the rightful heir, in a democratic American society, to the prestigious role of patron of the arts. In Europe, Art patronage had traditionally been the privilege, pleasure, and purview of nobility – secular and religious.[390] As Charles Briggs noted, looking back on the flowering of genius during the Italian Renaissance in his "Annual Report of 1843," "in those days the church and the state were both Art-Unions, on a grand and magnificent scale."[391] When

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[390] All of the Art Unions in Europe and in America were, broadly construed, vehicles for the entry of the middle classes into art patronage. They all shared some common forms of organization and diverged from each other with respect to details. Past that, European Art-Unions found themselves in different political and social circumstances from the American Art Unions and each requires individual examination to understand its position and function.

[391] *Transactions . . . 1843*, 5.

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the founders of the American republic debated the form that their new government should take, they went for inspiration and ideas to the political, economic, and social thinkers of the Enlightenment. The texts served as anchoring documents for the great American experiment and Enlightenment authors acquired the legitimacy of secular prophets.[392] It followed that when Americans in succeeding generations looked for signposts to guide them in the creation of a new culture they returned to the same well. In a nation without a titled nobility or an established church, but by no means classless, various sectors competed for the right to be arbiters of high culture. A variety of socio-economic qualities could be invoked to justify claims to high status.[393] These included the possession of

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[392] For an extended discussion of the varied and multifaceted influences of Enlightenment thought in America, see Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976). Henry Steele Commager, in *The Empire of Reason: How Europe Imagined and America Realized the Enlightenment* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1977) breezily sketches how Americans adapted Enlightenment ideas to practical use in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. More specifically, Richard Hofstadter, in *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1948; Vintage Books/Random House, 1954), 9 and 30 cites Alexander Hamilton quoting Montesquieu and Jefferson advising his nephew to read John Locke. Bernard Bailyn discusses the manner in which the revolutionary generation used and misused ancient and Enlightenment texts in *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967). Bailyn's chapter "Sources and Traditions," 22-54, and especially pp. 26-28 addresses this directly. Albert O. Hirschman, in *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977) 77-78 discusses Montesquieu's exposition of the principal of the separation of powers in *The Spirit of the Law.* For a fascinating glimpse of how "big" ideas "trickled down"into the lives of everyday, provincial Americans, see David Jaffee, "The Village Enlightenment in New England, 1760-1820," *The William and Mary Quarterly* Third Series 47 no. 3 (July 1990): 327-346.

[393] The role of "taste" or "connoisseurship" as a delineator of high status, with its implication of moral superiority and consequent right to exercise control over the lower orders of society has a vast literature. Two discussions specific to the nineteenth century

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substantial property, money, erudition, distinguished genealogy, regional and sectional pride, and cultural refinement. Lacking the authority conferred by notions of divine right, American cultural shapers sought a new, rational, and ethical basis to legitimize their position.

By the 1840's, the men who propelled the American Art-Union into national prominence soared on the wings of a notion of merchant culture that was, like America, a hybrid creation. Selectively borrowed from a variety of well-known Enlightenment texts, tweaked here and nudged there to retrofit Europe's former New World colonies, these ideas constituted a shared set of assumptions that, though never formally articulated, functioned as intellectual capital for the culturally ambitious businessmen of New York City. It was never necessary to quote chapter and verse from these sources. Their names and their ideas were common currency. These Enlightenment ideas were widely invoked to legitimize a variety of cultural endeavors aimed at improving and refining manners, morals, and taste in a rapidly developing American society that was more than a little rough and not just around the edges.

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are DiMaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship" and Levine, *Highbrow Lowbrow*. DiMaggio sums up Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "cultural capital"as "knowledge and familiarity with styles and genres that are socially valued and that confer prestige upon those who have mastered them" (35) in DiMaggio's discussion of "the institutionalization of high culture" (33) by the Brahmin class in Boston between 1850 and 1900. Levine describes the dichotomy between "high" and "low" culture that was deliberately created in America in the late nineteenth century, succinctly capturing the process in the phrase "the sacralization of culture." Patricia Hills, "Ideology," invokes Raymond Williams's notion of cultural hegemony. All of these scholars agree that no group dominated American culture as early as the 1840s. The experience of the Art-Union makes clear that elite Americans of the period understood the political and social implications of taste, and the importance to democracy of attempting to educate and "refine" popular taste (by their own lights) to the greatest extent possible.

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Partial tracks of this synthesis as it developed in New York surface in a selection of early nineteenth-century texts and orations. These pieces of the story begin chronologically with elite efforts (which, indeed, never end) and consisted of talks delivered in front of small audiences. As the century progressed, the effort to establish a foundation for art secured in a rising middle class that included significant portions of the professional and business community dispersed throughout the growing country made use of the wide audience reached by the print media.

Attempts to create an intellectual justification for the support of the fine arts in America took place against a backdrop of ongoing doubts about the wisdom of encouraging the fine arts at all, punctuated by derision and jests about the state of culture in America, some lobbed from Europe, and some home-grown.[394] There was a long-standing, two-pronged argument that the fine arts in America were frivolous at the least, dangerous at the worst – frivolous in that they diverted attention and energy away from a concentrated effort to produce objects of social utility; dangerous in that their cultivation could lead to moral corruption. John Adams was a leading spokesman for both misgivings. In 1780 he wrote to his wife, Abigail, "It is not indeed the fine arts which our country requires. The Usefull, the mechanic Arts, are those which We have occasion for in a young country."[395] Adams' marginal notes in a Bolingbroke history that he owned took issue with the Roman practice of displaying portrait busts of ancestors in their homes. He noted with

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[394] Neil Harris, "The Perils of Vision: Art, Luxury and Republicanism," in *Artist*, 28-53 addresses this topic.

[395] As quoted by Wendell Garrett, in *Neo-Classicism in America* (New York: Hirschl & Adler Galleries, 1991), 13.

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passion that "images of fools and knaves are as easily made as those of patriots and heroes . . . [T]he fine arts . . . promote virtue while virtue is in fashion. After that they promote luxury, effeminacy, corruption, prostitution."[396]

While any support for the fine arts in America required defense against serious critics such as Adams (who was by no means alone in these sentiments), at the same time proponents of refinement had to shelter beginning efforts from the dispiriting effects of the comments of a succession of Europeans. Some who visited (Mrs. Trollope and Charles Dickens, most notably) and some who observed from a transoceanic distance exercised their sharp wits in scoffing and sarcasm directed at American cultural and intellectual pretensions. Joseph Cogswell, an American himself (and a future Art-Union Manager), did nothing to discourage European critics when he published two anonymous essays in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in 1819, "On the Means of Education and the State of Learning in the United States of America, " and "On the State of Learning in the United States of America," both highly critical of his native land. Cogswell's choice of venue in which to publish his criticism assured his views a wide, highly prestigious readership all over the English speaking world. In the next year Sidney Smith, a Scots preacher, politician, wit, and a founding editor of the *Edinburgh Review,* asked, rhetorically, "Who

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[396] As quoted from Zoltan Haraszti, *John Adams and the Prophets of Progress* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952): 59 and cited in Bender, *Artist*, 36, 334 n. 47. Adams's Bolingbroke was presumably Henry Saint John, 1st Viscount Bolingbroke (1678-1751) a Tory, turned Jacobite who spent his exile in France in the company of Voltaire and his circle, writing history, philosophy, and political analysis. Bolingbroke was involved in numerous political intrigues throughout his career. When he was allowed to return to England he continued to scheme, but never regained his influence or fortune. See H. T. Dickinson. "Bolingbroke, Henry Saint John, 1st Viscount," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 15th ed.

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reads an American book? or goes to an American Play? Or looks at an American picture or statue?"[397]

If the pundits painted an America that was crude and coarse, a special criticism was reserved for New York City. Avowedly mercantile, New York was characterized as tunnel-visioned in its pursuit of Mammon. In 1816, John Galt, Benjamin West's contemporary biographer, noted West's impression of New York in 1759: "In New York Mr. West found the society wholly devoted to mercantile pursuits. A disposition to estimate things, not by their . . . beauty, but by the price which they would bring in the market, almost universally prevailed."[398] In 1836 William Cullen Bryant wrote to his brother John, in Illinois, "I have not been much pleased . . . with New York The entire thoughts of the inhabitants seem to be given to the acquisition of wealth; nothing else is talked of."[399] The historical irony was that it was precisely the fruit of this commercial prowess – that is, the existence of leisure time and the presence of expendable income – that enabled New Yorkers to enjoy the "luxury" of cultural pursuits.

Against a background of these ever-present currents in public and private

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[397] As quoted in Bender, *Intellect*, 75, from the *Edinburgh Review* (January 1820): 78-80.

[398] As quoted and cited in Wayne Craven, *Colonial American Portraiture*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 305. West passed through New York on his way to Europe in 1759.

[399] Bryant toyed with the idea of leaving city life behind and joining his family in Illinois. Like so many others, before and after, he realized (before it was too late) why he stayed: " You are so distant from all the large towns, and the means of education are so difficult to come at, and there is so little literary society . . . ." As quoted in Lawall, *Durand*, 203, from Parke Godwin, *A Biography of William Cullen Bryant, with Extracts from his Private Correspondence*, (New York: 1883), 1:322.

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discourse, Mayor DeWitt Clinton faced the thirty-five or so gentlemen of the newly-founded Literary and Philosophical Society of New-York in December 1814 to deliver *An Introductory Discourse Delivered Before the Literary and Philosophical Society of New-York.*[400] Clinton, a tyro of political and cultural energy, ranged widely in citing sources to buttress his various arguments, but focused particularly on the Scottish philosopher David Hume's 1742 essay, "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences." After listing five causes for American scientific and intellectual backwardness, Clinton, confident of the prospects for a bright future, quoted Hume at length to support his optimistic prognosis, summing up Hume's arguments in the observation that " free governments are the native soil of great talents."[401]

It was no accident that Clinton looked to Hume for encouragement. A number of Hume's principal points in "Rise and Progress" seem to fairly leap off the page, as if

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[400] DeWitt Clinton, *An Introductory Discourse Delivered before the Literary and Philosophical Society of New-York* (New York: Van Winkle and Wiley, 1815). Clinton's "Discourse" was certainly discursive enough, running to 160 pages when it was printed shortly after its delivery. For the Literary and Philosophical Society and Clinton's address there, see Bender, *Intellect*, 66-69. For a discussion of the "Discourse" in a useful and recent biography of DeWitt Clinton, see Evan Cornog, *DeWitt Clinton and the American Experience, 1769-1828* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 119-120. While Clinton particularly addressed the need to nourish literature and science in America, his particular interests, his remarks readily extend to the fine arts. His first major point is a defense against "the accusations which are brought against our country by the literati of Europe" (5).

[401] Clinton, "Discourse," 22-29. Clinton's five reasons for American backwardness are, briefly: a presiding "violent" party spirit in politics; "internecine" feuding in the medical profession; a too narrow focus by lawyers on detail and not enough on "general knowledge;" too much energy "directed to the accumulation of wealth" rather than the "pursuit of knowledge;" and a absence of professional authors and therefore "not much vernacular literature."

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tailor-made to hearten Americans concerned with the domestic development of the "high branches" of culture.[402] Hume's first major point, for example, was a *sine qua non* that suited America to a tee: "It is impossible for the arts and sciences to arise, at first, among any people," Hume wrote, "unless that people enjoy the blessing of a free government." Moreover, "nothing is more favorable to the rise of politeness and learning, than a number of neighboring and independent states, connected together by commerce and policy." Though Hume was describing his own Europe, the description could be construed to describe either the relationship of the various American states or of their growing towns and cities, whose inter-urban rivalries acted as mutual goads. Another Hume observation, that "when the arts and sciences come to perfection in any state, from that moment they naturally . . . decline," coincided beautifully with America's notion of itself as a new Arcadia in contradistinction to Europe's corruption and decay. Hume also addressed the always thorny problem of how newcomers could aspire to the precincts of already achieved testimonies of genius. Again, though he may have been writing for the British isles in their relation to Italy, Germany and France, his words were a balm and a guide for America. "A noble emulation is the source of every excellence," Hume wrote, but "next to emulation, the greatest encourager of the noble arts is praise and glory." With regard to foreign influence, "it may not be for the advantage of any nation to have the arts imported from their neighbors in too great perfection." Hume offered a final note of hope to culturally underdeveloped America – "In short, the arts and sciences, like some plants,

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[402] Ibid., 22.

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require a fresh soil."[403]

Hume's essay, which offered encouragement to Clinton's cultural ambitions for America in 1814, lost no relevance with the passage of time. In Hume's analysis of the political circumstances best suited to the fostering of art and science, and in his discussion of the problems faced by a parvenu nation, the managers of the Art-Union could still find a blueprint to guide their own action.

David Hume began to publish his series of collected essays in 1741. They appeared in various configurations in ten editions during his lifetime, with a final eleventh edition, prepared by the author, published posthumously in 1777. These were tremendously popular and influential in their time – pithy, easy to read, and widely circulated.[404] The Hume essay that DeWitt Clinton singled out dealt with the cultivation of the arts and sciences on a national level. This was the appropriate and comfortable frame of reference for Clinton and his audience of New York's most cosmopolitan intellectuals and men of science. An expanded set of familiar texts, by Hume and others, examined the

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[403] David Hume, "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences," in *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis, Indiana: Liberty Fund, 1985), 111-137. The specific citations for the passages quoted are as follows: 115, 119, 135, 135-36, 136, and 137. DeWitt Clinton's citation to Hume, in a note on the bottom of page 29 is "Hume's Essays, vol 1, 14th Essay."

[404] Hume was enormously popular in his lifetime and remained so. See Eugene F. Miller, "Forward," to David Hume, *op. cit.*, xi-xviii for a brief bibliographic account of Hume's career and the publishing history of the *Essays*. For a longer account of Hume's career, encompassing all his works, see T. H. Grose, "History of the Editions," and "List of the Editions," a preface to T. H. Green and T. H. Grose, eds., *David Hume, The Philosophical Works* (London: 1882; reprint ed. Darmstadt, Germany: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1964), Volume 3, *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, 15-84; 85-86. This work is an annotated reprint of the posthumous 1777 edition prepared by Hume.

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role of the individual as an agent of culture. These were particularly germane to the men involved in the American Art-Union. For example, in the very first essay of Volume I, "Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion," Hume wrote that:

> The good or ill accidents of life are very little at our disposal; but we are pretty much masters of what books we shall read, what diversions we shall partake of, and what company we shall keep. . . . Every wise man will endeavour to place his happiness on such objects chiefly as depend upon himself. . . . When a man is possessed of that talent, he is more happy by what pleases his taste, than by what gratifies his appetites, and receives more enjoyment from a poem or a piece of reasoning than the most expensive luxury can afford. . . . The cultivation of . . . higher and more refined taste . . . enables us to judge of the characters of men, of compositions of genius, and of the productions of the nobler arts. . . . Nothing is so improving to the temper as the study of the beauties, either of poetry, eloquence, music, or painting.[405]

Hume returned to this point in "Of the Standard of Taste." "Though men of delicate taste be rare, they are easily to be distinguished in society, by the soundness of their understanding and the superiority of their faculties above the rest of mankind."[406] And again, in "Of Refinement in the Arts," he argued that:

> Another advantage of industry and of refinement in the mechanical arts, is, that they commonly produce some refinements in the liberal; nor can one be carried to perfection, without being accompanied, in some degree, with the other. The same age, which produces great philosophers and politicians, renowned generals and poets, usually abounds with skillful weavers. . . . The spirit of the age affects all the arts; and the minds of men, being once roused from their lethargy, and put into a fermentation, turn themselves on all sides, and carry improvements into every art and science. Profound ignorance is totally banished, and men enjoy the privilege of rational creatures, to think as well as to act, to cultivate the pleasures of the mind as well as those of the body.
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> The more these refined arts advance, the more sociable men become: They flock into cities; love to receive and communicate knowledge . . . . Curiosity allures the wise; . . so that, beside the improvement which they receive from

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[405] Hume, "Of Refinement in the Arts," in Miller ed. *Essays*, 5-7.

[406] Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," in Miller ed. *Essays*, 243.

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> knowledge and the liberal arts, it is impossible but they must feel an increase of humanity . . . . Thus *industry*, *knowledge*, and *humanity*, are linked together by an indissoluble chain . . . .[407]

The famed Scottish skeptic seems almost to have foreseen America when he described a clear social progression from the skilled and industrious mechanic to the man of refinement and sensibility. The highest level of attainment glittered invitingly, independent of circumstances of birth or fortune, to anyone who sought to cultivate it.

In 1693 John Locke published *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, in which he emphasized that education had four major purposes, listed, in order of importance, as "Virtue, Wisdom, Breeding, and Learning."[408] (Section 134: 105) So that no one would mistake his meaning, he reiterated, "Learning must be had, but in the second place, as subservient only to greater qualities." (Section 147, "Learning:"115) And again, "These are my present thoughts concerning learning and accomplishments. The great business of all is virtue and wisdom." (Section 200: 168) Though much of Locke's text concerned the

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[407] Hume, "Of Refinement in the Arts," in Miller ed., *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, 271.

[408] The work originated as a series of letters Locke sent, while in exile, to a friend in England, offering advice on the education of his son. Locke's topic was the ideal education for a gentleman. Although the letters offered a wealth of pedagogical advice, in the end, Locke's principal concern was the product and not the process. I have consulted John William Adamson, ed. *The Educational Writings of John Locke* (Cambridge, England: At the University Press, 1912; 2d ed., 1922). Because Locke's writings are available in multiple sources, I have included also letter number and descriptive headings which are standard to all sources as well as specific page references to the Adamson edition. For convenience references are parenthetically inserted in the text. Professor Adamson's "Introduction" describes the immediate popularity of Locke's *Some Thoughts*. In 1705, the year after Locke's death the work, the sixth English edition appeared. By 1763 it had been translated into French (1695). Dutch (1698), Swedish (1709), German (1729, 1787) and Italian (1763).

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proper raising of children, he also offered hope, across the centuries, to older students that they were not too late for significant improvement. "Wisdom . . . is . . . not to be taught children." (Section 140, "Wisdom:"108) Even more heartening, "the first rudiments [of knowledge] . . . will open the way enough for his own industry to carry him as far as his fancy will prompt, or his parts enable him to go. . . . " And, "a gentleman, that would penetrate deeper, must do it by his own genius and industry. . . ." (Section 94, "Governor:" 73) Locke understood education as a process that was not confined within the walls of a school room. It needed to be fostered "by safe and insensible degrees. . . [the passage] from a boy to a man; which is the most hazardous step in all the whole course of life." Education had to accompany its acolytes into society. "The only fence against the world is a thorough knowledge of it, into which a young gentleman should be entered by degrees . . . ." (Section 94, "Governor:" 73) Applying the moral of Locke one hundred and fifty years later and transported across the Atlantic Ocean, in America every boy was a potential gentleman, and every ambitious young man had the power and the personal duty to attain a level of education sufficient to reflect credit on himself and his society.

Baron Montesqueiu published his political treatise, *Esprit de lois* (*The Spirit of the Laws*), in 1750. Its influence was immediate and, by 1774, it was a familiar volume in American libraries.[409] Montesquieu's analysis served as a seminal source for the framers of the American Constitution, who translated the French nobleman's theory about the value

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[409] Mott, *Multitudes*, 316 lists *Esprit de lois* as one of his "better sellers"of 1774. Hume is represented on the "best seller" list with the 1795 American edition *History of Great Britain*. Locke appears on Mott's "better seller" list for 1794 with *Essay on Human Understanding*.

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of the separation of powers into a framework for the organization of their new government. Montesquieu identified the rise of an international merchant class as the historical fulcrum for the development of a counterbalance to the power of the ruler (or the tyrant). Thus Montesquieu awarded the merchant more than just a rightful place in society. He bestowed upon him, in effect, a new patent of nobility. Not just a domestic countervailing force against the monarch (as the old nobility had once been), merchants were also a powerful force for world peace. War is bad for commercial relations. This is the nub of Montesquieu's concept of "douceur."[410] Albert Hirschman, in his 1977 book, *The Passions and the Interests*, summoned Montesquieu's notion of *douceur* in two sentences he excerpted from Montesquieu's discussion of economics in *Esprit de lois:* ". . . it is almost a general rule that wherever the ways of man are gentle [*moeurs douces*] there

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[410] Hirschman, *Passions*, offers a useful and concise precis of Montesquieu's description of the mechanism by which the rise of capitalism limited the ability of rulers to be despots. Briefly, historical sources of wealth, that is, currency and real property, were always vulnerable to seizure by rulers who appropriated tyrannical power. With the advent of the bill of exchange, however, merchants constituted an international class with the ability to move financial assets out of danger with the stroke of a pen. Monarchs discovered that in order to have access to vital capital, they had to "voluntarily" curb their powers. In a situation where the power of the State (the ruler) and the power of the purse (the merchants) resided in separate spheres, contesting equals had reason to accommodate one another (77). The confluence of mercantile interests united in a commercial culture that crossed regional and national political borders and thus became a force for national unity and international peace. Hirschman discusses the difficulty of translating the French *douceur* (literally, softness) used in this context, but says that "it conveys sweetness, softness, calm, and gentleness and is the antonym of violence" (59). American foreign policy still very much subscribes to this notion. It was the foundation of Franklin D. Roosevelt's "good neighbor" policy with regard to Latin America. It is current today all over the world in our notion of "trade partners." including our problematic relations with such partners as China and Saudi Arabia. Though Montesquieu might have envisioned amicable international relations among equals, its history has been intimately involved with the historical development of imperialist policies in industrialized nations.

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is commerce; and wherever there is commerce, there the ways of men are gentle." Later in the same chapter Montesquieu wrote, "Commerce . . . polishes and softens [*adoucit*] barbarian ways as we can see every day.[411]

This aspect of Montesquieu's ideas appealed powerfully to the cluster of political and economic thinkers in eighteenth-century Edinburgh. William Robertson, a Scottish historian, echoed Montesquieu in 1769 when he observed that "commerce tends to wear off those prejudices which maintain distinctions and animosity between nations. It softens and polishes the manners of men."[412] "Douceur" implies not only an absence of war, but a commercial and international standard of etiquette inextricably bound up with the notion of cultural refinement. Thus commerce, peace, and cultural refinement became a kind of holy trinity of mercantile virtue. Sir James Steuart Denham reflected the influence of Montesquieu's ideas in his *Inquiry Into the Principles of Political Economy*, written largely during his exile in France and published in Scotland in 1767.[413] Montesquieu's influence was also apparent in John Millar's (1735-1801) posthumously published essay, "The Advancement of Manufactures, Commerce, and the Arts; and the Tendency of this Advancement to diffuse a Spirit of Liberty and Independence." Millar's prose addressed a point that was very much reflected subsequently in the premise of the Art-Union – the

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[411] Ibid., 60.

[412] Ibid., 61.

[413] Denman (1712-1780) was an Edinburgh intellectual whose involvement in the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 resulted in a French exile that lasted until 1763 and placed him in France when Montesquieu published his work. Hirschman analyzes this in some detail, 81-87.

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belief that concerted action for a shared purpose could achieve desired goals more effectively than lone pursuit.

> *By a constant attention to professional objects,* the superior orders of mercantile people become quick-sighted in discerning their common interest, and, at all time, indefatigable in pursuing it. . . . The merchant, though he never overlooks his private advantage, is accustomed to connect his own gain with that of his brethren, and is therefore, always ready to join with those of the same profession, . . . in promoting general measures for the benefit of their trade."[414]

The managers of the Art-Union adapted this technique from their business practice to their role as art patrons. Though a number of them were serious collectors in their own right (notably Hone, Cozzens, Roberts, and Sturgis), they understood, as a group, that individual patronage could have only a limited effect in encouraging the growth of the fine arts in America and virtually no effect on popular taste. By combining and cooperating in art-patronage as they did in business, they believed that they could work for the benefit of cultivated taste (as best they understood it) for the fine arts in America.

Clinton's "Discourse" of 1814 was delivered to the members of a New York cultural inner sanctum, a *retardataire* group that preserved the social patterns of elite associations characteristic of the late eighteenth century intellectual landscape.[415] Only six years later, in 1820, a cluster of New York merchants' clerks founded an institution that

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[414] As quoted (with italics) in Hirschman, *Passions*, 91. Millar was a native of Glasgow, a city much like New York in that its prosperity was built on port-related shipping and commerce. For an extended discussion of Millar in Hirschman, see 87-93.

[415] For an excellent overview of this period in New York, see Thomas Bender, *Intellect*, especially Chapter 1, "The Emergence of City Culture in New York," 9-36.

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looked forward to the coming age of Jacksonian democracy.[416] At a time when access to books was very limited, The Mercantile Library Association proposed to facilitate the ambitions of clerks desirous of professional advancement by fostering the opportunity for personal self-improvement through education.[417] The library was an idea whose time had come. It appealed powerfully to New York's moneyed merchant class, a number of whom

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[416] The term here is used to convey a general idea and not to judge its historical validity. The degree of upward mobility in Jacksonian America has been a subject of considerable scholarly debate, with social historians like Edward Pessen, *Riches*, arguing that inherited wealth, family status and advantageous marriage accounted for a large number of "new" fortunes in the period, while others see significant expansion of opportunity and accompanying social ferment.

[417] The inspiration for the new Mercantile Library Association derived from Benjamin Franklin's advocacy of lending libraries. Franklin's call inspired a Boston crockery and glass merchant, William Wood, to encourage the organization of a lending library for clerks in Liverpool, England, where he was doing business, and, on his return to America, in his native Boston in 1820, and then in New York in 1821. The library began in 1821 in rented rooms upstairs at 49 Fulton Street with a meager seven hundred books. In 1826 it moved to larger rooms in the Harper Brothers building on Cliff Street. By 1828 the collection boasted in excess of 4,400 volumes available to 1,200 members and the Association was looking for a proper home. Along the way the book and journal collection expanded dramatically, along with membership and scope of activities. The institution added informative and morally edifying talks and courses to its core function as a reading room. In 1828 a group of paternalistic merchants (including Philip Hone) came together to form the Clinton Hall Association. They twice raised funds to build the library handsome homes, the original Clinton Hall, completed in 1830 at Beekman and Nassau Streets, and the second Clinton Hall in the former Italian Opera House at the juncture of Astor Place and Eighth Street to which the Library moved in 1855. Soon after moving into the first Clinton Hall, the Association enthusiastically supported the founding of the University of the City of New York (now New York University), which was initially envisioned as a school of higher education that would tender a practically-oriented curriculum in contrast to the classically-based education offered to the sons of gentlemen at Columbia College. While the new campus at Washington Square was under construction in 1832, the school's first classes were held at Clinton Hall. For a full account of the founding and first fifty years of the New York Mercantile Library Association, see Jonathan R. G. Hassard, "The New York Mercantile Library," *Scribner's Monthly* 1, no. 4 (February 1871): 353-367.

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could still recall (or claim to recall) their own youthful days as clerks.[418] Their financial support was successfully solicited on the premise and the promise that a library would provide a wholesome alternative for their clerks' leisure hours, a refuge from the temptations of the proliferating saloons and billiard parlors. (This was a particularly cogent argument for temperance-minded employers.) The Mercantile Library was a success and blossomed into a major intellectual resource for its modestly-positioned members.

In 1833, 1839, and 1840, three men who figure prominently in the history of the American Art-Union – Prosper Wetmore, John Gourlie, and Philip Hone – were invited to speak before the Mercantile Library Association.[419] Each man fleshed out, in his remarks, an ideology that extended the empowering mantle of Enlightenment notions of progress through education to those who stood on the bottom rung of the ladder to mercantile riches. All three speakers freely adapted ideas extracted from Enlightenment political, social, and economic thought to the circumstances of their audience and their city, taking,

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[418] The important point here is not how many wealthy merchants had genuinely begun as anonymous and lowly clerks, but that it was already a staple of the American creed that any ambitious, honest, and hardworking boy could succeed. It was especially important for men of wealth to believe this, and thus the Merchant's Library presented an especially attractive "cause."

[419] There is a draft in Wetmore's hand of his talk in the Delafield Family Papers, Special Collections, Firestone Library, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey: Box 130 (hereinafter referred to as Wetmore Papers) which I have transcribed and include as Appendix Two. Gourlie's address was printed in *The Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review* 2 (January 1840): 75-78 and also issued separately in pamphlet form. John Hamilton Gourlie, *An Address, Delivered Before the Mercantile Library Association at its Eighteenth Annual Meeting, January 8, 1839 (Embodying a History of the Association.) By John H. Gourlie* (New York: Printed by J. Van Norden, 1839). Hone's address, "Commerce and Commercial Character," was delivered December 17, 1840 and printed "by request of the board of directors" (of the Mercantile Library) in *The Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review* 4 no. 2: (February 1841) :129-146.

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as a common topic, the importance of cultural refinement in the making of the merchant character. All three talks built their arguments on the confluence of assumptions that we have looked at in popular works of Hume, Locke, and Montesquieu.

When Prosper Wetmore faced his audience at the Twelfth Annual Meeting of the Mercantile Library Association in 1833 he brought a degree of heartfelt empathy to his task (fig. 22).[420] Wetmore was the oldest son of a widowed mother. His formal education had ended abruptly and prematurely when he was placed, of necessity, in a counting house at the age of nine. Thus, his own biography attracted him to a Lockean preoccupation with the importance of education and its relation to moral character, specifically as it applied to the mercantile class. Though Wetmore earned a good living as a merchant (with a family of twelve children to support!), he was by avocation, a poet, journalist, civic activist, theater patron, political partisan, officer of the New York State Militia, antiquarian, and local literary light. His true missionary zeal burned brightest for the cause of education, which he conceived of in the broadest terms as taking place not only in schools, but also in myriad locations throughout society, available and free to all seekers. For Wetmore, as for many other self-educated men, the powerful romance of education never wavered or dimmed. He regarded himself as one with his audience.[421]

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[420] This talk was likely given in January, the customary month for the Mercantile Library Association Annual Meeting. Both Wetmore and Hone empathized with their audience to the extent that both had faced financial circumstances that drove them into trade before their educations were complete. Both felt keenly about the importance of educational opportunity. Gourlie's background remains unknown.

[421] For a more complete biographical sketch of Wetmore see the alphabetical listing in Appendix One. Wetmore was, after James Herring, the most influential shaper of the American Art-Union. The details of his busy life can only be reconstructed from

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Girded by a Lockean concept of the educated man as a vessel of virtue and wisdom as well as energy, self-discipline, and information, Wetmore preached the gospel of education in terms suited to the secularized, tolerant universe of New York commerce.[422] Education was the common denominator available to all men seeking the path to salvation. "Throughout, not alone the civilized world, but to the heathen, and the Savage, the Schoolmaster has sent his missive, and glad voices respect the lesson, and grateful hearts respond to the gift."[423] Reflecting Locke, Wetmore understood character-building as the

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the shards of mentions in a wide variety of sources which are cited in the biographical sketch. The papers at Princeton are fascinating, but obviously incomplete. They do not mention the Art-Union but concentrate on political and family matters and on the records of his time as Naval Agent which he assembled to defend himself against charges of improper behavior which he faced in 1850. These charges were the reason he stepped down as President of the Art-Union. It is clear from his very active public career after 1850 that contrary to Sperling's assertion, Wetmore, for one, did not slink away in disgrace.

[422] Of all the major towns in America, New York has historically been the most diverse in terms of population and religion, leading to the very early development of a characteristically cosmopolitan culture. This general theme is sounded in various sources including Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*: Carl Bridenbaugh's social histories comparing New York, Boston, Newport, Philadelphia and Charleston, *Cities in the Wilderness: The First Century of Urban Life in America, 1625-1742* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1938; rev. ed., New York: Oxford University Press, 1971) and *Cities in Revolt: Urban Life in America, 1743-1776* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1955); and Bender, *Intellect.*

[423] All quotes from Wetmore come from the manuscript copy of his talk at the Mercantile Library Association cited above. Later critics of Wetmore as President of the American Art-Union accused him of arrogance in his dealings with artists. It is hard to evaluate the truth of this charge, but the tone of this much earlier statement suggests that the degree of appreciation that Wetmore expected from the beneficiaries of largesse (from the point of view of the donor, of course) might well have stuck in the craw of the objects of such charitable intervention. See Baker's discussion, "Relations with the National Academy of Design," and especially his contention that when Abraham Cozzens succeeded Wetmore in 1850, Cozzens mended relations with prominent artists (191).

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first priority of education. It followed, then, that education was no luxury, but as vital to the man of business as to the professional or the scholar. Seizing upon Adam Smith's famous phrase, Wetmore made it his own, asserting that "the character of the people is the wealth of a nation."

Wetmore operated in the thick of New York Jacksonian politics. In 1833, when he delivered his remarks, his position as Secretary to the Democratic Governor William Marcy made him a man of substantial power and influence in New York State. As a merchant himself, he naturally believed that America's political future lay with men like him. In 1833 he was also put forward by Marcy (and officially elected by the State Legislature) to become one of nineteen members of the Regents of the University of the State of New York, a lifetime post to the agency that exercised general oversight over all the libraries and educational institutions at the secondary level and above in the State. Wetmore treated his Regents' duties very seriously.[424] In 1834 Wetmore won a seat in the New York State Assembly. Thus he was certainly self-referential in 1833 when he told the assembled clerks and dignitaries that merchants, specifically those "who have cherished with as earnest a care the riches of the mind, as they have their gains from a hundred seas," were taking their rightful places in "our halls of legislation . . .[and] in our public assemblies." The merchant was already and would remain a key figure in the governance of the country.[425] He therefore had to be as thoroughly and as broadly educated as any

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[424] Wetmore's papers in Princeton contain numerous references to his activities as a Regent.

[425] Wetmore thought that merchants would themselves run for office and personally serve the nation. He did not foresee that the mercantile class would discover

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gentleman. Moreover, merchants were the face of America to the rest of the world, and by their personal integrity and intellect, the nation was judged from abroad. "Such a fact is worth volumes of comment on the advantages of mental cultivation to the merchant and the trader."

Wetmore's talk before the Mercantile Library Association was illuminated by the inner light of personal witness. Reading was, for Wetmore as for Locke, "a thing of honour, credit, delight and recreation" (Section 148, "Reading:"115). While other members of the elite debated over how much education and what kind of education would best serve the lesser classes of society, Wetmore did not condescend. He expounded a democratic belief in intellectual entitlement which strongly recalled Hume's formulation:

> [A]n adequate devotion to business is neither incompatible nor irreconcilable with a love of letters and an admiration of the works of genius. . . . The hours that can with propriety be withdrawn from business, can never be so advantageously employed as in reading, or in some other exercise which has for its object the improvement of the mind.

Wetmore exhorted his audience to read history, poetry, even "the serious Novelist." He spoke with the sincerity born of his own experience when he said that "relaxation is necessary to preserve the elasticity of the mind. Reading composition – or listening to the oral lessons of philosophy and science – will restore that brilliancy which the duller pursuits of life have for the time destroyed." In the end, the personal *was* political. Education was essential to American freedom. "The moral force you gain by study must be

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that they could use their money, instead, to buy the public servants, and thus, go on accumulating wealth. By the time he died, however, this more modern pattern was thoroughly entrenched, put into place by a political system in which he was deeply involved.

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apparent, for to acquire knowledge is to create power. . . . How becoming it is then in a people, whose greatest pride is their love of freedom, to concentrate this beautiful element through the alembic of their own minds."[426] Wetmore brought Locke, Montesquieu, and Hume to bear in putting forward his strongly patriotic message. The educated merchant represented the future of America. His character determined the fate of republican virtue.

John Hamilton Gourlie spoke at the New York Mercantile Library Association on the occasion of its Eighteenth Annual Meeting on January 8, 1839. Gourlie was a stockbroker and a man of letters. In his brief remarks, following the presentation of the Annual Report, he usefully and succinctly rehearsed the history of the Mercantile Library Association and noted with satisfaction its thriving condition. But in his peroration Gourlie could not resist a restatement of the link between education and morality which was, in fact, the bedrock upon which he Association had been established:

> And so it is in proportion as you enlighten the mind, you awaken it to the perception of moral beauty and the practice of virtue; and it is in this point of view, that we regard the mercantile library with the greatest satisfaction. No young man can go there, and among its eighteen thousand volumes, not find works to dispel the mists of a delusive theory and erroneous speculations, and be a steady frequenter of its well provided reading room, without having his taste cultivated, his mind enlightened, and his heart improved. . . . .We believe much good has been done at Clinton Hall, for the cause of virtue, and we will add, of religion. Here there is no excitement to hypocrisy or display. The youth communes with his own heart; and the communion which he holds with the silent monitor in his hand, tells with effective force on his understanding, influences, the current of his thought;

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[426] Wetmore's use of this argument reflected his lifelong involvement with education in New York State. Moreover, it was Wetmore's close friend (and fellow Art-Union Manager), Townsend Harris, who successfully spearheaded the drive for the establishment of a free municipal institution of higher learning, City College. The requirement for an educated electorate remains the most compelling motivation for funding public education to this day. By 1825 New York State had universal white manhood suffrage. Expanded public education inevitably followed.

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> directs his aspirations to the pure and beautiful, and is, as it were, the voice of the Almighty, guiding him into the paths of peace, by that gentle but irresistible impulse which controls his actions, while he is insensible of its application; preparing him for a career of honor and usefulness, by bringing him up in an intelligent, a sober, and reflecting state of mind, which gives him a distaste for everything low vicious, or dishonest.[427]

The Library Reading Room was intended precisely as a sanctuary, a shelter where clerks who were already in the world could safely complete the metamorphosis from boy to man. Thus the institution was, for the merchant's clerk, the benevolent tutor that Locke envisioned:

> The great work of a governor [teacher, tutor] is to fashion the carriage, and form the mind; to settle in his pupil good habits, and the principles of virtue and wisdom; to give him, by little and little, a view of mankind; and work him into a love and imitation of what is excellent and praiseworthy; and in the prosecution of it, to give him vigour, activity, and industry (Section 94, "Governor:" 75-76).

Gourlie's clerk, his head bowed in concentration in the Mercantile Library reading room, could seize the opportunity to cultivate his taste and become the healthy, wealthy, and wise man whom the philosophers descibed. Dr. Locke wrote that "A sound mind in a sound body, is a short but full description of a happy state in this world" (Section 1: 25).

In 1840 the Mercantile Library Association invited Philip Hone to speak as preface to the Association's lecture series. A revered elder, Hone exercised his right to a certain prolixity. He was an honorary charter member of the Association, a past President of the Clinton Hall Association (the Mercantile Library's "landlord"), and had long counted among the Library's merchant benefactors.[428] As with Wetmore, Hone's approach to

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[427] Gourlie, "Address:" 78.

[428] According to John Gourlie, it was Hone who suggested the name Clinton Hall in 1828 in honor of the late Governor at the meeting of merchants who pledged the funds

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culture and the fine arts was conditioned by an acute awareness of his truncated educational opportunities. In 1832 he had written in his diary:

> I am sensible of my deficiency and would give half I possess in the world to enjoy the advantages of a classical education. O, that my sons knew how to appreciate their opportunities of acquiring knowledge, and would profit by their father's experience! The toils of eighteen would then be richly rewarded by the delightful experience of fifty, and the pleasures of prosperity enhanced, and the sorrows of adversity assuaged, by the stores of intellectual riches laid up in early life.[429]

Hone addressed his audience on the subject of "Commerce and Commercial Character."[430] This former Mayor of New York clearly felt "at home" at the Mercantile Library and offered an expansive amalgam of historical analysis and personal anecdote. Hone's talk remains remarkable as a thorough statement of the role of the merchant in political, civic, charitable, and cultural affairs as explicated by a contemporary who lived at the very center of New York merchant culture. Hone understood America to be composed of three "great interests" -- agriculture, manufacturing, and commerce (132). Echoing Montesquieu as mediated through the Edinburgh philosophes, Hone said that "the

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to build the Association a permanent home. In 1831 Hone served as President of Clinton Hall. The Clinton Hall Association remained the Mercantile Library Association's landlord. Their role was more than advisory. In 1850 when the Association hotly debated moving to a larger location, the group arguing against the move prevailed by a narrow margin, only to find out that the Clinton Hall Association had already sold the old building and purchased the Italian Opera Hall on Astor place as a suitable new location to which the Library moved in 1855. Hassard, "Library:" 355.

[429] As quoted by Nevins ed. "Introduction," *Hone Diary*, 1 : x.

[430] Hone spoke on the same topic at the Mercantile Library Association of Boston (of which he was an honorary member) on October 3, 1843. His talk in Boston was also published, but in abridged form, *The Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review* 10 no. 1 (January 1844): 65-72. Though the talks bore identical titles and shared similarities, they emphasized different points. Page citations are indicated in the text in parentheses all refer to the 1840 talk.

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government is bound to protect the merchant in return for the support it derives from him" (132). This was a protection of liberty for all, since "the first indication of a tendency to arbitrary power in rulers is a neglect of the just claims of the merchant to the paternal care and protection of the government. . . . Commerce affords the readiest and most natural resource of the government in times of emergency" (132). Therefore, "commerce has in all ages been the great promoter and supporter of civil and religious freedom" (135). Continuing his restatement of these ideas, Hone turned to

> the bright examples of nations and communities, who, under the operations of just laws and free institutions have cultivated trade as a liberal and honorable profession, promoting that intercourse between the people of distant countries which destroys prejudice, improves the mind, refines the habits, and softens the disposition . . . (136-37).

Hone was clear where New York stood in this: "The city of New York is above all others the offspring of commerce; to the enterprise, ability, and liberality of her merchants, she owes her present commanding position. Queen of the western world, her throne is established upon the pillars of trade, and mercantile honor is the jewel of her diadem" (141). Hone concluded his talk with an exposition on the five "attributes of an accomplished merchant." He listed "upright and candid dealing," "punctuality," "a judicious employment of time," "economy in the habits of living," and finally,

> a love of literature, ardor in the pursuit of knowledge, and a taste for the fine arts. These accomplishments, which may be classed among the virtues as well as the ornaments of social life, are indispensable in the formation of such a character as we are describing . . . . It is not presumed that every person engaged in trade would be an author, a philosopher, or a connoisseur; but in this enlightened age, none will be excused for ignorance . . . (144-45).

Hone concluded by prescribing that "every merchant should be a *gentleman*" [italics

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original]. Unlike Locke's gentleman who was born to his station, and whose education had to be tailored to make him morally fit to fill his inherited position, Hone's gentleman was a thoroughly American creature. Though Hone was already aware of the danger in using the term, it was important to him. Hone's "gentleman" was an amalgam of all that Locke, Hume, and Montesqueiu had described:

> I am aware, my friends, that it is not at present the most popular term, ...But rightly understood the attributes of a gentleman cannot fail to command the respect of all classes of mankind; they soften the asperities and sweeten the intercourse of society. By a gentleman I do not mean the man who founds his pretensions upon the accidental gifts of fortune, or claims exclusive deference from any peculiar position in society; the poor man, and he of humble birth, has an equal claim to aspire to the title with the richest and the proudest, and frequently shows a better right to it (145).

The term gentleman, for Hone, denoted a constellation of moral qualities. "Commerce" was more than just a "means of acquiring wealth." It was "a profession tending to improve the mind, refine the imagination and enlarge the heart" (132). It promoted "intercourse between the people of distant countries which destroys prejudice, improves the mind, refines the habits, and softens the disposition, while it supples the wants, increases the comforts and extends the enjoyments of mankind" (137). In America this exalted status, with the aid of institutions like the Mercantile Library Association, was within the reach of all. It was the genius of America to transform the European gentleman into a New York merchant.

Relatively few people actually heard DeWitt Clinton, Prosper Wetmore, John Gourlie, or Philip Hone. Clinton's *Discourse*, though committed to print as a gesture of respect toward the speaker, was never intended for significant distribution. Wetmore's

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remarks were remembered (with luck) only by his audience. By the mid 1840s, however, the basic tenets of merchant culture had achieved widespread currency. They were a familiar refrain, regularly repeated and restated in a variety of widely circulated print forums. American merchants were coming of age, experiencing a growing sense of group identity and empowerment accompanied by a growing awareness of the importance and the responsibility of their function in American society. This self-consciousness was not unique to merchants, but a shared phenomenon with American society as a whole. Andrew Jackson's victory over John Quincy Adams in the 1828 Presidential Election had sent a clear signal that the age of the American Revolution and the founding of the Republic was past. As the generation of statesmen and soldiers who had made the Revolution died, and increasing sectional rivalries raised serious doubt as to whether the Federal Union would survive, Americans became increasingly aware that they had a past to remember and a future to engage.

The 1830s saw the beginnings of a distinct American historical sensibility. In 1834 George Bancroft (Prosper Wetmore's good friend and John Cogswell's former schoolmaster-partner) published his *History of the United States.* In 1835 American self-awareness received a powerful jolt with the appearance of a systematic treatise on the American experiment published by a member of the minor French nobility who had been despatched by his government to America to observe and report on what he found. Alexis de Toqueville's *Democracy in America* was immediately translated into English. William Hickling Prescott (a member of Philip Hone's extended circle of friends) published his three-volume *History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella the Catholic* in 1838, while

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Jared Sparks (1789-1866) was appointed the first professor of secular history in America at Harvard College in 1839. The urge to record, preserve, and interpret was not limited to writers of political history. Closer to home, William Dunlap, New York artist, playwright, and theater manager, published two seminal works, his *History of the American Theatre* in 1832, and *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* in 1834.[431]

John Gourlie's remarks of 1839 and Philip Hone's lecture of 1840 reached a much wider audience than the seating capacity of the Clinton Hall rooms where they were delivered. Freeman Hunt reprinted them in his monthly *Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review.*[432] Hunt brought out his first issue in July 1839, the same year that

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[431] Dunlap continued with a *History of New York for Schools* in 1837, and a two-volume *History of the New Netherlands, Province of New York, and State of New York to the Adoption of the Federal Constitution* in 1839 and 1840.

[432] Hunt (1804-1858), from Quincy, Massachusetts, arrived in New York City in 1831, and, in July 1839, began to publish his magazine. It was titled *The Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review* from 1839 to 1850. From 1850 to 1860 it officially assumed what had always been its popular name, *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine.* It ran under different owners after Hunt's death until 1870, when it was supplanted by the weekly *Commercial and Financial Chronicle.* For a brief description and publishing history, see Mott, *Magazines*, 696-7. For an analysis of the ideology of the magazine, see Jerome Thomases, "Notes and Documents: Freeman Hunt's America," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 30, no. 3 (December 1943): 395-407. The magazine contained, as Hunt promised at the end of his first successful year, news from "various departments of maritime and commercial law, the political economy of nations, navigation, commerce, and manufactures, mercantile biography, currency, banking and those miscellaneous subjects which possess an interest to the merchant and man of business, and are of standard value to society and the community at large . . ." all expressed in the prose of "sound and able writers" (Hunt, *Merchants'* 1, no. 6 [December 1839] : 536.) Hunt provided a platform for the articulation of many ideas concerning the nature and importance of merchant culture. One of his "departments" was "Mercantile Associations." In 1839 alone Hunt published updates on the activities of the New York Mercantile Library Association (including a list of donations), the Boston Mercantile

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the Apollo Association was founded. The proximity in timing was not deliberate, but neither was it coincidental. Hunt's *Magazine* and the Apollo Association both rode on the crest of the same historical current – the unabashed assertion of a commercial presence in every aspect of American life.

Hunt's Merchants' Magazine (as it was popularly known) was a compendium of fact and opinion intended to aid the merchant in the pursuit of his business affairs, to instruct and guide him in hewing to high ethical standards, and, importantly, to glorify him as the true American hero. Like the merchants he admired, Hunt anticipated the needs of his customers and met them. Brimming with useful information and literate discussion, the magazine found its audience and became the clearinghouse for the expression of a wide range of topics vital to the interests of practicing merchants. The journal regularly noticed and reviewed new books of general interest, including in its lists works on topics relating to art and literature.

In June 1849 Hunt offered his readers a shimmering conception of the hegemony of commerce as the defining institution of America, couched in terms of the tenth anniversary of his successful journal:

> [A]lthough our journal is designed for merchants in the largest acceptation [sic] of the term, we are gratified to know that it has been found almost equally useful to, and as highly appreciated by, statesmen and lawyers. No effort will hereafter be wanting on our part to render the work equally acceptable to all classes of intelligent men in any way connected with trade and commerce, in all their bearings, upon the legislation of States and nations, and upon the development of the great industrial interests of man and society, at home and abroad. . . . We are

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Library Association (including a report on its nineteenth anniversary), the Cincinnati Mercantile Library Association, the Philadelphia Mercantile Library Society (including a discussion of its officers), and the Young Man's Institute of Hartford, Connecticut.

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> persuaded that our journal will continue to maintain, in even a greater degree, its character as a perfect *vade mecum* to the Merchant, the Manufacturer, and the Banker, as well as to the Statesman, Commercial Lawyer, and the Political Economist, and, in short, to all who desire information on all subjects falling within the wide scope embraced in our plane.[433]

The success of Hunt's magazine reverberated in the South.[434] A small group of Southern activists understood that America had entered into an age in which economic power was shifting from agriculture to commerce and manufacturing. Among these forward-looking sectional champions was a young South Carolina lawyer, James Dunwoody Brownson De Bow. De Bow believed that the future of a prosperous and economically independent South lay in regional industrial development that would take the raw material riches of Southern agriculture and transform them into income-producing manufactured goods. This would require the funding of a vastly improved internal transportation system and the deliberate cultivation of an enlarged class of Southern commercial men. De Bow looked North to Freeman Hunt, and, in 1846, founded the *Commercial Review of the South and West* (known popularly as *De Bow's Review*).[435] Like Hunt, De Bow championed education. In 1848 he exulted over the establishment of a

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[433] Freeman Hunt, "Our First Decade Completed," *Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review* 20, no. 6 (June 1849): 696.

[434] According to Jerome Thomases, "Notes," 396, Hunt was an abolitionist and his magazine was specifically designed to contradict and counteract a denigration of mercantile activity that was deeply rooted in the agricultural classes, and particularly among the gentleman planters who dominated southern society and culture.

[435] For a publishing history of *De Bow's Review* with bibliography, see Mott, *Magazines*, 338- 349. *De Bow's* survived fitfully from 1846 until 1867. In 1853 De Bow was named Director of the Census by President Franklin Pierce, a position he held for four years. The magazine was based in New Orleans, though it published from Washington D. C. while De Bow worked for the Census.

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"professorship of commerce" at a newly formed state-sponsored university in New Orleans, "the first institution in modern times, and certainly in our own country, to perceive the importance of elevating the mercantile classes to the same rank as the learned professions."[436] While not as long-lived or successful as its New York progenitor, De Bow's magazine worked to spread the word to its Southern constituency of the importance of mercantile activity in creating a viable economy for the region.

In his talk of 1840 Philip Hone had singled out the Medici family of Florence for special praise, observing that "Literature, science, and the arts, flourished side by side with commerce under the auspices of this family of merchants" (137). The chorus urging the American merchant to function as a modern Medici became a popular refrain.[437] In 1845 C. [Charles] Edwards Lester (1815-1890) published *The Artist, The Merchant and, The Statesman of the Age of the Medici, and of Our Own Times*. Lester, a Connecticut native and maternal descendant of Jonathan Edwards, was the United States Consul to Genoa at

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[436] "A Professorship of Commerce," *The Commercial Review* 6, no .2 (April 1848): 110.

[437] For a nation self-avowedly free from the "corruption" of the "old world," America has never ceased to position itself as the logical and legitimate heir of selected historical traditions. In the revolutionary and federal periods Americans saw themselves as modern inheritors of aspects of ancient Greek and Roman identities, both to legitimize newly- minted democratic and republican political forms, and to participate as well in the international neoclassical movement in art, decorative arts, architecture and women's fashion. In the early mid-nineteenth century the Florentine model became popular. It could only have come to the fore with the rise of a significantly wealthy merchant class. I have no idea who first made the parallel. It is unlikely, however, that it was Philip Hone. The notion of the Medici model was clearly current by the 1840s, but the Italians were positioned as the leading citizens of quasi democratic city-states. It was only after the Civil War that the merchants dared assume the regal description "merchant princes." It was also after the civil War that the "renaissance style" in decorative arts and architecture saw sumptuously decorated "palazzos" constructed in American cities.

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the time that he wrote.[438] His ambitious two-volume, 500-page treatise roamed through a series of topics. In the first volume Edwards extolled the genius of Hiram Powers, the Florence-based American sculptor, and pressed the need for reform of the consular service. In the second volume Lester took up the subject of the history of art patronage in Italy, ending with a precis (based on Dunlap) of the history of art in America. Lester embroidered on the notion of the Medicis – merchant patrons whose largesse funded the golden age of Florentine art – as a model for American art patronage. He ended his book with this optimistic vision:

> The day of art is coming. It will not be a single generation . . . before the arts will stand higher in this country than they now stand in any other nation. The men are now at their easels, who will see the day when their fellow-citizens will crowd to their Studios with eagerness and enthusiasm – when Congress will hold high the laurel crown for the men who will make the history of our father live in marble and breathe in canvas. And then the Painter and Sculptor will stand with the Poet and the Historian. The same spirit that lived in Greece in the times of Apelles, and in Florence under her Medici, will fire the souls of our people.[439]

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[438] Edwards, born in Griswold, Connecticut, was the great grandson of Jonathan Edwards on his maternal side. He emphasized this relationship in his pen name, C. Edwards Lester. After a classical education, he traveled to the south and west, read law for one year in Mississippi and then trained for the ministry at Auburn Theological Seminary in Auburn, New York in 1835-36. He worked for one year as a minister, but found his lungs too weak for the calling and traveled to Europe to restore his health. He was an American delegate to the Exeter Hall Anti-Slavery Convention in England in 1840. From 1842-47 he was American consul to Genoa. He was a regular contributor to *Hunt's* and was known to its readers for a series of articles urging that the United States Consular service be placed on a professional footing to properly reflect the importance of commerce to America as well as to establish and maintain a proper level of dignity for America abroad. In 1846 he published *Artists in America*. He continued a career as an author and journalist when he returned to America in 1847, writing biography and history as well as translating works of Italian history and biography into English. (Database:*Biographies of Notable Americans*, 1904).

[439] C. Edwards Lester, *The Artist, the Merchant, and the Statesman, of the Age of the Medici, and of Our Own Times* (New York: Paine & Burgess, 1845), 2 : 238.

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Lester's book received a long notice and lavish praise in *Hunt's* (likely written by Hunt himself) which described the contents of the work in patriotic terms: "The two important ideas of these volumes are the value of national sentiment and the future influence of literature and art upon the fortunes of America."[440] Hunt took the occasion of the publication of Lester's book to wax patriotic, making an intriguing link between American manifest destiny and art. Prosper Wetmore could not have been more pleased to read that

> National greatness involves as its prominent idea, moral grandeur, elevation, and refinement of the soul. . . . America . . . is to be great and powerful . . . by the living power of thought. . . . Those mighty energies which are expended now upon lower objects of pursuit, must be devoted to literature and the fine arts, till the whole nation become enamored of the spirit of beauty. . . . We owe to ourselves and to the human race, a school of literature, and art thoroughly our own. . . . . From what quarter shall come that liberal nurture of the scholar, the sculptor, the painter, which shall cherish genius into life and maturity, till it shall make the past immortal and secure the future? We think Mr. Lester, in the remarks which he has made upon the merchants and commerce of the Italian republics, has truly shown us where our literature and our artist must look for that generous patronage which alone can secure success. . . . Why then should not our merchants do for their country all and more than those of Genoa and Florence and Venice. . . . To their liberality and enterprise must be committed the hope of the country. . . . The minds of great merchants are liberalized by the operations of their business. . . . They alone, as a class, possess the wealth which can afford a generous patronage . . . . Our affluent, large-souled merchants alone can effectually aid in enlarging and refining the national mind, and in founding a new school and a new era in art.[441]

The success of the American Art-Union in the late 1840s can be attributed to a number of factors – the visibility it gained through the Presidency of William Cullen Bryant; the popularity of the Thomas Cole *Voyage of Life* prize in 1848; a popular mania

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[440] [Freeman Hunt], *The Merchant's Magazine* 14 no. 3 (March 1846): 236.

[441] Ibid., 238-242.

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(and therefore self-limited) for the device of the art lottery; an improved national economy – these are certainly all valid contributors to its exponential growth. To these should be added, however, a more elusive element. As the 1840s progressed, the ideology that fueled the Art-Union enterprise was broadcast in a variety of public print forums and thus spread among the members of a commercial middle class throughout the nation. Freeman Hunt's review of Lester's book encompasses all the major points made earlier by DeWitt Clinton, Prosper Wetmore, John Gourlie, and Philip Hone. Hunt spoke to, but also for, his audience in understanding the link between art patronage and America's "manifest destiny." The Art-Union provided a vehicle to translate this widely shared structure of belief into practice.

As the Art-Union gained forward momentum in numbers and in geographic reach through the mid-1840s, it became increasingly concerned with the quantity and quality of its presence in the press. American art was no longer a topic of concern to a limited circle of aesthetes. The nation was riveted in 1847 by the national tour of Hiram Powers' *Greek Slave.*[442] Congress squabbled over questions relating to the decoration and architecture of public buildings in Washington, D.C. But still, the right of commercial men to judge ideas, literature, or the fine arts was by no means established. In his address to the Annual Meeting of the Apollo Association of 1840, President John Francis expressed his hope and belief that:

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[442] The American tour of the *Greek Slave* attracted press attention across the nation and grossed the amazing sum of $23,000 (Craven, *Sculpture*, 119). A version of the work was among the prizes of the Western Art Union in 1850 and pushed that organization's list of subscribers from 1,407 in 1849 to over 5,000 in 1850. Baker, Art-Union,"139-140; *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* (April 1851): 14.

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> The metropolitan city of the Union may distinguish herself equally with her commercial prowess in those exalted arts which promise to unfold, . . . the highest attributes of American genius. The arts owe so much in all ages to the liberality of mercantile generosity, that I cannot think this expectation vain when contemplating the character of the American merchant.[443]

Art still had no "rightful" position in American society. In 1842 the Annual Report of the Committee of Management noted that:

> It has been said that Art in the 19th century must feed on the crumbs which fall from the table of utility: But who shall say that Art is not herself utility. It cannot be that Christianity and Science in their advanced age, will leave their most beautiful off-spring to perish, whom they nourished into existence when their union was first consummated. . . .
>
> And he who wishes well to his race, and above all to his country, should not neglect an Institution which cannot be perverted to evil, and which must be productive of good.[444]

Charles Briggs, delivering the 1844 "Annual Report" on behalf of the managers, returned to the defense of art. "Among the ill-informed and unthinking, paintings and statues are regarded as luxuries to be indulged in only by the rich and effeminate." Briggs attributed these prejudices to the fact that there was so little art in the "abodes of common life." Art was not merely decoration for the very rich. It represented, said Briggs, "the palpable expressions of thinking minds." A discerning taste in Art, properly cultivated, was, moreover, "a source of national wealth." Here Briggs put forth the argument that in England led to the founding of the Kensington Museums. He cited the example of France, which "has long cherished the arts as among the chief of her national resources. . . . Of the

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[443] *Transactions . . . , 1840*: 12.

[444] *Transactions . . ., 1842*: 7. Though Charles Briggs delivered this report for the Committee, the themes and phrasing strongly recall Prosper Wetmore's talk of 1833 before the Mercantile Library Association.

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enormous amount of manufactured articles which we receive from her, the greatest part owe their sole value to the ingenuity of her artists, who have been educated at the national expense. . . ."[445]

At the same meeting, the Rev. Dr. Bellows played some interesting variations on Enlightenment themes.[446] He replaced commerce with art as the "softening" agent, and imbued it moreover, with the power to render American society less mercenary:

> If ever there was a people, or a community, that needed the softening, harmonizing and soothing influences of that which admits not of passionate and selfish devotion, it is we. Our institutions keep us politically and socially in a state of perpetual excitement and competition. President-making, and money-getting, together, stir up all that is bitter, sectional or personal in us. . . . No nation needs its [art's] exalting, purifying, calming influences, more than ours. We need it to supplant the mean, utilitarian tastes, which threaten to make us a mere nation of shop-keepers.

John Jay chimed in with another turnabout. Too much of a focus on the mechanical and the material actually impeded progress. To fulfill her manifest destiny America required art.

> The Arts will necessarily counteract in some degree, the mechanical tendencies of our age, since they raise our thoughts from the downward inclination, to which they are forced in the universal pursuit of money-getting – since they blend the ideal with the actual, I think this may be regarded as a patriotic Institution that is to adorn America in her infancy, with those charms of external culture which will add lustre to her maturer age, when the Star of Empire taking its westward way, having set forever in the old world over which it has reigned for unnumbered centuries,

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[445] "Annual Report of the Committee of Management of the American Art-Union for the year 1844," *Transactions . . ., 1844*: 3-9.

[446] Henry Whitney Bellows (1814-1882), a Harvard-trained Bostonian, was the pastor of the First Congregational Church (later the Church of All Souls) and was a noted orator. During the Civil War he took an active role in the Sanitary Commission and in 1865 was among the founders of the National Conference of Unitarian Churches.

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shall shed its full effulgence on the broad face of this great continent.[447]

If Reverend Bellows made the argument for art as good for the soul, John Jay, the current bearer of an honored name in American and New York public life, updated DeWitt Clinton's national concern to reflect the expansionist political reality of the mid 1840s.

In its early days the Apollo Association contented itself with defenses of art and of its own actions and choices such as these, speeches delivered at the annual meetings, printed and distributed to subscribers through the medium of the *Transactions.* With time the Management Committee became increasingly aware of the importance of the press both for the dissemination of information and for the "correct" understanding of the importance of art to America, and the importance of the Art-Union in particular. The Art-Union realized that it could assure that its viewpoint was represented in print by speaking on its own behalf. This awareness culminated in the transformation of the *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* into a serious art journal, resembling in form, tone, and content, the respected *Art Journal,* which was published in London, but also enjoyed an American readership.[448]

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[447] "Annual Report of the Committee of Management of the American Art-Union for the year 1844," *Transactions . . ., 1844*:10; 14-15.

[448] In 1847 John Ridner advertised himself both as an Honorary Secretary (taking Subscriptions) for the London Art Union, and as an agent for the "Art-Union [sic] Journal." *Literary World* 2, no. 20 (November 1847): 380. The London *Art Journal* (called the *Art Union Journal* until 1849) was, despite its name, not published by the London Art Union. See King, "Taste," 269, no. 12, for clarification of the confusing relationship between the London Art Union and the *Art Journal.* For a complete history of American Art-Union publications, see Cowdrey, "Publications," 241-293. The *Bulletin* began as a semi-monthly source of self-advertisement in 1848 and became increasingly ambitious until reaching its final form in 1850 as an illustrated monthly art magazine (with ten issues a year published from April through December).

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By the late 1840s the argument was fully and widely set forth.[449] The development of a school of American art (and American literature) was inextricably linked to the full realization of America's exalted destiny to fill the continent and shine the beacon of liberty throughout the world. The commercial classes, broadly defined and located in every corner of the Union, were critical to the success of this mission, not just as funders, but as a vanguard for the spread of cultivated taste among all sectors of the society. Though the Art-Union contributed greatly to this development, its democratic vision of a class of art patrons and taste-makers firmly based in the middle class has never been fully realized. The Art-Union was a corporate patron, arguably, the first such patron in the modern sense in America. It achieved substantial power over a small and limited American art market by combining its aggregate of small contributions to achieve a dominant position. The men who directed the Art-Union, though certainly among the "elite"of their day, were not, however, the nation's richest men.

In fact, the future of American art patronage lay not with these middling business men, professionals, and journalists who constituted the leadership of the Art-Union, but with the American "Medici" foreseen by Philip Hone, C. Edwards Lester and Freeman Hunt. These "Medici," who emerged in full force after the Civil War, did indeed become art patrons and provided the substantial funds to found the great American public collections. They still felt insecure about linking the words "American" and "art" in the same phrase and did not much prize nor purchase American art. Instead, they used their

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[449] This is not to say that it was completely accepted. Merchants remained defensive about their right to function as connoisseurs and arbiters of taste. The fine arts continue to occupy an awkward niche in American society.

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fortunes to move the art of the Old World, both ancient and modern, from Europe to America, where they displayed it in their mansions and their museums, often relying on professional connoisseurs to guide their purchases. American artists long remained beggars at the table of American art institutions and American art patronage. James Herring's vision of a permanent gallery of American art in New York City, filling its space with the work of contemporary American artists, was not realized until 1931 when Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney turned her Whitney Studio Galleries into the Whitney Museum of American Art.

To understand the position of the American Art-Union with regard to the development of a popular taste for the fine arts in America, it may be useful to resort to the imprecise notion of "middlebrow."[450] The Art-Union struggled with the problem of "taste" and "taste-making" for all of its life and was never able to satisfy critics at both ends of the spectrum – those who found its choices too pandering to "popular" taste and those who urged it to support local and beginning artists, and not spend large sums on major works by established names. We can see the Art-Union historically, then, as the first serious attempt in America to assert the validity of a middle-class presence in the world of fine art. In its evangelistic belief in the efficacy of fine art as a civilizing agent, the Art-Union sought to involve the literate public in art matters by offering the prospect of power over

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[450] Russel Lynes, "Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow," in *The Tastemakers: The Shaping of American Popular Taste* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955; reprint with new afterword; New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1980), 310-333. This chapter, first published in 1949 in *Harper's Magazine* was the genesis for the book. Lynes credits the term "middlebrow" to Virginia Woolf in an essay of the same name, 320. The topic of "taste" is vast, multifaceted and multidisciplinary.

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the shape of production.

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CHAPTER 9

THE ART-UNION'S POLITICAL AGENDA: EARLY AND LATE

It is striking, in examining the makeup of the participants in the Art-Union over the years, how many of them were deeply involved in political life. It is also striking how the Art-Union Committee table accommodated, at the same time, fiercely partisan Whigs and Democrats, joined in this "party-neutral" venture. It is my hypothesis that the overriding political purpose of the Art-Union transcended party affiliation. New York Whigs and Democrats alike signed on to a project that they hoped and believed would strengthen the bonds of Union through the creation and encouragement of a national art. If merchants transformed themselves into educated, cultured gentlemen; and international bonds of commerce "softened" relations among nations and encouraged a world of peace and mutual commercial benefit; might not the same mechanism work within the United States to mitigate sectional strife and unite a nation-wide mercantile middle class in support of art, refinement, and national unity? The vehicle to realize this ambition had been created by James Herring, whose sole engagement in the political arena, so far as is known, was to protect and defend the object of his primary allegiance, the Masons. What James Herring began, Prosper Wetmore saw through to completion – two very different men, fueled by different sources of energy, pursuing the same goal.[451]

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[451] Prosper Wetmore led the Art-Union it its years of greatest growth and success, serving as President in 1847, '48, '49 and the beginning of 1850. He resigned as President and from the Committee of Management in a letter read by Abraham Cozzens, Chairman of the Executive Committee at the Committee of Management meeting of 21 February 1850. His resignation was accepted, with proper resolutions of thanks, and Cozzens was

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The Apollo Association was founded fifty years after George Washington became the first President of the United States. The thirteen original colonies had backed reluctantly into a whole, their national unity forged in opposition to rule from London, and not from any positive regard for one another. America remained, well into the nineteenth century, a work-in-progress, still finding its way, and by no means irrevocably established. Under these circumstances, secession in the face of intractable disagreement was an option that never entirely disappeared from political discourse. In 1814 New England Federalists, bitterly opposed to "Mr. Madison's War," had seriously debated withdrawing as a region at their secret Hartford Convention. In 1832 an offended South Carolina threatened "nullification" of the Federal union over Andrew Jackson's tariff legislation.

The 1830s witnessed a dramatic acceleration of the abolition movement, primarily in New England, but also in some sectors of the population of the Middle States including New York. What was the content of "patriotism?" For the abolitionist, unconditional love of country required a nation free from the stain of slavery. For most white southerners, regardless of feelings about slavery, the federal government had no legitimacy to interfere with state laws and practices. For non-abolitionists outside the South, who constituted the vast majority of the white population, the *sine-qua-non* of patriotism was the preservation of the Union, the United States. In 1835 Philip Hone worried in his *Diary* that the activities of the abolitionists would ultimately tear the country apart.[452] In October 1838

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promptly elected to replace him. At the meeting of 7 March 1850 George Curtis was elected to fill the vacancy on the Committee.

[452] Hone, *Diary* 1: 171.

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Hone described abolition as the "new enemy of the peace of mankind, which I fear is destined to overthrow the institutions of our country."[453]

New York merchants, in particular, had strong ties of business and personal affection with the South.[454] New York bankers extended the credit to Southern planters that financed their crops. New York shippers collected the cotton and tobacco and transported it to England. Their vessels returned to New York laden with European consumer goods which New York jobbers, brokers, auctioneers, and commission merchants distributed to Southern retailers. New Yorkers were well aware of the importance of the Southern trade to the prosperity of their city.[455] For all that, New Yorkers were uncomfortable with slavery and took refuge in the hope that it would

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[453] Hone, *Diary*, 1: 348.

[454] This entire discussion is indebted to Philip Foner, *Business & Slavery*. Foner's book (based on his Columbia University dissertation) is a masterful exposition and evocation of the stresses on New York merchants in the 1850s. The first sentence of his "Preface" offers as accurate a description of the officer and managers of the Art-Union as can be found: "This is the story of a group of people in the antebellum North who earnestly believed that it was possible to save their country from the horrors of civil war, who struggled for many years to stave off the threatened dissolution of the Union, and who, in the end, zealously supported the armed forces of the United States in the hope that war would achieve what peace had failed to accomplish – the preservation of the Union" (vii).

[455] Some Southern regionalist champions, James DeBow among them, were well aware of the essentially imperialist position of New York vis-a-vis the South and urged the development of Southern commercial and industrial institutions so that the agricultural region could break free of its dependence on the Empire City. "[W]ill the South be content with its present position? If a great centralization of capital at the North be the secret of its vast commerce, have not we to balance against it many other advantages? . . .That the South should be dependant upon the North for its imports, is inexplicable upon any sound principle of political economy, and evidences a state of things humiliating in the extreme." James DeBow, "The Progress of American Commerce," *The Commercial Review* 2, no. 6 (December 1846): 407-408.

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gradually disappear.[456] Philip Hone reflected in his own personal contradiction the uncomfortable position of many New Yorkers. No friend of abolition, neither was he at ease with regard to slavery. In the mid-1840s Hone and his fellow Whigs in New York and New England strenuously opposed annexation of Texas and the Mexican War:

> The Southern States desire the annexation of Texas to the Union, to strengthen their position geographically and politically by the prospective addition of four or five slaveholding States. We of the North and East say we have already more territory than we know what to do with, and more slavery within our borders than we choose to be answerable for before God and man.[457]

Hone, who died in 1851, did not live to see his worst fears come true. Through the extended period leading to Southern rebellion, New York merchants were torn between a personal dislike of slavery and their first priority – the preservation of the Federal Union and with it, their own prosperity. Motivated by a mix of patriotism and direct economic interest, they energetically sought alliances based on their commercial relations that would enlarge and enrich their common ground with unionist Southerners. Some of these alliances were political. Henry Clay was a popular figure among New York Whigs. For specific merchants and their extended families, some alliances were dynastic.[458] The

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[456] For a concise and recent discussion of the political position of the pro-southern New York merchant class in the years before the Civil War, see Beckert, "The Politics of Capital," in *Metropolis*, 78-97.

[457] Hone, *Diary*, 2: 702.

[458] Pessen *Riches*, and Jaher, *Establishment* both generally emphasizes the importance of family ties among the elite. Sven Beckert looks at the importance of dynastic arrangement for New York in the second half of the nineteenth century in *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850-1896* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Among the Herring generation on the Art-Union, Benjamin Nathan was related to a tangle of prominent and wealthy Jews, including the Cardozos of Charleston, South Carolina. Wellington

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American Art-Union offered the opportunity to create and extend alliances based upon a shared love of the fine arts.[459]

James Herring's sense of America as the sum of far-flung and disparate parts took shape in the course of his efforts to produce the four volumes of *The National Portrait Gallery*. The project, published "under the Superintendence of the American Academy of the Fine Arts," was itself a manifestation of the development of a historical self-awareness that entered the current of mainstream American culture in the 1830s. In the "Address" that prefaced the first volume of the project in 1834, Herring noted with satisfaction that "the American people now display a becoming solicitude for the preservation of the relics of their own glory." The *Portrait Gallery* was intended to function as a pantheon of great Americans drawn from every section of the Union, issued in a format which could find a place in American parlors over the length and breadth of the land. Its aggregate of high-quality images and well-written short biographies would create a common patriotic vocabulary and constitute a focus of national pride. Herring expressed this intent clearly:

> The enterprise presents the loftiest appeal to national honour and self respect, as an effort at once to preserve the features, and to rescue, from the wasting hand of time, the memory of those whose noble deeds, exalted fame, or eminent virtues,

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Solomons, who traveled for the Art-Union from 1842 to 1845 was also a member of a prosperous and extended Jewish family with a branch in Georgetown, District of Columbia.

[459] This coalition-building very much extended to literature. Evert Duyckinck, a member of the Committee of Management from 1848 through 1851, included the Southern author William Gilmore Simms in his coterie of "Young America" writers. For Simms as a southern writer in this period see Widmer, *Young America* and Miller, *Raven*.

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have shed a lustre upon their age.[460]

Before Herring became involved in the *Portrait Gallery* he had been a largely self-taught portrait painter, English-born and New York bred, whose personal experience of America was contained in the towns and villages of a corridor across the width of New Jersey bounded by New York City and Philadelphia. The collection and compilation of material for *The National Portrait Gallery* substantially enlarged Herring's scope of activity. In 1835 he traveled to Boston, Plymouth, Newport, and Washington, D.C. In 1836 he returned to New England, and went to the South as well.[461] The "Address" to Volume II emphasized the ground that had to be covered in order to produce this "national work," and expressed "thanks for the encouragement . . . received from every section of the Union."[462] In the course of compiling material for the *Portrait Gallery* Herring amplified his initial patriotism with a new appreciation of "our extended country."[463] By the time that the last volume made its delayed final appearance in 1839, Herring expressed deep satisfaction at what had been achieved. By collecting original documents and images, the collaborators had alerted citizens all over the country to a legacy that had been neglected and was on the verge of being permanently lost. "The invaluable relics of those whose lives have most eminently contributed to the formation of our character, and proud

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[460] Herring, "Address,"(1834), 1: 3-4. While Volume was published in book form in 1834, the contents was originally published in twelve monthly parts in 1833.

[461] Seibels, "Herring," 216.

[462] Herring, "Address" (1835), 2:3.

[463] Herring, "Address" (1836), 3:3.

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distinction as a self-governed people, have, in many instances been saved from destruction or wrested from oblivion." In the four volumes that appeared

> We have endeavored to produce a work which all who are swayed by the impulses of patriotism, the honor, or the arts of our land, may regard not merely with favor, but with exultation, as a monument of national gratitude and the evidence of a just appreciation of the brave, the honorable, and virtuous achievements which indicate to the world the high destiny of the republic.[464]

James Herring's origins as a Londoner endowed him with a visceral understanding of the metropolis as national focal point.[465] New York was to become the London of America, the logical unifying center, gathering together the welter of local traditions and regional styles to meld and form a national identity. The American Academy, however, proved too doddering a vehicle for Herring's ambitions. Moreover, despite its ambitious name, it was decidedly a local New York organization. This was equally true of its arch-rival, another New York institution grandly calling itself the National Academy of Design.[466] America was an anomaly, a nation without national institutions. In his efforts

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[464] Herring, "Address," (1839), 4:2.

[465] As an Londoner Herring might also have found relatively inexplicable the Jeffersonian tendency to locate the soul and virtue of America in rural places and agricultural pursuits. The Enlightenment has been generally described as an urban movement, and Herring's Masons were an Enlightenment organization. See the work of Margaret Jacob generally, and especially *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). For a one paragraph global analysis linking Hume, the Enlightenment, urban community, Freemasonry and artists, see Craske, *Europe*, 204.

[466] The National Academy of Design was so named, according to its founding president, Samuel F. B. Morse, because "any less name than National, would be taking one below the American Academy, and therefore is not desirable." As quoted in Cummings, *Annals*, 28. In fact, from its founding in 1827 until a rule change of 1862, only artists resident in New York could be full academicians; distinguished outsiders were awarded "Honorary Professional" or "Honorary Amateur" status. Bartlett Cowdrey,

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on behalf of the *Portrait Gallery* Herring became acutely aware of the lack of a "central repository for the preservation of the Portraits, or the important papers relating to the most distinguished individuals, . . . materials. . . essential to our national history and honor. . . ."[467] From the very beginning, then, Herring's Apollo was intended to be as truly national as was possible.

The Apollo Association and its successor, the American Art-Union offered the American public American fine art as a patriotic delight and a patriotic duty. The patriotism was intrinsic to Herring's vision and a key piece of his enduring legacy. Herring came to the Apollo venture with a well developed understanding of the role of art as handmaiden to the development of national identity and national pride. His definition of "American", which had been expanded and refined in the making of the four volumes of *The National Portrait Gallery* during the 1830s, may have been New York-centric, but it was consciously inclusive in a decade that experienced deepening fissures along sectional lines.

The episode that best illustrates Herring's ambition for the Apollo Association played out over the course of the summer and autumn of 1840, at the same time that the Association had entered into an arrangement to issue its first engraving. After he left New York and began to travel to recruit subscribers, artists, and honorary secretaries for the Apollo Association throughout the country, Herring made one last bold move to make the

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National Academy of Design Record 1826-1860 (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1943) 1:xiv.

[467] Herring, "Address" 4 (1839), 1.

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Apollo the great unifying force for an American school of art. He wrote to Ridner:

> I wish our backing out subscribers could hear the people in distant places talk of the Association. They would feel ashamed of themselves as New Yorkers . . . . It's viewed here as the only Institution in the country which ever has been devised to unite the people of the whole land in Brotherly community free from sectional, party or sectarian strifes or jealousies. I wish my Dear Ridner, you would press home these arguments upon our friends at home. If New Yorkers will do their duty, it will be the great institution we have dreamed and talked about . . . .[468]

This Apollo Association, then, was not merely intended as a stimulus to the encouragement of the fine arts and the encouragement of refined taste. It was to be nothing less than the fulcrum of national unity. A seasoned veteran of the New York art organization wars, Herring understood the extent to which other, competing organizations inhibited the potential reach and effect of the New York group and he was not shy in communicating it in his letters to New York. In a letter from Baltimore in October 1840 he explained his plan to

> stop all efforts to raise counter associations in the other cities where Annual Exhibitions are held . . . . its design, importance and operation, As such it will acquire broad popularity and as such will hold down all opposition. Every point, therefore, which we can gain rendering it truly and indisputably so, will increase the power, means, favor and utility which we have aimed at from the beginning, and the means of which are continually developing themselves in these intercourses I have with 'the people.'

Herring's aggrandizing plan began with the Artists' Fund Society of Philadelphia and was developed against the continuing leitmotif of the jockeying for position between the Apollo Association and its New York neighbor and rival, the National Academy of Design. James Herring founded the Apollo after years of fruitless negotiating with his fellow New York artists at the National Academy. Conflating Thomas Cummings's

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[468] James Herring to John Ridner, September 1840. AAU-NYHS.

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account, as published in his 1865 history of the National Academy of Design, with Herring's own correspondence and with information about the Philadelphia Artists' Fund Society, a picture emerges that describes the extent of Herring's ambition for his own project. It also explains much about the course of future relations between the Art-Union, the National Academy of Design and other fine arts organizations (including local art-unions) in America and abroad.

Cummings spoke of the original attempt at detente between the Apollo Association and the National Academy in July 1840. It resulted in the offer by the NAD of the use of its gallery for the homeless Apollo. At that time there was one outstanding issue between the two organizations, viz, the Apollo's intention to exhibit the work of American artists and to buy for distribution or for their own projected permanent gallery, only from among works they had exhibited. The National Academy feared that in "inducing artists, in their necessity, to give their works to the Apollo Exhibition, instead of the Academy," the Apollo would "thus vitally destroy. . . our Exhibitions which are the life-blood – the source of the whole support of our Academic system."[469] The NAD felt confident, at this point, that the apparent overlap in territory, which the Apollo acknowledged, could be amicably resolved. In the July 1840 report signed by Morse, Cummings and Walter Page,[470] the NAD conferees stated that some of their Apollo counterparts[471] said that "in

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[469] Cummings, *Annals*, 161.

[470] Page had studied briefly with James Herring before moving to the studio of Samuel Morse. Cummings's account is a masterful illustration of how the chronicler gets the last word. Although the committee report entered the official records bearing Cummings's name along with those of Morse and Page, in his *Annals* he disowned the report saying that he "seriously objected to the manner and matter of this Report, but was

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the new Constitution which they were about to frame, that objectionable feature should be removed." The Apollo had been revising its constitution since receiving its state charter on 12 May 1840. On that basis the NAD proceeded with its loan of the gallery space it was vacating while the outstanding issues were left waiting for further resolution.

At the Apollo's Management Committee meeting of 23 June 1840 George Bruce requested the Executive Committee "to ascertain from Mr. Herring upon what terms he would endeavor to obtain subscribers out of the City." The inquiry resulted in an arrangement. Herring was present for the Association's meetings of 29 June and 7 July but must have begun his traveling shortly thereafter. On the road, Herring already had a plan. For one thing, he cast a covetous eye at the efforts of Joshua Shaw (1777-1861) in Philadelphia. Shaw had been one of the Apollo Gallery's original artists. The Apollo Association purchased a work from him for distribution in 1839. Shaw was among the founders of the Philadelphia Artists' Fund Society, a hybrid institution that, like its prototype, the National Academy of Design in New York, developed out of artist dissatisfaction with the patron-run Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. The Artists' Fund Society was founded in 1835. By 1837 it already had a schism, as the contentious Shaw led a group of artists in secession in protest against the leadership of John Neagle.[472]

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overruled" (161).

[471] They are not named but described simply as "some of the members of the Apollo Association." The formal committee constituted at the meeting of 7 July 7 to negotiate with the NAD included Augustus Greele (Chairman of the Executive Committee), Wetmore, and Daniel Elliott. John Gourlie was added in October.

[472] For a focused and extended discussion of this episode, see Ramsey, "Artists' Fund," 57-61, 65-70.

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In 1838 Shaw organized an exhibition in competition with that of the Artists' Fund Society. In 1839 he went one better. Observing Herring's New York-based Apollo Association, Shaw decided to follow suit, and with ten other Philadelphia artists, founded the "Artists' and Amateurs' Association of Philadelphia for the Promotion of the Fine Arts."[473] The *Catalogue of the First Exhibition of the Artists' and Amateurs' Association* stated the problem clearly. In a note entitled "To the Public," the founder explained that:

> In New York it [the Apollo Association] is indeed working wonders . . . . [It] is attracting the notice of artists from every part of the Union toward that city, as their best place of residence and resort, and it is now becoming really important for the citizens of Philadelphia to consider whether it is not worth their while to do something to retain among them the professors to the highest branches of the arts. . . . There is good reason to apprehend that [New York] will not only bear away the palm of art, but attract to it nearly all the eminent artists.[474]

New York had already trumped Philadelphia in its commercial rivalry. Now it threatened to lure its artists away as well.

Herring did, in fact, have his eye on Philadelphia. In New York, the Apollo Association had to compete with the National Academy of Design for pictures. Although the Academy claimed to be a national institution, only resident New York artists could be

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[473] According to Ramsey, the founders were George R. Bonfield, George W. Connaroe, Manuel J. De França, John Haviland, Thomas H. Lane, Louis Lang, Emanuel G. Leutze, William Mason, John Notman, Shaw, and John A. Woodside. Of these, Bonfield, Connaroe, De França, Lang, Leutze, and Shaw had already exhibited in Apollo Association exhibitions, suggesting that Herring was in much the same position vis-a-vis Shaw's institution as he was with the National Academy, that is, competing for the best work of the same artists.

[474] As quoted in Ramsay, "Artists' Fund,"66-67 from "To the Public," *Catalogue of the First Exhibition of the Artists' and Amateurs Association* (Philadelphia, 1840). The exhibit that this catalogue accompanied was held in Spring 1840.

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full members, and the shows were overwhelming filled with New York art. Certainly, the Apollo Association would have a better chance to fill its walls with American art if it could make itself especially attractive to the substantial artists' community in nearby art centers. Philadelphia, which Herring knew well, presented itself as eminently eligible. Yet, here was Shaw, and the Artists' Fund also, threatening to retain the best of what Philadelphia had to offer. Herring was explicit in his letter of 27 August 1840 from Richmond. He wanted to build a serious base of support in Baltimore and be well supplied with letters of introduction to potential subscribers in Philadelphia before moving on to the Quaker city: "I would strike at Shaw's establishment at once, but. . . I do not want to move in Philadelphia till I feel confident of overrunning their 200 subscribers on their own ground." In urging John Ridner to negotiate lower prices for the Apollo with the artists, he cited Shaw's efforts again: "Shaw's operation numbered 100 subscribers [in 1839], they distributed 17 pictures, but the Artists privately gave three or more, and set the prices of the rest down very low."[475] If artists would do as much for the Apollo Association as Philadelphia artists had done for Shaw's local group, they would very much help it at this critical juncture.

In this same letter Herring also took cognisance of the National Academy. He knew that the academicians were waiting for the wording of the new Constitution that would remove the Apollo from competition for the work of American artists. He advised Ridner that there was no need to rush with the document. "Perhaps it would be well to let it all alone till we see whether the N.A. will admit our few members if we adopt their

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[475] James Herring from Petersburg, Virginia 4 September 1840. AAU-NYHS.

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Exhibition. Perhaps the Philadelphia Artists Fund would and all the other exhibitions in the Country." On 3 October 1840, Herring wrote again on the same topic. The Apollo would propose a reciprocal arrangement with the Artists' Fund Society (thus effectively pulling the rug out from under Shaw's competing organization). Herring had spoken with John Sartain (1808-1897) who thought the Artists' Fund Society would be amenable to the proposition "though not without some opposing opinion."[476] Herring projected an optimistic vision of the future. Once the Artists' Fund Society agreed,

> the first effect will be to give us the same hold on the Citizens of Penna. and the other neighboring cities as we now have in New York. It will lead at once to the arrangement proposed with the Academy of Design, and next, and a not less important consequence will be, it will stop all efforts to raise counter associations in those other cities where Annual Exhibitions are held.

Here was a degree of megalomania on the part of James Herring that made succeeding groups of managers and officers at the Art-Union seem positively self-effacing.

At the Management Committee meeting of 31 October 1840, Herring presented "a full and interesting report and his success and efforts abroad for the benefit of the Association." At the same meeting, on motion by Herring, a committee of three was appointed "to correspond with the artists fund association of Philad. On the subject of opening their exhibitions to the members of this association." In an additional motion, Herring, Ridner and John Gourlie were given "power to negociate with the Directors of any other institution out of the City of New York having under their control exhibitions of

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[476] Sartain trained in his native England as an engraver and immigrated to America in 1830. He settled in Philadelphia, where he established himself professionally and took an active part in Philadelphia art affairs. At the time of this correspondence, Sartain was engaged in the process of engraving the Apollo Association's first offering, John Blake White's *Marion*.

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the works of American artists."

What was the agenda operating behind Herring's schemes? It was, to say the least, ambitious. A less charitable assessment might describe it as a plan for a New York-controlled cultural imperialism that would, if successful, bestow institutional permanence and legitimacy upon New York's role as the capital of American fine art. In fairness, Herring understood early what the New York managers never really grasped – that to build an enduring organization of far-flung constituents, it was necessary to create (or co-opt) real organizations in the hinterlands. Herring's Masonic experience informed his organizing instincts.

The Apollo Association sent a letter proposing its scheme to the Artists' Fund Society in Philadelphia, signed by Herring, Ridner and Gourlie on 2 November 1840. The Art-Union papers contain what is probably a draft in Herring's hand, confirming that he was the likely author. Herring addressed the letter to John Sartain. The Apollo letter is breathtaking in the naivety of its arrogance.

> The plan of the Apollo Association we take for granted is sufficiently known. We have to state now, that we are encouraged to believe that it is destined to become an object of regard and favor in every part of our country, and that by the efforts which we are determined to use, it will become truly a National Institution, as it will be sustained by the citizens of the whole land, and its benefits be as extensively distributed and an institution of a neutral character where the views of all parties, sects and sections can and will unite for the promotion of one great national object. We believe that one great institution will be more advantageous to the artists and to the members than numerous small societies of a local character, because the larger the body of associates, the greater the benefits which can be secured to all. The benefits proposed at present are these - the distribution amongst members of painting and sculptures, and to all equally, engravings, and information in the form of lectures to be delivered in various cities before the members and their families and friends, and printed for the use of the members everywhere - and by giving them access to exhibitions for the purpose of creating a

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taste and love of works of Art.

The letter went on to explain the advantages of size. The Apollo continued:

> The arrangement contemplated by us to effect these objects is the expenditure of the fund realized by the association from its Philadelphia members, in the purchase of works from the Artists fund exhibition, provided our resident members and occasional visitors with their wives and children can have free admission thereto. Those members will then have all the advantages which could possibly be guaranteed to them by any local association, with the additional advantages of the Engravings and lectures published by the general committee and also the free access to the other exhibitions of the Association, whether established in this city or which may be adopted as such in the other cities of the Union; our object being to open, if we can, all the exhibitions of American artists to the members of our association on similar terms.

Local exhibitions were commonly held in the Spring. The Apollo suggested that only it could be a national organization. It offered, in return for effectively co-opting the local groups, that it would refrain from competing with them in the Spring for the cream of the crop of their local artists' pictures and would sponsor only one exhibition a year in New York in the Fall. (This was particularly outrageous considering the rag-tag quality of Apollo Spring shows.) The letter smugly concluded:

> We deem it unnecessary at present to enter more particularly upon details, as the advantages of this proposed arrangement appear to us to be so perfectly equitable, natural and desirable that they will be equally apparent to all parties concerned.

The Philadelphians seem not to have been impressed with this "perfectly equitable, natural and desirable" proposition. Responding promptly, as requested, they received the proposal on 11 November and rejected it on 19 November. While the proposal rested in Philadelphia, Cummings registered in his history "A speck of war on the horizon. Matters in the Apollo did not appear to be working quite so well as was anticipated." Morse and Cummings for the NAD were designated to convey to the Apollo the requirement that it

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refrain from exhibiting "any works of modern artists, not previously exhibited by the National Academy of Design – any other arrangement being deemed a vital interference with the interests of the Academy."[477] The Academy demand was global and non-negotiable. The Apollo had no desire to negotiate on the basis presented. No discussion took place and the parties broke off talks by mutual consent. In fact, these two New York groups were perfectly matched in arrogance. The Academy insisted that the Apollo yield its chosen field to the Academy, believing that they occupied it by right of prior presence. Granting to the Apollo the right to show carte blanche anything that fell outside its purview, e.g. the works of European artists, copies, or works by American artists previously shown in New York, they suggested the Apollo

> so modify its Exhibition System as to remove entirely all interference with our previously established Exhibition system. Will [the Apollo Association] . . . confine their Exhibitions to those works vastly more numerous excluded by our laws from our Exhibitions, and leave us exclusively to the Exhibition of works of living Artists never before exhibited in the city of New York? Is not this a reasonable request? We think it should be granted as a matter of common justice.[478]

This, then, was the end of Herring's grandiose plan. He remained Corresponding Secretary through 1841, when he left to devote himself to American Freemasonry and to his profession as a portrait painter. James Herring's last interaction with the Apollo took place at the Management Committee Meeting of March 20, 1843, when he was voted $50

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[477] Cummings, *Annals*, 164-165, entry for 16 November 1840 .

[478] Handwritten copy of NAD resolution titled "Extract from the minutes of the Committee," from the "Council Room of the Academy," dated 5 December 1840 and signed by Morse as Chairman of the Academy. AAU-NYHS.

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to clear his outstanding account. On the one hand, arrogance, global ambition, and competitiveness were the legacy of James Herring. On the other hand, Herring began with a truly national vision and Prosper Wetmore was more than prepared to assume that mantle.

While James Herring was maneuvering in Washington, Philadelphia, and New York, the Apollo Association embarked on the preparation of its first annual engraving for subscribers. The work it chose was John Blake White's *General Marion Inviting a British Officer to Dinner* (painted in 1836). White (1781-1859) had studied in Benjamin West's London studio from 1800 to 1803 together with his fellow South Carolinian, Washington Allston, and subsequently returned to Charleston.[479] His efforts as an artist came to the attention of New Yorkers through an event that Philip Hone recorded in his *Diary* for 8 September 1835. Hone had gone to see

> a picture which is exhibited here, painted by a Mr. White of South Carolina called "The Unfurling of the Banner." It was painted by order of a committee of anti-nullifiers in South Carolina and is intended to illustrate the advantages of our rallying as a united people under the glorious emblem of our sovereignty.[480]

White's picture, *The Unfurling of the United States Flag in Mexico,* painted in 1834,

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[479] When he returned home and found himself unable to earn a living as an artist White completed his legal training. Thereafter he was a full-time lawyer, occasional history painter, and sometime playwright in Charleston. In 1821, he was among the founders of the short-lived South Carolina Academy of the Fine Arts along with Samuel F. B. Morse (in Charleston at the time looking for portrait commissions) and the diplomat and politician Joel Roberts Poinsett, subsequently a leader of the Unionist faction in South Carolina politics. In 1837 Poinsett served as Martin Van Buren's Secretary of War. (Poinsett, a serious amateur botanist, returned from a diplomatic mission in Mexico with an exotic flower, named, in his honor, "poinsettia."). When James Herring went to Washington D.C. in 1840 in search of subscribers, Poinsett was among those he recruited.

[480] Hone, 1: 175.

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toured the nation between 1835 and 1837 before finding a final home in the South Carolina State Capitol building in Columbia.[481] The exhibition of White's patriotic picture in New York identified him as a southern Unionist. Suddenly John White, who had neither lived nor shown in New York, became a "known" artist. In 1837 White sent a history painting, *General Marion's Swamp Encampment* (1837), to the exhibition at the National Academy of Design where it was available for sale.[482] It clearly did not sell, because in October 1838, James Herring hung the same painting in his initial exhibition at the Apollo Gallery. It was continued over into the January 1839 show, available for $300 without the frame.

After finding themselves unable to decide on an engraving to publish in 1839,[483] the Association decided, in June 1840, to move forward with a selection. Herring, John Ridner, and John Austen were constituted as a committee to pursue the matter. Herring consulted Washington Allston for advice as to a choice and perhaps for permission to engrave and distribute one of Allston's own works. He received a polite rebuttal from the

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[481] Gerdts, *Art Across America* 2: 50-51. Ironically, the picture was destroyed by Union troops during the Civil War when they burned the building.

[482] The Academicians were favorably enough impressed by White to make him an Honorary Member, a position he held until his death, although he showed only one more work at the Academy, *The White Veil* in 1838. He was, of course, an old acquaintance of NAD President Samuel Morse. The varying titles of this painting all come from the artist. It is clear from the catalog description of the work in the 1838 October Apollo Gallery exhibition that *General Marion's Swamp Encampment*, *General Marion Inviting a British Officer to Dinner*, and *The Camp of Marion* are all the same picture.

[483] "Report," *Transactions . . ., 1839*, 2.

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esteemed Cambridgeport artist.[484] They then settled on White's *General Marion*, which had already been returned to the artist.[485] It appears that Herring had made a copy of the work when it was still in New York (perhaps anticipating that it would be a reasonable choice for engraving).[486] When the Apollo informed White that they had selected his picture to engrave, he was surprised, but pleased. The artist professed himself "flattered" and offered to send the original "whenever it may be required."[487] The choice of White's *General Marion* was a stroke of genius. Here was an artist who was an Honorary Academician at the National Academy of Design. He was a prominent Charlestonian who

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[484] Washington Allston to James Herring 4 July 1840. Allston had no advice to offer and added that "with respect to my own picture – to speak frankly it is my intention, whenever they are engraved, to have them engraved exclusively for my own benefit." AAU-NYHS.

[485] Minutes of the Committee of Management meetings of 23 June 1840, 29 June, 21 July 1840. AAU-NYHS

[486] The sequence of events is confusing and can only be inferred from the correspondence. In White's letter of 18 September 1840, when he first found out that his picture had been selected for engraving, he wrote (to Ridner): "Your letter informs me that the association have determined upon engraving my picture The Camp of Marion and with that view had caused it to be copied while remaining in the hands of Mr. Herring. A letter from John Sartain to Herring of 7 February 1839 (the previous year) responded to a Herring inquiry about the costs of making a plate. The Association did not go ahead at that time. Sartain's response of 18 February is preserved in the correspondence but does not mention any specific work. Perhaps Herring copied White's picture in 1839, while it was still in New York, thinking it would serve as the basis for an engraving in that year. In 1840 the Association did finally arrange with Sartain to produce their engraving. To this end, Ridner seems to have written to Sartain, offering to have White send Sartain the original for the preparation of his engraving. Sartain must have already been working from Herring's copy. He was diplomatic and polite about the copy, but eager to work from the original. Sartain to Ridner 17 August 1840. It is not clear when Ridner wrote to White. The artist had been out of Charleston in the summer at a spa in the mountains, causing a delay in his receiving his mail. AAU-NYHS

[487] Letter of John White to John Ridner, 18 September 1840. AAU-NYHS.

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was nationally identified as an anti-nullifier and thus a southern Unionist.[488] The subject of the work, General Francis Marion (1732-1795), the so-called "Swamp Fox" of the Revolutionary War, was both a nationally-honored romantic figure and a South Carolina patriotic legend, in White's words, a "hero . . . identified with the South."[489] The work was a history painting of precisely the type that the Apollo sought to encourage. And, as a fillip, General Marion had been the maternal great-uncle of Mrs. John Wakefield Francis (wife of the President of the Apollo Association) and her sister, the late Mrs. Samuel Ward (mother of Samuel Ward, Jr. of the 1841 Committee of Management).[490]

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[488] White to Ridner, September 18, 1840. White's correspondence with the Apollo Association is fascinating. He wrote a long, chatty letter detailing the state of his health and explaining that he had another work, *The Rescue*, which he was also eager to have engraved, soliciting the advice of the organization about effecting the engraving. He charged no fee for the use of his work for an engraving, and modestly asked only for "a proof impression or two" (he was sent nineteen)." He asked constantly after James Herring, proffering Herring hospitality should he visit Charleston. He was full of good advice for the fledgling venture, and promised to look out for its interests in Charleston. White recommended local Honorary Secretaries for the Apollo whom the Committee immediately appointed. White was clear about the southern appeal of his work. In his letter of 5 May 1842, he reported on the continuing popularity of the *Marion* print in South Carolina and suggested that if the Association could offer it as an alternative engraving choice, it would yield additional subscriptions. That suggestion was immediately adopted. The ability to choose any present or past engraving (subject to availability) proved to be a popular feature of the Art-Union judged by the number of subscribers over the years who exercised the option.

[489] Marion was included in Volume III of the *National Portrait Gallery*, 121-132. The ten-page biographical note was written by James Herring (who signed it with the initials "J. H.").

[490] Francis Marion married Mary Videau. The couple had no children. Marion's sister, Esther Marion married Dr. Thomas Mitchell. Their daughter, Sarah Mitchell, married Benjamin Clark Cutler. Among the Cutler children were two daughters, Julia Rush Cutler, who married Samuel Ward (the father of the Art-Union Committee member) and Mary "Eliza Cutler," who married Dr. John Wakefield Francis.

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The year eighteen forty-two saw the Apollo Association on its own, so to speak, without the presence of its founder, James Herring. The experience of the first three years had definitely been mixed. The support of American art had not turned out to be a genteel diversion, but an uphill battle involving some unpleasant exchanges with prominent New York artists at the National Academy of Design and fraught relations with a host of out-of-town artists. The good news was that the Apollo had survived; the bad news was that it had not grown to any significant extent. Fourteen of the nineteen managers and officers chose not to continue, and a fifteenth resigned at first meeting of the new Committee.[491] Of the four who remained, however, Prosper Wetmore, John Ridner, and John Austen were central to the future of the organization and persevered to lead it to success, while John Gourlie soldiered on through 1845, serving as Treasurer in 1843. In addition, Francis Edmonds returned to the Committee in 1842 after an absence of two years and although Abraham Cozzens was away from the Committee in 1842 and 1843, his departure was also only temporary. A number of the additions to the 1842 leadership added significant strength to the institution. Among the new recruits, Edmonds' return added a strong bridge to the National Academy, where he was an active member. Jonathan Sturgis had

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[491] The departed included Dr. John Francis (President), George Bruce (Treasurer), James Herring (Corresponding Secretary), Abraham Cozzens, Augustus Greele, William L. Morris, Eleazar Parmly, Benjamin Nathan, Peter R. Brinckerhoff, Paul Spofford, Joseph N. Perkins, Jonathan Hunt, Samuel Ward and Joseph G. Cogswell. Daniel Elliott, Chairman of the 1841 Executive Committee, resigned at the meeting of January 3, 1842 and was promptly replaced by James T. Brady at the meeting of January 10. As an organization run by businessmen volunteers, at least some of the turnover on the Committee was attributable to the changing nature of personal and business obligations. Francis Edmonds, the 1839 Treasurer traveled in Europe in 1840 and 1841 and returned to the Committee from 1842 to 1847. Daniel Elliott returned for one year in 1843 and again served on the Executive Committee.

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been the business partner of the late Luman Reed. Charles Briggs was a noted writer and journalist with ties to the literary Young America circle. Erastus C. Benedict was an eminent marine lawyer and active Whig who remained until the very last, and William Cullen Bryant was a genuine celebrity. All of these men would remain for at least four years. There was also more continuity than met the eye in the continued presence of Ridner and Wetmore. Ridner, who officially took over the post of Corresponding Secretary had been functioning in that capacity ever since James Herring had begun to travel in July 1840.[492] Although there was no formal exhibit to superintend in 1842, Ridner continued to be responsible for the Association's relations with its artists, soliciting works and arranging for them to be received and exhibited informally in the Apollo's rooms, as well as overseeing the delivery of the members' engraving. If Ridner insured continuity of operations, Wetmore insured continuity of vision. Since he had joined in 1839, his had been the commanding voice on the Committee, and it remained so. Additionally, he was joined in 1842 by his long-time friend and associate, Andrew Warner, who immediately took on the post of Recording Secretary.

The reconstituted Committee of 1842 promised great strength and Wetmore was determined to press forward in the quest to make the institution the national force that Herring had envisioned. While Herring's focus was art and Freemasonry, Wetmore's was

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[492] Prosper Wetmore's critical role in the organization is apparent from even a casual look at the minutes. He attended meetings regularly and made more motions than any other member. Andrew Warner and Prosper Wetmore had been friends and colleagues at least since 1827 when Warner served as Wetmore's junior officer in the Militia. When Wetmore was forced out in 1827, Warner followed out of personal loyalty. Their friendship was lifelong.

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art and politics. But both men shared the same patriotic vision for the Apollo Association, that it develop a truly American identity and serve as a source of unity in an increasingly fractious and fractionated polity.[493] Moreover, Wetmore, like Herring, came to the new organization with a prior experience that seemed to speak fruitfully to the issue at hand.

Prosper Wetmore had been among the earliest supporters of the American tragedian Edwin Forrest.[494] In 1826 he "discovered" Forrest as a young actor playing in Albany, New York, and arranged for Forrest's first New York City engagement at the new Bowery theater, where Wetmore was a member of the Board of Directors. Wetmore introduced Forrest into his circle of literary and journalistic friends, including William Leggett and William Cullen Bryant of the *Evening Post*. In 1828 Forrest, an ardent American nationalist, initiated a competition to award a prize for the best American play using the subject matter of native Americans. Forrest's judges were the poet Fitz-Greene Halleck, Wetmore, Bryant, and William Leggett, Bryant's brilliant and fiery associate. The prize-winning entry, August Stone's *Metamora* became a staple of Forrest's repertoire.[495]

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[493] Wetmore was an old soldier and an ardent supporter of the Union. In 1835 he was among the New York businessmen who denounced abolition as a threat to the Union. The Wetmores were part of the New York merchant community that worked hard to support the passage of the Compromise of 1850 as described in Foner, *Business and Slavery*. While Wetmore's individual role is not clear, his correspondence with William Marcy testifies to his close involvement during the years Marcy spent out of office during the Whig administration of the Zachary Taylor and Millard Fillmore (1848-1852).

[494] This account of the relation between Forrest and Wetmore derives from Richard Moody, *Edwin Forrest: First Star of the American Stage* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), 58, 62, 67, 78, 85, 88, 95, 111. The quote from Wetmore's *Prologue* is on p. 95. For Forrest and Whitley see *ibid.*, 184, 301, 315.

[495] The play debuted in 1829 with an onstage prologue written and delivered by Wetmore:

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Inspired by Forrest's successful example and by his own involvement in the project, Wetmore transferred his positive experience to the fine arts, and specifically to the goal of encouraging the production of American history painting on patriotic themes. If Forrest's contest had yielded *Metamora*, what treasures might a similar call to artists produce? In 1842, in the words of the *Transactions* for that year,

> the Committee offered a premium of five hundred dollars for a cabinet picture, illustrative of the history, literature, or manners of the country, to be engraved for distribution . . . . But from a disinclination amongst the Artists to compete with each other in this manner, or from some other cause, but four pictures were offered and none that were thought suitable for the object aimed at. Some of them possessed a high degree of merit as paintings, but were deficient in the representation of a subject of general interest.[496]

No truly satisfying explanation has ever been given for the failure of this offer to elicit a serious number of works. It has been suggested that artists rejected the notion of a competition. The *Transactions* of 1842 noted that at the beginning of the year "the Committee very soon discovered, that the artists generally entertained a feeling towards

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> *Tonight we test the strength of native powers,*
> *Subject, and bard, and actor, all are yours –*
> *"Tis yours to judge, if worthy of a name*
> *And bid them live within the halls of fame!*

In 1834 Wetmore, Bryant, and Leggett joined with other eminent New Yorkers (including William Dunlap, Philip Hone, and Washington Irving) in feting Forrest on the eve of his first trip to Europe.Forrest and Wetmore shared more than a love of theater. Both men were Democrats and both, according to Philip Hone, "locofocos." Hone, 1: 347-348. It is not clear how accurate Hone's characterization of Democratic factional politics is here. He seems to use the phrase "locofoco" generically, as a substitute for "wild man." In 1838 the Democrats seriously attempted to recruit Forrest as a congressional candidate. Hone scoffed at the idea, asking what qualifications an actor would bring to the Congress, apart from his ability to win election. Forrest ultimately turned down the opportunity to run.

[496] *Transactions . . . 1842*: 6.

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the Association, if not of positive hostility, at least of cold indifference."[497] The managers congratulated themselves that they had overcome this attitude in the course of the year, but the results of the competition suggest otherwise. Those artists who did participate complained that notice was poorly circularized and too little time was allowed.

Of the four entries, John Blake White sent a painting which he had done earlier and restored after it was damaged in a fire, his version of an episode in South Carolina Revolutionary War history, *Miss Mott Directing Generals Marion and Lee to Burn her Mansion to Dislodge the British.*[498] Walter Page claimed to have worked within the parameters of the competition, when, in fact, he ignored them and sent a work of a nature not likely to have been purchased by the Association, as "political" a picture as the Apollo ever received (fig. 23). He explained his rationale in a letter of 5 September 1842:

> The picture is called "The Young Traders" and is intended to come strictly within the limits of the terms of the Association. I have chosen to illustrate manners, rather than history, as the subject is more simple and better adapted to the ready understanding of all classes An historical picture must of necessity be either commonplace or obscure, and for both reasons, I conceive would be unsuitable for the object aimed at by the Association.

After saying that a picture had to tell its own story, Page told the story anyway. The work showed young street sellers exchanging merchandise for their own pleasure, a girl giving a boy strawberries in return for a magazine. He proposed that causing this picture to be

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[497] Ibid., 4. This comment seems to be an implied criticism of the lately departed James Herring, who had been the chief intermediary between the Apollo Association and the artists.

[498] There is a version of this in the collection of the United States Capitol, Washington, D. C. It is not clear whether this is the same picture White sent to the Apollo Association.

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engraved might teach "rich and refined" Association subscribers

> to look with gentle eyes upon the "feeble folk" whom they encounter in their daily walks and of encouraging those whom misfortune may deprive of their ordinary means of living to adopt without fear of disgrace any kind of trade or calling by which they may be enabled to earn their bread honestly.

Page ended his letter with a disclaimer that "it is not intended by these remarks to influence in the smallest degree the decision of the committee." This comment must be viewed as somewhat disingenuous. Page was closely linked with the New York literary community. He had painted a portrait of new Committee member Charles Briggs (fig. 24). He was the portrait painter of choice for John Ridner and his family and had also painted Francis Edmonds.[499] Moreover, in 1839, the Apollo Association had borrowed, for its October Exhibition, Page's *Full Length Portrait of Ex-Governor Willliam L. Marcy* (fig. 25).[500] None of this availed. The Association ignored Page's cogent critical analysis of the problem with conventional history topics and passed over his genre painting.

Joshua Shaw wrote a disorganized letter describing how he had first lost his notice, but then found it in time to submit a picture. Shaw was full of advice about how the

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[499] Ridner exhibited three works, *Portrait of a Gentleman*, *Portrait of a Lady*, and *Portrait of a Lady and Child* in the September 1840 Apollo Association exhibition. Although the subjects of portraits were rarely identified, ownership strongly suggests that the owner or his family were the subjects. On the same basis, Ridner also showed Page's *Portrait of a Gentleman* owned by F. W. Edmonds at the same show. Ridner also loaned a Page narrative painting, *The Wife's Last Interview with the Condemned*, to the September 1839 show. In 1835 Page had shown a painting of Edwin Forrest as Spartacus at the American Academy of Fine Arts exhibition. He was a Member of the Board of Directors of that organization.

[500] Marcy was Prosper Wetmore's most powerful political connection. The work had been commissioned of Page for New York City Hall and was borrowed from the City Corporation.

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Association could better have informed the artists' community about the competition including advertisements and circulars to prominent American artists. Shaw submitted a picture of "groups of Indians who have just discovered the first European sails on the waters of the Hudson," which he subsequently named *A Scene in the Olden Times: The First Arrival of a Ship in the Waters of the Hudson* (fig. 26). It measured 3 feet by 2 feet and "on all hands is said to be much the best picture I have ever painted. Mr. Sartain said it was most admirably calculated for Engraving."[501] This was a not-too subtle touch, which, like Page's, went for naught.

Albertus D. O. Browere's (1814-1887) painting was delayed by illness (according to his letter of 19 September 1842), but, though he successfully pleaded for a short postponement of the deadline, "not so much for the desire of gain, as for the honour of contending for the first Apollo prize," he seems to have not actually submitted a painting.[502] On 5 October John Ridner informed the artists that a decision had been made not to award the prize. When Samuel Bell Waugh was informed of this he asked the

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[501] Joshua Shaw to the Committee of Managers of the Apollo Association 17 (19?) September 1842. AAU-NYHS.

[502] The illness Browere cited had involved the death of a son, which was perhaps too great a personal loss to overcome so quickly. Browere had exhibited in all the previous Apollo shows, but curiously, after the Apollo purchased on of his works for distribution in 1839, he sold only one more work to the Art-Union, *The Happy Boy* in 1849. Browere's father, a sculptor in New York City, died in 1834 and thereafter Browere moved to Catskill, New York, where he supported himself as an apothecary and painted in his spare time. He was an occasional history painter and exhibited a number of history paintings at the National Academy. In 1841 he showed *Canonicus and the Governor of Plymouth* at the National Academy described as "one of the pictures competing for the premium offered by the Academy." According to Cummings, *Annals*, 168, he did not win.

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Association to sell his picture for $100.[503] Shaw similarly offered his for sale at $165.[504]

What had worked for Edwin Forrest did not work for the Apollo Association. But Forrest's indirect connection to the Art-Union through his association with Prosper Wetmore was to have one more consequence for the Art-Union in later years. The actor had purchased land in Covington, Kentucky, across the River from Cincinnati, Ohio, where he planned to raise grapes. He hired as his superintendent an English landscape artist resident in the neighborhood, Thomas Whitley. Whitley, a friend of Parke Godwin, and through Godwin, an acquaintance of William Cullen Bryant, had lived in New York City in the early 1840s. In 1841 he exhibited landscapes in the March and October Apollo exhibitions. Whitley resumed sending work to the Art-Union later in the decade. In 1848 Bryant interceded with Wetmore on Whitley's behalf and the Art-Union purchased three of his views. Whitley sent over twenty pictures to the Art-Union in 1849, of which four were purchased. After that, though Whitley offered, the Art-Union purchased no more. In 1848 the Western Art-Union had similarly rebuffed Whitley and he had responded with a long and vitriolic attack on the management of that organization published in the *Herald of Truth* and then separately as a pamphlet.[505] Whitley and Forrest had a falling out and the

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[503] What Waugh sent remains unclear.

[504] It did not sell in New York as indicated in a letter of 7 January 1843 from Shaw who explained that he was about to go to Washington to try to press for $700 he was owed by Congress. He has been given a room in the Capital to exhibit and paint, and he requested the return of his Hudson River picture so that he could show it in the nation's capital. NAAU-NYHS.

[505] T. W. Whitley, "Reflections on the Government of the Western Art Union and A Review of the Works of Art on its Walls" (Cincinnati: The Herald Office, 1848).

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actor fired his superintendent. In 1850 Whitley moved to back to New York and began to write for James Gordon Bennett's *Tribune,* publishing a series of attacks on the Art-Union in that paper. While in New York, Whitley also testified on behalf of Catherine Forrest in the sensational Forrest divorce trial. For Whitley it was sweet revenge. Not only could he attack the Art-Union which had declined his pictures, but he could, by extension attack Forrest through the actor's friend Wetmore's association with the Art-Union.[506]

New York's business community was overwhelmingly Whig. With a discount for hyperbole, Joseph Scoville was on the mark when he observed that "very few merchants of the first class have been Democrats. . . . The Democratic merchants could have easily been stowed in a large Eighth avenue railroad car."[507] Given these circumstances, it is all the more remarkable that so many of the Art-Union managers and officers were prominent Democrats. These included: Wetmore, Bryant, Warner, Cornelius Lawrence, William

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[506] See E. Maurice Bloch, "The American Art-Union's Downfall," *The New-York Historical Society Quarterly* 37 No. 4 (October 1953): 359. Bloch calls Whitely the "disappointed and unsuccessful artist, whose deeply personal aversion for the Art-Union . . . built on unfair and flimsy grounds . . . [caused] indirectly the destruction of a large and influential organization." Whitely's animus toward the Art-Union has been explained in a number of texts as related to the Art-Union's failure to purchase his pictures. No one that I am aware has factored in Whitely's hostility to Forrest and linked it to Forrest's close friendship with Wetmore. While Whitely's attacks came after Wetmore had left the organization, the association beetween Wetmore and the Art-Union remained strong. Moreover, Andrew Warner, the Art-Union's Corresponding Secretary remained very much in charge of relations with artists and was Wetmore's long-time friend and aide.

[507] Walter Barrett [Joseph Scoville], *Old New York Merchants* 1: 81 as quoted by Frank Otto Gatell, "Money and Party in Jacksonian America: A Quantitative Look at New York City's Men of Quality," *Political Science Quarterly* 82 No. 2 (June 1967), 206-235. Gatell's article is largely historiographical, arguing emphatically that New York men of wealth were overwhelmingly Whig and not fairly evenly divided between Whigs and Democrats as historian Lee Benson, in particular, has argued (236-237). He quotes Scoville on p. 246.

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Allen Butler, Francis Edmonds, Benjamin and Nathaniel Jarvis, James Brady, Charles Leupp, Robert Kelly, Charles Daly, and Townsend Harris. Edward Widmer has seen the Art-Union's nationalist agenda as a natural subset of Young America's nationalist cultural concerns. That offers a partial answer, perhaps.[508] Rachel Klein sees no difference between Art-Union Whigs and Democrats – they are all conservatives despite their different party labels.[509] Herring's initial group had included one of these identifiable Democrats – Francis Edmonds. Edmonds was not himself, however, a political man. His party affiliation came through family connections. He was an artist, a banker, and, since 1829 an Associate member of the National Academy, the combination of roles that recommended

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[508] The "fit" is far from perfect. The most active Young American on the Art-Union Committee was Evert Duyckinck. It is unclear if Duyckinck had any "politics" at all. He was totally focused on intellectual pursuits, primarily literary. By Klein's lights, his Knickerbocker background and active Episcopalianism would place him in the "conservative" camp. Bryant, the most prominent Democrat connected to the Art-Union was not a part of the Young America movement, though he may have agreed with most of their aims and had friends in common through Berkshire connections. Wetmore, the most important Art-Union officer and a fiercely partisan Democrat was not a member of the Young America set. Widmer is also obviously discomfitted by, and at a loss to deal with, the tendency of some Young Americans, led by John O' Sullivan who was the most politically active of the group, to be southern apologists. (Unlike anyone connected with the Art-Union, O' Sullivan later sided with the Confederacy.) In his interesting and generally sound analysis of the Art-Union, therefore, he largely ignores its strong ties to the South. He writes with some surprise, "It is striking how many members of the American Art-Union came from the South" (147). Precisely. Southern members and southern honorary secretaries represented the result of a deliberate policy of reaching out in that direction.

[509] In Gatell's phrase, Klein's views echo those of the post-World War II "entrepreneurial or 'Columbia'" school" who argued that Jacksonian Democrats "shared the capitalistic ethos of their Whig antagonists, and that they were merely demanding equal time at the feeding trough" (235-36) This might also broadly characterize Pessen's analysis.

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him to Herring.[510]

I believe that the key to understanding lies in the early addition of Prosper Wetmore to the Committee. Wetmore was a journalist and published poet early in his career and maintained a lifelong identity as a friend of arts and letters. But Wetmore was a drygoods merchant by trade and as bound up in the hurly-burly of politics as Herring was with Masonry. Thus Wetmore was in an ideal position to understand the attraction of the fine arts as a unionist rallying point. The nearly reconstituted Apollo Association Committee of Management of 1842 was decidedly more political than before, with Democrats Brady, Leupp, and Bryant joining, as well as the active Whig, Erastus Benedict.

As a whole the New York merchant community was fervently committed to the preservation and strengthening of the Union. This posed a particular awkwardness for New York Democrats. The national Democratic Party maintained its strongest sectional base in the South. For New York Democrats with an interest in art matters, then, the Apollo Association and the Art-Union offered an attractive opportunity – to be able to engage in a cultural cause that was noble and uplifting at the same time that it offered an opportunity to expand the common ground available to Northern Democrats and Southern Unionists. That art could elevate the taste of the nation and improve manners in a way that contributed to national unity was a legacy of Enlightenment thought. It was not a stretch for New York Democratic merchants to see in Montesquieu's idea of "douceur," a means

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[510] Edmonds became an Associate Academician in 1829. When he moved home to Hudson, his affiliation lapsed, but was renewed in 1838 when he again became active as an artist in New York City. In 1841 he was elected a full Academician.

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of mitigating sectional strains through the mingling of commerce and art that lay at the core of the Art-Union plan.

Through the rest of its history, the Apollo Association and its continuation, the Art-Union, worked tirelessly to cultivate connections with the South and the West, both with respect to the purchase of the work of young regional artists, and with extensive correspondence with local Honorary Secretaries. The voluminous Art-Union correspondence richly documents the strenuous efforts that the New York organization made to extend its membership to every section of the nation, but particularly to the South and West. This effort began early and lasted until the very end of the Art-Union. James Herring's first trip for out-of-town subscribers was to the South. Southern Honorary Secretaries and members received were warmly received. In 1850 and '51 Andrew Warner mentored a young Virginia artist, John Elder (1833-1895), as a favor to a Virginia Honorary Secretary, John Minor.[511] Warner relayed funds sent for Elder, arranged for the young man to study with Daniel Huntington, and then recommended him to Leutze in Düsseldorf. The Art-Union office went shopping for just the right color of silk for the wife of Norfolk, Virginia secretary Frederick Southgate and sent it along with local engravings.[512] Warner arranged for a Virginia Honorary Secretary to be voted a member of

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[511] There is a large correspondence between Minor and Warner with regard to Elder. Warner arranged for Minor to study with Daniel Huntington, and then to go to Düsseldorf and study with Leutze. Elder was improvident and apparently had a drinking problem. He returned to the South shortly before the Civil War, served in the Confederate Army and had a career as a regional painter.

[512] Southgate was one of Herring's earliest Secretaries, recruited in August 1840 and officially appointed at the Committee of Management meeting of 18 September.

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the New-York Historical Society. Similarly, the organization supported a number of Ohio artists and Warner engaged in lengthy correspondence with local secretaries in Ohio, and in St. Louis. John Minor, a prominent Virginia lawyer and John Elder's mentor, was among the organization's staunchest supporters when it came under attack and wrote long, lawyerly letters of support to Warner in New York. The correspondence, however, also tells a different story. There are letters that relate Southern resistance to doing business with a "northern" institution. It must indeed have been a low blow when James Gordon Bennett accused the Union of being in league with an abolitionist newspaper. Bennett, of course, was aiming at his arch-enemy, the founder of the New York *Daily Times*, Henry Raymond, who had been a member of the Committee of Management from 1847 through 1851. In fact, the Art-Union apparently shared its subscription lists with Raymond in exchange for free advertising in his new newspaper.[513]

Through the 1840s New York merchants continued to look for ways to preserve the Union. They organized strenously in favor of the passage of the Compromise of 1850, even finding ways to support the unpalatable Fugitive Slave Act which was the Compromise's chief concession to the South.[514] The Compromise and the Art-Union both broke down at about the same time. By then, in 1852, it may very well have become apparent that more than "douceur" would be needed to assure the future of a "United"

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[513] This is the explanation offered by Bloch, "Downfall," 351 which he footnotes to Ernest Francis Brown, *Raymond of the Times* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1951), 105.

[514] James Brady, a Manager from 1842 through 1845, constructed ingenious legal arguments for the legitimacy of the Fugitive Slave Act. Activity around the Compromise of 1850 is extensively discussed in Foner, *Business*, passim.

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States of America.

For New York merchants, and for Democrats in particular, the opportunity to strengthen the definition of American identity through encouragement of the fine arts was a way to maintain a positive dialogue with the South and West. This played out through the decade of the 1840s as sectional strains with economic underpinnings exacerbated by the issue of slavery seriously strained the bonds of the Federal Union. The Art-Union faltered at the same time that it was becoming increasingly clear that the Compromise of 1850 would not offer the hoped-for solution. The national political climate, by that time, was too riven by controversy to continue to support a notion that a shared taste in the fine arts would bind the nation together.

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CONCLUSION

> "History . . . commits us, according to its original meaning, to nothing other than 'inquiry.'"[515]

In the end, the Art-Union achieved more than its founder and early managers ever dared dream and certainly less than they had expected. The tens of thousands of subscribers over the years, the visitors from all over the country who came to the free gallery in New York, the increased numbers of American artists, all document the impressive achievement of this "extracurricular" cultural enterprise of the New York mercantile elite. At the same time, the managers and officers certainly believed that they were building an institution that would endure. In that they were disappointed.

For a decade the Art-Union managers marketed American fine art to a growing national audience, an audience they both created and then supplied. The venture appealed to a natural love of spectacle. Witness the drama of the lottery that the Art -Union managers staged in the vast spaces of the Broadway Tabernacle and Niblo's theater. The Tabernacle had been built for the charismatic evangelical preacher, Charles Grandison Finney. It was an appropriate venue for the Art-Union's combination of glamor and evangelical art fervor. Sooner than anyone expected, the novelty faltered. The large public proved inconstant. Like many merchants since, who have overexpanded, in the end, it did not seem possible to fall back to a more modest position. So the managers and officers moved on. In this sense, the Art-Union is an episode in the history of American merchandising.

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[515] Bloch, *Craft*, 20.

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The Art-Union was a creature of its time. The 1840s were a transitional decade. To reiterate a point that appears in many guises in this long discussion: politically, socially, intellectually, culturally, economically, technologically, the eighteenth century was giving way to the twentieth. The 1840s stood on the cusp of the Enlightenment and modernity. New York was at the center of this transformation. The very structure of the Art-Union embodies the spirit of the 1840s. It was the essence of impermanence. Every year the Art-Union began *tabula rasa*, with an empty gallery and an empty treasury. It was the mercantile life, and many of the Art-Union's merchant managers and officers knew all too well the dramatic cycles of boom and bust, loss and recovery, boom and bust.

Of more lasting significance, the experience of the Art-Union engaged a series of ongoing issues with respect to art, artists, and patrons. It engaged them in the specific terms in which they play out in America. These issues appeared early – in the days of the Apollo Gallery and the Apollo Association and they have been the focus of the present discussion. The patriotic function of art, the nature of professional artists' practice, venues for art viewing and art buying, the ways in which the market determines what the artist produces versus the artist's desire to create freely, the price of art versus its value, who determines value, the artist as entrepreneur – these issues all surfaced early in the Apollo experience and have been, to some extent, examined in these pages.

The experience of the Art-Union touches upon a range of significant issues in the history of American culture – including the role of art in a democracy; the definition and nature of "American-ness" in a post-colonial, immigrant population; the role of visual culture in the larger culture, the definition and relations of "high" and "low" forms; the

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relationship between the artist and the market; and the progress toward free, public exhibition of works of art in the United States. While none of these topics has been systematically examined in the current manuscript, there is information, evidence and observation that speaks to all of these concerns. It has been set out here in the hope that future scholars may find it of some value.

Much more remains to be done. The Art-Union papers at the New-York Historical Society (available to students and scholars via microfilm) yield a trove of possibilities. They contain three distinct mid-nineteenth century voices: the voice of the patron, that is, the corresponding secretaries of the Art-Union; the voice of the artists; and the voice of the public. For the volunteer managers, cultural and commercial leaders who were among New York's busiest men, the Art-Union represented a significant time commitment and an obligation to grapple with a series of concerns outside their areas of primary expertise. For the artists, the Art-Union was a powerful patron, sometimes faceless and sometimes not, whose purchasing decisions could have momentous consequences for their careers. The honorary secretaries formed a nationwide network of contacts and supporters, insiders in one sense, and outsiders in another, local intermediaries between the organization and the subscriber/ members, whose aggregate numbers gave the Art-Union its power and visibility. All three constituencies speak in these papers.

What follows is a selection of questions, topics and areas for further investigation that have suggested themselves as I have read and written, but remain outside the parameters of the current project.

How do the different art unions, American and European compare? In specific,

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how do the two largest, The American Art-Union and the London Art-Union compare? How do their two publications *The Art Journal* and *The Bulletin of the American Art Union* compare in content, tone and opinion? What was the taste of these two Art-Unions, how similar, how different and why? How did each respond to issues concerning art markets and the national role of the fine arts?

Looking only at America, what was the taste of the American Art-Union? How did the managers juggle the problem of popular taste versus what they really would have liked to purchase? What would they have liked to purchase? The Art-Union spent considerable money on history painting in a largely failed attempt to create a popular audience. Who were these artists and where are their works today? How extensive was the Art-Union's support for landscape painting? What were the Art-Union's relations with American landscape painters of the Hudson River School? How does this relate to the international romantic movement in art and literature, which was also a nationalist movement. Does William Cullen Bryant serve as a bridge between these related cultural movements?

The Art-Union could be cast as America's first corporate art patron. As such, the Art-Union was a patron of regional artists, especially western and southern, female artists, artists from "elite" families, and foreign-born artists, especially Germans. One might examine the artists who were heavily patronized and barely known now. Why are they little known? Does present obscurity represent the vagaries of taste and the market? Are they waiting to be discovered or are they just not very good? How do they compare with artists whose names are familiar who were rejected by the Art-Union? Is there any pattern?

What did those managers and officers who had their own collections buy – Philip

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Hone, Jonathan Sturgis, Charles Leupp, Samuel Ward, Abraham Cozzens and Marshall O. Roberts? Hone, Sturgis, Leupp and Ward may be regarded as tastemakers, men whose collections were formed previous to their services to the Art-Union. Cozzens and Roberts present more interesting cases. They were likely collecting actively for themselves at the same time as they were purchasing for the Art-Union. Is there a dichotomy between the taste that informed this private collecting and what the Art-Union purchased? If so, what does this signify?

What artists benefitted most from Art-Union patronage? Who got the most money? Who sold the most pictures? Whose careers were most crucially aided? What kind of relations did the Art-Union maintain with the leaders of the American art world? The Art-Union not only bought extensively and generously from NAD President Asher B. Durand, but hired him to oversee the progress of a number of their engravings, keeping him essentially on retainer as an engraving consultant. In another move than can be read as a friendly gesture toward Durand, the Art-Union commissioned as a medallist an aging Charles Cushing Wright, one of Durand's former engraving partners. Similarly, the Art-Union offered its rooms for a one man show for Daniel Huntington and supported Huntington's efforts as a painter of literary and allegorical subjects with generous purchases negotiated by Art-Union managers sent to Huntington's studio with blanket authorizations to purchase. Additionally the Art-Union purchased pictures from a number of artists who were students of Huntington. These substantial gestures of friendship did not keep Huntington from later public criticism of the Art-Union. The Art-Union's relations with Francis W. Edmonds were the most complex, since Edmonds, an important

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banker as well as a well-known genre artist was the first Treasurer of the Apollo Association (as it then was) in 1839, and served as a member of the Committee of Managers from 1842 to 1847. The Art-Union purchased pictures from all three of these artists as well as distributing engravings of their works. Durand, Huntington and Edmonds were among the many artists who exhibited with both the Art-Union and the NAD. They were also privately patronized by members of the Art-Union Committee of Managers. Why didn't this help with the Art-Union's relations with the NAD? Or did it?

What does the Historical Society correspondence say about life in America outside the big cities in the 1840s, especially for local constituencies who were a potential art audience? This correspondence, in a variety of hands, from every part of the United States, Canada, Curacao, Bermuda, and London, is fascinating reading today. Its authors, at their most evocative, bring to life, for the reader one-hundred-fifty years later, the passions, victories, frustrations, anger, and humor of life in mid-nineteenth century America as experienced by citizens with a modest but aspiring taste for fine art and beauty. The correspondents raised the questions in particular and human terms that the Committee of Management had to grapple with as policy concerns. They conveyed local and regional issues and illuminated both the state of the nation and the delicate relationship of a New York City organization to the South, the West and the Yankee Northeast. They reflect the impact of weather, sickness, currency shortages, bad roads, the activities of other art unions (both legitimate and not), and human nature on the fortunes of the Art-Union. They offer a revealing window into the economic and vocational status of both subscribers and secretaries, suggesting the contours of a national market for the fine arts. Many are

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quite clear in expressing their own preferences in art and urging the Art-Union to veer in those directions.

It would be fascinating to trace the influence of the Art-Union in mobilizing a national constituency for art. Who were some of the principal out of town Honorary Secretaries? While many voices make up the aggregate of this correspondence, a few may be singled out for special examination – William Curtis, the conscientious and business-like Secretary in St. Louis, John Minor, a socially prominent connection in Virginia, and W.C. Little, the flamboyant agent in Albany. The correspondence of these men highlight three different kinds of secretaries in three quite distinct regions of the country.

The graphic images distributed by the Art-Union as annual premiums and as illustrations in its publications constitute a topic of their own. In an era immediately preceding the widespread use of the photograph, tens of thousands of images were distributed throughout the United States. How did these compare with the paintings which were purchased for distribution? What was the impact on the local level of these images? Similarly, support for medalists and sculptors can be examined.

The lottery is also clearly a topic of its own. It has a long history as an art-selling device in England and America.. The London Art-Union was almost brought down by a lottery challenge in 1844. The American Art-Union knew it had a problem. The Art-Union's lottery correspondence is rich and detailed. What did the correspondents say? Why didn't the American Art-Union respond to the lottery challenge? Even if they felt politically invulnerable, the lottery was treated as a necessary evil. Was it really necessary?

The Art-Union is a chapter in the history of art marketing. The correspondence has

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many letters from early artist's agents including Earle in Philadelphia and William Balch in Boston. Balch was an agent and an Honorary Secretary. Robert Fraser, the Art-Union's Corresponding Secretary was also an artists' agent. How did the Apollo Association and Herring fit into the development of art-dealing in America? The letters are not chatty, but might be useful combined with other sources.

There are a trove of letters from would-be artists. What kind of advice did they get? The Art-Union, with its easily accessible New York address and willingness to answer queries, served as a beacon for young, would-be artists seeking advice and encouragement. Some of these were young women; some were regional artists looking for New York exposure or further training; a few attained professional careers that can still be tracked. Andrew Warner, in particular, took this advising role seriously and this portion of the correspondence sheds interesting light on the fine art aspirations of a widely dispersed populace. One might look at the correspondence from Honorary Secretaries encouraging the purchase of works from young local artists. How did the Art-Union respond? Did any of these artists have careers we can trace?

What was the nature of the strident controversy that marked the Art-Union's final phase. Who were the Art-Union's enemies among the artists and the press, and what were their motives? What were the stated issues, what the real issues? Three principal enemies each appealed to different segments of the reading public. James Gordon Bennett was a sensationalist seeking to aggrandize his popular newspaper, fueled by the fires of Thomas Whitley's poison pen resentment. Nathaniel Willis sneered at the Art-Union from his position as self-anointed leader of the genteel, cosmopolitan aesthete. Lewis Gaylord

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Clark's opposition had more to do with New York literary politics. These attacks (and others) were telling because they were read nationally and picked up by local controversialists who had their own varied reasons (some legitimate, others not) for unhappiness with the organization. John Kenrick Fisher was an artist who exhibited at the Apollo and sold one work in 1849 to the Art-Union. He joined the ranks of critics with detailed proposals for a reorganization of New York's art organizations. Could any of Fisher's proposals have proved fruitful?

There is much more to ask about the Art-Union than has been asked and much more to know than is known.

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APPENDIX A

THE MEN WHO MADE THE ART-UNION

"It is men that history seeks to grasp."[1]

This is the tale that wags the dog. Between 1838 and 1852 the names of eighty-four prominent New Yorkers were publicly associated with the Apollo Association and/or the American Art-Union as members of the Committee of Management and officers. A few of the managers and officers were exceedingly influential and fashioned an organization reflective of their own styles. Nonetheless, the Art-Union was never the work of one man, or of a unified cadre. All of the men who served were invited onto the Committee to serve a purpose; they were included because it was believed they had something to add to the enterprise. What emerges out of this welter of individual biographical detail is a global portrait, the collective identity of the American Art-Union.[2]

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[1] Bloch, *Craft*, 26.

[2] The material for these sketches has been compiled from an assortment of mostly secondary sources. The four most commonly cited sources, indicated in the text are *Appleton's Encyclopaedia of American Biography*, *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, *Dictionary of American Biography*, and obituaries in the *New York Times*. These sources, when consulted, are indicated by abbreviations at the end of the biographical sketch with the following abbreviations – ApCab, NatCab, DAB, and NYT respectively. Citations to the name of the article are given only if the information is found under a name different from the subject, as happens with men who are parts of larger families and are listed under an ancestor's entry. All of these sources are subject to errors, and indeed, sometimes contradict each other. Moreover, they are all intended to be complimentary and thus give generally sanitized versions of their subjects lives and accomplishments. I have supplemented them with other secondary sources which mention individual men in the context of specific historical discussions. It would take a lifetime of biographical and genealogical research to cover the ground in these sketches in a way that met the highest standards of accuracy. Moreover, these are not biographies in a

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Biographical Sketches of Officers and Managers

George F. Allen (1815-1863)

George F. Allen, an owner of the Novelty Iron Works,[3] served on the Committee of Management in 1846. Allen was a friend and patron of Thomas Cole and occasionally acted as the painter's business agent in New York City.[4] He was the son-in-law of James Brown (1791-1877) of the Brown Brothers Bank (later Brown Brothers Harriman). The Novelty Iron Works did business on the East River at Twelfth Street at the same address as the ship building yard of William H. Brown, James's son and Allen's brother-in-law. Indeed, Brown followed Allen onto the Committee of Management, serving in 1847 and 1848. The Brown-Allen family had numerous ties to the New York Art world. Allen's brother and business partner, Horatio Allen, was a founder of the New-York Gallery of the Fine Arts. His father-in-law was active in a wide variety of charitable organizations and commissioned a family group portrait from Eastman Johnson in 1869 that is in the

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standard sense, but factual narratives composed of nuggets that seem to me to bear particularly on who these men were in relation to their service to the Art-Union. This project is admittedly impressionist attempt. The information, I believe, is more than true enough to yield an understanding of the human dimensions of the organization accessible through the device of these aggregate biographies.

[3] Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 659; Albion, *New York Port*, 149-151.

[4] Allen is discussed with references to further information and family connections in Allen Wallach, "Thomas Cole's *River in the Catskills* as an Antipastoral," *The Art Bulletin* 84 no. 2 (June 2002), 346, 350 notes 75, 78.

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collection of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.[5] Allen was an original member of the Century Club.

Joseph W. Alsop, Jr. (1804-1878)

Alsop was a member of the Committee of Management for three years in 1842, '43, and '44. A commission merchant on South Street,[6] Alsop's family background led naturally to his profession. He was a native of Middletown, Connecticut, a port on the Connecticut River, where his family was involved in the East India trade.[7] Tutored for a business career at home, he was sent to work in a New York commercial house as a young man before returning to Middletown. After his father's death, Alsop and his partner, Henry Chauncey concentrated their attentions on the American shores of the Pacific Ocean. In 1841 they reestablished their business in New York City and maintained branches in Valparaiso, Chile; Lima, Peru; and San Francisco, California. Alsop became a business associate of William H. Aspinwall, who ran the Pacific Mail

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[5] John Davis discusses this picture at length in "Children in the Parlor: Eastman Johnson's Brown Family and the Post-Civil War Luxury Interior," *American Art* 10, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 51-77.

[6] Commission merchants clustered on South Street. They were middlemen, sometimes also called factors. They sold merchandise that was consigned to them by importers (or by commission merchants in other ports) to the merchants who would actually sell the goods to consumers. Some commission merchants specialized in particular goods, while others were generalists. Commission merchants commonly maintained close working relations with similar houses in other ports. Albion, *Port*, 275-6.

[7] The term East Indies was applied loosely to a large area including the Malay Archipelago, India, and China. The trade involved cotton and silk, spices, tea, indigo, and later opium.

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Steamship Line and developed the Panama Railroad. Alsop was thus engaged in business in the same arena as Marshall Roberts, and, to a lesser extent, Prosper Wetmore. In 1848 Alsop was ideally positioned to profit from the business opportunities presented by the discovery of gold in California. In his later career, like other New York merchants with seafaring investments, Alsop diverted his capital and his energies from shipping to banking and railroads. In 1860 he served as Treasurer of the Seaman's Bank for Savings, of which Ebenezer Platt, who had served as the Art-Union Treasurer in 1845, was the Cashier. Alsop retired in 1863 from active roles in the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad and the Illinois Central (where another Director was Jonathan Sturgis). During his years on the Art-Union committee, Alsop lived at 13 Clinton Place (East 8th Street), near to Evert Duyckinck. He subsequently moved to Washington Square. (Obituary NYT, 28 March 1878)

William H. Appleton (1814-1899)

Appleton was a member of the Committee of Management in only one year, 1850. Nonetheless, in that limited time, he used his position of power as a New York publisher and bookseller to recruit booksellers across the country as honorary secretaries. He also facilitated distribution of Art-Union materials to far-flung members, arranging for them to accompany Appleton orders shipped to local book dealers. William Henry Appleton, though only thirty-six years old, had already worked in the book trade for twenty years. In 1826, at the age of sixteen, Appleton joined his father, Daniel, in a recently begun general store and was put in charge of the small book department. In 1831

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Daniel Appleton branched out into publishing and William directed that aspect of the business. The young man traveled to Europe in 1835 and 1837, making contacts with London publishers and English authors. In 1838 he became a partner in the business, renamed D. Appleton & Co. While Daniel Appleton was legendary as the soul of caution, William Appleton was characterized as having "dash and enterprise.[8]" Daniel Appleton retired in 1848, and William reorganized the firm in conjunction with his brothers, John and Daniel. The business subsequently occupied generations of Appleton descendants. John Adams Appleton, William's brother and partner, lived on Staten Island, in Clifton, the same community as John Austen. In 1854 the firm purchased, to use as its flagship showroom, the splendid premises at 346 Broadway that had been built by the New York Society Library in 1838-40. Appleton distinguished himself as advocate for international copyright, a defining issue for Evert Duyckinck and the Young America group. Indeed, Appleton was Duyckinck's publisher. In 1866 Appleton purchased Wave Hill, whose house and grounds command the heights above the Hudson River in what is now Riverdale, from the estate of William Lewis Morris, a member of the Apollo Association Committee of Management from 1839-41. William Henry Appleton was a member of the Century Club from 1847 until his death in 1899, and was joined there by many other family members. (Obituary NYT, 21 October 1899, NATCAB, DAB)

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[8] DAB, s.v. "Appleton, William Henry."

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John Haggerty Austen (1811-1894)

George Washington Austen

John Haggerty Austen served on the Committee of Management from 1839 through 1851. George Washington Austen was treasurer of the Art-Union from 1846 through 1851. The Austens were sons of David Embree Austin, who married Mary Haggerty, the sister of auctioneer John Haggerty. Austen joined his brother-in-law in the auction firm of Haggerty and Austen, which, along with John and Philip Hone conducted "the lion's share" of the important New York auction business.[9] By the 1830s David Embree Austen was a partner with William E. Wilmerding in Austen, Wilmerding & Co. auctioneers. The Austens lived at 2 Bowling Green, one in a line of six elegant houses along what was called "Nob's Row, "[10] next door to fellow auctioneer John Hone, Jr., nephew of Philip Hone.

In 1836 John Austen married and moved a few blocks north to Vesey Street. His wife, Elizabeth Townsend Austen, was descended from Peter Townsend, who had introduced steel manufacture into America from Germany in 1776 and founded the

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[9] Albion, *Port*, 279.

[10] For a description and illustration of these houses see Rodman Gilder, *The Battery* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1936), 140-141. A developer built a row of six three-story brick houses set back from the Green around 1816. In 1817 the facing street was named Bowling Green. The block was popularly called Nob's Row, a sarcastic reference to its wealthy inhabitants. Two Bowling Green was originally owned by Peter Remsen. David Austen sold the house in 1840 to William E. Wilmerding, his partner in the auction business, who lived there until 1855. ("To Occupy a Historic Site: Memories Recalled by the Location of the New Custom-House. The Story of Bowling Green," *New York Times*, 7 May 1899, 14) Wilmerding financed construction of a rustic fountain designed by the architect James Renwick, Jr. in the Park. (Gilder, 177)

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Sterling Iron Works. After his marriage, John seems to have temporarily left the family business. He is listed in city directories from 1838 to 1841 as a merchant in partnership with Aaron Thompson, an item of some note because Thompson was one of James Herring's original members of the Apollo Association Committee of Management. By 1842 John rejoined his father and brother, David, Jr., in the auction business. The family was reunited residentially as well on Union Place where David and David, Jr. lived at No. 31, while John and his family were at home at No. 37. By 1847 two additional brothers, George W. and James, joined the auction firm, which was now named "Austens & Spicer."[11] John Austen moved permanently to Staten Island in 1852, into a house he had purchased as a country home in 1844. The move coincided with the birth of a son, Peter Townsend Austen, who grew up to become a well-known Chemistry professor and popular lecturer. Austen's eldest child, his daughter, Alice Cornell Austen, was the mother of the photographer, Alice Austen. John Austen remained on Staten Island and was still listed in the Staten Island directory in 1886, with his occupation described as auctioneer.

George Austen's trajectory is not so well documented. He was admitted to membership in the New-York Historical Society in 1845 at a time when Prosper Wetmore served on the Executive Committee and recommended nominees for membership. George Austen was the original owner of a painting by Frederick Church

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[11] In 1827, 2 Bowling Green was occupied by a merchant, Peter Schenck. The row is now the site of the Customs House, designed by Cass Gilbert and built 1901-1907.

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painted in April 1848 two months after Thomas Cole's death, *To the Memory of Cole.*[12] George W. Austen joined the Century Club in 1851, while John seems never to have been a member.

Augustus Averill

Averill was a South Street commission merchant who served on the Committee of Management in 1844-45.

John Russell Bartlett (1805-1886)

Bartlett served on the Art-Union Committee of Management in 1847, while he was the proprietor of shop specializing in imported books located in Charles Stetson's Astor House hotel. While Bartlett only passed through the Art-Union, his presence sheds light on a type of manager who was especially welcome, the merchant-intellectual. John Bartlett lived in New York City from 1836 to 1849. He was born in Providence, Rhode Island, and reared in Ontario, Canada. Trained early as a merchant, he returned to Providence to clerk in an uncle's drygoods store and went from there to the banking business. Bartlett's cultural interests were already manifest in Providence. He joined the scientific Franklin Society. In 1831 he was elected to the Rhode Island Historical Society, and in the same year was among the founders of the Providence Athenaeum. Bartlett moved to New York City in 1836. After a brief and unsuccessful foray as a commission

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[12] Carol Vogel, "Inside Art: Lost Treasure to be Auctioned," *New York Times*, 7 May 1999, E 30. The work was sold at Sotheby's auction house in New York in May 1999.

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merchant, he joined with Charles Welford in the book business. The shop became an informal literary and intellectual salon. Bartlett was admitted to membership in the New-York Historical Society and played an active role in the organization, serving as its Foreign Corresponding Secretary from 1845 to 1849 (an appropriate position for an importer of books). He became a close friend and colleague of Albert Gallatin, President of the Society from 1843 to 1849, and, in 1842, founded with Gallatin and others the American Ethnological Society, with Gallatin as the President, Bartlett the Corresponding Secretary and Charles Welford the Recording Secretary. Bartlett published *Progress of Ethnology* in 1847, followed in 1848 by *A Dictionary of Americanisms: a Glossary of Words and Phrases Usually Regarded as Peculiar to the United States*. In 1849 he was chosen to write a memorial essay, "Reminiscences of Albert Gallatin," for the *Proceedings of the New-York Historical Society*. Bartlett was a member of the Century Association from 1847 to 1849, the year in which he retired from business. In 1850 he was appointed by President Zachary Taylor to serve on the commission empowered to adjudicate the border created by the Treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo that ended the Mexican War. Around 1854, Bartlett returned to Rhode Island, where he embarked on a stellar second career in Rhode Island political and cultural affairs. He was annually reelected Rhode Island Secretary of State from 1855 to 1872, and was Acting Governor in 1861-62. From 1855 to 1886 he worked to select and catalogue the library of John Carter Brown (1797-1874). Between 1856 and 1865 Bartlett edited and published *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island, 1636-1792* in ten volumes, writing and publishing a series of monographs on Rhode Island historical topics at the same time. There is a memorial

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biography of Bartlett in the Rhode Island Historical Society proceedings for 1886 as well as an obituary in the *Providence Journal*, published May 29, 1886. Bartlett was a polymath – a well-connected merchant, serious scholar, and active politician whose presence on the Art-Union Committee, however brief, was a public validation of the cultural ambitions of the merchant class. His career echoes that of Joseph Cogswell, who preceded him on the Committee of Management. (DAB, NATCAB)

James William Beekman (1815-1877)

Beekman served on the Committee of Management from 1848 through 1851. He was one of the relatively few Knickerbockers associated with the Art-Union. (Evert Duyckinck and Peter Remsen Brinckerhoff are two others.) The original William Beekman came to America on the same boat as Peter Stuyvesant. James William Beekman graduated from Columbia College in 1834. He trained as a lawyer but never practiced, having already inherited substantial wealth with the early deaths of his father and uncle, which also put him into possession of the family estate on the East River. In 1835 he traveled with fellow Knickerbocker and recent Columbia graduate Evert Duyckinck to Europe. Beekman studied European forms of government before returning to New York. In 1850, during his tenure on the Art-Union Committee, he was elected to the State Senate as a Whig (where he returned for a second term in 1862). Correspondence indicates that he acted as a conduit of information and as a friend of the Art-Union during his initial term in Albany. Beekman was a president of the St. Nicholas Society and, from 1848-1854 served as Corresponding Secretary and a member of the

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Executive Committee of the Historical Society. At the same time, as befitting a man of his social status and wealth, he served on a large number of charitable boards, was vice-president of the New York Hospital, president of the Woman's Hospital, and a director of the New York Dispensary. James Beekman was a member of the Century Club from 1852 until his death in 1877, where he was joined by many fellow Beekmans. (NATCAB)

Abner Benedict

Abner Benedict, who served on the Committee of Management in 1846 and 1847, was a lawyer with an office on Wall Street.

Erastus Cornelius Benedict (1800-1880)

Benedict was an energetic and influential presence at the Art-Union, a fixture on the Committee of Management from 1842 through 1851, much of that time as a member and chair of the Executive Committee. A well-known public figure in his time, whose career is documented by substantial entries in contemporary biographical dictionaries (DAB and NATCAB), Benedict is one of those fascinating nineteenth-century figures who is largely forgotten now. Benedict's first American forebear settled in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1638. The family migrated from Massachusetts to Connecticut, and then to the Berkshire area of New York State, where Erastus Benedict was raised. He graduated from Williams College in 1821 and worked as a tutor there, teaching Mark Hopkins. Benedict acquired a legal education which he put to use upon his arrival in New York City in 1824, when he was appointed deputy clerk in the

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Southern District Federal Court, a political patronage position. Benedict's exposure to admiralty law in the Federal courts prepared him for a lucrative career in subsequent private legal practice. Erastus Benedict may well have enjoyed the most successful career as an elected public official (excluding the perennially re-elected Judge Charles Daly) of any of the men prominently associated with the Art-Union. Though he ran and served under the Whig banner, Benedict's political career was notable in that his focus appears to have been on substantive issues rather than on party machinations. Erastus Benedict was passionate both about rationalized city planning and public education. In 1840 he was elected to the New York City Common Council representing the aristocratic, wealthy and overwhelmingly Whig Fifteenth Ward.[13] In 1842 he became a school trustee; in 1848, he was elected to the State Assembly; in 1850 he was elected to the New York City Board of Education, where he remained for thirteen years. Benedict was President of the Board of Education in 1852, when he delivered a notable speech on the occasion of the opening of a ward school in which he advocated and defended the construction of expensive public schools as a matter of public policy.[14] Benedict supported fellow Art-Union Committeeman Townsend Harris (though Harris was a Democrat) in working for the establishment of the Free Academy (now City College of the City University of New York), a project first proposed by Harris in 1846. In 1855 Benedict assumed a seat on the

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[13] The Fifteenth Ward, New York's wealthiest electoral district, was bounded by Houston Street on the south, Fourteenth Street on the north and Fourth to Sixth Avenue, east to west. See the map, "Ward Divisions of Lower Manhattan, 1855," in Ernst, *Immigrant Life*, 43, and numerous references in Spann, *Metropolis*.

[14] As quoted in Spann, *Metropolis*, 483 n. 35 from *New York Evening Post*, Sept. 7, 1852.

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State Board of Regents, a lifetime appointment, where he joined his Art-Union colleague, Prosper Wetmore. At the time of his death he was Chancellor of the State University.

Observing the explosive growth of suburban Brooklyn, which lured population from Manhattan by offering affordable housing, parks and accessible public mass transit, Benedict argued strongly for planned development in the large empty tracts of upper Manhattan. To this end he published *New York City and the City Travel: Omnibus and Railroad. What Should be Done* in 1851 where he expressed his concerns and envisioned uptown residential development encouraged and sustained by a usable system of public transportation. In 1864 Benedict was elected to a second term in the Assembly. In 1872 he was elected as a reform candidate to the State Senate. Benedict was a member of the Court of Impeachment that heard accusations against members of the judiciary implicated in the Tweed Ring scandals (where he likely sat in judgment of Benjamin Nathan's brother-in-law, Judge Albert Cardozo.)

In 1850 Benedict published a legal treatise, *American Admiralty*, which has long been regarded as a defining work in the field. (It was reprinted as recently as June 2002.) This was followed by a travel account in 1854, and translations of medieval hymns and poetry from German. Benedict held office at the New-York Historical Society where he was a member (and sometime Chairman) of the Executive Committee from 1843 to 1848 and from 1851 to 1880. He served as Second and First Vice President in 1871 and '72, and Foreign Corresponding Secretary in 1879-80. He was among the founders of the Association for the Improvement of the Conditions of the Poor (AICP) and served on

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numerous charitable boards His wife was a visitor at the Wilson Industrial School and Mission (for girls). When Benedict died, various courts adjourned as a sign of the respect he commanded in the legal and judicial community. Among the pallbearers at his funeral at the South Reformed Church (5th Avenue and 21st Street) was Chief Justice Charles Daly of the Court of Common Pleas.

Benedict and Wetmore make a wonderful pair – the Whig and the Democrat who, together, superintended the fortunes of the Art-Union, the New-York Historical Society and the New York State Board of Regents.

Abraham Bininger

Abraham Bininger served on the Committee of Management for only one year, in 1842. There were three men of the same name, one without a known middle initial, one who was Abraham G., described as a grocer, and the third Abraham M., an "agent." A *New York Times* obituary of October 15, 1870 further confuses the question, even to the point of making it unclear which Abraham Bininger had died. The Art-Union Abraham Bininger may have been the relatively elderly son of the original Methodist preacher and family founder in America, also named Abraham. It might also have been his son, Abraham, or his nephew, Abraham, son of Isaac Bininger. There appear to have been two family businesses descended from the two brothers, Abraham and Isaac. Both brothers sold groceries and other provisions. One Abraham Bininger was especially known as the premier purveyor of liquor and tobacco to Manhattan's well-to-do gentlemen. (Obituary NYT, 15 October1870)

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James Topham Brady (1815-69)

Brady was a legal celebrity in mid-nineteenth century New York, a pillar of the New York Bar and the Irish-American Catholic community, who served for four years on the Committee of Management from 1842 through 1845. He was born in New York City to Irish Catholic parents who had immigrated to America in 1812. His father, Thomas S. Brady, was a brilliant intellect who first worked as a schoolmaster before studying law under John Riker, brother of Richard Riker, the long-time Recorder of the City and County of New York. The elder Brady for many years was the Alderman for the Irish Sixth Ward on the New York City Common Council.

John Brady, one of a large family, trained in his father's office and joined the New York Bar in 1836. He immediately attained a reputation as a brilliant, thorough lawyer, a gifted speaker who addressed issues of justice rather than citing precedent to make his arguments (consistent here with David Dudley Field's codification movement and Young America). As a young lawyer, Brady worked on a case with Daniel Webster and won that statesman's praise. In the course of a long legal career, Brady was perhaps the most celebrated defense lawyer of his day, often winning his cases against the seeming weight of evidence. He lost only one of the fifty-two murder cases in which he was involved. Brady made a special study of the legal aspects of insanity. Equally effective in civil as in criminal cases, he was among the lawyers representing Mrs. Edwin Forrest in her celebrated and protracted divorce trial.

Brady was an ardent and deeply involved Democrat who, despite his attractive qualifications, generally refused offers to run for public office, preferring the practice of

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law. He was New York District Attorney briefly in 1843 (an interim appointed post which he held while an Art-Union Manager), and, from 1845 to 1847, was New York City Corporation Counsel. These were his only public offices.[15] He ran for governor of New York State in 1860, secure in the knowledge he would lose, so that his party would at least be able to field a candidate in support of Breckenridge, the southern States' Rights Democrat who challenged Abraham Lincoln. He declined the Tammany nomination for Mayor in 1861. Although a "hard shell" or "pro-slavery" Democrat before the War, he was a strong supporter of the Union during the conflict and strongly condemned the New York Draft Riots. Along with his fellow Irish-American Charles Daly (Committee of Management 1849-1851), he lent his considerable oratorical skills to the Union cause. He refused an offer to become Andrew Johnson's Attorney General.

Brady never married and devoted himself to looking after his siblings, among whom he was the eldest surviving brother. His sister was the wife of Nathaniel T. Jarvis, Jr., the Recording Secretary of the Art-Union from 1847 through 1851. After James Brady's death, a younger brother, John R. Brady, began an extended tenure as a judge of the New York Supreme Court, serving from 1869 to 1891. Brady wrote on legal topics, but also was an occasional contributor to the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, often writing under a pseudonym. His poem, "A Christmas Dream," published in Park Benjamin's *New York World* in 1846, became a popular favorite. (Obituary NYT, 10 February 1869, NATCAB, DAB)

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[15] Brady had no shortage of close associates who held elective office. His law partner, James Maurice, served in Congress.

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Charles Frederick Briggs (1804-1877)

Briggs served on the Committee of Management in the mid-period from 1842 through 1845. He was a literary and press figure, partner, with Edgar Allen Poe, on the *Broadway Journal* in 1845. A Nantucket native (his mother was a Coffin), Briggs went to sea before he began his literary career. In New York he maintained his nautical connection by settling on Staten Island. Briggs often wrote under the pen name Harry Franco, taken from the title of his 1839 satirical novel, *The Adventures of Harry Franco: A Tale of the Great Panic.* From 1853 to 1856, he edited the short-lived *Putnam's Magazine* with George William Curtis and Parke Godwin (William Cullen Bryant's son-in-law). He then became an editor at Henry Raymond's *New York Times*, in charge of the editorial page when Raymond traveled in Europe. Briggs' Republican political connections were responsible for a period of employment at the Customs House and also service on the Board of Commissioners of Central Park. In 1869 Briggs rejoined the resurrected *Putnam's* as editor. In 1870, he moved to the *Brooklyn Union*, becoming chief editor in 1874. He ended his journalistic career on the editorial staff of *The Independent.* Briggs wrote two additional novels after *Harry Franco, The Haunted Merchant* (1843); and *The Trippings of Tom Pepper: The Results of Romancing* (1845). As a literary man, he identified with the Young America movement, though he had strained relations with William Gillmore Simms and Cornelius Matthews (1817-1889), two of its key figures. Briggs plays a major role in Perry Miller's account of the literary history of the period, *The Raven and the Whale*, in which Miller identifies Briggs as an early influence on Herman Melville, particularly with regard to *Moby Dick.* For twenty-

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four years Briggs wrote the annual introduction to *Trow's Directory.* He was a close friend of James Russell Lowell, at the time that his partner, Poe, was attacking Lowell. During his tenure at the Art-Union Briggs was a recognized spokesman for the creation of an American school of literature and thus a friend of Evert Duyckinck, although Duyckinck did not arrive at the Committee until after Briggs had departed. Later the friendship gave way over Briggs's hostility to Duyckinck's friends, Simms and Matthews. (NATCAB, DAB)

Peter Remsen Brinckerhoff (1804-1874)

Brinckerhoff was an early recruit to the Apollo Association, a member of the Committee of Management in 1840 and 1841. His New York pedigree was impeccable and included grandparents who were members of the Remsen and Van Wyck families. When he died, he lived in Ossining, New York, which may account for his disappearance from the city directory after 1841.

William Brown

Brown was a prominent ship builder[16] who served on the Committee of Management in 1847-1848. He did business at the same address as the iron manufacturer and Manager, George Allen, his brother-in-law, who preceded him on the Committee of Management. His yards built hulls for the clippers of the Collins line mail boats. Brown was the son of James Brown (1791-1877), the banker who founded the American Branch

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[16] Albion, *Port,* 292.

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of Brown Brothers Bank (later Brown Brothers Harriman).

George Bruce (1781-1866)

George Bruce was among the men called upon by James Herring to establish the Apollo Association on a firm footing. He served on the 1839 Committee of Management and was Treasurer of the Apollo Association in 1840 and 1841. Bruce was an Edinburgh-born typefounder who, together with his brother David, introduced stereotype printing to the United States, improving the process with inventions of his own devising. The Bruces became enormously successful in business, enough for George to be credited with a worth of $200,000 in Moses Beach's 1845 list of "Wealthy Citizens of New York."[17] George Bruce was arguably the pre eminent "mechanic" of New York City, a multi-term president of the Mechanics Institute of New York and also the New York Typefounders' Association. He was an officer of the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen (which had founded the Mechanics Bank in 1810) and the Mechanics' Library, a member of the New-York Historical Society and the St. Andrew's Society. High profile, high energy, well respected, he personified the virtues that Herring sought in assembling his initial group of worthies to lend weight and credibility to the fledgling Apollo venture. Bruce was a creative mechanic who designed many typefaces and was among the first to

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[17] Moses Beach, the owner of *The New York Sun*, was not distinguished by a passion for truth or accuracy. His lists of New York's "Wealthy Citizens" have been roundly criticized on both these counts, specifically by Pessen, *Riches*, "Appendix B," 319. Nonetheless, Beach's lists, were contemporary, and, as cited here, reflect the prominent status that these men enjoyed in their community and the common belief, generally not mistaken, that (even if Beach's specific figures command little credence) they were men of substantial wealth.

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avail himself of the use of the newly introduced design patent in 1842. Additionally, Bruce was, by all accounts, a beloved figure, who worked at his typefounders shop bench until his eyesight failed ten years before his death. (NATCAB, DAB, Obituary NYT 8 July 1866)

William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878)

Of all the men recruited to lend their prestige to the American Art-Union, the most famous was indubitably the New York editor and internationally renowned poet, William Cullen Bryant. Bryant joined the Committee of Management in 1842 and served as President of the Art-Union in 1844, 1845 and 1846. A New Englander transplanted to New York, Bryant's American roots went back to 1632 and the Massachusetts Bay Colony. John Alden was a maternal forebear. Bryant came from a line of physicians and strong Federalists, but went his own way on both counts. At Williams College, he met Charles Sedgewick and began a long-lasting acquaintance that proved decisive in shaping his future life with this important and energetic Berkshire family. Faced with financial difficulties, Bryant did not finish college, but trained, instead, to practice law. Just as he was about to leave home to begin his legal career at the age of eighteen, he wrote "Thanatopsis." The poem remained unpublished for five years, seeing the light of day in the *North American Review* in 1817. Its publication marked the beginning both of Bryant's celebrity and his lifelong friendship with one of the editors of the *Review*, Richard Henry Dana. Through his career Bryant demonstrated a gift for friendship with literary men and artists. His poetry celebrated nature in terms that brought him national

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and international fame and made him America's pre-eminent romantic poet, "the American Wordsworth." He cultivated a particular friendship with Thomas Cole and served as the poetic muse of the Hudson River School of painters.

Encouraged and sponsored by Henry Sedgewick, Bryant gave up the practice of law in 1825 to commit himself to a literary life in New York City. Though his first magazine endeavors ended in financial failure, he was quickly admitted to the circle of artists and writers around James Fenimore Cooper. In 1826 he began to write for the *Evening Post;* in 1827 he acquired a financial interest in the paper; and in 1829 he assumed the role of editor-in-chief, the position he held until his death. The *Evening Post* was Jeffersonian in politics, but Knickerbocker in its literary tastes, publishing Cooper, Fitz-Green Halleck, Washington Irving, James Kirke Paulding, Gulian Verplanck and Nathaniel Parker Willis. In politics, Bryant was a Jacksonian and led the paper into the Democratic ranks as that party coalesced. Always more concerned with public issues and principles than with party machinations, Bryant and *The Post,* with the coming of the Civil War, went first to the Free Soil, and then to the Republican Party. As a journalist[18] and politician, Bryant was a fierce and partisan skirmisher, a controversialist who managed, nonetheless, to become a venerated elder. His persona as a journalist seemed at the time, and still appears, to be at considerable variance with his identity as a romantic

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[18] Not everyone loved Bryant. Philip Hone wrote of him in his *Diary* on the occasion of President William Henry Harrison's death, "The newspapers were clothed in mourning, all but the *Evening Post*, whose malignant, blackhearted editor Bryant, says he regrets the death of General Harrison only because he did not live long enough to prove his incapacity for President.." Hone *Diary* 2, 536. There is no way of knowing whether it is coincidence or not that Hone's service at the Art-Union bracketed Bryant's but never overlapped.

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poet and muse. These multiple identities have served to confuse Bryant's historical reputation. These varying aspects of Bryant are represented in his residences. He maintained a lifelong tie with the Berkshires, and with Cummington, Massachusetts, the town of his birth. For most of his career he lived in various locations in Manhattan, but was never truly "at home" in New York until 1843, when he purchased and renovated a country estate on the north shore of Long Island Sound in Roslyn, New York.

Withal, Bryant remains the best-known of all the men associated with the Art-Union, his patronym invoked in the names of the park behind the New York Public Library (Bryant Park), a New York City Public High School (Bryant High School), and the highest donor circle at the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (the Bryant Fellows). His biographers claim for him the distinction of having been the first, in 1844,[19] to advocate, in the editorial column of the *New York Post*, a large urban park for Manhattan, a feature that had not been part of the 1811 largely parkless gridplan. Bryant's pivotal position at the crossroads of politics and culture made him an ideal leader for the Art-Union. It is not clear who recruited Bryant to the Art-Union. At different times he had a multiplicity of connections to its shifting group of managers. Bryant's connection with Prosper Wetmore, however, seems particularly intriguing. Although by no means the same kind of political operative, the two men shared a Democratic party affiliation. Wetmore was a minor poet, and together with Bryant, a friend and supporter of the American tragedian, Edwin Forrest. In the 1820s Wetmore

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[19] Charles H. Brown, *William Cullen Bryant : A Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), 293.

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had been involved in the small world of New York journalism, working for James Watson Webb's *Courier and Enquirer*. Moreover, Wetmore was an old friend and colleague of Bryant's late and much lamented former partner, William Leggett (1801-1839). Wetmore and Legget had worked together in the late 1820s on the *Mirror*,[20] and in 1828 Wetmore appealed to Forrest for a donation of funds to aid the financially beleaguered Leggett. Bryant revered Leggett and keenly felt his loss.

Bryant was a joiner and had connections everywhere. Beginning with an initial affiliation with Cooper's Bread and Cheese Club, a coup for a recent arrival to the City, Bryant belonged to its two successors, the Sketch Club and the Century Club. He was a friend of artists and was an instructor at the National Academy of Art Schools. In February 1828 he lectured on the topic of "Mythology" and was awarded the lofty title of "Professor of Mythology and Ancient History." In 1834 he was made an Honorary Member of the Academy. Bryant was also a fixture at the New-York Historical Society.

William Allen Butler (1825-1902)

William Allen Butler served on the Committee of Management from 1849 through 1851. He was only twenty-four years old when he joined his good friend, Evert Duyckinck as an Art-Union Manager. Butler arrived with impeccable credentials. His father, Benjamin Franklin Butler, had clerked in the law office of Martin Van Buren and became his law partner. B. F. Butler served in Andrew Jackson's cabinet as Attorney General and also Secretary of War (still the only man to hold two cabinet positions

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[20] Mott, *Magazines*, 354.

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simultaneously). Young Butler attended the University of the City of New York (confusingly enough, the present New York University) which his father and uncle had been instrumental in founding. He graduated in 1843, in the same class with Evert Duyckinck's younger brother, George, beginning an association that led to a lifelong friendship with the Duyckinck brothers.[21] Butler read law in his father's office, and was admitted to the Bar in 1846. He traveled in Europe, exhibiting his literary bent in a series of travel pieces he sent back to the *Literary World*. Butler was associated with the Young America group and his allegiance to Evert Duyckinck was lifelong: in 1879 he wrote a biographical memoir of his late friend. Butler also wrote a series of essays on great masters of art for the Art-Union Bulletin, signing his articles "W.A.B."

Professionally, Butler made a specialty of admiralty law, appropriate in light of his marriage in 1850 to Mary Russell Marshall, the daughter of Charles H. Marshall, the owner of the Black Ball Steamship Line. (This meant that after 1866, Butler was the brother-in-law of the artist, William Stanley Haseltine). In this specialty he joined his eminent and senior colleague at the Art-Union, Erastus Benedict. In 1849, Butler became the law partner of Hiram Barney, son-in-law of Lewis Tappan, silk merchant, abolitionist, and founder of the Mercantile Agency, the direct ancestor of Dun & Bradstreet. Butler maintained a lifelong affiliation with his alma mater, teaching at its law school, which his father was instrumental in founding, and eventually succeeding his uncle Charles as University President in 1897.

As was the case with many other Art-Union managers, Butler sustained a variety

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[21]Perry Miller, *Raven*, 77.

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of interests. In later life he served as a member of the Board of Trustees of the New York Public Library, and he was President, in the 1880s, of the American and New York Bar Associations. A staunch Union supporter, he identified with the Republican Party after the Civil War. He moved to Yonkers (as did Frederick Coe) in 1865, where he was active in political, educational, and charitable institutions. Butler was a dab hand at rhyming which translated into a facility for light verse. He achieved a somewhat embarrassing modicum of fame for his poem, "Nothing to Wear: An Episode of City Life," which was initially published anonymously in 1857 in *Harper's Weekly*. He also wrote novels, biographies and legal treatises. (DAB, NATCAB)

Thomas N. Campbell, Jr.

Campbell, a member of the Committee of Management in 1839 and 1840, was a Custom's House Broker, a middleman who brought together sellers and buyers without ever handling actual goods. Campbell was a collector of European and American art who lent about fifteen works to 1839 and 1840 exhibitions of the Apollo Association. While little is known about Campbell, he was a conscientious early member of the Committee of Management, attending meetings faithfully without ever exerting a leadership role. He may have been the Thomas Campbell identified as a picture dealer in 1851-52.

Stephen M. Chester

Chester served on the Committee of Management in 1842 and 1843. He is listed as a carpet merchant in the city directories, doing business at 191 Broadway and living at

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171 Greene Street. He lent five pictures to Apollo Association exhibitions in 1839 and 1840, including a genre work by Robert Street (1796-1865) that he offered for sale.

Frederick Augustus Coe (1816-after 1869)

Coe was an active member of the Committee of Management from 1847 to 1851, joining the group the year after he won Asher Durand's *View on the Hudson – Cornwall, N.Y.* in the 1846 lottery. He was a lawyer who traveled for the Art-Union, visiting Honorary Secretaries in the field and suggesting new ones for appointment. He was a member of the Century Association for one year in 1851. In 1869 he was still practicing law at 170 Broadway and living in Yonkers, indicating, perhaps that he moved there around 1852.

Joseph Green Cogswell (1786-1871)

Joseph Green Cogswell, educator, editor, and bibliographer, brought in his person to the Committee of Management in 1841 that *rara avis* in American society, the professional intellectual. A Yankee from Ispswich, Massachusetts (his forebear, John Cogswell arrived in 1635), he graduated from Harvard College in 1806, studied law for two years and then embarked on a series of mercantile ventures in Southern Europe that brought him face to face with pirates, bandits, and the vagaries of international politics of the time. Returning home, he married Mary Gilman, the daughter of the John Taylor Gilman, Governor of New Hampshire in 1812, and began the practice of law in Maine. When his wife died in 1813 he returned to Harvard as a Latin tutor. From 1815 to 1820

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he traveled and studied in Europe. In 1817 a trio of sons of New England, Cogswell, Edward Everett (1794-1865), and George Ticknor (1791-1871), were the first Americans to study at a German university – choosing Göttingen which had been founded in 1737 by George II of England, in his capacity as Elector of Hanover. In the course of his travels, Cogswell established a friendship with Wolfgang Goethe and maintained a several year correspondence with him, which resulted in Goethe's donation of a set of his works to the Harvard College library in 1819. In February 1819 Cogswell published two anonymous essays in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, "On the Means of Education and the State of Learning in the United States of America," and "On the State of Learning in the United States of America," both highly critical of the substance and methods of education in America. Cogswell's choice of venue in which to publish his criticism assured his views a wide, highly prestigious readership all over the English speaking world. He and Ticknor were guests of Walter Scott at Abbotsford. On his return to America in 1820, Cogswell was named Professor of Mineralogy and Geology at Harvard as well as Harvard Librarian. Using Göttingen as a model, he reorganized the Harvard Library. In 1823, acting on his previous criticism of American education, he founded the Round Hill School in Northhampton, Massachusetts with George Bancroft (1800-1891). The school was modeled on the German gymnasium and emphasized academics combined outdoor activities, offering a compassionate but strict discipline. Bancroft left in 1831 and, after encountering financial difficulties in 1834, Cogswell relocated to Raleigh, North Carolina, where he founded another school. This cosmopolitan Yankee found southern culture uncongenial, and so he came to New York City where, from 1836

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to 1838 he lived with his friend and former Round Hill pupil, Samuel Ward, and functioned as the live-in tutor for the family. With Ward's support he founded and edited the *New York Review*, a literary journal that lasted until 1842. It was during his time as a New York editor that Cogswell served on the Apollo Committee. Through the Wards Cogswell met John Jacob Astor. Together with Washington Irving and Fitz-Greene Halleck, Cogswell developed the vision that became the Astor library. When Irving, about to assume the role of American ambassador to Spain, arranged for Cogswell to be the secretary of the American legation and thus accompany him, Astor, unwilling to lose Cogswell's counsel, employed him to plan the library and purchase books for it. Philip Hone recorded the episode in his diary entry for 1842:

> Mr. Coggeswell [*sic*] of this city, who was appointed secretary of legation to accompany Mr. Irving, does not go. Mr. Astor, who enjoys his society, has bribed him to remain. He is willing to pay as much for the velvet cushion on which it is his pleasure to rest his head as the secretaryship would have produced, and it comes in the shape of a permanent salary to Mr. Coggeswell as librarian of a great public library which Mr. Astor has signified his intention to establish and endow in this city, which he proposes now to anticipate. That gentleman wisely determines to receive his equivalent and stay at home, write articles for the New York *Review,* and accompany his patron in his daily drives from Broadway to Hell Gate. Macaenas keeps Horace near him, and Horace knows when he has a good thing."[22]

Although Astor died in 1848, Cogswell devoted the rest of his life to the Astor collection which became one of the founding collections of the New York Public Library. The Astor Library opened to the public in its own building in 1854. Cogswell retired in 1861 to Cambridge, Massachusetts, but continued to work until 1866 at cataloging the Astor collection. He also collected old master drawings. (APCAB, NATCAB, DAB)

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[22] Hone, *Diary*, 2, 595.

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David Cadwallader Colden (d. 1850)

Colden served on the Art-Union Committee of Management in 1848 and 1849. He was as close to an aristocrat as America could produce, the scion of a family with numerous and plentiful ties to politics and commerce. His great-grandfather, Cadwallader Colden, served as lieutenant Governor of New York under the British. His father, Cadwallader D. Colden, was a former Mayor of New York whose array of activities included serving as President of the Manumission Society, director of the American Academy of the Fine Arts, trustee of the New-York hospital, member of the Literary and Philosophical Society, and grand officer of the Sovereign Grand Consistory of the Masons.[23] David Cadwallader Colden was, additionally, the nephew (though not the heir) of George Rapelye, an immensely wealthy landholder of ancient New York lineage who died in 1835.[24] Colden served as a Director of the American Academy of the Fine Arts in 1839. In 1841 he was chosen by the organizers of the so-called "Boz Ball" to visit Boston and personally tender New York's invitation to the visiting English author, Charles Dickens, a mission which he successfully accomplished. Colden was an Honorary Member of the National Academy of Design. He also served as President of the St. David's Association (the Welsh fraternal society), and the Dramatic Fund Association (an activity he shared with James T. Brady). In 1849 he was listed in the City Directory as the President of the Utility (gas) Company. He came onto the Committee at a

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[23] This digest description comes from Cornog, *Empire*, 4.

[24] Pessen, *Riches*, 94 notes this, citing Hone's disapproving note in his diary entry of February 4, 1835 (which is not excerpted in the 1927 Nevins compilation).

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time when a number of his social circle also joined, Phillip Hone (1848-51), Moses Grinnell, (1848), Charles H. Russell (1848-51) and James W. Beekman (1848-51). Colden was eulogized by Park Benjamin as having a

> fine, frank and cordial disposition, . . . almost universally popular. . . and without the ambition to make a noise in the world. . . . Devoted to the advancement of Art, delighting in the society of artists, and with the cultivated taste of an amateur, he had done much for the promotion of the cause [of the Fine Arts] in this country.[25]

Nevins describes him as "a distinguished attorney," who, as a particularly esteemed Sketch Club member, was invited to chair the meeting convened by Sketch Club members that established the Century Club in 1847.[26]

Lefferts G. Coles

Coles was a member of the Committee of Management in 1849. His name indicates membership in at least two distinguished and wealthy New York families.

David A. Comstock

Comstock, who served on the Committee of Management in 1840, sold silk goods on Pine Street. In 1850 a subscriber identified only as D. A. Comstock, New York, won Robert Walter Weir's *Church of the Holy Innocents* in the Art-Union lottery.

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[25] Park Benjamin, "Letters from New York. New York, April 10, 1850," in *Southern Literary Messenger* 16, no. 5 (May 1850): 316.

[26] Allen Nevins, "The Century, 1847-1866, " in *The Century 1847-1946* (New York: The Century Association, 1947), 5.

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Edward B. Corwin

Corwin was the Corresponding Secretary Corwin of the Apollo Association in 1841, a minimally demanding post as it turned out, since the organization nearly evaporated in that year. The description of him as a "teller" in the city directory suggests that he was a banker.

Abraham Martling Cozzens (1811-1868)

Cozzens, a glass merchant, joined the Committee of Management of the Apollo Association in 1840. Absent for 1842 and '43, he returned in 1844, serving continuously until he was chosen as President to replace Prosper Wetmore in 1850. Cozzens was the son of the popular proprietor of the American Hotel, William B. Cozzens, a member in 1845 of the New York City Board of Aldermen.[27] The family had Rhode Island roots. Abraham Cozzens was a very young member of the Bread and Cheese Club, followed by the Sketch Club, and among the "half-dozen who . . . became the founding fathers of the [Century] Club." He was, in Allen Nevins's phrase, "a merchant of artistic leanings"[28] He

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[27] The evidence for Abraham Cozzens being the son of William B. Cozzens is the assertion in John Durand's biography of his father, that "Mr. Abraham Cozzens, of hotel celebrity," was "'posted' on the history of art, by his son, Mr. A. M. Cozzens" when the elder Cozzens was an alderman prepared to argue in favor of giving the New York Gallery of Fine Arts the free use of the city-owned Rotunda. William B. Cozzens was an alderman in 1845. John Durand has apparently confused the father's name with the son's. Despite the name confusion, the relationship is likely to be accurate since Asher B. Durand, a contemporary of both men, knew them both well. Assuming that Abraham Cozzens was indeed, William Cozzens son, he was also then, a first cousin to Frederick Swarthout Cozzens (1818-1869), wine merchant and Knickerbocker *literateur*. Durand, 129.

[28] Nevins, "Century," 3.

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also took an active role at the New-York Historical Society, and was an Honorary Member of the National Academy of Design from 1844, a compliment that was not lightly paid by the artists of the Academy to members of the merchant/patron class. Cozzens was a serious collector of art, much of it the work of contemporary Americans. He was an early patron of Emanuel Leutze whose relationship with the painter went beyond financial transactions – Leutze named his eldest son Eugene Henry Cozzens Leutze (1847-1931). The Century Association retains a Leutze portrait of Cozzens. Cozzens was also a critical early patron of Daniel Huntington. In an 1871 interview in *Scribner's Monthly*, Huntington reminisced about the period around 1840 when he was a young artist just beginning his New York career.

> Mr. Cozzens was an appreciative patron; not only did he give of his own purse to the young artist, but induced his friend Ed. Carey of Philadelphia to become his patron also .... 'A warm sympathy thus began,' says the artist, 'between Mr. Cozzens and myself, and I attribute much of my success in life to his generous friendship.'[29]

In 1848, while the residential heart of Manhattan marched steadily North, Abraham Cozzens moved in the opposite direction, going the few blocks from 47 Broadway to 7 State Street (now the Shrine of Saint Elizabeth Seton) where he lived until 1854. The row of houses along State Street had once been New York's finest and Cozzens' home had many historic associations.[30] Cozzens was a popular figure in New York Society. In 1854 a group of colleagues from the Art-Union presented Cozzens with

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[29] D. O'C. Townley, "Daniel Huntington, Ex-President N.A.D.," *Scribner's Monthly* 2, no. 1 (May 1871): 46.

[30] For a discussion of State Street, see Gilder, *Battery*, 162-166, 195.

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a set of silver plate in honor of his efforts on behalf of the recently concluded organization.[31] Cozzens succumbed to typhoid fever in 1868. The record of the auction of his collection, which was conducted by his long-time Art-Union colleague, John Austen, provides a valuable insight into his own taste and that of the Art-Union.

George Curtis (1824-1892 or 1796-1856)

George Curtis served on the Committee of Management in 1850. It is not clear which George Curtis served on the Committee, father or son. Either would have been plausible. The father was a banker from an old Providence, Rhode Island family. He attained eminence in Rhode Island, serving as Speaker of the House in the state legislature in 1837-38, immediately before he left for New York, which, by 1839, was clearly the center for banking opportunity. In 1844 he became the President of the Continental Bank in New York. In 1853 and '54, he worked with Frances Edmonds to establish the New York Clearinghouse. He was a member of the Hone social circle. [32] Rachel Klein believes that this is the right Curtis, a belief consistent with her statement

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[31] There was a notice of this gift in the *New York Times* of 9 February 1854 in a round-up of events column entitled "New-York City" (p. 2). On the next day, 10 February, the *Times* devoted a full story to the presentation, "The American Art-Union: Service of Plate to A. M. Cozzens, Esq." (p. 6) which quotes in full the letter that accompanied the silver service and the names of all the signatories, and records Cozzens lengthy thanks, a celebration of the achievements of the Art-Union and a distinctly sarcastic hope that "those who have been mainly instrumental in destroying the efficiency of the Art-Union should be looked to for a "renewed" "new and effective means . . .[to be] employed in aid of the cause of Art."

[32] This, according to Pessen, *Riches*, 239.

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that "conservative Whiggery defined the core of the Art-Union leadership."[33]

George William Curtis, the son, clerked in New York City from 1839 to 1842, spent two years on Brook Farm with his elder brother James, and traveled in Europe from 1846 to 1850, sending travel letters back to Horace Greeley's *New York Herald.* These marked the beginning of his career in literature and journalism. James T. Callow, in *Kindred Spirits*, believes that it was George W. Curtis who joined the Art-Union Committee of Management in 1850.[34] George William Curtis was a journalist, a reformer, a man of letters, and a professional lecturer, concerned about the quality of American popular taste. He would have found a likely and comfortable place at the Art-Union Committee table. In 1853 he joined George Putnam, Charles Briggs, and Parke Godwin in launching *Putnam's*, and remained with the magazine until it failed in 1856. In his later career, he was active in the Republican Party and was an advocate for the right of labor to organize, and the right of women to vote. Curtis developed a significant career as a public orator. He sounded one of his most important themes at Wesleyan University in 1856, when he described his ideal American scholar not as a "closeted specialist," but as a "'priest of the mind' dedicated to the elevation of public thought and action," an entirely consistent clarion call for a former Art-Union manager. [35] Curtis was a member of the

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[33] Klein, "Art and Authority," 1538, 1561. In Klein's "Table 1" she lists George Curtis's occupation as banker. That would have been the senior Curtis.

[34] James T. Callow, *Kindred Spirits:Knickerbocker Writer and American Artists, 1807-1855* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 33.

[35] DAB, s.v., "Curtis, George William."

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State Board of Regents (like Prosper Wetmore and Erastus Benedict) and, like Benedict, served as Chancellor of the University of the State of New York. In 1856 he married a Staten Islander, and found the island a congenial place, as had William Page, Charles Briggs and John Austen. His name is remembered there still at Curtis High School. Curtis's enduring claim to fame resulted from his cogent advocacy of the institution of a permanent non-political cadre of government employees, a successful crusade which earned him the sobriquet, "father of the American Civil Service." His acquaintance with A. M. Cozzens is documented in a recollection of Cozzens living on State Street in the 1850s that appeared in "The Editor's Chair" column of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in September 1876.[36]

Charles Patrick Daly (1816-1899)

Charles Daly served on the Art-Union Committee for its final three years, from 1849 through 1851. He was born in New York to Irish immigrant parents and attended the school run by Thomas S. Brady, where his schoolmates were James T. Brady and the future Cardinal McCloskey. Daly's father, a carpenter, died when Daly was young, abruptly ending the boy's formal education. He went to Georgia to work as a clerk. Ill-treated, he ran away to sea and served for three years before the mast. When he returned to New York he trained to become a carpenter, like his father before him, but spent his evening in pursuit of self-improvement, seeking education and honing his intellectual

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[36] George W. Curtis, "Editor's Easy Chair," *Harpers New Monthly Magazine* 53 no. 316 (September 1876): 625. Curtis became the editor of *Harper's Weekly* in 1863, and wrote the "Easy Chair" column.

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skills with membership in a literary society. His prowess in oratory at the literary society attracted a patron who offered Daly a place in his law office in 1836. Daly's brilliance was immediately apparent. He was admitted to the Bar in 1839, after only three years study instead of the usual seven. Daly was elected to the State Assembly in 1843 and declined an invitation to run for Congress. A Democrat, but not a Tammany man, he was appointed to the Court of Common Pleas in 1844 over Tammany opposition. The judicial post became elective in 1846, and Daly was consistently returned to office, serving as Chief Justice from 1858 until 1885, when he reached mandatory retirement age. In a period of considerable political influence on the judiciary, Daly enjoyed a reputation as an outstanding legal scholar and a dispassionate judge. In the election of 1871 he was the candidate of all the political parties.

Daly presided over the trials of seven men charged in the Astor Place riots in 1849 and applied the law in such a way as to achieve convictions and impose substantial sentences despite widespread public sympathy with the rioters.[37] The Astor Place trial took place during his tenure on the Art-Union Committee. Daly was an important leader of the Irish Catholic community in New York. He was a Union Democrat during the Civil War and a legal advisor to Lincoln. In 1856 Daly married Maria Lydig, a member of an old New York family with an estate in the Bronx at West Farms (near the current Bronx Zoo). Maria Daly was active in numerous Catholic charitable activities and headed

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[37] In addition to issues of class and nationalism that were brought to the fore in the riots, New York had a history of political rioting as a semi-legitimate safety valve for popular discontent. The Macready-Forrest rivalry split the Art-Union Committee, generally along class and party lines.

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the women's committee that commissioned Tiffany and Co. to produce the flag for the Irish "Fighting Sixty-Ninth" Regiment, a green banner with an Irish harp in the center.[38] Daly held a law degree from Columbia College (awarded in 1860), and for thirty-five years, from 1864 to 1899, served as President of the American Geographical Society, pursuing an interest in geography and maps sparked by his years as a sailor. When he traveled to Europe he met and favorably impressed his fellow geographer, the famed German Alexander Humboldt. Daly was an honorary member of the Royal Geographical Society (London), the Berlin Geographical Society, and the Imperial Geographical Society (Russia). Daly joined the Century Club in 1851. He was a member of the New-York Historical Society and served for many years as President of the St. Patrick's Society. He wrote on history, geography and jurisprudence. In 1879 he published *In Memory of Henry Peters Gray.* (NATCAB, DAB, Obituary NYT, 20 September 1899)

William B. Deen (d. about 1854)

Deen was a commission merchant who served on the Committee of Management from 1847 through 1851. Both he and his wife were members of old Virginia families. They had returned to Virginia by 1852, when their son was born. (DAB[39])

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[38]Edward R. Spann, "Union Green: The Irish Community and the Civil War," in Bayor and Meagher, *Irish*, 198.

[39] This information comes from DAB, s.v., "Deen, William Morris," the son of William B. Deen.

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Richard Demill

Demill served on the Committee of Management in 1846 and 1847. He was a merchant and an agent for a line of Savannah packets.

Evert Augustus Duyckinck (1816-1878)

Evert Duyckinck joined the Management Committee in 1848 at the time that the Art-Union began to expand its publishing program. He played an active role in the organization until its end in 1851. A strong addition to the Committee, Duyckinck was well-educated, well-connected, and an important actor in New York literary life. In his extensive career as a writer and publisher, Duyckinck's motivating conviction was that a serious school of American literary criticism could be midwife to a first-rate school of American literature. Perry Miller's comment that Duyckinck's "mission was to cultivate taste"[40] pinpoints exactly why this bookish Knickerbocker was a natural recruit for the Art-Union.

The first Evert Duyckinck (1621-1702) arrived in New Amsterdam from Holland in 1638, nine years before Peter Stuyvesant. The family was at the heart of New Amsterdam cultural life (such as it was) from the start. The founding Evert was a glazier and artist who painted the New Amsterdam city seal on street-corner fire-buckets, as well

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[40] The quote is from Miller, *Raven*, 76. Miller's book contains extensive discussion of the literary politics of Duyckinck's New York. Duyckinck is a major figure, as well, in any discussion of American literature of the period. There are, for example, numerous references to him in the classic Matthiessen, *American Renaissance*. For a discussion of Duyckinck's purpose written from a political point of view, see numerous references in Widmer, *Young America*.

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the coats of arms of prominent New Amsterdam families on the windows of the Dutch Reformed Church built in the fort.[41] Subsequent generations maintained the family interest in art. Evert's son, Gerrit (1660 -c.1713) assisted his father and worked as a limner. Gerrits' two sons, Evert Duckinck III (1677-1727) and Gerardus Duyckinck (1695-1746), both learned their glazing and painting trades their grandfather's studio. Gerardus II (1723-1797) owned a shop where he sold prints, maps, glass (for frames and mirrors), and taught drawing and painting on glass as well.

Evert Augustus Duyckinck's father (also Evert) made a comfortable living as a Water Street bookseller and publisher. The young man graduated from Columbia College in 1835 and read law in the office of John Anthon, a distinguished New York lawyer and jurist. Though Duyckinck was admitted to the Bar in 1837, he never practiced law. After a year's travel in Europe, he returned to New York, married, and pursued a literary career. His house at 20 Clinton Place (now East 8th Street) contained one of New York's best private libraries, its 17,000 books available to Duyckinck's wide circle of literary friends, both critics and authors. This salon (or "clubhouse" in Perry Miller's phrase) nurtured, among others, Charles Briggs, Edgar Allan Poe, and Herman Melville.[42] Duyckinck, quiet and devoted to his Episcopalian faith, was also an iconoclast and a controversialist from the start. He assembled a group of like-minded young men passionately committed to the fostering of a distinctively American voice in literature – centered in New York City, but inclusive of Northern and Southern voices. Their natural opposition was the Whig group

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[41] Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 44; Gilder, *Battery,* 13.

[42] Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 686.

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clustered around Lewis Gaylord Clark's *Knickerbocker* magazine.

Duyckinck began his life's work as a young man contributing essays to an Episcopalian journal, *The New York Review,* and to Park Benjamin's *American Monthly.* In 1840, in conjunction with his tight-knit circle of friends, he founded *Arcturus* (1840-42), a short-lived but highly regarded journal of literary, artistic, and dramatic culture. The magazine championed Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne and published poetry from the Boston poet, James Russell Lowell. In the mid-1840's Duyckinck engaged in a variety of publishing activities. In 1844 he was associated with Dr. John Francis in circulating a prospectus for a literary magazine to be called *The Home-Critic*, "a permanent organ of criticism, systematically and industriously devoted to a review of *American* creations." The project, which never came to fruition, was to include Henry Raymond with Hiram Fuller as publisher. In the same year Duyckinck entered into an arrangement with Putnam and Wiley to edit a series of volumes to be called the "American Library," publishing works of Bryant, Poe, and the southern writer William Gilmor Simms, with whom Duyckinck had a close relationship (as did Prosper Wetmore). Duyckinck also wrote for the *Whig Review*, a journal which was willing, despite its conservative politics, to print work by Briggs, James Russell Lowell, Walt Whitman, and, in February 1845, Edgar Allan Poe's poem, *The Raven.* Duyckinck also contributed to Brigg's *Broadway Journal.* In 1845 Duyckinck became literary editor of John L. O'Sullivan and Samuel Tilden's *Morning News,* a Democratic paper, affiliating as well with O'Sullivan's *Democratic Review.* The *Democratic Review*, founded in Washington, D.C., in 1837, had moved to New York City in 1840. It was a bare-knuckled partisan journal and might

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have seemed a strange place for so high-toned a figure as Duyckinck, except that, under O'Sullivan's leadership, it maintained a serious commitment to American literature. The magazine published such writers, critics, poets and essayists as William Cullen Bryant, John Greenleaf Whittier, James Russell Lowell, Henry T. Tuckerman, Horatio Greenough, Charles Briggs, Henry David Thoreau, the young Walter Whitman, and the early poetry of William Allen Butler, and, in 1844, Edgar Allan Poe. In 1847 Duyckinck was named editor of *The Literary World,* a journal intended to "preach the . . . doctrine" of "a literature distinctively American."[43] The magazine first appeared in February 1847 and, by April 24, Duyckinck was gone. In October 1848 Duyckinck and his brother George purchased the *Literary World* and made it their own, publishing until December 1853. Thus Duyckinck owned, edited and published the *The Literary World* at the same time that he served on the Art-Union Committee.

Evert Duyckinck's engagement with American literature continued until the end of his life. In 1855 he and his brother (an Episcopalian clergyman by trade) published the *Cyclopaedia of American Literature.* In 1861-62 he followed up on James Herring's Jacksonian impulse with his own contribution to the War effort, a two-volume *National Portrait Gallery of Eminent Americans.* At the time of his death he was involved with William Cullen Bryant in bringing out an edition of Shakespeare's works. Duyckinck published numerous works including memorials of Henry T. Tuckerman (1872), James W. Beekman (1877), and Fitz-Greene Halleck (1877). He, in turn, was memorialized in 1879 by his long-time literary ally, William Allen Butler. His substantial library and

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[43] Miller, *Raven*, 189.

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papers went to the Lenox Library, now part of the New York Public Library. Duyckinck served as Domestic Corresponding Secretary of the New-York Historical Society, and as a trustee of Columbia College (1874-78) and The New-York Society Library. He was, during his lifetime, a contradictory figure, an insider by birth, but never, for example, a member of the Century. (The Century Club was located at 24 Clinton Place from 1852 until 1858 and thereafter on West 15th Street. Duyckinck ran, in effect, an alternate salon.) Though primarily affiliated with Democrats, he had no apparent interest in electoral politics and crossed political party lines with nary notice nor regret when the interests of the literature he championed led him to do so. A committed New York City dweller, whose idea of a rural excursion was a trip to Staten Island, he is, ironically, buried at Sleepy Hollow in the bucolic precincts of Tarrytown alongside that most iconic of American writers from the previous generation, his friend, Washington Irving. Duyckinck is remembered primarily for his falling out with Herman Melville, though he was Melville's primary mentor at a crucial time, and their friendship was, in the end, resumed.[44] (NATCAB, DAB, Obituary NYT 15 August 1878)

Francis William Edmonds (1806-1863)

Francis Edmonds was recruited to the Apollo Association by James Herring. He was a natural choice, bridging the worlds of art and business. Edmonds was both a *bona fide* banker and a serious artist. He served as Treasurer of the Apollo in 1839 and as a member of the Committee of Management from 1842 through 1847. Edmonds remains

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[44] For quotes and anecdotes above, see Miller, *Raven*, 114, 122,189, 74, 107, 346.

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known today as a mid-century genre painter whose works deliberately recall the images and themes of the Dutch little masters. Francis Edmonds' father was a Hudson, New York, shop keeper who parlayed Democratic political connections into the job of Paymaster for the State Militia during the War of 1812. Though well-respected in Columbia County, the family found itself unable to pay for higher education for Francis, the tenth of twelve children. His early artistic bent had been encouraged, but a scarcity of funds similarly deflected him from an intended course of study with the Philadelphia engraver, Gideon Fairman.

He went, instead, directly to the world of business, sent, at the age of sixteen, to clerk for his uncle, Gorham A. Worth, President of the Tradesmen's Bank in New York City. While working days at his uncle's bank, Edmonds enrolled as one of the first students at the school established by the National Academy of Design upon its founding in 1826. He earned extra money as a bank note engraver which likely brought him into contact with Asher Durand. In 1829 Edmonds was elected an Associate Member of the National Academy of Design. In 1830 he accepted a banking position in his hometown of Hudson, where he married and remained until 1832, when he returned to Manhattan to assume the important post of cashier for the Leather Manufacturer's Bank. In the city Edmonds resumed professional bank note engraving and also sought to improve his use of color by studying privately with William Page. In 1836 a work that Edmonds exhibited pseudonymously at the National Academy of Design, *Sammy the Tailor* (Art Institute of Chicago), attracted sufficient positive attention to encourage Edmonds to pursue his art with more vigor. He exhibited in subsequent years at the Academy and was

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elected a full academician in 1840. In 1839 Edmonds became Cashier of the Mechanics Bank of New York, a position which he held until he retired from banking in 1855. (Through a convoluted series of mergers, this institution became part of what is now the Chase Bank.) The Mechanics Bank was a Democratic bank whose president, Gideon Lee, was a patron of William Sidney Mount and the father-in-law of Charles Leupp.[45]

In January 1840 Edmonds' wife died of consumption, leaving him with two young children. He suffered a nervous collapse, in his own words "an illness which baffled the efforts of all my physicians – it was a disease in the head."[46] Following medical advice, Edmonds opted for a popular nineteenth-century remedy – a restorative trip to Europe. In Autumn of 1840 Edmonds traveled and studied art in the company of fellow New York artists – Asher Brown Durand, John Kensett, Thomas P. Rossiter, and John Casilear. This is the trip documented in Rossiter's 1841 *A Studio Reception, Paris* (Albany Instititute of History and Art), though Edmonds had already returned by the time Rossiter painted his picture. All of Edmonds' travelling companions had already received some support and/or had their work exhibited by the Apollo Association. Rossiter exhibited the picture for sale in the October 1841 Apollo Exhibition under the title *The Artists Conversazione, containing portraits of all the American Artists at Paris, in March*

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[45] Lee had begun in the leather tanning business, but wound up as a banker. He served in the State Legislature in 1822; in 1833 he was the last appointed Mayor of New York (chosen by the Common Council), and from 1834 through 1837 served as a Jacksonian member of the United States House of Representatives.

[46] As quoted from Edmonds' 1844 journal as printed in *The American Journal of Art* 12, no. 4 (Autumn 1981): 9.

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1841.[47]

Edmonds returned to New York in 1841, married Dorothea Lord (a union which produced six additional children), and resumed both his banking and his artistic careers. He sold works to the American Art-Union, rejoined the Committee of Management and, at the same time, exhibited at the National Academy. He showed *The Image Pedlar* (1844, New York Historical Society) at the Royal Academy in London through the intercession of his friend, George Putnam, who was in London at the time and served the Art-Union as its London Honorary Secretary. In the mid-1840s Edmonds was busy indeed. He sat simultaneously on the Executive Committee of the N.A.D. and the Art-Union Committee of Management, attempting to act as a friendly broker in the strained relations and periodic negotiations between the two groups, while, at the same time serving as Vice-President of the New-York Gallery of Fine Arts, in charge of hanging its collection. Edmonds was one of only two artists on the Board of Trustees of the New-York Gallery of Fine Arts (the other being Thomas Seir Cummings, another long-time acquaintance, colleague, and eventual rival at the National Academy of Design).[48]

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[47] This fascinating picture, now entitled *A Studio Reception* is in the collection of the Albany Institute of History and Art. See Thomas B. Brumbaugh, "A Venice Letter from Thomas P. Rossiter to John F. Kensett – 1843." *The American Art Journal* 5, no. 1 (May 1973): 77.

[48] Cummings, a miniaturist and art teacher, was foremost an art-politician. The highly opinionated historian of the National Academy, he was, from the start, singleminded in his devotion to that organization and, as such, hostile to the Art-Union. He engaged in a series of factional struggles which pitted him against Edmonds and Durand, both of whom were forced out in 1861. It has been suggested that Edmonds dual loyalty to the NAD and the Art-Union was partly responsible for Cummings' hostility to him, which, however, played out in other issues. Cummings' history is invaluable, but must be read critically.

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Jonathan Sturgis was the President of the New-York Gallery.[49] Sturgis, who had financed Durand's European trip of 1840-41,[50] joined Edmonds on the Art-Union Committee from 1842 to 1846. In 1845, Edmonds served as the National Academy's Recording Secretary, and as Treasurer from 1850 to 1859. Among Edmonds' fellow officers at the Academy were John L. Morton, and John G. Chapman, both of whom had early involvement with the Apollo Association, and Asher B. Durand, President of the National Academy from 1845 to 1861.

Throughout his life Edmonds remained a close confidante of his older brother, John Worth Edmonds (1799-1874). Hudson is near Kinderhook, home to Martin Van Buren, and the Worth and Edmonds families had numerous ties to the Kinderhook Democrat. John Edmonds had clerked in the Van Buren's Albany law office, and kept up the family tradition in Democratic politics with a long career as a politician and judge.[51]

Edmonds capped his banking career in 1853 when he was instrumental in

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[49] Maybell Mann, "The New-York Gallery of Fine Arts: 'A Source of Refinement,'" *The American Art Journal* 11, no. 1 (January 1979). Mann publishes a note from Edmonds to Durand in her article, discussing Edmond's plan (complete with sketch) for hanging the gallery. See pp. 77-78, Fig. 2.

[50] This is according to John Durand, the artist's son, in Durand, *Life*, 142.

[51] John Edmonds graduated from Union College and clerked in Martin Van Buren's law office in 1816. He was a Democratic officeholder beginning with a position as state recorder under Governor De Witt Clinton. He was elected to the State Assembly in 1831 and the State Senate from 1832 to 1836 before settling in New York City in 1841. Edmonds served on the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals. He resigned under fire for his defense of the legitimacy of the Fox sisters and his public adherence to Spiritualism. He returned to private practice and subsequently published works both on law and on Spiritualism.

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establishing the New York Clearing House and served as its first chairman.[52] In 1854 Edmonds was appointed City Chamberlain. In 1857 he was an organizer of the Bank Note Engraving Company (forerunner of the American Bank Note Company) with his old friends, Alfred Jones and James Smillie, both of whom had worked as engravers for the Art-Union. After 1860 Edmonds exhibited pictures at the Artists' Fund Society. Over the years, Edmonds acted as financial advisor, agent, and banker to various artists who used him as a bridge from their world to the world of commerce. He was a personal friend of Thomas Cole. Edmonds was a member of the Sketch Club, the Artists' Sketch Club, a founding member of the Century Club, a shareholder at the New York Society Library and a member of the New-York Historical Society. He also served as a Director of the Harlem Railway Company, whose line extended to Bronxville, where he lived after 1850. Edmonds maintained numerous political, personal, and artistic ties to the Young America movement.[53]

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[52] For a brief description of the founding the New York Clearing House, see Hammond, *Banking*, 705-707. Also see "New York Clearing House Association" entry in Jackson, *Encyclopedia*, 828. The idea for a New York Clearing House had been advanced by Albert Gallatin in 1841. When it was finally adapted from European models in 1853 it simplified money exchanges among the fifty-two commercial banks in the City and functioned as a kind of trade association to insure prudent practices by its members.

[53] There is a lot of literature on Edmonds. For the present purpose I have largely consulted Widmer, *Young America,* NATCAB, DAB, and Cummings, *Annals*, 317-320. There are Edmonds papers at the William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor and at the Columbia County Historical Society, Kinderhook, New York as well as an autobiographical manuscript on microfilm at the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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Daniel Elliot

Daniel Elliot was a Herring recruit who served on the Committee of Management from 1840 through 1843. According to Moses Beach, writing in 1845, he was a wealthy paper merchant, lately retired to Westchester, who hailed from Massachusetts and had been trained as a physician.

John Wakefield Francis, M.D. (1789-1861)

Dr. Francis was the founding President of the Apollo Association, serving for the three years from 1839 to 1841. Francis occupied the very epicenter of New York Society. His involvement in an organization was the mark of instant credibility. The Doctor's life story was an iconic American tale, the poor boy who succeeds brilliantly by dint of natural talent, hard work, and a fostering society. Francis was the son of a German immigrant (as were Philip Hone and Andrew Warner) whose academic talent attracted well-to-do mentors. Like an earlier poor but bright boy, Alexander Hamilton, he graduated from Columbia College. After a brief apprenticeship with the leading physician in New York, Dr. David Hosack, Francis became the first graduate, in 1811, of Columbia's newly founded medical school. He practiced medicine as Hosack's junior partner until 1820, taking time in 1816-1817 to extend his medical studies in Edinburgh. While Francis practiced a wide range of medicine, his specialty was obstetrics. In addition to working as a physician Francis published medical treatises and taught. In 1829, when the Doctor married Maria Eliza Cutler in Boston, he was earning an impressive $15,000 a year. His wife came from a distinguished family. Her mother was

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the grandniece of General Francis Marion, the South Carolina Revolutionary War hero known as "the Swamp Fox," and her sister had married Samuel Ward in 1812, making Ward and Francis brothers-in-law. After 1830 Francis largely retired from teaching and devoted himself to his practice in order to support a family that grew to include seven children. He maintained, however, a full plate of professional and civic activities. In 1846 he was among the founders of the New York Academy of Medicine, serving as its second President in 1847-48. In the 1850s he was instrumental in the founding of Woman's Hospital. Outside of medicine, there was hardly a cultural organization in New York with which Francis was not connected. The list included, in part, The New-York Historical Society (where he served as librarian from 1812 to 1818, and Corresponding Secretary in 1817-1818), the New York Lyceum of Natural History, the Woman's Hospital, the State Inebriate Society (with a home in Binghamton), and the Typographical Society. In 1857 Francis expanded on autobiographical remarks that he gave at the Historical Society to publish his memoir, *Old New York; or Reminiscences of the Past Sixty Years.*

It is telling, but not surprising, that the Art-Union is fondly remembered, but only in passing, and with no mention of Francis's own role in its history. In fact, Francis, while President, was very much a figurehead, and attended relatively few meetings. At the time that he departed, the organization it was at its lowest ebb and clearly required a drastic overhaul if it was to survive. He was not necessarily to blame for this. His contribution was his name and he gave that with the characteristic generosity that made him one of New York's most beloved sons. Perry Miller describes how Francis "charged his merchant patients high fees so as to give his services unstintingly to actors and

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musicians."[54] Though not a collector of art, Francis was a collector of people. He was a welcoming host to a variety of New York artists, musicians, and writers, as well as to the bon-tons of Manhattan society at his commodious home at 1 Bond Street, near to his brother-in-law Ward and to his boon companion, Philip Hone, who lived a short block away at Broadway and Great Jones Street. (NATCAB, APCAB, DAB, Obituary NYT 11 February1861)

Robert F. Fraser (d. after 1860)

Robert Fraser was the Corresponding Secretary of the Art-Union in 1845, 1846 and 1847 and a member of the Committee of Management in 1848. The position of Corresponding Secretary was central to the functioning of the organization. Its incumbent served as the public voice of the Art-Union to out-of-town subscribers and the official voice of the Art-Union in its dealings with artists. Fraser was also the superintendent of the Gallery. He was a framemaker by trade, listed in the New York City directories in that business since 1834. While an officer, he carried on his framemaking activity at the Art-Union premises and added, while employed by the Art-Union, an additional role as artists' agent. Fraser's two predecessors in the Corresponding Secretary position, James Herring and John Ridner, also had professional interests that overlapped with their Art-Union activities. Fraser's circumstance was unique, however. Of all the men associated with the organization, he was the only one whose sole qualification for inclusion was that he earned his living in a related occupation. Herring was an artist, a

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[54] Miller, *Raven*, 17.

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networker, a Mason, and an entrepreneur. Ridner was a patron and a collector whose interest in art ultimately moved him away from his original sphere of mercantile activity. Fraser was a solo artisan, and this may well have translated into a class difference. His parting from the Art-Union appears to have been not entirely congenial. Fraser's framing and artist's agent activities eventually embarrassed the Art-Union sufficiently that the organization felt obliged to issue a public clarification of proper activities for Art-Union officers. Fraser's successor, Andrew Warner, spent years mopping up and apologizing for clerical sloppiness in his predecessor's tenure. Moreover, Fraser also was not on good terms, at the end, with the Art-Union's long-time traveling secretary, Wellington Solomons, who served the organization from 1842 to 1845. When Fraser finally departed from the Art-Union, he also left New York City for Milton, Wisconsin, where he may have taken up farming. He was still listed in the census for Milton as of 1860.

James Watson Gerard (1794-1874)

James Gerard was another of the men that James Herring recruited to give his fledgling Apollo Association credibility. He served on the Committee of Management for the initial year of 1839, the year in which he lent three European pictures to Apollo exhibitions. In 1839 Gerard was a well-known and exceedingly well-to-do lawyer. His father, born in Scotland to Huguenot parents, had made a fortune as a merchant in New York. The son graduated from Columbia College in 1811 and served in the Iron Greys during the War of 1812. Another brother became a partner in the auction firm of Gerard and Glass. In 1820 Gerard married Elizabeth Sumner, daughter of Increase Sumner,

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Governor of Massachusetts. Gerard was thus thrice blessed – by inherited wealth, by a good marriage, and by his own lucrative legal career. Gerard's first case as a young lawyer involved the defense of a boy accused of his first "crime," the theft of a canary. For the rest of his life Gerard made the welfare of young people his primary interest. He was a founder, in 1824, of the Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents, which built the House of Refuge, a "reform" facility for youthful offenders. Gerard was the first in a long line of Art-Union managers to manifest a passion for public education. He served for many years as a trustee and inspector of the public schools, and made it a habit, after he retired from legal practice, to visit a New York City public school on every school day. He declined appointment to the Board of Education, as he declined all political offices. He appears, however, to have been a Whig in good enough standing to have been invited, in 1842, with a select group that included Philip Hone, to fete Daniel Webster at Stetson's Hotel. [55] Gerard also successfully championed the notion that New York City Police Officers should wear official uniforms. Though his tenure with the Art-Union was brief, his professional, social, and charitable connections continued to place him within the larger circles of the men who ran the Art-Union. A number of Art-Union managers were involved with Gerard at the House of Refuge. (APCAB, DAB, Obituary NYT 8 February 1874; related story, 10 February 1874)

John Hamilton Gourlie (1806-1891)

John Gourlie served as Recording Secretary of the Apollo Association in 1840

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[55] Hone *Diary*, 2, 628.

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and 1841; as Treasurer in 1843; and as a member of the Committee of Management in 1842, 1844 and 1845. He was a broker and financier in the Wall Street firm of Gourlie and Ogden. He was, as well, a sometime poet and minor literary light who was a member of the Sketch Club and a founder of the Century Association. In 1851 Gourlie was a trustee of the New York Society Library (with Charles Leupp and James W. Beekman), and in 1856 he served a term as President of the New York Stock Exchange. Gourlie was a bachelor whose family home was in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. John Ferguson Weir remembers Gourlie's visits to his artist-father, Robert, at their West Point home when he was a child. Gourlie delighted the Weir children with his ventriloquism and was, in Weir's paraphrase of William Makepiece Thackery, "a clubbable man."[56] When Gourlie retired to Stockbridge, he lived in a cottage near to which he donated to the town a fountain with marble statuary that had been executed in Milan. He was a long-time literary correspondent of William Cullen Bryant; the two men shared a Berkshire loyalty.[57] Gourlie was also a correspondent of Francis Edmonds. In 1856 Gourlie wrote an account of the founding of the Century Association, and, in 1860 he wrote a memorial tribute to his friend, Charles Leupp, who served with him not only at the American Art-Union, but in very close association as a Manager of the Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents. Gourlie was also a member of the American Geographical Society, together with Charles P. Daly.

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[56] John Ferguson Weir, *The Recollections of John Ferguson Weir*, ed. Theodore Sizer (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1957), 51.

[57] Brown, *Bryant*, 487.

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Augustus Greele

Augustus Greele, who served on the Committee of Management from 1839 to 1841, was a Herring connection and, like Daniel Elliot, a paper merchant. He seems to have been a modest collector of European art , loaning three Italian pictures to the Apollo in 1839 and one in 1840. By the time that Moses Beach was compiling his lists in the mid-1840s, Greele's estate was listed as being worth $500,000, suggesting, Beach's notorious inaccuracy notwithstanding, that Greele was probably dead and had been a very wealthy man.

Moses Hicks Grinnell (1803-1877)

Moses Grinnell was a member of the Art-Union Committee of Management in 1848, coming on in the same year in which his old friend, Philip Hone, rejoined the Committee. Grinnell was a member of the Hone Club, a small group of eminent and wealthy gentlemen who came together to form the club in 1838 as a gesture of solidarity with their friend Hone who had suffered serious (and permanent) financial losses in the panic of 1837.[58] Grinnell was the quintessential member of New York's "codfish aristocracy." His mother was a Howland, and his first wife a Russell. Grinnel's father was a New Bedford , Massachusetts, ships' captain. In New York, Grinnell became a partner of the legendary ship owner, Preserved Fish, in Fish and Grinnell, later Minturn and Grinnell. The firm earned a fortune through its involvement in the Liverpool trade. Grinnell married Julia Irving, niece of Washington Irving in 1836. He was a Whig

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[58] Hone, *Diary*, 1, 348.

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member of the 26th Congress from 1839 to 1841, and was a presidential elector for Fremont (the Free Soil Party) in 1856. He was President of the Chamber of Commerce from 1843 to 1848 (while Prosper Wetmore served as Secretary), a time when that organization exercised significant power to adjudicate disputes between merchants by means of binding arbitration.[59] Among Grinnell's far-flung commercial interests were the Phoenix Bank, the Sun Mutual Insurance Company, and the Institution for the Savings of Merchants' Clerks (of which Prosper Wetmore was a founder, and Andrew Warner, Cashier). In 1860 Grinnell joined the Board of Commissioners of the Central Park,[60] a logical role for him insofar as the immediate impetus for building the park has been credited to Anna Mary Wendell Minturn, the wife of Grinnell's partner, Robert Bowne Minturn. From 1860 to 1865 Grinnell occupied the post of New York City Commissioner of Charities and Corrections. In 1869-70 he served as collector of the Port of New York during the Grant administration. In 1871 he was naval officer of customs. Grinnell was President of the Union Club from 1867 to 1873, and served as President of the New England Society. He was a financial backer of the second Kane expedition to the arctic in 1853 in 1855, the early focus of the group that had founded the American Geographical Society in 1851. (APCAB, DAB, Obituary NYT 25 November 1877)

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[59] Albion, *Port*, 229-30.

[60] Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), 98.

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Townsend Harris (1804-1878)

Townsend Harris served on the Art-Union Committee of Management in 1847. He was a close personal and political friend of Prosper Wetmore (who was a pallbearer at the funeral of Harris's mother in 1847). He was also engaged in the same business, the sale of crockery and earthenware. Harris was self-taught, mastering foreign languages, literature and natural science on his own initiative. A strong advocate for public education, Harris was elected to the New York City Board of Education and served as its President in 1846-47. He was a founder of the free college (now City College) and also a founder of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. He left the Art-Union Committee to sail as supercargo to the Far East on a ship that he owned.

In 1854 Harris was American consul in China, and, in 1856, was sent by President Franklin Pierce to negotiate the treaty which opened Japan to western trade, a major achievement which he finally accomplished in 1858.[61] Harris was a Democrat whose diplomatic career ended with the election of Abraham Lincoln, a Republican, in 1860. Back at home, he was a War Democrat and a member of the Union League Club. His efforts on behalf of free public education in New York City are remembered today in the name of a high school in Queens and in the name of the original administration building on the Hamilton Heights campus of City College. A bachelor who had lived with his mother, her death in 1847 precipitated a period of financial troubles and excessive alcohol consumption. In his later life Harris involved himself with temperance and religious

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[61] The Wetmore Papers at Princeton contain numerous letters written by Wetmore on behalf of Harris to influential Democrats with Washington in which Wetmore pressed for various diplomatic posts for his friend.

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activities. (APCAB, DAB)

James Herring (1794-1867)

Herring was born in England and spent his boyhood near London. As he tells the story,[62] his family were educated people of moderate substance who enjoyed a position of prominence and esteem in their community. The Herrings emigrated to New York in 1805, when James Junior was eleven years old. He attended Erasmus Hall Academy in Flatbush before joining his father as a brewer on Rivington Street in Manhattan. The business fell victim to the commercial disruptions related to the War of 1812. Herring married when he was eighteen years old and set up as a distiller. As such he was listed in the New York directory for 1814-15 at Delancey Street, near Third Avenue, in close proximity to his father. After the elder Herring died, young James apparently left the distillers trade behind. There are no James Herrings in the city directory for 1815-16.

Leaving the spirits business, Herring decided to cultivate a boyhood love of drawing and embarked on a career in art. He found work coloring mezzotints for a man named Thatcher, and worked also for John Wesley Jarvis (1780-1840). He and his wife together worked as colorists for a map-maker, and when the employer fled, insolvent, to Philadelphia, the Herrings followed him to recoup money they were owed. In Philadelphia, Herring made a connection that would prove valuable for years to come. He worked for Matthew Carey, a map-maker and publisher, whose son, Edward L. Carey

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[62] Herring's manuscript autobiography is in the collection of the New-York Historical Society.

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extended the publishing business and became a major patron of American art. Herring established himself successfully as a map coloring subcontractor, employing and instructing a work-force of young women, all the while expanding his artistic horizons, to establish himself as a self-taught portrait painter. Although Herring appears in the New York City Directory for 1816-17 as a portrait painter at 446 Greenwich Street, a pair of portraits attributed to Herring also place him in New Jersey during that period. The likenesses of the Reverend Jacob Kirkpatrick and Mrs. Jacob Kirkpatrick in the collection of the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center are dated 1817 and show Herring working in the limner tradition in his images of this New Jersey couple.[63]

Herring's presence in Somerset County is further documented by the fact that in 1816 he was initiated there into the Solomon's Lodge of Freemasons, a turning point for the twenty-two year old. While James Herring's professional life took a variety of twists and turns, early and late, the constant factor in his adult life was his active involvement with Freemasonry. The masonic affiliation must have proved an invaluable asset to a young, itinerant portrait painter.[64] Herring rose rapidly in the masonic ranks, skilled both as a speaker and a writer, energetic and never shy of controversy. From 1827 until the end

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[63] Seibels, "Herring,": 213, Plates I and II.

[64] Seibel's article, cited above, is the most complete discussion of Herring as a portraitist. While she emphasizes Herring's masonic affiliation, she does not discuss what if any masonic connection his portrait subjects might have had. My suspicion is that, except for portraits done in connection with the *National Portrait Gallery* project, many of Herring's portrait commissions came from fellow Masons and their families. The Masonic library on West 23rd Street in Manhattan has a number of unidentified and unattributed portraits that bear stylistic similarities to Herring's known style as illustrated in Seibel's article.

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of his life he was a prominent masonic leader and public spokesman. He served as Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of New York from 1829 to 1846, a period which encompasses his activities with the Apollo Gallery and the Apollo Association.[65] Herring's masonic affiliations gave him entree into the very center of New York political and professional society and proved a ready-made networking basis for the foundation of the Apollo Association.[66] On January 5, 1817 Herring was exalted in the Masonic Jerusalem Chapter No. 8 in New York City.[67]

Herring remained listed in New York City directories as a portrait painter through the 1820s, moving to Orchard Street, the Bowery, and then Broadway during the decade. In 1824, Herring was brash enough with regard to his qualifications as a portraitist to compete for the portrait commission that the New York City Council held to determine who would paint the Marquis de Lafayette on the occasion of his triumphal visit to New York. That commission was awarded to Samuel F. B. Morse. In 1826 Herring exhibited

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[65] There is a handwritten synopsis of Herring's masonic career in the Herring papers at the New-York Historical Society excerpted from an obituary notice which appeared in a publication of the St. John's lodge (New York City).

[66] Because the Masons were a quasi-secret order, it is very difficult two hundred years later to know what the strength and effect of Masonic ties were on the early history of New York. While there are tidbits of information in the masonic literature, there is no scholarly assessment, of which I am aware, that addresses the issue. David Bjelajac treats the subject of masonic imagery in Washington Allston's painting in *Millenial Desire and the Apocalyptic Vison of Washington Allston (1779-1843)* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), but that is a rather different topic. It is certain that many very prominent men of the Revolutionary and Federal period were active Masons, including, of course, George Washington and New York Governor George Clinton.

[67] William R. Denslow, *10,000 Famous Freemasons* (Missouri: Missouri Lodge of Research, 1958), II, "E-J, "221.

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three portraits at the first exhibition of the newly established National Academy of Design. He did not show there again until 1840. Herring's first wife died in 1829, and sometime in the next few years he remarried. In 1830 he established a 10,000 volume circulating book collection library at 389 Broadway (near White Street), which he christened the Enterprise Library. William Dunlap, in 1834, reported that the library was a thriving operation, that yielded Herring a very respectable $1500 annual income.[68]

In 1830 Herring was also elected to membership in the American Academy of the Fine Arts. Herring was remarkable at the American Academy in that he was much younger than its stalwarts, who numbered among them the long-time President John Trumbull (1756-1843), the brothers Alexander (1772-1841) and Archibald Robertson (c.1745-1813), and Samuel Lovett Waldo (1783-1861). Herring joined the American Academy at a period of low ebb in its fortunes. He came armed with a plan. Immediately assuming an active role, he served as the Academy's Secretary from 1831 to 1835, arranging its exhibitions during that time, and participating in what were ultimately fruitless negotiations with the National Academy of Design to merge the two organizations. In 1831 he proposed to his new colleagues an ambitious plan,[69] "The National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans." Herring saw these four volumes through to completion in 1839, but left the American Academy around 1838 to found the Apollo Gallery. In 1839 he transformed the Apollo Gallery into the Apollo Association,

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[68] Dunlap, *History*, 2, 298.

[69] The details of "The National Portrait Gallery" proposal were published under Longacre's signature in a flier dated March 1, 1833, reproduced in Robert G. Stewart, "Introduction," *National Portrait Gallery*, vii-viii.

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based on the model of the Edinburgh Art-Union, and remained with the Apollo through 1841. After that Herring seems to have returned to occasional portrait painting and devoted himself to Masonic activities. When he died in 1867, he was living with his daughter, Emily, in Paris, France.

Although Herring had a very wide circle of acquaintance and doubtless knew many of the officers and managers of the Art-Union through Masonic connections, he appears not to have been involved in the many organizations and groups with which the other men were affiliated. Nor was he part of any circle of New York artists. Strangely enough, this man at the center of the initiative was socially, professionally, and civically, a fringe personality.

Philip Hone (1780-1851)

Hone was a commanding figure in his time but would likely today be as obscure as men with more substantial records of accomplishment save for one aspect of his busy life. If he was not the author of extraordinary deeds, he was the author of an irresistibly informative and gossipy diary. That diary, contained in twenty-eight quarto handwritten volumes, survived and has illuminated the years 1828 to 1851 in New York City since it became part of the collection of the New-York Historical Society. Bayard Tuckerman excerpted it for publication in 1889; in 1927, the Society commissioned Allen Nevins to select from it at greater length and re-published it. Hone's diary is a record of dinners and social events, theater-going and travel, business pursuits, and the details of daily life with a wife and six children. Thus Hone has become, for subsequent historians, the Cicerone

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of mid-nineteenth century New York, a man who saw it all and wrote about it in deliciously quotable prose.

John Herring reached out to Philip Hone in 1839 when Hone served as a Manager of the Apollo Association which was headed by his good friend, Dr. John Wakefield Francis. He returned to the Committee in 1848 and remained until his death in 1851. The son of an artisan (his father was a German-born joiner), Hone went to work at the age of sixteen with his brother in a newly-founded auction business. The family firm did spectacularly well. Hone decided in 1820, when he was forty years old, that his half-a-million dollar fortune was sufficient to free him to pursue other interests. He retired in 1821 from the auction trade and henceforth devoted himself to civic affairs and politics, to his family, to private business interests, and to the further acquisition of the culture and education that had not been his portion as a young man who needed to earn a living. Like Prosper Wetmore, Francis Edmonds, and Townsend Harris, Hone was self-educated. An assiduous acquirer of culture, he traveled to Europe and amassed a considerable library and art collection in his comfortable mansion at 235 Broadway, across the street from City Hall. Tuckerman's list of Hone's affiliations in the introduction to the 1897 Diary excerpts is selected (it does not include, for example, the Art-Union) and runs to more than half a page.[70]

Hone served one term as Mayor of New York in 1825-26. Originally a Federalist, he became a passionate and partisan Whig. His social circle constituted a who's who of

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[70] Philip Hone, *The Diary of Philip Hone (1828-1851)*, ed. and introduction Bayard Tuckerman (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1889), v.

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wealth, position, influence and attainment. On October 22, 1838, Hone recorded in his diary the formation of a social club composed of twelve gentlemen which took as its name, the Hone Club, with Hone serving as President. The founding members met at John Ward's house and included Ward and Hone, Simeon Draper, Moses H. Grinnell, William G. Ward, John Crumby, Roswell L. Colt, Edward R. Biddle, Jonathan Prescott Hall, and R. M. Blatchford. Charles H. Russell and James W. Otis were immediately added. William Duer, the long-time President of Columbia College, later joined. The club never numbered more than twenty members and met regularly for dinner, rotating among member's houses where each host was "allowed to invite four gentlemen not members of the club." Dr. Francis was a frequent participant and chronicler.[71] The clubmembers shared an unwavering allegiance to Whiggery. Daniel Webster was their ruling divinity. In 1845 the Club commissioned G.P. Healy to paint a portrait of Webster as the "Squire of Marshfield," paying the artist $550, frame included.

While Hone suffered serious financial losses in the 1837 panic, and lost a Whig bid for a seat in the New York State Senate in 1839, nothing shook his standing as a public embodiment of civic integrity. Thus, in 1839, Hone was not only a logical, but nearly an essential choice when John Herring first constituted the Apollo Association Committee of Management. His ceremonial presence is attested to by the fact that he attended only ?meetings. When Hone returned to the Committee in 1848, his membership signified the continuing support for the organization by the "old guard" of

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[71] Hone describes the Club in his *Diary*, 1: 348, 389. Francis remembers the Club in *Reminiscences*, 293-295. Because of Francis's customary reticence, it is not clear whether he was a Club member or a frequent guest.

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the New York elite. Though nearly seventy years old in the late 1840s, Hone was by no means "inactive." He continued, through the period he served on the Art-Union Committee, to look for ways to recoup his sagging fortune, and, in 1849, was finally rewarded by Whig President Zachary Taylor with a long-sought patronage appointment as Naval Officer of the Port of New York, a post he retained until he died. (APCAB, DAB)

William Jones Hoppin (1813-1895)

William Hoppin was a young recruit to the Art-Union, only thirty-years-old when he joined the Committee in 1843, remaining for the duration. He came of merchant stock, one of twelve children of a prosperous Providence, Rhode Island, China trade merchant, and the grandson, and namesake on his maternal side of William Jones, Governor of Rhode Island from 1811 to 1817.[72] (A cousin, William Warner Hoppin, was Governor of Rhode Island from 1854 through 1856.) Hoppin was educated at Yale and Middlebury Colleges and received a law degree from Harvard in 1835, but, like Joseph Cogswell, Evert Duyckinck, and William Cullen Bryant, he chose literature over law. Though never an officer, Hoppin was an important leader of the Art-Union, taking an active role in the Committee of Management, and serving as editor and chief writer for the Art Bulletin. He was a member of the Sketch Club and a founder of the Century.

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[72] A valuable and well-researched compendium of Hoppin family information is available at (http://www.shadowlawn.com/library.htm) the website for The Inn at Shadowlawn, a bed and breakfast in the Italianate house that Richard Upjohn designed as a summer home for Hamilton Hoppin in Newport, Rhode Island (originally named "Villalon"). Hamilton Hoppin (1821-1885) was a younger brother to William Jones Hoppin and lived with him in New York before he married Samuel Howland's daughter, Louisa, in 1849.

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Unlike many of his fellow Managers, however, Hoppin appears not to have taken an especially active part in the life of New York City. His Rhode Island ties remained strong and correspondence reveals that he made frequent trips to his family in Providence. He was listed in the city directories as a lawyer, and, in 1846-47, as Commissioner for Rhode Island. Hoppin was an occasional dramatist, and, from 1876 to 1886, through three Republican administrations, held the appointment of secretary to the United States Legation at London.

Hoppin was one of twelve siblings a number of whom evinced strong artistic inclinations. His younger brother by three years, Thomas Frederick, arrived in New York City in 1837 after studying in Paris with Paul Delaroche, and worked as a sculptor and also designed the four chancel windows at the new Trinity Church. Augustus, fifteen years younger than William, gave up law for art and made a career as a writer and an illustrator, illustrating among other works, "Nothing to Wear," Benjamin Butler's poem of 1857, and Oliver Wendell Holmes's *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.* A cousin, James Mason Hoppin, temporarily forsook divinity to teach art history at Yale. The Hoppin family presence in art is amply documented in the membership lists of the Century, with seven Hoppins listed. In 1847 William Jones Hoppin was joined in New York by his brother Hamilton, who became a partner in the cast iron business with James Bogardus. (APCAB, NATCAB)

Jonathan Hunt

Hunt was a drygoods merchant who served on the Committee of Management in

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1841. Moses Beach identifies him as a bachelor worth the very large sum of $1,000,000 with extensive business interests in Mobile, Alabama.

Richard Irvin[73]

Irvin was a commission merchant who served on the Committee on Management in 1842. He lent a painting and three engravings to the Apollo Association for exhibition in 1841 and is identified both as a lender and "Honorary Secretary."

Benjamin H. Jarvis

Nathaniel Jarvis, Jr.

Benjamin Jarvis was the Recording Secretary of the Art-Union Committee of Management in 1846 and thereafter a Manager from 1847 to 1851. Nathaniel Jarvis, Jr. succeeded Benjamin Jarvis as Recording Secretary and retained the post from 1847 through 1851. The Jarvises were relations.[74] Benjamin Jarvis appears to have been a

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[73] The last name is printed as Irwin in Baker, "Art-Union," 106. Rachel Klein transcribed it that way, finding no information on this manager. In fact, this appears to be a transcription or typographical error. The manager listed in the 1842 *Transactions* . . . , 2 is Richard Irvin.

[74] Much remains to be discovered and clarified with respect to the Jarvises. The situation is made more complicated by the fact that there are at least three Nathaniel Jarvises in the immediate family. The three chief sources of information, unfortunately, do not address directly either of the Art-Union men. A *New York Times* obituary of 9 January 1892 for Nathaniel Jarvis gives a good deal of family history and states that the deceased was the uncle of Nathaniel Jarvis, Jr. Nathaniel Jarvis was born about 1805. His father was also Nathaniel Jarvis. He was a ships' chandler who was active in Democratic politics in the second quarter of the century. The obituary states that "he was one of the New-York State Commissioners under President Jackson to distribute among the counties of the State certain money of the United States, the proceeds of the sales of

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generation older than Nathaniel, Jr. He graduated from Columbia in 1834, and was a lawyer and Clerk in the Court of Common Pleas (the same court where Charles P. Daly served as a judge). Nathaniel Jr. was similarly a lawyer who, later in his career also became Clerk in the Court of Common Pleas.

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public lands." This was an important and doubtless lucrative patronage position. He was elected to the Board of Aldermen from 1839-42, and was its President in 1841-42, leaving office for the post of County Clerk which he held from 1842-44. He became the owner of a fast mail line of boats that met transatlantic ships at Halifax and raced to New York with the European news. After that he had he was captain and part owner of the steamship Pacific running between New York and San Francisco, an interest he sold to Commodore Vanderbilt. He was additionally financially involved in various political ventures in Venezuela. He lived at times uptown in Harlem at MacComb's dam, described in the city directories as farmer, and on West 116th Street when he died. From the dates it seems likely that this Nathaniel was a brother or a cousin of Benjamin H. Jarvis. The second source of information relates to Dr. Nathan S. Jarvis, a United States Army Surgeon, some of whose correspondence survives in the collection of the New York Academy of Medicine. Dr. Jarvis was born in 1801 and died of illness contracted during duty in the Civil War. His correspondence is explicit about the family's political ties. In a letter of 31 December 1834 to his brother Will, he asks that if his father sees Governor Marcy, to please express that he feels "much indebted to his exertions for my appointment with the Army." On 5 October 1836, also to Will, he describes his efforts to effect a transfer to Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn, but says that "as everything goes by political favor, I think it very doubtful whether I get it." He did not. On 5 February 1837 he wrote that his only chance for a good posting was for his father "to go to Washington and endeavor through what influence he may possess to procure me a station." Dr. Jarvis was a diarist and collector. He offered to send Indian artifacts to Marcy, and did send a collection to New York in 1847 through the intermediary of Prosper Wetmore to give to the Historical Society. The collection is now owned by the Brooklyn Museum. Nathan Jarvis was Art-Union Secretary in Texas in 1847 and wrote long letters to Andrew Warner mostly describing life in Texas. In 1844-45, while another relation, Pierre Jarvis, served as the Commissioner of Pilots, William Jarvis was the Secretary to the Commissioner of Pilots. By 1848 William had the plum position of Naval Officer at the Customs House. Nathan Jarvis was also a brother to Benjamin H. Jarvis. Another brother was Samuel Matthias Jarvis (1822-1893), a full generation younger. He seems to have accompanied General Walker to Nicaragua (consistent with Nathaniel's South American interests). Later he joined his brother in the Army in Texas during the Mexican War and remained there, settling in Laredo after the Civil War where he served as Mayor and was active in Republican politics. ("Jarvis, Samuel Matthias." The Handbook of Texas Online at www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online).

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The Jarvises were members of a family deeply involved in Democratic politics. They were Catholics. Nathaniel Jarvis, Jr. was the brother-in-law of John T. Brady, married to Brady's sister. In 1872 Nathaniel, Jr. was a commissioner of the Common Schools in New York. Shortly thereafter he was involved in a scandal involving the misappropriation of the funds of an Indian merchant confined to an insane asylum over which he had oversight through his court position. As a consequence of the ensuing scandal, he was forced to resign his post in the Court of Common Pleas and make financial amends.

William H. Johnson

Johnson was a banker, listed as a "cashier." He served the Apollo Association as Treasurer in 1842 and 1844, spending the interim year on the Committee of Management. He may have been a relation of Prosper Wetmore.

Cornelius V. S. Kane

Kane was a lawyer who served as Recording Secretary in 1844. He was likely a member of a family of the same name who were prominent Dutchess County landowners.

Robert Kelly (1808/9-1856)

Robert Kelly was a dry goods merchant, who served on the Committee of Management from 1848 through 1851, an overlap with his tenure as President of the New York City Board of Education from 1849 to 1850. His father, William, had been an Irish

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Protestant political exile who prospered in New York as a merchant. Robert was the youngest of three brothers. He graduated first in his class from Columbia in 1826 and joined his brothers in business until 1836, when all three retired to devote themselves to charitable activities. William, the eldest, bought an estate in the Hudson Valley near Rhinebeck, New York, and interested himself in agriculture, education, and politics. He served as the president of the State Agricultural Society, was the founder of the State Agricultural College at Ovid, and President of the Board of Trustees of Vassar College and also Rochester University. His brother, William, was an unsuccessful Democratic Candidate for Governor in 1860 (a "softshell" Democrat, running in a three-way race against the "hardshell" Democrat John Brady and the victorious Republican Edmund Dennison Morgan).

Robert Kelly was a founder of the Free Academy (with Townsend Harris), a regent of the State University (with Erastus Benedict and Prosper Wetmore), the second President of the New York Board of Education, a trustee of the New-York University, and, with his brother, a founder and President of the Board of Trustees of Rochester University. He was a Trustee of the Clinton Hall Association and a Trustee of the Society Library. Following James Watson Gerard's lead, he was a manager of the Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents from 1839 until his death, serving on the building committee in 1851-2, and as President from 1852 to 1856. His colleagues there included past and present Art-Union managers David Colden, John Gourlie, Charles Leupp, and Andrew Warner. Kelly was also President of the Board of Managers of the Society's residential facility, the House of Refuge, from 1849-1856.

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In the 1850s Kelly assumed a prominent role in Democratic politics, running for statewide office and holding a series of important party positions. He was involved in financial institutions including The Merchants' Clerks Savings Bank (with Andrew Warner), the Mechanics Bank, and the United States Trust Company. At the time of his death he was City Chamberlain, a post previously held by Francis Edmonds, and the first President of the Alumni of Columbia College Alumni Association. (APCAB, NATCAB, NYT, "The Death of Hon. Robert Kelly, "29 April 1856, 1; Obituary, 29 April 1856, account of funeral 30 April 1856)

William Kemble (about 1802-)

Kemble was a noted figure in New York, a merchant at the heart of Washington Irving's Knickerbocker social circle, who served as one of James Herring's original managers in 1839. His family connections included Bayards, Van Cortlandts, Gouverneurs, and Morrises. His aunt was married to Thomas Gage, Jr., the son of British General Thomas Gage. The Kembles had come from the West Indies and settled in New Jersey. William Kemble's life can be reconstructed, in part, from biographical accounts of his much better-known elder brother, Gouverneur Kemble (1786-1875). An 1803 graduate of Columbia college, Gouverneur Kemble was a bachelor and friend of Washington Irving. In 1818, he established the pre-eminent weapons foundry in America, the West Point Foundry Association, at Cold Spring, New York, near West Point. Kemble was an art collector whose collection included paintings by his friends, Asher B. Durand and Robert Weir. He entertained the West Point faculty, officers, and other guests at regular Saturday

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evening gatherings at his Hudson Valley home, "Marshmoor," Washington Irving's "Bachelor's Elysium." James K. Paulding, married to Gertrude Kemble, a sister of Gouverneur and William, presided over a Kemble mansion on the banks of the Passaic River outside of Newark, New Jersey, Irving's "Cockloft Hall." In addition to his foundry, Kemble was an early promoter of the cross-Isthmus Panama railroad (which required iron ties and iron engines). He served in Congress as a Democrat from 1837 to 1841 (during the presidency of his Kinderhook neighbor, Martin Van Buren).

William Kemble, a younger brother, was a merchant in New York City, in effect the city agent of the family business. (He later became a banker). He imported the iron used in the Cold Spring Foundry. William Kemble was a lifelong friend of the artist John G. Chapman, Herring's original partner in the Apollo venture, for whom he occasionally acted as agent. (Artists were often inept at business dealings and/or benefitted from having city agents, to wit: the relationship between George Allen and Thomas Cole). Another Kemble brother-in-law, Robert Parrot (married to Mary Kemble), became Gouverneur's partner in the foundry, and purchased in 1867, John Ferguson Weir's *The Gun Foundry.* [75]

Cornelius VanWyck Lawrence (1791-1861)

Lawrence, an auctioneer by trade, was a Tammany Democrat who served on the

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[75] For a genealogy of the family see E. F. DeLancey, *The Kembles of New York and New Jersey* 17 (New York: New York Historical Society Colls., Pub. Fund Series, 1885). For an account of Parrot's purchase of the Weir picture, as well as reminiscence about the Kemble family, see Weir, *Recollections.*

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Committee of Management in 1848 and 1849, the same years in which he held a patronage position as Collector of the Port of New York at the Custom's House. He lived in uptown in rural Manhattanville. Lawrence was the opposite coin of Philip Hone, the two former Mayors and retired auctioneers – Hone the Whig and Lawrence the Democrat, sitting at the Art-Union Committee table at the same time. Lawrence's Long Island family traced its roots back to the Crusades. His first America forebear, William Lawrence, arrived on Long Island in 1644. The family had extensive land holdings in Flushing. A prominent member of the Tammany Society, Lawrence enjoyed a long and successful political career. He was elected to the 23rd Congress in 1832 and won a hotly contested election as the first popularly elected mayor of New York in 1835, barely defeating Gulian Verplanck in a contest marked by street rioting. In 1836 Lawrence was the president of the College of Electors that chose Martin Van Buren as President. Lawrence saw more street rioting as Mayor, when, in 1837, shortly after the great panic and at a time of serious bread shortage, a mob sacked the flour warehouse of Eli Hart. Lawrence Collector of the Port of New York under the Democrat James K. Polk. He enjoyed a successful business career as an auctioneer and financier. He was a partner at Hicks, Lawrence and Co., auctioneers. He also served as President of the Bank of the State of New York for twenty years and the Bank of America, and was a trustee of the New York Life and Trust Co., and of a number of fire and marine insurance companies as well. Lawrence retired in 1856 to his home in Flushing. (NATCAB)

Jacob LeRoy

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Le Roy served on the Committee of Management in 1844. Of Huguenot extraction, he was part of the Hone social circle and a relation, by marriage, of Daniel Webster. His family was involved in the financial house of Le Roy, Bayard and Company and the family name carried a cachet of money and social prominence.

Charles Mortimer Leupp (1807-1859)

Charles Leupp, a member of the Committee of Management from 1842 through 1846, was a New Jersey native who married the boss's daughter and joined his father-in-law, leather mercchant Gideon Lee, in the family business. Lee had begun as a Massachusetts shoe maker and made his fortune in New York as a leather merchant. He engaged in a substantial political career, serving as a Democratic member of the New York State Assembly (1822), a member of the New York City Board of Aldermen (1828-30), Mayor of New York (1833), a member of the United States House of Representatives (1834-37) and Presidential Elector (1840).

Leupp was similarly a Democrat, although he did not involve himself in electoral politics. Both Leupp and Lee were important patrons of genre painter William Sidney Mount. Leupp was a collector of the work of living American artists, following the model set by the late merchant Luman Reed, whose partner, Jonathan Sturgis, was a fellow Art-Union Committee member. Leupp's collection included works by Emmanuel Leutze, Henry Inman, Washington Allston, George Chapman, Thomas Cole, John Kensett, John. Quincy Adams Ward, Henry Peters Gray, William Page, Asher B. Durand, George Inness, Daniel Huntington, Thomas P. Rossiter, Henry Kirk Brown, and

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his friend, Francis W. Edmonds.[76] Following the pattern of merchants of the period, Leupp expanded his business interests from buying and selling of goods to finance and transport. He was a director of the New York and Erie Railroad and on the board of the Greenwich Bank and the Mechanics Society Bank. He also served as President of the Mechanics Society. Leupp was a member of the Sketch Club and a founding member of the Century. He joined with Art-Union colleagues John Gourlie, David Colden, Robert Kelly, and Andrew Warner in serving as a manager of the Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents. Active there from 1842 until his death in 1859, he was vice president from 1853 through 1859, and a member of the building committee from 1851 through 1859. Leupp was a frequent travelling companion of William Cullen Bryant. He invited Bryant to travel to Europe with him in 1845, when both men visited Emanuel Leutze in Düsseldorf.[77] They traveled together again in 1849, first to the American South and Cuba, and then to Europe. In 1852-3, Leupp and Bryant again went to Europe, meeting John Durand (Asher's son and biographer) in Paris and going as a group to the

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[76] Edmunds spent the large part of his banking career as Cashier of the bank headed by Lee. See James T. Callow, "American Art in the Collection of Charles M. Leupp," *The Magazine Antiques*, 118 (November 1980), 998-1009 for an extended discussion of Leupp as a patron and collector. The subject has been briefly revisited more recently in Franklin Kelly, "Mount's Patrons," in Deborah J. Johnson, *William Sidney Mount: Painter of American Life* (New York: The American Federation of Arts, 1998), 121-22. Callow mentions Leupp's visit to Leutze in Dusseldorf in 1845 (p. 1003), as does Brown, *Bryant*, 312.

[77] For references to Leupp and Bryant as traveling companions, see Brown, *Bryant*, 301, 344, 346-7, 361. Brown describes Leupp as a fellow member of the Sketch Club and does not notice the Art-Union affiliation both men shared. Indeed, Brown does not notice the Art-Union at all in his biography of Bryant, which is focused on Bryant's political and journalistic career.

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Holy Land. Leupp struggled against depression, and, faced with business difficulties, committed suicide in 1859. Among the many buyers when his collection was sold at auction on November 13, 1860, was his friend (and fellow Democrat), the actor Edwin Forrest. Leupp was eulogized by John Gourlie.[78]

William Lewis Morris

One of James Herring's original contacts, William Morris was an "attorney, counsellor and commissioner." Likely a descendant of a wealthy West Indian planter and trader who emigrated to New York, he was a member of the Committee of Management from 1839 through 1841. Morris built Wave Hill in the Bronx high above the Hudson River in 1843-44. William H. Appleton acquired it from the Morris estate in 1866.

John Ludlow Morton (1792-1871)

John Ludlow Morton attended the initial meeting of the Committee of Management of the Apollo Association held on January 19, 1839. On January 22, though not present, he was named to the Executive Committee. He never returned and his letter of resignation was read at the September meeting. He was immediately replaced on both the Management and Executive Committees by John P. Nesmith.[79] William Dunlap's

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[78] John H. Gourlie, *A Tribute to the Memory of Charles M. Leupp: An address Delivered before the Column, February 10, 1860* (New York, 1860), 16-17.

[79] Rachel Klein calls John Morton a merchant, as does the city directory. Pessen has an excellent, extended discussion of the problems involved in characterizing sources of wealth for the period as mercantile, *Riches*, 62-70. Pessen mentions the Morton family in passing, 95, 240, where he notes that Philip Hone was a pall-bearer at Mrs. Jacob

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1834 description of Morton offers the clues to what John Herring saw in him:

> He is a native of New York, and son of General Morton. Mr. Morton was one of the builders up of the National Academy of Design, a student of it, and is an academician. . . . Happily situated in point of fortune, his time is divided between the arts and agricultural pursuits on the banks of the Hudson.[80]

John Morton was the Secretary of the National Academy of Design at its founding and remained so until 1844. Morton's grandfather, also John Morton, came to the colonies as a British soldier in 1760, and remained to become a successful banker, the so-called "rebel banker" who lent significant sums of money to the Continental Congress. John Ludlow Morton's father, Jacob Morton (1761-1836), graduated from Princeton. He was a marshal at Washington's inauguration in New York City and a lawyer who held a number of political positions, including that of clerk of the Common Council of New York for twenty years. Jacob Morton married Catharine Ludlow in 1791,[81] and the family lived in the twenty-six room mansion at 9 State Street built by Catherine's father, the merchant Cary Ludlow.[82] Jacob Morton was commander of the First Division of the New York State Militia for over thirty years, attaining the rank of Major General during the War of

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Morton's funeral.

[80] Dunlap, *History*, 2, 447.

[81] Catherine Ludlow was the daughter of Cary Ludlow and Hester Lynsen. She married Jacob Morton in 1791. The couple had nine children, seven sons and two daughters. John Ludlow Morton, the eldest son married his cousin, Maria Ludlow, the daughter of Gulian and Maria Ludlow Ludlow, and then Emily Ellison. They had three daughters. The Jacob Morton-Catherine Ludlow marriage not only brought together two fortunes, but also linked the Mortons to a host of influential and well-to-do relations on the Ludlow side, including the Livingston family.

[82] For a description of the house, see Gilder, *Battery,* 137.

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1812. In his old age, he oversaw the muster of his troops in the Battery Park Parade Ground from the balcony of his house. General Morton was an original incorporator of the Free School Society of New York in 1805. In 1816, General Morton joined the American Academy of the Fine Arts as a patron. In 1827, he was made an honorary member of the newly formed National Academy of Design, doubtless related to the fact that his eldest son, John Ludlow Morton, an artist, was the original Secretary of the Academy. In 1839 Morton was living with two lawyer-brothers in his father's house. Two other brother were also artists: Edmund Morton, a miniaturist, and Henry Jackson Morton (1807-1890), an episcopal clergyman, and a portrait and genre painter who was a member of the New York Sketch Club.

As was common practice, John Ludlow Morton's resignation from the Committee elicited no comment in the minutes. Perhaps he was too busy. Perhaps he sensed a collision course between the new venture and the National Academy, the institution that commanded his primary allegiance. That tension did not dissuade Francis Edmonds from dual service. Edmonds chose to remain affiliated with both the Art-Union and the Academy and to work to establish a comfortable common ground. Morton was later involved in negotiations between the Academy and the Art-Union, but from the Academy side. Nonetheless, he appears to have born no ill will toward the Apollo after his departure. A man of substance who did not have to sell his art to earn his bread, he offered his work to the Art-Union which subsequently purchased a total of eight of his paintings in 1844, '47, '48, '49, and '50.

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John R. Murray (1774-1851)

A member of the Committee of Management in 1840, John Robert Murray was an elder statesman of merchant support for art endeavors in New York. He served as Vice President of the American Academy of Fine Art from 1817 to 1825, and a member of its Board of Directors from 1825 to 1828. An honorary member of the National Academy of Design from 1840 until his death, Murray was a merchant whose father and uncle "were the merchant princes" of colonial New York.[83] Of Scottish extraction, the Murrays were active Quakers whose family estate was located in the present east midtown Manhattan neighborhood, Murray Hill.

Benjamin Nathan (1813-1870)

Benjamin Nathan was the Apollo Association's first Recording Secretary, and a member of the Committee of Management in 1840-41. He was a member of an elite and extensive family of Sephardic Jews whose alliances by marriage included members of the Seixas, Hendricks, Gratz, Cardozo, Levy, Lazarus, and Solomons families.[84] One of fifteen children, Nathan's father, Seixas Nathan, served on the original board of the New York Stock Exchange in 1820, was an inspector of Customs in 1849, and, like his father before him, served as President of Shearith Israel, the Sephardic congregation that was

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[83] NATCAB, *s.v.* John Murray.

[84] The family eminence continued past Nathan's generation. Among his nieces were Emma Lazarus, author of the *The New Colossus*, the poem on the base of the Statue of Liberty, and Annie Nathan Meyer , the founder of Barnard College. His nephew and namesake was United States Supreme Court Justice Benjamin Nathan Cardozo.

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(and remains) the oldest Jewish congregation in New York. Benjamin Nathan married Emily Grace Hendricks (1815-79) in 1836. He was a broker, a vice President of the New York Stock Exchange, a President, like his father and his brother Jonathan, of Shearith Israel, and a mason. He was an incorporator in 1852, and served as Secretary of "Jews Hospital" (now Mount Sinai Hospital) at its original location on West 28th Street. Nathan served as a director of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad, held numerous shares in the Ninth Avenue Railroad Company and had insurance interests.

Nathan's very visible presence on the Committee of Management of the Apollo Association is testimony to James Herring's spirit of inclusiveness, arguably a cross-over from his Masonic involvement.[85] The Nathan family had strong southern ties through their South Carolina Cardozo cousins. The family were Democrats. Albert Cardozo, Nathan's brother-in-law (married to his sister, Rebecca Nathan), was a Tammany Judge appointed by "Boss" William Marcy Tweed, who resigned from the bench in 1872, just as he about to be impeached by the State Legislature. (Two fellow Democrats, fellow lawyers, and fellow members of the judiciary, Judge Charles Daly and Judge John Brady, interceded to make sure that he was not disbarred.) Benjamin Nathan's historical imprint today is twofold. He was the victim of a sensational crime, murdered outside his house on

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[85] Nathan was the only Jewish member of the Committee of Management. However, the Art-Union hired Wellington Solomons as its travelling secretary in 1842. The Solomons family were prominent members of the Jewish community, with ties of blood and community activity with the Nathans. It is worth noting that Art-Union was willing to employ as a travelling secretary an individual with an instantly identifiable "Jewish" surname. In its later days the Art-Union counted a number of prominent Catholics on its Board of Managers, but none during the Herring period. One wonders whether Herring's Masonic identification led to a problem with Catholics, who could not be Masons.

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West 23rd Street in the summer of 1870, while his family was summering in Morristown, New Jersey. Though the crime has never been solved, gossip at the time pointed to Nathan's dissolute son. On a substantially more positive note, Albert Cardozo's son, who was named for his uncle, became one of the most renowned jurists in America, Supreme Court Justice, Benjamin Nathan Cardozo.

John P. Nesmith (1793-1869)

A member of the Herring circle who served in 1839 and 1840, John Nesmith was a commission merchants on South Street.

Eleazar Parmly (1797-1874)

Eleazar Parmly was a dentist, real-estate speculator and art collector who served the Apollo Association in 1839, '40 and '41. He later became the father-in-law of the artist Thomas Pritchard Rossiter (1818-1871). Parmly was a young man with an artistic flair when he first began his career in dentistry, carving false teeth out of the tusks of seahorses and walruses for his older brother, dentist Levi Spear Parmly. After touring America as an itinerant dentist, he went to Paris for further training and then established a society dental practice in London, where his patients included Thomas Carlyle and Benjamin West. Parmly established himself in practice in New York City with his brother Jahial, and the brothers made dentistry the foundation of their fortune. Parmly remains an important figure in the history of American dental practice, credited as the founder of professional dentistry in America. He served as the first President of the

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Society of Surgeon Dentists of the City and State of New York in 1834; was a founder in 1839 of the *American Journal of Dental Science*, and for a time its editor; was second vice-president of the American Society of Dental Surgeons when it was established in 1840, first vice president in 1841-44, and for eleven years served as President. After his retirement in 1866 he was the first president of the New York College of Dentistry. Parmly wrote and published numerous professional papers. He was among the founders of the Century Club. (NatCab)

Duncan C. Pell (1806-1874)

Duncan Pell, an auctioneer, served the Apollo Association for one year in 1839. He was a member of the Westchester County Pell family (whence derives the town name Pelham) with connections to the Claiborne, Duane, Rutgers, and Cruger families The Pells also had a Rhode Island branch, and Duncan Pell left New York for Rhode Island, where he served as Lieutenant Governor in 1865. He was living in Newport, Rhode Island, when he died. (Obituary NYT 17 January, 1874)

Joseph N. Perkins

Joseph Perkins, a Wall Street broker, served on the Committee of Management in 1840 and 1841.

Ebenezer Platt

Platt, the cashier of the First Manhattan Bank, served the Art-Union as its

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Treasurer in 1845.

Henry Jarvis Raymond (1820-1869)

Henry Raymond was a member of the Art-Union Committee of Management from 1847 through 1850, when he left to establish a moderate Whig anti-slavery newspaper, the *New York Daily Times* (in 1857 renamed the *New York Times*). Raymond was a young graduate of the University of Vermont when he came to New York City in 1840 intending to study law, but was deflected from this purpose when he met Horace Greeley. He worked for Greeley on the *New Yorker* and the *New York Tribune* from 1840 to 1848, honing his skills as an outstanding reporter. In 1848 Raymond, more temperamentally conservative than Greeley, left the *Tribune* to become associate editor of James Watson Webb's *Courier and Enquirer.* Raymond also functioned as a literary advisor to the publishing house of Harper Brothers and wrote the prospectus that resulted in the founding of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1850. From 1849 to 1851 Raymond served as a Whig member of the State Legislature, showing particular interest in education and canal improvements. He left the *Courier and Enquirer* in 1850 over political differences with Webb and found backers for his own venture. Though Raymond was no longer a manager of the Art-Union by the time his newspaper first appeared, his abolitionist stance was seized upon by James Gordon Bennett as part of his attempt to smear the Art-Union in the South.

Raymond was elected Lieutenant Governor of New York in 1854 and wrote the platform for the newly founded Republican Party in 1856. He was elected to the State

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Legislature in 1861-62 and served as Speaker. He was largely responsible for writing Abraham Lincoln's campaign platform of 1864 and was Republican National Committee Chairman from 1864 to 1866. He served a term in Congress before returning to full-time journalism. (NatCab, Britannica)

John P. Ridner (d. about 1868)

Ridner was a mahogany merchant and art collector who joined the Committee of Management in 1839 and maintained his affiliation with the Art-Union to 1851. He loaned works to Apollo exhibitions in 1838, '39, '40 and '41. Ridner succeeded James Herring as Corresponding Secretary and served in that capacity from 1842 through 1844, during which time he organized the exhibitions and oversaw the day-to-day functioning of the organization. The Art-Union served as the bridge for Ridner to move from being a mahogany merchant (which would have involved the importation of this prized wood from the West Indies) to being a seller of artists' supplies and materials, an artists' agent, and a dealer in fine arts, graphic arts and art books and journals. After Ridner's term of service as corresponding secretary, he became the agent for the Thomas Cole family. Ridner had a long-established relationship with William Page, who painted a number of Ridner family portraits. He was also close to Jasper Cropsey. In 1843 Ridner brought Cropsey to Greenwood Lake and introduced him to his cousin, Maria Cooley, whom Cropsey eventually married. Ridner mentored Cropsey, giving him a letter of introduction to Asher B. Durand at Saugerties in 1844, and suggested that Durand might also introduce Cropsey to John W. Casilear.

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In 1847 Ridner became both landlord and tenant when he rented the commercial space in the Art-Union's newly renovated premises at 497 Broadway at Mercer Street. He advertised in *The Literary World* (a journal owned and edited by Evert Duyckinck) as the proprietor of a "Repository of Fine Arts" and an "Art and Artists Exchange" offering "every variety of works of fine art" including "paintings, engravings, sculpture, medals, bronze, and porcelain figures, together with books, illustrated or relating to the Fine and Decorative Arts, Articles of Taste, which depend for their chief merit on Art, and Artists' Materials." He also served as a New York agent for the Western Art-Union of Cincinnati, Ohio, the Philadelphia Art-Union and the Art Union of London. In 1850 Ridner also wrote *The Artist's Chromatic Hand Book*, a how-to treatise, which was published by George P. Putnam. When Ridner died in 1868, he appears to have been living in Eagleswood, New Jersey, the town near Perth Amboy, New Jersey, where William Page and George Inness had been recruited to form the core of an artists' colony.[86]

Marshall Owen Roberts (1814-1880)

Marshall Roberts was a member of the Committee of Management from 1846 through 1851. He was an investor, a steamship owner, a speculator, and an art collector who a close friend and business associate of Prosper Wetmore. The son of a Welsh

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[86] The Raritan Bay Phalanx was a short lived utopian religious community with ties to abolitionism and Brook Farm. Although it was disbanded, one of its stalwarts, Marcus Spring, recruited William Page and George Inness to live there in the mid-1860s as the core of a projected artists' colony. Inness and Page argued; Inness converted to Swedenborgian doctrines and left the settlement, now called Eagleswood, in 1867. Nikolai Cikofsky, Jr. and Michael Quick, *George Inness* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1985) 27-28.

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doctor, Roberts went into trade, gravitating to the ships' chandler business. From there he became the lieutenant to George Law, owner of the United States Mail Steamship Line, which had the lucrative contract to transport mail from New York to Panama. There are conflicting accounts as to how Marshall made his initial fortune. The *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (NatCab) claims that in 1841 he was appointed U.S. naval agent at New York by President William Henry Harrison and that his rise to fortune came from government contracts he was awarded during the Mexican War. Albion says that Roberts was awarded lucrative contracts in 1841 by a Whig Navy agent despite the fact that his bids were thirty to forty percent higher than his competitors.[87] The position of Navy Agent in 1840-41 was held by Robert S. Hone, son of Philip Hone. He was a Whig appointed by John Tyler. In 1842-44 the post was held by Robert C. Wetmore, brother of Prosper Wetmore, but a Whig. Prosper Wetmore was a close associate and sometime business partner with Roberts, and also a business partner of Robert Wetmore, making the Wetmore link more likely. James Suydam replaced Robert Wetmore as Navy Agent in 1844-45, followed by Prosper Wetmore himself. When the United States Mail subsidies were discontinued in 1858, Roberts bought ships at auction for low prices. During the Civil War he leased them to the Union at highly profitable rates. Roberts diversified his holdings into railroads. He served as a director of the Erie railway and a projector of the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad, and was active in developing railroads in Texas. He was an original investor in the Atlantic Cable in 1854 with Cyrus Field and David Dudley Field. In 1871 he served with John Jacob Astor on a

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[87] Albion, *Port*, 233..

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"blue ribbon panel of six business with unimpeachable reputations" who investigated city finances to ascertain whether William Marcy Tweed was guilty of any improprieties. The panel looked and found none.[88] Roberts was a friend of Abraham Lincoln and is reported to have sent the recently widowed Mary Todd Lincoln $10,000. The second of Roberts' three wives was among the founder of the Young Womens' Christian Association in New York, as well as a home for young women which Roberts endowed. Roberts was a member of the Century Association from 1852 until his death. His art collection of more than three hundred pictures in addition to sculptures and bronze was housed in a gallery in his home that was open to the public. Among the works which Roberts owned, from 1852 to his death in 1880, was Emanuel Leutze's *Washington Crossing the Delaware* (Metropolitan Museum of Art , New York). (NatCab)

Charles H. Russell

Charles H. Russell, an importer, served on the Art-Union Committee of Management from 1848 through 1851. A New Englander, Russell volunteered in 1842 as an Aide-de-Camp to Major General William Gibbs McNeill to help put down Dorr's Rebellion in Providence. Russell was a member of the Hone Club and the father-in-law of Philip's son, Robert S. Hone. He was a near neighbor to Hone, living at 2 Great Jones Street.

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[88] Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 1009.

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Charles W. Sandford (1796-1878)

Charles Sandford was a lawyer who served on the Committee of Management in 1845. The New Jersey-born son of a revolutionary war soldier, Sandford studied law with Ogden Hoffman and enjoyed a successful legal career as the longtime counsel to the Harlem Railroad Company. At the time of his death he was Vice President of the New York Bar Association. His most famous and enduring association, however, was with the New York State Militia. He joined as a young man, and by 1834 was a Brigadier General. In 1837 he was promoted to Major-General, a position which he held until 1867 and which included active voluntary service during the Civil War. He was reported to have been exceedingly fond of pomp, and led his division in the honors accorded to the Hungarian patriot Louis Kossuth who visited New York in 1851. On a more serious note, Sandford commanded troops called out to quell the sacking of Eli Hart's flour warehouse in 1837, the Astor Place Riots in 1848, the municipal riots of 1857 and the draft riots of 1863. In 1847 Sandford briefly tried his hand as a theater impresario. According to his *New York Times* obituary of July 26, 1878, "He was accustomed to disastrous speculations, and lost two or three fortunes. Of late years he had been more prudent, however, . . ." Sandford appears to have enjoyed excellent social connections. His law partner was John Bristed, the father of Charles Astor Bristed. (Obituary NYT 26 July 1878)

Daniel Seymour

Daniel Seymour was a paper merchant who served on the Committee of

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Management in 1847 and 1848. He was an active member of the Century Club and managed its activities.

Paul Spofford (1791-1869)

Paul Spofford served on the Apollo Association Committee of Management in 1840 and 1841. A Massachusetts native, he came to New York City in 1819 with his friend, Thomas Tileston, planning to sell Haverhill shoes on commission. The business and the friendship prospered. The two men engaged by degrees in shipping, which, by 1846, entirely superseded the shoe trade. The partners shared everything jointly and lived successively in three locations, on Barclay Street, on Broadway near Eighth Street, and at Fourteenth Street and Fifth Avenue, in side-by-side houses with interior connections. In 1845, Spofford and Tileston entered into a contract to build an eight-hundred-ton steamship for the Charleston trade. The ship was built by William H. Brown's ship works and George Allen's Novelty Iron Works. Spofford was connected with the Bank of the Commonwealth, serving for many years as a director and President.[89] (Obituary NYT 29 October 1869)

Daniel Stanton

Stanton, a merchant, served as President of the Apollo Association for two years in 1842 and 1843.

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[89] This chatty information comes from Richard C. McKay, *South Street : A Maritime History of New York* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1934), 243-246.

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Charles Augustus Stetson (1810-1888)

Charles Stetson, who served for only one year on the Apollo Association Committee of Management in 1843, was a minor, passing figure in the life of the organization, but a major figure in the social life of New York City. Stetson was the affable manager of the Astor House hotel. Born to a hotel keeper in Newburyport, Massachusetts, he ran the Tremont Hotel in Boston in 1830 and Barnum's hotel in Baltimore in 1833 before he arrived at the Astor House Hotel in 1837, remaining until 1875. He was quartermaster general of the State Militia in 1851 and thereafter was known as General Stetson. Stetson's particular circle of friends included Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, Rufus Choate and William Seward, indicating a Whig predilection. Stetson was also an art collector, and owned *A View of Swampscott, Massachusetts* (Worcester Art Museum, Massachusetts), an 1847 work by Thomas Doughty.[90] (Apcab)

Dr. John B. Stevenson

Dr. Stevenson's resignation was read at the first meeting of the Apollo Committee of Management in January 1839. He was a physician whose claim to fame was that it was on his account that Gulian Verplanck created the ruckus at the 1811 Columbia graduation.[91] Stevenson's inclusion on the original committee list might have been related to the presence of his medical colleague, John Francis. Stevenson's resignation made

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[90] Susan Danly, "Introduction," in Susan Danly and Leo Marx, eds., *The Railroad in American Life* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1988), 5.

[91] For an account of this "event" see Cornog, *Clinton*

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room for the addition of Prosper Wetmore to the Committee.

Jonathan Sturgis (1802-1874)

Jonathan Sturgis, a wholesale grocer who specialized in coffee and tea, was an art collector and the junior partner of the late revered mentor of American artists, Luman Reed. He served on the Art-Union Committee in the middle period, from 1842 through 1847. Sturgis was a major patronage figure in New York City art circles.[92] In 1844 he supplied the energetic force behind the founding of the New-York Gallery of Fine Arts. This was the collection of pictures purchased in its entirety from the Luman Reed estate by a consortium of merchant friends with the intention of realizing Reed's dream for a permanent gallery of art in New York City. The New-York Gallery was an institution whose leadership united members of the business community with activists from the Art-Union and the National Academy. Although it was as unsuccessful as the Art-Union in finding the permanence it sought, it lasted long enough to serve as a convenient way station, in 1857, for the remaining assets of the Art-Union, prior to their going to the New-York Historical Society. Sturgis had strong connections with every major art organization in New York City. An honorary member of the National Academy from 1838, he was a member of the Sketch Club, a founder of the Century Association, and a member of the Historical Society. He was equally active as a businessman, a member of the New York Chamber of Commerce, a director and founder of the Bank of Commerce,

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[92] For a description of Sturgis's collection, as of 1836, see Cummings, *Annals,* 141.

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director and acting president of the Illinois Central Railroad, and among the proprietors and a director of the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad. He was a strong supporter of the Union during the Civil War and was a founder and President of the Union League Club. (Obituary NYT 30, November, 1874)

Aaron R. Thompson

Aaron Thompson was drygoods merchant who was a member of the Committee of Management in 1839, the same year in which he lent two pictures to the Apollo exhibition, a *Portrait of Napoleon* "ascribed to David," and a *Crucifixion* credited to "Van Baeler." Of more importance to the future of the organization, he was the Thompson of Thompson, Austen & Co., merchants doing business at 15 William Street. His business partner (soon to return to the family auction firm) was John Austen, who joined the Committee in September 1839 replacing Jacob Morton.

George Tredwell

George Tredwell, a dry-goods merchant, served on the Committee of Management in 1851, taking Henry Raymond's place. He was probably a relation of Prosper Wetmore.

Thomas W. Tucker

Thomas Tucker, a lawyer, served on the Committee of Management in 1842 and 1843.

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James H. Van Allen

With a Columbia County Dutch family name, James Van Allen was a drygoods merchant who served on the Art-Union Committee of Management in 1849.

Samuel Ward, Jr. (1814-1884)

The Art-Union Samuel Ward, the fourth in an illustrious line of Samuel Wards, served on the Committee of Management in 1841. The presence of his name (which was, in fact, his late father's name) in association with the fledgling organization was a signal of respectability and legitimacy. Ward was descended from a Rhode Island family of merchants and politicians who supplied three Rhode Island governors, the last of whom also served in a leadership capacity in the Continental Congress. Ward's maternal great-grandfather was also a governor of Rhode Island. Samuel Ward's grandfather became a New York merchant. His father, Samuel Ward, entered business as a bank clerk, and in 1808 was made a partner in the banking house of Prime, Ward and King. Ward, Sr. and his wife, Julia Rush Cutler, whom he married in 1812, had seven children before Julia died in 1824. Julia Cutler was the grandniece of Francis Marion, the South Carolina Revolutionary War hero made famous as "the Swamp Fox." She also had collateral ties to the Allston family of South Carolina, the same family as the artist Washington Allston. The elder Ward was an important New York figure, active in business, cultural and religious affairs. As a banker, he took the lead in negotiating a $5,000,000 loan from the Bank of England to enable New York banks to resume specie payment after the panic of 1837. He was a founder (with Jonathan Sturgis) of the Bank of Commerce. Ward took an

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active role in a variety of charitable endeavors. After his wife died in 1824, he turned to temperance and was first president of the New York Temperance Society. He joined the Protestant Episcopal Church in 1831 and supported its mission activities. (His brother-in-law, Benjamin Clarke Cutler, assumed the post of mission director for New York City in 1832, and became pastor of St. Anne's in Brooklyn in 1833 until his death in 1863). Samuel Ward was a founder and the first Treasurer of the University of the City of New York (the present New York University) in 1830, and helped finance the construction of a building for the Stuyvesant Institute in 1836, at Broadway and Bond, across the street from his own house. With his brother-in-law, Dr. John Francis, Ward was a firm friend and near neighbor of Philip Hone. He was a donor to Kenyon College in Ohio, where his friend, the Evangelical Episcopalian minister Charles McIlvaine had gone to assume the Presidency in 1832. Ward collected art and was a major patron of Thomas Cole, commissioning in 1839, just before his death, Cole's *Voyage of Life* series.

Samuel Ward, Jr.'s siblings included Louisa, who married the American sculptor Thomas Crawford, and Julia, who later wrote the words that were set to the tune of "John Brown's Body" to become the "Battle Hymn of the Republic."[93] Sam, Jr. was educated at the Round Hill School in Northampton, Massachusetts, owned by John Cogswell, and graduated from Columbia College in 1831 and went to Europe where he received a Ph.D. from the University of Tübingen and became proficient in European languages. He married Emily Astor on his return to New York in 1835 and joined his father's banking

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[93] Julia Ward married Samuel Howe of Boston. She wrote the poem that was set to the Civil War marching song, "John Brown's Body," to become "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

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firm. His subsequent career indicates that banking was an ill-fit for his restless, literary, and scholarly personality. He worked in New York as a banker until 1848. In that interval his wife died and he married for a second time in 1843. In 1848 he went to California and worked as a miner, ferry boat operator and billiard parlor owner, mastering several Indian dialects. He went to Mexico in 1854, and Paraguay in 1858, and on a diplomatic mission to Nicaragua in 1862. Ward left New York for Washington, D.C., where he became a lobbyist for the financial industry. After 1877 he settled in Europe. Ward wrote and published occasional poetry (as had his mother, Julia Cutler Ward) and literary criticism, and corresponded with the poets, Fitz Hugh Halleck and William Henry Longfellow. (Apcab, *s.v.*"Ward, Richard")

Andrew Warner (1806-1899)

The son of a German immigrant, Andrew Warner apprenticed as a young man in the Counting Room of John Pintard.[94] Warner joined the New York State Militia in 1824 and the following year was made a Lieutenant. In October 1825 Colonel Prosper Wetmore appointed Warner Adjutant of the Battalion. The relationship between Wetmore and Warner endured and figured prominently in the history of the Art-Union. When

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[94] The best source for Warner is Robert Hendry Kelby, *A Memorial of Colonel Andrew Warner* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1915), a booklet published on the occasion of the receipt of Kate Warner's bequest in honor of her father. Another useful source is Charles DeKay, "Col. Andrew Warner," *New York Times* 5 March 1899: IMS 13. John Pintard was a founder of the New York Historical Society, the nephew of Elias Boudinot, President of the Continental Congress, and a patron of the American Academy of the Fine Arts. Though the Warner family could not afford extended education for Andrew, his placement in Pintard's office suggests a significant amount of social entree.

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Wetmore resigned from the Militia in 1827, Warner, by than a Captain, loyally followed. From 1832 to 1851 Warner served as Deputy Clerk in the Manhattan County Clerk's office. He was admitted to the Bar in 1836. Warner resumed activity with the Militia in 1834 with the organization of the "Jefferson Guard," a group of German Americans. This was incorporated into the 38th Battalion New York State Artillery and subsequently enlarged to the 38th Regiment, New York Artillery, all under Colonel Warner's command. The Regiment drilled in Tompkins Square Park in anticipation of a call up during the Mexican Ware which did not occur. Warner retained command of the Regiment (which was frequently reconfigured) until 1854.

Warner was a work-horse and a powerful presence at the Art-Union, which he served as Recording Secretary in 1842, 1843, and 1845, and Corresponding Secretary from 1848 through 1853. (He served the interim years on the Committee of Management, and was thus present without interruption from 1842 until the end.) In his years as Corresponding Secretary he was the voice of the Art-Union to artists, Honorary Secretaries, and subscribers across the nation and the world. In 1848 alone Warner handled over 3,000 pieces of correspondence, unassisted and refusing any financial compensation.

Warner was named the first Clerk of the Court of Common Pleas in 1853, when the State Legislature created the position. He resigned a year later to join the Institution for the Savings of Merchants Clerks as Cashier which had been chartered in 1848. The President of the Bank was Moses Grinnell. Benjamin R. Winthrop was also an officer. Warner became Secretary of the Bank in 1855, and President in 1881, a position he held

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until 1897 when he retired from active business life.[95]

Warner also served as Secretary of the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb from 1853 to 1868; on the Board of Managers of the society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents from 1853 and as Secretary from 1854 to 1880, as Vice President in 1883 and on the Board until 1895. In 1863 he joined the Board of governors of The society of the Lying-in Hospital of the City of New York and was Treasurer from 1882 to 1892. During the Civil War Warner was the Secretary and then the President of the "Stuyvesant Square Home Guard." He was an incorporator and trustee of "The Home for Disabled Soldiers" founded in 1865.

Warner had a long history with the New York Historical Society. Elected to membership in 1845, he was Recording Secretary from 1846 to 1850 and again from 1854 to 1899. His only child, Kate Warner, died in 1913 and left a bequest (which was received in 1915) in honor of her father in the amount of $100,000, at that time the largest cash gift to the Society in its history.

James Watson Webb (1802-1884)

James Watson Webb served on the Apollo Association Committee of Management in 1839. The son of Revolutionary War general Samuel Blatchley Webb, he served in the United States Army himself until 1827, when he arrived in New York City

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[95] The Bank, at15th Street and Fourth Avenue, changed its name to Union Square Savings Bank in 1905. From 1968 on it was involved in a series of mergers which resulted in its dissolution in 1995. The present building, which dates to 1907, is now used as an off-Broadway theater.

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bound on a career in journalism. He purchased and edited the *Morning Courier,* adding to it, in 1829, *The New-York Enquirer,* thus creating the *Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer*, which he owned and edited until 1861. As a journalist and as a personality, Webb was partisan and prone to quarrels. Though he began as a Jacksonian, his support of the National Bank led him to the Whig Party, and his newspaper became a major Whig organ until Webb joined the newly formed Republican party. Webb was a keen competitor as a journalist, but was also a hothead who had fought two duels by the time he left the army. He instigated the duel that led to the death of Congressman Jonathan Cilley in 1838 and fought a third duel in 1842 in which he was wounded. Since dueling was illegal in New York State, only a pardon from Governor William Seward, Webb's fellow Whig, kept him from a two-year term at Sing Sing. In 1843, newly pardoned, Webb was named New York State engineer-in-chief, carrying the rank of Major-General in the State Militia, a rank which Webb, thereafter prefaced to his name. A strong supporter of the Union and of Lincoln, Webb, who could hardly be described as having a diplomatic temperament, as appointed minister to Brazil in 1861, a position he retained until 1869. (Apcab, Natcab)

Prosper Montgomery Wetmore (1798-1876)

In a group of managers and officers that included New Yorkers of impressive wealth, fame, and eminence, Prosper Wetmore was, after the founder, James Herring, the single most influential leader of the American Art-Union. He came onto the Board of Managers in 1839, the replacement for the very first vacancy, and served as President of

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the organization from 1847 through 1850.[96] Wetmore was a dry goods merchant from a respectable Connecticut family who began his working life early as a nine-year-old counting house clerk following the death of his father. In 1816, still an adolescent, he joined the prestigious New York State Militia.[97] His militia career was dazzling; he rose to the rank of colonel before he resigned in 1827 in consequence of his involvement in the failure of the Lombard Association, a loan and trust company of which he had been an officer. A history of the Seventh Regiment offers a description of the man:

> In the history of the militia of the city of New York there is no record of an officer so young in years achieving by his own exertion and talents such great distinction. He was the idol of his comrades in arms, the favorite of his superior officers, and a pet of the public. Though not distinguished as a tactician or military instructor, he was a fine officer, and with his graceful and dashing manners won laurels from both soldiers and civilians. Money flowed liberally from his purse for the advancement of the corps, and, being a fluent speaker and a ready writer, he was always prepared to promote or defend its interests.

Wetmore was appointed in 1838, by his mentor, Governor William Marcy, to the post of Paymaster General of the State Militia, the source of the title "General" that he proudly added to his name.

In 1816 Wetmore also began to write for publication. He was a poet, and a

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[96] There are a variety of sources that address Wetmore's biography, but unfortunately they contain what appear to be minor contradictions, which may reflect incomplete information. The major printed sources are APCAB and the *Cyclopaedia of American Literature.* There are Prosper Wetmore papers with the Delafield Family Papers in the Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Wetmore's granddaughter, Violetta Susan Elizabeth White, married John Ross Delafield. The Princeton archives rely on APCAB for their biographical sketch.

[97] For a biographical sketch concentrating on Wetmore's Militia career see Col. Emmon Clark, *History of the Seventh Regiment* (New York: Seventh Regiment, 1890), especially 98, 103, 106112,119,135, 146-150, 228.

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contributor to William Leggett's *Critic*,[98] and later to the *New York Mirror* and James Watson Webb's *Courier and Enquirer*. In 1830 he published *The Battle of Lexington and other Poems*. In 1832 he was invited to recite his poem, "Ambition," written in Spencerian stanza in front of the literary societies of Hamilton College in upstate Cazenovia, New York. Wetmore "discovered" the American tragedian Edwin Forrest in Albany and was responsible for Forrest's first New York booking. Later he was a judge in Forrest's prize competitions to encourage the writing of American plays.[99] Wetmore was enough of a minor literary figure to merit inclusion in a number of nineteenth century biographical dictionaries of American writers. His literary career is the source of a two personal descriptions that offer in sum substantially the same flavor of the man as the Seventh Regiment historian. The first, in 1842, offered that "the name of Mr. Prosper M. Wetmore is familiar to all readers of American light literature. He has written a great deal, at various periods, both in prose and poetry, (but principally in the latter) for our Papers, Magazines, and Annuals." The second, in 1846, went into greater detail:

> *General Wetmore* occupied some hears ago quite a conspicuous position among the *littérateurs* of New York City. His . . . "The Battle of Lexington and other Poems" is a collection of considerable merit, and one which met a very cordial reception from the press.
>
> *Much* of this cordiality, however, is attributable to the personal popularity of the man, to his facility in making acquaintances and his tact in converting them into unwavering friends.

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[98] Mott, *Magazines*, 353.

[99] For Wetmore's role in Forrest's career, see Richard Moody, *Edwin Forest: First Star of the American Stage* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960) especially 58, 62, 67, 78, 85, 88, 95, 111, 184. The Wetmore-Forrest friendship had subsequent consequences for the American Art-Union as discussed in Chapter Nine.

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> General Wetmore has an exhaustless fund of *vitality*. His energy, activity and indefatigability are proverbial, not less than his peculiar sociability. These qualities give him unusual influence among his fellow-citizens, and have constituted him . . . one of a standing committee for the regulation of a certain class of city affairs . . . .
>
> Mr. Wetmore is not only a general, but Naval Officer of the Port of New York. Member of the Board of Trade, one of the Council of the Art Union, one of the Corresponding Committee of the Historical Society, and of more other committees than I can just now remember. His manners are *recherchés*, courteous – a little in the old school way. He is sensitive, punctilious; speaks well, roundly, fluently, plausibly, and is skilled in pouring oil upon the waters of stormy debate.
>
> He is perhaps fifty years of age, but has a youthful look; is about five feet eight in height, slender, neat with an air of military compactness; looks especially well on horseback.[100]

The writer of both of these comments was a literary figure about town himself who had opportunities for close observation of Wetmore – Edgar Allan Poe.

Indeed, Poe's observation about Wetmore's energy hardly overstates the case. Wetmore seems to have been constitutionally incapable of attending a meeting without taking a leading role. His roster of activities, even now, remains astounding. Wetmore was deeply involved in Democratic politics. He was Governor William Marcy's secretary in 1832, a position of substantial influence in the State.[101] In 1833 Marcy named him to the New York State Board of Regents, a lifetime appointment which he took very

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[100] Edgar Allan Poe, "A Chapter on Autography (Part III), " *Graham's Magazine* (January 1842): 45 available at http://www.eapoe.org/works/misc/autogc3.htm; Poe, "The Literati of New York City - No. IV," (B), *Godey's Lady's Book* (August 1846): 76 available at www.eapoe.org/works/editions/grvolll.htm both accessed November 20, 2002.from the E. A. Poe Society of Baltimore.

[101] This was the same position that DeWitt Clinton had held when his uncle, George Clinton, was Governor of New York. Evan Cornog, *Clinton*, 22, calls it "to this day . . . the second most powerful position in the executive branch."

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seriously.[102] Wetmore was elected to the State Assembly in 1834 where he served as Chairman of the Committee on Colleges and Academies. In 1835 he was a leader of the large committee of eminent New Yorkers convened in the aftermath of the great fire to oversee the recovery.[103] From 1845 to 1849 he was Navy Agent in the port of New York, appointed by Democratic President James Polk. He was a regular correspondent, the political New York City eyes and ears for William Marcy. Other frequent political correspondents who were also close friends included the historian George Bancroft (who was Secretary of the Navy in 1845 and '46) and fellow New York merchant turned statesman (with Wetmore's active intervention on his behalf), Townsend Harris. Wetmore retained an active interest in the intersection of public affairs and military matters throughout his life, publishing *Observations on the War with Mexico* in 1847. During the the Civil War he was a prominent War Democrat, and a founder of the Union Defense Committee which he served as Secretary from 1861 to 1865. He was working on

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[102] Wetmore's papers at Princeton refer frequently to his duties as a Regent including meetings and school visits. There is a charming reference to Wetmore in the recollections by Rev. Edward McSweeny, of his school days thirty years earlier, published in the *New York Catholic World* 47 no. 282 (September 1888): 744. "One of my earliest recollections of college-days in New York is the occasional visit of the Regents of the University . . . . The chief of them for a while was Prosper M. Wetmore, and you can imagine how exalted a personage he was in the eyes of an under-graduate. One day, going to school, I met this gentleman on the corner of Union Square and Fifteenth Street, carrying a small market-baskest. He had evidently gone out to procure some fresh fruit or vegetables for his household."

[103] See August Costello, *Our Firemen: A History of the New York Fire Departments*, Chapter XIX, "Gunpowder Checks the Flames." Wetmore was clearly a leader of the meeting convened on December 19, 1835 at City Hall. His name figures prominently Costello's account.Costello's book has recently been reissued, but was available on the web at http://members.aol.com/dcbreton1/FDNY/FDNY_Intro.html on 11/1/00.

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a history of this committee when he died. In 1874 he was one of the honored veteran officers who attended the fiftieth anniversary of the organization of the Seventh Regiment.[104]

Wetmore was Secretary of the New York Chamber of Commerce from 1843 to 1849, and Vice President in 1850. He was a long-time active member of the New-York Historical Society and a member of its Executive Committee from 1842 to 1848. He was an antiquarian who rummaged to find treasures. Among his "finds" were John Trumbull portraits of Alexander Hamilton and Cadwallader Colden commissioned by the Chamber of Commerce that had been rescued from the great fire only to be rolled up, stored, and forgotten in an attic, until Wetmore, the Chamber Secretary, rediscovered them. Wetmore also found two early Chamber minute books, also rescued from the fire "in a lumber box in a Front Street shop." In 1844 he deposited a trove of assorted official records, newspapers and journals with the Historical Society.[105]

Wetmore and his wife, Lucy Ann Ogsbury, had twelve children, nine daughters and three sons. The Wetmore correspondence reveals a close-knit and loving family. Efforts to support this brood were not an inconsequential part of Wetmore's life. He seems to have gone through several fortunes, since his obituary observes that he "died poor." His political activities and posts were sources of substantial income. In addition,

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[104] *New York Times*, "The Seventh Regiment," October 5, 1874: 8.

[105] For the pictures, see "Chamber of Commerce Has Its Hall of Fame," *New York Times*, July 3, 1927: xx8; for the minute books, see Meyer Berger, "About New York: New York State Chamber of Commerce, Born in 1768, Is Oldest Existing Body of Its Kind," November 30, 1955: 38. For a record of Wetmore's 1844 donation, see *Proceedings of the New York Historical Society* (March 1844): 332.

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he was involved in numerous commercial ventures, many of a speculative nature. In addition to the commission merchant business and an early fling at banking, he had interests in shipping that included Nicaragua and China trade vessels. His partner in some of these activities was an active Whig, art collector and fellow Art-Union Committeer member, Marshall Roberts. Roberts was not Wetmore's only close Whig associate. His younger brother and partner in the crockery business, Robert C. Wetmore, was also a Whig whose father-in-law, Whig Seth Geer, built the row of colonnade houses on Lafayette Street below Astor Place that were the best addresses of their day.[106]

Lest this account seem like all Wetmore did, let it be noted that he was a director of the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, a founding member in 1844 the New-York Sporting Association ("to attend to the interests of game and sporting in general"), a member of the first governing committee of the Racket Court Club in 1845, and, when he died, the oldest living member of the New England Society.[107] (APCab, Obituary NYT 17 March 1876)

Benjamin Robert Winthrop

Benjamin Winthrop, a banker, was a member of the Art-Union Committee of

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[106] Four of this row of nine buildings survive today, a very distressed landmark of old New York.

[107] The sources for this list are assorted, but note especially "Game Protectors at Dinner: They Make Merry At Their Semi-Centennial Dinner," *New York Times,* May 22, 1894. President Theodore Roosevelt spoke on the occasion and noted that the group was founded "to consider the intolerably oppressive nature of the laws regarding dogs, whereby many valuable sporting dogs were lost to their owners." Roosevelt characterized Wetmore as "an eccentric reformer and politician in those days."

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Management in 1845 and '46. In 1837 he had served as the Recording Secretary of the New-York Historical Society. He was a vice president of the Merchants Marine Insurance Company.

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APPENDIX B

TYPESCRIPT OF TALK BY PROSPER WETMORE TO MERCANTILE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION IN 1832[108]

Mr. President - Gentlemen

About twelve years ago – if I recollect aright, Sir, the attention of the judicious and reflecting portion of this community was attracted to a project for the establishment of a Library and Reading Room by the Merchants' Clerks of the City of New York. This undertaking awakened the feelings and enlisted the cooperation of various classes of our citizens. The philanthropists saw good reason to expect from its prosecution an improvement of the moral habits of an interesting part of the population. The man of business looked to its success as a means for enlarging the capacity, strengthening the mental qualifications, and confirming the integrity of those, to whose custody his interests were confided. Such a project, in short, could not but receive the encouragement of the wise and good; it could scarcely excite the opposition of any. Some there were, however, and I confess myself to have been of the number, who doubted the feasibility, while they approved the intention. How fallacious were the doubts, and how feasible the effort, the annual report to which you have listened this evening, has satisfactorily shown.

That feeling is born within us which delights in the mental elevation of the human species; and there is at all times an ennobling sensation excited, on witnessing (some new) each endeavor for the diffusion of knowledge and for the cultivation of the intellect.

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[108] Wetmore Papers, Princeton University, Firestone Library, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, Delafield Family Papers, Box 130

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An added (?) is thrown around such endeavors, when they spring spontaneously from the young and volatile. When the youthful turn aside from frivolous amusements, and enticing pleasures — from the blandishments of fashion, and the allurements of folly – to seek a more healthful recreation

"Where learning spreads the laden page of thought
"And knowledge stores the wealth that mind has bought."

It is our fortunate lot to live in an age fertile in improvements both physical and mental. Science and Art have o'erleaped the boundaries where human ingenuity, exhausted in its labours, had left them for years, and now seem to wander uncontrolled in the regions of discovery and creation. Literature is diffusing her light where heretofore the mind has slumbered in darkness. A closer knowledge of man and a better knowledge of God is abroad upon the earth. The pile of the Hindoo widow now rarely sends up its impious flame; the dwellers by the Ganges and the Euphrates – by the Orinoco, and the "Father of Rivers" – and they who roam wherever our own magnificent forests expand their ample bosoms – are no longer without instructions for their thoughts, and an object for their worship. Throughout, not alone the civilized world, but to the heathen, and the Savage, the Schoolmaster has sent his missive, and glad voices respect the lesson, and grateful hearts respond to the gift.

It is not strange, then – the reverse would indeed be strange – that we perceive a marked improvement in the intellectual character of our own people. We witness the truth of this in every situation of life. It is not uncommon to hear in our halls of legislation, or in our public assemblies, the precepts of wisdom from the lips of those whose vocations

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be with the mechanic arts. It is not [un]common to meet among the framers or expositors of the laws, those who have devoted a life of activity to the counting room and the warehouse. Believe me, sir, among your safest and most practical legislators will be found those who have stood by the merchants desk. Such instances, however, are to be found only among those who have not neglected the pursuit of knowledge – but who have cherished with as earnest a care the riches of the mind, as they have their gains from an hundred seas.

The character of the people is the wealth of a nation. Who is there – certainly none within these walls – that does not feel a glow of honest pride, as the exalted estimation in which the American character is held by the enlightened throughout the world. Has it ever occurred to you – Gentlemen – to consider how much the intelligence and probity of the American merchant has contributed to the formation of that character? Have you reflected on the fact, that of the whole number of American citizens who have visited the different countries of Europe, and from an association with whom this favourable estimate has been formed, a very large proportion have been merchants or those engaged in commercial pursuits? Such a fact is worth volumes of comment on the advantages of mental cultivation to the merchant and the trader.

It is to maintain, and still higher to elevate our mercantile character, that this institution has been established. What it has already accomplished is evidence that it possesses within itself the elements of future usefulness. With a proper exercise of its power – with a correct development, and a judicious application of its resources, such an institution cannot fail of exerting a beneficial influence on those who avail themselves of

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the means it presents for self improvement.

Gentlemen of the Association –

The evidence which your annual report has furnished of the zeal and ability which have heretofore characterized your exertions, is sufficient to justify the most flattering expectations for the future. It can hardly be necessary to say aught to stimulate those who understand their own interest and who appreciate so justly the advantages they possess. The moral force you gain by study must be apparent, for to acquire knowledge is to create power. He that succeeds in the noble pursuit, will have conquered the vantage ground whereon the Philosopher of old desires to plant his lever to move the world. Knowledge has been aptly termed the expence (?) of liberty – How becoming is it them in a people, whose greatest pride is their love of freedom, to concentrate this beautiful element through the alembic of their own minds.

I believe your experience will sustain me in the assertion that an adequate devotion to business is neither incompatible nor irreconcilable with a love of letters and an admiration of the works of genius. Though – to borrow the words of a writer, who I know is a favourite with you all – though you be engaged "in the sugar trade, and cotton line," though like Norfolk you "deal in malt, or like "the Douglas, in red herrings" – yet cannot I appreciate the objections, that would bar you access to the regions of the imagination, or the sober dwellings of philosophers (ies?) that would shut you out from among those who have

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The hours that can with propriety be withdrawn from business, can never be so advantageously employed as in reading, or in some other exercise which as for its object the improvement of the mind. Johnson, who thought as well as wrote correctly has said –

> "I would never desire a young man to neglect his business
> "for the purpose of pursing his studies because it is
> "unreasonable; I should only desire him to read at those
> "hours when he would otherwise be unemployed. I will
> "not promise that he will be a Bentley; but if he be
> "possessed of any parts, he will certainly make a sensible man. – "

Trust me, Gentlemen, you will not come to your ledger, or your sales room in the morning, with a zest the less keen, or a mind less alive to the complications of business, even though you may have devoted your evenings to the pages of the historian, the serious (?) Novelist, or the poet. Relaxation is necessary to preserve the elasticity of the mind. Reading – composition – or listening to the oral lessons of philosophy and science – will restore that brilliancy which the duller pursuits of life have for the time destroyed.

But I am, Gentlemen, only repeating those axioms with the justice of which you must have long been familiar. May I not conclude with a word which has been spoken elsewhere though on a similar occasion –

> " – Go on – go on – shun not the strife
> Where honour gives the prize – who wins that word
> Shall know, and, smile when ingrates whet the knife,
> Tranquility of mind amid the storms of life." –

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– "listened and believed, and felt
the Poet's mastery
O'er the mind's sea, in calm and storm,
O'er the heart's sunshine and its showers,
O'er passion's moments, bright and warm,
O'er reason's dark, cold hours;
On fields where brave men "die or do,
In halls where ring the banquet's mirth.
Where mourners weep, where lovers woo,
From throne to cottage hearth! – "

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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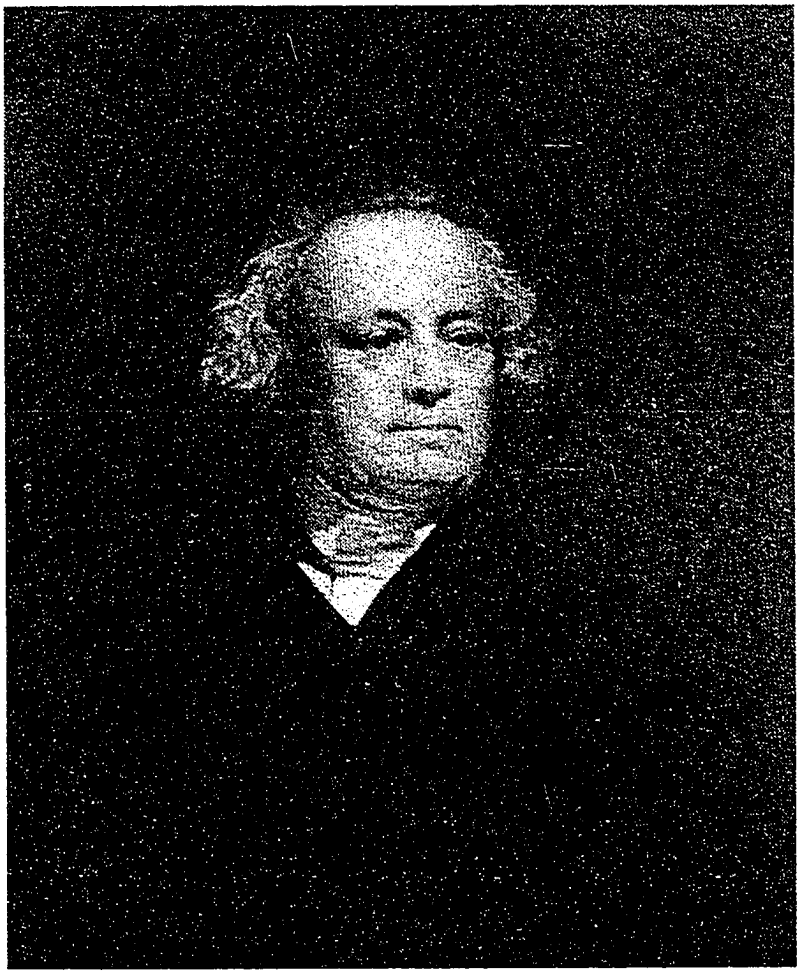


Figure 1. Charles L. Elliott, *John Wakefield Francis.* President of the Apollo Association, 1839, 1840, 1841

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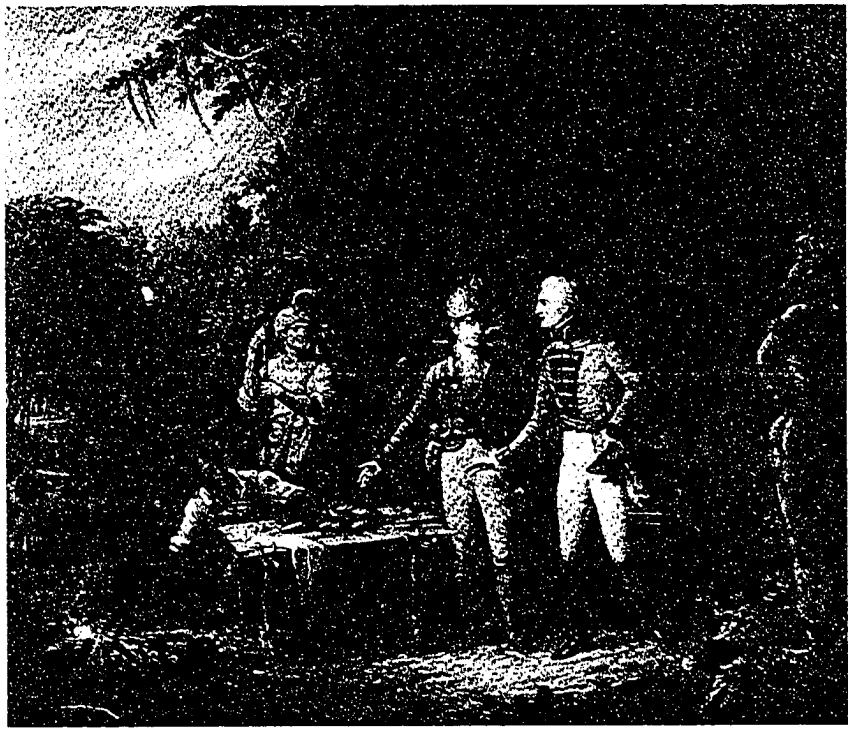


Figure 2. John Blake White, *Gen. Marion in His Swamp Encampment Inviting a British Officer to Dinner*. Apollo Association 1840 engraving.

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Figure 3. Daniel Huntington, *Sibyl*. First and only purchase for the permanent gallery.

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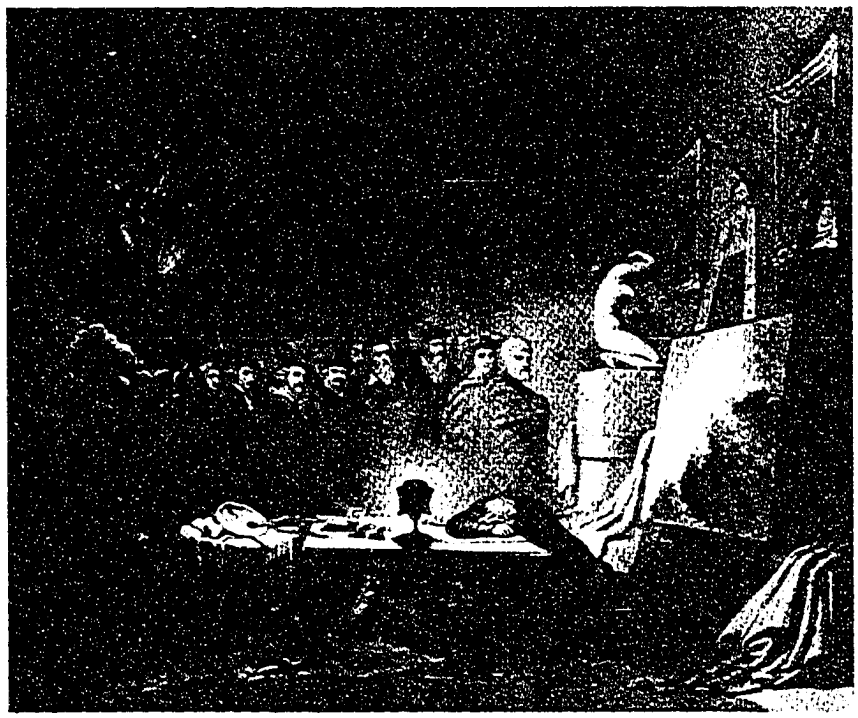


Figure 4. George H. Comegys, *The Artists Dream*. Apollo Association 1841 engraving.

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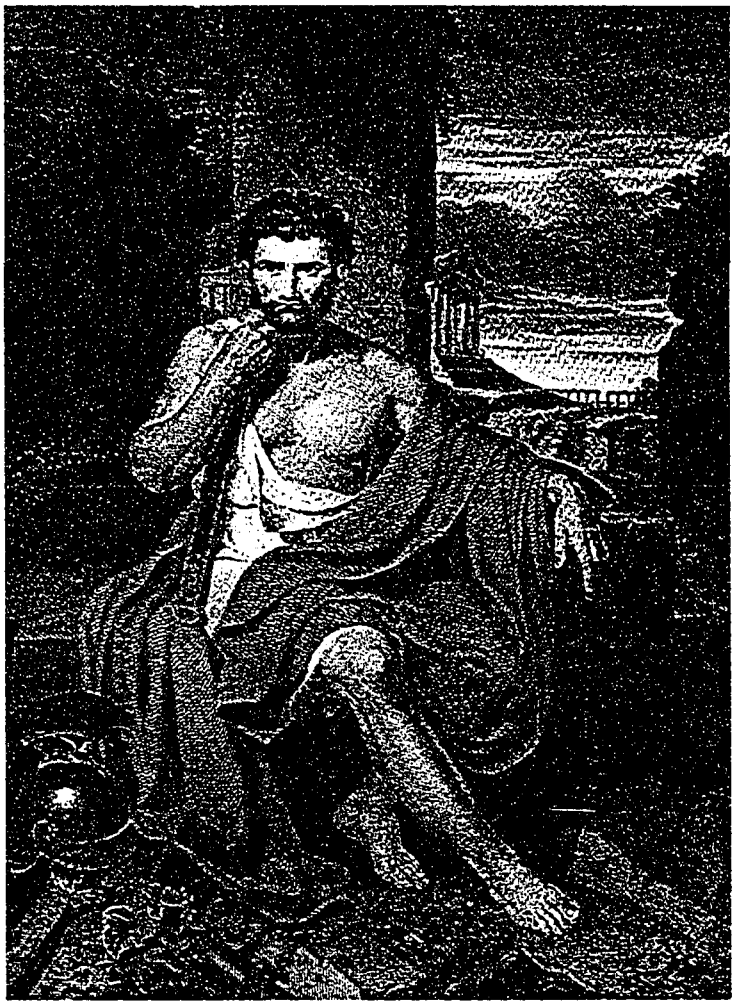


Figure 5. John Vanderlyn, *Caius Marius on the Ruins of Carthage*. Apollo Association 1842 engraving.

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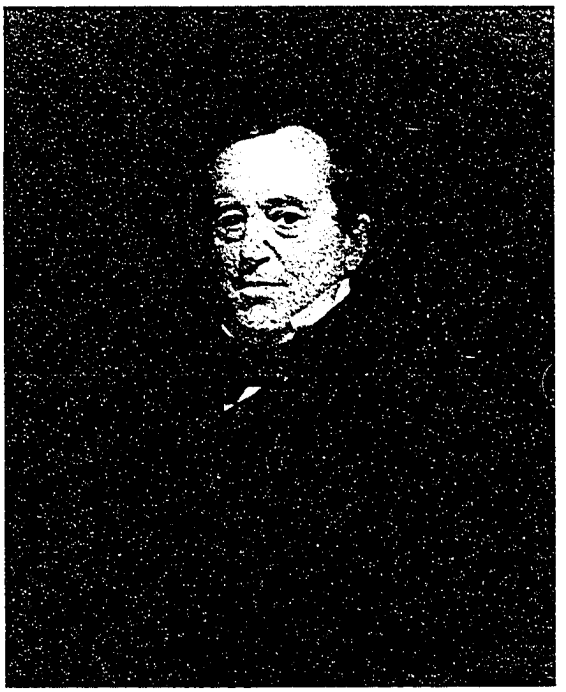


Figure 6. Charles L. Elliott, *Daniel Stanton*. President of the Apollo Association 1842, 1843.

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Figure 7. William Sidney Mount, *Farmer's Nooning*. Apollo Association 1843 engraving.

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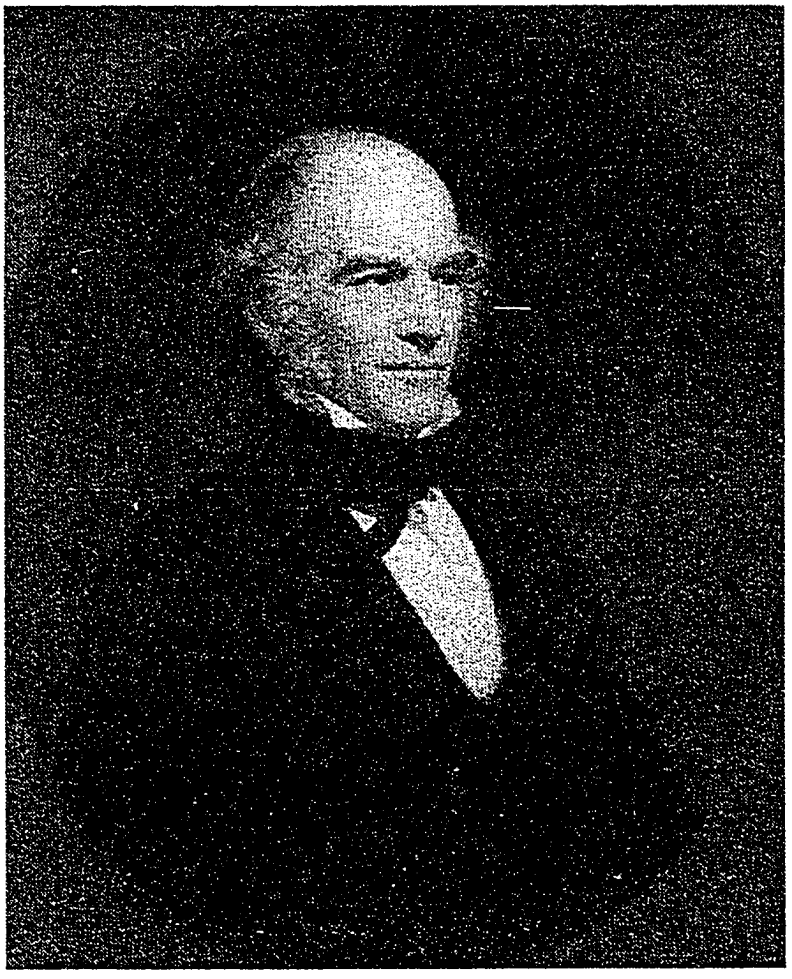


Figure 8. Henry Peters Gray, *William Cullen Bryant.* President of the American Art-Union 1844, 1845, 1846.

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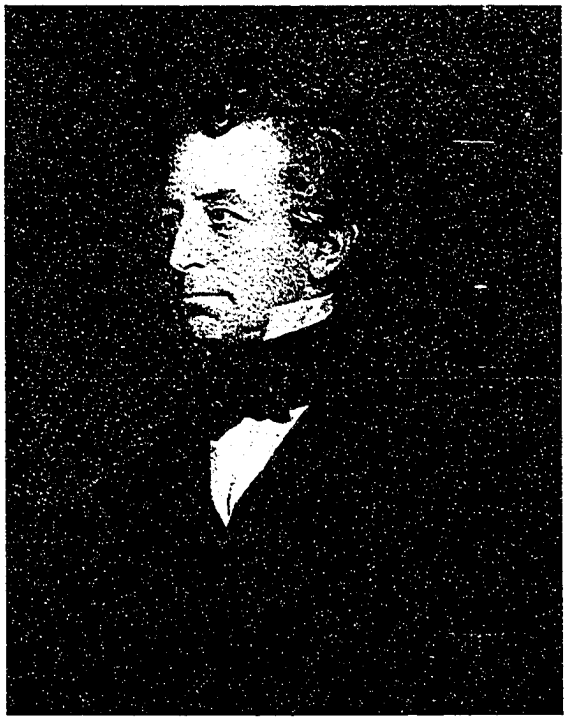


Figure 9. Daniel Elliott, *Prosper Montgomery Wetmore*. President of the American Art-Union 1847, 1848, 1848, 1850.

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Figure 10. *The Gallery of the American Art-Union*

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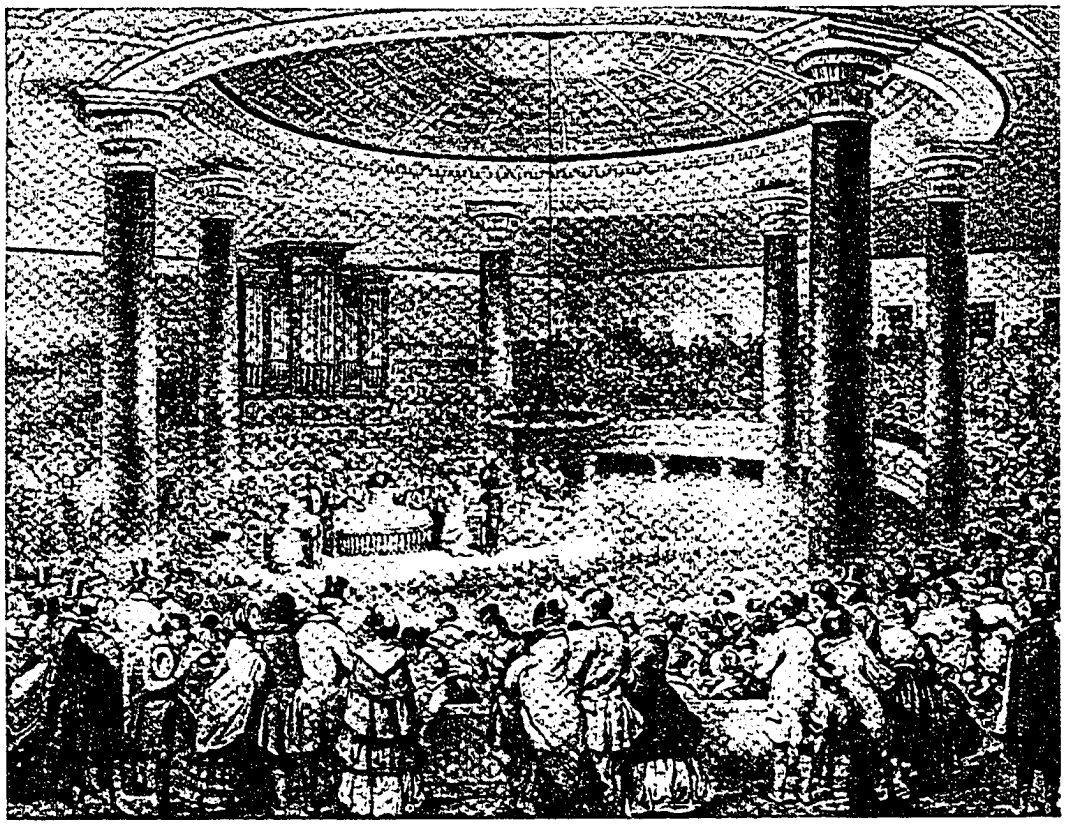


Figure 11. T. H. Matteson, *Distribution of the American Art-Union Prizes.* Distributed as a promotion device to Honorary Secretaries

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Figure12. James Herring, *John Wakefield Francis*. Portrait for *The National Portrait Gallery*.

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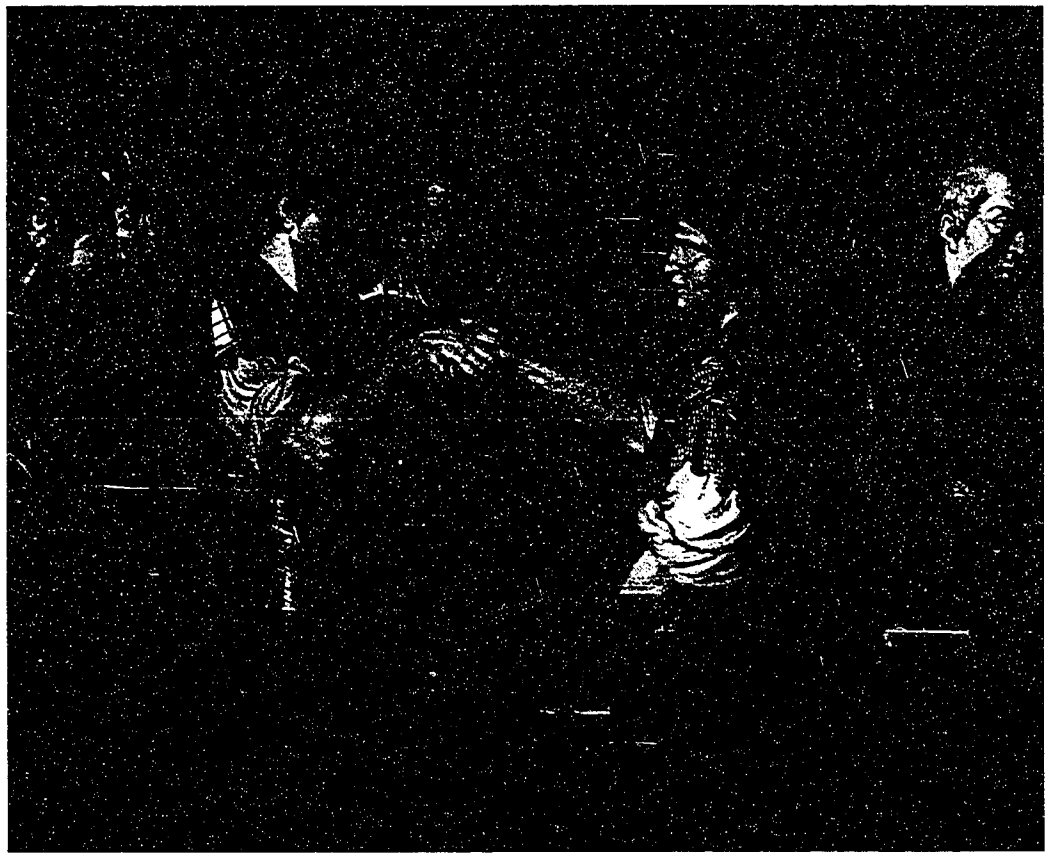


Figure 13. George Cooke, *Cataline's Conspiracy* after Salvator Rosa.

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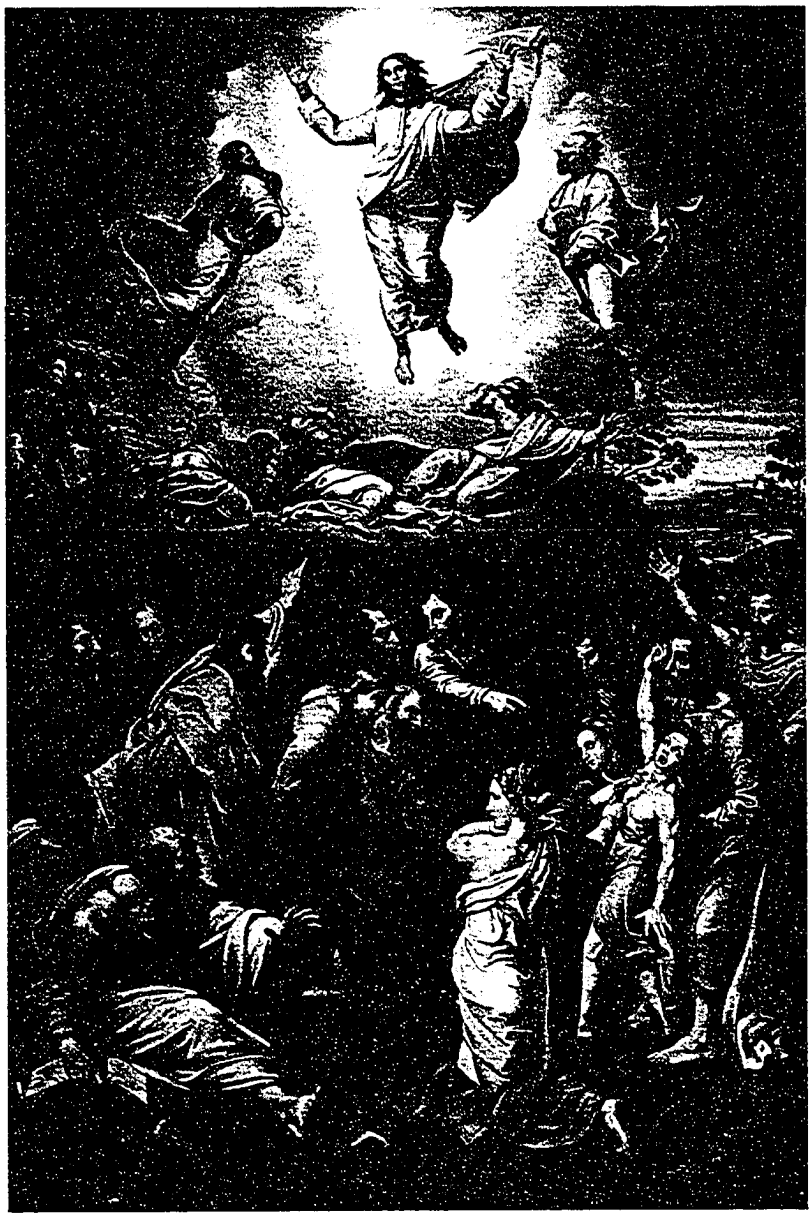


Figure 14. George Cooke, *Transfiguration* after Raphael

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Figure 15. John Gadsby Chapman, *View of Montpelier*. Engraved for frontispiece of Volume II of The National Portrait Gallery

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Figure 16. John Gadsby Chapman, *The Baptism of Pocahantas*. Painted for the Capitol Rotunda.

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Figure 17. John Gadsby Chapman, *A Lazy Fisherman*. 1844 Art-Union prize.

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Figure 18. Charles Bird King, *The Grandfather's Hobby*. Possibly version purchased by Apollo Association in 1839.

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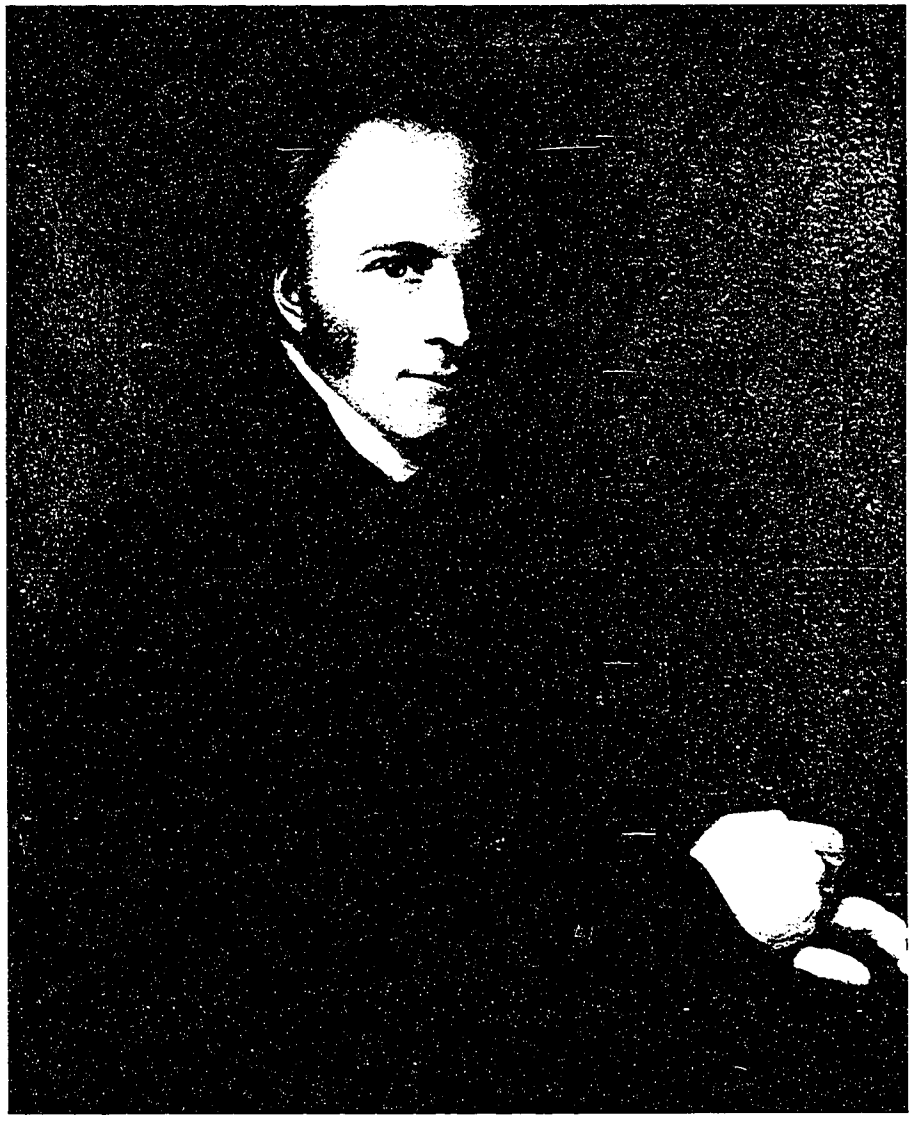
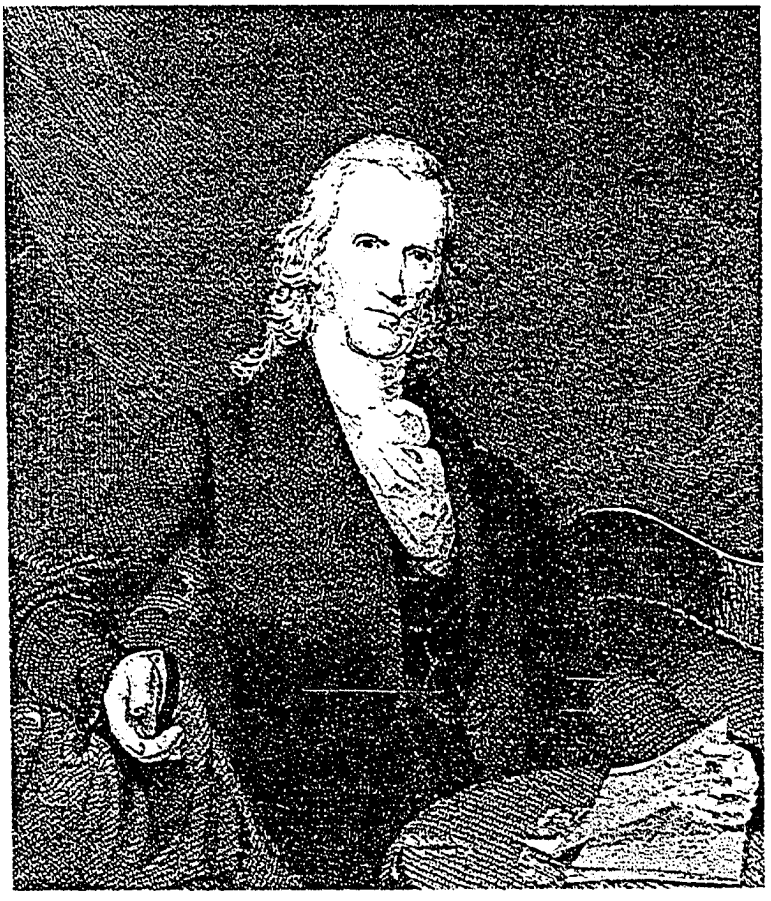


Figure 19. Charles Bird King, *Self Portrait*. Painted in 1815. Possibly exhibited at Apollo Gallery in 1838 as *Portrait of Charles B. King by himself*

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HUGH LAWSON WHITE

Figure 20. Emanuel Gotlieb Leutze, *Senator Hugh Lawson White.* Painted for *The National Portrait Gallery.*

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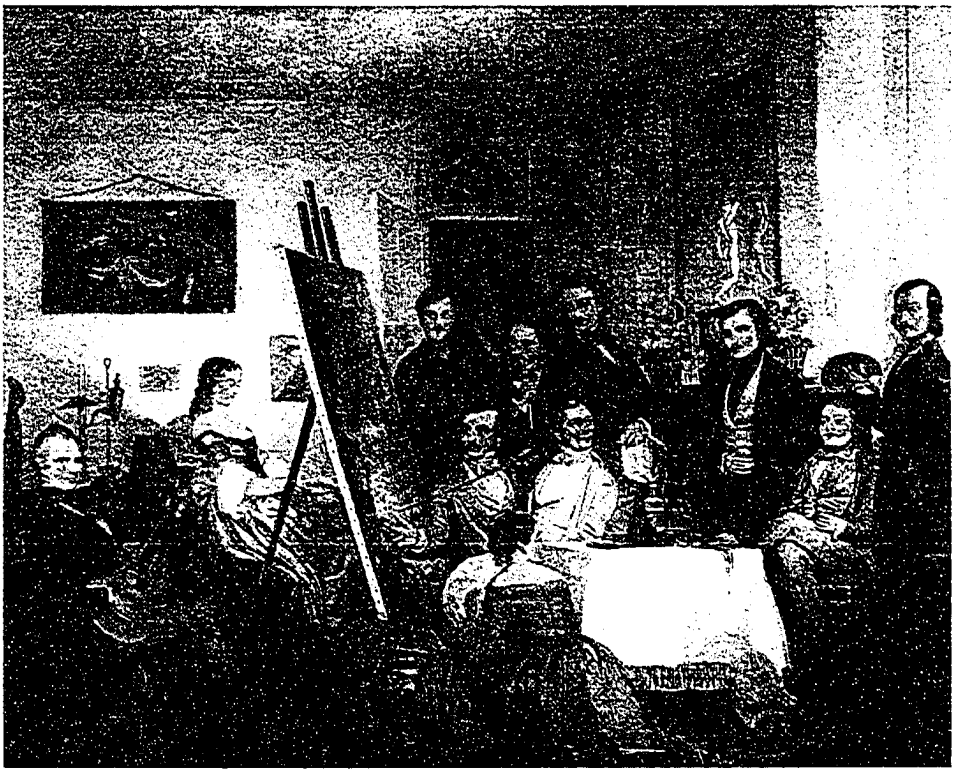


Figure 21. Thomas P. Rossiter, *The Artists' Conversazione, containing Portraits of all the American Artists at Paris, in March 1841*. Exhibited at the Apollo Association 1841, for sale.

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Figure 22. Henry Inman, *Prosper Wetmore.* Painted near the time Wetmore spoke at the Mercantile Library.

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Figure 23. William Page, *The Young Merchants*. Submitted to 1842 competition.

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Lowell Briggs Page, photograph courtesy of Detroit Institute of Arts

Figure 24. William Page, *Charles F. Briggs*.

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Figure 25. William Page, *Governor William Learned Marcy*

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Figure 26. Joshua Shaw, *A Scene in the Olden Times: The First Arrival of a Ship in the Waters of the Hudson*. Submitted to 1842 competition.

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