WOMEN, WEALTH AND POWER: NEW YORK CITY, 1860 - 1900

by

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VOLUME I

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

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
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Abstract

WOMEN, WEALTH AND POWER: NEW YORK, 1860 - 1900

by

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Using two lengthy private diaries, published first person narratives, archival and newspaper records, this work provides a complete assessment of New York's women of wealth. It explores these women's household, benevolent and social priorities as an avenue to understanding the social tensions of the period. It presents the ways in which women attempted to structure and manage their changing social environment, beginning with the 1860 Prince of Wales Ball through the reign of the conservative society matron Caroline Astor. While wealth served as the principal determinant of social status, domesticity shaped women's feminine identity. As a consequence, this study views the period's social rivalries as more than a contest between women of old and new wealth. Rather women engaged in an intense debate over the boundaries that defined women's public place as well as the values that would govern women's lives in the future.

To Barbara and Carlton, for their support and encouragement.
To my teachers and countless librarians, for their patient assistance.
And to Mamie, who missed a lot of walks.

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Introduction

In October of 1860, New York's wealthy gathered at the Academy of Music to celebrate the visit of Edward Prince of Wales to the city. New York had already established itself as a commercial nexus that awarded the accomplishments of self-made men. Many individuals, however, saw the royal sojourn as an opportunity to present the city as a place of cultural and social amenity, not unlike leading European capitals. Consequently, city fathers spared no expense in organizing a gala ball for the Prince that mirrored their own expectations for a courtly occasion. Despite the attention paid to matters of protocol, costume and decor, the evening did not unfold as planned. As the invited guests streamed into the Academy and crowded around the Prince for their royal introductions, the temporary flooring constructed over the parquet collapsed. This mishap produced a gaping hole directly in front of His Highness. While no one was injured in the noisy confusion that followed, society's desire to present itself as an aristocracy had produced an embarrassing spectacle.

As a metaphor, the 1860 Prince of Wales ball foreshadows the decades of ostentatious social activity that followed during the Gilded Age. Many of the beautifully gowned and bejeweled women who danced with the Prince saw themselves as members of

an aristocracy rather than as the wives of successful businessmen. They excluded others from their society on the basis of character and family pedigree, denying the importance of wealth to their social status. Women, as shrewd social managers, also understood that their society must reflect the city's commercial vitality in order to remain relevant. Consequently, wealthy women labored to preserve their status by balancing their own aristocratic pretensions with the social aspirations of newer families of fortune. This study examines the ways in which women attempted to order their social environment. From the services of a church sexton to the organization of debutante assemblies to the compilation of lists and registers, women reached for a social structure that eluded their grasp. Their social arena became increasingly rivalrous, centered around distinctions in dress and manner. As a consequence, this study provides information on tastes and habits of wealthy society for the period under consideration. This work is more than a catalog of dresses and parties, however. It is finally a search for the values that shaped the feminine response to social change. Additionally, this study presents a detailed analysis of how two women attempted to compensate for their lack of substantial fortune. As such, this study provides a complete picture of wealthy women, presenting them as they saw themselves rather than simply as others saw them.

Information on the women of New York society is often difficult to obtain. The available historical literature, while providing useful context, often lacks specificity regarding women. Two scholars, the late E. Digby Baltzell and Frederic Cople Jaher,

have explored the world of the wealthy as it existed at the turn of the century.[1] While Baltzell's principal interest is patrician Philadelphia, Jaher comparatively examines elites in respect to patterns of marriage, inheritance and capital formation in several American urban centers. Jaher's brief consideration of style as a determinant of status during the late nineteenth century does not, however, afford a more rounded appraisal of women. Furthermore, both Jaher and Baltzell concentrate upon wealthy and powerful men without a significant exploration of any feminine contribution to society of the Gilded Age. More recently, the historian Sven Beckert considers the consolidation of a "self-conscious upper class" in New York during the late nineteenth century.[2] Beckert, while recognizing a subordinate feminine role in this integration, focuses upon the economic forces that facilitated upper class formation. Similarly, the historian Eric Homberger limits his consideration of wealthy women to their public social identities, emphasizing their entertainments and desire for celebrity.[3]

In the literature specifically pertaining to women, there is a quantitative disparity between works intended for popular consumption and those generated for and by scholars.

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[1] E. Digby Baltzell, The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America, (New York: Random House, 1964) and Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia: Two Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Class, Authority and Leadership, (New York: The Free Press, 1979). Also Frederic Cople Jaher, ed., The Age of Industrialism in America: Essays in Social Structure and Cultural Values, (New York: The Free Press, 1969) and The Urban Establishment: Upper Strata in Boston, New York, Charleston, Chicago and Los Angeles, (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1987).

[2] Sven Beckert, The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850 - 1896, (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[3] Eric Homberger, Money and Social Power in a Gilded Age, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002).

Many books intended for a general audience have been published on women of wealth.[4] On balance, these works focus upon the social milieu of the Gilded Age, emphasizing the period's opulence as well as its social rivalries. In contrast, there are few scholarly treatments of Gilded Age women. These studies are also limited in scope as they consider the social implications of feminine culture to the exclusion of all else. Notably, Maureen E. Montgomery examines New York's urban society in two works.[5] Writing from a literary rather than a historical perspective, Montgomery first considers the tensions between lineage and new wealth in her study of the fiction of Henry James and transatlantic marriage. In a second work, Montgomery evaluates shifting perceptions of the public leisure activity of the wealthy through her examination of gossip columns, etiquette manuals and the fiction of Edith Wharton.

Even with these accounts, it is difficult to imagine many women as significant participants in the public drama that comprised much of Gilded Age society. While wealth provided women with social opportunity, women also organized their lives under the precepts of feminine domesticity. Social governance, relative to the acceptance or rejection of new members, can be seen as one part of women's domestic responsibility.

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[4] Examples of the popular genre include: Henry Seidel Canby, The Age of Confidence: Life in the Nineties, (New York: Farrar & Reinhart Incorporated, 1934); Lloyd Morris, Incredible New York, (New York: Random House, 1951); Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., Queen of the Golden Age: The Fabulous Story of Grace Wilson Vanderbilt, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956); Dixon Wecter, The Saga of American Society, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970); Clarice Stasz, The Vanderbilt Women: Dynasty of Wealth, Glamour, and Tragedy, (New York: toExcel, 1991); Jerry E. Patterson, The First Four Hundred: Mrs. Astor's New York in the Gilded Age, (New York: Rizzoli, 2000).

[5] Maureen E. Montgomery, "Gilded Prostitution:" Status, Money and Transatlantic Marriages, 1870 - 1914, (London: Routledge, 1989) and Displaying Women: Spectacles of Leisure in Edith Wharton's New York, (New York and London: Routledge, 1998).

Even as women enjoyed grand social occasions, they also moved comfortably within their own homes and participated in benevolent work. To this extent, women served as surrogates of their male providers. Domesticity, by the late nineteenth century had become a powerful hegemonic construct, specifying separate, though complementary, social roles for men and women. Accordingly, men embraced the more active public worlds of commerce and industry, while women undertook the private responsibilities associated with the home and children. Although the ideology of separate spheres resonates in the prescriptive literature of the period, historians have demonstrated a disjunction between the rhetoric of this social construct and the actual lives and practices of women.[6]

To appreciate the relevance of the domestic construct to Gilded Age women of wealth, one must approach the subject from their point of view. Women's lives, when viewed historically, are often presented to emphasize the deficiencies in their lives. Certainly, women of the late nineteenth century did not enjoy the full and equal rights of complete citizenship. As social subordinates of men, women had little opportunity for the exercise of their personal prerogatives outside the home. They could not vote. Moreover,

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[6] For an early analysis of the ideology of separate spheres see Nancy Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). A consideration of the ways in which women applied this ideology to suit their own purposes see Lori D. Ginzberg, Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). Catherine Allgor, Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government, (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2000. Susan E. Marshall, Splintered Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Campaign against Woman Suffrage, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997). For a more complete analysis of the historiography on the subject see Linda J. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," Journal of American History 75(June 1988): 9-39.

most had only limited access to meaningful education. While it is difficult to locate a feminine perspective, it is possible. A more rounded understanding of women of wealth is required to appreciate their shared values and undertakings as well as their contribution to the time in which they lived. One must listen to their voices as they describe the joys and frustrations of women's experience during an exceedingly rich and complex historical period. In this regard, women's unpublished diaries and journals and published autobiographies and memoirs provide a clear statement of feminine priorities. These first person narratives permit a unique historical understanding of women's opportunity for fulfillment both in and outside the home.

Much of this study is based upon two extensive sets of personal diaries. The use of diaries for purposes of historical investigation is fraught with difficulties, however. While such sources provide a compelling historical narrative, their final usefulness rests upon many interpretive issues. Diaries can be approached as "a research tool for historians, a therapeutic instrument for psychologists, a repository of information about social structures and relationships for sociologists, and a form of literature and composition for rhetoricians."[7] Because diaries are themselves flexible in form and content, they require interpretation which raises questions regarding the truth of the reader's observations or conclusions. Additionally, such texts can become meaningful for what is excluded as well as what is included, if not repeated. Diaries, though thought to

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[7] Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff, "Issues in Studying Women's Diaries: A Theoretical and Critical Introduction," in Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries, edited by Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 1.

be private texts, also raise questions of audience, or the identification of those for whom they were inscribed.

Finally, the inscription of a diary is a private undertaking. As personal records of experience, however, diaries can become significant coping mechanisms that provide women with agency in situations where they otherwise seem powerless.[8] At the same time, this private act of composing a diary reveals the self both to the writer and to the audience. Questions can arise as to the authenticity of a woman's private voice as distinguished from her public persona. A "woman's private self is but one aspect of her multiplicity and to claim her private voice as the 'better' representation limits the significance of her public voice."[9] The attempt to distinguish between a writer's private and public voice also becomes "unfeasible" when a woman is only represented through her private writing.[10]

This disjunction between the diarist's public and private voice applies also to women's presentation of themselves in memoirs and autobiographies. Although frequently written by women of achievement, these narratives foster images of the "romantic female," modest, obedient and dutiful.[11] Throughout the nineteenth century, women, who founded institutions and pioneered professionally, do not present themselves

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[8] Gayle R. Davis, "Women's Frontier Diaries: Writing for Good Reason." Women's Studies 14 (1987): 5-8.

[9] Amy L. Wink, She Left Nothing in Particular: The Autobiographical Legacy of Nineteenth-Century Women's Diaries, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001),xiii.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Jill Ker Conway, ed. Written *by* Herself: Autobiographies of American Women: An Anthology, (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), xi.

as driven, creative models of feminine achievement. Instead, their accomplishment comes from the "intersection of emotionally prepared women with events and causes, to which they respond but which they do not shape."[12] Women's lives, presented within the prevailing romantic context, become an improvisation in which the response to a new situation follows an "underlying grammar and evolving aesthetic."[13]

Although first person narratives provide an important window into the experience of wealthy women during the Gilded Age, these sources are frequently limited in contextual detail. This study supplements the diarist's record with archival research into the author's specific social, benevolent and religious affiliations. Newspaper archives add another layer of understanding, enabling a more complete identification of the diarists' brief mentions of individuals. During the period under review, the New York Times provided increasingly generous coverage of important social events. Less appreciated is the use of this newspaper for as a resource for other information of a social nature as well as for society gossip. Newspaper archives also provide critical linkages that clarify or elaborate upon first person narratives. Finally, this research includes the fiction of three New York women who participated in the city's society, including Edith Wharton, Constance Cary Harrison and Mrs. Van Rensselaer Cruger. These authors, who shared the values and practices of the wealthy, illuminate the lives of patrician women from inside their circle of acquaintance.

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Mary Catherine Bateson, Composing a Life, (New York: Grove Press, 1989), 3. See also Vivian Gornick, The Situation and the Story: The Art of Personal Narrative, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001).

Together these sources permit a fuller understanding of women's lives, examining all aspects of their public and private experience. In total, this work evaluates feminine domesticity as it defined women's lives and shaped their social opinions. Domesticity becomes the lens through which to interpret the response of the existing society of wealthy families to the social demands of the newly rich and the social order that evolved during the late nineteenth century. For purposes of this discussion, New York's "wealthy elite" community are considered to be a "self-conscious" class whose members "know one another, see one another socially and at business, and so, in making decisions, take one another into account."[14] The word "society" is interpreted to include a "fashionable elite" who enjoyed participating in a range of activities of a purely social nature.

Specifically, Chapter One uses the 1860 Prince of Wales Ball as a prelude to women elites and the social change of the Gilded Age that followed. The use of this date as the starting point for this study permits an analysis of feminine domesticity during the subsequent decades. This chapter evaluates the existing criteria necessary for social status, including lineage, accomplishment and wealth. This is followed by a consideration of the Grace Church sexton Isaac Brown who assisted the feminine effort to manage society. Although many of the wealthy society thought of themselves as members of an aristocracy, Brown superintended the material display of the upper classes which helped to undermine this assertion. This chapter also evaluates the limits of women's public authority and their efforts at self definition through their use of clothing. The fiction of Edith Wharton and Mrs. Van Rensselaer Cruger provide perspective on these topics.

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[14] C. Wright Mills, The Power Elite, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 11.

Chapter Two, relying principally upon personal narratives and newspaper archives, examines wealthy women's shared experience prior to marriage. This chapter appraises the strengths and limitations of women's education, foreign and domestic travel and summer leisure. This chapter also addresses the formal and informal means by which parents readied their daughters for society and married life. Early socialization included parties, memberships in small exclusive clubs and dancing classes which culminated in a young girl's debutante season. The fiction of Constance Cary Harrison conveys the urgency in the effort to manage the lives of girls. A mother's effort to orchestrate her daughter's social life reveals an underlying sense of competition which would later inform the adult social activity of young women.

The balance of this presentation rests on the extensive private records of two women, Elizabeth Wolcott Merchant and Maria Lydig Daly.[15] In the first instance, Elizabeth Merchant's household record provides a lens through which to view marriage and private household activity. For much of her adult life, Elizabeth did not enjoy the security of a comfortable fortune. Nonetheless, Elizabeth's networks of family, schooling and religious affiliation as well as the Wolcott record of civic contribution gave her access to the homes of the socially prominent. Even without money, Elizabeth enjoyed status,

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[15] Elizabeth Wolcott Merchant, Diaries, 1863 - 1868; 1870 - 1874; 1876; 1880 - 1893; 1895 - 1909. 43 vol. Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, New York, New York. All citations from this source will appear as EWM, Diaries, date. Maria Lydig Daly, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861 - 1865, edited by Harold Earl Hammond. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, Inc., 1962). All citations from this source will appear as MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861 - 1865, date, page. Maria Lydig Daly "Diaries, 1866 - 1893." 3 vol. The Collected Papers of Charles Patrick Daly. Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, New York, New York. All citations from this source will appear as MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," date.

and to some degree power, among New York's wealthy. Elizabeth's diaries provide the basis for two chapters on private domesticity, focusing upon those household and personal matters that motivated Elizabeth's life away from home. Secondly, the published diary and unpublished journals of Maria Lydig Daly concentrate upon the women's public experience, particularly their social and charitable interests. Maria's own substantial record is supplemented with archival research into the charities she sponsored and with newspaper records that identify her wide range of social acquaintance. The final four chapters complete the understanding of women's public lives: women's benevolence during the Civil War, post-war benevolence, social rivalries, and women's management of society. Again, Maria Daly's diary serves as the point of departure from which to assess some of the period's social activities.

Consistent with this overview, Chapter Three presents feminine domesticity through the prism of Elizabeth Wolcott Merchant's private diaries. Elizabeth Merchant maintained a daily household record of her experience from 1863 through 1909. The very "dailiness" of her undertaking provides remarkable insight into the domestic priorities of feminine elites and includes many pertinent women's issues.[16] Elizabeth's personal narrative is supplemented with research into the health of women and children, motherhood, household management, servants, and the etiquette of social calls and mourning rituals. Elizabeth's diary indicates the seriousness and dedication with which she approached her domestic responsibilities. Using contemporaneous prescriptive literature, this chapter next presents the prevailing domestic construct that shaped

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[16] Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff, 5-6.

Elizabeth Wolcott's marriage to Stephen L. Merchant. This discussion leads to an evaluation of the relative success or failure of Elizabeth's domestic partnership. Due to personal circumstance, Elizabeth Merchant did not enjoy an active public life in either the social or benevolent arenas available to a woman of her social standing. Nevertheless, Chapter Four assesses Elizabeth Merchant's life away from home and her engagement with her urban surroundings as an important alternative to household activity.

Chapters Five and Six rely upon the published and unpublished records of Maria Lydig Daly. Maria's published Civil War diaries and her unpublished journals, maintained from 1866 through 1893, illuminate her extensive charitable interests. Maria's benevolent work, during the war years and immediately afterwards, reflect the feminine response to a national emergency as well as a deeply held patriotic conviction. While some of Maria's charities linked her to larger national undertakings, most of her benevolence reflects the importance of traditional forms of women's charity serving the local community. Supplementing Maria's benevolence with archival research, Chapter Five presents Maria's benevolence during the Civil War, including her support of the United States Sanitary Commission. Archival research also indicates Maria's significant effort to create an organization to curtail the purchase of imported luxuries by women.

Chapter Six presents Maria's philanthropic interests after the war when she devoted much of her time and energy to the funding and management of the Union Home and School. This orphanage principally served the indigent children of Union veterans. Archival research and newspaper records reveal a series of difficulties that Maria resolved during her tenure with the Union Home: accounting mismanagement, a fraudulent

treasurer's report, the rivalry of a competing organization, and Maria's own controversial fund raising methods. Her experience with the Union Home and School provides a template to analyze Maria's subsequent benevolence. Archival records of institutions, news accounts as well as Maria's journal illuminate her approach to forming a kindergarten and later a school for scientific cookery. Throughout the decades of Maria's involvement in philanthropy, local charities increasingly received public monies and accepted oversight by outside supervisory bodies. Maria's unpublished journals reveal her determination to resist these changes. Throughout her life, benevolence became the means by which Maria achieved and maintained social status.

Again using the diaries of Maria Daly, Chapter Seven concerns the tensions underlying the social rivalries between women of old and new wealth during the 1870's and 1880's. Most discussions of the Gilded Age are limited to the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This work, however, uses 1860 as a starting point for its analysis. The use of this earlier date encourages an examination of the domestic construct that shaped the resistance of New York's existing society to families of new fortune. This chapter considers New York society from the standpoint of two representative women. From Maria Daly's conservative perspective, one learns of the qualities she esteemed in people as well as her standards of polite hospitality. Maria also expressed her strong dislike of the increasing materialism of many representatives of New York society. Her fear of the growing influence of the city's social newcomers coalesced specifically in the person of Mrs. Paran Stevens. Mrs. Stevens, who left no personal record, is understood only through the newspaper archives that merged her public and private life into a stream

of press clippings. Mrs. Stevens embodied an aggressive alternative to the polite femininity of Maria Daly. Determined to succeed in New York society, Mrs. Stevens challenged the social security of the city's conservative establishment by marrying her daughter to an intimate of the Prince of Wales. The fiction of Edith Wharton and Constance Cary Harrison illuminate the social effort of Mrs. Stevens and those women like her. This chapter concludes with a comparative assessment of the personal and social values of Maria Daly and Mrs. Paran Stevens, two different expressions of femininity during the late nineteenth century.

Chapter Eight evaluates the deliberate effort made by traditionally minded women to manage the growth of New York society through the close of the Gilded Age. This discussion initially considers the social career of Ward McAllister whose services to society replaced those provided by Isaac Brown. An annotated edition of McAllister's memoir, Society As I Have Found It, reveals the identity of some of the individuals who fueled his New York social ascent.[17] Newspaper records, however, test the validity of McAllister's version of Gilded Age society and indicate the presence of several women's organizations that challenged McAllister's social agenda. In his service to the establishment's desire for social order, McAllister provides a platform to the entertainments hosted by the socially conservative doyenne Caroline Schermerhorn Astor. Other than newspaper archives and the record of Ward McAllister, there is little

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[17] Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Found It, Inscribed: "Society Library, 67 University Place, New York City, New York. Ward McAllister, Lyman Cottage Leroy Avenue, Newport, Rhode Island, September 4, 1893." Deluxe Edition, no. 398. (New York: Cassell Publishing Co., 1890).

contemporaneous material to flesh out the motives behind Caroline Astor's resolve to lead society. Understanding the need for structured expansion at the upper rungs of the social ladder, Caroline Astor successfully transformed traditional domesticity into an image of femininity that enabled her to perform as society's queen. Through archival and newspaper sources, this chapter finally considers smaller social groups that organized around shared intellectual and cultural interests to suggest the importance of values other than wealth for membership in elite society.

The Conclusion briefly revisits the experience of both Elizabeth Wolcott Merchant and Maria Lydig Daly. In the 1890's, Elizabeth and her family relocated to Duluth, Minnesota, where they remained for over a decade. Elizabeth's personal record of her life in these unfamiliar surroundings permits conclusions about the permanence of the domesticity that defined her existence, while also providing her the opportunity for personal growth. During this same period, Maria Daly devoted herself to her last philanthropic undertaking which exists today as a part of New York City's cultural landscape. Newspaper and archival records complete the evaluation of the final achievement of this public woman.

Much of this study rests on the written records of two women, Elizabeth Wolcott Merchant and Maria Lydig Daly. Because wealthy New York valued heritage, the lineage of each woman is presented in detail. Both women also represent women's wider networks of association through diaries that reflect experiences shared with their social peers. Elizabeth Merchant's unostentatious domesticity is enshrined in the prescriptive literature of her period. Maria Daly's continuing ability to inspire others to accept

financial responsibility and assume leadership roles in her charities is singular. In sum, this work is a discussion of the legacies of late nineteenth century women and the domesticity that shaped their response to the time in which they lived. Both Elizabeth Merchant and Maria Daly understood their social roles and their need to protect their status without significant wealth. As a consequence, the ability of each woman to create a personal legacy becomes relevant to this analysis and its final conclusions.

Preamble to the Gilded Age: The Prince of Wales in New York

In March of 1860, the citizens of New York learned that Edward Prince of Wales would travel to the former British colonies in North America beginning in early July.[1] No member of the British royal family had ever visited the United States. The Prince's itinerary originally included several venues in eastern Canadian as well as the potential of American destinations.[2] By July, the Prince had formally accepted the invitation of mayor Fernando Wood to visit New York for three days before his return to England.[3] For many in the city, the royal sojourn offered a welcome distraction from divisive domestic political issues. In February of 1860, Abraham Lincoln, virtually unknown to eastern audiences, had delivered an address at New York's Cooper Union appealing for sectional tolerance and understanding. Just one month later, New York gratefully considered the prospect of a royal visit. Because of public interest in the

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[1] New York Times, 28 March 1860,4.

[2] New York Times, 8 May 1860, 1; 25 June 1860, 2.

[3] New York Times, 10 July 1860, 2. The royal itinerary remained in flux for several months. In the end, the royal visit included extensive American travel with stops in the following cities: Detroit, Michigan; St. Louis, Missouri; Cincinnati, Ohio; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Baltimore, Maryland; Washington, D. C.; Richmond, Virginia; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; New York, New York; West Point, New York; Albany, New York; and Boston, Massachusetts. The Prince departed Portland, Maine, for his return voyage to England on October 14, 1860. New York Times, 22 October 1860, 4.

Prince, newspapers pushed sectional politics "out of metropolitan regard."[4]

New York welcomed the opportunity to present itself as the nation's largest urban center. With a population of slightly less than one million people, the city had in recent decades sustained waves of German and Irish immigration. New York's commercial environment had also significantly altered through industrial development and a concomitant capital consolidation. To this extent, New York had become a national entrepot with significant mercantile ties abroad and to the states and territories of the American South and West. Proud of its achievement, New York in 1860 felt poised for the wider recognition that would accompany a royal visit.[5]

Regardless of the city's commercial vitality, its urban vista did not inspire the casual tourist. In 1860, one foreign visitor observed New York as "a long, low, interminable mass of red brick houses," relieved only by the vertical thrust of church spires and ships' spars.[6] Broadway, the city's principal commercial avenue, showed itself as "not the Elysium of thoroughfares which Americans suppose it would be...[rather] a wild bizarre street, a pattern book of shops and palaces such as one sees

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[4] "Editors Easy Chair," Harpers New Monthly Magazine, 21, no.126 (November 1860: 845.

[5] David Morris Potter, The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861, (New York: Harper & Row, 1976). See also Philip S. Foner, Business and Slavery: The New York Merchants and the Irrepressible Conflict, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1941); Edward K. Spann, The New Metropolis: New York City, 1840 - 1857, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); Robert Greenhalgh Albion, The Rise of the New York Port, (Hamden, Connecticut: Arcane Books, 1961).

[6] London Times. Reprinted in New York Times, 8 November 1860, 2.

no where else in the world."[7] Without the majestic architecture and grand boulevards that characterized leading European cities, New York also contained many negative features associated with urbanization. The city's laboring poor lived in densely populated slums, characterized by their filth and a high incidence of disease and crime. Streets in most sections of the city remained dirty and unpaved. Cornelia Jay, directly descended from the nation's first Chief Justice, remembered an ever present slippery mud as particularly "trying on the clothes, tempers and health."[8] New York's principal paved thoroughfares, Fifth Avenue and Broadway, made perilous footing for pedestrians and animals alike. On occasion, livestock intruded onto the city's traffic flow. Cows ambled on Fifth Avenue.[9] Roaming pigs, that had escaped back yard tethers, foraged for garbage in all sections of the city. In addition to these hazards, traffic noise condemned those who lived in the city to a "purgatorial" existence.[10]

If city life retained its difficulties, New York also lacked significant cultural amenities. The city's shrine to artistic accomplishment, the Academy of Music, had opened in 1854 at the corner of Fourteenth Street and Irving Place. The Academy, funded by a syndicate of wealthy businessmen, seated four thousand people making it the largest concert hall in the world. Built to reflect the cultural preferences of the

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Cornelia Jay, The Diary of Cornelia Jay, (Rye, New York: privately printed, 1924), November 24, 1864, 173. See also Frederick Van Wyck, Recollections of an Old New Yorker, (New York: Liverright, Inc., 1932), 202.

[9] Maitland Armstrong, Day before Yesterday: Reminiscences of a Varied Life, Edited by his daughter Margaret Armstrong, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), 37.

[10] Ibid.

wealthy, this institution also served to educate and elevate popular taste. Despite its broad mission, the Academy rarely turned a profit. Often unable to attract leading European talent, the Academy survived on the largess of wealthy subscribers who vied for prominent box seating in the auditorium and existed as a symbol of the city's unrealized cultural promise.[11] Central Park, the city's much heralded natural sanctuary, exhibited in 1860 only the potential of landscaped serenity. The park typically served as home to communities of Irish squatters and "curs, urchins, goats, pigs, and mounds of debris revealing old tin cans and discarded hoop-skirts."[12] To the author Constance Cary Harrison, an outing in the Park produced "much wear and tear to the physical and nervous system."[13]

In addition to this lack of cultural amenities, the New York press voiced concern over city officialdom's unpolished manners and their ability to host a distinguished guest.[14] City fathers pressed forward, however, determined to showcase New York as

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[11] Edward K. Spann, The New Metropolis: New York City, 1840-1857, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 219-20; Lawrence W. Levine, Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 85-93; David Black, The King of Fifth Avenue: The Fortunes of August Belmont, (New York: The Dial Press, 1981), 537-550.

[12] Constance Cary Harrison, Recollections Grave and Gay, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 275. See also Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, The Park and the People: A History of Central Park, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992); David M. Scobey, Empire City: The Making and Meaning of the New York City Landscape, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 227-249; A. H. Guernsey, "The Central Park of New York," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, 33, no. 198 (November 1866): 794-800.

[13] Constance Cary Harrison, 273.

[14] New York Times, 28 March 1860, 4; New York Herald, 5 October 1860, 5; The Home Journal, 15 September 1860, 2.

vital to American progress. Many pundits acknowledged that the royal visit would help to position New York as an important international city. For planning purposes, the local government designated a General Committee of four hundred prominent business and civic leaders to organize the Prince's official New York visit.[15] Unlike other American venues on the Prince's itinerary, this committee resolved that New York host a public ball at the Academy of Music, with each member subscribing one hundred dollars to fund the costs associated with the formal occasion.[16]

The Prince of Wales represented the authority and prestige of his mother Queen Victoria. Though only a youth of nineteen at the time, he could anticipate his own elevation to sovereignty. Therefore, he received the same official courtesies granted a visiting head of state. Publicized plans for his visit included: a full military parade up Broadway; excursions to prominent educational, cultural and philanthropic institutions; and a special worship service at Trinity Church. Organizers envisioned the Academy of Music ball, scheduled for Saturday evening October 12, as the capstone of the official festivities. In view of the ball's importance, the General Committee designated wealthy and socially prominent gentlemen to form a Committee of Arrangements to finalize the evening's details. This group issued 2,800 invitations, distributing seven of these to each member of the General Committee "to dispose of as he chooses, on payment of

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[15] New York Times, 15 August 1860, 8.

[16] Ibid. The Prince of Wales formally accepted this invitation to a ball in his honor for the evening of September 29, 1860. New York Times, 29 September 1860, 8.The General Committee published an accounting in November, indicating that $12,260 remained of the initial $40,000 budget. Each subscriber received a check for $30.65, their portion of this balance. New York Times, 15 November 1860, 4.

$70."[17] To assure sufficient numbers of dancing partners for the men in attendance, the Committee also requested that invitations be extended in the "proportion of four ladies to three gentlemen."[18] In the end, the Academy of Music ball assembled representatives of both the national and state governments, leading members of the military establishment as well as those accomplished in New York's political, social and economic circles.

Because of the interest in the Prince and the demand for invitations, the ball provides an introduction to New York society. The evening offered wealthy women a great public stage. Expensive gowns and elaborate jewelry became the means by which women elites distinguished themselves from the other women in attendance. Despite the elegance suggested by this material display, life for most women centered around their obligations to home and family. In 1860, the city's wealthy women used servants to facilitate household lives of refinement and ease. Women also opened their homes to offer informal, relaxed forms of hospitality. Publically, wealthy women busied themselves with their religious and charitable concerns as well as they superintended the city's social life.

In keeping with their lives of quiet elegance, many of the city's wealthy saw themselves as members of an aristocracy, not unlike that of Europe. Some individuals remembered the time as a "golden age," unsullied by the influence of money upon

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[17] New York Times, 5 September 1860, 4.

[18] Ibid.

social values.[19] New York society arguably premised social recognition upon factors other than wealth, including: accomplishment; culture; and lineage. Despite this assertion, New York had developed historically as a nexus of business opportunity that rewarded self-made men. The city's steady growth required that its existing society accommodate and absorb commercial newcomers to insure cohesion and off-set the formation of competing social cliques. As a rule, the rich granted social recognition to those who succeeded in business and demonstrated a willingness to uphold prevailing standards of polite behavior.

Events at the Prince of Wales Ball demonstrate the aristocratic longings of New York's commercial elite. First, this chapter presents the Prince of Wales Ball as anticipated and as it unfolded over the course of the evening. While women at the ball contributed to the evening's magnificence, they did so as representatives of wealthy men. Their elaborate costumes and jewels, though seemingly warranted by the royal occasion, reinforced the truth of New York society as a prosperous business elite. Next, this chapter next examines the domestic component of women's collective identity and as it enabled the fulfillment of their social roles. This chapter also considers the manner in which wealthy women used clothing and jewelry to state their social position within the larger community. The reliance by the wealthy upon material goods as an indication of social status undermined, however, the importance society attached to other social criteria. Finally, this chapter considers those families who comprised New York

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[19] Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, The Social Ladder, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1924), 53.

society. Women's effort to shape the growth of this group includes the use of Isaac Brown, the sexton of Grace Episcopal Church. As Brown tutored the city's new arrivals on the material determinants of social status, he subverted society's presentation of itself as a social aristocracy.

The Prince of Wales Ball

The Prince arrived in New York on Thursday, October 11, a mild day with slightly overcast skies. Ordinary citizens of New York received their opportunity to greet the Prince of Wales, upon his arrival at Castle Garden, during an afternoon parade up Broadway from City Hall to Twenty-Third Street. Parade organizers promised that this event would feature the largest number of uniformed troops ever assembled in the city. With businesses closed and Wall Street deserted, crowds started to form along Broadway around ten o'clock in the morning. This throng seemed "animated, glittering, good-natured, and bent on making the best of all possible greetings to the coming Prince...All stoops, windows and roof-tops were groaning under human freight."[20] Hundreds of women of "beauty and intelligence" stationed themselves at windows to achieve a "tolerable good view" of His Highness.[21] Conservative estimates of the crowd along the five-mile parade route numbered half a million people. Flags and banners stretched across the road, "but they seemed as solid as masonry compared with the endless flutter of handkerchiefs...that rippled out over the fronts of massive

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[20] New York Times, 12 October 1860, 1.

[21] New York Herald, 12 October 1860, 3.

distant buildings like flakes of snow."[22] Clad in the scarlet coat of a British colonel and wearing the blue sash of the Order of the Garter, the young Prince heard roars of welcome.

For those who witnessed this display of popular affection, the parade became an event of lasting significance.[23] The lawyer George Templeton Strong, who served on the Committee of Arrangements, sat with friends near a convenient window in the New York Club. Strong's diary recalled that he saw a "six-horse barouche pass. We hurrahed. Ladies in the opposite windows waved their handkerchiefs. Little boys in the street hay-hayed. Elder loafers yelled and the Prince was gone."[24] City fathers had spared no effort in arranging a schedule that would entertain His Highness and showcase the city's cultural amenities. While in New York, the Prince and his party stayed at the newly constructed Fifth Avenue Hotel in rooms hung with paintings donated by private collectors.[25]

After his arrival, His Highness reviewed a torch-light parade sponsored by the

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[22] London Times, 12 October 1860. Reprinted New York Times, 8 November 1860, 2.

[23] Charles Townsend Harris, Memories of Manhattan in the Sixties and Seventies (New York: The Derrydale Press, 1928), 1. See also Augustus Saint-Gaudens, The Reminiscences of Augustus Saint-Gaudens Edited and amplified by Homer Saint-Gaudens, (New York: The Century Co., 1913), 24; Maitland Armstrong, 136; Frederick Van Wyck, Recollections of an Old New Yorker, (New York: Liverright, Inc., 1932), 69.

[24] George Templeton Strong, The Diary of George Templeton Strong, edited by Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas, 4 vol. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), October 11, 1860, 3:45. Citations from this source will read as George Templeton Strong, date, volume, page.

[25] New York Times, 12 October 1860, 1.

Fire Department from a hotel balcony. The following day, he toured the city's preeminent cultural institutions including New-York University, the Astor Library, Cooper Institute, and the Free Academy. He rode through Central Park before lunching with Mayor Fernando Wood. Afterwards, he reviewed the work of the Deaf and Dumb Asylum. He found time to see the photographic studio of Matthew Brady and visit the home of General Winfield Scott. He purchased American pearls at the city's oldest jewelers Ball, Black & Co.[26] His Royal Highness finally surveyed the curiosities at Barnum's Museum. Throughout the day, eager crowds of noisy spectators greeted him at every venue.

Nothing, however, could have prepared His Highness for the crush of New York's social and civic officialdom that crowded into the Academy of Music on Saturday evening. Increasing numbers of citizens had clamored to be included in the event. Attendance at the gala became a lasting mark of social distinction. The society leader Ward McAllister included a rendering of the invitation in his memoir some thirty years later.[27] Helen Lansing Grinnell, whose father-in-law served on the Committee of Arrangements, expressed her delight at the chance to attend this "very select" function. Helen recorded her impressions of the event in childhood diary she maintained for her

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[26] New York Times, 15 October 1860, 1. See also Black, Starr & Frost, Through One Hundred Years: The Hundredth Anniversary of the Oldest Retail Jewelry House in New York, ([New York:] Black, Starr & Frost, 1910.

[27] Ward McAllister, Society as I Have Found It, (New York: Cassel Publishing Company, 1890; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1975), 129.

son Frankie.[28] Of the 3,025 tickets issued, only 175 people expressed their regrets.[29] A few individuals, despite published warnings to the contrary, sold their tickets for $200 apiece through newspaper advertisements.[30] An individual, so inclined, could enter the Academy for about $3500 in today's currency.[31]

The ball's male organizers left little to chance. As one guest recalled, "Our best people, the smart set, the slow set, all sets took a hand" in the planning.[32] Once the venue had been determined and arrangements made for food and decor, delicate issues of protocol and appropriate male dress fell to a ten member Reception Committee. This group also served as official hosts to the Prince and his party. As a member of this body, the lawyer George Templeton Strong remarked upon the committee's solemn deliberations on dress and protocol.[33] For men's attire, the Committee recommended medium length black dress coats with medium width lapels, black pantaloons and plain,

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[28] Helen Lansing Grinnell, Diary, 1859 - 1867, Friday, October, 12, 1860, Manuscript Collection, New York Public Library, New York, New York.

[29] New York Herald, 15 October 1860, 4.

[30] New York Herald, 11 October 1860, 1.

[31] One dollar in 1860 increased in value to $17.43 in 1997. John J. McCusker, "How Much Is That in Real Money? A Historical Price Index for Use as a Deflator of Money Values in the Economy of the United States," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 101, pt.2(1992), 297-373. Cited in Scott Derks, The Value of a Dollar: Prices and Incomes in the United States, 1860-1999, (Lakeville, Connecticut: Grey House Publishing, 1999), 2.

[32] Ward McAllister, 39.

[33] In addition to Strong, the other members of this group notably included: Hamilton Fish; Luther Bradish; Peletiah Perit; Maunsell Field; Robert Minturn; John Jay Cisco; Charles King; B.C. Stilliman; Cyrus W. Field; John Jay; Augustus Schell. As such, the Strong diary provides an insider's perspective on some of the issues considered in planning the event. George Templeton Strong, October 2, 1860, 3:43; October 5, 1860, 3:44. See also New York Times, 11 October 1860, 4.

roll collared black silk under-vests. Standing shirt collars, narrow white cravats, and pale straw colored gloves completed men's dress requirements.[34] Many men, however, chose to embellish this simple costume. The men's speciality store Brooks Brothers imported selections of cloth for the occasion, raising the price of an average ball suit from about fifty to eighty dollars. Some men purchased embroidered shirt fronts and French silk cravats, while others added under vests of crinolated steel ribs to their wardrobes. Purveyors of fine jewelry noted increased sales of men's finger rings, watch chains and gold vest buttons set with precious stones. One survey found that the "gentlemen are as greatly exercised on the important question of dress as the ladies."[35] Some men reportedly made five or six calls a day on their beleaguered tailors.[36]

Although some observers worried that the men's attire might "too clerical for a ball," women in full ball dress would add brilliancy and variety to the evening.[37] With feminine dress left to personal choice, the ball provided wealthy women an opportunity to demonstrate their individual taste. The "coming ball" produced "unwonted activity in fashions" in the city's premier shops who offered new merchandise for consideration.[38] Edward Lambert on Broadway featured a choice supply of new robes

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[34] New York Herald, 11 October 1860, 10; New York Times, 11 October 1860, 1; Home Journal, 6 October 1860, 3.

[35] New York Herald, 11 October 1860, 10.

[36] Ibid.

[37] New York Herald, 9 October 1860, 3.

[38] New York Times, 21 September 1860, 1. See also Home Journal, 6 October 1860, 3.

de bal embroidered on silk, tulle and tarletane. A. T. Stewart, the city's largest retail emporium, displayed a large selection of gowns in white, blue and scarlet merino and French Thibet, trimmed with gold edges and tassels of silk and gold. George A. Hearn's shop offered a large selection of blended silks.

Reports of the latest European fashions, including the precise placement of each flounce, ruffle and ruche, appeared in the press on the days preceding the ball.[39] One fashion report concluded that "[n]o lady will permit herself to be outshone on such an occasion."[40] Women guests at the ball required the most luxurious fabrics and trimmings for their costumes, including those gowns trimmed and accessorized with lace. Lace shawls could be purchased for six to twelve hundred dollars. Lace flounces ranged in price from ten to two hundred dollars a yard, with some gowns requiring up to ten yards. Lace handkerchiefs cost from ten to two hundred dollars each. Complete sets of matching lace, including shawl, flounces, handkerchief and garniture, could be had for three hundred to three thousand dollars a set.[41] As an indication of the relative value of lace, the weekly salary of female clerks in the city's lace and embroidery shops in 1860 ranged from $3.50 to $10 a week.[42]

In addition to lace, some women purchased fine jewelry for the evening. The

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[39] New York Herald, 10 October 1860, 1.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Home Journal, 6 October 1860, 3.

[42] In 1860, lace clerks worked from eight in the morning until ten at night and were expected to make lace when not assisting customers. Virginia Penny, The Employment of Women: A Cyclopedia of Woman's Work, (Boston: Walker, Wise & Company, 1863), 127.

jewelers Ball, Black & Co. and E. W. Burr offered selections of pearls and gemstones, some of which had been created to commemorate the evening. The jeweler E. W. Burr, for example, rendered the Prince of Wales' insignia as a shawl pin of frosted gold feathers, secured by a coronet of precious stones.[43] Tiffany & Co., in a two week period, sold necklaces, bracelets, tiaras and broaches totaling $150,000. This store also noticed the increased purchase of diamond broaches ranging in cost from $1000 to $2500. Necklaces bought for fifteen to sixteen thousand dollars became "quite ordinary" for a New York woman "determined to exceed the others in the costliness and magnificence of her jewelry."[44]

The royal ball also required a fashionable coiffure. The Home Journal, a publication catering to the interests of the rich, recommended Madame Laurent, an importer of "the best" ribbons and artificial flowers for the hair. The preferred coiffure, based on the styles of London and Paris, featured a "bandeaux, turned back in front of the forehead, and slightly puffed at each side" with two long ringlets that dropped to the shoulder.[45] Many wealthy women used personal maids to execute this elaborate suggestion. Otherwise, the occasion warranted the skills of one of the city's professional hairdressers who travelled from house to house to service their clientele before an important event. Julia Ward Howe believed Monsieur Martelle to be New York's best. Julia recalled Martelle as "a dainty half Spanish or French octoroon,

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[43] Home Journal, 13 October 1860, 2.

[44] New York Herald, 10 October 1860, 4.

[45] Home Journal, 6 October 1860, 3.

endowed with exquisite taste, a ready wit, and a saucy tongue."[46] Some women also needed the services of an enameler to approximate the appearance of a youthful complexion. This beauty professional, who sometimes practiced dentistry, coated the face and other areas left exposed by clothing with a fine paste of arsenic or white lead.[47] An enameled complexion provided a base for the application of additional cosmetics, including powder and rouge. Some observers found the effects of enameling to be "dazzling," so that the face became "almost angelic in brilliancy."[48]

As men and women readied themselves for the ball, the preparations inside the Academy of Music accelerated to a fevered pace. Within six days, teams of electricians, carpenters and florists transformed the concert hall into an elegant ball room. Florists placed forty ornamental stands holding vases filled with plants and flowers throughout

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[46] Julia Ward Howe, Reminiscences, 1819-1899, (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1899), 64. See also Katherine Lydig Brady, Quaint Customs of Former New Yorkers, (New York: n.p., 1915), 113.

[47] Maude Howe Elliot, This Was My Newport, (Cambridge, Mass.: The Mythology Company–A. Marshall Jones, 1944; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1975), 133. The effects of enameling could be adjusted to last for periods of up to six months, depending upon personal need and the skill of application. An ordinary application lasted only several days. The process could also be repeated once or twice a week for greater permanence. Although, prices varied widely, they averaged: "[f]or enameling the face to last once or twice, from ten to fifteen dollars; for enameling the face and bust temporarily, from fifteen to twenty dollars; for enameling the face to endure one or two weeks, from fifteen to twenty-five dollars; for enameling the face and bust to last about the same period from twenty-five to thirty-five dollars; for keeping the face for six months in an enameled condition, from two hundred to three hundred and fifty dollars; for keeping the face and bust in the same state for the same length of time, from four hundred to six hundred dollars." George Ellington, The Women of New York or Social Life in the Great City, (New York: The New York Book Company, 1870), 85.

[48] The morning after, however, "the face looks boiled, and resembles a white enamelled side of leather, cracked by the cold weather." Home Journal, 27 August 1859, 2.

the house. Floral garlands hung from the galleries, while a semi-circle of green foliage with large crystal globes filled with gold and silver fish extended around the outer row of seats. "Not a jutting cornice, pillar or pendant lamp" remained unadorned.[49] At the stage end of the ball room, a crimson silk reception dais had been elevated for the Prince and his party within a specially constructed white tent. A dance floor had been newly constructed over the Academy's parquet. Eleven rows of lights had been strung among the tiers and chandeliers from the ceiling over the stage. Over 108,000 lights had been used throughout the building which required that 800 new gas pipes be laid.[50] The Academy's proscenium had been regilded and its private boxes refurbished with lace-edged amber satin curtains. Richly upholstered chairs and sofas had been strategically placed around the perimeter for guests' convenience. The total effect was breathtaking. Viewing the main part of the room from the vantage of the royal stage, one beheld a "vista of gilding, yellow satin, wreathed pillars, crimson velvet and flowers, with semicircular double lines of light illuminating the whole tier."[51]

Every area that the Prince might walk had been newly carpeted. Two private boudoirs and a retiring room had been built and furnished for his exclusive use. A separate canopied and carpeted passage had also been constructed to permit His Highness to move privately to the adjacent supper room. This large wooden out-

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[49] New York Herald, 15 October 1860, 4.

[50] Home Journal, 20 October 1860, 1; New York Herald, 13 October 1860, 3; New York Times, 13 October 1860, 1.

[51] New York Times, 13 October 1860, 1.

building, situated between the Academy and a neighboring Medical College, had been built "as would have benefitted the character of a more permanent edifice."[52] The Medical College's lower floors had been converted into a kitchen for the restauranteur Lorenzo Delmonico who had been retained to cater the evening's elaborate buffet. The supper room conveyed an ambience of lavish hospitality with a cornucopia-patterned carpeting. Twenty chandeliers illuminated the setting. Walls, draped with alternating strips of fluted pink, blue and white muslin, had been hung with large mirrors. A representation of the Prince's insignia, crafted of 3,000 glass prisms, hung suspended from one end of the room. Before this sculptural piece, a raised horse-shoe shaped table had been set with china and gold and silver plate for the Prince and his party. Other guests would eat at long dining tables "furnished in the usual handsome style of New York."[53]

By the evening of October 12th, the Academy of Music sparkled with lights and a profusion of flowers. Fifty uniformed police officers stood ready to receive the tickets of admission. Forty additional liveried ushers marshaled to assist guests along the various canopied passages and distribute bouquets to the ladies. Outside the hall, an expectant crowd awaited the arrivals of the Prince and other guests. People began to flow into the Academy around seven-thirty, including a number of ladies in mourning who had received invitations to see the decorations. Rather than await their official greeting and escort by the Reception Committee, guests streamed into the Academy so

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[52] New York Herald, 12 October 1860, 3.

[53] New York Times, 13 October 1860, 1.

that by eight-thirty, the ballroom had filled to capacity. One saw "[a] sea of heads but besides a sea of colors, the light flashing back from the gayest and richest of dresses, from pearly white shoulders and brilliant complexions, from jewels iris-hued and rivaling in brightness the eyes which flashed above them."[54] Outside His Highness, dressed in simple ball room attire, passed quietly through his separate royal entrance, unrecognized by the crowd.[55]

Shortly after nine, the Committee of Reception officially ushered the royal party into the ballroom to the strains of "God Save the Queen." After greeting these hosts, the Prince and his party began to receive guests who surged forward for a royal presentation. This formality became a "frantic promenade" which began to "entwine itself" before the Prince.[56] Suddenly, without warning, everyone inside the Academy heard a "stupendous crash," quickly followed by another.[57] Former Governor Hamilton Fish, who stood next to the Prince, stepped forward to call for calm. The loud noise had resulted from the collapse of the temporary dance floor constructed over the Academy's parquet. This mishap created a large, gaping hole in the "reserved quarter and directly in front of the Prince."[58] George Templeton Strong's wife Eleanor "went down into

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[54] New York Herald, 13 October 1860, 3.

[55] Afterwards, rumors circulated that the Prince was initially turned away from the door because he did not wear the "regulation black" suit to the ball. New York Times, 17 October 1860, 4.

[56] New York Times, 13 October 1860, 1.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

one of the pits...but did not loose her footing, nor her self-possession."[59] As people moved away from the dangerous areas of the floor, the royal party withdrew to the supper room. Despite misgivings about the floor's safety, a score of policemen and carpenters led by the architect James Renwick gathered to inspect the damage. Isaac Brown, "illustrious" sexton of Grace Episcopal Church, superintended the repairs, looking "as if engaged in his ordinary sextonical duties at an internment."[60]

Many people in the room shared the lawyer George Templeton Strong's "general sense of failure and calamity."[61] Nonetheless, carpenters in a "modified anvil chorus" repaired the damage within two hours.[62] This unforeseen delay eliminated nine of the scheduled twenty-one dances planned for the evening. At midnight, the Prince officially opened the ball with the Governor's wife Mrs. Morgan, in a "Quadrille d'Honneur," joined by the historian George Bancroft and his wife along with Colonel and Mrs. Abraham Van Buren. Other guests rapidly streamed onto the floor. Over the course of the evening, the Prince danced with many of the city's "prettiest women," selected by the Reception Committee to represent the city's civil, judicial, military and commercial establishments. Of these chosen women, six were married and six unmarried, so that "neither order of the female hierarchy was slighted."[63] These dancing partners

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[59] George Templeton Strong, October 13, 1860, 3:48.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

[62] New York Times, 13 October, 1860, 1.

[63] New York Times, 15 October 1860, 1.

included, among others: Camilla Hoyt, the married daughter of General Scott; Caroline Belmont, wife of the banker August Belmont and daughter of Commodore Perry; Mrs. Maunsell B. Field, wife of the Secretary of the Committee; Mrs. Edward Cooper, daughter-in-law of the President of the Committee; Miss Fish, daughter of the Ex-Senator and Ex-Governor; and Miss Augusta Jay, granddaughter of the first Supreme Court Justice.

Despite the difficulty with the flooring, a majority of guests like Helen Lansing Grinnell enjoyed a "splendid" evening. Helen particularly noted "the flowers, diamonds, pearls, rubies, point lace, ladies smiles were bewitching, the scene was enchanting, the Prince was fascinating, the people were satisfied." Helen continued that "the more everybody saw the Prince, the more crazy everybody was to see the Prince. [W]here the Prince was, there was the jam, and where the Prince was not, you could swing a cat around with comparative comfort, not that a great many tried the experiment, but I merely mention what could have been done."[64] From Helen's perspective, the ball's organizers had failed in their attempt to limit access to the Prince.

Other individuals complained of the "snobbish and rude and indecent" activity around His Highness.[65] Overwhelmed by the opportunity to share the royal company, the young Helen Russell, daughter of a New York banker, lost her voice and astonished His Highness "with a series of contortions and muscular twitchings before she succeeded

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[64] Helen Lansing Grinnell, Monday, October 15, 1860.

[65] George Templeton Strong, October 13, 1860, 3:48

in articulating an audible word."[66] Jane Poultney Bigelow committed another kind of gaffe. Known more for her repartee than historical knowledge, she insisted to the Prince that America had won every battle in the War of Independence.[67] Others among the socially prominent saw "fearful expressions of tuft-hunting and Prince-worshiping."[68] Eleanor Strong, for example, reported her observations of Walker, "the Presbyterian bookbinder," who bustled towards the Prince to introduce his daughter. Eleanor watched Prince "evade this ambitious plebeian rather gracefully."[69] The author Mary Elizabeth Sherwood overheard one woman ask the "astonished" young royal, "Prince, how 'air you? and how's your mother?"[70] Some of the less cultured guests attempted old fashioned curtseys or genuflected before the Prince.[71] Mrs. Abraham Van Buren later confided that she had been brought to the point of laughter at the "grotesque figures" attempted by the some of the dancers.[72]

In addition to dancing, guests exited by one of two stage doors for a buffet supper served by a staff of liveried waiters. Delmonico's menu for the evening began

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[66] Ibid.

[67] Poultney Bigelow, Seventy Summers, 2 vol, (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1925), 1:15.

[68] George Templeton Strong, October 5, 1860, 3:44. See also New York Herald, 15 October 1860, 1.

[69] George Templeton Strong, October 13, 1860, 3:48. See also Ward McAllister, 131.

[70] Mary Elizabeth Wilson Sherwood, An Epistle to Posterity: Being Rambling Recollections of Many Years of My Life, (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1898), 86.

[71] George Templeton Strong, October 13, 1860, 3:48.

[72] Ward McAllister, 139.

with chicken consomme and oysters, followed by cold meats, salads, and an assortment of pates and terrines. The meal concluded with rich desserts and fresh fruits, including imported French grapes. Fine European wines accompanied each course. Because of the numbers of people requiring dinner service, each person received only twenty minutes to enjoy their meal. Prominent businessmen restricted access to the supper room to prevent its overcrowding. Ward McAllister recalled his own futile attempt to enter the room once its maximum capacity had been reached. "[T]he vigilant eye of John Jacob Astor met mine. He bid me wait my turn."[73] The Prince, according to all accounts, accepted the evening with grace and good humor. The ball wore on until dawn. On balance, the city's wealthy elites judged the affair to be "more municipal than exclusive."[74]

On Sunday, after a service at Trinity Church, the Prince departed New York City for West Point. Helen Lansing Grinnell stood in a crowd to watch the steamer Harriet Lane sail up the Hudson River "bearing this precious burden."[75] Like many other New Yorkers, Helen had found her brush with royalty a memory to savor. The lawyer George Templeton Strong later observed that "[e]veryone has some little instance to tell."[76] Edward's visit inspired some citizens to pen commemorative verses for

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[73] Ibid., 133.

[74] Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, 86.

[75] Helen Lansing Grinnell, October 15, 1860.

[76] George Templeton Strong, October 14, 1860, 3:51.

publication.[77] In the end, most observers agreed that the highlight of the royal visit had been the warm and enthusiastic greeting the Prince received upon arrival from New York's ordinary citizens.[78] Many editorial writers concluded that the crowd's enthusiasm would cement the future for cordial British-American relations.[79]

Despite these sentiments, the ball and its wealthy organizers soon suffered recriminations. People inevitably complained about the supper and the manner in which it had been served. Though Delmonico's "mathematical and appreciative calculations" brought food costs below their original estimate, some judged the fare "unexceptional" and took issue with the number of mishaps resulting from crowded tables.[80] The blame for the collapse of the Academy's flooring quickly moved from the carpenters' ineptitude to the police stationed at the doors whom some suspected of accepting bribes to permit unauthorized entries. An audit of admission tickets, however, quickly disproved this rumor. In the final analysis, American editorial writers found the ball to be overly "redolent of the odor of Wall Street."[81] The London press also viewed the ball as a business function, pointing to the absence of young people and the evening's

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[77] New York Herald, 27 October 1860, 4. See also Home Journal, 3 November 1860, 3.

[78] New York Times, 17 October 1860, 4; 18 October 1860, 4.

[79] New York Times, 17 October 1860, 4. See also New York Herald, 16 October 1860, 6; London Times, 31 October 1860. Reprinted New York Times, 13 November 1860, 2; London Times, n.d. Reprinted New York Times, 30 November 1860, 8; Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, 87.

[80] New York Herald, 14 October 1860, 2. See also New York Herald, 13 October 1860, 3.

[81] New York Herald, 14 October 1860, 4.

lack of spontaneity. British papers particularly took issue with the General Committee's "cautious" insistence upon men's attire in their effort to insure a "respectable" occasion. "What is called 'the best society' in New York is composed of very diverse and inharmonious elements. The standard of aristocracy is wealth, and wealth is so suddenly gained and lost that the citizen who today holds the humblest station may tomorrow lead this social coterie."[82]

Despite these critical rejoinders, all agreed that the ball had occasioned an extraordinary assembly of beautifully dressed women. "No high bodies were permitted to the dresses, and this occasioned some slight embarrassment to ladies who had not for a long time been accustomed to this exposure."[83] Many older women compensated the requirements of fashion with small lace capes which featured prominently in many costumes. Upon entering the Academy, "[t]he first effect upon the senses is indeed so dazzling ...Never was more taste or costliness expended upon toilettes."[84] The dress of the Prince's dancing partners received special attention. Helen Russell, for example, wore a relatively simple gown of lamé muslin, with a crown of flowers in her hair. Eleanor Strong danced in a gown of pink silk with a tulle overdress and Chantilly lace flounces which she accessorized with a pink wreath.[85] Many other women dressed in more expensive costumes described as "recklessly magnificent. The only jewels

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[82] London Times, 14 October 1860, n.p. Reprinted New York Times, 13 November 1860, 2, passim.

[83] New York Herald, 13 October 1860, 3.

[84] New York Herald, 15 October 1860, 4.

[85] Ibid.

generally worn were diamonds, and these were in such profusion that the floor and the galleries sparkled."[86] Mrs. Hamilton Fish "glittered with diamonds" in a mauve-colored silk festooned with white lace.[87] Caroline Belmont complemented her rose colored robe with point lace flounces with a "magnificent riviere of diamonds."[88] Others noticed Mrs. Henry Duncan's gown of white tulle, trimmed with Solferino gold marguerites. "A wreath of the same splendid ornaments, large diamond stars, glittering 'in a night of hair' completed this brilliant costume."[89]

One report of the glamourous scene found it impossible "to go into the minutiae and describe the gloves embroidered with gold,...[h]andkerchiefs with a tiny center of cambric and fifty dollars of cobweb lace, jeweled bouquet holders filled with [the] freshest exotics, and tiny slippers holding delicate feet, encased in the shimmerest of hose."[90] Such magnificence did not come cheaply. There circulated "[f]abulous stories" of "immense sums" paid to dressmakers and milliners. "$150 for the simple making of a dress, the material of which cost $1500; $3000 for the lace flounces and garniture of a single dress; $2000 for a robe of gold tissue, imported directly from Paris; $3500 for a white silk embroidered with silver, designed to represent a

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[86] London Times, 14 October 1860. Reprinted New York Times, 16 November 1860, 2.

[87] Home Journal, 29 October 1860, 2.

[88] Ibid. See also New York Herald, 15 October 1860, 4.

[89] Home Journal, 29 October 1860, 2. See also New York Times, 15 October 1860, 1.

[90] New York Herald, 13 October 1860, 3.

fountain."[91] Because so many gowns deserved mention, newspapers increased their coverage of women's clothing to satisfy interested readers.

This feminine magnificence confirmed New York's commercial prosperity. The Academy's lavish decor demonstrated the city's ability to provide their royal guest the best that could be purchased. Regardless of the opulent setting, the city's wealthy had invited criticism, if not ridicule, for all their effort. To avoid lapses in dress and decorum, the ball's organizers had exposed their own pretensions. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu observes the "social power" conferred by "legitimate manners" in his study of taste and status.[92] According to Bourdieu's analysis, legitimate manners require the "cultural capital" of previous generations through which newcomers acquire cultural knowledge. Cultural legitimacy implies the possession of stately things, acquired over the course of generations, such as aristocratic titles and palatial homes. The male organizers of the Academy ball assumed that they possessed the cultural capital to control the behavior of others. In asserting their social values, these men had vetted guest lists and established dress codes to demonstrate social leadership. Some guests had criticized the less affected manner of others. Nevertheless, New York's wealthy elites lacked the cultural legitimacy they sought. In contrast, the Prince's royal manner had been cultivated over generations. His Highness represented the sole authority from whom all manners are derived. "The quieter he is the better he shows

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[91] Ibid.

[92] Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste, translated by Richard Nice, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 71.

what the English gentleman ought to be and the American also."[93] "The courteous, gentlemanly, high bred manners of the royal party afforded the strongest and most agreeable contrast to the fussiness of the old fellows about them."[94]

City fathers, in trying to be royal, had overlooked the ball as an opportunity to celebrate the city's vitality. The event's planners had assumed that the superficial imposition of dress requirements could elevate the festivities into a courtly occasion, making New York the social equal of London or Paris. This attempt, however, exposed the commercial core of the city's social hierarchy and its emphasis upon material values rather than the presence of an aristocracy. True social leadership, as represented by the Prince, implied more than the presence of expensive decorations and diamond jewelry. Despite their assertions to the contrary, the city's wealthy elite lacked the authority of a genuine aristocratic tradition. Excepting the Prince and his party, many others inside the Academy seemed uncertain in their attempt to assert an aristocratic privilege that they as Americans could never possess.

Money mattered in America. To eliminate any doubt of this fact, the press had proclaimed "The Prince a Millionaire."[95] Wealth had guaranteed the women inside the Academy an opportunity to participate in the evening. Money also separated those in attendance from the crowd in the street who could only anticipate reading of the festive evening. At the ball itself, women's costume and notions of propriety had created status

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[93] London Times, n.d. Reprinted in New York Times, October 29, 1860, 2:2.

[94] New York Herald, 14 October 1860, 3.

[95] Home Journal, 20 October 1860, 2.

distinctions among New York's wealthy. Those occupying the upper rungs of New York's social ladder had wished to demonstrate their own importance. Eager to acquire the benefits of old world cultural legitimacy, they assumed that proximity to a Prince and the display of expensive clothing would satisfy their own desires to be seen as royalty. New York, however, had no aristocratic tradition. The city had been built and would continue to grow as a site of commercial opportunity. As voiced by the noisy crowd who cheered the Prince upon his arrival, most citizens understood this simple truth.

The royal ball also showed that the numbers of wealthy people in the city had begun to exceed the social influence of any group. The Academy of Music, the city's largest public venue suitable for such an occasion, could barely contain those guests who could pay to enjoy the Prince's presence. As the city's social establishment surveyed the numbers of people assembled, they questioned the basis of their own claims to exclusivity. Though New York's wealthy establishment espoused the importance of nonmaterial considerations like accomplishment and heritage as indicators of social status, the ball conveyed a contradictory impression. Everyone inside the Academy was simply rich. Money had provided the basis for the clothes and jewelry necessary to women social identity. At the same time, wealthy women defined themselves in terms of a timeless domesticity that supported and nurtured the city's successful men. Moving within the framework of their domestic family obligations, women would in the coming decades attempt to reconcile society's longings for aristocracy with New York's commercial reality and the increasing presence of families of new fortune.

The World of Women

In order to receive an introduction to His Highness, women had been classified according to their marital status as representatives of accomplished male family members. Though many women received recognition for their personal taste in ballroom attire, they did so as the wives and daughters of eminent men. The given names of married women did not appear in the extended coverage of the event. As a consequence, one could not separate Mrs. Belmont's splendid Tiffany riviere from her husband's successful merchant bank. Similarly, Mrs. Fish sparkled in a mauve-colored lace "icicled over with glittering diamonds" as a statement of her husband's wealth and public prominence. Mrs. Aspinwall's "glory of blue moire antique, powdered with jewels" and Mrs. Grinnell's "black moire antique" spoke to the vibrancy of the city's cadre of successful merchants. By all accounts, New York had never before witnessed such a gathering of powerful individuals. It seemed "idle to attach mortal names to such a phantasmagoria of brilliant effects," making many of the wealthy "queens of the evening" all but invisible. [96]

In associating women's clothes and jewels with men, the press also reminded its readers that such luxury did not come cheaply. The lace-covered embroidered tulle worn by Mrs. Gardiner Howland, for example, appeared of "fabulous elegance and price." Guests admired Mrs. Brockholst Cutting's "rich" bridal dress and its "costly" point de Venise lace. Mrs. Colonel Meinell received praise for her singularly "rich and

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[96] New York Times, 13 October 1860, 1, passim.

brilliant" gown. To add context to these descriptive details, writers often mentioned a woman's physical appearance. Mrs. Dr. Alex Mott, for example, wore violets in a manner "singularly becoming to her sentimental and yet intellectual style of beauty." Mrs. Brockholst Cutting's "coquettish" choice of a black velvet ribbon around her neck "contrasted finely with the brilliant purity of a fresh Southern complexion." Mrs. Governor Morgan's black lace and diamonds befitted her "matronly rank." Women elites, so objectified, became little more than decorative accessories.[97]

In 1860, newspaper writers saw no inconsistency in their hesitancy to supply a woman's given name with their willingness to describe her physical attributes. This journalistic habit reflects the ambiguities surrounding a woman's public place. Most wealthy women devoted substantial amounts of their time and energy to their private households. Child rearing and home management, though facilitated by servants, consumed their attention. As a consequence, the rich attached significance to the home and its wider cluster of associations. The home became a "family castle; it was the stronghold to which even the offshoots clung...a sure refuge for all...Order, punctuality, and cleanliness were its chief ornaments."[98] Elizabeth Story Palmer romanticized her memories of her mother's well-ordered house in which "no luxuries were made necessities."[99] In keeping with these practices, many wealthy women maintained

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[97] Ibid., passim.

[98] Abram C. Dayton, Last Days of Knickerbocker Life in New York, (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1897),18-19.

[99] Elizabeth Story Palmer, My Memories of Old New York, (New York: Edwin S. Gorham, 1923), 10.

households without particular reference to current tastes in home furnishings. They enjoyed the home as an "heirloom, not valued in the light of an estate to be converted into money, but priceless as....the ancestral abode."[100] Many of the rich did not routinely seek to update their comfortable decor with lighter and more graceful furnishings. Instead, families relied upon possessions, handed down over generations. Family heirlooms increased the significance of each item, imbuing the home with a consistent and unvarying style of living.[101]

The ability to nurture this domestic fixity reflected a family's pride and fostered a conservative awareness of generational continuity. Many wealthy women idealized the ability to staff and maintain a proper home environment. Elizabeth Hobson, who spent her early childhood on Long Island, remembered her mother as "intelligent, practical, beautiful. As a wife and mother she was perfect. I never remember a domestic jar."[102] Although Elizabeth later pioneered in the field of nursing education, her remarks suggest the importance of household obligations. Similarly, Marian Gouverneur, the wife of a diplomat, idealized domestic ability, recalling that her mother "never allowed an event of a social character to interfere with what she regarded as her household or maternal duties."[103] Wealthy mothers served as role models, tutoring their

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[100] Abram C. Dayton, 197.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Elizabeth Christophers Hobson, Recollections of a Happy Life, introduction by Louisa Lee Schuyler, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1916), 10.

[103] Marian Gouverneur, As I Remember: Recollections of American Society during the Nineteenth Century, (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1911), 73.

daughters on the principles of household management and food presentation, with emphasis on "thrift and economy."[104]

Affluent women also enjoyed sharing the comfort and ease of their households with those outside the family. The novelist Edith Wharton recalled her mother's relaxed and gracious home hospitality as the rule rather than the exception.[105] Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer remembered small, "at home" occasions on Saturday evenings in which hostesses themselves made the preparations for guests, including salad, punch, candy and cake. In the Van Rensselaer household, it was "unthinkable" to require the presence of servants for occasions near the Sabbath.[106] Cornelia Jay invariably filled her trips to New York City from her family's estate in Rye, New York, with small, hastily arranged parties of friends who dropped by for evenings of parlor games and conversation. Elisabeth Marbury, who lived with the decorator Elsie deWolfe, lauded these impromptu hostesses for their ability "to create their own atmosphere" without the need for professionals.[107] Dinner parties usually included small groups of ten to twelve friends "around mahoganies of generous size and space [yet] small enough for talk to fly easily across them." Hostesses served meals punctually at seven o'clock "in silver, damask, porcelain, and glass, by their own customary attendants, and cooked by their

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[104] Elisabeth Marbury, My Crystal Ball: Reminiscences, (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923), 19.

[105] Edith Wharton, A Backward Glance, Introduction by Louis Auchincloss. Originally published 1933. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), 26.

[106] Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, 40.

[107] Elisabeth Marbury, 27. See also Dictionary of Notable American Women, s.v. "Marbury, Elisabeth."

own resident artists...in the family menu of every day."[108]

The wealthy also opened their homes for literary discussions and musical concerts. These small gatherings revolved around friendships, mutual tastes and shared occupations.[109] The author Mary Elizabeth Sherwood enjoyed the literary salon of the author Anna Lynch Botta who introduced Sherwood to a number of leading writers.[110] Sherwood also valued the hospitality of the historian and diplomat George Bancroft whose literary evenings conveyed the sense of "going behind the scenes with the stage-manager after having been taken to the play."[111] The author Constance Cary Harrison similarly recalled the pleasures of a small musical club that met in the Madison Square home of Elsie Barlow as well as cultural evenings spent with the Schermerhorns and the Roosevelts. Harrison herself hosted a musicale for thirty to forty guests in her family's apartment. Though worried about accommodating "all these grand musicians" in her "bird's nest," Harrison remembered the evening as "royal fun."[112]

These uncomplicated social evenings gave women the opportunity to enjoy family heirlooms, which reinforced the "seclusive sanctity" of their homes and those

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[108] Constance Cary Harrison, Recollections Grave and Gay, 276-77, passim. See also Mrs John King Van Rensselaer, The Social Ladder, 46; Abram C. Dayton, 204-206.

[109] Abram C. Dayton, 196.

[110] Dictionary of Notable American Women, s.v. "Botta, Anna Charlotte Lynch."

[111] Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, An Epistle to Posterity, 124-125. See also Sherwood, "New York in the Seventies," Lippincott's (September 1898): 395.

[112] Constance Cary Harrison, Recollections Grave and Gay, 290.

invited to share their tables.[113] Hostesses also took license to personalize their more routine hospitality. Mittie Roosevelt, whose son Theodore became President, conveyed a "waft of violets" at her afternoon teas. For this effect, Mittie complemented her table service with maids "dressed in lilac print gowns, with muslin aprons and caps surmounted by bows of ribbon in the same shade."[114] Mittie Roosevelt's ability to charm her guests with unique entertainments endeared her to her friends. At the same time, these details and the tolerance of others for them also suggested the wealth and prestige of her husband Theodore's family.

Women like Mittie Roosevelt carved out a social identity with a subtlety that conveyed their husband's prominence. In contrast, Caroline Perry Belmont explicitly displayed the tastes and cultural preferences of her husband August's European heritage. Those who knew Caroline Belmont remembered her as "very beautiful, very elegant, with a gift of exclusiveness."[115] The social arbiter Ward McAllister affirmed the extent of Caroline Belmont's influence, calling her "our society queen."[116] The identification of Caroline as "queen" reflects wealthy's longings for the fixity of aristocracy. The author Constance Cary Harrison saw Caroline Belmont as a woman "whom fortune had

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[113] Abram C. Dayton, 197. See also Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, The Social Ladder, 46.

[114] Constance Cary Harrison, Recollections Grave and Gay, 279. See also Kathleen Dalton, "Theodore Roosevelt, Knickerbocker Aristocrat," New York History 67(January 1986): 39-65.

[115] Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, An Epistle to Posterity, 186; "New York in the Seventies,"395. See also George Templeton Strong, June 26, 1860, 3:36; November 4,1860, 509.

[116] Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Found It, Annotated Edition, 117.

allotted means and opportunity to take the lead in entertainments of the grandiose foreign order."[117] The distinguished naval careers of Caroline's father and uncle, coupled with her family's marital links to New York's prestigious Hone and de Peyster families, guaranteed her social acceptance among New York's wealthy.[118]

The power of August Belmont in the city's financial community, however, insured Caroline's role a society tastemaker. Many individuals considered the Belmont home at 109 Fifth Avenue to be the city's finest private residence in 1860. Located at Eighteenth Street, this mansion contained the city's first private ballroom, a skylit picture gallery, and an extensive wine cellar. August Belmont personally supervised this home's construction and its decor while serving as a diplomat at The Hague. He monitored the purchase and shipment of over 250 cases filled with furniture, books, silver and other accessories.[119] Belmont planned to have "the walls of my rooms all very plainly papered and to cover them with my pictures of which I have nearly 100."[120] His interest in household matters extended to his wife Caroline, to whom he "sent letters to her from the office during the day, guiding her personal affairs and instructing her in

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[117] Constance Cary Harrison, Recollections Grave and Gay, 279.

[118] Caroline's father Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry had commanded the American fleet in the Gulf of Mexico during the Mexican War. His brother Oliver Hazard Perry had distinguished himself in the Battle of Lake Erie in the War of 1812.

[119] August Belmont. Belmont Family Papers, (New York Public Library, New York, New York), Letter Book, 4(1856 - 58),175. 178 - 81.

[120] August Belmont in "Letter to House" April 13, 1857, p. 231-32 in Ibid. Thus in June of 1857, Belmont also forwarded his personal art collection valued at $33, 556 to New York in sixteen additional cases. August Belmont, Letter Book 4 (1856-1858), 311-312.

the management of their home."[121] The etiquette authority Mary Elizabeth Sherwood credited the Belmonts for introducing a "foreign way of doing things."[122] Prior to their arrival in New York, wealthy women refrained from wearing their new European clothing for at least a season. August Belmont, however, encouraged his wife to wear Parisian fashions on a daily basis rather than save them for special occasions. Caroline's acquiescence encouraged other wealthy women to follow her example. In Edith Wharton's novel The Age of Innocence, the banker Beaufort, whose character was modeled on August Belmont, also "started the new fashion by making his wife clap her new clothes on her back as soon as they arrived."[123]

Through the influence of women like Caroline Belmont, "fashion ruled" in New York by 1850.[124] Women realized almost "by intuition" that their power lay in "appropriate costume, with decoration 'costly as the purse can buy'...for nothing so stamps the personality, and imbues the possessor with more respect than an habitual elegant attire."[125] The journalist Nathaniel Parker Willis concluded that New York elites required expensive habits in order to distinguish themselves from others. In addition to dress, Willis defined the social elite as families "who keep carriages, live

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[121] David Black, 72.

[122] Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, "New York in the Seventies," 396.

[123] Edith Wharton, The Age of Innocence, in The Edith Wharton Omnibus. Introduction by Gore Vidal. (Originally published 1920; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978),199.

[124] Abram C. Dayton, 12.

[125] Ibid., 208.

above Bleecker, are subscribers to the opera, go to Grace Church, have a town house and a country house, give balls and parties."[126] Born into a family of letters, Willis as a young man traveled widely in Europe and the Middle East, supporting himself with the publication of several collections of essays on topics of interest to society. In 1845, he married Cornelia, the only daughter of Joseph Grinnell of New Bedford, Massachusetts, in 1845.[127] A year later, he founded the Home Journal with George Pope Morris where he earned a reputation for his social opinions.[128] His readership valued his "always dignified and reliable"advice.[129]

Willis understood the material determinants of status, concluding that to "look well-bred has a value in this metropolis...which gives more social rank than in any other capital in the world."[130] Willis did little to challenge his affluent readership to find other ways to state their social authority. Instead, he flattered the elite desire for

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[126] Nathaniel Parker Willis, n.t., Cited in Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, Gotham: A History of New York to 1898, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 714.

[127] Nathaniel Parker Willis and his wife had a son and two daughters. The couple resided in Manhattan and at Willis' estate Idlewild in the Highlands of the Hudson. Willis died in January 1867 at the age of sixty. New York Times, 22 January 1867, 4. See also New York Times, 17 July 1897, BR1.

[128] The magazine included condensations of articles from European papers, "Sketches of Belles" and "Gossip of the Gay World," a regularly featured column of society news and activity. The Home Journal, which later became Town and Country, also employed the services of four female correspondents with humorous pseudonyms like Amelia Rayter and Lotsa Nuffin to supplement their society coverage. The magazine's effort to provide a "Picture of the World as It Passes" embraced topics ranging from personal health, fashion, manners, as well as book and theatrical reviews, literary notices and travel features.

[129] George Ellington, pseud., 162.

[130] Nathaniel Parker Willis, Hurry Graphs: Sketches of Scenery, Celebrities and Society Taken from Life, (Auburn and Rochester: Alden and Beardsley, 1856), 285.

material distinction with observations on their "exacting moral character."[131] He extolled the wealthy's "support of moral opinions and charities" as well as being "the most exemplary in their individual private life."[132] Willis emphasized the importance of appearance to social status. By his standards, women's fashion both demonstrated a family's wealth and implied the presence of private virtue. Centuries earlier, the Puritan fathers preached material prosperity as an indication of Divine favor. In much the same manner, New York's elites conflated a fashionable appearance with the existence of private scruples.

By 1860, clothing had become a critical component of a woman's public identity. In addition to social occasions, the Sunday promenade became a "rite of sociability" that permitted the socially prominent to confirm their urban class identity.[133] Women dressed specifically for these family walks to attract the notice and admiration of others. "On Sunday afternoons, especially, the Fifth Avenue, from Washington Parade Ground to the summit of Murray Hill, was, and indeed, still is, the fashionable promenade of youth and beauty."[134] Families usually lived near their house of worship so that regular Sunday strolls to and from church became an established ritual. The

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[131] Nathaniel Parker Willis, Dashes at Life with a Free Pencil, (New York: J. S. Redfield, 1845), 169.

[132] Ibid.

[133] David Scobey, "Anatomy of the Promenade: The Politics of Bourgeois Sociability in Nineteenth-Century New York," Social History 17(May 1992): 204. See also John F. Kasson, Rudness & Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990).

[134] Home Journal, 27 August 1859, 2. See also George Ellington, pseud., 34-35.

author Mary Elizabeth Sherwood remembered her walks to Washington Square "where the children picked the first dandelions" and Sunday promenades "up Fifth Avenue almost to Twenty-Third Street."[135] As the "royal and fashionable" venue, Fifth Avenue routinely filled on Sundays with the "costliest of silks and laces, appareled in the finest of broadcloth and cassimere."[136]

As the city expanded northward from its commercial center, homes of the wealthy clustered around Union Square, Gramercy Park and north along Fifth Avenue.[137] A shift in "fashionable attention" accompanied a similar move from Broadway to Fifth Avenue, protected from commercial development at its southern end

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[135] Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, An Epistle to Posterity, 178-180, passim.

[136] Home Journal, 27 August 1859, 2.

[137] Of these neighborhoods, Union Square Park had been planned and developed by Samuel Ruggles in the 1830's on what was then the northern frontier of the city. Within ten years, this area of homes, grouped around a small open space near Fourteenth Street, had become a fashionable address. Gramercy Park, another Ruggles project, offered a similar blend of urban access to open park land. Situated between Eighteenth and Twenty-Third Streets on the east side of Manhattan, Gramercy Park had originally existed as part of a country estate. Ruggles divided the land into sixty-six residential lots surrounding an open reserve which were deeded in trust to the surrounding home owners. By the 1850's, this small, exclusive enclave had become home to many of the city's business and social elite. See Carole Klein, Gramercy Park: An American Bloomsbury, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987); John B. Pine, The Story of Gramercy Park, 1831-1921, (n.p.: Gramercy Park Association, 1921). For a more generalized discussion of New York's residential neighborhoods and their architecture see also Helen W. Henderson, A Loiterer in New York, (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1917); Charles Lockwood, Bricks and Brownstones: The New York Row House, (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1972). For contemporaneous descriptions of elite New York neighborhoods see also Maria Theresa (Yelverton) Longworth, Teresina in America, 2 vol., (London: Richard Bently and Son, 1875; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1974), 1: 1-20; Junius Henri Browne, The Great Metropolis: A Mirror of New York, (Hartford, N. J.: American Publishing Company, 1869; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1975), 219-229; Arthur Bartlett Maurice, Fifth Avenue, (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1918; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1975).

by Washington Square.[138] Wealthy New Yorkers walked predictable routes within affluent residential areas for purposes of peer recognition. The Sunday promenade became a ritualized outing designed to attract the attention of others. Edith Wharton's short story "New Year's Day" centers around the unintended consequences of social recognition, pointing out the lack of anonymity in the city's neighborhoods of distinction.[139] The potential of meeting one's peers made clothing an important part of the promenade. Fashion helped the wealthy to recognize one other just as it "stabilized social position by making it visible."[140] The promenade itself "dramatized the legitimacy of social distinction," by making the larger public witness to this authority.[141]

As city streets increasingly filled with unfamiliar individuals, fashion provided only a partial guide to the status of strangers. The ability of unknown individuals to wear the appropriate fashion and masquerade their social authority created anxiety among the socially secure.[142] Promenading also required a "model of public demeanor," that emphasized "discipline and decorum" to distinguish members of the elite from others.[143] Women, thought to be vulnerable to mishaps on city streets, required a special protocol to insure their safety. Prescriptive literature set forth specific

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[138] Edward K. Spann, 111.

[139] Edith Wharton, "New Year's Day," Originally published 1924. In The Edith Wharton Omnibus, 533-588.

[140] David Scobey, 206.

[141] Ibid., 205.

[142] Karen Halttunen, Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

[143] David Scobey, 217.

manners for salutations, recognitions, refusals, and terminations of public discourse which gave women a means to regulate the uncertainties of city life. Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, who voiced the prevailing social opinion, believed that on the street "[a]ppearances went for everything."[144]

For public promenades and other social outings, wealthy women required large wardrobes. In the evening, women attended a range of formal functions, including balls, dinners and receptions, all of which required elaborate dress. Other nighttime excursions to the theater, opera, concerts and lectures presupposed different wardrobe requirements. Women also needed suitable daytime attire for luncheons and teas as well as for social visitation and shopping. It is difficult to approximate precisely what constituted an adequate wardrobe in view of the range of activity away from home. Quality, quantity as well as the social requirements of the individual varied greatly. In 1872, one woman "who was well known in society" valued her wardrobe at $21,000.[145] This unnamed woman submitted a clothing inventory to an insurance company for casualty coverage following a fire. A lawsuit resulted when her insurer refused reimbursement, protesting that no one could own so many clothes. The personal itemization included: ten evening dresses; nineteen morning and afternoon dresses in both summer and winter fabrications; twelve robes for morning and evening; jackets; skirts; and lingerie. The inventory also enumerated accessories, including: shawls;

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[144] Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, The Social Ladder, 47.

[145] James D.McCabe, Lights and Shadows of New York Life; or the Sights and Sensations of the Great City, (Philadelphia: National Publishing Company, 1872; facsimile, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970),144-150; See also George Ellington, 125-37.

tassels; fringes; handkerchiefs; mantillas; laces; combs; artificial flowers; ribbons; hair nets; parasols; bonnets; feathers; and a sable muff, cape and boa. The precise descriptions provided of more costly items indicate the owner's personal style. For example, one evening ensemble lost in the blaze included a "crimson velvet dress, lined throughout with rose-colored silk; train very long, trimmed with rich silk, blonde lace covering the entire train, being carried around and brought up the front of the dress and body, forming the bertha; and sleeves looped up with white roses; turquoise fan and slippers to match."[146]

This particular ensemble, assessed at $400, seems modest in view of the sums invested in gowns for the Prince of Wales Ball. Though the claimant's submission generated comment, her wardrobe merely reflected an earlier portrayal of society women by Charles Astor Bristed. Bristed, the Cambridge educated grandson of John Jacob Astor, characterized New York's women as "daintily arrayed . . . who spend half their income on their persons, and shrink from the touch of a woollen glove . . . who wear the finest furs and roll in the most stylish equipages, . . . [and are] well up in all the latest French dances and the newest French millinery."[147] Bristed hoped to portray New York society as equal to that of Europe. He achieved this purpose, however, by demonstrating only the existence of women's expensive tastes.

Bristed described New York's upper crust by identifying the qualities necessary

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[146] James D.McCabe, 145.

[147] Charles Astor Bristed, The Upper Ten Thousand: Sketches of American Society, (New York: Stringer & Townsend, 1852), 6-7, passim. See also Ann Sophia Winterbothom Stephens. High Life in New York, (New York: Bunce & Brother, 1854).

for inclusion in his Upper Ten Thousand, published in 1852. Like the journalist Nathaniel Parker Willis, Bristed pointed to external determinants of social status available to anyone with money. An expensively dressed woman demonstrated her husband's success and the affluence of her household. In this way, she distinguished herself as socially prominent. A woman's ability to convey stylishly her personal taste also identified her among her elite peers. Julie Grinnell Storrow Cruger, who wrote under the pen name of Julien Gordon, was a grandniece of Washington Irving. Her marriage in 1844 to the wealthy businessman Steven Van Rensselaer Cruger sharpened her social judgements.[148] Mrs. Cruger believed that women dressed "for women, not for men" because women "value each other more for outward than for inward graces."[149] The historian Henry Adams concluded conversely that the "American woman

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[148] Stephen Van Rensselaer Cruger, born in May 1844, was educated privately and in Europe. During the Civil War, Cruger earned military distinction in the Georgia campaign of General William T. Sherman, achieving the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. After the war, Cruger returned to New York to manage his assets as well as the real estate interests of Trinity Church where he worshiped with his wife. He also became active in local Republican party politics, receiving a district nomination as a candidate for mayor in 1894. He lived with his wife at 112 East Thirty-fifth Street in Manhattan and at a country estate in Bayville, Long Island, New York. Cruger died in 1898 at the age of fifty-four. New York Times, 24 June 1898, 7. Julie Cruger received a large inheritance upon the death of her husband. She continued to write novels, maintaining homes in New York and Oyster Bay, Long Island, New York. In 1908, she "surprised" friends with her marriage to Wade Chance, a broker ten years her junior. This union lasted thirteen months before the couple separated. Chance finally obtained a divorce in Los Angeles in 1915. Julie Cruger Chance died in 1920. New York Times 13 July 1920, 10. See also New York Times, 28 May 1893, 19; 2 December 1894, 23.

[149] Mrs. Van Rensselaer Cruger, Eat Not Thy Heart, (Chicago and New York: Herbert S. Stone & Co., 1897), 15.

of the nineteenth century will live only as man saw her."[150] Adams' view of women as virtuous and pure contrasts with the materialism of Julie Cruger.

Although the degree to which women mirrored male desire in the construction of their public identities remains moot, women lacked other means to distinguish themselves. Despite this, women's love of finery drew criticism from a variety of sources. Some observers simply could not tolerate the extravagance of wealthy women. To the European traveler Maria Theresa Longworth, American women enjoyed "no occupation but that of dressing." which they commenced "ere they can lisp their own names."[151] Longworth found wealthy women lacking in the arts and languages, concluding that "very little beauty is seen in New York."[152] While Longworth complained of the cultural deficiencies of affluent women, other observers held women spiritually accountable for their expensive tastes. James D. McCabe suggested that women dressed fashionably only to gain "satisfaction seeing [their] magnificence celebrated in some of the city journals."[153] George Ellington similarly attributed women's fondness for clothes to their desire for attention.[154] In these critical opinions,

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[150] Henry Adams, The Education of Henry Adams, Introduction by James Truslow Adams, (The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1918; reprint ed., New York: The Modern Library, 1931), 353. See also John Patrick Diggins, "'Who Bore the Failure of the Light:`" Henry Adams and the Crisis of Authority," The New England Quarterly 58 (June 1985): 165-192.

[151] Maria Theresa (Yelverton) Longworth, 1:311.

[152] Ibid., 1:317, 319.

[153] James McCabe, 141.

[154] George Ellington, 29.

wealthy women led empty lives and could only "turn to dry goods for consolation."[155]

Many conservative critics lampooned the spending habits of the wealthy because the pursuit of fashion undermined the precepts surrounding feminine domesticity.[156] Society, in this regard, expected women to propagate moral order in the home. Here women dedicated themselves to the transmission of spiritual and cultural values to children which, in turn, contributed to an orderly, stable community.[157] Women's extravagance and their pursuit of a public life distracted them from their domestic responsibilities. Conservative ministers like T. DeWitt Talmadge cautioned women against the risks of materialism.[158] By 1860, many like Talmadge idealized women as spiritual beings, purer and more refined than men. Women's superior moral qualities better suited them to the management of family life. The public display of extravagant clothing by women undermined this traditional image of moral and selfless femininity. As wealthy women used clothing to create a public identity, they also expressed their individuality competitively, yielding to the pressure to wear the most current fashion or the most costly jewel. Because of this, women did not always represent the spiritual

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[155] Ibid., 32.

[156] T. DeWitt Talmadge, The Masque Torn Off, (Chicago: V. Fairbanks & Co., 1879), 160-168; Abba Goold Woolson, Woman in American Society, (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1873), 112; J. L. Collins, Queen Krinaleen's Plagues; or, How a Simple People Were Destroyed, (New York: American News Company, 1874), 94-101; Michael Barton, "The Victorian Jeremiad: Critics of Accumulation and Display," in Simon J. Bronner, ed., Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America, 1880-1920, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989), 55-71.

[157] Linda L. Kerber, Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1980).

[158] T. DeWitt Talmadge, 167-168.

attributes that defined feminine domesticity. To many social conservatives, women belonged at home where they could nurture the nonmaterial requirements of family life. Furthermore, the larger society needed women's spiritual goodness as a counterweight to the increasingly aggressive capitalism of the late nineteenth century.[159]

Women's Society

Just as expensive clothing distinguished society's members from other guests at the Ball, their polite manner set the boundaries of accepted social conduct. New York's wealthy women represented what most outside observers understood to be society. With their expression of shared values, women created what the historian Sven Beckert has termed "a collectivity" among the city's wealthy families.[160] As a woman displayed her husband's economic position through her public taste, she signified a family's claim to social prominence. Women nourished the cohesive bonds that held society together in order to solidify their family's social position. The extent to which men and women pursued separate, gender-specific roles to maintain family status has heretofore

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[159] Stowe Persons, The Decline of American Gentility, (New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1973). See also Daniel Horowitz, The Morality of Spending: Attitudes toward the Consumer Society in America, 1875-1940, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), xv. See also Alan Trachtenberg, The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age., (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982); Warren I. Sussman, Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).

[160] Sven Beckert, The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850-1896, (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 31.

generated scholarly comment.[161] Less-appreciated is the way in which women defined and monitored the boundaries of polite society.

By the 1850's, New York's women of wealth had begun to create an "aristocracy of culture" in which "taste" became a sign of "true nobility and cannot conceive of referring taste to anything other than itself."[162] Women elites exercised the judgement of taste in a number of ways pertaining to their domesticity, including: the location, construction and decoration of their homes; the employment of household staff; entertainments; the rearing and education of children; and travel. By definition, the self-referential nature of women's tastes and how they related to the culture of the wider community signified status. The "naive exhibitionism of 'conspicuous consumption,' which seeks distinction in the crude display of ill-mastered luxury, is nothing compared to the unique capacity of the pure gaze."[163] Members of New York's wealthy society believed themselves to be an aristocracy whose taste and standards amounted to a "pure gaze."

The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu understands taste to be an instrument of cultural domination. Taste, as it advertises the prestige of the upper classes, begins with the an understanding of the habits of an elite who desire to influence less powerful members of society. Though many of Bourdieu's references dissect the cultural choices made in

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[161] Nancy Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood. See also Carol Lasser, "Gender, Ideology, and Class in the Early Republic," Journal of the Early Republic 10 (1990): 334.

[162] Pierre Bourdieu, 11.

[163] Ibid., 31.

modern France, his observations on the bourgeoisie and the rivalries resulting from variations in taste and habit speak directly to the behavior of New York society in the late nineteenth century. From this perspective, the Prince of Wales ball demonstrates the extent to which the wealthy had objectified their cultural values. Certain standards of dress, jewelry, the right hairstyle and manner bespoke women's status at the ball. Over the course of the nineteenth century, women would increasingly rely upon such material expressions to separate themselves from others. As elites commodified the values for inclusion in polite society, they also exposed themselves to the challenge of other equally wealthy citizens who could purchase similar things. The existence of other rich people forced New York's wealthy to consider those things that determined social status.

Many of the city's wealthy, like Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, valued the quieter and more cultivated society of antebellum New York. Mrs. Van Rensselaer considered herself the product of an "old regime, which acknowledged names above notoriety and lineage above bank books."[164] For her, social authority rested with an elite cadre that had expanded "generation by generation through the abundant contributions made by each family."[165] Several contemporary scholars, including C. Wright Mills, E. Digby Baltzell and Frederic Cople Jaher, premise their interpretations of the growth of the city's upper classes during the late nineteenth century on Mrs. Van

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[164] Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, The Social Ladder, 5.

[165] Ibid., 30. See also Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, 53-55.

Rensselaer's representations.[166] The antebellum elite esteemed by Mrs. Van Rensselaer, however, reflects the value that she attached to her own family heritage and its Knickerbocker traditions.

Because the Dutch settlement of New York predated that of the English, names like Brevoort, de Peyster, Van Rensselaer and Beekman conveyed social authority. These names resonated with images of vast land holdings passed down over generations. The Dutch social model of landed wealth harmonized with English concepts of aristocracy. To both the early Dutch and English settlers, passive income derived from land could not be questioned. Wealth accumulated in this manner seemed less mercantile, less speculative. Many large tracts of New York real estate dated to colonial grants which had been bestowed initially by royalty as an inducement to settlement. Therefore, a family's ability to maintain land over time carried a cluster of aristocratic connotations, reminiscent of European nobility. The novelist Edith Wharton, whose own family lineage in America reached back three hundred years, expressed pride in her pedigree. She remembered her father's contemporaries as men of leisure and as "heirs of an old tradition of European culture."[167]

Despite the wealth produced by land, the early Dutch discountenanced sloth and saw the lack of business activity as a bar to respectability. New York's early

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[166] C. Wright Mills, 49; E. Digby Baltzell, An American Business Aristocracy, (New York: Collier, 1962); The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America; Frederic Cople Jaher, The Upper Strata in Boston, New York, Charleston, Chicago and Los Angeles, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 280.

[167] Edith Wharton, A Backward Glance, 56. See also Abram C. Dayton, 2.

colonization had been predicated on business enterprise and the desire for profit. This frank interest in the accumulation of capital distinguished the citizens of colonial New York from their more spiritual New England counterparts.[168] The commercial talents of the early Dutch also fostered the city's early development.[169] In keeping with their mercantile interests, early businessmen nonetheless insisted upon scrupulous honesty in commercial practice. Financial incorruptibility became a social cornerstone. According to Abram Dayton, "Thrift, rigid conformity with social law, undeviating probity, constituted the prime essentials to respectability."[170] A man's reputation for "industry, punctuality, frugality, with a strict conformity to popular sentiment" were fundamental to his social success.[171]

Colonial families of English origin identified with and accepted these same cultural values and business practices. By 1809, the author Washington Irving had coined the term Knickerbocker in his satirical History of New York to describe the blended Dutch-English aristocracy that began to coalesce. The novelist Edith Wharton restated the importance of the accommodation of Dutch traditions by more recent English-born settlers. The novelist Edith Wharton observed that English families did not "affect old manners and customs, since the dearest ambition of newcomers was to

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[168] Bishop Kep, "New York Society in Olden Times," Putnam's Magazine, 16, no.33 (September 1870), 243. See also Edith Wharton, A Backward Glance, 10.

[169] Elizabeth Blackmar, Manhattan for Rent, 1785-1850, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), Chapter 1.

[170] Abram C. Dayton, 196.

[171] Ibid., 194. See also Bishop Kep, 253 - 254.

assimilate existing traditions."[172] Fluid from the outset, wealthy colonial Knickerbockers accepted others who shared their values. In view of this continuous process of social and cultural assimilation, the families who comprised Manhattan's landed and commercial elite could claim that "no aristocracy existed or was claimed, save where the distinction was cheerfully awarded."[173]

Various aspects of Knickerbocker life reinforced the presence of an elite cadre until the "idea of aristocracy pervaded Gotham." Plainly dressed with carefully starched ruffles and cuffs, Knickerbockers maintained a public composure that demanded deference. Form and ceremony shaped their daily experience, strengthening notions of family pride and generational continuity. The unvarying rhythm of most households reinforced this sense of permanence. Both "steady and determined," Knickerbockers concentrated on "conventional industry" with "assured competency its aim, quiet contentment its goal."[174] Wealthy Knickerbockers also held conservative opinions. Most families worshiped in the Episcopal, Presbyterian and Dutch Reformed churches, turning away from the newer Baptist and Methodist denominations. Social custom demanded a rigorous Sabbath observance with the city blanketed in an "awful stillness" save the scheduled tolling of church bells.[175] This traditionally minded establishment distrusted the rising middle classes, excluding the man who "kept a shop"

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[172] Edith Wharton, A Backward Glance, 6.

[173] Abram C. Dayton, 196.

[174] Edith Wharton, A Backward Glance, 6 - 11, passim.

[175] Abram C. Dayton, 6.

from their polite associations.[176] Knickerbockers preferred instead the social amenities cultivated through education and good breeding. To outsiders, Knickerbocker society appeared narrow and dull, if not "clannish."[177]

European visitors to New York in the early nineteenth century did not share the Knickerbockers' opinions of themselves. Although descendants of the city's first settlers considered themselves as aristocrats, the Austrian nobleman Francis Grund posited, "What great difference, after all, is there between a parvenu of ten years standing, and a parvenu who is just making his debut in society?"[178] In 1830, Grund concluded that the American aristocracy consisted of "nothing but a wealthy overgrown bourgeoisie."[179] Grund's ideas, shaped by his understanding of Europe's feudal heritage, viewed the fiat of aristocracy as enduring social and political authority. America, by contrast, had been settled by those fleeing the consequences of aristocracy who arrived to enjoy the advantages of social mobility.[180] Years later, the businessman Henry Clews, who

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[176] Edith Wharton, A Backward Glance, 11. See also Edward Pessen, "Philip Hone's Set: The Social World of the New York Elite in the 'Age of Egalitarianism'" New York Historical Society Quarterly 1972 56 (4): 285-308; also "The Wealthiest New Yorkers of the Jacksonian Era: A New List" New York Historical Society Quarterly 1970 54 (2): 145-172.

[177] Elizabeth Story Palmer, 29. See also James D. McCabe, 136; Junius Henri Browne, 33.

[178] Francis Grund, Aristocracy in America, 2 vol., (London: Richard Bently, 1839), 1:101.

[179] Ibid., 10.

[180] Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution, introduction by Tom Wicker, (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1955; reprint, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991). See also C. Wright Mills, 12.

immigrated from England, credited his own achievement to the fact that America possessed "no aristocracy to contend with but the aristocracy of brains and courage."[181]

The novelist Edith Wharton shared this assessment. She remarked upon the relative newness of New York's society, observing that few of the old Knickerbockers could even claim a distinguished European pedigree. Citing her mother's "contempt for aristocratic genealogies," Wharton specified only five New York families with unassailable credentials: the Duers, Livingstons, Rutherfurds, de Grasses, and Van Rensselaers.[182] Wharton understood the manner in which the city's wealthy used a European cultural traditions to validate their commercial achievement. Prestigious sounding names connoted an important heritage. One critic noted that "Vans and those bearing names suggestive Holland, vow they are of the Knickerbocker stock, albeit it is said, some who were Smiths and Jones two or three generations ago."[183] Despite their cultural assertions, Knickerbockers, though economically powerful, lacked the generational permanency that they valued.

From its earliest settlement, New York had been a city of business opportunity. As the historian Thomas Kessner concluded, "merchants exploited every advantage, bent every effort, and sought every opportunity to pursue investment, expansion, and

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[181] Henry Clews, Fifty Years in Wall Street, (New York: Irving Publishing Company, 1908), 1062.

[182] Edith Wharton, A Backward Glance, 10.

[183] Junius Henri Browne, 33. See also James D. McCabe, 136.

profit."[184] The city's wealthiest individual John Jacob Astor began his New York career in 1783 "dealing in rat and fox skins."[185] Astor also profited in the China trade and through shrewd real estate investments, amassing a fortune in excess of $30 million at the time of his death in 1848. By the 1840's the term "millionaire" had been coined to describe successful men like Astor. As the city grew, its numbers of wealthy citizens increased. Within twenty years, New York had become home to 115 millionaires.[186] Though some individuals enjoyed a rapid economic gain similar to Astor's, the reality behind great fortunes often proved more complex. Some of the family wealth in 1860 originated in the earlier merchant class whose members had acquired sufficient capital to benefit from the city's growth. Land values appreciated as the city's trade and manufactures flourished which, in turn, encouraged population growth. Income from the sale and rental of property provided many established families with the funds for other investments, particularly in the emerging fields of banking, insurance, manufacturing and transportation.[187] Excepting modest property taxes, little existed to offset the rapid accumulation of wealth.[188]

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[184] Thomas Kessner, Capital City: New York City and the Men Behind America's Rise to Economic Dominance, 1860-1900, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 28.

[185] George Ellington, pseud., 18..

[186] Edward K. Spann, 205. See also Edward Crapsey, "A Monument of Trade," The Galaxy, 9, no.1 (January 1870): 94-102; New York Times, 21 July 1895, 25; 14 March 1897, 7.

[187] Frederic Cople Jaher, The Urban Establishment, 175 - 178. See also New York Times, 14 March 1897, 7

[188] Ibid., 211. See also Edward Pessen, "The Wealthiest New Yorkers of the Jacksonian Era," 149-152.

Social ties reinforced sound commercial practice as the wealthy associated with one another in other areas of their lives. As the city prospered, wealthy members of the established English-Dutch Knickerbocker elite abandoned the restrained habits of their elders to live in a manner indicative of their good fortune. Newer, palatial homes, with lavish interiors, stretched northward from Manhattan's commercial center.[189] The historian Edward Pessen finds that aspects of city life suggested a growing "cosmopolitanism" by the 1830's.[190] Lydia Maria Child observed in 1845 that a rich woman could easily spend ten thousand dollars on furnishings for a single room.[191] Home entertainments also began to forego comfortable Knickerbocker standards. Opulent private entertainments became the norm after an 1840 costume ball hosted by the Henry Brevoorts. In 1854, Mrs. William Colford Schermerhorn celebrated the decoration of her Lafayette Place mansion, modeled on Versailles Palace, with a costume ball for six hundred friends dressed as French courtiers.[192]

In addition to increasing standards of opulence, the rich usually married within their own circle of acquaintance. Circumstances permitting, children of newer money often married into wealthy families who enjoyed greater community longevity. The Astors, for example, married into the older Brevoort, Wendel, Armstrong, Ward,

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[189] Richard Grant White, "Old New York and Its Houses," The Century, 26, no.6 (October 1883): 845-859.

[190] Edward Pessen, "Philip Hone's Set," 297-307.

[191] Lydia Maria Child, Letters from New York: Second Series, (n.p.: n.p., 1845), Cited in Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, 721.

[192] Ibid., 723.

Delano, Schermerhorn and Roosevelt families over three successive generations.[193] They achieved social eminence in 1853, however, when William Backhouse Astor married Caroline Webster Schermerhorn whose Knickerbocker roots dated to 1640. This ability to build upon family fortune and secure social prestige through marriage occurred with some regularity among the city's wealthy.[194] Over time, this practice reinforced feelings of generational continuity among the rich, supporting their view of themselves as a social aristocracy. One contemporaneous observer concluded that "the first generation of the unrecognized fares hard. The Second is educated, and the third claims lineage; prates of 'gentility,' and frowns upon what its grandparents were."[195]

As seen by the Astor example, New York's wealthy society moved glacially over the process of several generations before bestowing unconditional social acceptance. This reluctance is seen in the Knickerbocker James Roosevelt's hesitancy to entertain the Frederick Vanderbilts in his Hyde Park home, despite superficially cordial relations between the two families.[196] As the city's commerce thrived, however, the upper strata inevitably expanded as newer families obtained the secure social footing they desired. This continuous assimilative process at the upper rungs of New York's social ladder supports the findings of the sociologist C. Wright Mills. Mills persuades that New

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[193] Ibid., 212.

[194] Edward K. Spann, 212. See also Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, The Social Ladder, 170-173.

[195] Junius Henri Browne, 228.

[196] Geoffrey C. Ward, Before the Trumpet: Young Franklin Roosevelt, 1882-1905, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1985), 211n.

York's wealthy elite "no matter what its pretensions...is merely an enriched bourgeoisie, and that, no matter how powerful its members may be, they cannot invent an aristocratic past where one did not exist."[197] The contemporaneous Jacob Knickerbocker elaborated that distinguished lineage required a "record of eminence," so that the wealthy could not "claim prestige entirely as early colonization."[198]

From the outset, New York society lacked the fixity of an hereditary aristocracy. Even Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer commented upon society's "instability," viewing its upper rungs as a process that is reformulated with every generation.[199] Other writers defined society as "anything and everything."[200] The journalist Junius Browne observed that "our best society will never be determined to the satisfaction of more than one of the cliques, or coteries...that assume to represent it."[201] Social commentators understood that New York's upper strata enlarged with each new generation of capital accumulation. This conclusion is supported by the statistical analysis of the historian Frederic Cople Jaher who found a declining cohesion among the city's wealthiest families. Jaher's comparative review of city tax data for 1828 and 1856-57 shows that while the "old families did not disappear," the numbers of households worth at least $100,000 multiplied seven fold over the period. This increase in the numbers of

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[197] C. Wright Mills, 50.

[198] Jacob Knickerbocker, pseud., Then and Now, (Boston: Bruce Humphries, Inc., 1939), 390.

[199] Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, The Social Ladder, 30.

[200] George Ellington, 18.

[201] Julius Henri Browne, 32.

wealthy individuals diminished the influence of the older, more established families. By 1857, over forty percent of the wealthiest New Yorkers had been born outside the city, including many foreign born.[202] These increasingly diverse origins also undermined the existence of a permanent social order.

By the closing decades of the nineteenth century, contemporaneous observers simply viewed society through its effort "either in being, or trying to be fashionable."[203] By this measure, the qualification for inclusion in New York society became only a "matter of enjoyment."[204] To pursue social pleasure and participate in society, one needed money. George Ellington thought that any poor person could receive an introduction to select circles, "but without a 'fat purse' he won't remain long."[205] James D. McCabe similarly saw "wealth [as an] absolute necessity to the enjoyment of social pleasures. Society stands...upon a pile of bank books."[206] The journalist Nathaniel Parker Willis cautioned his readership against using money as the only measure of social status, however. "Wealth...only suggests the additional question of 'how it was made;' and without a satisfactory answer to that, the blackball upon a new-comer's advances would be unanimous."[207] Yet Willis had little to offer in the alternative. Though he admired London's "intellectual sphere of society" with its

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[202] Frederic Cople Jaher, The Urban Establishment, 203.

[203] Jacob Knickerbocker, pseud., 31.

[204] "Brahmins and Swells," The Galaxy, 13, no.6 (June 1872): 770.

[205] George Ellington, 24.

[206] James D. McCabe, 135.

[207] Nathaniel Parker Willis, Hurry Graphs, 284 - 285.

"higher standards than rank or wealth," he acknowledged that these social circles had required generations to organize.[208]

In 1860, New York's wealthy elite understood that it did not have this same luxury of time. The size of the affluent crowd who filled the Academy of Music served notice on the wealthy elite to "draw lines somewhere" to offset the influence of wealth on social status.[209] While wealth remained critical to participation in society, many wealthy families also viewed heritage as fundamental to social recognition. Lineage implied a family's social contribution over time, giving New York society the appearance of the permanence and generational continuity that it desired. Despite this acknowledgment of pedigree's importance, society's ability to enforce this fiat became more difficult as the numbers of wealthy increased. Society could only maintain its importance and remain relevant by limiting access to its ranks. Wealthy women who policed society's boundaries understood this need for exclusivity. Exclusivity, moreover, complemented women's understanding of their domestic obligation. Just as women shaped and monitored the access of others into their private homes, they could apply those same personal standards to society as a whole.[210] In this way, social recognition began with the family parlor.

Using their personal domestic standards as criteria, society women marshaled

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[208] Ibid., 288.

[209] George Ellington, 18.

[210] Jacob Knickerbocker, pseud., 391.

their status requirements.[211] In assessing unfamiliar individuals, the visible determinants of dress and etiquette offered the only practical way to evaluate an individual's social potential, however. Because one could not literally display their pedigree, restrained taste and a decorous manner suggested an avenue to social acceptance. The process of social recognition required that women organize society around small, subtle distinctions in taste.[212] The mere presence of wealth became tempered with women's understanding of style. The journalist Nathaniel Parker Willis concluded that "[i]t is not beauty that is exacted...but style."[213] The novelist Edith Wharton echoed that "stylishness was what New York most valued." [214] Precisely how a woman displayed wealth became a measure of social worthiness. Despite this regard for style, the subtleties of social management grew more complex as women's public opportunities increased. No woman could possibly attend every important social event in the city. A woman could make a passing acquaintance, only to be faced with to how to respond to subsequent overtures by this new person. Wealthy women converged into traditional feminine networks of education, church membership and charity which

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[211] Maureen E. Montgomery, "Gilded Prostitution," 38.

[212] This observation is somewhat at issue with the conclusions of the sociologist Thorstein Veblen who chronicles the status struggles between new and old wealth. Veblen, however, confines his analysis to the habits of America's nouveau riche who ascended socially through the translation of wealth into symbols of status. Veblen does not account for the presence of an inherited social structure so that consumption becomes the sole means of social competition. To this extent, Veblen blends aristocratic and bourgeois habits into a unified upper class structure. Thorstein Veblen, The Theory of the Leisure Class, 1899, (New York: New American Library, 1953), 162. See also C. Wright Mills, 58-59.

[213] Nathaniel Parker Willis, Hurry Graphs, 285.

[214] Edith Wharton, The Age of Innocence, 50.

functioned for the informal exchange of information. These separate circles of social engagement, however, lacked a unifying element to bind them into a collective judgement.

To assist in the formation of a feminine collectivity, wealthy women increasingly relied upon Isaac Hull Brown. Brown, a man of modest background, had been born in lower Manhattan on[215] Duane Street in 1812. After completing a common school education, Brown worked as an apprentice carpenter until 1846 when he received an appointment as sexton of the newly completed Grace Episcopal Church. Located on Broadway at Tenth Street, Grace Church had established itself as a house of worship for New York's wealthy.[216] Designed by the architect James Renwick, the church's unpolished grey marble edifice as well as its tall wooden spire reflected the material aspirations of its congregants. In all respects, Grace Church signified "power."[217]

Religion figured prominently in the city's social life. Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer observed that "[m]uch of the city's social activity was then closely interwoven with its religion. Members of society were all church-goers...The church to which they belonged was a vital part of their lives."[218] As the city's affluent

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[216] The Diary of Philip Hone, ed. Allan Nevins, (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1927; reprint, New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1969), February 5, 1846, 2:754; New York Herald, cited in William Rhinelander Stewart, Grace Church and Old New York, (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1924), 160.

[217] Junius Henri Browne, 168. See also New York Times, 2 October 1921, 97.

[218] Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, The Social Ladder, 166.

clustered in several Protestant denominations, church membership provided social opportunity. Many of the wealthy valued their ministers more for their skill at dinner table repartee than the content of their homily, indicating the secular quality of church observance.[219] Bearing this in mind, Carolyn Pryor Pine remarked that her Baptist mother did not circulate in "really fashionable circles."[220] Membership in the "right" church measured community standing, making Grace Church a "rival to the opera" in its social importance.[221]

Through his work as church sexton, Isaac Brown represented an intersection of church and society. He brought to his employment at Grace Church prior professional experience as New York's Inspector of Hacks and as an undertaker.[222] Brown also maintained lifelong memberships in leading fraternal organizations which provided him with useful contacts for expanding his secular enterprise among church members.[223] As church sexton, Brown's responsibilities included "every personal discomfort experienced by worshippers, and from filling of a vacant pew to the checking of an open draught he must see to it that neither his own feelings nor those of others are in

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[219] Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, "New York in the Seventies," 399.

[220] Carolyn Pryor Pine, Recollections of Mrs. John B. Pine, (n.p.: privately printed, c. 1925), 11.

[221] Ibid.

[222] New York Times, 23 August 1880, 5.

[223] Brown's fraternal affiliations included: the Puritan Lodge and the Royal Arch Masons; the Cosmopolitan Consistory and the Lodge of Perfection, Scottish Rite; and the Palestine Commandery, Knights Templar, where he achieved office in the state's Grand Lodge. The St. Cecilia Lodge, an organization of musicians, also named Brown an honorary member. New York Herald, 24 August 1880, 9.

the least degree ruffled."[224] He met this job description, providing wealthy families with the assurance that their church weddings and funerals would proceed smoothly.

Through his church duties, Brown gained access to many of the city's wealthy women. The rich initially hired him to announce guests' arrivals and call for their carriages when they departed. From this modest beginning, Brown began to make evening transportation arrangements as many of the wealthy did not own or use private carriages at night. Eventually, Brown "controlled the largest number of fine carriages for hire."[225] Brown is best remembered, however, for his efficient delivery of invitations to important social functions. The planners of the Prince of Wales ball, for example, used Brown to manage its large guest list. For social newcomers, Brown became a necessity compared to using the right caterer, the proper florist, or the most popular orchestra.[226] He began to advise this clientele on the composition of guest lists. Through his position at Grace Church, Brown knew who was in town and who was away. Brown could suggest the proper mix of old and new people at their entertainments as he understood who would come and who would not. The social arbiter Ward McAllister confirmed that Brown "knew all and everything about everybody."[227]

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[224] Ibid., 187.

[225] Frederick Van Wyck, 67.

[226] The Great Empire City; or High and Low Life in New York; a Mirror of the Great Metropolis, (n.p.: F. M. Lupton, 1883), 7.

[227] Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Found It, 124. See also Frederick Van Wyck, 67; William Rhinelander Stewart, 177; Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, An Epistle to Posterity, 179.

No socially ambitious hostess could arrange a party without first seeking an interview with Brown. He could be relied upon to produce a fashionable gathering or "'crush' done in the latest style."[228] Brown supplied presentable young men to serve as escorts and extra dancing partners.[229] For this service, he drew upon his local contacts as well as newly arrived European gentlemen in need of income. These men, collectively known as "Brown's Brigade" or "Brown's Five Hundred," were "bound to dress fashionably. Good dancing was a necessity, and there were certain rules that had to be observed."[230] Brown billed his clients for his fees on a monthly basis.[231] As the demand for his secular services increased, Brown became dictatorial with the "fashionably dressed women that besieged his office," turning away those who did not meet his standards.[232] Brown, however, "never snubbed blood" as he possessed an "unbounded reverence" for those families established in city's upper crust.[233]

Brown enjoyed an "unprecedented position" among older eastern seaboard elites

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[228] New York Times, 23 August 1880, 5.

[229] Arthur Bartlett Maurice, 66-67; See also Marian Gouverneur, 135-36; The Great Empire City, 7. Constance Cary Harrison denies any first hand knowledge of the so-called "Brown Brigades." Constance Cary Harrison, Recollections Grave and Gay, 318.

[230] New York Times, 23 August 1880, 5. Because some individuals took liberties with membership in the Brigade, "undesirable acquaintances" crept into the city's drawing rooms, forcing Brown to disband the group.

[231] Frederick Van Wyck, 69.

[232] Ibid.

[233] Ibid.

in a role that remained unique to New York.[234] The historian Frederic Cople Jaher observes that unlike the social leadership of Boston and Philadelphia who set their tone from within society, Brown and his successors Ward McAllister and Harry Lehr "originated as outsiders and remained in varying degrees employees of the clients they directed."[235] Nonetheless, some women like the author Constance Cary Harrison found Brown "arrogant," recalling his boast that he "could not undertake to 'run society' beyond Fiftieth Street."[236] Harrison also praised Brown for his ability to "temper justice with mercy in the case of his earlier patrons, the old families, whom he considered to be of first importance."[237] The city rang with apocryphal rumors of a newcomer's failure to consult Brown before an important event.[238] With his standard of taste for weddings, one needed only "Delmonico's, cash, and Isaac H. Brown."[239] His signature funerals similarly set the tone for polite bereavement.[240]

Brown flourished at a time when New York began to experience an influx of

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[234] Frederic Cople Jaher, "Style and Status: High Society in Late Nineteenth-Century New York," in The Rich, the Wellborn, and the Powerful: Elites and Upper Classes in History, edited by Frederic Cople Jaher, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 262.

[235] Ibid.

[236] Constance Cary Harrison, Recollections Grave and Gay, 275.

[237] Ibid., 316. See also Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Found It, 124.

[238] Arthur Bartlett Maurice, 68.

[239] Junius Henri Browne, 521. See also Marian Gouverneur, 137. There were limits to Brown's willingness to participate in all Grace Church functions. He refused his services at the 1863 nuptials of the dwarfs Tom Thumb and Lavinia Warren. According to Maria Lydig Daly, Brown "was so disgusted that... the police took his place." MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861 - 1865, February 13, 1863, 220.

[240] James D. McCabe, 169.

newly wealthy families. By the early 1870's the city was "beginning to dread and yet be drawn to" these people.[241] Brown transmitted to newcomers the established parameters of polite taste in a time of social uncertainty. Assuring the existing wealthy of their importance, Brown filtered new arrivals. To these newer individuals, Brown held forth the potential of access to the socially secure. Brown, who owed his secular enterprise to the needs of wealthy women, subverted all notions of class. His own obscure background gave women a convenient way to distance themselves from his opinions. Brown, as a social outsider, could never appreciate every nuance of taste and conduct. Prominent women like the author Constance Cary Harrison could turn a blind eye to his mistakes while using his judgements to form their own social opinions.[242] For women like Harrison, Brown functioned as a credible source of information at a time when extensive media coverage of social affairs did not exist. He enjoyed a long career because his insights helped women elites to exercise their social authority.

Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer succinctly described Brown as a "social messenger."[243] In this informal capacity, Brown assisted women in their discourse about the violation of social rules. The historian James Scott regards gossip and rumor as a form of "disguised popular aggression" and a "safe form[s] of social sanction" sometimes employed by those who lack true authority. Women, without complete public power, needed an indirect means to convey their social opinions. More direct

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[241] Edith Wharton, The Age of Innocence, 1.

[242] Constance Cary Harrison, Recollections Grave and Gay, 316-17.

[243] Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, The Social Ladder, 38.

social sanctions seemed inconsistent with domestic femininity. Men asserted themselves in competitive, commercial enterprise while women depended upon gentler methods of influence. Isaac Brown trafficked in social gossip, one indirect method used by women to curb the power of newcomers. Gossip, anonymous by definition, permitted its practitioners safely to claim that they had simply relayed information. Brown, mindful of a range of social activity, had been perfectly positioned to transmit his impressions of people and events to women in need of information. Brown also communicated rumors, which, in their ambiguity, had the potential to thrive in the absence of first-hand observation. Women, lacking institutional alternatives, used Brown to convey their social sanctions. Brown helped women maintain their awareness of and conformity to polite standards.[244] In New York's "hieroglyphic world," he became an outlet for women's anxieties regarding their efforts at social management.[245]

As Isaac Brown policed the material criteria of social status, he called attention to their importance. His secular services implied that social status could be purchased by following his standards of taste. To this extent, Brown undermined the value that wealthy elites attached to pedigree as he conveyed his opinions on the style of social events. While established families nodded in approval of Brown's deference towards them, the pecuniary nature of his secular enterprise suggests the potential for his

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[244] James C. Scott, Domination and the Arts of Resistance, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 141-145, passim. Similarly, the anthropologist Robin Dunbar in her study of primates and the evolution of language concludes that gossip is a "powerful mechanism" for social conformity and group stability. See Robin Dunbar, Grooming, Gossip and the Evolution of Language, (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1996), 172-173.

[245] Edith Wharton, The Age of Innocence, 36.

conflicting interest. Brown, in short, served both sides of the social street for money. Despite the appearance of this impropriety, Brown continued to perform as sexton of Grace Church. By the time of his death in August 1880, his informal methods of social management had outlived their usefulness to women.[246] By that date, the all male Patriarchs under the leadership of Ward McAllister had superceded Brown's effort on behalf of women to manage society. Even so, the Grace Church congregation commemorated Brown with a brass tablet crediting "his Fidelity, his Generosity, and his Stainless Integrity."[247] As indicated by this plaque, church fathers made no distinction between the value of Brown's religious duties and his secular enterprise. Brown remains a quaint historical figure, emblematic of the feminine effort to order the growth of their increasingly complex society.

Conclusion

As indicated by the Prince of Wales ball, New York had established itself as a city of commercial opportunity by 1860. The city's affluence could be measured by the generous expenditures on clothes and decor inside the Academy of Music. Historically, New York had developed as a city organized and built around business

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[246] New York Herald, 24 August 1880, 9; New York Times, 23 August 1880, 5.

[247] William Rhinelander Stewart, 299. Brown also survives in contemporaneous memoirs, doggerel and as a peripheral character in Edith Wharton's novel The Age of Innocence. William Allen Butler's poem "Diggory Pink"was originally published in The Literary World on March 24, 1849 as "The Sexton and the Thermometer." William Allen Butler, A Retrospect of Forty Years, 1825-1865, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911). A second tribute by the society bard Peter Marie is reprinted in several sources, including: Arthur Bartlett Maurice, 67. See also Marian Gouverneur, 137. The novelist Edith Wharton also referred to "Mr. Brown, the livery stable keeper." Edith Wharton, The Age of Innocence, 141.

advantage rather than the existence of an aristocracy. New York's social hierarchy had always reflected the power of money, despite the suggestion that lineage and pedigree also influenced social recognition.

Many in the city's monied society shared a blended Dutch-English heritage. Collectively known as Knickerbockers, these individuals considered themselves inheritors of a rich cultural tradition comparable to that of European nobility. Although this mutual ancestry reinforced the aristocratic pretensions of the wealthy, the city's first settlement had been a commercial outpost, lacking in European refinement. Most early residents came to New York in search of economic opportunity and the social mobility suggested by a free society. To the extent that the social values of the early Knickerbockers survived, the grand ball indicated that the cultural tastes of the wealthy had moved well beyond the comfortable restraint of their forebearers. While some of the wealthy saw themselves as members of an aristocracy, the Prince's royal manner demonstrated that true social authority required more than the appearance of a glamorous setting and fine clothing. In the end, the evening's wealthy organizers learned that their effort to set dress codes and vet guest lists did not convey the assured leadership of genuine aristocracy.

As further evidence of the city's prosperity, the expensively gowned wives and daughters of businessmen contributed to the evening's gaiety, serving as symbols of the city's commercial vitality. Women had played no role in the decision to host a ball or in the formulation of plans for the event. Women received newspaper commentary regarding their evening attire that specifically linked them to men of accomplishment.

Though women served as necessary components of the ball, they could only enjoy the royal presence as representatives of their prominent fathers and husbands. The 1860 Prince of Wales Ball showed these wealthy women to be at a crossroads. Virtually every woman inside the Academy derived her feminine identity from her understanding of her domestic obligation. The ease with which women met their private family responsibilities freed men from household concerns to concentrate upon their public activities. The position of women away from home became less assured, however. When in public, domesticity required that women sublimate any inclination to undue material display. Women, through this exercise of restraint, maintained the appearance of spiritual purity associated with their domestic identity. Public occasions like the Prince of Wales Ball, however, warranted that women represent their family's social importance. Such public occasions gave women the opportunity to display their personal taste in clothes and jewelry. To this extent, wealth helped women, both individually and as a group, affirm their social status within the wider community.

With the city's growth and as their public opportunities increased, women increasingly used material indications of status to convey their social identity. Fine clothing, whether worn to a grand social occasion or for a simple Sunday promenade, became the means by which women represented to the community their own importance as well as that of their families. As status became objectified, women exposed society's exclusive numbers to the challenge of wealthy newcomers who also had the means to acquire those things that signified social standing. By 1860, taste and style had become visible determinants of social merit. Inasmuch as women accepted

the responsibility for society's management as a part of their domestic responsibilities, they lacked an institutional structure to bind their individual opinions into a collective voice.

As the numbers of the wealthy increased and the task of social management grew more difficult, women elites increasingly relied upon the services of Isaac Brown. Brown, the sexton of the socially influential Grace Episcopal church, served wealthy women in many capacities. The socially secure turned to Brown to deliver invitations, make transportation arrangements and announce the arrival of guests at important social functions. Women from the city's newer families came to depend upon Brown's ability to oversee their guest lists and provide suitable escorts for important events. Brown's advice on the subtleties of taste in directing weddings, funerals and large private entertainments proved invaluable to these social newcomers. For the parvenu, adherence to Brown's suggestions held forth the promise of access to an elite society that increasingly premised its identity upon the appropriate display of wealth.

Brown understood the porous nature of the elite society that he served. Because elites had previously welcomed new families of commercial accomplishment, society could anticipate continued growth at its upper rungs. Yet as Brown offered newcomers potential access to elite society, he also functioned to maintain society's boundaries. Brown, who always deferred to the values and practices of those families with prior community standing, schooled newcomers on New York's existing fashionable criteria. His first-hand knowledge of the tastes of the rich positioned him to pass along his observations to women in need of information upon which to premise their activity and

social judgement. Women understood that their society could only maintain its authority by retaining its exclusive caliber. Brown, cognizant of society's need for exclusivity, also transmitted his knowledge of parvenus, suggesting that his knowledge of them held the potential of social sanction. Through Isaac Brown, taste became the means by which wealthy women elites monitored and shaped the cultural values of the newly rich. As taste signified social status, it increasingly became the rationale by which women withheld social recognition.

Because Brown tutored social aspirants on the material determinants of social recognition, he undermined other elite status criteria like family lineage. Brown, however, offered wealthy women a non-confrontational, indirect means of social governance consistent with prevailing notions of polite femininity. Women's need for his services does not address, however, the question of why the wives and daughters of the city's wealthy businessmen resisted the social inroads of other similarly situated women. The answer to this lies in the domestic construct that shaped the feminine identity of individual women. As the city grew over the nineteenth century, women's understanding of their public duty would begin to change. In 1860, women enjoyed a public existence without fully participating in the life of the city. Over time, women would expand upon the ideals of morality and domestic virtue to find personal fulfillment and a more active community life. The empowerment of individual women

would occur at the expense of their group collectivity, however.[248] Despite this trend, domesticity would continue to serve as the point of reference for women's lives outside the home. Women, in the coming decades, would search for their collective strength in an manner consistent with their domestic identity in their effort to manage an increasingly difficult social environment.[249]

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[248] The historian Sven Beckert argues that New York's bourgeoisie had coalesced at the end of the nineteenth century into a distinct and self-conscious elite who premised its power on capital. Sven Beckert, 1-14. Beckert departs from the earlier historical analysis of David Hammack who concludes that the city's elites remained culturally and organizationally fragmented at the end of the century. David C. Hammack, Power and Society: Greater New York at the Turn of the Twentieth Century, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1982), 304. See also Timothy J. Gilfoyle, "Making an American Upper Class," Reviews in American History, 30 (2002): 279-287.

[249] Leon Fink, "Class Consciousness American-Style," in Major Problems in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era: Documents and Essays, Leon Fink, ed. (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1993), 42.

Parameters of Privilege

At the 1860 ball honoring Edward Prince of Wales, New York's wealthy women confirmed their social status with lavish ballroom attire. Women, elaborately gowned and bejeweled, represented an important part of the evening's pageantry. To gain a sense of women's complete lives beyond this glamorous setting, one must also examine the origins of their collective identity. Many wealthy women shared similar childhoods molded by parents who schooled their daughters in precepts of feminine domesticity. Young women grew to appreciate their domestic obligation to home and family under the assumption that they would mature to manage their own households. Parents educated their daughters in preparation for this foreseeable future.

Similarly, young women developed a self awareness that would ultimately guide their formation of a social identity. Patrician parents made choices about a daughter's education and socialization prior to marriage which fostered the continuance of social values. Parents linked young women to networks of privilege that mirrored many of their own standards. These important early connections tied the daughters of the rich to past traditions of social activity. Parents shaped a young woman's social environment, surrounding her in a cocoon of suitable people, places and activities. Early associations with children from other affluent homes formed a young woman's taste into a group consciousness. At an early age, daughters of the rich learned to represent their parents

among their contemporaries and in the wider community. In accepting parental guidance, young women prepared themselves for a social identity they would enjoy as adults.

In 1860, women's understanding of their domestic responsibility both shaped and limited their feminine aspirations. Social convention accepted that a girl would marry, usually out of individual choice rather family motive. Women, as mothers and household managers, played important roles in their daughters' socialization. While patrician parents did not always specify a daughter's husband, they managed her early socialization so that she encountered young men that they, as parents, deemed suitable. A well-married daughter reflected positively upon skillful parental tutelage and the social values she had learned as a child. Just as young women replicated the values of their parents within their own households, their children could also be expected to mature into responsible members of society. Women understood the necessity of this domestic obligation as a part of their contribution to the greater social good. The community benefitted from a woman's ability to create a sheltering home environment that nurtured happy children and fostered male achievement.

Although parents implicitly served as role models for their children, this chapter considers explicit choices parents made to shape their daughters' social development. This chapter examines the strengths and limitations of feminine education, the influence of foreign and domestic travel as well as parental management of a young girl's social life prior to marriage. Critical to an understanding of these women are the entitlements of wealth inherent in their privileged upbringing. As a consequence, this chapter views a young woman's early awareness of status and the importance of clothing to her identity as

a daughter of privilege. This chapter also considers clothing as it enabled the construction of childhood memories.

In mining this terrain, this chapter uncovers a parental emphasis upon the visible determinants of status, including the proper decorum and the material indications of wealth. As daughters learned to value these status indications, they also learned the social fundamentals which would inform their own management of society.

Education's Value

Schooling that combined models of both practicality and elegance, groomed young women in the cultivation of domesticity, or the "cloistered and untested virtues of the non-participant."[1] In the decades before the Civil War, society premised the need for female education on the notion that women were physically and emotionally unsuited for the individualistic, competitive aspects of public life. The pressured worlds of commerce and the professions remained best left to men, typically assumed to be better equipped to meet these challenges. Women's softer, more spiritual natures enabled their success as wives and mothers. Because of this basic understanding that men and women would fulfill different social roles, all-female secondary schools were founded in the early nineteenth century to meet women's separate educational needs.[2] Women, as a consequence, received training in those subjects which insured their success as wives and mothers.

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[1] Ann Douglas, 58.

[2] Nancy Cott, 112-125. See also Linda K. Kerber, 206-231; Mary Beth Norton, Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750 - 1800, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1980), 272-287.

Despite the limitations of this schooling, Elizabeth Christophers Hobson later pioneered in nurses' education. Elizabeth remembered as an adult, however, her mother's wish to school her five daughters in "feminine attainments only, to marry early."[3] Similarly, Florence Jaffray Hurst Harriman, who served as Ambassador to Norway, recalled of her early training only her father's insistence upon his daughters' erect carriage, making them walk daily with a book on their heads.[4]

Many wealthy parents understood marriage as the only reasonable alternative for a young woman. Even Elisabeth Marbury, who pursued a career as a theatrical agent, strongly believed that women should marry. For Marbury, women's "one indisputable field of usefulness is in the bearing and raising of children. This is the end for which God intended her."[5] The author Julia Ward Howe echoed these sentiments, advising all women, rich or poor, to "[l]earn to make a home, and learn this in the days in which learning is easy."[6]

Because of such strongly held opinions, women's schooling introduced patrician daughters only to the subjects and skills necessary to their successful performance as wife and mother. Mrs. Slyvanus Reed, the founder of a girls academy in 1864, believed that education should be "one of the chief agents in developing whatever is true and faithful in

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[3] Elizabeth Christophers Hobson, 73. See also Dictionary of Notable American Women, s.v. "Hobson, Elizabeth Christophers."

[4] Florence Jaffray Hurst Harriman, From Pinafores to Politics, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1923), 15. See also Dictionary of Notable American Women, s.v. "Harriman, Florence Jaffray Hurst."

[5] Elisabeth Marbury, 36.

[6] Julia Ward Howe, 213.

the home."[7] Proper schooling included the mastery of useful household skills like sewing and needlework. Education in subjects like the modern languages, history, geography and literature increased the capacities for artistic appreciation and furthered a woman's powers of discrimination. A superficial acquaintance with a broad range of subject matter enabled young women to converse pleasantly and enhanced their suitability as a prospective marriage partner. The correct schooling also introduced young women to their peers, forming a network of friends that would people adult sociability. There were notable exceptions to this formula for feminine education, including Emma Willard's Seminary in Troy, New York and Mary Lyon's Academy in Mount Holyoke, Massachusetts, where women received schooling comparable to that of men. Most patrician families, however. did not avail themselves of these educational opportunities for their daughters in the decades before the Civil War.

Girls routinely received home schooling prior to their enrollment at one of the city's all-female academies. Small, privately tutored classes introduced children to basic subjects. Some parents included other children in these home lessons, charging a small fee to underwrite the costs associated with special tutors. Florence Jaffray Hurst Harriman recalled her first lessons in the home of Pierpont Morgan along with the Morgan daughters Juliet and Anne.[8] Nathalie Smith Dana remembered that until the 1880's most parents harbored suspicions of outside kindergartens, preferring to school their small

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[7] Mrs. Sylvanus Reed, "The Private School for Girls," Scribner's 8, no.4 (October 1890): 525.

[8] Florence Jaffray Hurst Harriman, 16.

children at home. "Children were expected to learn to read by themselves with some help from their parents" so that home lessons concentrated on subjects like writing, spelling and French.[9] At around age ten, most young girls enrolled in a school outside the home. Traditionally, all-female institutions, maintained by single or widowed women, attracted students of good family who could be groomed to move gracefully in New York's benevolent and social circles. Most women's schools did not require entrance examinations so that wealthy parents could easily send their daughters to an institution within walking distance of home.

As a publication catering to elite tastes, The Home Journal provided guidance on polite schooling for young women. Although several institutions advertised in this publication, it editorially endorsed Miss Reed's School for Young Ladies at 20 West 16th Street. This institution, like many others, offered boarding accommodations for students from outside the city. Miss Reed's particularly attracted girls from southern states as it promised to "make school a home, and study a pleasure."[10] Miss Reed's touted itself as a "French and English Boarding and Day School" with "an efficient corps of resident teachers." The school compensated for any "intellectual attractions" with the assurance that it would provide its students "all the kindly influences of home."[11]

In 1860, The Home Journal enumerated thirty-five New York institutions specializing in the educational needs of young women. This listing included schools where

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[9] Nathalie Dana, Young in New York: A Memoir of a Victorian Girlhood, (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1963), 73.

[10] The Home Journal, 3 July 1858, 3.

[11] The Home Journal, 3 September 1859, 3.

"solid and practical branches of education are taught" and the "ornamental and the polite are likewise inculcated."[12] The editors of the magazine claimed to have inspected or made personal inquiries into each institution. In view of this assertion, the inclusion of Henry C. Vail's Scientific and Practical Agriculture School in Sing Sing, New York, is curious. Most of the other named schools, however, fulfilled traditional expectations for female education. The principal of The Spingler Institute at Fifth Avenue and Thirty-Fourth Street stated that "woman requires and should receive an education as 'liberal' as that provided for the sterner sex."[13] Despite this claim, a detailed discussion of the school indicated that students obtained little more than an "appreciation of aesthetic culture in the highest sense of the term."[14] Other institutions named by The Home Journal offered only advanced classes in selected subjects like French, voice, piano, design and Shakespearean elocution, suggesting again the limited expectations for women's education.

Although The Home Journal recognized the importance of women's learning as well as its demand among elite families, the graduates of these schools recall only "a very sketch education" organized around rote learning.[15] Florence Jaffray Hurst Harriman particularly remembered drills in spelling and penmanship at Miss Lockwood's academy on Lexington Avenue.[16] Frances Metcalf Wolcott remembered that Mrs. Macauley's School combined regular outings for Shakespearean theater with the memorization of

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[12] The Home Journal, 10 September 1859, 2.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Florence Jaffray Hurst Harriman, 16.

[16] Ibid.

"large portions of the text."[17] Though Edith Kermit Roosevelt studied zoology, botany and physiology at Miss Comstock's School at 32 West Fortieth Street, the mastery of these subjects required only that students memorize the parts of the body in Latin.[18] Learning for polite young women primarily consisted of memorization followed by extended classroom recitation. Frances Metcalf Wolcott recalled the shame of a friend's "halting performance in recitation, on the last day of school, [which] made one wish to sink under a chair."[19] Number One Fifth Avenue, considered to be the city's finest women's school, also practiced this same instructional method. Carolyn Pryor Pine noted that her mother, the product of this "famous" academy, could recite the ballads of Scott and Macaulay "by the hour."[20]

Number One Fifth Avenue had been established in 1839 by Lucy Merriman Green.[21] Born in 1810 in Worcester, Massachusetts, to William E. and Lucy Merriman Green, Lucy enjoyed the advantages of a comfortable childhood that cultivated her

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[17] Frances Metcalf Wolcott, Heritage of Years, (New York: Minton, Balch & Company, 1932), 33. A native of Buffalo, New York, Frances Metcalf was widowed by Lyman K. Bass before she married United States Senator Edward O. Wolcott of Colorado. She was a distant relative, by marriage, to Elizabeth Wolcott Merchant. See also The Home Journal, 3 September 1859, 4.

[18] Sylvia Jukes Morris, Edith Kermit Roosevelt: Portrait of a First Lady, (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, Inc.), 33.

[19] Ibid., 32.

[20] Carolyn Pryor Pine, 9.

[21] Elizabeth Wolcott Merchant recorded a few passing references to her years at Number One Fifth Avenue. On one occasion she attended "a meeting of Miss Green's old scholars...to consult about some memorial work to be done in her name." EWM, Diaries, Monday, January 18, 1886; Monday, October 5, 1908.

"inherited mental and religious traits."[22] Green's own teachers included the reformer Dorothea L. Dix and Lucretia Bancroft, sister of the historian and diplomat George Bancroft.[23] Lucy Green completed her formal studies at several private academies in New York. In the early 1830's, she began teaching at Number One Fifth under the leadership of Mrs. Esther Smith. Upon Mrs. Smith's retirement in 1839, Lucy Green assumed the management of the school with her sister Mary.[24] Lucy Green, operating under the precepts for woman's education, both strengthened and extended the school's reputation for academic excellence. She insisted upon "the most competent corps of teachers" available, including: the Rev. George H. Cheever; the artist Charles Eames; the librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte; the author Anna Lynch Botta; and Henry J. Raymond, the founder of The New York Times.

In 1869, Frances Graham assumed leadership of the school.[25] Miss Graham called

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[22] New York Times, 6 August 1893, 2.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] After her retirement from teaching, Lucy Green lived at her family's Massachusetts homestead where she managed and renovated the property Her younger brother, the civic reformer Andrew H. Green, assisted these efforts. In 1885, Lucy Green's former students commemorated her seventy-fifth birthday with the purchase of a house and grounds at Greens Farms, Connecticut, under the aegis of the L. M. Green Association. This property, entrusted to the supervision of the Working Women's Vacation Society, became a summer retreat for self-supporting women, particularly teachers and nurses. Lucy Green died in Massachusetts in 1893. New York Times, 6 August 1893, 2. Former students gathered again in 1917 to honor Lucy Green's commitment to women's education with the installation of a commemorative plaque at Green's Farms. New York Times, 17 May 1917, 8. Lucy's brother Andrew Haswell Green participated in a number of New York civic reforms. In 1868, he revised an initiative that consolidated the city west and north of Central Park. Later, he worked to consolidate New York into a single municipality of five boroughs, earning him the soubriquet "Father of Greater New York." Green also participated in the 1895 formation of the New York Public Library as

the roll each morning at Number One Fifth Avenue from a "throne" situated on a raised platform in the large assembly hall. Students entered the building a few steps above street level. The ground floor contained a reception area, administrative offices and several living rooms. The rest of the building remained free for educational purposes. Older girls attended classes on the second floor which also featured a carpeted Ladies Parlor and several long assembly rooms. For Mabel Osgood Wright, the school offered, "Lessons not too important or too difficult; healthy competition for the head of the class, neatly written essays upon rather abstract subjects easily transcribed from Appleton's American Encyclopedia; texts from the Bible recited one or two a day and grouped at the month's end, made up the slight mental strain."[26] Requirements for deportment could be fulfilled by exhibiting clean teeth and fingernails, refraining from whispering and daily turns at sweeping away table crumbs after lunch. In addition to the crumbing ritual, Mabel Wright remembered plain classrooms furnished with "stiff, narrow-seated, high-backed chairs" where students sat for their lessons. During the winter months, most students wore sleeveless knitted jackets or small plaid shawls because they "never knew what it was to be relaxingly warm."[27]

At age fourteen, girls advanced to the senior department which was graded into five year-long courses. Instructors grouped various studies about a particular historical

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executor of the Samuel Tilden estate. Green died in New York in 1903. Encyclopedia of New York City, s.v. " Green, Andrew Haswell." See also New York Times, 14 November 1903, 2.

[26] Mabel Osgood Wright, My New York, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1926), 178.

[27] Ibid., 179-180, passim.

period including: Greece; Rome; England; America; and a universal summary during the final year of study. Girls also attended an array of impressively titled classes in the natural sciences, astronomy, physics, mathematics, rhetoric and composition, literature, and Latin. All students were required to converse in French during school hours. Finally, the school required penmanship classes for all girls. Number One Fifth Avenue offered the option of instruction in the "moulded, angular or the round hand, trimmed, if one so wished, with many pigeon wings and flourishes."[28]

Catherine Elizabeth Haven's older sister also maintained a school for about ninety students on East Ninth Street that Catherine attended. Catherine's childhood diary included a list of the rules read annually to assembled students at the school's September opening. While most of the shibboleths concerned loud talking, tardiness and neatness, several others related to the requirements of classroom recitation. This school also advised that "[a]ll unnecessary questions both to teachers and scholars may thus be avoided."[29] With any independent thought discouraged by school administrators and classroom teachers, Carolyn Pryor Pine's conclusion that she "learned little" is understandable.[30] Carolyn Pine, however, did not fall prey to her own intellectual curiosity, noting with some interest a friend who read Bacon's Essays "hidden behind her school desk."[31] Florence Jaffray Hurst Harriman also recalled an elocution teacher as

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[28] Ibid., 181, 182, passim.

[29] Catherine Elizabeth Havens, Diary of a Little Girl in Old New York, (New York: Henry Collins Brown, 1920), 151.

[30] Carolyn Pryor Pine, 9.

[31] Ibid., 7.

"very odd that such a pretty teacher could be so strong-minded."[32] In keeping with these opinions, women elites often echoed Elizabeth Story Palmer's appraisal of an education which valued that "'wisdom is better than knowledge.' They could sew, so beautifully, they could keep 'help,' they knew how to have babies and they understood husbands."[33]

Elizabeth Palmer's acceptance of the limits of her schooling is somewhat unusual. Other women elites regretted their academic deficiencies, confining their memories of their formal educations to a few brief sentences in their memoirs. These recollections usually concentrated on a favorite teacher or a subject that inspired individual excellence. The author Julia Ward Howe, for example, limited her school memories to her reference to a class captioned "Conversations in Chemistry" where she "studied with great pleasure albeit that I never saw one of the experiments therein described."[34] Other women are apologetic for their lack of genuine education. The novelist Edith Wharton characterized her formal training as simply private tutoring in "modern languages and good manners."[35] Schooled in subjects valued by her mother Lucretia Jones, Wharton emphasized the importance of self-education through the solitary pleasures of reading. Other women like Elisabeth Marbury dismissed her education as only a "ruthless reminder of the passing years."[36] A more meaningful education occurred on Marbury's first trip to Europe where she gained both historical knowledge and a genuine introduction to art and beauty. For

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[32] Florence Jaffray Hurst Harriman, 18.

[33] Elizabeth Story Palmer, 14.

[34] Julia Ward Howe, 56.

[35] Edith Wharton, A Backward Glance, 48.

[36] Elisabeth Marbury, 11.

Elisabeth Marbury, travel to Europe compared to "a meal in which the courses were reversed, but there was time enough to tabulate."[37]

Foreign Travel

Wealthy parents like the Marbury's made the affirmative decision to permit their daughters to travel as an extension of their formal education. Many of the wealthy in the nineteenth century viewed travel as a way to obtain the "desirable elements of a gracious and refined way of life."[38] Life at home lacked the tradition, glamour and polish suggested by a familiarity with European culture. European travel also served as a "stage for independent self definition" and personal discovery.[39] For young women, otherwise sheltered at home, travel enhanced self-confidence and independence as well as it schooled in the social graces. Finally, travel gave many of the wealthy a way to confirm their status claims. As early as 1865, the writer Robert Tomes complained of people going abroad "for no better reason than because traveling costs money . . . [and] is approved by fashion."[40] Many individuals simply longed for the opportunity to buy European goods and perhaps achieve the social success that had eluded them at home. One study shows that 50,000 Americans traveled to Europe in 1866 alone.[41] The increased popularity of

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[37] Ibid., 34.

[38] William W. Stowe, Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth-Century American Culture, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 5.

[39] Ibid.

[40] [Robert Tomes], "The Americans on their Travels," Harpers New Monthly Magazine, 31(1865): 57.

[41] Allison Lockwood, Passionate Pilgrims: The American Traveler in Great Britain, 1800-1914, (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1981), 198. Cited in Mary Suzanne Schriber, "Julia Ward Howe and the Travel Book" New England Quarterly LXII, no. 2

guides and other travel literature is consistent with this figure. One bibliography itemized 1,822 books on travel published in America before 1900.[42]

For young women, the anticipation of foreign travel generated a great deal of excitement. Elizabeth Christophers Hobson recalled her "celebrity" status when her parents reluctantly agreed in 1849 to permit her trip with family friends around Cape Horn to San Francisco and on to India. At the Astor House Hotel, where the Hobson's customarily resided for the winter months, Elizabeth relished the status of being "the girl who was going round the world."[43] Though Elizabeth made this journey on a "fine clipper ship," she later concluded that "the second-cabin passengers on an ocean steamer...are far more comfortable and have better food."[44] In 1863, Cornelia Jay, great-granddaughter of America's first Chief Justice, traveled to Europe on the bark "Henry Hill." Cornelia elected to travel by sail rather than a newer steam vessel out of a romantic desire "to go to sea in a sailing vessel and above all to have a grand rough time of it. Well! Both wishes have been granted . . . and I can record this next hearty wish on the subject that I never want to do it again."[45] On this voyage, the young Cornelia suffered miserably from seasickness, endured perilous storms and competed gamely for deck space with the ship's livestock. Her journey to Marseilles required almost four weeks. Elizabeth Hobson's trip from New York to San Francisco, under similar conditions, lasted one hundred twenty-

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(June 1989), 265.

[42] Ibid., 4.

[43] Elizabeth Christophers Hobson, 14.

[44] Ibid., 15.

[45] Cornelia Jay, 95.

five days.

Faster, steam powered vessels, which debuted in New York in 1838, quickly provided the adventurous with a faster alternative to the older sailing ships. By 1850, two major lines, the Cunard Company of Great Britain and the American-owned Collins Line, operated small fleets of "liners" running weekly between New York and Liverpool.[46] These early steamers, also equipped with sails, crossed the Atlantic in from fifteen to eighteen days, approximating the time of the fastest clipper ships. Newer steam powered vessels soon reported Atlantic crossings of nine and ten days. Newer ships also attracted passengers with promises of greater comfort and convenience. By the 1850's, the Collins Line could advertise its transatlantic crossing as "a pleasant excursion"with fares ranging from around $160 for a first class cabin to $80 for second class.[47]

Despite the luxury suggested by these newer, faster vessels, passenger cabins, often shared, were little more than "close, low-ceilinged closets."[48] Sanitation remained primitive with a single, sequestered spot on the upper deck usually designated as the "bathing room." Even as late as 1870, Cunard's "Tarifa" had no baths and only two toilets.[49] Ship construction also limited the amount of deck space available for passenger use. Most liners supplied deck chairs so that passengers could engage in traditional shipboard pastimes of reading, knitting and conversation. Many vessels could also

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[46] Foster Rhea Dulles, Americans Abroad: Two Centuries of European Travel, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1964), 44.

[47] Ibid., 46.

[48] Ibid., 48.

[49] Ibid., 49.

accommodate walking and deck sports. Popular indoor activities centered around evenings of cards or chess, auctions on the length of the day's progress, dances and special champagne-filled captain's dinners. Shipboard life on a peaceful crossing could become quite gay. The abolitionist Samuel Gridley Howe noted his wife Julia's frivolity on their wedding voyage in 1843 when she organized a lady's tea and presided over a series of toasts to the ship's cow.[50] Annie J. Bradley recorded the highlights of two ship-sponsored dances held on board "The Canada" in the company of eighteen young men from Hobart College.[51]

An ocean voyage also brought an unpleasant experience to many travelers. Seasickness, resulting from the ship's motion and the rotation of its screw, afflicted many passengers. Pungent engine fumes and poor ventilation added to the predictable cluster of symptoms associated with ocean travel. Cornelia Jay returned to America in 1864 on a steamer operated by the German Lloyd Company. Though she enjoyed the privacy of her cabin, she endured protracted bouts of nausea and spent most of the crossing "sitting in a heap in a corner of the ladies little parlor."[52] Cornelia also complained that the"screw makes considerable motion and I feel it greatly in my stateroom. One evening I was lying in my berth with the everlasting shake . . . and behold, presently it did stop, only for a moment, but quite enough to frighten me."[53]

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[50] Julia Ward Howe, 90.

[51] Annie J. Bradley, Diary, August 3, 1872 - December 15, 1874, Manuscript Collection, New York Public Library, New York, New York, Saturday, August 3, 1872. Hereafter, citations from this source will be given by name and date.

[52] Cornelia Jay, Friday, August 28, 1864, 155.

[53] Ibid., Saturday, August 29, 1864, 156.

Land excursions presented travelers with another array of obstacles. Many wealthy Americans hired private couriers to direct them through main attractions, attend to railway tickets, and deter bandits and highway men.[54] Elisabeth Marbury particularly remembered an Italian courier who "evidently thought that American tourists were congenital idiots, for he never failed to exclaim when leaving a hotel, 'This is the street.'"[55] Young women like Elisabeth Marbury, however, needed a courier to ease the difficulties associated with their European experience. Travel in Europe challenged the assurance gained by the security of a home environment. Wealthy Americans usually hired private coaches before the advent of rail travel. Even this amenity posed uncertainty, however. Caroline Crane Marsh found one descent amid the superb scenery of the Italian Dolomites "so alarming that only two of us kept to the carriage."[56] The more venturesome used public conveyances like the French diligence which carried up to eighteen people with luggage.[57] Inside the diligence, passengers sat upright on hard seats, crowded into tightly sealed compartments for long periods through the night. Though this public transport often stopped to change its team of six to eight horses, there were no scheduled rest stops for passenger convenience. Rail service, widely available by mid-century, frequently

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[54] Mrs. Sarah J. Hale provides a complete description of the useful services provided by foreign couriers. Sarah J. Hale, Manners; or, Happy Homes and Good Society All the Year Round, (Boston: J. E. Tilton and Company, 1868; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1972), 132-133.

[55] Elisabeth Marbury, 32.

[56] Caroline Crane Marsh, "Diary, 1878-1879," n.d., n.p. Crane Family Papers, Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, New York, New York. Hereafter, citations from this source will be given by name and title.

[57] Foster Rhea Dulles, 57.

entailed lengthy delays and scheduling changes. Tourists also complained of rigorous customs inspections when crossing borders.[58]

Travel accommodations could prove equally daunting. Most Americans lauded English accommodations where even countryside inns provided a welcoming fire and homelike dining. Northern European countries, including Switzerland, Germany and Austria, also enjoyed a reputation for comfort and cleanliness which appealed to American habits. Accommodations in France, however, were less dependable. Many travelers considered Italy to be the most primitive tourist destination. Caroline Crane Marsh, for example, noted her family's need to fashion a bed in one Italian destination. "We fastened together with pins the two cradle blankets that lay on our beds, put the feather bed, intended for our feet under our backs–for the so-called spring mattress might as well have been slabs from the over hanging Dolomites."[59] Caroline's ability to confront this challenge, however, built her self confidence and enriched the memories of her journey.

Most American travelers used guide books to inform their journey.[60] By the late

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[58] Nathaniel Parker Willis, Pencilings by the Way: Written during Some Years of Residence and Travel in Europe, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1852). Cited in Ibid.

[59] Caroline Crane Marsh, "Diary, 1878 - 1879," n.p.

[60] William W. Stowe finds a shift in emphasis between guide books published before the Civil War and those afterwards. Earlier volumes, such as George Palmer Putnam, The Tourist in Europe, (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1838) and Roswell Park, A Hand-Book for American Travellers in Europe, (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1853) earnestly present Europe for personal edification from the American perspective. The tone of travel literature changed, however, after the Civil War as indicated by books like Morford's Short-trip Guide to Europe, (New York: Lee Shepard, and Dillingham, 1874). Morford's emphasizes the practicality of brief stops in major cities with minimal exposure to the custom and habits of Europeans. Books also appeared for less-prosperous travelers, including Bayard Taylor, Views A-foot, rev. ed., (New York: G.P. Putnam and Son, 1855) which described an extended trip, budgeted at fifty cents a day. William W. Stowe, 29-37.

nineteenth century, this genre included books directed solely to women's needs. Many women's travel guides assumed a feminine independence, thoroughly lacking in earlier, general interest guides.[61] European Travel for Women by Mary Cadwalader Jones is one example of women's travel literature.[62] Mary Jones, sister of the novelist Edith Wharton, intended her book for the well-heeled. She assured her readership that with a well-planned, leisurely trip "your mental horizon [will be] widened for the rest of your life."[63] She provided practical suggestions for any eventuality a woman might encounter, warning that "soap is never furnished in Continental hotels."[64] Jones' recommended travel pharmacopeia included plaster, bandages, liniment, quinine, cholera mixture and a mild laxative. For seasickness, she insisted upon Dr. Burggreave's granules of hyoscyamine and sulphate of strychnine.[65] Mary Jones also advised that the following items be packed for a trip, including: a paper cutter; a wooden pencil; a stiff, cheap fan; "a thick gauze veil in case of excessive dust"; a small bottle of brandy or ginger; a folding silver fruit knife; a travelling drinking cup; a small "housewife" or sewing kit with "glove and shoe buttons, a thimble, safety-pins, cobblers thread and a plaited tress of sewing silk"; an inkstand,

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[61] William W. Stowe, 37.

[62] Mary Cadwalader Jones, European Travel for Women, (New York: Macmillian and Company, 1900). See also May Alcott Nieriker, Studying Art Abroad: How to Do It Cheaply, (Boston: Roberts, 1879) and Women's Rest Tour Association, A Summer in England, with a Continental Supplement: A Hand-Book for the Use of American Women, (Boston: Alfred Mudge, 1894).

[63] Mary Cadwalader Jones, 4.

[64] Ibid., 40.

[65] Ibid., 49.

stamps, a blotter and writing paper; a hot water bottle with its own flannel coat; a thermometer; an inflatable rubber bathing tub outfitted with whalebone stays; and a small portable lamp or "Etna" with its separate supply of alcohol.[66]

These necessaries indicate not only the level of amenity that awaited the female tourist but also women's desire to encase themselves with reminders of home. The handy "housewife" and inflatable bathing tub could never substitute for the convenience and security of a well-equipped household, suggesting the limits of what a woman would endure while abroad. Jones' advice also implies that women could never rid themselves of their domestic identity. According to the sociologist Judith Adler, travel "implies collectively sustained and successfully transmitted conventions of performance."[67] Travel, as with any performance, also suggests the existence of an audience whose responses and interventions play "a constructive role" in the overall experience.[68] To see women's travel as performance permits some understanding of their desire for predictability in the travel experience. Women elites shared their experiences abroad with gifts, letters and diaries, often maintained for public consumption. As they transmitted their travel experience to others, wealthy women confirmed their elite status. At the same time, travel helped women to maintain their domestic identity, while offering the opportunity to evade or challenge that persona.[69]

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[66] Ibid., 41, 45, 47, 51, passim.

[67] Judith Adler, "Travel as Performance," American Journal of Sociology 94, no.6 (May 1989): 1387.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ann Douglas, 237.

As seen in recommendations of Mary Jones, women patterned their travel experience along prevailing notions of domesticity. Travel for wealthy women had become by the 1850's a "culturally recognized and codified phenomenon," in which part of the performance included appropriate gift giving.[70] Women fulfilled this expectation when they unpacked their trunks and distributed presents to friends and family upon their arrival home. In this way, women materially shared the benefits of their foreign experience. With gifts from abroad, a woman demonstrated her sophisticated tastes as well as her feminine sensitivity to the needs of others.

Throughout their journey, women also regularly informed family and friends of the details of their trip through personal letters. Women had been schooled to perform this task by virtue of their training in penmanship and literary composition. The social establishment valued letter writing for both men and women as an important skill. The author and editor Sarah J. Hale concluded that "nothing ... marks the lady or gentleman more than the mode in which they write a letter or note."[71] Most purveyors of taste concurred in this assessment as they often devoted several chapters to the construction and content of letters in prescriptive literature.[72] Travel letters reflected a woman's

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[70] William W. Stowe, 25.

[71] Sarah J. Hale, 136.

[72] John H. Young, Our Deportment or the Manners, Conduct and Dress of the Most Refined Society, (Detroit: F.B. Dickerson & Co., 1882), 242-266; Richard A. Wells, Manners, Culture and Dress of the Best American Society, (Springfield, Massachusetts: King, Richardson & Co., 1891), 169-196; Eliza Leslie, Miss Leslie's Behavior Book; A Guide and Manual for Ladies, (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson and Brothers, 1839; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1972), 150-174; Sherwood, Mary Elizabeth, Manners and Social Usages, 4th edition, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1897; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1975),159-167; Sarah J. Hale, 136-139.

personality and character, demonstrating her discriminatory powers of observation. Women also understood that personal travel letters written to family members would be shared with friends outside the home. The socially prominent Maria Lydig Daly once commented upon a woman whom she found to be "spiritual, good and lovely." Maria Daly based this impression upon her recollection that the woman had traveled, seen "a great deal of good English society . . . and the letters she wrote were charming."[73]

Some women chronicled their travels for publication in order to record their experiences and "to create for themselves appealing, powerful and prestigious cultural personas."[74] The importance of travel as a component of a woman's identity is also evident in the diaries that many maintained while abroad. Travel diaries required both a disciplined organizational technique and the ability to articulate one's impressions. Victorian parents generally "promoted diary writing among girls as an effort to...encourage conformity to societal expectations."[75] The maintenance of a diary also "contributed to the process by which late-Victorian girls amassed fragments of experience into an identity."[76] Annie J. Bradley, for example, expressed her genuine interest in the social aspects of her two-year European tour as she often noted other Americans that she

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[73] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," December 2, 1875.

[74] William W. Stowe, 55. Examples of this genre of Victorian women's travel writing include Lydia H. Sigourney, Pleasant Memories of Pleasant Lands, (Boston: James Munroe, 1842); Harriet Beecher Stowe, Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands, (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1854); Margaret Fuller, "These Sad but Glorious Days": Dispatches from Europe, 1846, 1850. Edited by Larry J. Reynolds and Susan Belasco Smith. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

[75] Jane H. Hunter, "Inscribing the Self in the Heart of the Family: Diaries and Girlhood in Late-Victorian America," American Quarterly 44, no.1 (March 1992): 52.

[76] Ibid.

met on her trip. The details of her time in London offer nothing more than a listing of the sites she visited. Annie, however, found the time to inscribe a lengthy passage concerning a young man's social call in which she judged him "altogether too familiar and free."[77] Though traveling ostensibly for educational purposes, Europe for Annie Bradley provided a only backdrop for social opportunity. By the time she reached Dresden, Germany, in 1873 she confessed to being "a little tired of doing nothing but study."[78] Annie obviously intended this diary for private use. Although her regular entries indicate her orderly habits, they also suggest her self-assertion when confronted with the duty of keeping a record of her trip. Annie Bradley used her diary "to carve out a measure of imaginative independence."[79]

In contrast to Annie Bradley, Miss Whitehall obediently indexed the contents of her 1860 travel journal, indicating her implicit desire to maintain the volume so that others might enjoy its contents. In a neatly rounded hand, Miss Whitehall supplemented her detailed passages on the contents of European museums and churches with dates and literary quotations gleaned from other sources.[80] Miss Whitehall valued the educational opportunities offered by a European trip. Her crisp presentations, however, reveal nothing of a personal nature, indicating Miss Whitehall's desire only to share only her

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[77] Annie J. Bradley, "Diary, August 3, 1872-December 15-1874," Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, New York, New York, Sunday, August 4, 1872. Hereafter, citations from this source will be given by name and date.

[78] Annie J. Bradley, Thursday, March 27, 1873.

[79] Jane H. Hunter, "Inscribing the Self," 61.

[80] "Miss Whitehall's Journal, 1860," 1 vol., Crane Family Papers, Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, New York, New York.

cultural impressions, fulfilling the expectations of others for her intellectual growth. Both Miss Whitehall's inclusion of literary references and the amount of descriptive detail in her record suggests that she referred to an outside source in constructing her diary. Many travel books provided information that coached the traveler on how to respond to what they had experienced.[81]

The journal of Miss M.R. Parkman, who journeyed with her father through Egypt and the Holy Lands, supports this conclusion. Miss Parkman confessed that she penned her impressions of the Dead Sea after her return to Jerusalem because "after writing my account (copied into this book) liking always to write my account after reading a description of the scene visited."[82] Miss Parkman's admission that she used her guide book to shape her travel record raises doubts about the naturalness of her impressions. Her use of a guide to create a diary entry indicates Miss Parkman's wish to construct a meaningful record of her trip as well her hope that her diary would meet the approval of its readers. In keeping with this goal, Miss Parkman never explicitly stated an opinion on the larger issues that she encountered in her travels. She does not, for example, reveal her thoughts on the position of women in the countries that she visited. Instead, she recounted her discomfort in a Cairo hotel when asked to hand her intimate laundry to a male chambermaid in the absence female employees.[83] In much the same manner, her

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[81] William W. Stowe, 29.

[82] M. R. Parkman, "Diary, March 5-April 23, 1871," 3 vol., Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, New York, New York, vol. 3, Friday, April 14, 1871. Hereafter, citations from this source will be given by name, volume, date.

[83] M. R. Parkman, vol. 1, Saturday, March 11, 1871.

description of her riding costume near Jaffa also compels. Miss Parkman liked to don a "great grey gentleman's travelling shawl, my hat enveloped in white muslin . . . my waterproof buttoned round me for a riding habit." Miss Parkman enjoyed the freedom of her riding costume which "made it difficult to tell a man from a woman" as she rode ahead of her caravan, "often alone."[84] As this passage indicates, travel presented Miss Parkman with the opportunity to assert her independence and perhaps question the necessity of her feminine role at home. Nonetheless, the care with which she maintained her journal also shows that she would ultimately fulfill her domestic obligations. Upon her return, Miss Parkman could anticipate that eager friends and family would gather to read the record of her trip and reflect positively upon her powers of observation and her skill as a writer.

Summer Leisure

Parents valued family holidays as a means to socialize their children and as an introduction to other wealthy families. During the summer months, in lieu of foreign travel, many elites traveled to seaside and mountain resorts that lay a convenient distance from New York by train or boat. Wealthy families, without a residence outside of the city, did not suffer from a lack of suitable alternatives. Many attractive communities catering to the well-heeled lay within a day's travel from the city up the Hudson River. The Home Journal recommended Highland Terrace's scenic vistas on the northern side of Storm King Mountain in upstate New York. Although the area had previously been "the resort of strangers," a new road along the bank of the Hudson to West Point assured the area's

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[84] M. R. Parkman, vol. 2, Tuesday, April 4, 1871.

future as a holiday destination.[85] Despite the addition of a new road, West Point remained the preferred destination in upstate New York throughout the 1860's and 70's. Lying approximately fifty miles up the Hudson River, the town featured several established hotels as well as activities associated with the United States Military Academy. A holiday at West Point offered the opportunity for the "enjoyment of military shows and music [and] for all manner of pleasure excursions by land and water, to glens and mountaintop, fishing, hunting, and studying of the picturesque."[86] The United States Military Academy made a holiday at "the Point" valued "over all other summer resorts" for many young women.[87] The vacationing wealthy preferred rooms in West Point's leading hotel Cozzens. The hotel's carpeted public rooms featured rosewood and marble furniture, ornate mirrors and elaborate gilding. The essayist Nathaniel Parker Willis found this decor "a little too splendid" amid West Point's rural setting.[88] Nonetheless, Willis praised Cozzens for its ability to provide "conveniences and luxuries...even the fastidious would be puzzled to name a want."[89]

Newer resort destinations along the Hudson River developed with improvements in rail and steam transportation, which permitted "the head of the family to attend to his business in the City and spend the evening with his family."[90] This growth also brought

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[85] The Home Journal, 13 November 1858, 2.

[86] Ibid.

[87] The Home Journal, 21 August 1858, 3.

[88] Nathaniel Parker Willis, Hurry Graphs, 117.

[89] Ibid.

[90] New York Times, 24 July 1875, 2.

the "luxury of pure air" within the reach of families of more modest means.[91] To accommodate a discriminating clientele, news accounts of Hudson River resorts always specified the guests at popular hotels. This practice gave prospective visitors an indication of whom they could expect to encounter while on holiday as most resort towns offered a range of lodging alternatives. Sharon Springs near Albany, New York, for example, attracted health-conscious vacationers drawn to the area's "enormous flow of sulphur water."[92] Although the town offered a variety of lodging possibilities, only the Pavilion Hotel provided amenities appropriate to wealthy tastes. One writer found this hotel's table "splendid," commenting favorably upon the dining room's family-style seating at long tables.[93] To assuage any doubts regarding the informality of such food service, the writer listed the hotel's wealthy and prominent clientele.

Elite women relied upon such informative travel literature. Without the specific recommendations of friends and family, domestic vacationers required some knowledge of what and whom they could expect to encounter in a resort. The wealthy generally sought holiday communities that provided a "geographical escape from the cities and a social release from deep conflicts in American life.[94] Many wealthy vacationers valued rural settings that held forth the promise of homogeneity and exclusivity as opposed to the pluralism and equality that characterized much of their urban lives.

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[91] Ibid.

[92] New York Times, 30 August 1875, 5.

[93] Ibid. See also New York Times, 28 July 1855, 2.

[94] Judith S. Goldstein, Crossing Lines: Histories of Jews and Gentiles in Three Communities, (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1992), 152.

Johanna Anthon's diaries of her holidays in several resort communities reflect this same longing. Johanna's family had contributed to New York's civic and cultural progress for decades.[95] Inasmuch as the social elite valued family accomplishment, Johanna enjoyed easy access to New York's patrician circles. She participated, however, in the city's social life as an unmarried woman without significant independent means. Johanna along with her unmarried sister Elizabeth lived on family inheritances in a house at 15 West 24th Street bequeathed to her by her brother Charles in 1875. As a consequence of her situation, Johanna's diary, maintained intermittently from 1867 to 1883, reflects her need while on holiday to maintain appearances as well as a consideration of expenses. Johanna and her sister vacationed in a number of polite locations frequented by the well-to-do. In the summer of 1868, she visited friends in Lenox, Massachusetts. She spent several subsequent summers at Narragansett, Rhode Island, where in 1870 she awoke one night to a great fire on the pier.[96] She recorded that "we all got up and dressed ourselves completely. I did not get to bed again until four o'clock...splendid northern lights."[97] For the most part, however, Johanna did not remark on her vacations other than

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[95] Johanna was the oldest daughter of John Anthon who for twenty years served as president of the New-York Law Institute. New York Times, 7 March 1863, 2. See also New York Times, 12 April 1863, 6. Her brother Professor Charles E. Anthon excelled as a Latin and Greek scholar at Columbia College. New York Times, 10 July 1883, 2. Another brother William Henry Anthon, also a lawyer, served as Judge Advocate General of the staff of Governor Morgan and in Republican party politics. New York Times, 9 November 1875, 4. Her mother Judith Hone Anthon was a daughter of John Hone, brother of former New York mayor Philip Hone. New York Times, 7 December 1875, 5.

[96] Charles Carroll, "Narragansett Pier," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 59, no.350 (July 1879): 161-177,

[97] Johanna Anthon, "Diary, 1867 - 1883," 1 vol., Manuscript Collection, New York Public Library, New York, New York, September 27, 1870. Hereafter, all citations from this

to record her general pleasure in a "delightful summer."[98]

On balance, Johanna's vacations reveal an awareness of the difficulties of travel for a woman in her financial situation. Her 1873 stay at Cozzens Hotel in West Point, New York, is remembered relative to its cost. For this particular visit, Johanna noted that the "price of board is $29 per week, but for those who agree to stay for three months only $21."[99] Johanna returned home after a "poor summer" during which she lay ill for most of the time.[100] She returned to Cozzens the following June where she stayed until mid-September. The accidental death of Mary Williams, a "scrubber" at Cozzens marred this outing, however. Williams left three small children, including an infant aged seven months. Johanna took up a collection to cover Mary Williams' medical and burial expenses, obtaining placement for her orphaned children at the New-York Orphan Asylum where her mother Judith had served as First Directress for many years.[101]

In the intervening months Johanna coped with her mother's death in 1875 and its financial implications.[102] Problems arose within the family over the terms of Charles Anthon's will and the right of Johanna and her sister to occupy the house on West 24th Street. Johanna resisted family pressure to sell the house and move so that the proceeds

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source will be cited by author and date.

[98] Johanna Anthon, Thursday, September 15, 1869.

[99] Johanna Anthon, June 17, 1873.

[100] Johanna Anthon, September 16, 1873.

[101] Johanna Anthon, October 26- 27, 1874. See also New York Times, 7 December 1875.

[102] Johanna Anthon, March 1, 1876.

could be divided among Charles Anthon's nieces and nephews. During this stressful period, she also planned and executed a small wedding reception in her home for her niece Mamie to the wealthy businessman Stuyvesant Fish.[103] A week after the family wedding, Johanna along with her sister Elizabeth and two friends left the city for Sea Bright on the coast of New Jersey "to look for a summer cottage."[104] The shore towns around Long Branch, New Jersey, had long attracted summer visitors from New York, some of whom had begun to build permanent vacation homes in the area.[105] By the early 1870's, with improved rail service, large hotels and guest houses opened to accommodate increasing numbers of seasonal tourists.[106] In Sea Bright, Johanna found lodging in a "yellow cottage" in a room formerly used as a dining room. While she complained of the closet's "narrow shelves" and the presence of a "dumb waiter," Johanna found the air "delightful" so that she decided to "suffer some inconveniences."[107] At a second establishment in Sea Bright, she secured a "much better room" frequented by other New Yorkers, including the

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[103] Johanna Anthon, June 1, 1876. See also New York Herald, 2 June 1876, 8; New York Times, 2 June 1876, 5. Mamie, was the daughter of the lawyer William Henry Anthon. Her fortuitous marriage to the president of the Illinois Central Railroad enabled her to achieve a reputation for the "most original and sparkling" entertainments of the period. The couple resided in Manhattan, Newport and at the Fish ancestral estate near Harrison, New York. Despite her reputation for strong opinions, many considered Mamie Fish the inheritor of New York's social leadership upon the death of Caroline Schermerhorn Astor in 1908. The Fishes had three children. Mamie Fish died in 1915 at the age of sixty. New York Times, 27 May 1915, 11.

[104] Johanna Anthon, June 9, 1876.

[105] New York Times, 1 August 1873, 5. See also Olive Logan, "Life at Long Branch," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 53, no.316 (September 1876): 481- 494.

[106] New York Times, 7 May 1873, 5.

[107] Johanna Anthon, June 10, 1876.

John A. Kings and a daughter of the prominent merchant Archibald Gracie.[108]

The proximity of these social friends insured a pleasant experience for Johanna in this second Sea Bright venue and she attempted to extend her stay for the month August. Finding her query "rudely declined," Johanna left Sea Bright and traveled to Richfield Springs where she found a double room at the Central Hotel, attractively priced at twelve dollars per week, per person. Johanna approved of this establishment's comfortable rooms and good table. She complained, however, that the Central Hotel was "not a fashionable house and we knew no one there...We found this atmosphere so depressing."[109] Despite the pleasant room and good dining at the Central Hotel, Johanna "determined not to pass another night" there.[110] Because the Central Hotel was not considered fashionable by other wealthy families, Johanna moved into another hotel "where one meets all the best people we enjoy."[111]

Johanna Anthon needed the proximity of other people she knew to reinforce her own taste and opinions. As a consequence, Johanna enveloped her travel in a layer of social acceptability, summering only in places that catered to individuals with tastes and habits similar to her own. In view of the increasing numbers of wealthy people in New York, women like Johanna Anthon needed current information upon which to base their holiday decisions. For example, an 1880 travel article on Coney Island, New York, warned its readership of changes at this once pleasant seaside destination. In addition to

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[108] Johanna Anthon, July 1, 1876.

[109] Johanna Anthon, August 3, 1876.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Johanna Anthon, August 8, 1876.

problems with untreated sewage at the shore, the article noted the "rather startling" spectacle of a "fifty year old dame with a toothpick in her mouth, five thousand dollar solitaires in her ears and six button white kid gloves on very red hands" seated at a hotel breakfast table.[112] Hotel proprietors, thoroughly alarmed at such "bombastic display," declared the exhibition to be symptomatic of Coney Island's "diamond epidemic."[113] Because "well-born and well-bred" families patronized the hotel, its proprietors expected that this "problem" would resolve itself.[114] The "diamond mania...carries a lesson that sober men and women will not be slow to teach their children."[115]

Hotel management optimistically hoped that their fashionable clientele would use this "diamond epidemic" as an opportunity to instruct their children on the value of public restraint. The socially prominent, however, did not wish to teach their children in a "school of the world" like Coney Island.[116] Increasingly, wealthy families sought summer refuge in social settings that they could shape and control. Rural holiday communities grew up around exclusive clubs or sports like horse racing and yachting which appealed to the rich. In upstate New York, the mineral spring water of Saratoga attracted wealthy urbanites to the area before the introduction of racing. The town boasted several large hotels as well as a street of small stores where women could promenade and indulge their

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[112] New York Herald, 22 August 1880, 5.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Henry James Ten Eyck, "Educational Value of Summer Resorts," The Century 28, no. 5 (September 1884): 796.

"natural instinct" for shopping.[117] Saratoga, though popular, lost some of its former cachet. By 1883 the town expected to host 50,000 summer visitors.[118] Although leading hotels like the Grand Union and the United States renovated and expanded, they relied upon the patronage of large national organizations whose annual meetings helped proprietors to cover their operating expenses.

In contrast to Saratoga, Newport, Rhode Island, matured throughout the nineteenth century into a rural shore retreat that consistently met the wealthy elite's expectations for leisure.[119] The grey sand of Newport's principal beaches, wedged between granite cliffs, and Rhode Island's upland pastures began to draw summer visitors during the early eighteenth century.[120] The town gradually attracted summer guests from the West Indies and the South who came to enjoy New England's temperate climate. These seasonal residents either rented cottages or stayed in one of the town's hotels. Summer visitors frequently included twelve-month residents in their informal social gatherings. Philip Hone, former New York mayor, commented upon the town's relaxed

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[117] New York Herald, 15 April 1883, 21.

[118] Ibid.

[119] The town's founding dated to its 1639 incorporation by families forced to leave the Massachusetts Bay Colony because of their religious beliefs. Newport quickly became a haven for other faiths that departed from mainstream Puritan doctrine, including its early settlement by both Quakers and Jews. This atmosphere of religious toleration as well as Newport's strategic location off the coast of New England fostered the town's economic growth. By 1750, some 12,000 people inhabited the town that drew its wealth from the surrounding countryside and trade in sugar, rum and slaves. Maude Howe Elliot, This Was My Newport, Introduction. See also May King Van Rensselaer, Newport Our Social Capital, (Philadelphia and London: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1905; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1975), 123 - 221.

[120] Lizzie W. Champney, "Newport Society in the Last Century," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 59, no.352 (September 1879): 497-505.

and informal society. When Hone visited in 1834, only twelve families from New York, Boston and Charleston owned summer residences in Newport.[121] Julia Ward Howe, whose family traditionally summered there noticed the "visitors flocking from every direction...There are "sailing parties, walking parties, fishing parties, riding parties, dancing parties, quiet parties–all kinds of parties."[122]

Maude Howe Elliot, daughter of Samuel Gridley and Julia Ward Howe, dubbed this period in Newport as "the wooden age" in which the town's main street was lined with "pleasant, substantial cottages."[123] Prior to the construction of great stone mansions, Maude and her childhood friends occupied themselves with doll tea parties and hunts for blackberries, mushrooms and mussels. She also recalled trips to the home of the historian and diplomat George Bancroft to inspect his garden of roses and artichokes.[124] Maude Elliot lauded antebellum Newport for its social "simplicity," when commemorating a new barn became a social event.[125] The Newport of Elliot's memory was a "modest" town of "moderate opulence" without the wealth to build and maintain larger homes.[126] A "select"

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[121] Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, The Social Ladder, 223.

[122] "Letter, Julia Ward Howe to Samuel Ward," August 11, 1836. Cited in Maude Howe Elliot, This Was My Newport, 53.

[123] Maude Howe Elliot, Three Generations, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1923), 115.

[124] Maude Howe Elliot, This Was My Newport, 87. See also M. A. DeWolfe Howe, The Life and Letters of George Bancroft, (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1908), 100.

[125] Maude Howe Elliot, This Was My Newport, 59, 71, passim.

[126] "Editor's Easy Chair," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 77, no 462 (November 1888): 958.

group of families managed the town's social life a "confident and absolute" manner.[127]

Newport began to lose its pristine character in the years immediately before the Civil War. During this time, "a class of people from our principal cities not usually met in public houses" began to fill the town's hotels.[128] Newport had always possessed "abundant materials for the highest social enjoyment; but they need being drawn forth and properly organized."[129] This social structuring occurred with the1853 arrival of Ward McAllister.[130] McAllister, who sought social recognition in New York, had summered in Newport as a child with his family from Savannah, Georgia. With McAllister's purchase of Bayside Farm, the rhythm of Newport's social life increased to a "gilt edged and multi-colored" tempo.[131] Simple outdoor picnics became grand occasions with butlers, silver cutlery, iced champagne and elaborate collations. McAllister also introduced outdoor cotillion dinners to the town with the construction of wooden platforms in his barn or under the trees to permit dancing.[132] Other New Yorkers, including August and Caroline Perry Belmont, followed McAllister to Newport.[133] Once established in the town, the Belmonts' style of lavish hospitality effectively eliminated the last traces of rusticity from the Newport's social activity.

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[127] Ibid.

[128] The Home Journal, 6 September 1851, 2. See also Marian Gouverneur, 99 - 103.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, 228.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Found It, 198 - 201.

[133] New York Times, 30 June 1860, 10.

Newport became a "Mecca of American elegance and fashion."[134] The town ultimately grew into a "creation of the rich seeking refuge from the boredom of a quiet seashore resort."[135] The wealthy constructed a town of "improvised magnificence and mad profusion upon the outskirts of simplicity and moderation."[136] Newport represented wealthy society in full flower, as they attempted to transform themselves into an aristocracy. The newer, larger cottages of the rich symbolized the grandeur of this effort. In many respects, the newer version of the town was not unlike the Newport of the previous generation. More wealth simply enabled fashionable society to exercise their exclusionary principals on a grander scale. The town became a vacation destination without a large summer hotel which explicitly discouraged the casual, uninvited visitor. Instead, Newport attracted wealthy families from across America who constructed great stone palaces on small plots of land to convey their significance.[137] Maria Lydig Daly visited friends in Newport with her husband Charles in 1879. Maria enjoyed Newport as a "wonderful place," marveling in the "quantities of flowers" and "velvet lawns...But a week in this hotbed of fashion and wealth, though delightful like a glass of fine liqueur after

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[134] Sir Philip Burne-Jones, Dollars and Democracy, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1905), 128.

[135] Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, 236.

[136] "Editor's Easy Chair," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 79, no.474 (November 1889): 959.

[137] An extended report in 1895 on property taxes in Newport lists the property values of the town's home owners from New York and other American cities. At this time, the seaside mansion belonging to Cornelius Vanderbilt had the highest assessed value, listed at $993,000. New York Times, 26 May 1895, 16.

dinner, was enough for us."[138] Upon her return to New York, Maria voiced alarm over the appearance of her friend Augusta Astor, who with her sister-in-law Caroline, dominated the town's social life. To Maria, Augusta looked "worn" so different from the brilliant girl I once knew...She seems to feel the weight of the gold and to have taken its color."[139]

Other observers also sensed the frenzied tenor of Newport's social life. The French journalist Paul Bourget remarked upon Newport's taste for Japanese ivy, "rapid growing, not evergreen...fading every season, [a] graceful symbol of the American impatience."[140] Bourget understood the wealthy's desire to purchase the aristocratic traditions that eluded them. Bourget's floral metaphor also describes the town's chief "industry" which, beginning in the 1880's became the "examination and appraisal of qualifications for Society."[141] In contrast to the relaxed resorts catering to wealthy families from the South, a holiday in Newport became a commercial undertaking with seasonal residents engaged in the business of granting social recognition to those wealthy families seeking approbation.[142]

Newport's pressured social environment heightened parental expectations for their

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[138] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," July 22, 1879.

[139] Ibid.

[140] Paul Bourget, Outre Mer, (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1895), 45.

[141] Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, 219.

[142] In an article on White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, the New York Times commented upon the absence of stiffness and exclusiveness in this southern resort. "Everybody knows everybody else, apparently, and everybody appears to be enjoying life." New York Times, 30 August 1887, 4.

children. Casual picnics and afternoon carriage rides lost their innocence as the social activity of young grew more elaborate. Increasingly, a girl's summer holiday reflected the social aspirations of her parents. Although young women understood the importance of acquiring those skills necessary to the assumption of her social identity, this learning process acquired an urgency in Newport. Society attached great significance to the variations in taste and material display exhibited by the town's wealthy residents. Therefore, as young women absorbed Newport's material splendor, they also witnessed the social consequences of a family's failure to succeed.

Some Early Fundamentals

The English writer Sir Philip Burne-Jones, concluded that American children, though beautiful, could exhibit the inward attributes of a "diminutive demon."[143] While it is difficult to reconcile this opinion with romanticized versions of Victorian childhood, the daughters of the rich proved capable of alarming arrogance. Elisabeth Marbury remembered her attempt to exclude schoolmates from a "secret society" that she organized with friends. Marbury reasoned that "all children are natural born snobs."[144] The childhood diary of Catherine Elizabeth Havens, a descendant of both the Stuyvesant and Van Rensselaer families, demonstrates that even small girls could be merciless. Catherine found humor in her brother's impertinence with "beggar girls" who came to the family's back door seeking food.[145] As a child, she saw the less fortunate as an

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[143] Sir Philip Burne-Jones, 34.

[144] Elisabeth Marbury, 10.

[145] Catherine Elizabeth Havens, 12.

inconvenience as in the instance of a particular seamstress who came to the home regularly to mend carpets. "[M]other says she comes of an excellent old Long Island family, yet . . . I don't like to have her use our forks and drink out of our cups . . . [I] try to pick out a nicked cup for her to use so that we can recognize it and avoid it."[146]

Mabel Osgood Wright sometimes saw herself as a target of other children's scorn because she "was considered the most humble of the group."[147] Mabel, the daughter of a prominent Unitarian minister, did not enjoy the material advantages of many of her peers. Nonetheless, her father's vocation as well as his popularity among his congregants insured that she would be schooled and socialized with the daughters of the wealthy. Considering the importance of wealth to social status, Wright weighed the ways in which parents bid "unconsciously, for prestige through their children."[148] Wright remembered the increasing elaboration of children's parties which originally had differed only in "the color of the ice cream."[149] By the 1860's, parents had begun to replace children's simple parlor games at parties with professional jugglers or a Punch and Judy show. Wright recalled a formal birthday luncheon in a Fifth Avenue dining room where a liveried staff served very young girls roasted squabs on the bone. Wright suffered humiliation as the only young guest without a personal servant to carve her bird.

If parents used children to further their own social ambition, the contemporaneous critic George Ellington complained of parents who tried to make their children "as much

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[146] Ibid., 35.

[147] Mabel Osgood Wright, 140.

[148] Ibid., 133.

[149] Ibid.

like grown people outwardly as possible."[150] As girls learned the value of good manners, they learned how to socialize with young men. Many daughters of the rich received their first exposure to young men in classes held at Dodworth's Dancing School. Founded and operated by a trio of brothers in the mid nineteenth century, the school moved several times before it found a location at 681 Fifth Avenue near Fifty-fourth Street. Three Dodworth brothers participated in the business, including: Thomas the band master; Harvey the musical leader; and Allen the dancing master. Of these, Allen Dodworth is remembered as the "graceful" gentleman in "faultless evening clothes."[151] His wife, usually clad in black velvet, maintained the school's records, forcing through her own courtesy "impolite and unreasoning" mothers who observed the classes into a more "ladylike behavior."[152]

Allen Dodworth and his wife tutored children in "the type of dancing that was both a joy and an art."[153] In a student primer, Dodworth presented dancing as the "accomplishment most calculated to display a fine form, elegant taste and graceful carriage."[154] Dodworth's classes schooled children in good manners, believing the lack of them to be indicative of the absence of Christian grace.[155] His group classes provided

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[150] George Ellington, pseud., 111.

[151] Mabel Osgood Wright, 165.

[152] Ibid., 170.

[153] Ibid., 165.

[154] Allen Dodworth, Assistant for A. Dodworth's Pupils, (New York: Nesbitt & Co., Printers, 1865), 3.

[155] Ibid., 7.

children with a model of public conduct so that "all the little forms imperiously exacted by custom will much more willing be learned."[156]

The Dodworth school divided its classes according to age and ability, with children younger than ten grouped into a beginner's section. Students entered the dance floor to music, either singly or in pairs, curtsying or bowing to the Dodworths before walking to their seats arrayed along the wall below the parents or chaperones who watched from a raised platform. Most younger girls wore long white dresses with ribbon sashes, white stockings and black kid pumps to these afternoon classes. Dress for boys required a tuxedo such as the silk-lined "Jimmy" model with a small notched collar "made like men's."[157] Teachers usually paired boys and girls together for purposes of instruction. Mabel Wright recalled "Teddy Spectacles" who awarded his unfortunate partners with a "quick but decisive kick under the ankle bone."[158] Like many boys, Theodore Roosevelt resented his parents' imposition of dancing classes. Young girls, in contrast, "hopped along quite as gaily without boy partners. . . rather snubbing boys when it came to dancing."[159]

Dodworth's instruction began with five basic positions for the placement of the feet, with six radical variations on these forms as the dance steps required more skill. In all positions, students also learned to assume a graceful attitude which inclined the upper part of the body slightly forward so that the dancer maintained "a beautiful curved line" or

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[156] Ibid., 8.

[157] New York Times, 9 November 1900, 14.

[158] Mabel Osgood Wright, 169.

[159] Ibid., 168.

"Grecian bend" with all steps.[160] With a knowledge of fundamentals, students graduated to advanced classes to perfect the intricacies of the quadrille in which they learned to glide "in a waving, flowing and graceful manner."[161] The Academy hosted special evenings "of social amusement" for students from sixteen to eighteen who had learned the waltz and galop cotillion steps with their increasingly elaborate permutations. Students advanced to learn the polka-redowa and the five-step waltz, a dance originated by Dodworth. The final requirement before entrance to an evening class, including an exhibition of the minuet which effectively "finished" a pupil.[162]

As young girl progressed through the demands of dancing instruction, her wardrobe requirements grew more elaborate. As they matured, girls increasingly understood the importance of clothes to their social identity. New York provided young women with numerous retail alternatives to satisfy this growing interest. In addition to the city's many small shops, Stewart's department store, which opened in 1846, offered its customers an appealing atmosphere of "material well-being, luxury, comfort, pleasure and happiness. [163] Stewart's second store, opened on Broadway in 1862, provided a setting where ladies could indulge their taste for Irish lace, silk gowns, and camel-hair shawls

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[160] Allen Dodworth, Dancing and Its Relations to Education and Social Life, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1885), 24.

[161] Allen Dodworth, Assistant for A. Dodworth's Pupils, 5.

[162] August and Caroline Belmont's children also attended dancing classes at the Dodworth Academy. David Black, 342.

[163] William Leach, Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture, (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 21. See also Kathy Lee Peiss, Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in New York City, 1880 - 1920, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985).

costing $1000.[164] Lord & Taylor, a women's specialty store, displayed "a stock of goods equal in costliness and superior in taste to anything that can be bought at Stewart's"[165] As a child, Catherine Elizabeth Havens formed a taste for the "elegant silks, satins and velvets" in Arnold & Constable where her mother also shopped for "her best things."[166] Catherine understood the importance of clothing. Anna Roosevelt similarly remembered her mother Mittie's love of fine dress. Anna recalled Mittie's ensemble consisting of "an enormous crinoline and a perfectly exquisite white muslin dress over a pink silk lining with all the little ruffles at the bottom edged with real lace, and the cloak...matched the dress, and the bonnet tied under her chin with great pink ribbons...and on the brim of the bonnet was a great big pink rose with perfectly realistic little green dragon flies."[167]

Because women associated clothes with status, they often formed their childhood memories around dress. The novelist Edith Wharton, for example, describes a winter walk with her father up Fifth Avenue. Though Wharton enjoyed this attention from her father, their stroll became fixed in her adult memory by her bonnet of "white satin, patterned with pink and green plaid in raised velvet." Wharton realized that on this occasion she "awoke to the importance of dress" and of herself as a "subject of adornment." Wharton's life-long appreciation of fine clothes had been ingrained by her mother Lucretia Rhinelander Jones, who was once forced to wear a "homemade" dress of "white tarletane, looped up

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[164] Ibid.

[165] James, D. McCabe, Jr., 384-85.

[166] Catherine Elizabeth Havens, 67.

[167] Gen. Daniel Tyler, Memoirs, ed., Donald G. Mitchell, (Privately printed, 1883). Cited in Sylvia Jukes Morris, 17.

with red and white camellias" as a debutante. Family economy also required Lucretia to wear her mother's old white satin slippers. The "martyrdom" of this important occasion indicates the importance Lucretia attached to clothing which she, in turn, transmitted to her daughter. Lucretia's 1844 marriage to George Frederick Jones permitted her the wealth to avenge her homemade tarletane and hand-me-down shoes. Her daughter Edith later boasted that many considered her mother to be the "best dressed woman in New York." Edith memorialized her mother in terms of her love of fine clothing.[168]

Clothing brought forth a different cluster of associations for Mabel Osgood Wright. When the Wrights relocated to New York from Providence, Rhode Island, the young minister and his family participated in a range of cultural and social opportunities. Like Anna Roosevelt and Edith Wharton, Mabel Wright could recall as an adult the precise details of her mother's gown of pale Chinese silk because "[w]ithout the telling of this there would be no picture in the frame." Though considered somewhat sheer for the winter season, the minister's wife wore this dress in 1850 to a gala New Year's dinner hosted by wealthy congregants the Paines. This pleasurable event did not prepare the young minister and his wife for the two boxes that arrived a few days later from Mrs. Paine. One parcel contained a dress of "rich watered silk with embossed velvet bands for the trimming and...bodice." The second box held a "mink cape, more than knee length, with a large flat collar trimmed with tails of the fur." After consulting her husband and a few select friends, Ellen Osgood ultimately sublimated her reservations about the

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[168] Edith Wharton, A Backward Glance, 1, 2, 15, 16, 20, 26, passim.

"necessary and continuous taking of dole" and accepted the Paine's gift of clothing.[169] The unintended humiliation of this gift provoked a family discussion that resonated within the Osgood household for years. Mabel, born nine years later, shared her mother's deep humiliation over the event. This anecdote became a prelude to Mabel's rendition of her own series of childhood snubs and embarrassments centered upon the inadequacies of her clothing.[170] Like Edith Wharton, Mabel Wright learned at an early age the need for a woman to display her social status.

Social Opportunities

Just as Mabel Osgood recognized the importance of clothing to her identity, she learned to interact with her schoolmates and social peers. Young girls participated in informal groups or clubs that focused upon a particular interest or activity. The young Edith Carow, for example, joined her friend Corinne Roosevelt in creating a literary club. Limited to twelve girls, the club known as P.O.R.E. or "Party of Renowned Eligibles" met weekly over doughnuts and lemonade to read the poems and stories penned by various members.[171] Carolyn Pryor Pine participated in a cooking club with her female friends which matured into a "competitive affair."[172] Carolyn also belonged to several heterosocial

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[169] Mabel Osgood Wright, 10, 11, 16,17, 13, passim.

[170] In 1884, Mabel Osgood married the Englishman James Osborne Wright. The couple had no children. Mabel Wright pioneered as a naturalist and was widely known as the author of twenty-six books and as a lecturer and photographer. She helped to found the Birdcraft Sanctuary and the Audubon Society of Connecticut and belonged to the American Ornithologists Union. She died in Fairfield, Connecticut, in 1934 at the age of seventy-five. New York Times, 18 July 1934, 17; 31 July 19 1934, 15. See also New York Times, 10 January 1999, 552.

[171] Sylvia Jukes Morris, 42- 43.

[172] Carolyn Pryor Pine, 4.

groups in her Gramercy Park neighborhood. These informal associations included a Walking Club which met for purposes of a stroll to Central Park and an Etching Club in which well-known collectors displayed their drawings. These childhood associations required little more than the imagination of their founders as a pretext for socialization. Early groups based on existing family ties, neighborhood proximity or schooling provided young girls with lasting networks of friends. Edith Carow's childhood membership in P.O.R.E, for example, insured her continued association with the Roosevelt family. Carolyn Pryor Pine also remarked on her friends formed in teenage clubs who figured prominently in her adult life.

The older children organized more structured social clubs and activities. Edith Carow Roosevelt hosted an annual "unhallowed" Halloween party in her parents' kitchen where guests enjoyed a molasses candy pull, ducked for apples, and danced to her mother's piano music.[173] The pseudonymous author Jacob Knickerbocker recalled the "Surprise Party" in which club members descended on the home of the "surprised" member with all of the elements for a proper party, including supper and musicians.[174] These gatherings convey a mood of benign informality that appear as little more than the opportunity for young adults to practice the dance steps learned at the Dodworth Academy. Home activities required parental participation and supervision. Mothers of young hosts and hostesses traditionally prepared light refreshments and readied the family

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[173] Sylvia Jukes Morris, 52.

[174] Jacob Knickerbocker, pseud., 398.

parlor for parties with the installation of a "crash" carpeting for dancing.[175]

More formal home entertainments for young adults revolved around select gatherings called "Sociables." Mabel Osgood Wright remembered these events simply as parties "where the neighborhood young folks danced, ate ice cream and cake...and reached home no later than eleven."[176] "Sociables" consisted of small groups limited to forty or fifty members who regularly elected officers, assessed modest annual dues and issued invitations for membership. With fanciful names like "La Belle," "Unique," "La Comare" and "La Fleur," these clubs sponsored a season of parties held on a rotating basis in members' homes. Activities at these functions included parlor games, songs, dancing and a late evening supper. Young adults and parents, eager to see their children circulate in fashionable crowds, coveted some memberships. Unlike the more informal and impromptu nature of other teenage parties, a "Sociables" membership conferred the prestige of acceptance by a particular group. The self-limiting nature of these organizations also demanded the exclusion of other potential members. For young women, "Sociables" entailed the appropriate wardrobe to satisfy the needs of a social calendar, adding pressure to self-conscious young adults.

Publications catering to society's interests, such as The Home Journal and Our Society, regularly noted the activities of "Sociables." Extended coverage of the "Murray Hill" Sociable, however, reflects the negative effects of publicity on group cohesion. The

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[175] Elizabeth Wolcott Merchant noted similar preparations for her son's "very pleasant party of young people...Mrs. Fanning played and they danced untiringly till towards twelve o'clock...had ice cream." EWM, Diaries, Thursday, April 28, 1887.

[176] Mabel Osgood Wright, 229.

"Murray Hill" Sociable traced its origins to 1864, drawing its membership largely from upper crust families who lived in Manhattan's Murray Hill neighborhood. The group apparently operated quietly for a few seasons, attracting little notice for its "select, aristocratic, and enjoyable" parties. By 1870, however, the "Murray Hill" lost much of its cachet when it elected an "unlimited number of members, discarded old regulations, and made new ones." The "greatest error" made by the group was its desire to "become more widely known." This "chase of fame" led to the formation of cliques that produced disharmony.[177] While it is not known how long the "Murray Hill" survived, its brief reported history indicates some of its members desire for recognition as well as the strenuous nature of their social activity. Organizations like the "Murray Hill" also foreshadow the exclusionary basis for the adult society that many would encounter in the future.

Unlike "Sociables" in which children exercised their own discriminatory powers, adults organized and supervised the official entrance of the young woman into society. For young women, the process of social maturation climaxed in a debutante season which occurred at around age eighteen. New York's wealthy families routinely introduced their young daughters to society in the early fall with a series of subscription dances and receptions. These formal occasions dated to the 1841 opening of the New York Assembly in which a carefully chosen group of young women received their formal social introductions.[178] Originally organized by an all-male committee of businessmen, the social

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[177] Our Society, I, no. 2, (October 22, 1870), 5, passim.

[178] Jerry E. Patterson, 22.

introduction of young women matured into an event that managed by wealthy women. The ceremonies surrounding the debutante reflected the domestic ideal, emphasizing feminine purity and dependency. In addition to group cotillions, wealthy parents hosted home teas or receptions to mark a daughters' coming of age. Once introduced, the young girl then participated in other public formalities including social calls, receptions, dinners, balls and evenings at the theater and opera. At each occasion, the mother of the debutante or another adult female supervised the young woman. A chaperone's presence underscored the special regard that refined society held for its daughters just as it demonstrated the need for etiquette to protect a woman's purity.[179] This extended process of socialization aimed to introduce the debutante to a potentially suitable marriage partner.

In New York, there was no male equivalency for the girl's debutante season.[180] Young women, however, required a "domestically oriented code of etiquette to tame and make safe the public spaces used for larger forms of heterosocial entertainments."[181] Conduct manuals emphasized the need to protect the young woman during her vulnerable transition when she entered the marriage market. As a consequence, wealthy parents often

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[179] Maureen E. Montgomery, Displaying Women: Spectacles of Leisure in Edith Wharton's New York, (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 52 - 57. In the 1880's to mid-1890's, elites adopted stricter codes of chaperonage regarding a young woman's public behavior. When behavioral standards began to relax, chaperonage adapted itself to reflect a more modern life and the increased mobility of the young. See also Albert Rhodes, "Shall the American Girl Be Chaperoned?" The Galaxy 24 no.4 (October 1877): 451- 459.

[180] Briefly in the 1880's, families hosted formal parties to introduce their young sons to society. Jerry E. Patterson, 22.

[181] Maureen E. Montgomery, "Female Rituals and the Politics of the New York Marriage Market in the Late Nineteenth Century," Journal of Family History 23, no.1 (January 1998): 49.

based much of their own social lives on their daughter's need to marry well. Parents circulated socially at evening events to assess the suitability of other families. Through marriage, the debutante validated the social order through her entrance into society, reaffirming her family status and its extended circle through her reincorporation into the larger group.[182]

As she passed from childhood to maturity, the debutante participated in a precise ritual that specified her dress and conduct. Gowned in white as a reflection of her girlish delicacy and purity, the debutante accepted floral bouquets from male admirers as an indication of her fragility and dependence. The elaborate protocol of home events required that the debutante stand to receive guests at her mother's left so that she might be properly introduced. When escorted into dinner by her brother or another male family member, she sat always at her father's left. Her mother determined the appropriate male partners for the dancing that followed. To the young recipients of this attention, the event itself often proved unrewarding. The novelist Edith Wharton remembered her own party as "a long cold agony of shyness." Dressed in pale green brocade with a lacy white overskirt, Wharton recalled that she "cowered by my mother in speechless misery, unable even to exchange a word with the friendly young men."[183]

Home receptions like the one honoring Edith Jones began to decline in popularity during the early 1880's after Archibald Gracie King honored his daughter at a ball held at the restaurant Delmonico's. Although many of the invited guests questioned the public nature

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[182] Ibid., 50.

[183] Edith Wharton, A Backward Glance, 77-78.

of this private family function, most shed their scruples and attended. The evening at Delmonico's proved to be a social success. The mirrors that lined the restaurant's banquet hall "gave immense satisfaction" to young men who guided their dance partners around the outer edges of the party "admiring their reflections in the glass as they swept by."[184] The evening's grandeur encouraged the attention of the burgeoning society press which began to notice what had once been a discrete household celebration. As large balls outside the home grew in popularity, parents also began to introduce their daughters through participation in a cotillion series.[185] Of the cotillions, the New York Assemblies and the Family Circle Dancing Class were among the most prestigious. Cotillion managements planned a series of three annual balls for the winter social season, sending invitations to prominent families with daughters to introduce. These events, traditionally held in Delmonico's ballroom, usually began at 11:00 o'clock in the evening with a supper served at around midnight. These balls, which did not last as long as adult functions, concluded at around 2:30 in the morning.[186] The Assembly setting appealed to some families because most homes no longer contained ball rooms or maintained the household staff required for large, formal home entertainments. Furthermore, the increasing opportunity for other forms of public leisure had also begun to compete for the attendance of single men at evening functions, making the larger cotillions more practical.

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[184] Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, The Social Ladder, 38.

[185] For coverage of some of the period's private debutante balls see New York Times, 12 December 1883, 5; 3 February 1883, 8; 24 January 1886, 3.

[186] New York Times, 9 December 1884, 4.

For this reason, many families also began to host "kettledrums" in the mid-1870's as an adjunct to the more formal debutante presentation. These parties originated with British officers in India who, without regular furniture, gathered around a kettle-drum for afternoon tea. The novelty was introduced in New York after the Financial Panic of 1873 as "a social economy for many persons still wishing to entertain, but not feeling they could afford expensive evening entertainments."[187] These late afternoon receptions lasted from thirty minutes to an hour and offered guests a light assortment of tea, sandwiches and cakes.[188] New York hostesses verbally issued invitations to stop by the home around tea time, after business hours.

The kettledrum's informality masked a serious purpose, however. As a ritualized flirtations, they sounded a young girl's availability for marriage. At the event, parents displayed a large silver bowl or "kettle." Unattached young men crowded around to "drum," using their spoons to maintain a tattoo that covered any potentially embarrassing conversation. If one of the drummers eyed a young woman with whom he wished to speak, he relinquished his position at the kettle to join the young lady and offer her a cup of tea. The young lady accepted the tea with a "spoon," signaling that the young man had her permission to pay her compliments. These flirtations, or "spooning," lasted until either party put down their teacup and the young man returned to his place around the "kettle." Many

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[187] New York Times, 19 December 1879, 4. Caroline Perry Belmont reportedly introduced the custom to New York. This mode of entertainment spread to other American cities along the east coast with slight variations in the manner in which invitations were issued and the ritual surrounding the kettle. David Black, 442- 443.

[188] John H. Young, Our Deportment or the Manners, Conduct and Dress of the Most Refined Society, (Detroit: F. B. Dickerson, 1882), 131-133.

guests complained of the lack of opportunity for polite conversation as well as the inconvenience of the kettledrum's late afternoon hour.[189] The custom's New York nadir arrived with the 1887 kettledrum honoring a "famous family" of Japanese pugs owned by Mrs. Eugene Clarke of Fifth Avenue, attended by "nearly all the really aristocratic" dogs of the neighborhood.[190] Despite naysayers, the fashion for kettledrums persisted through the 1880's as a fund-raising vehicle for several New York charities.[191]

Kettledrums functioned as a gentle parody of the courtship process that served several purposes. For parents, kettledrums announced their daughter's readiness for marriage as they, quite literally, beat a drum to remind young men of her single state. To benefit the young women at the party, the din surrounding the "drum" privatized any courtship that occurred in the presence of adults. The kettledrum also provided the wealthy with a chance to display the material comfort of their private homes as well as their own domestic proficiencies. With the kettledrum, wealthy mothers continued their participation in, if not control of, their daughter's courtship process. As mothers surveyed the kettledrum's guests, they regulated the access of young men to their marriageable daughters.

Regardless of how a family chose to celebrate their daughter's coming of age, the

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[189] New York Times, 21 February 1875, 4.

[190] New York Times, 9 July 1887, 5.

[191] New York Times, 2 March 1878, 2; 25 February 1881, 5. New York Times, 7 February 1877, 8. See also New York Times, 10 February 1877, 2; 12 February 1880, 8; 15 February 1880, 5; 17 February 1884, 2; 14 February 1886, 5; 20 February 1887, 9; 4 March 1888, 9; 16 February 1889, 8.

occasion's purpose remained constant. The notice that debutante activities attracted in the public media reminded everyone of society's changing nature as young women achieved recognition and began to attend more adult functions. Wealthy parents had every reason to anticipate the day when their daughters would marry and assume their social identity. From the debutante's perspective, however, the process of social introduction suggests a young girl's vulnerable position. Florence Adele Sloane, for example, had been schooled to "make myself attractive and I can flirt, which instead of being proud of, I ought to be ashamed of."[192] Adele, who devoted much of her diary to her romantic interests, noted her mother Emily Vanderbilt Sloane's misgivings about her infatuation with an older man who had once lived in Paris with another woman.[193] Emily Sloane also dissuaded Adele from the naturalist Gifford Pinchot as well as several other suitors, one of whom the family perceived as "sinister."[194] The young Adele Sloane had hoped to please her mother by attracting many male admirers during her debutante year. Her apparent popularity, however, created unease in the Sloane household. While seeking to build her daughter's social confidence, Emily Sloane had unwittingly provided unsuitable men with unwelcomed access to Adele. Adele, for her part, had upheld her obligation to succeed through the demonstration of her popularity. That some of her admirers failed to meet family expectations, implied Adele's continued need for parental guidance. Adele's season of social introduction supposedly

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[192] Florence Adele Sloane, Maverick in Mauve: The Diary of a Romantic Age, commentary by Louis Auchincloss, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1983), 99.

[193] Ibid., 112.

[194] Ibid., 13.

announced her readiness to assume the free choice of an adult. Yet instead of proving her maturity, Adele showed only that she continued to warrant the family guidance given a child.

Families like the Sloanes viewed their daughter's social introduction as a competition in which Adele vied for the attentions of men with other similarly situated young women. The extent to which adults involved themselves in the debutante process indicates its importance to a family's social reputation. Families needed to preserve the appearance of their daughter's purity as well as demonstrate her readiness for marriage. A young woman also had to prove her fitness for a more rigorous social life. Parents provided the debutante with the essentials of a wardrobe and the requisite social introductions at a special function held in her honor. Mothers could counsel their daughters in matters of discretion involving young men. At the same time, mothers needed some verification of the success or failure of their efforts.

Just as young girls counted their invitations to social events and filled their dance cards, gifts of flowers also measured popularity. Young women customarily carried the flowers received from male admirers on public occasions. Some girls labored with as many as eighteen bouquets at a time while others managed large, unwieldy floral displays resembling "small flower beds." Tradition also dictated that the girl's family offer reciprocal hospitality to the men who had sent bouquets. In most households, reciprocity included an invitation to dinner or inclusion in a family evening at the theater or opera. By the 1880's, however, this etiquette had begun to provide social opportunity to "men of wealth who occupy and yet have no claim to what is known as a swell position in society." Because

bouquets publically displayed a debutante's success, New York's wealthy elite began to assign a dollar amount as the point at which floral tributes required a family response. As determined strivers could easily meet any fixed sum, older girls began to forgo the custom of carrying bouquets in public. Younger girls, however, needed flowers to confirm their popularity.[195]

A debutante's floral tokens signified a family's social importance. The "handsome" debutante reception honoring the daughter of Mrs. William Post became remarkable for its "profusion of bouquets" which "covered and weighted down" the table that held them. Floral abundance, in this instance, demonstrated the importance of the Post family as well as they defined Miss Post's popularity. Similarly, one public notice of several debutante presentations commented upon a girl's "coy and fascinating" manner without any reference to flowers. This same article subsequently mentioned the floral tributes of another debutante, indicating her greater value to society.[196] In other words, the simple gift of flowers reinforced a young woman's need to realize her social identity through material display.

The level of parental involvement in a girl's courtship could be easily interpreted as maternal desire for a daughter's happiness. Socially inexperienced young women seemed to require adult supervision in making an important decision with lifelong consequences. Therefore, prescriptive literature urged mothers to "watch with a jealous care the tendencies

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[195] New York Times, 7 December 1884, 14.

[196] Ibid.

of their daughter's affections."[197] Unlike the custom of some European countries, the final choice of a husband in America supposedly rested with the young woman. Yet her selection reflected upon the entire family. Mothers attempted to control their daughter's sexual experimentation by controlling male access, shielding the family from embarrassment by protecting daughters from themselves. Purveyors of advice urged tact and vigilance upon anxious parents in the hopes that their "cooler judgment and critical observation" would prevail over the emotional tendencies of young women.[198] Some writers even questioned a woman's ability to choose at all, finding women generally to be "more frequently deceived in their attachments."[199] Empowered by the need for propriety and the requirements of familial duty, mothers monitored a daughter's emotional well being to shape the outcome of her courtship. If the courtship process was not always a matter of the heart, events like the debutante reception and the kettledrum reliably presented a young women with agreeable male alternatives.

In view of all of the attention accorded their daughters, some contemporaneous observers like the author Constance Cary Harrison accused society of "worship of the girl fetish."[200] At the same time, Harrison realized women's need to marry before the age of twenty-five. She pitied those women who "hold on like grim death to their rosebud

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[197] John H. Young, 183.

[198] Ibid., 182.

[199] Richard A.Wells, Manners, Culture and Dress of the Best American Society, (Springfield, Massachusetts, 1891), 219.

[200] Constance Cary Harrison, "Maidens and Matrons in American Society," North American Review 151, no. 409 (December 1890): 714.

privileges. The clever ones know when to fall back on dinners and charities, or collecting missals, or musical instruments...And when there's no money, it's simply dreadful."[201] Like Constance Harrison, wealthy families believed that a daughter's careful upbringing could only lead to marriage. Because of the importance of a good marriage to the family, young women received the care and cultivation of hot house plants. Parents saw their protective child rearing practices as a social and cultural necessity. Women were widely believed to be unable to derive meaning in life from anything other than motherhood and family. Even women who found success outside the home, including Julia Ward Howe, Florence Jaffray Hurst Harriman and Elizabeth Christophers Hobson, discuss their individual accomplishments in terms of the domesticity that governed their lives.

Despite the social emphasis upon domesticity, some women like Elisabeth Marbury did not marry. The decision to remain single can be attributed to many reasons including the lack of suitable alternatives as well as individual sexual preference. In all events, an unmarried daughter signified a family's failure to meet its social responsibility, reflecting an inability to contribute to the preservation of society's collective standards. Wealthy families, lacking the continuity of aristocracy, used marriage as an affirmation of social prominence. A good marriage became a stepping stone to the creation and maintenance family status over time. Wealthy families positioned their daughters along a generational continuum. A successful marriage enabled the rich to secure their social identity as it existed in the present. As a daughter established her own household, marriage also carried family standards

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[201] Constance Cary Harrison, The Anglomaniacs, (New York: Cassell Publishing Company, 1890), 209.

forward into the future. As this new generation turned to the past for its own validation, wealthy families achieved the cultural legitimacy implied by the heritage of longstanding tradition. Marriage became the means by which the society achieved the appearance of aristocracy. Without marriage, everything that a family had invested in their daughter's future, as well as their own, came to naught.

Conclusion

To a great extent, access to education as well as the nature and quality of that instruction, determined the future for many wealthy women. A young girl learned, from an early age, precisely what she could expect from life. Friendships, made in school and through private social activities, formed the basis of associations that many women maintained throughout their lives. Instructional methods emphasized the rote memorization of factual information. Similarly situated in New York's small, private academies, young women typically mastered several foreign languages and learned to recite poetry and recognize European masterpieces of painting and sculpture. Women also acquired some grasp of history and philosophy as a consequence of courses in reading. Foreign travel helped to supplement this basic curriculum. More substantive courses in economics and science were no more necessary to women elites than a knowledge of cooking. Women from this charmed circle who later succeeded in careers outside the home did so in spite of their education, rather than the intrinsic value of their schooling.

Patrician parents groomed their daughters to supervise large households and to entertain guests. Parents anticipated that their daughters would mature and marry into families with wealth and social standing that was equal to, if not greater than, their own. As

a consequence of adult goals, daughters of the wealthy did not need to learn anything other than those skills that would assist them as wives and mothers. Young women deferred to the parental authority that cultivated the softer side of their feminine natures. Obedient daughters could be expected to mature into dutiful wives and mothers who submitted to the direction of their husbands. The course of a young woman's life flowed safely and predictably through her childhood years. Conventional society did not value its daughters for their potential as individuals. Instead, these young women were seen as part of a larger, collective force that would some day help to promulgate established standards for family life and social conduct. Reared as social commodities, daughters of the wealthy provided a diverse and complex society with the promise of continuity.

The processes by which young women acquired the requisite social graces exposed them to a variety of social situations outside the household. Girls received instruction in dancing and deportment, which included their initial introduction to the company of young men. Informal, heterosocial clubs transitioned young women into adolescence, culminating in a debutante season. Throughout her life, the young girl had been groomed and cultivated to succeed in this social arena that would clarify her marital options. Nonetheless, the debutante process was fraught with uncertainty. Concerned parents attempted to maximize their daughter's social exposure while at the same time offering her guidance and protection. Families stood to benefit from a daughter's successful social introduction which, in turn, reflected family achievement. Adults viewed socially inexperienced young women as particularly vulnerable to unwelcome attention during this transitional period. The socialization process, in its entirety, reinforced childhood feelings of girlish dependency.

Young women, who had matured according to parental expectation, continued to require their elder's supervision and approval for much of their social activity prior to marriage.

In keeping with these prevailing notions of social propriety, patrician mothers also fostered discretion in dress and conduct in their children. Protected resort communities, like the home, gave children sheltering summer sanctuaries which assisted parents in the furtherance of their prescribed standards. These summer settings, like much of a girl's upbringing, emphasized an elite need for exclusivity. Although the social establishment articulated the importance of pedigree, its very existence had been premised upon commercial accomplishment and the requirement of wealth. Young women, as a consequence, learned the importance of material determinants of family status. The proper attire enhanced a daughter's opportunities for social success just as it formed the basis for some of her earliest memories. As a consequence, young women became practiced in exclusiveness while learning to exercise their personal taste in material goods.

Well-versed in the material requirements of elite status, young women also appreciated the fundamentals of social competition. To qualify their success as social fledglings, young women learned the importance of quantitative measures of their popularity. Invitations to leading social events, like flowers and other tokens of male approval, could be assessed as indications of their popularity among their peers. Patrician parents disparaged the materialism of social aspirants and ostensibly discouraged it in their children. Nonetheless, the process by which young women arrived at an understanding of their place in society subtlety inculcated that same trait.

Everything about a woman's upbringing, from her clothing and careful penmanship,

to her skill in the ballroom, to her first heterosocial clubs premised on the neighborhood proximity of her playmates, indicated her social entitlement. Young women learned to appreciate the value of a correct childhood and the friendships that ripened from an early age. Despite these childhood affections, competition colored many elements of the young woman's social life. The final, debutante season provided mothers with an opportunity to monitor the introduction of the next generation of society's leaders. At this critical time, young women also learned to measure themselves against their peers. Through the demonstration of her personal taste, charm and tact, a young woman presented herself as the embodiment of parental standards. As she readied herself for adult responsibilities, she also demonstrated her popularity. As she learned the extent of her sway over others, she gained knowledge of her ability to discriminate. By the time of her introduction to society as a debutante, the daughters of privilege had acquired all of the necessary traits deemed critical to a mature woman elite.

The daughters of privilege had received little meaningful education. A narrow and materialistic world view contributed to their opinions of others. Nonetheless, elite families regarded their daughters as ready to assume their domestic role as wives and mothers and poised for wider participation in social activity outside the home. Patrician girls approached this transition with a keen awareness of their place in the larger community. Their burgeoning talent for polite socialization concealed a snobbery which would inform the exclusionary principles by which they would undertake society's management. Although young women could be faulted for their materialistic values, this quality proved to be precisely what women required to succeed in New York society. By their late teenage

years, young women had acquired the toughness necessary for an active public life. As a consequence, New York society premised the social reputations of its newest female members on more than youth and beauty. Parents expected that a daughter "prove" herself at an early age and show that she could "hold her own among the established belles."[202] Parents had educated their daughters in anticipation of this "hard time" in society.[203] Everything about the girl's upbringing guaranteed that she would accept this challenge.

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[202] New York Times, 18 November 1883, 13.

[203] Ibid.

Elizabeth Wolcott Merchant: A Private Domesticity

Most wealthy women understood their place in the larger world of New York society. Born into families of wealth and privilege, these women complemented their family's social identity with their own networks of friends and acquaintances. Their measured lives did not require the recognition of the wider public. Most shunned publicity with the assurance that those people who mattered to them appreciated their contributions. Personal milestones, including marriages, births and deaths, became a matter of perfunctory public notice, often appearing as terse two-line announcements buried in the interior sections of the daily press. Wealthy women traditionally guarded these details, preferring that personal matters remain within private confines.

The household diaries of Elizabeth Wolcott Merchant illuminate the daily existence of one such woman. Unlike many of her social peers, however, Elizabeth did not enjoy the security of wealth for much of her adult life. Elizabeth, despite a distinguished pedigree, often struggled to accommodate her family's lack of money with the material determinants of social status. In the end, Elizabeth's effort to create the illusion of financial well-being confirms the importance of money to a woman's social identity. Despite her lack of wealth, Elizabeth's lineage as well as her close relationships with socially prominent friends and members of her extended family gave Elizabeth

standing in New York society. Additionally, her access to the homes of wealthy and socially prominent families gave her some degree of social power. Born in1840 into the home of a successful merchant, Elizabeth traced her lineage on her father's side to Oliver Wolcott a Connecticut signer of the Declaration of Independence. Her mother, the former Abby Howland, was a daughter of Gardiner Greene Howland, an eminent New York merchant and railroad promoter, whose own heritage stretched to John Howland a passenger on the Mayflower.[1] From 1863 to 1909, Elizabeth maintained a set of small household journals. Although there are a few significant breaks in this chronology, there is nothing to indicate Elizabeth's desire to discontinue her record. Her persistence in maintaining a diary suggests instead that the loss of six volumes over the span of forty-six years resulted naturally from her family's relocations. There is also every reason to conclude that Elizabeth Merchant regularly penned her thoughts before 1863. Her initial entry for that year reads as a continuation of the prior year, without any bold statement of her intention to keep a diary. It is possible that she began her household entries upon her marriage in 1861 to Steven L. Merchant. Her dedication to these journals, however, is

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[1] Robert Greenhalgh Albion, The Rise of the New York Port, copyright 1939, (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1961), 246. According to the family historian William Howland, all Howlands in America can trace their lineage to three sons of Henry Howland of Fen Station, Huntingdon Station, England. Of these descendants, John Howland arrived in America on the Mayflower in 1620 and his brothers Arthur and Henry "probably" arrived sometime between 1623-1624. William Howland, The Howlands in America, (Gouverneur, New York: The York Press Company, 1939), 11. See also Franklyn Howland, Genealogical and Biographical History of Arthur, Henry and John Howland, (New Bedford, Massachusetts: privately published, 1885). Henrietta Howland Robinson Green (1834 - 1916), who amassed a fortune in excess of $100 million, descended from Henry Howland. Hetty Green was a distant cousin of Elizabeth Wolcott Merchant. Charles Slack, Hetty: The Genius and Madness of America's First Female Tycoon, (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 6.

more indicative of a habit formed early in childhood.

Elizabeth Merchant's diaries placed only a limited demand on her time. These small volumes, purchased annually, varied in size from 3 x 5 inches to 4 x 6 inches, so that each entry, comprising a page, required only a few inches of lined space. Constrained by the size of the page, Elizabeth expressed her thoughts concisely in the carefully worded sentences of a woman of breeding and intelligence. Sometimes, she wrote multiple entries at a single sitting to encapsulate a week's activities. More spontaneous entries, written daily, provide greater insight into her private, emotional world. Elizabeth's uncharacteristic loss of reserve usually occurred in periods of stress, as in times of poor health, financial difficulty or subsequent to the death of a child. Despite the sometimes tragic circumstances of her life, Elizabeth Merchant made sure, that for at least forty-six years of her existence, there was a daily record of her accomplishment.

Elizabeth Merchant maintained her diaries for a variety of reasons. For the most part, she intended that the diaries register her household activities and obligations. Elizabeth's focus upon household matters is indicated by her apparent lack of interest in the outside world. Her first diaries date from the years of the American Civil War. Although she mentioned the war as it pertained to several family members, she did not habitually remark upon the progress of the conflict, the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, or the Confederate surrender at Appomattox, Virginia.[2] The single

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[2] Elizabeth's Civil War references include the following notations: "Day set about by the President for fasting and prayer." EWM, Diaries, Thursday, April 30, 1863; Union forces imprisoned her husband's brother Andrew Merchant at Port Hudson. EWM, Diaries, Saturday,

exception to this practice are her references to the Draft Riots of July 1863 which threatened the security of her household. On this occasion, Elizabeth devoted two successive entries to the "great riot in the city," noting a "report that the houses of Republicans would be attacked and burned...We packed our valuables and Father buried them and his papers and we sat up till nearly one and then went to bed in our clothes."[3]

In view of Elizabeth's dedication to household matters, her diaries concern topics related to feminine domesticity. The volumes are practical notations of daily household events, including: servants; home maintenance; appointments; finances; health care; and menus. The diaries also functioned as a compendium of useful information. Mindful of her social obligations, Elizabeth's diaries record social calls and correspondence. Similarly, Elizabeth monitored the whereabouts of other household members just as she noted the growth and development of her five children. Her diaries occasionally became a safe place to express her most personal thoughts. Not only did the diaries serve Elizabeth as a coping mechanism and a confessional device, they also became a spiritual resource. As an actively engaged church member, Elizabeth habitually noted her own church attendance and that of other family members. She recorded the content of sermons that she found instructive, indicating how the diaries reflect many aspects of her life.

Many volumes contain supplemental blank pages in the back which Elizabeth used

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July 25, 1863; Her cousin Huntington Wolcott died of "malarial fever contracted in army." EWM, Diaries, Friday, June 9, 1865.

[3] EWM, Diaries, Monday and Tuesday, July 13-14, 1863.

for many purposes. She sometimes itemized books that she had read or she accounted for titles she wished to read. She also occasionally noted the addresses of friends and of stores where she shopped for clothing and household goods. As a part of her church related activity, she sometimes tracked her correspondence with invalids who shared her religious affiliation. She listed ideas for Christmas gifts. Other books contained nostrums for various family ailments. Elizabeth's financial accounting of household expenses is the most revealing of these supplemental pages, however. These budget entries, maintained from 1881 to 1886, indicate the costs of food and other household items. Together, they present a disturbing, if incomplete, picture of the Merchant family's chronic financial difficulties.

As indicated by her use of this extra space, Elizabeth maintained her diaries principally as a vehicle for efficient household management. The domestic priorities of these records sometimes limit, however, a fuller understanding of her life. Although the diaries reveal Elizabeth's chronology, she seldom elaborated upon her personal feelings. To this extent, the diaries specify the significant dates of a life celebrated in birthdays and anniversaries and mourned with the passing of loved ones. They do not, however, detail the success or failure of her husband's professional career which obviously affected the family's well being and Elizabeth's own peace of mind. Elizabeth also seldom expressed her opinions of other people. She was not prone to gossip, even within the sanctity of this very private record. Limited also by the "pocket" format of her journal, Elizabeth's often cryptic references to people and events are clarified only as her life unfolded. The reader can only know with certainty what she chose to reveal. Elizabeth's devotion to her

father Frederick Wolcott and son Huntington is evident throughout her life. She is far more veiled, however, in references to her husband. Her frequent omission of Stephen from this record speaks powerfully to the quality of her marriage as if she had given full voice to her private disappointment.

Elizabeth's penmanship presents another set of interpretative issues. Generally, she wrote in a relaxed, cursive script. Her writing occasionally became calligraphic in its elaborations, indicating her intensive instruction in penmanship. At other times, her handwriting degenerated into a sloppy, childish scrawl. On these occasions, large imperfectly formed letters produced an uneven script that coursed downward across the page without regard to symmetry or the size of the page. Although she complained of arthritic hands as an old woman, her diaries from these later years are often more legible than at other periods. Elizabeth suffered a number of chronic physical discomforts throughout her life. Her health at times required lengthy periods of bed rest. She did not explain these more serious conditions, suggesting a prolonged and disabling depression as well as the possibility of self-medication. For most of these periods of ill health, she honored her commitment to her diary. In short, Elizabeth's handwriting became an indicator of her emotional well being. She habitually signaled her disquiet over some unspoken problem with gradually deteriorating penmanship before she stated the precise nature of her unhappiness.

This chapter introduces Elizabeth Wolcott Merchant through her lineage and extended kinship ties. As a descendant of both the Wolcott and Howland families, Elizabeth possessed a pedigree esteemed by New York's wealthy social establishment.

Elizabeth's father Frederick H. Wolcott is seen through his own record as the formative influence on his daughter's character and development. The death of Elizabeth's mother and her father's remarriage resulted in Elizabeth's marriage to her stepmother's younger brother Stephen Merchant.

This chapter primarily considers Elizabeth and Stephen Merchant as a case study in Victorian marriage. Their union is presented through prescriptive literature that set forth the accepted standards of marital duty for both husband and wife. From this perspective, Elizabeth's diaries indicate the steady decline of her marital relationship which finally matured into a marriage of convenience. Elizabeth and Stephen also attempted to build a family and establish a home, independent of her father's household. In viewing the Merchants' marriage, several other themes are introduced. These topics, relating to engagements, pregnancy and childbirth, children's health and mourning customs, contextualize Elizabeth's marriage.

Elizabeth Merchant lived in a manner consistent with her understanding of her domestic obligation. To this extent, she offers a picture of traditional womanhood. Although Elizabeth honored the wishes of her father and husband throughout her life, her domesticity also provided her a means of personal growth. Rather than limiting her development, domesticity gradually empowered Elizabeth. As she learned to maintain the fiction of her domestic identity, Elizabeth grew in self-esteem and gained independence.

A Pedigreed Woman

Elizabeth Wolcott Merchant understood the significance of her lineage as well as the importance of her family's tradition of civic contribution. As a descendant of an old

and distinguished family, she traced her American roots to Henry Wolcott and his move from England in 1630 "to avoid persecution" to Dorchester, Massachusetts.[4] In 1636, Henry Wolcott moved to Windsor, Connecticut, where he served as one of the town's principal planners. There Wolcott, in 1643, was elected to the magistracy, a post which he held until his death in 1655. One of his descendants served in that same local office for nearly eighty years.[5] The Wolcotts, blessed with large families, variously served as members of the Assembly, Governors, Judges of the Superior Court or magistrates in the Connecticut colony for nearly two hundred years. Wolcotts married into the prestigious Pitkin and Griswold families who also played important political roles in the early history of Connecticut. The Wolcott family's ability to achieve high public office continued throughout much of Elizabeth's own life. Although she regularly visited in the home of her first cousin Roger Wolcott on her annual trips to Boston, Elizabeth does not mention the active political career of her accomplished first cousin. After holding several elective offices, Roger rose to become a three-term governor of Massachusetts, beginning in 1895.[6]

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[4] Frederick H. Wolcott, The Wolcott Family, (Boston: n.p., 1847), 251.

[5] New York Times, 15 April 1883, 13.

[6] Elizabeth's first cousin Roger Wolcott, the son of Huntington and Cornelia Frothingham Wolcott served as a three-term governor of Massachusetts. Born on July 13, 1847, Roger graduated from Harvard College in 1870 where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and served as class orator. Although he graduated from Harvard Law School in 1874 and gained admission to the bar, Roger principally occupied himself with personal financial matters. On September 2, 1874 he married Edith Prescott with whom he had five children. In 1877, Roger began a political career winning election to the Boston Common Council. He later served three terms in the state Legislature beginning in 1882. Elected Lieutenant Governor in 1893, he became Acting Governor in 1895. Subsequently, he won reelection for three successive terms. He declined renomination for a fourth term. Active in Republican party politics, Roger Wolcott was offered

Elizabeth, who joined the Connecticut and Minnesota chapters of the National Society of Colonial Dames in 1899, traced her lineage through her great-great grandfather Roger Wolcott.[7] Roger, born in 1679 in Windsor, Connecticut, to Simon and Martha Pitkin Wolcott, enjoyed a forty-five year political career, culminating in his election as Governor of the Connecticut colony in 1750. He also served as Major-General of New England forces during King George's War. Additionally, Roger wrote a book of Poetical Meditations, published in 1725 .[8] Of his fifteen children, Elizabeth's great-grandfather Oliver Wolcott was born on November 20, 1726 in East Windsor, Connecticut. After graduation from Yale college in 1747, Oliver married Laura Collins and settled in northwestern Connecticut, near the present-day Litchfield. Oliver, like his father, achieved political prominence in the Connecticut colony and was named to its Governor's Council. During the American Revolution, Wolcott represented the colony at the Continental Congress and served under George Washington as the Commander of the Connecticut militia. He was elected Lieutenant Governor of Connecticut in 1786 and

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the Ambassadorship to Italy by President William McKinley in 1900, but he declined due to ill health. Roger Wolcott died on December 21, 1900. William Lawrence, Roger Wolcott, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1902); Massachusetts General Court, Public Services in Memory of Roger Wolcott, (n.p.: n.p., 1901); New York Times, 22 December 1900, 9. See also New York Times, 25 December 1900; New York Times, 28 December 1900, 1.

[7] Elizabeth Merchant joined the Connecticut and Minnesota chapters of the National Society of Colonial Dames of America on February 21, 1899. Her membership application traces her lineage through Roger Wolcott, providing the details of his career in public service. See The Colonial Dames of the State of Connecticut, Proof of Eligibility for Membership, Mrs. Stephen L. Merchant, in right of Governor Roger Wolcott, December 5, 1898.

[8] Albert Bates, "Sketch of Roger Wolcott," Connecticut Historical Society Collections, 16(1916): xxv-xxxv. See also Richard L. Bushman, From Puritan to Yankee: Character and Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967); Robert J. Taylor, Colonial Connecticut: A History (Millwood, New York: KTO Press, 1979).

Governor in 1796.[9]

Oliver's son and Elizabeth's great-uncle Oliver Wolcott, Jr. also graduated from Yale college in 1778. After studying law, Oliver, Jr. was born to Oliver and Laura Collins Wolcott in January 1760 in Litchfield, Connecticut. After graduation from Yale college in 1778 and admission to the local bar in 1781, Oliver Jr. settled in Hartford where he began work as a clerk for a state finance committee. By 1788, he had risen to the position of Connecticut's Comptroller of Public Accounts. A year later, Oliver Wolcott became auditor of the federal Treasury under Alexander Hamilton. He eventually was named Comptroller of the Treasury. When Hamilton resigned his Cabinet post in 1795, George Washington named Wolcott Secretary of the Treasury, a post he retained through the presidency of John Adams. Oliver Wolcott left public service in March 1802, settling in New York where he pursued his interests in the China trade and speculated in land. Wolcott also participated in the board of the Bank of the United States, later serving as president of the Bank of America. In 1813, he returned to Connecticut in 1815 where he ran unsuccessfully for governor and helped to draft its

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[9] Franklin Bowditch Dexter, Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College, vol. 2, (New York: Henry Holt, 1912). See also J. Moss Ives, "The Share of Connecticut in the Revolution," New England Magazine, 20, no.3(May 1899): 263 - 277; Samuel Wolcott, Memorial of Henry Wolcott and Some of His Descendants, (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1881); Christopher Collier, Connecticut in the Continental Congress, (Chester, Connecticut: Pequot Press, 1973; Ellsworth S. Grant, "From Governor to Governor in Three Generations," Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin 39 (July 1974): 65-77; Richard Buel, Jr., Dear Liberty: Connecticut's Mobilization for the Revolutionary War, (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1980).

1818 state constitution.[10]

Oliver's brother Frederick Wolcott was Elizabeth's grandfather. Born in Litchfield, Connecticut, on November 2, 1767, Frederick followed his brother to Yale college. He intended to practice law after further study. When ill health curtailed this ambition, Frederick decided upon a career in public service. For forty-two years, he served as Clerk of the Court of Common Pleas and as Clerk of the Superior Court of Litchfield County, Connecticut. He also represented Litchfield in the state's General Assembly before his election in 1810 to the State Senate. Frederick was also named, along with his brother Oliver, a Fellow of Yale College.[11] His son Frederick Henry, Elizabeth's father, later wrote that "the whole state honored and venerated him as one of its brightest and strongest characters."[12]

Elizabeth Merchant's father Frederick Henry Wolcott was born August 19, 1808, near Litchfield, Connecticut to Frederick Wolcott and Elizabeth Huntington. He was the fifth of six children by this marriage. His older siblings, particularly his brother Huntington and his sister Elizabeth Jackson and their children, formed the basis of Frederick, and later Elizabeth's, large extended family. Frederick intended to follow in

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[10] Robert Jay Delger, "Oliver Wolcott, Jr. : Conspirator or Public Servant?" Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin 46 (1981): 78-85. See also "Memoirs of the Federal Administrations," North American Review, 64, no.134 (January 1847): 161 - 179; Linda K. Kerber, "Oliver Wolcott: Midnight Judge," Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin 32 (1967): 25-30.

[11] Robert C. Griffen and Mitchell R. Alegre, Wolcott Genealogy, (Interlaken, New York: Heart of Lakes Publishing, 1986), 223.

[12] Frederick Henry Wolcott, Diary, 1849 - 1854, 2 vol. Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, New York, New York, Wednesday, December 31, 1851. Hereinafter, references from this source will be cited by name and date.

his father's footsteps, preparing for college under a Mr. Brace and at the Litchfield Law School of Judge Tapping Reeve. Frederick decided, however, at the age of sixteen to move to Boston to begin a mercantile career.[13] There he worked briefly as a clerk with the firm of Stone and Kent before forming a partnership with his brother Huntington and Mr. Stone. This association lasted for approximately three years until his brother left the firm to join the firm of A.& A. Lawrence. Young Frederick briefly served with another firm before joining the firm of W. & L. Lawrence & Stone as first clerk. He remained in this capacity until December 30, 1829, when he left Boston to seek his fortune in New York City.[14]

By the 1820's, New Englanders, like Frederick Henry Wolcott, had become prominent fixtures in the city's thriving economy. Many Connecticut traders sought the opportunities offered by New York's larger and more vibrant commercial markets.[15] In February 1830, Frederick joined several associates to form the partnership of Steele,

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[13] His brother Joshua Huntington Wolcott followed a similar trajectory. Huntington, born August 29, 1804. He moved to Boston to join the counting house of A. and A. Lawrence as an apprentice. He rose to partnership at age twenty-six. Huntington featured prominently in the development of New England manufacturing, serving as President and Director of numerous companies and charities. During the Civil War, he served as State Treasurer of the Sanitary Commission. In 1844, he married Cornelia Frothingham. The couple had two sons, Huntington Frothingham(b. February 4, 1846, d. June 10, 1865 while serving as a 2nd Lt. 2nd Regiment of the Massachusetts Cavalry) and Roger (b. July 13, 1847, d. December 21, 1900) Upon Cornelia's death in 1850, Huntington married her sister Harriet Frothingham in 1851. He died on January 6, 1891. Frederick and Huntington's sister Elizabeth Wolcott was born on March 6, 1806. She married John P. Jackson of Newark, New Jersey, on May 23, 1827. The couple had eleven children. She died on October 15, 1875. Robert C. Griffen and Mitchell R. Alegre, 292, 218 - 222, passim. See also New York Times, 5 January 1891, 5.

[14] Frederick Henry Wolcott, Wednesday, December 31, 1851.

[15] Robert Greenhalgh Albion, 242.

Wolcott & Richards which lasted four years. Wolcott left this firm after several months for health reasons, traveling to the British Isles and France for his recuperation. Returning to New York in July 1831, he joined two consecutive partnerships before the financial Panic of 1837. He wrote of this crisis as a time when "banks suspended specie payment and during the crisis thousands of business firms in all parts of the country suspended and failed. My own firm suspended for about six weeks and then commenced paying in full with interest every debt."[16]

In May 1840, Frederick Wolcott formed a connection with William G. Lambert under the name of L. & W. For this firm of forwarding and commission merchants, Wolcott recollected that "business for the whole period averaging over one million dollars per annum, less our loss in 1837 . . . [T]he number of failures were very heavy . . . still we were able to meet all our engagements honorably."[17] Among other commodities, Wolcott traded in dry goods. For twenty years, he served as New York agent for the domestic cotton output of two of New England's largest textile mills. During that period, sales from this venture alone amounted to some $10,000,000.[18] In 1849, Wolcott's New England clients formed a separate firm entirely devoted to their interests. Frederick Wolcott accepted this news as "not a serious calamity," reflecting that "my capital and that of my partner will enable us to command new assignments probably as profitable."[19]

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[16] Frederick Henry Wolcott, Wednesday, December 31, 1851.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Frederick Henry Wolcott, Tuesday, November 11, 1849.

For several years after this business reversal, Wolcott commented favorably on the business climate, remarking upon the availability of capital and the prices of various commodities. In December of 1851, Wolcott announced his intention "to retire from active business in the dry goods."[20] Though he maintained an office for another decade, Wolcott concluded that by 1851, at age forty-three, he had accumulated "sufficient property to satisfy my desires."[21] Ten years later, a registry of New York's wealthy citizens valued his net worth at $100,000.[22]

Shortly after the outbreak of the Civil War, Frederick Wolcott retired from all direct business involvements. He and his family relocated from their New York City home at 108 Waverly Place to his farm at Hurl Gate, Long Island, near the present day Astoria, Queens. At that time, rural Queens county contained the country homes of other prominent Manhattan residents. Prior to this move, Wolcott confided his interest in the management of this property, proudly recording its improvements and the details of planting. In his retirement, Frederick Wolcott occupied himself fully with the operation of "The Hill" estate and with charitable work. He took an active role in the organization and management of the New York Juvenile Asylum and in the Law and Order Society of Long Island. He also served as vice-president and on the Board of Managers of the American Bible Society which raised funds for the printing and distribution of Bibles both

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[20] Frederick Henry Wolcott, Wednesday, December 31, 1851.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Reuben Vose, The Rich Men of New York, (New York: Francis & Loutrel, 1862), n.p. The 1860 Census rolls lists the value of Frederick H. Wolcott's Hurl Gate estate at $35,000 and approximates the value of additional personal property at $25,000.

domestically and overseas.[23] In 1880, Frederick was named to the Board of Trustees of Green-Wood Cemetery which acted in an oversight capacity for the management of this institution.[24] Proud of his Wolcott heritage, Frederick supervised the production of a Wolcott Genealogy which he issued in 1847. For this project, Wolcott invested a thousand dollars for "processing and compiling the interesting facts which extend back into the eleventh century."[25] An active church member, Frederick served for many years as an Elder of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York where his family worshiped. He also represented the New York Presbytery several times at the General Assembly, the denomination's national governing body.[26]

Elizabeth Merchant's connection to New York's Howland family dates to her father's marriage on June 12, 1838 to Abby Woolsey Howland, daughter of Gardiner Greene Howland.[27] Frederick later reckoned that through mutual ancestors in the Huntington family "my dear wife and myself were third blood cousins."[28] Gardiner

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[23] New York Times, 6 June 1874, 2; 6 July 1874, 3; 8 August 1874, 2; 7 November 1874, 2.

[24] New York Times, 18 March 1880, 8.

[25] The Wolcott Coat of Arms features three rooks because an ancestor played chess with King Henry V and checkmated his Highness with a Rook. Frederick H. Wolcott, November 11, 1850.

[26] New York Times, 18 March 1880, 8.

[27] Abby's sister Rebecca Brien Howland married James Roosevelt in 1853. The couple's only son James, known familiarly as Rosie, was born the following year. Rebecca died in 1876 after a long illness. Franklin Delano was the only child of James and Sara Delano Roosevelt. Elizabeth Wolcott Merchant maintained cordial relations with her Roosevelt cousins throughout her life. Geoffrey C. Ward, Before the Trumpet: Young Franklin Roosevelt, 1882 - 1905, (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 33.

[28] Frederick H. Wolcott, Wednesday, November 12, 1851.

Howland, Elizabeth's grandfather, was born to Joseph and Lydia Howland on September 9, 1787 in Norwich, Connecticut, where his father was a "reasonably prosperous" shipowner in the West India trade. The Howland presence in New York's business community dated to around 1800 when Joseph relocated his business. Gardiner undertook mercantile training with his father before forming his own commercial shipping house in 1807 with his brother Samuel Shaw Howland.

The firm of G.G. & S.S. Howland quickly achieved "remarkable success" in the Latin American trade which they conducted with "numerous second-hand" ships.[29] The Howland firm profited "through the eventful period of the War of 1812 and the embargo."[30] The Howland brothers earned a reputation for their shrewd business dealings. In 1825 and 1826, the firm acted as commercial agent for two frigates on behalf of the Greek government in their war of liberation against Turkey. Though the Howland firm did not build the ships, their commission fees and interest charges drove the price of the two vessels well above the original estimate. A New York board of merchants arbitrated the matter, deciding in favor of the Howlands and the firm that had built the ships. The Greek buyers finally took possession of a single ship, after paying more than the original estimate for the two frigates. The second ship was sold to the United States Navy where it became infected with dry rot. The ensuing scandal proved embarrassing in New York where funds had been raised to support the cause of Greek independence.[31]

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[29] Robert Greenhalgh Albion, 246.

[30] New York Post, 10 November 1851, 2.

[31] Robert Greenhalgh Albion, 310-311.

Despite this negative publicity, the Howland brothers flourished throughout the 1830's. They dominated the Latin American markets as exporters of flour and domestic textiles which they exchanged for valuable cargoes of coffee, sugar and mahogany. The firm also cultivated a large Pacific trade with individual cargoes frequently valued as high as $250,000.[32] In 1834, both Samuel and Gardiner retired from active management of G.G. and S.S. Howland. They retained, however, an investment of about $150,000 each in the firm as special partners.[33]

Gardiner Howland's commercial success permitted him an opulent life by New York standards. As fixtures among the city's cultural and social elite, Howland and his wife hosted a gala costume ball in their State Street home in lower Manhattan on March 3, 1830. Those in attendance considered the evening to be one of unprecedented luxury. The Howland home sparkled with the "tasteful arrangement of lights, the splendid drapery, the painted floor, the rich and splendid varied colored silk and satin drapes reflected in numerous mirrors."[34] One hundred guests danced to the "strains of a full and well selected band," supped on "every variety of viands and wine" and participated in a festive lottery drawing.[35] Former mayor Philip Hone concluded that "the whole affair

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[32] Ibid., 175.

[33] Ibid., 264.

[34] "A Hasty Sketch of the Late Fancy Ball at G.G. Howland," Costume Ball of March 3, 1830 given by Mrs. Gardiner Green Howland. Manuscript Division, New York Historical Society, New York, New York, 2.

[35] Ibid., 20-21.

went off well and has never been surpassed in this city."[36] Gardiner Howland also joined other prominent citizens to form the Italian Opera Association where he served as a trustee on its Finance Committee. This group, formed in November 1832, sponsored opera productions and commissioned new works.[37] According to its 1833 "Articles of Association," the Opera Association raised operating capital of $96,000 through the sale of shares, valued at one thousand dollars each, to fund the purchase of land at the corner of Church and Leonard Streets and the construction of an opera house with "proper saloons and furnished with scenery."[38] Gardiner Howland purchased six shares to underwrite this venture, which he recouped in 1839 at a profit.[39]

Like other wealthy citizens, the Howlands moved out of lower Manhattan's commercial district into a larger home at Number 15 Washington Square. Gardiner Howland, however, took particular pleasure in the management of his estate in Flushing, New York. Former mayor Philip Hone, who visited there in 1839, remarked that "the noble farm is in superb order. The teeming earth groans under the weight of the noble harvest, and the whole face of Nature smiles with the prospect of abundance."[40] In retirement, Howland mentored young men "in whom he saw industry, talent and high

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[36] Philip Hone, Diary, March 3, 1830, 268. See also Eric Homberger, Mrs. Astor's New York: Money and Social Power in a Gilded Age, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 130.

[37] Italian Opera Association, Minutes of the Association, November 26, 1832, Manuscript Division, New York Historical Society, New York, New York.

[38] Italian Opera Association, "Article 3," Articles of Association, Manuscript Division, New York Historical Society, New York, New York.

[39] Italian Opera Association, Minutes of the Association, February 20, 1839.

[40] Philip Hone, Saturday, June 1, 1839, 402.

character."[41] He also took an active role in the promotion of the Hudson River Railroad and served as a Director of the Bank of New York.[42] His son, William E. and his nephew, William H. Aspinwall, whose mother was a Howland, continued his mercantile enterprise as Howland & Aspinwall. This successor firm maintained a lucrative South American trade and pioneered in the development of China clippers for faster service to the Far East. William Aspinwall played an important role in connection with the California trade, running the Pacific Mail steamships and developing the Isthmus of Panama.[43]

Gardiner Howland died at home on November 9, 1851, of a sudden heart attack . Contemporaneous news accounts memorialized his " knowledge of men almost infallible, great firmness and decision, a sound but not a timid judgement, and a magnanimity to which all that is marrow and small was entirely alien."[44] These tributes also noted that Gardiner Howland had amassed a personal fortune conservatively estimated in excess of a million dollars. In his will, Howland divided his assets equally among his nine surviving children. He also bequeathed his widow a fixed income for life as well as the occupancy of their city and country homes. According to Frederick Wolcott, Howland had intended

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[41] New York Tribune, Friday, November 11, 1851, 5:2. Moses Taylor profited from an early association with Gardiner Howland, rising from a clerkship at G.G. and S. S. Howland to establish his own firm specializing in the Cuba trade. Burrows and Wallace, 657. See also Thomas Kessner, 22-33, passim. Howland also mentored his "nephew" the young James Roosevelt while the later studied at New-York University. Geoffrey C. Ward, 33.

[42] New York Times, 10 May 1903, 7. The Hudson River Railroad received its charter in 1846 as a freight line. It merged in 1869 with the New York and Harlem lines to form the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad. The Encyclopedia of New York City, s.v. "Hudson River Railroad."

[43] Robert Greenhalgh Albion, 246.

[44] New York Tribune, 11 November 1851, 5.

to execute a new will. A draft of a second will was found among his personal papers naming Wolcott as executor. Howland had further intended that Wolcott serve as trustee for Mrs. Howland and as guardian of his minor children.[45]

Gardiner Howland esteemed his personal association with his son-in-law Frederick Wolcott. Wolcott, in turn, appreciated Howland's "honorable labor" and "benevolence."[46] Both men had demonstrated their ability to succeed in New York's business community. It was not unusual for a young man like Frederick Wolcott to marry into such a wealthy and prominent family. Gardiner Howland reputedly harbored "absolute contempt" for any businessman who had not earned his fortune from the bottom up.[47] Wolcott's connections as a textile merchant also complemented Howland's efforts to supply the lucrative Caribbean markets. Both men shared a Connecticut heritage. The union between Abby Howland and Frederick Wolcott proved to be both happy and fruitful. The couple had six children, including: Elizabeth Huntington, Abby, Alice, Frederick Henry, Gardiner Howland and Oliver Huntington. Of these children, Alice, Frederick and Gardiner figure prominently in Elizabeth's diary. Elizabeth, born on April 22, 1840, ranked as the oldest child among her siblings. Her sister Alice was born on July 31,1843. Brothers Frederick and Gardiner were born on October 30, 1845 and August 25, 1848, respectively. Abby Howland, born June 27, 1841, died "suddenly after

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[45] Frederick Henry Wolcott, Friday, November 14, 1851.

[46] Ibid., Wednesday, November 12, 1851.

[47] Robert Greenhalgh Albion, 254.

an illness of eight hours" on May 26, 1844.[48] Oliver, born October 24, 1850, died in infancy on April 15, 1851.

Three months after the birth of her last child, Abby Howland Wolcott died on January 14, 1851. Abby Wolcott had been ill for twelve months and had "failed since the birth of her last child."[49] She succumbed peacefully with her husband and two daughters Elizabeth and Alice at her side. For months, Frederick mourned his wife's passing along with that of his youngest son Oliver who died the following April. In grief, Frederick confided to his journal, "My home is desolate, there is no consolation."[50] Still in his early forties, with five small children to superintend, Frederick could anticipate the comfortable life of a gentleman farmer, living in semi-retirement. He had, however, every reasonable expectation to remarry once his grief had passed. His brother Huntington had married his sister-in-law Harriet Frothingham less than two years after the death of his first wife Cornelia.

There is no indication, however, that Frederick entertained any thoughts of remarriage. After Abby's death, his entries record unremarkable days of quiet activity, tending to the maintenance of his estate, monitoring his investments, and pleasant dinners with close friends and family. Frederick H. Wolcott, however, intended this journal as more than just a record of his daily activity. Because of his interest in genealogy and the Wolcott family legacy, Frederick carefully noted marriages and deaths of family members,

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[48] Frederick Henry Wolcott, Wednesday, December 31, 1851.

[49] Ibid., Tuesday, January 14, 1851.

[50] Ibid., June 12, 1851.

often inscribing detailed descriptions of individuals.[51] There are, however, missing pages ripped from the back of the journal at the time Frederick contemplated remarriage. Frederick could have decided to excise such personal deliberations surrounding this decision. Elizabeth, who grew to dislike her step-mother, could also have destroyed these pages in honor of her mother's memory. Frederick's second wife could have removed the pages to eliminate any future misunderstanding. By any interpretation, the defaced journal survives only until January 2, 1854, leaving no record of the first encounter between Frederick Wolcott and the widow Sarah Elizabeth Merchant Chase.

Household Complexities

Elizabeth's life changed dramatically upon her father's remarriage in 1855. Sarah Elizabeth Merchant was born on October 10, 1822 to Lieutenant Charles Spencer Merchant and the former Sarah Lufkin of Newburyport, Massachusetts. Charles Merchant joined the army after graduating from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1814. Merchant served for ten years as a First Lieutenant in the Artillery Corps. In 1828, he received a Brevet Captaincy and later a Captaincy in the Florida War against the Seminole Indians. Merchant also saw brief service on the Canadian border in 1838-39. With the outbreak of the Mexican War, Merchant received command of Fort Brown, Texas, a post which he held until 1848. By the outbreak of the Civil War, Merchant had achieved the rank of Lieutenant Colonel of the Third Artillery. Promoted

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[51] Frederick H. Wolcott marked the death of his brother Henry Griswold Wolcott with an account of his brother's life, including his schooling and professional involvement in the China trade. Frederick also described his brother's physical appearance as well as his salient personality and character traits. Frederick H. Wolcott, Saturday, June 8, 1852.

to Colonel of the Fourth Artillery in 1861, Merchant commanded Fort Washington, Maryland, before he retired on August 1, 1863. Legislation providing for the retirement of officers with service in excess of forty-five years prompted Merchant's decision to leave active duty. In 1865, he received the rank of Brevet Brigadier General in recognition of his military service. In retirement, General Merchant served on court martials and as president of the West Point Association, the Academy's alumnae organization.[52]

Given the nature of Charles Merchant's military career, it is possible that his family moved several times as he accepted new assignments. It is also possible the Merchant family maintained a permanent home in upstate New York. Charles and Sarah Merchant had eight children, several of whom figure prominently in Elizabeth's diaries. These include: Sarah Elizabeth and her sisters Valeria(Vallie), Sarah(Sallie), Virginia(Jenny), and her brothers Stephen and Clarke.[53] Sarah Elizabeth's brother Charles Merchant died of wounds received in the Mexican War. Another brother Anderson served in the Confederate Army, settling in the South after the Civil War. A third brother Clarke graduated from the United States Naval Academy at Anapolis, Maryland, and maintained a wholesale metals business in Philadelphia. Sarah Elizabeth was the oldest of the four Merchant daughters. Widowed by Captain Leslie Chase of the United States Army, she

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[52] New York Times, 8 December 1879, 5.

[53] Valeria and Sarah Merchant married William Penrose and George Bowman, respectively, both of whom lived in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Virginia Merchant married John C. Maben on October 5, 1871. Duluth Evening Herald, Friday, 7 June 1901, 3.

had one son Leslie by this marriage in 1843.[54]

Sarah Elizabeth Chase and Frederick H. Wolcott married on January 18, 1855 in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in a service preformed by Rev. Dr. Skelton of Buffalo, New York.[55] On November 16, 1855 the couple had a son Charles Merchant Wolcott who died in childhood on April 3, 1858.[56] By 1860, census records indicate that a complex blended family resided at the Astoria estate of Frederick H. Wolcott. In addition to Frederick and his second wife Sarah Elizabeth, the household included the five Wolcott children from his first marriage, Sarah Elizabeth's son Leslie Chase, her parents Colonel and Mrs. Merchant and her sister Virginia. Eight servants are also enumerated. This census data indicates Frederick's clear resolve to merge the Wolcott and Merchant families into a single, large household.

Frederick completed this family ambition when Sarah Elizabeth's younger brother Stephen L. Merchant joined the household in 1859. Stephen had been born at Augusta Arsenal at Savannah, Georgia, on September 3, 1834. There is no record of his early childhood or of his education. At age fourteen, Stephen left home with his older brother Anderson and clerked at a store in Detroit for several years. At sixteen, Stephen moved to

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[54] Leslie Chase married Eva Hyde on June 24,1876. An 1859 graduate of Columbia University, Chase traveled widely and lived in France for many years. He authored articles on international politics for newspapers in New York, Philadelphia and Washington. His books include Political X-Rays, (New York: The Grafton Press, 1905), Rooseveltiana, (New York: The Grafton Press, 1909), and Plutocracy, (New York: The Grafton Press, 1910). He died in Atlantic City, New Jersey in 1919. New York Times, 29 June 1859, 4; 1 May 1883, 6; 30 April 1883, 6; 21 September 1884, 3; 11 November 1905; 25 May 1919, 19.

[55] New York Evening Post, 23 January 1855, 6.

[56] Robert C. Griffen and Mitchell R. Alegre, 292.

San Francisco to live with his father who had been ordered to command the Presidio garrison. Stephen remained in California for nine years, of which four were spent as a clerk in the United States mint. In 1859, Stephen left California and joined his family in New York. Here, his brother-in-law Frederick Wolcott helped him obtain a job as a secretary for the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. Frederick served on the Board of Directors of this company, owned by his Howland in-laws. Contemporaries recalled Stephen Merchant as the "life of any company in which he mingled, having a fund of interesting stories and anecdotes, and the knack of telling his experiences in a fascinating way."[57] At the very least, Stephen regaled the Wolcott household with stirring stories of the California Gold Rush and its vigilante justice. Stephen soon attracted the attention Elizabeth Wolcott, then a girl of nineteen.

Elizabeth, in contrast to the childhood of her future husband, had enjoyed an upbringing appropriate for a daughter of the wealthy elite. Her family had several options for her schooling near their Waverly Place address in lower Manhattan. Of these, Frederick selected Miss Green's School at Number One Fifth Avenue. Elizabeth Wolcott excelled in this educational setting. The penmanship in her diary indicates that she occasionally tested her memory for the calligraphy mastered at Miss Green's.[58] Elizabeth's father, who did not otherwise discuss his children in his journal, noted with pride that

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[57] Duluth Evening Herald, 7 June 1901, 3.

[58] On New Year's Day in 1897, Elizabeth recorded "mending broken china" in the elegant moulded script of a graduate of Number One Fifth Avenue. EWM, Diaries, Friday, January 1, 1897,

"Bessie passed a very perfect exam."[59] Frederick further acknowledged his daughter Elizabeth as a "most dutiful and excellent child."[60] Frederick's desires for Elizabeth, however, did not extend beyond his wish to see her comfortably settled into a marriage. Elizabeth, irrespective of her intellectual abilities, had been groomed for a domestic existence. Frederick Wolcott saw the possibility for the marriage of his oldest daughter to young Stephen Merchant. Stephen, like Frederick some thirty years earlier, had come to New York to seek his fortune. If nothing else, the marriage of Stephen to Elizabeth would affirm Frederick's choice of Sarah Merchant Chase as a wife. From the Merchants' perspective, Elizabeth's marriage to Stephen would cement the union of the two families. With Frederick's blessing, Elizabeth's uncle the Reverend Robert S. Howland performed the marriage ceremony of Stephen L. Merchant and Elizabeth Huntington Wolcott on November 20, 1861, at the Wolcott family estate on Hurl Gate, Long Island.[61]

If Elizabeth Wolcott harbored second thoughts about her marriage to Stephen Merchant, she never confided them. Her diaries contain but a single reference to an "old admirer, General Joseph Wheeler [who] called and flattered me."[62] Elizabeth, however,

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[59] Frederick Henry Wolcott, Friday, May 7, 1852.

[60] Ibid., Thursday, April 22, 1852.

[61] New York Evening Post, 20 November 1861, 57. At the time of her marriage, Elizabeth's uncle the Reverend Dr. Robert S. Howland was the Rector of the Episcopal Church of the Holy Apostles at Twenty-Eighth Street and Ninth Avenue in Manhattan. In 1868, Robert Howland became Rector in the new parish of Heavenly Rest at Forty-Fifth Street and Fifth Avenue. Howland contributed significantly from his private means for the construction of the Church of the Heavenly Rest, including several buildings adjacent to the church. Ill health forced his retirement in 1886. He died the following year. New York Times, February 3, 1887, 8.

[62] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, June 7, 1881.

did not express her regrets. The extent to which she acquiesced to her father and stepmother's wishes by marrying Stephen Merchant is unknown. Elizabeth enjoyed a close relationship with her father after the death of her mother. This bond and the depth of Elizabeth's respect and affection for her father are implicit in her diary's repeated references to "Dear Father." Elizabeth wished only to please the parent who had shaped her habits and guided her character for much of her life.

After her mother's death, Elizabeth, as the oldest child, enjoyed certain authority within the Wolcott home. She lost this privileged place in the family with her father's remarriage. As Sarah Elizabeth began to manage the Wolcott household, she assumed some of Elizabeth's former duties. Elizabeth did not express any overt resentment towards the woman she referred to as "Mother." There is a detached tone in her references to this individual in her diaries, however. Elizabeth clearly reserved her genuine affection and respect for her surviving natural parent. Her true feelings towards "Mother" erupted only once when she suspected that her stepmother had violated her privacy and read her diaries. Elizabeth buried her outrage in the back pages of an old diary "where I can often read them over but no one else will see them."[63] Much of this lengthy entry is an anguished invocation to God. "Help me to yield up to Thee all my selfish wishes and desires . . . all my unforgiving and unkind feeling toward a certain person whom I have such difficulty in even thinking of with patience . . . Lord, how can I love a person who has made so much of my life unhappy by her irritating, aggravating influence."[64]

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[63] EWM, Diaries, Inscribed January 1, 1882, 1880, n.p.

[64] Ibid.

It is not known how many times Elizabeth turned to this passage out of frustration with "Mother." General Merchant's career of military service insured that Stephen would be seen outside the family as a respectable match for a Wolcott daughter. Nonetheless, the Merchant family could not approximate the Wolcott legacy of civic accomplishment. Frederick anticipated that Stephen would find success in New York's business community. Marriage also offered Elizabeth a path to independence. Marriage would end her girlish reliance upon her father and his new wife, completing her transition to adulthood. Instead, Elizabeth found herself living under her father's roof for the first twelve years of her married life. While Stephen presumably gained his business footing in New York, "Mother" freely monitored every aspect of Elizabeth's life. Elizabeth was powerless under her father's roof. "Mother's" son, her younger siblings and her parents now occupied the Wolcott home for extended periods. Elizabeth had no means to undermine "Mother's" authority within the family. "Mother" supervised everything pertaining to the Wolcott home.

Despite her stepmother's influence, Frederick continued to support and counsel his oldest daughter and her husband. From the beginning, it is clear that Stephen Merchant did not meet Elizabeth's romantic expectations for married life. In 1863, Elizabeth mentioned other women in Stephen's life, raising questions about his past involvements and the possibility of infidelity. Stephen tormented Elizabeth with a letter from an old admirer, insisting that she read it.[65] At age twenty-nine, Stephen promised his wife "to be

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[65] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, November 14, 1863.

more faithful in the performance of his Christian duties."[66] For Stephen, life in the Wolcott household had come at the sacrifice of his independence. Working on his own since the age of fourteen, Stephen now answered to both his father-in-law and older sister as well as his wife.

Elizabeth also suffered as her marital difficulties played out before the members of her immediate family. Elizabeth's natural mother had died when she was eleven. As a vulnerable young woman, she had experienced courtship and decided to marry without the benefit of maternal counsel. As a consequence, she often turned to her father for help when personal difficulties spiraled beyond her control. Elizabeth's relationship with her father was unusual in this regard. In most homes of the wealthy elite, fathers had the liberty to distance themselves from matters involving household harmony. Frederick Wolcott, however, appeared more than willing to provide Elizabeth with the emotional support she needed in the absence of her natural mother. As an example of their close relationship, Elizabeth once confided "quite a fright as Steve did not come home but merely sent a message saying he had gone to Philadelphia."[67] Frederick did not hesitate to intervene in this situation with an unscheduled trip into New York, later assuring his daughter that "only business had called Steve away."[68]

This series of diary entries suggests the extent of Frederick Wolcott's involvement

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[66] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, September 3, 1863.

[67] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, April 7, 1863.

[68] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, April 8, 1863.

in Elizabeth's marriage.[69] Though a loving and compassionate father, Frederick's economic power over the Merchants, both as a provider of a home and of Stephen's employment, gave him some standing in his daughter's relationship. Furthermore, Elizabeth's reliance upon her father to ameliorate her unhappiness suggests both her emotional vulnerability and the reach of his paternal authority. Elizabeth valued her father's household involvement, never viewing his presence as interference. She, in fact, modeled her expectations for her husband and her own marital happiness upon Frederick and his concern for the Wolcott household.

Elizabeth's Marriage and Her Family

Once Elizabeth and Stephen made the decision to marry, conventional etiquette mandated strict conduct for the prospective bride and her family. According to the etiquette authority Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, these behavioral norms originated in the family's need to protect a young girl's "purity."[70] Though there were no corresponding safeguards for young men, prescriptive literature stressed the importance of a young woman's virginity prior to marriage. In an effort to control the sexual activity of the future bride, etiquette manuals warned that her conduct could never provide the basis for gossip or rumor. As a consequence, she could not leave her home unaccompanied nor

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[69] Historians agree that the movement away from the well-ordered, patriarchal family of the colonial era to a more affectionate, private household environment occurred in most upper and middle class American households by the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Daniel Blake Smith, "The Study of the Family in Early America: Trends, Problems, and Prospects," William and Mary Quarterly 39(January 1982), 3-28; Carl Degler, At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 8-25; Nancy Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood.

[70] Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, Manners and Social Usages, 97.

could she entertain her intended husband without adult supervision. Prescriptive literature recommended that the future groom make a series of brief supervised calls on the bride and her family as opposed to a single visit prolonged past ten o'clock.[71] Late visitations would subject the prospective bride "to the ridicule and censure of others."[72] Other young male family friends could not enter the home of the betrothed unless their character had been vouched by her family. These customs insured a family and their daughter against a loss of reputation should the engagement be broken. Because of these strictures, engagements often lasted only for the time required for the bride and her mother to complete wedding arrangements

The circumstances surrounding a wedding including its size, location, the time of day, season of the year and type of religious observance varied tremendously. The details of Elizabeth Wolcott's home wedding are unknown. She did remark occasionally on other weddings that she attended, commenting favorably upon the food, gifts and flowers.[73] Prescriptive literature attempted to locate a balance between solemnity and celebration in offering wedding advice. Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, who directed her opinions to the well-heeled, captioned her discussion of weddings as "splendid and costly simplicity."[74] Advice writers agreed only that the bride's family bore the responsibility for the costs

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[71] John H. Young, 191-192.

[72] Richard A. Wells, 236.

[73] EWM, Diaries, "beautiful crowded rooms, elegant supper," Wednesday, February 11, 1863; "presents magnificent, flowers superb," Tuesday, April 28, 1863; "elegant, of course," Wednesday, April 27, 1867; "lovely bride," Tuesday, October 30, 1867; "grand affair, great crowd,"Wednesday, October 5, 1870.

[74] Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, 94, 99, 119, passim.

incurred by a wedding. Prevailing etiquette deemed it awkward for a groom or his family to supply the bride with any of the flowers, clothing or cards during the delicate engagement period. Once ceremonies at the altar had concluded, however, the groom assumed all future financial obligations for his wife.

The bride could savor the true magnificence of her wedding in the first months after the ceremony. Then she could appreciate her new diamond jewelry along with the silver service and "bits of china, cloisonne, clocks...lamps, tablecloths and choice etchings" that she had received as gifts.[75] Marriage removed any social uncertainty surrounding the nature of the couple's relationship. Friends hosted bridal dinners and parties to welcome newlyweds upon their return from their honeymoon. The bride's family also sent cards "to let the bride's friends know where she could be found in her married state."[76] Recipients of wedding cards returned this courtesy by calling on the couple in their new home. This warm communal welcome initiated the young bride's pursuit of a social presence somewhat independent of her parents. As she began to make her own series of calls, she carried forward the social values of wealthy elites.

The young bride also accepted a new domestic obligation as she began to create her married identity. Advice literature frequently included information for the newly married on the creation of a proper home environment. Writers portrayed the home as "woman's kingdom," premising their recommendations on the accepted differences in masculine and feminine abilities. Accordingly, the husband "could not be the preserver,

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[75] Ibid., 119.

[76] Ibid., 89.

inspirer, teacher and exemplar in his household; the wife could not become the worker and provider, protector and lawgiver."[77] In "tender love and hopeful piety," women contented themselves with the interior world of the home.[78] This conventional wisdom viewed the married woman as a "helpmate," which in practice subordinated a wife's interests to those of her husband.[79] Writers instructed women in terms of their marital "duty" and obliged women to "strive to the utmost of her ability to do whatever is best calculated to please."[80] Amid the counsel regarding personal neatness and home beautification, prescriptive literature also advised on financial matters. Women were told to "act openly and honorably" with respect to the money entrusted to them and to maintain household accounts with "scrupulous exactness."[81] A dutiful wife avoided extravagance and encouraged her husband through her "own frugality, to be economical, thrifty, enterprising and prosperous in his business.[82] In finance, as in other matters, women ruled through influence. A good wife inspired her husband by her example, leading him "to high and noble thoughts, lofty aims, and temporal comfort."[83]

Writers were far less explicit regarding a husband's duties in marriage. Most authors cautioned men against undue involvement in household matters. One author

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[77] Sarah J. Hale, Manners; or, Happy Homes and Good Society All the Year Round, 78.

[78] Ibid.

[79] John H. Young, 212. See also Sarah J. Hale, 72-72.

[80] John H. Young, 211.

[81] Richard A. Wells, 260.

[82] John H. Young, 212.

[83] Ibid.

concluded that in domestic matters "the wife rules predominant, and he should never interfere with her authority and government in this sphere."[84] A woman could wish, however, that her husband be "ever kind and attentive"at home.[85] This profound expectation, however, could also apply to any male friend or family member. What distinguished a husband's responsibility from all other men in a married woman's universe was his implicit duty to provide "such comforts as his means permit."[86] This financial obligation lay at the core of the social contract implied in a nineteenth century marriage. While a wife could express interest in and support of a husband's public business matters, delicate female constitutions theoretically limited women's ability to accept the complete responsibility for a household's financial well-being.

With these explicit social responsibilities, the dominant justification for marriage remained the concept of romantic love. This emotional, personal choice often forced couples to confront the contradictions inherent in the cluster of ideas that defined a nineteenth century marriage. One study of Victorian love letters, uncovers a tension between powerful community standards which defined the performance of marital roles and the more private, voluntaristic process of choosing a mate.[87] Women supposedly entered marriage freely, as a matter of personal choice. Nonetheless, the gender roles socially prescribed in a conventional marriage required female dependency. Financial

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[84] Ibid., 214.

[85] Ibid., 213.

[86] Sarah J. Hale, 75. See also John H. Young, 213.

[87] Karen Lystra, Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 206.

considerations often undermined the quality of a relationship. Neither spouse expected economic autonomy on the part of women. Convention also mandated that husbands provide an acceptable level of support. Therefore, a man's inability to fulfill this obligation exposed a woman's economic vulnerability. Women additionally suffered emotional exposure in marriage as the requirements of feminine domesticity gave the wife limited alternatives outside the home. Husbands, on the other hand, enjoyed unfettered freedom to pursue a public life. A husband's willingness to act as a supportive and caring domestic companion became critical to the emotional well-being of many women.[88] A wife's happiness often depended upon her husband's explicit approval as validation of her feminine role of wife and mother. Consequently, a man's conspicuous absence from the home enhanced a woman's awareness of her physical isolation as well as her emotional dependency.

For many women, the reconciliation of the social construct that defined a Victorian marriage with the individual expectations of romantic love proved daunting. Most women did not equate a mature romantic love with the excitement and passion experienced during courtship. Most couples accepted a calmer, more predictable emotion as fundamental to a relationship.[89] Nonetheless, the strong pressure of community standards to maintain the appearance of an idealized marriage often eroded the confidence of even the most secure individuals.

Within the social context of the late nineteenth century, the forty-one year

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[88] Ibid., 209 - 211, passim.

[89] Ibid., 207.

relationship of Elizabeth Wolcott and her husband Stephen Merchant presents a case study in the dynamics of a Victorian marriage as well as it speaks to the strength of the domestic ideal itself. Elizabeth Wolcott Merchant is vague regarding her husband's public enterprise. She knew the nature of her husband's business and had no need to note its details in her personal diaries. Public financial matters, moreover, theoretically lay beyond her purview. In this regard, New York City directories indicate Stephen Merchant's business address as 88 Wall Street from 1862 until 1868.[90] Here Stephen worked in the offices of Pacific Mail and Steamship Company where his father-in law Frederick served as a member of the board of directors. In late 1867, Elizabeth recorded Stephen's concern over the "possible ousting" of the company's directors.[91] As a consequence of this management change, Stephen found himself "alone in business" with offices at 76 South Street.[92] Listing his occupation as merchant, Stephen decided to concentrate on the importation of encaustic tiles by 1872. These ceramics, inlaid and fired with colored clays, were widely used to form decorative patterns on the hearths and floors of Victorian homes. Over the years, Stephen changed his business address with some frequency which did not give his wife cause for comment. His offices consistently remained in the business district of lower Manhattan. In 1873, Stephen listed himself merely as "broker" and a

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[90] Trow's New York City Directory, compiled by H. Wilson, (New York: John F. Trow, 1863), 598.

[91] EWM, Diaries, Monday, October 21, 1867.

[92] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, March 24, 1868. See also Trow's New York City Directory, (1868), 744.

second time as "merchant" without reference to his tile business at 76 South Street.[93] Elizabeth's brother Frederick also described himself as a "merchant" at the same South Street address.[94] The nature of the business connection between Stephen and Frederick is unknown as there are no subsequent business listings for Frederick Wolcott after 1873.

By 1877, Stephen had moved to 53 Broadway, listing his occupation as "cement."[95] Stephen described his occupation in five separate city locations as "cement" until 1890, after which there are no business listings for Stephen L. Merchant. Later in life, Stephen boasted of his "conspicuous success" in the cement business which he supplemented with the importation of decorative English tiles.[96] While this rendition of Stephen's New York commercial activity is somewhat compatible with the city's business listings, it contradicts the impressions left by Elizabeth's diary. In 1872, she noted with some excitement her husband's appointment as an agent for the sale of stock for the Glasgow State Line.[97] Any hope of significant income arising from this venture quickly dissipated. Less than one week later, Elizabeth observed, "Steve looking miserable and depressed about his failure to sell the stock for the Glasgow line. May have to give it up."[98] As a consequence of this business set-back and the economic uncertainty surrounding the collapse of the national bond market a few months later, no further listings

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[93] Trow's New York City Directory, 1873, 890.

[94] Ibid., 1412.

[95] Trow's New York City Directory, 1877, 962.

[96] Duluth Evening Herald, 7 June 1901, 1..

[97] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, November 19, 1872.

[98] EWM, Diaries, Monday, November 25, 1972.

for Stephen L. Merchant as "broker" appear after 1873. Stephen was equally unsuccessful in his tile and cement enterprises. This impression is born out by the household financial records Elizabeth maintained from 1881 until 1886. On the unnumbered back pages of her journals, Elizabeth monitored in exacting detail her purchases of food, clothing, salaries for household help, doctor's bills, charitable contributions and travel expenses. She tracked a labyrinth of financial obligations with various siblings who routinely helped defray household costs. Also notable among these cash infusions is a monthly stipend of around $100 that she regularly received from her father. In 1881, for example, Frederick Wolcott contributed $1250 to the maintenance of his daughter and her family. Stephen, by contrast, sporadically contributed only small amounts of less than ten dollars to his wife's household budget.

As her father neared the end of his life, Elizabeth considered the implications of his financial assistance. She worried "about our class which doesn't seem to prosper."[99] Elizabeth's own awareness of her vulnerability and the importance of money to the preservation of her social identity is singular. With her understanding of status and as a woman, Elizabeth had been schooled not to verbalize her interest in money matters. Her remark, however, reflects her awareness of the necessity of wealth among New York elites. Personal circumstance forced Elizabeth to realize that her own future would diverge from the one assumed in her comfortable upbringing. This bleak foreboding about her own financial future quickly came to fruition.

In early 1883, Elizabeth's scattered references to Stephen indicate that he

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[99] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, September 17, 1881.

increasingly used a home office that she had organized.[100] City Directories, moreover, indicate that his professional interests now centered on his cement enterprise. By October of that year, Elizabeth began to show signs of distress over an unidentified personal issue. Her diary entries became increasingly imprecise and her handwriting deteriorated into an illegible scrawl . Later in the month, Elizabeth recorded Stephen's meeting with an unnamed "German gentleman."[101] Soon she admitted that "[p]oor Steve in trouble and obliged to make an assignment."[102] This statutory proceeding meant that Stephen had conveyed all of his assets to a third party for liquidation and distribution on a pro rata basis to his business creditors. Stephen's 1883 assignment was a declaration of business failure. News records further indicate that in 1879, Stephen had previously accepted an "assignment for the benefit of creditors."[103] As Elizabeth's journal for 1879 is missing, it impossible to know her reaction to her husband's earlier financial reversal. Not surprised by this latest set-back in 1883, Elizabeth only noted Stephen's "very blue" mood without further comment.[104] Elizabeth keenly shared her husband's disappointment, however. Her diary became a coping mechanism that grounded her in the present's daily household obligations. Elizabeth's father had expressed pride in his ability to honor his business obligations after the Financial Panic of 1837. It is not known whether or not Elizabeth asked her father to help Stephen regain his business footing. For the novelist Edith

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[100] EWM, Diaries, Monday, April 4 - Wednesday, April 6, 1881.

[101] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, October 21, 1883.

[102] EWM, Diaries, Monday, October 22, 1883.

[103] New York Times, 21 June 1879, 8.

[104] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, October 23, 1883.

Wharton, however, "The mere idea of a woman's appealing to her family to screen her husband's business dishonor was inadmissible, since it was the one thing that the Family, as an institution could not do."[105]

Elizabeth shared her husband's public failure. As a provider, Stephen Merchant had at least twice demonstrated an inability to flourish in New York's commercial environment. While financial matters threatened Elizabeth's security, other aspects of the Merchants' marriage also proved troubling. Stephen, in this regard, is notable more for his absences from home than for his active interest in Elizabeth or their family. When Stephen is mentioned in the early years of Elizabeth's marriage, it is usually to record his negative impact on Elizabeth and the larger Wolcott household. Elizabeth, for example, regularly noted the time of Stephen's nightly arrival home which she characterized as "late" or "quite late" if she was not awake at the precise hour. Stephen belonged to a men's group known as the Associated Pioneers of the Territorial Days of California which met periodically over dinner to reminisce.[106] New York also offered any number of evening diversions, including theater, restaurants, private clubs, dance halls, and brothels, for gentlemen who were inclined to relaxation outside the home.[107] In view of these distractions, some writers simply stated that the "conditions of modern city life [were] not

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[105] Edith Wharton, The Age of Innocence, 210.

[106] New York Times, 2 August 1878, 2; 19 January 1884, 2.

[107] George Ellington; James D. McCabe, Jr. See also Timothy J. Gilfoyle, City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992); Lewis A. Erenberg, Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981).

favorable to prosperous matrimonial engagements."[108] By the kindest interpretation, Stephen habitually worked late in his office and visited his elderly parents who lived for a time on Bedloe's Island before returning to the Wolcott estate in Hurl Gate at night. Elizabeth also remarked upon the evening arrivals of other household members throughout the years that she maintained a diary. At the very least, her notation of her husband's arrival mirrored her need for an orderly domestic life. The timing of a husband's nightly return affected plans for family meals and evening socialization. These practicalities are not conveyed in Elizabeth's record of Stephen's habits, however. Elizabeth occasionally confessed the personal hardship in not knowing Stephen's whereabouts. Routinely, she approached the advent of a new year with her reflections on the accomplishments of the old. In one such year-end summary, Elizabeth remarked that Stephen was "less with me than ever before."[109] This plaintive observation mirrors Elizabeth's sadness at her husband's inattention rather than her disapproval of his many absences.

Elizabeth confessed to "hard struggles" in bearing Stephen's absence with patience.[110] Stephen could occasionally find legitimate excuses for his late arrivals. On the evening of July 14, 1868, for instance, his ferry across the East River to Queens collided with another boat. Stephen narrowly escaped harm by jumping to the other boat which was eventually towed back to the city. This one episode did not compensate, however, for his frequent and extended periods of unexplained late arrivals. After one such period,

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[108] New York Times, 15 February 1880, 6.

[109] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, December 31, 1867.

[110] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, May 10, 1868.

Elizabeth had a "long talk" with Stephen who promised "many good resolutions."[111] This confrontation proved fruitless as Stephen enjoyed a series of late evenings at the theater with "English friends" in the days that immediately followed.[112] Stephen's absence from home extended to holidays and other important family gatherings. In 1871, for example, Elizabeth noted the family's "anxiety" on Easter Sunday when Stephen did not reach home until eleven, "as he was enjoying himself at the Hoffman House."[113]

Stephen's Easter celebration at New York's premier German restaurant prefaced another succession of late evening "serenades" at unspecified locations.[114] Elizabeth confided her disquiet during this period with the notation that Father had installed a security bell in her room "which makes me feel more secure."[115] Stephen Merchant obviously chaffed at the regularity of the Wolcott's home life. Not only could he expect the inquiries of his father-in-law about the day's business, he also endured the meddling of his older sister. On one occasion, Steve left the house in anger after receiving a scolding from "Mother" for his failure to attend church. Elizabeth observed that her mother-in-law's interference did "more harm than good."[116] Implicit in her step-mother's intervention is an implied critique of Elizabeth's failure in the relationship. When Stephen returned home the following day, Elizabeth renewed her "resolve" to be a more "unselfish

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[111] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, October 9, 1870.

[112] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, October 18, 1870.

[113] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, April 9, 1871.

[114] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, May 16, 1871; Friday, May 19, 1871.

[115] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, May 4, 1871.

[116] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, February 25, 1866.

wife."[117]

In the end, Stephen's decision to leave "The Hill" estate permanently resulted from a family quarrel in 1871. Elizabeth did not witness the critical disagreement between her husband and brother Gardiner. According to Stephen's nephew Leslie Chase, who was also Elizabeth's half-brother, Gardiner Wolcott provoked the entire matter. Stephen Merchant, however, provided an easy target for disparagement. In a fit of pique, Stephen left the Wolcott home, sending Elizabeth a note "telling me to prepare at once to leave home as he will return there no more."[118] Stephen held firm to this decision, despite entreaties from Father that he return to the family fold. Though saddened by the disturbance, Elizabeth expressed happiness in the opportunity finally to have her own home. As a result, the Stephen Merchants moved into a boarding house in New York at the end of September 1871. Elizabeth, now age thirty-one, wrote that she "felt badly to give up all claim to the old room where most of our married life was passed and every one of our babies born. Still, perhaps, it is better too."[119] Elizabeth accomplished the move to new quarters with the help of her Father and sister Alice as Stephen made himself unavailable.

If Elizabeth anticipated that this move from the Wolcott household would improve her marriage, she was mistaken. Once the family settled in New York, Stephen resumed his pattern of late evenings away from home. One cannot know how other elites regarded

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[117] EWM, Diaries, Monday, February 26, 1866.

[118] EWM, Diaries, Monday, September, 25, 1971.

[119] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, April 18, 1872.

Stephen's inattention. Certainly, he benefitted from a double standard that allowed men latitude in their public behavior while discountenancing similar conduct on the part of women. As a rule, women elites who left memoirs and autobiographies do not discuss the quality of their married lives. Exceptions to this regard for feminine privacy are the memoirs of Elizabeth Drexel and Consuelo Vanderbilt Balsan who openly discuss their failed relationships.[120] Volumes like these, however, appeared at least sixty years after Elizabeth Merchant began to confide her marital problems in her diary. By this time, legal remedies to marital problems were more widely accepted among the wealthy. Women of Elizabeth Merchant's generation did not customarily air private household matters. Caroline Schermerhorn Astor, like Elizabeth Merchant, also learned to accept her husband's extended absences as well as the rumors of his infidelity without comment.[121] Although Elizabeth shared some of her private emotions with her diary, her references to Stephen are often cryptic and incomplete. Elizabeth preferred simply not to elaborate on her husband. By excluding Stephen in this way from her diary, Elizabeth honored the Wolcott regard for family legacy. She understood that some day others would read her record. In the end, her actions protected her family's memory of Stephen as well as the privacy of her household.

Nonetheless, Elizabeth also realized that Stephen would never alter his behavior for the sake of his marriage. Elizabeth remarked on her "disappointment" in her husband's

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[120] Elizabeth Drexel Lehr, "King Lehr" and the Gilded Age, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott company, 1935; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1975); Consuelo Vanderbilt Balsan, The Glitter and the Gold, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952).

[121] Elizabeth Drexel Lehr, 85.

habits with the observation that "he was just starting to go for me."[122] Stephen confirmed his wife's assessment by his friendship with a Mrs. Leonard. In December 1871, Stephen embarrassed his wife and her family by escorting this woman home from church. This public promenade from the Wolcott pew at the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church surely caught the attention of well-heeled New York. Elizabeth admitted that the episode "excited my indignation."[123] Stephen's disengagement from his domestic responsibilities persisted until his wife again confronted him. Elizabeth noted in April of the following year a "rather miserable talk" about Mrs. Leonard, after which she felt "blue, though I daresay I am foolish"[124]

Stephen's behavior regarding Mrs. Leonard is particularly callous in view of the difficulties his wife encountered with her own health and that of their children during the early years of their marriage. One of Elizabeth's first entries in her household journal of 1863 recounted a young mother's pleasure in giving "dear baby his first bath."[125] For the next several months, Elizabeth recorded other activities with her son Frederick, noting a friend's remark that "he was one of the prettiest baby's...so aristocratic looking."[126] Within a few months, young Frederick had become gravely ill. Elizabeth first observed the infant's "unnatural sound...his dear eyes so fixed and strange"in mid-February. Despite the consultations with several doctors and protracted family vigils, the infant continued to fail,

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[122] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, November 10, 1871.

[123] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, December 3, 1871.

[124] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, April 10, 1872.

[125] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, January 14, 1863.

[126] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, February 16, 1863.

ultimately suffering a series of debilitating convulsions. The family summoned a minister from Astoria to christen the dying child who succumbed on March 1, 1863.

Elizabeth's uncle the Reverend Robert Howland conducted a brief funeral service in her grandmother Howland's home at 15 Washington Square. He was buried in the Wolcott plot on Pine Hill in Greenwood Cemetery in Brooklyn.[127] The Howlands and Wolcotts had previously organized this site for family burials. The large plot had been "excavated [with] extensive catacombs below" and was marked by two "handsome" monuments of red Scotch granite bearing the names of Gardiner Greene Howland and his brother Samuel Shaw Howland.[128] A burial at Greenwood Cemetery offered the bereaved the assurance of social propriety at a difficult time.

To ease other uncertainties, prescriptive literature contained guidance regarding funerals, mourning attire and letters of condolence. Writers tailored much of their advice to the needs of women who publically represented the private sentiments of their entire household. Elizabeth Merchant honored the memory of her son by participating in a defined ritual befitting both her elite status and her family's loss. When in public, Elizabeth

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[127] The non-sectarian, nonprofit Greenwood Cemetery, comprising three hundred sixty acres, opened in 1842. Conceptualized as a rural retreat where visitors could reconcile death with nature, Greenwood's landscaped grounds afforded unimpeded harbor views of the cities of New York and Brooklyn. Though ordinary burial plots cost $110, smaller plots could be obtained for a proportionate amount. The cemetery became fashionable when the body of DeWitt Clinton was exhumed and moved there in 1844 from Albany, New York. Within ten years of its opening, over 30,000 internments had occurred there and some 700 monuments to prominent families dotted its grounds. Encyclopedia of New York City, s.v. "Green-Wood Cemetery," 508-510; Trow's New York City Directory, 1854, appendix, 125. See also Nehemiah Cleaveland, Green-Wood Cemetery: A History of the Institution, from 1838-1864, (New York: Anderson & Archer, 1866).

[128] Nehemiah Cleaveland, A Handbook for Green-Wood, (New York: Bergen & Tripp, 1867), 63.

wore a mourning costume to symbolize her grief and as protection from the "untimely gaiety of a passing stranger."[129] This apparel offered women a refuge or containment for their sadness just as it provided others with a reminder of the family's withdrawal from more social pursuits. Etiquette manuals helpfully set the parameters of bereavement, advising that women publically mourn the death of a child for about a year. Prescriptive literature advised a more extended period of public grief for widows who were expected to wear a mourning costume for at least two years.

For the duration of deepest bereavement, women traditionally donned garments of heavy woollen crepe, appearing in public with their faces covered by a heavy, impenetrable veil. Some writers like Mary Elizabeth Sherwood questioned both the health and the aesthetic consequences of this crepe clothing. Mrs. Sherwood complained of the English widow's tendency "to make a hearse of herself" with multiple dark layers and further cautioned against the harmful effects of this formaldehyde-treated fabric on the eyes and lungs.[130] Rigid mourning customs relaxed in America during the late nineteenth century. For bereaved mothers, many writers encouraged an abbreviated period of deep mourning of about three months. Mindful of the effects of protracted grief on a family's other children, close friends and family could prompt the grief stricken mother "to make her dress more cheerful."[131] Elizabeth Merchant, on the Easter that her husband enjoyed himself at the Hoffman House, expressed her own "great trial" in discarding her "crepe veil

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[129] Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, Manners and Social Usages, 189.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid., 203.

and bonnet" that she had donned after the death of her son Charles in 1869.[132]

Through her change in apparel, Elizabeth quietly signaled her return to a brighter mood. Once a woman put aside her heaviest black garments, she symbolically lightened her attire with combinations of black and white or shades of gray, purple and lilac. By any standard, a woman's bereavement had become a costly observance by the late nineteenth century. Department stores and specialty merchants created separate departments to satisfy women's need to represent their grief. Fashionable mourning required special matte-finished black kid gloves, black furs, sealskin capes and dresses of crepe trimmed cashmere. More elaborate mourning toilettes included black crepe flowers worn at the wrist as well as black jet ornaments that substituted for traditional jewelry. In the absence of a long veil, many women continued to wear small pieces of sheer black tulle over the eyes and nose during the lighter months of quiet mourning.

As a young woman, Elizabeth Merchant confessed little of her private emotion after the loss of her first son. A few weeks after Frederick's passing, she noted the details of his final illness for future reference to his medical condition and as a memorial to his brief existence. Though saddened, Elizabeth resumed her quiet household routine, including a brief trip with her husband to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, to visit his family Upon their return to New York, the couple spent a few days at the hotel Astor House before returning to "The Hill" estate. There to his wife's distress, "Steve met his old friend Miss Burnham at breakfast."[133] Whether or not Stephen's meeting was a chance encounter, this

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[132] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, April 9, 1871.

[133] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, March 25, 1863.

insensitivity contributed to Elizabeth's anxiety in the months ahead. She cryptically noted that "a year ago God...sent me trouble and I think too that life may not seem such a pleasant and desirable thing as it once did."[134]

In June of 1863, Elizabeth's extended family suffered another loss when Stephen's sister Valeria's infant daughter died. This second family tragedy reminded Elizabeth of her own "failing" in the death of her infant son.[135] That Elizabeth would conflate her sadness at the death of another child with a keen sense of personal responsibility is revealing. A few days later, she elaborated that "the past and future both seem full of sadness...I am not very well."[136] She further confessed her "dread [of] another winter like the last. A baby should have a large, airy room and my little one was so shut up and confined...and with so many to advise and discipline, I had little comfort."[137] With this passage, Elizabeth suggests that, despite her marital unhappiness, she had become pregnant again. A woman's ability to bear children represented an important part of her domestic responsibility. Elizabeth's anxiety can be attributed to the cluster of feminine emotions surrounding childbirth in the nineteenth century.

Elizabeth had endured the difficulties of pregnancy and childbirth only to watch her first born suffer and die. Like many of her contemporaries, she harbored what the historian

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[134] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, April 22, 1863.

[135] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, June 13, 1863.

[136] EWM, Diaries, Friday, June 19, 1863.

[137] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, June 20, 1863.

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has described as an "ambivalence towards her own sexuality."[138] According to Smith-Rosenberg, Victorian society generally assumed that behind a woman's chaste, modest exterior "lay a complex network of reproductive organs that controlled her sexuality, determined her emotions, and dictated her social role."[139] A woman's ability to bear children lay at the center of her prescribed social duty. Childbirth itself posed a significant health risk for women, however. While there are no large studies, available mortality data indicates that women in the decades of the 1840's and 1850's between the ages of 10 and 35 died with greater frequency than their male counterparts.[140] Though not conclusive, this data suggests childbirth as an important variable in women's longevity

While Elizabeth's anxiety regarding childbirth is understandable, it is unlikely that her family situation played a contributing role in the infant Frederick's death. Advice literature, often contradictory, only reminded young mothers that "the rules should be made to fit the baby, not the baby the rules."[141] Families like Elizabeth's invested increasing amounts of emotional and financial resources in the happiness and well-being of their children, exhibiting overall a tendency to fewer children. Reason held that once the likelihood of a child's survival improved, parents could afford to invest emotionally in their children's well-being. This outlook, in turn, slowly began to alter patterns of conception. One study, however,

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[138] Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Puberty to Menopause: The Cycle of Femininity in Nineteenth-Century America," in Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

[139] Ibid., 183.

[140] Carl N. Degler, 60.

[141] Mary Blake, "A Letter to a Young Mother," Scribner's Monthly 13, no.1 (November 1876), 130.

finds a comparative increase in infant mortality over the previous century. In Massachusetts as late as 1900, the rate of infant deaths was "no lower than it had been in 1850."[142] Rates of infant mortality in America did not improve appreciably until the early decades of the twentieth century. This rise in infant deaths is attributable to urbanization and its concomitant, water and air pollution, which enhanced the spread of disease. The diseases of consequence among children were of an "endemic infectious nature, the products of pathogens that were ever-present in communities and that took their greatest toll among young children."[143] Because of these dangerous environmental conditions, nearly two out of every ten children died before their fifth birthday.[144]

Young Frederick Merchant's convulsion had been treated with "sips of brandy."[145] Elizabeth's tendency to record precisely the symptoms and nostrums associated with her

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[142] Carl N. Degler, 72.

[143] Samuel H. Preston and Michael R. Haines, Fatal Years: Child Mortality in Late Nineteenth-Century America, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 3.

[144] By 1900, the United States Census Bureau had organized a Death Registration Area, listing the causes of death. This statistical compilation initially represented only 26 percent of the population. Despite its limitations, this sampling indicates that approximately 88 percent of childhood deaths occurred at ages 0 to 4, with 59 percent of these as infant deaths. Convulsions accounted for about 5 percent of childhood deaths in 1900. Death through convulsions, however, usually indicated the fatal effects of some underlying, undiagnosed condition, including dehydration resulting from a gastrointestinal problem. Among the leading causes of death in children were gastrointestinal disease which caused 20 percent of the deaths for children aged 0 to 14 and 25 percent of the deaths in infants. Respiratory ailments accounted for another 19 percent of deaths among infants and 16 percent of deaths among children aged 5 to 14. Other identifiable infectious diseases, including measles, scarlet fever, diphtheria, whooping cough, and small pox together constituted 11.5 percent of all deaths in children below the age of 15. Scarlet fever, measles and whooping cough remained life threatening to children throughout the nineteenth century. A diphtheria antitoxin became available in the 1890's and smallpox was largely eliminated by 1900 through widespread vaccination. Ibid., 5-6.

[145] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, February 18, 1863.

children's illness arose out of her practical need to preserve this information for future reference. Similarly, Helen Lansing Grinnell filled pages of the diary that she maintained for her son Frankie with a complete presentation of the scarlet fever that spread from her son Mortie to her three other children. Grinnell prefaced her description of this illness with a list of family members who had previously died from it. Of the symptomatic high fever, Grinnell noted that "some marbles that he[Mortie] chose to hold in his hand [became] so hot as to be painful to the touch."[146] Helen Grinnell managed successfully to treat her sick children with bed rest, cold compresses and sips of barley broth. Months later, she recorded the death of a young cousin from diphtheria. Though frequently unable to treat diseases like diphtheria and scarlet fever, physicians at least recognized their presentation in children. The news of outbreaks of these illnesses traveled quickly which permitted parents to take the appropriate measures. Elizabeth, for example, noted the death of a child in Astoria of scarlet fever, concluding in best "not to take children into the village at all."[147]

While some parental worries seem trivial, inadequate diagnostic techniques made it impossible to separate serious conditions from relatively harmless childhood ailments.[148] Elizabeth's anxiety over her son Huntington's teething is understandable in this regard. Elizabeth initially attributed her son's "difficult nights" to teething.[149] Several months later,

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[146] Helen Lansing Grinnell, Diary, 1859-1867, Tuesday, January 26, 1860.

[147] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, April 11, 1868. Similarly, Elizabeth remarked upon "feeling very nervous and anxious at finding there is scarlet fever at Mrs. Wallace's home." Saturday, May 4, 1872.

[148] Judith Flanders, Inside the Victorian Home: A Portrait of Domestic Life in Victorian England, (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2003), 78 - 81.

[149] EWM, Diaries, Monday, February 14, 1870. See also Saturday, January 22, 1870.

she noted the baby's "disordered bowels and vomiting," and recorded the local doctor's conclusion that "teething caused the disturbances."[150] Upon the advice of her doctor, Elizabeth administered an "oil tonic," which exacerbated her son's illness.[151] Several days later, Elizabeth worried that "I suppose it is his teeth, but I have a secret dread of dysentery.[152] The family summoned a doctor from the city for a consultation who concluded that Huntington suffered from a "torpid liver."[153] A third doctor confirmed this diagnosis, advising yet another "tonic and brandy three times a day."[154] Elizabeth's final notation of this unfortunate episode simply observed "baby still not right."[155]

Mothers like Helen Grinnell and Elizabeth Merchant sensed the mortal implications of any childhood illness. This grim awareness tempered family expectations for an infant's good health and longevity. For Elizabeth Merchant, insufficient medical remedy proved fatal to three other children. The family's second son Charles Spencer was born on November 23, 1863 and died February 18, 1869. A daughter Eliza Huntington, born on October 21, 1865, died a few months later on January 3, 1866. Another daughter Alice, born June 30, 1873, died the following year on August 1. For Elizabeth and Stephen Merchant, the fourth child Huntington Wolcott Merchant, born August 14, 1869, became the only one of her five

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[150] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, October 6, 1870.

[151] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, October 6, 1870.

[152] EWM, Diaries, Friday, October 7, 1870.

[153] EWM, Diaries, Friday, October 9, 1870.

[154] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, October 16, 1870.

[155] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, October 18, 1870. In another teething episode, the doctor concluded that the baby's "teeth very much swollen," for which he "lanced his gums and gave him hydrogen." Monday, January 30, 1871.

children to reach maturity.

Elizabeth's desire to build a family exacted an emotional toll. Like many other women, Elizabeth expressed anxiety regarding the process of childbirth. This general unease, when combined with first-hand experience with infant death, tempered Elizabeth's enthusiasm for subsequent additions to the family circle. Elizabeth indirectly expressed her guarded emotions by referring to her pregnancies as "trouble" or "darkness."[156] She often noted the deaths of young children and once compiled a list of friends who had also suffered the loss of a child to disease.[157] Despite these worries, she voiced delight in the arrival of her second son Charles, noting his name and time of birth. She devoted herself to the care and feeding of this child and regretted his absence when she delivered his sister Eliza almost two years later. Though the administration of chloroform provided her with "blessed relief" during delivery, she observed Eliza as "small and weak" which her doctor attributed to her "care of Charlie."[158] On some level, Elizabeth reconciled herself to her daughter's death a few months later, stoically rejoicing in the child's "freedom from all suffering" and "future unknown harm."[159]

The death of her son Charlie, however, at age five and one-half challenged Elizabeth's emotional resilience. For years following his death in 1869, she reflected upon

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[156] See EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, April 22, 1863; Friday, June 19, 1863; Sunday, November 15, 1863; Friday, October 20, 1865; Sunday, April 22, 1866; Thursday, November 8, 1866; Sunday, February 2, 1873; Sunday, May 25, 1873; Wednesday, June 25, 1973, passim.

[157] EWM, Diaries, n.p. 1868.

[158] EWM, Diaries, Friday, October 21, 1865.

[159] EWM, Diaries, Friday, January 5, 1866.

his role in her life. When her son Huntington arrived later in 1869, she attempted to shield herself from the possibility of another loss. For months following Huntington's birth, she did not mention his name or specify his gender in her diary. Instead, she used the generic phrase "dear baby" to record his daily development. At the end of 1870, some fourteen months after his birth, Elizabeth first wrote her son's name in the hopes that he "would be spared to brighten our lives."[160] Motherhood for Elizabeth came to represent "the weight of the world."[161]

Despite her fears for the infant Huntington's well being, Elizabeth nurtured him with all tenderness and care. Seasoned by the deaths of three other children, she noticed a rash. "Dear baby does not seem sick but we feel worried all the time."[162] In this instance, she found her husband Steve "sympathetic," doing "all he could to help."[163] She fretted that Huntington's nurse was "not good tempered," admitting that the care of an infant left her in "such a nervous worried state that I am almost sick."[164] Concerned for Huntington, Elizabeth also continued to grieve for Charlie. She wrote of "missing my boy continually. He always made these quiet days so bright, and the sunshine seems less warm and cheerful."[165] Elizabeth had christened two children, Frederick and Eliza, in their final hours. Out of practical necessity, she decided that she "did not want to postpone" this sacrament

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[160] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, December 31, 1870.

[161] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, August 15, 1873.

[162] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, January 4, 1870.

[163] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday January 5, 1870.

[164] EWM, Diaries, Friday, January 7, 1870.

[165] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, January 25, 1870.

for Huntington."[166]

She recorded the birth of his sister Alice in 1873 with some optimism. For the time that Alice survived, Elizabeth's diary centers on Huntington's activities and the family's plans to move into their first home, a rental property in Astoria. By early July 1874, Alice's care had "used up" Elizabeth's "strength." She attributed the child's stomach upset to summer heat and treated the illness, upon consultation with the doctor, with an old remedy of "oil and rhubarb" followed by a "chalk mixture."[167] Alice's condition did not improve, despite consultations with additional doctors and the administration of "quinine brandy" and "air nourishment to give her strength."[168] Alice died few hours after the family had her final picture taken in her "little carriage."[169] Elizabeth transcribed the details of the child's funeral and burial, paying particular attention to the hymns sung and the profusion of flowers. Though saddened by the loss of her daughter, Elizabeth understood from previous experience that it was "better to make an effort."[170] She quickly focused on Huntington's needs as he contracted whooping cough in the following weeks.

During this difficult period in her life, Elizabeth never mentioned the emotional support she may have received from her husband Stephen. If anything, the couple's protracted period of grief over the loss of their children only served to emphasize their growing emotional distance. Although Elizabeth did not necessarily equate romantic love

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[166] EWM, Diaries, Monday, July 11, 1870.

[167] EWM, Diaries, Friday, July 10, 1874.

[168] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, July 28, 1874.

[169] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, August 1, 1874.

[170] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, August 12, 1874.

with marital duty, she longed for the emotional attachment that had attracted her during courtship. Elizabeth could sometimes express pleasure in her marriage to Stephen and concern for his welfare.[171] Marriages like Elizabeth's did survive without affection because most elites did not consider the possibility of divorce as a remedy to unhappiness. Though divorce rates had increased steadily since the 1840's, the ratio of divorces to marriages remained small. In 1867, the number of divorces granted in the entire country amounted to 10,000.[172] Between 1870 and 1880 the number of divorces had increased one and one half times as fast as the population, so that in 1886 the annual number of divorces stood at 25,000.[173]

For a woman like Elizabeth Merchant, divorce did not offer a reasonable alternative to her situation at home. Elizabeth made only one explicit reference to divorce over the years that she maintained a diary. In this instance, she recorded that Stephen "the Brute" had whipped Charlie for what she termed a "baby habit." Stephen's harsh treatment of his son's bed-wetting provoked Elizabeth's outrage. "I shall sue for divorce! Mon curse!"[174] Elizabeth's frustration with her husband's impatience appears as a hyperbole rather than a realistic solution to Stephen's lack of proper parenting.[175] Implicit in her outrage is the

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[171] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, November 14, 1863; Saturday, January 23, 1864; Saturday, December 12, 1864; Sunday, April 22, 1866; Tuesday, November 1, 1866; Saturday, August 27, 1870; Monday April 1, 1872, passim.

[172] Carl N. Degler, 165.

[173] Ibid., 166.

[174] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, May 12, 1867.

[175] A similar episode involved the couple's infant son Charlie. On this occasion, Stephen "angry with dear baby. Frightened and made the boy unhappy. He left in the night and went to West Point...returns tonight but does not come home until tomorrow." EWM, Diaries, Saturday,

additional understanding that Stephen's behavior, however unwarranted, would ultimately require her acceptance.

During the 1870's, "families remained intact, whatever happened, and the most outrageous conduct by husbands and fathers was accorded no further publicity than the whisper of gossip."[176] Conventional society judged the voluntary dissolution of a marriage as a sanction for a partner's failure to fulfill culturally prescribed marital duties.[177] Regardless of the reality of their situation, women disproportionately shouldered this blame and suffered its social consequences. According to Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, society judged the divorced woman a "Pariah. There was no appeal. By her action she became a social outcast."[178]

In 1876, Elizabeth spent the first five months of the year in England and France with her husband, infant son Huntington and Stephen's niece Nellie Penrose. Stephen's business pursuits took the family abroad. Although it is not known whether she had previously traveled abroad, Elizabeth visited London's principal tourist attractions with her young niece. In early February, the family "crossed the dreaded channel" and journeyed to Paris.[179] On her first day in Paris, Elizabeth stopped at the Bon Marche, France's premier retailing establishment This department store, founded in 1869, stood at the center of French consumer culture. Like its American counterpart Stewart's, the Bon Marche relied upon

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June 6, 1864.

[176] Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, The Social Ladder, 49-50.

[177] Karen Lystra, 207.

[178] Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, The Social Ladder, 50.

[179] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, February 2, 1876.

seductive visual displays to "stir appetites, provoke overpowering urges . . . turning buying into a special and irresistible occasion."[180] In its airy, light setting, the store displayed its quality merchandise to highly decorative effect. "Silks cascaded from the walls of the silk gallery, ribbons were strung above the hall of ribbons, umbrellas were draped full blown in a parade of hues and designs."[181]

Elizabeth Wolcott readily succumbed to the lure of the Bon Marche. Though by nature a woman of thrift and practicality, Elizabeth dismissed the frugality required at home by her marriage. She indulged in numerous trips to the store, purchasing " a whole lot of gloves and handkerchiefs for different people." She spent another entire "day at the Bon Marche doing a lot of shopping." Elizabeth enjoyed her Paris sojourn as a consumer, perusing "many dressmakers" before deciding on a "little morning dress" at Madame Ruffy's. By early March, she found herself "through the worst of my shopping." Days later, however, Elizabeth rallied "to look at bonnets," purchasing one for herself and one for her stepmother. Because of her extensive shopping, she bought two additional trunks and retained the services of a "packer" in order to leave Paris. Optimistically, she recorded in the back pages of her diary the names and locations of small Parisian shops that she found to her liking.[182]

Elizabeth stayed in Paris for almost two months during which time Stephen traveled

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[180] Michael B. Miller, The Bon Marche: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 167.

[181] Ibid., 169.

[182] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, February 3, 1876; Friday February 18, 1876; Monday, February 21, 1876; Saturday, March 4, 1876; Tuesday, March 7, 1876; Monday March 27, 1876, passim.

independently on business. Despite her husband's absence, Elizabeth enjoyed this time in the company of a family friend Mr. McLane. This gentleman figures prominently in Elizabeth's scribbled accounts of "perfect days" spent touring, driving, walking and dining with her "kind friend." McLane, an apparent widower, visited Elizabeth in the evenings "as usual" with his daughter Anne. Though McLane presented Elizabeth with a "beautiful clock" as a token of their friendship, it is doubtful that Elizabeth strayed from her commitment to Stephen. The obvious pleasure that she took in McLane's solicitous attention challenged conventional notions of marital fidelity.[183] Nonetheless, Elizabeth's private scruples had been carefully constructed by the expectations of her father and others.

As a more practical deterrent to infidelity, there were other prominent New Yorkers in Paris. Elizabeth made social calls upon "Lily Cushing, Mrs. McAllister, Mrs. Howland and Uncle Edgar." [184] Her close friend Lou Minturn accompanied Elizabeth on several shopping excursions.[185] Besides the challenges implied by her cordial relationship with Mr. McLane and the extensive time devoted to shopping, Elizabeth enjoyed Paris in much the same manner that she lived in Astoria. Her diary records days of pleasant sociability, quiet

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[183] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, February 1- Wednesday, April 26, 1876, passim.

[184] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, February 24, 1876.

[185] Lou Minturn, born Louisa Aspinwall, was Elizabeth Merchant's life-long friend. She married John Wendell Minturn in 1863. Born in 1838, Minturn was the second son of the merchant Robert B. Minturn, Sr. The firm Grinnell, Minturn & Co. "was one of the wealthiest and most extensively engaged in business in the United States" during the days of sailing vessels. John Minturn and his older brother Robert B. Minturn succeeded in their father's business. John Minturn suffered from severe headaches which doctors attributed to the strain of overwork. Due to his ill health, Minturn, his wife and three children lived in Paris for several years. In May 1881, John Minturn committed suicide while on a business trip to New York. Elizabeth's husband Stephen Merchant was among the prominent mourners at Minturn's funeral, at the Church of the Holy Communion. New York Times, 1 May 1881, 1. See also New York Times, 5 May 1881, 2.

evenings at home and church services at the American Chapel.[186] Elizabeth Merchant's time abroad had been patterned upon an established model of American domesticity. Her diary contains only a few subsequent references to Mr. McLane. Of him, Elizabeth later admitted that "it does my heart good to see again."[187]

Elizabeth's marital situation did not improve upon the family's return to New York. Elizabeth and Stephen coexisted without realistic alternatives to their marital situation Prescriptive literature implied that most couples could achieve the gendered responsibilities that defined a marriage. Problems in a relationship could always be blamed on the individual's inability to meet his or her socially prescribed obligation. Therefore, families and friends sought remedies to fix a troubled relationship. In the instance of Elizabeth and Stephen Merchant, no one could force Stephen to be more considerate towards his wife just as it would have been unseemly for the wealthy Wolcotts to underwrite Stephen's business losses. Caring family members and dear friends could, however, support Elizabeth. Elizabeth often required financial assistance to maintain the appearance of a proper household. After the death of her father in 1883, Elizabeth's household subsisted mainly on money inherited from the estates of her father, grandparents and brothers Gardiner and Frederick who predeceased her. She invested a portion of her capital in a house at 100

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[186] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, March 1, 1876; Saturday, April 22, 1876; Monday, March 6, 1876; Sunday, April 16, 1876; Thursday, February 24, 1876, passim.

[187] EWM, Diaries, Friday, October 16, 1885. See also Thursday, June 16, 1881; Thursday, October 13, 1881; Monday, October 17, 1881; Tuesday, February 6, 1883; Saturday, October 6, 1883. Elizabeth's final reference to Mr. McLane noted a social call that he paid to the Merchant's Astoria home with his daughter and another girl. Elizabeth, confined to bed with an undisclosed ailment, "saw the two girls upstairs, but of course not Mr. McLane. Felt pretty blue and lonely." Sunday, November 6, 1887.

Noble Street in Green Point, Brooklyn, and supervised improvements to the property.[188] By 1884, Elizabeth's financial records and household diaries indicate no steady income from her husband. In addition to her siblings Alice and Gardiner, who contributed as boarders in the Merchant household, Elizabeth's uncle Huntington became a financial mainstay. Huntington Wolcott subsidized the education of Elizabeth's remaining son and occasionally forwarded his niece money at Christmas.[189] Elizabeth maintained a close relationship with her Boston relatives throughout her life, including regular correspondence and frequent visits. Elizabeth's personal difficulties also reflected on the extended Wolcott family. The monies provided by Elizabeth's Boston relatives also suggest that others outside the family circle knew the details of her personal finances.

In this regard, the financial and emotional support of her friend Pauline Agassiz Shaw is remarkable. The two women probably met as young girls on one of Elizabeth's trips to Boston. Born in 1841, Pauline was the youngest child of the Swiss naturalist and Harvard professor Louis Agassiz. At age ten, she moved to Boston to join her father and step-mother Elizabeth Cabot Carey. The two women shared many similarities. Both women experienced the early loss of their mothers and adjusted to a stepmother's household. Both women married older men at around the same time. Pauline, in 1860, married Quincy Adams Shaw who was sixteen years her senior. Shaw, the son of a wealthy and philanthropic Boston businessman, made an additional fortune in organizing the Michigan

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[188] EWM, Diaries, Friday, November 27, 1885. Elizabeth's notation of her payment of $300 "on account of the first mortgage on my house. 100 Noble Street, Green Point." n.p. February 19, 1886.

[189] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, December 24, 1884.

mining industry with Pauline's brother Alexander Agassiz. From her family's art-filled estate on Jamaica Pond in Boston, Pauline raised five children and could easily have chosen a life of comfortable sociability. She is remembered, however, for her pioneering philanthropy in early childhood education, funding both the Boston kindergarten movement and a chain of day nurseries. By 1880, Shaw supported thirty kindergartens and ten nurseries. Elizabeth toured some of these facilities to observe her friend's "most interesting work."[190]

For the most part, Elizabeth's association with Pauline Shaw centered on friendship rather than mutual philanthropic interest. While in Boston Elizabeth enjoyed luncheons at Shaw's "lovely home," long carriage rides, and gifts of books and flowers as appropriate tokens of their friendship. Whether Elizabeth shared her marital problems with Pauline Shaw or her friend simply developed a sense of Elizabeth's personal situation is unknown. In any event, Shaw became increasingly generous with Elizabeth as the two women matured. To Elizabeth's "amazement," Pauline surprised her friend with a Christmas gift of a "beautiful Davenport" or small writing desk in 1874.[191] Pauline continued to provide such thoughtful necessities over the years. With the death of Elizabeth's Uncle Huntington in 1891, the Merchant family's financial situation became more acute. Pauline Shaw continued her tradition of generosity towards Elizabeth with gifts of money and clothing. In gratitude,

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[190] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, January 7, 1880. See also Thursday, February 24, 1881. By 1888, Pauline Shaw had encouraged the Boston School Committee to embark upon its own program of publicly financed kindergarten schools. She also sponsored several vocational schools in Boston. Throughout the 1890's, Pauline Shaw supported the cause of woman suffrage, founding the Boston Equal Suffrage Association for Good Government in 1901. Dictionary of Notable American Women, s.v. "Shaw, Pauline Agassiz." See also New York Times, 11 February 1917, 23.

[191] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, December 24, 1874.

Elizabeth once exclaimed, "Did anyone ever have such a friend as she ever has been to me!"[192]

Elizabeth's dependence on her family members and the support of a loyal friend indicate the degree to which she had assumed the primary responsibility for her family's financial well-being. In February 1874, after two years in a rented house, the Merchants purchased their first home on the corner of Franklin and Stevens Streets in Astoria for $1200. At age thirty-four, Elizabeth had finally realized her goal of having her own home. Though she had hoped to live in New York, Stephen determined that the children would be better off in the country.[193] With this decision, Elizabeth devoted her energies to assembling the necessary furniture and household goods. Again Elizabeth relied on other family members to assist with her move as there are only a few references to her husband during this time. Now permanently situated in Astoria, Elizabeth's loneliness persisted. Stephen continued to ignore her birthdays and habitually enjoyed protracted, unexplained absences from the family circle at holidays. Months passed with little or no mention of Stephen, his pursuits, or his whereabouts.

As Stephen receded from the pages of Elizabeth's diary, his centrality to the Merchant family also diminished. Increasingly, Elizabeth recorded the activities of other family members as well as her preoccupation with maintaining a home. Elizabeth's diary also indicates her growing awareness of the wider world. In July 1881, she recorded for

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[192] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, January 6, 1880; Thursday, December 24, 1874; Thursday October 8, 1896; Wednesday, January 2, 1901; Saturday, January 5, 1901; Tuesday, June 6, 1905; Tuesday May 29, 1906, passim.

[193] EWM, Diaries, February 13, 1874.

several days the news surrounding the shooting of President James Garfield. For a woman who did not remark upon the death of Abraham Lincoln under similar circumstances, Elizabeth's "anxiety and sorrow" over Garfield is striking.[194] Although her public life was limited, Elizabeth had come to realize the influence of great public events on her own serenity. Elizabeth saw the connection between her private domesticity and the larger community. She remarked that she now read the "papers with so much interest."[195]

As another mark of her growing self-confidence, Elizabeth became more involved in the details of family finance. After her father's death in 1883, Elizabeth learned to manage the household with a reduced source of household income. Father's regular stipends had ranged from $50 to $100 per month. After his death, this allowance shrank to Elizabeth's regular withdrawals from an unnamed source of $20 to $30 per month. While it is possible that Stephen Merchant provided this regular income, it is unlikely as Stephen accepted his second assignment in 1883. Elizabeth periodically listed loans to Stephen among her household expenses just as she separately itemized his periodic contributions to the family.[196] Most likely, the Merchant family derived most of its living expenses from stock dividends which Elizabeth accounted for in her 1883 financial records. Additionally, she relied upon the contributions of her sister Alice, and of her brother Gardiner who lived with her from

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[194] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, July 3, 1881. Elizabeth's other entries relating to the death of James Garfield include the following: Saturday, July 2; Monday, July 4; Monday, September 19; Tuesday, September 20, 1881. While on a trip to Washington the following year with her son and sister Alice, Elizabeth attended church services and noted the slain President's "draped pew...all very touching." Sunday, January 22; Wednesday, January 25, 1882.

[195] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, July 5, 1881.

[196] EWM, Diaries, n.p. (June 17, June 30, November, 18, December 12, December 30), 1884.

1880 until his death in 1881 at age thirty-three. Elizabeth governed her spending with the thrift of small economies. She scrupulously tallied her sales of fresh butter, probably from a supply on "The Hill" estate, to her Astoria neighbors.[197]

To the extent that Elizabeth assumed the responsibility for household finance, she fulfilled the societal paradigm of a good wife. She maintained detailed and accurate records of her expenditures, reconciling them with her monthly income. More telling, is the degree to which Stephen abdicated his responsibility for financial matters. In early 1884 after Frederick Wolcott's death, the Merchants discussed the payment of back property taxes on the Wolcott's Astoria holdings. While Stephen busied himself storing silver and Frederick's personal papers at "The Hill," Elizabeth stayed at home to pore over her father's ledgers to determine the tax obligations.[198] In view of Stephen's role as Frederick Wolcott's executor, this role reversal is surprising. Though Elizabeth found the work "trying" and complained of back pain, her involvement in her family's financial future continued.[199] She became actively engaged with attorneys in 1881 in a legal dispute arising over the terms of her brother Gardiner's will.[200] During this same period, one of Stephen's remaining New York business

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[197] EWM, Diaries, n.p. 1884.

[198] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, February 13; Thursday, 14, 1884.

[199] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, February 23; Tuesday March 18, 1884.

[200] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, October 9, 1880. If Elizabeth's decision to permit her brother to live in the household created further difficulties with Stephen, she did not elaborate in her diary. Gardiner Wolcott's fiancee, the actress Nina Varian, died while traveling to Europe on a trip to restore her health in 1880. Gardiner, who had accompanied Nina and her nurse, never fully recovered from her loss. Elizabeth does not mention her brother's engagement to this actress, lauded for her work with the actor Edwin Booth. Gardiner Wolcott died in Elizabeth's Astoria home in November 1881. EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, November 2, 1881. In his will, Gardiner left one-half of the income or legal interest from his properties to Nina's mother Mrs.

associates called on her in Astoria. A "trying talk" with a Mr. Strauss resulted in Elizabeth's visit the next day to her sister-in-law Valeria the following day to discuss Stephen's deteriorating business.[201] That Mr. Strauss would violate Elizabeth's domesticity with her husband's financial matters indicates not only the extent of Stephen's business problems but also the public's understanding of Elizabeth's economic power within her family.

In 1885, the news that the "house next door sold as a boarding house for Mr. Fiske's workmen" further challenged Elizabeth's security.[202] In crisis, she turned to her uncle Huntington who pledged to finance the Merchant's purchase of another home, if necessary. Over the ensuing months, Elizabeth noted on several occasions her "business cares" while Stephen occupied himself with "Mother" trying to rent "The Hill" estate.[203] Conversion plans for the house next door did not materialize as Elizabeth did not voice another urgent desire to relocate the family. She pursued instead her family's estate litigation with a lawyer whom she found "so pleasant and satisfactory."[204]

Charlotte Varian of Meadeville, Pennsylvania. New York Times, 25 September 1880, 5. See also Matter of Gardiner H. Wolcott, 95 N.Y. 212; 1884 N.Y. Lexis 640, 9. Amid the contest over Gardiner Wolcott's estate, a woman named Laura Vasar Wolcott came forward, claiming to be Gardiner's widow. Laura Vasar, also an actress, asserted that Gardiner Wolcott "had lived with her as her husband" and had wished to be buried beside her. His family, however, ignored this request and buried him in Green-Wood Cemetery. The family opposed Laura Vasar's application seeking Gardiner's disinterment. New York Times, 18 July 1884, 2. Elizabeth wrote only that she was "[f]eeling very unhappy about some articles that have appeared in the papers relating to Gardie's affairs." EWM, Diaries, Friday, July 18, 1884.

[201] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, October 8; Thursday, October 9, 1884.

[202] EWM, Diaries, Thursday February 5, 1885.

[203] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, April 5, 1885. See also Friday, April 3; Saturday, April 4, 1885.

[204] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, November18; Thursday, December 23, 1886.

Elizabeth, during this period, consumed herself with the routine of a busy household. She monitored the activities of those that she cared about including: her son Huntington; her sister Alice; and the family pet, a large Newfoundland dog named Rover. She once confessed that "home is very blue particularly when Alice is not here to share the worries."[205] Though Stephen's whereabouts and business concerns do not necessarily fall within the purview of a household record, the continued omission of his name from her family chronicle is notable. Elizabeth's apparent lack of concern for Stephen contrasts sharply with the emotion she expressed for the family dog. Rover disappeared for several weeks from the Wolcott estate in Litchfield, Connecticut, in July 1886 while Elizabeth vacationed with her son and sister. During this time, Elizabeth "could not sleep thinking about Rover." Despite local newspaper advertisements regarding the dog and a search that extended to neighboring towns, Rover remained loose. Elizabeth confessed, "I am heartbroken." Finally, a door-to-door canvas yielded results in East Morris, Connecticut. Rover returned to Litchfield "thin and miserable and almost starved."[206]

Elizabeth and Stephen Merchant had achieved a marital accommodation by the mid-1880's. Though Elizabeth occasionally expressed a wifely concern for Stephen's well-being, he never merited the outpouring of affection that she reserved for the family pet and other household members. Significantly, she noted the passing of couple's uncelebrated twenty-

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[205] EWM, Diaries, Monday, July 25, 1881.

[206] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, July 29; Saturday July 31; Wednesday, August 4, 1886, passim. A year earlier, Elizabeth had devoted two weeks of diary entries to Rover's health which finally required a consultation with a Veterinary Surgeon who diagnosed a "fever of the lungs." Elizabeth gave the animal her "constant attention–steaming, medicine and food" to see him through this crisis. Saturday, October 31-Friday, November 13, 1885.

fifth wedding anniversary.[207] That Elizabeth accepted her fate without apparent rancor is indicative of the power of the social construct of a Victorian marriage. Bound by the expectations surrounding a marriage that had matured into one of convenience, Elizabeth increasingly concentrated upon those parts of her life that produced personal fulfillment. Stephen, for his part, continued to live virtually a separate existence apart from the enterprise of his own home. Elizabeth signaled their growing distance in a reference to an evening social call paid by the Vandevoorts in 1885. In spite of her extensive preparations for this entertainment, "Steve did not appear at all and I am afraid they thought it very strange."[208] Perhaps the industry and determination of his wife to satisfy her social obligations only reminded Stephen of his own shortcomings and, to some extent, accounted for his extended absences from Elizabeth's diary, if not her life. In view of the insular character of patrician New York, Stephen increasingly resisted the pressure to conform to the standards of a larger community that was only too aware of his failures.

As Elizabeth's emotional commitment to Stephen receded, Huntington featured more regularly in her diary. Once past the dangers associated with childhood illness, Elizabeth enjoyed monitoring her son's development. Huntington's social activities featured prominently in her record. She recorded his hobbies, his friendships with other boys as well as his gradual socialization with girls. She opened her home to his friends and planned his entertainments. On one New Year's Eve, for example, she recorded her son's "very jolly time" during which his twenty guests consumed "eight quarts of ice cream and five of

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[207] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, November 20, 1886.

[208] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, September 17, 1885.

oysters and three dozen croquettes" and danced to the music of a piano.[209] Huntington's academic progress also brought Elizabeth pleasure. She hired a French tutor for a series of private home lessons.[210] She was "delighted" when Huntington earned admission to Columbia Grammar School.[211] She later confessed, however, to feeling "lonely" because her son's "lessons are too hard...studies nearly all the afternoon and until eight thirty and then gets up at six in the morning."[212] This hard work proved beneficial as Huntington "did well in everything but Geography."[213]

The degree of Elizabeth's attachment to her son is compelling. Having lost four young children to disease, Elizabeth could lavish her motherly attention on her remaining child. Elizabeth's desire for children as a component of her domestic responsibility reflected her aspirations for the future implicit in the Wolcott legacy of civic contribution. The realization of these unstated goals rested squarely on Huntington's shoulders. Shortly after Huntington's first birthday, Elizabeth spoke of the new baby "reminding me continually of his brother Charlie whose picture he knows and loves and kisses very often.[214] There is no way to determine the extent to which Huntington sensed his mother's grief or wrestled with his ability to replace a departed sibling. Mother and son maintained a close relationship

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[209] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, December 31, 1885.

[210] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, March 2 - Tuesday, March 7, 1882.

[211] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, September 19, 1883.

[212] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, September 25, 1883.

[213] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, June 12,1884. During this same academic year, a teacher disciplined Huntington "with other boys for writing silly things in each other's books..we all feel disturbed but thankful it was for nothing really wrong." Thursday, April 17,1883.

[214] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, December 31, 1870.

throughout Huntington's life. In 1884, she recorded her trip to Boston as "the first time I ever left him."[215] Huntington apparently shared these feelings of separation as he wrote daily letters to his mother while she visited family and friends.[216] Similarly, Elizabeth noted her son's attention to her birthdays without the mention of similar tributes from her husband.[217]

By 1887, Elizabeth had begun to consider college alternatives for Huntington. After a brief visit to Amherst, Elizabeth decided upon Princeton, reflecting her family's historic ties to conservative Presbyterian belief.[218] To her "relief" and gratitude, her uncle Huntington had contributed $300 for five years so that Huntington could attend Columbia Grammar School in New York.[219] Several years later, Elizabeth reported that she "[h]ad a talk with dear uncle about Huntington and he gave me another $100 towards sending him to Princeton which he advises."[220] In a rare instance of discord between mother and son,

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[215] EWM, Diaries, Monday, May 5, 1884.

[216] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, May 7, 1884.

[217] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, April 22, 1886. On this occasion, Huntington gave Elizabeth "a vase of blue, a needle book, soap" which are typical of the manner in which he honored his mother on her birthdays.

[218] EWM, Diaries, Monday, May 10 - Tuesday, May 11, 1886. Elizabeth's Boston uncle Huntington Wolcott who helped to defray tuition costs also "advised" Princeton. Monday, April 11, 1887.

[219] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, September 22, 1885. Columbia Grammar School opened in 1764 as the preparatory school for what is now Columbia University in the belief that prior to university admission a student should be well trained in grammar. This schooling for young men included preparation in Greek and Latin as well as an English education. By 1864, Columbia Grammar had severed its ties with Columbia College and was located on Fourth Avenue at Twenty-Fourth Street. In addition to Classics, the curriculum included instruction in Modern Language, Drawing, Military Drill, Light Gymnastics and a college Preparatory Department. Ross Dixon and McDonald Sullivan, eds., Columbia Grammar School, 1764-1964: A Historical Log, (New York: Columbia Grammar School, 1964), 31-32.

[220] EWM, Diaries, Monday, April 11, 1887.

Huntington resisted the family decision enrol at Princeton. Elizabeth wrote, "Hope the Princeton matter is about settled but have been so perplexed and troubled not seeing my way and Huntington is so violently opposed to going"[221] Although Huntington acquiesced, Elizabeth's decision proved painful "I am so glad I have had the courage to send him...so glad he is happy and well. I can bear the loneliness."[222]

When her son left for college in 1887, Stephen, in a rare instance of compassion, attempted "to make up Huntington's loss" to Elizabeth.[223] Her diary, however, quickly moved away from Stephen's attention to focus upon a plumbing difficulty in the Astoria home and the possibility of relocating to Manhattan. Elizabeth quickly decided to rent the Astoria property for additional income and move into New York. A city home offered the proximity of old friends and increased cultural opportunities. By early December Elizabeth obtained a suite of "lovely rooms" in a boarding house at 20 West 17th Street.[224] Stephen, opposed to the move, indicated his displeasure by spraining his ankle and retreating to "Mother" who continued to live as Frederick Wolcott's widow at "The Hill" in Hurl Gate. Elizabeth's frustration over the situation became more apparent as her handwriting in her diary deteriorated over the coming months. Alone with her son for the holidays, Elizabeth admitted that she felt "dreadfully to have Steve out at Astoria and I here but he won't come in."[225] Stephen, in fact, did not return to New York until early February of the following

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[221] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, May 27, 1887.

[222] EWM, Diaries, Friday, September 16; Saturday, September 17, 1887.

[223] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, October 2, 1887.

[224] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, December 15, 1887.

[225] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, December 29, 1887.

year when he "surprised" his wife at her grandmother Howland's funeral.[226]

Shortly after the death of Louisa Howland in 1888, Elizabeth and Stephen agreed upon a house at 38 West 11th Street. Though Elizabeth found the house in "bad repair," she approved of its overall "situation."[227] Located in an established, genteel neighborhood, this house met Elizabeth's longstanding desire for a permanent Manhattan address. Elizabeth seemed joyful over the opportunity to realign socially with other elite families who shared her religious and cultural interests. After undertaking repairs and completing her interior decoration, she seemed "delighted with our new little home."[228] Amid the moving preparations, Elizabeth became embroiled in a legal dispute over the terms of her grandmother Howland's will.[229] Though Stephen "determined" that Elizabeth retain her own legal representation, he left the responsibility of negotiations with lawyers and family members to his wife.[230] Elizabeth, despite her agitation over the Howland matter and the possibility of a "family row," quickly resumed her unobtrusive social life of teas, receptions and social calls.[231]

Stephen, to maintain the fiction of profitable enterprise, became more engaged with the management of Frederick Wolcott's estate for which he had been named executor. In

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[226] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, February 1, 1888. See also New York Times, 31 January 1888, 8.

[227] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, February 15, 1888.

[228] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, September 9, 1888.

[229] Matter of Howland, 58 Misc. 124, 126; 110 N.Y.S. 759; 1908 N.Y. Misc. LEXIS 287 (Surr. Ct. N.Y. Co. 1908).

[230] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, April 12, 1888.

[231] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, April 11, 1888.

view of Stephen's poor financial history, Frederick's selection of his son-in-law as executor seems problematic. Stephen, however, was Frederick's only reasonable alternative. Frederick's remaining son Frederick, Jr. had returned to live at "The Hill" after the resolution of unspecified personal difficulties that had incurred Elizabeth's disapproval.[232] Elizabeth's antagonism towards her mother-in-law eliminated any consideration of her as sole executor. Elizabeth's younger sister Alice, emotionally fragile, could not have managed the pressure of handling her father's assets. Frederick's younger brother Huntington Wolcott lived in Boston, removed from the family's daily operations. Stephen, in contrast to these alternatives, could be relied upon to protect the interests of both his sister at "The Hill" and those of his wife and son. Frederick's retention of someone outside of the family, moreover, would have cast a long shadow over his son-in-law's future commercial prospects.

Frederick's holdings included a large tract of land which he had purchased for investment purposes in Duluth, Minnesota. Located on the shores of Lake Superior, Duluth had begun to grow after the opening of a canal at Sault Ste. Marie in 1855 which linked the small trading outpost to the Atlantic Ocean. Jay Cooke, the Philadelphia investor and land speculator, furthered the city's expansion with the construction of the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad and the Northern Pacific Railroads with their terminus at Duluth. As a center for the shipment of ores and grain from the surrounding area to manufacturing centers in the eastern United States, Duluth grew rapidly. In 1870, investors realized Duluth's

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[232] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, January 11, 1885. Frederick died "very quietly at last" at the estate. Diaries, Saturday, January 31, 1885 and was buried a few days later in Green-Wood Cemetery. Diaries, Monday, February 2, 1885.

potential as "the new Chicago of the Northwest."[233] The demand for real estate accelerated in the town as roads were graded to accommodate the town's booming economy. In a single seven month period one hundred eighty new buildings were erected, including hotels, churches, private homes, shops and railroad buildings.[234] Minnesota realtors regularly advertised investment opportunities in Duluth in the New York press.[235] The discovery of a vein of silver ore on an island in Lake Superior further fanned the interest of eastern investors in Duluth's possibilities.[236] By 1890, the city boasted a population of nearly 40,000. Stephen had made periodic trips to the city prior to Elizabeth's initial visit in June of 1887. Though excited about the prospects of overnight travel by rail and her "first night in a sleeper," Elizabeth remarked on her journey through "desolate, dreary country," observing Duluth itself to be "unattractive...though busy and thriving."[237]

The business possibilities of this Midwestern boom town appealed to Stephen Merchant who had first hand knowledge of the California gold rush. Frederick Wolcott's property seemed poised for greater growth as real estate values in Duluth climbed.[238] Once

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[233] New York Times, 15 January 1870, 3. See also New York Times, 12 August 1870, 4; 31 August 1870, 2.

[234] Ibid.

[235] New York Times, 18 May 1870, 6; 20 May 1870, 6; 12 April 1871, 8; 20 May 1871, 6.

[236] New York Times, 9 November 1870, 8.

[237] EWM, Diaries, Friday, June 17; Tuesday, June 21; Wednesday, June 22, 1887, passim.

[238] New York Times, 15 January 1870, 3. Articles about the development of Duluth and advertisements from local developers began to appear in the New York papers, beginning in 1870. New York Times, 18 May 1870, 6; 20 May 1870, 6; 20 May 1871, 6; 12 April 1871, 8; 12 August 1870, 4; 31 August 1870, 2; 9 November 1870, 8.

away from his wife and the responsibilities expected of him in New York, Stephen's relocation to Minnesota would renew his personal independence. After helping Elizabeth move into their new home, Stephen visited Duluth during the summer of 1888. At this time, Duluth was experiencing another real estate boom, with rapidly climbing property values.[239] Newspapers warned the unsuspecting of "real estate rustlers" in the town who preyed upon the unsuspecting investor.[240] The frontier atmosphere of this business setting attracted Stephen Merchant. By mid-December, he was "talking of going to Duluth." Elizabeth confined her misgivings over Stephen's venture to a single cryptic reference to Minnesota's "very cold" winter climate.[241] Undeterred, Stephen continued to plan his departure from New York. In early December, he summoned Huntington home from Princeton under the guise that his mother had taken ill. Finding Elizabeth in good health, Huntington accompanied his father to the train station a few days later for a departure to Duluth. Elizabeth expressed no regret over Stephen's hasty exit a few days before Christmas. In fact, she remarked upon the "happy time" she enjoyed with her son during the holidays.[242]

The unnumbered pages of Elizabeth's diary for 1888 provide clues into Stephen's move to Duluth. By this date, she had eliminated the practice of enumerating all household expenditures in this space, using the blank pages for other purposes. One such page includes an accounting for monies realized from the settlement of her grandmother Howland's

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[239] New York Times, 23 January 1888, 2. See also 19 February 1888, 11

[240] Ibid.

[241] EWM, Diaries, Friday, December 14, 1888.

[242] EWM, Diaries, Friday, December 14; Tuesday, December 25, 1888.

estate.[243] According to Elizabeth's calculations, she received $9,325.25 which translates into $162,539.10 in contemporary figures.[244] Of this amount, she itemized an "investment" of $3000 in "Duluth."[245] Elizabeth and her family stood to benefit from the success of Stephen's development of the Minnesota property. The ready income realized from her grandmother Howland's estate gave Elizabeth a convenient way to bring harmony to her immediate family. Stephen, clearly restless and unhappy in New York, perhaps stood a better chance of success once removed from the pressures of his past mistakes. Nevertheless, Elizabeth's use of a portion of her capital to underwrite her husband's business goals indicates a subtle shift in the balance of power within the Merchant household. Stephen, whether he realized it or not, had become increasingly dependent upon his wife's largess. Having been forced to accept at least two assignments for his debts, Stephen's ability to finance the Duluth venture without his wife's contribution seems doubtful.

After Stephen's departure, Elizabeth's life quickly resumed its serene rhythm of church attendance, charitable work and polite social activity. She did not mention her husband. She accompanied her son in early January to Seaman's Savings Bank so that he

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[243] In addition to her inheritance from her grandmother Louisa Howland, Elizabeth joined other family members before her death to "divide some silver. Had quite a nice time and drew a handsome silver pitcher."EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, April 19, 1881. Typically, families like the Howlands managed the disposition of personal effects by lot. Louisa Howland died in January 1888. EWM, Diaries, January 30, 1888. After her estate settled, the family gathered again to divide her furniture. Elizabeth complained that "we drew the very worst lot of all and were rather disgusted. Spent afternoon in making arrangements to sell or dispose of them." EWM, Diaries, Saturday, March 3, 1888. See also New York Times, 31 January 1888, 5.

[244] One dollar in 1888 increased in value to $17.43 in 1997. Scott Derks, The Value of a Dollar: Prices and Incomes in the United States, 1860-1999, 2.

[245] EWM, Diaries, "Investments," n.p., 1888.

could "draw out some money for me."[246] She purchased a coat at the women's specialty store Lord and Taylor.[247] Later in January, she attended a tea at her friend Kate Beekman's.[248] Rover accompanied her on long walks. Almost six weeks after leaving New York, Stephen wrote to his wife. Elizabeth simply indicated her receipt of this letter as "my first" without additional comment.[249] In her diary, Elizabeth sealed the emotional distance as well as her physical separation from her husband. Elizabeth continued, however, to record Huntington's progress at Princeton. She visited him there often and even attended several of the college's football games.[250] After Huntington's graduation in 1890, Elizabeth transcribed the events of his life with only infrequent references to Stephen. Huntington had replaced his father as the important man in Elizabeth's life.

Conclusion

Like many of her friends, Elizabeth Merchant lived a life framed by the expectations of others. That Elizabeth maintained a daily record for over forty-five years speaks to the dedication and determination with which she would attempt to meet her obligations. Born

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[246] EWM, Diaries, Friday, January 1, 1889.

[247] EWM, Diaries, Friday, January 4, 1889.

[248] EWM, Diaries, January 25, 1889.

[249] EWM, Diaries, January 31, 1889.

[250] Elizabeth's visits to Princeton include the following: EWM, Diaries, Thursday, June 30; Friday, September 23 - Friday, September 30, 1887; Thursday, February 7; Thursday, March 1, 1888; Tuesday, June 4 - Wednesday, June 19, 1889; Monday, January 20, 1890. References to Huntington's academic progress include the following: Wednesday, October 26-27, 1887. References to Elizabeth's attendance at Princeton football games include the following: Saturday, November 17; Saturday November 24, 1888; Thursday, November 28, 1889; Saturday, May 24, 1890. Huntington graduated from Princeton in 1890, winning a fifty dollar prize for an essay and finishing with "high honors about sixth or seventh in his class." Wednesday, June 11, 1890. See also New York Times, 11 June 1890, 4.

into a family of wealth and civic prominence, Elizabeth's Wolcott heritage directly linked her to men who had been instrumental in the colonization of Connecticut and in the founding of the nation. Through her mother's family, Elizabeth's roots extended to John Howland, a passenger on the Mayflower. Her father Frederick prospered honorably as a merchant in Manhattan before retiring to his country estate in Queens. By any measure, Elizabeth possessed both the wealth and the heritage of civic contribution necessary for inclusion among the women of New York's elite cadre.

Similarly, Elizabeth's childhood instilled in her the social values of the wealthy. She grew up in the comfortable surroundings associated with her family's Waverly Place address in lower Manhattan and their country estate in Queens. She regularly worshiped with her family in one of the city's prestigious Presbyterian congregations. Elizabeth enrolled with other daughters of privilege at one of the city's most reputable schools for young women, Number One Fifth Avenue. Here she excelled academically. In childhood, Elizabeth had every reason to anticipate a life uncomplicated by undue concern for wealth or social status. The death of her mother in 1851, however, foreshadowed that Elizabeth's life would not proceed upon the path reflected by her upbringing.

Without a mother to shape her years of adolescence and young adulthood, Elizabeth accepted new responsibilities within her family at an early age. It is not known whether Elizabeth regularly socialized with other young children of the wealthy elite or if she received a formal introduction into society. Elizabeth, instead, nurtured her younger siblings as the oldest daughter in the Wolcott household. Because of her enhanced position within the family, she developed an especially close relationship with her father. She tried

only to live up to the expectations of this parent upon whom she relied for guidance and strength. Intelligent and dutiful as a child, Elizabeth matured into a sober and reflective woman, possessed of neither great vanity or nor overreaching social ambition.

Her father's remarriage to the widow Sarah Elizabeth Merchant Chase presented Elizabeth with a new challenge in which she learned to accommodate her stepmother's wishes. Marriage gave Elizabeth the only hope of some independence from her stepmother's influence within the large, complex Wolcott household. Without the counsel of her natural mother, Elizabeth availed herself of the opportunity presented by her stepmother's younger brother. Stephen Merchant had left home at a young age to make his way in the world. Somewhat worldly and experienced, Stephen represented the potential of business ability that appealed to Frederick Wolcott's paternal instincts. Despite Stephen's promise, the couple seemed an unlikely match. They shared no mutual interests or the common background often necessary to a happy marriage. As one author observed of the marital relationship, "everything hangs on their compatibility."[251]

Like other daughters of the wealthy elite Elizabeth had been groomed only for domesticity. Although Elizabeth may have lacked the requisite emotional maturity, her other qualities indicated her readiness to assume marital duties. In the end, Elizabeth married Stephen Merchant out of a profound sense of family obligation. Not wishing to disappoint her father through her refusal of Stephen's proposal, Elizabeth acquiesced in the interests of Wolcott household harmony. In satisfying her father's goals, Elizabeth could now concentrate upon Stephen's wants. As with other young women, Elizabeth had some

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[251] Junius Henri Browne, "Women as Women," The Galaxy 17, no.4 (April 1874): 504.

understanding of what marriage entailed. Prescriptive literature clearly specified the obligations of both husband and wife, indicating the community's regard for these appropriate marital roles. In return for her effort at household management and child rearing, Elizabeth could anticipate that Stephen would meet her financial and emotional needs. Elizabeth did not find happiness, however. Stephen appeared insensitive to his wife's emotional vulnerabilities, often behaving in a feckless and uncaring manner. Business success also eluded Stephen. For the first twenty years of their married life, the couple survived on Frederick Wolcott's monthly stipend.

Elizabeth had devoted much of her childhood to pleasing her father. As a married woman, her wishes theoretically became secondary to those of her husband. Elizabeth's efforts to satisfy Stephen often proved futile, however. Over time, Elizabeth learned to sublimate her emotional needs to concentrate upon the outward requirements of a successful marriage. Her repeated pregnancies reflect, in part, her determination to build a family despite the emotional and physical cost suffered when four of her five children died. Elizabeth's dedication to her household tasks signifies the importance that wealthy women attached to such domestic obligations. Her diary also reveals the extent to which Elizabeth acknowledged the imperative that she maintain the appearance of a household that reflected her family's social status. She realized the importance of wealth to her identity as a woman elite. Her diaries consequently reveal the small economies of a woman determined to cultivate the fiction of prosperity and household harmony to those outside the family. She pieced together the funding for her son's schooling just as she relocated her family from Queens into a polite Manhattan neighborhood. Elizabeth understood the material necessities

of her social status.

Like other women, Elizabeth also saw her ability to sustain this domestic persona as critical to her feminine identity. She reflected, in this regard, on her notation of a homily taken from Matthew 10:38. She wrote, "Taking up the cross means an inward resolve to do or submit to the will of God making the selfish human will subjugate...there is only one cross (not crosses) and that is submission."[252] This reflection on Christian duty and personal challenge are recorded at the time when Elizabeth weighed her need to finance Stephen's real estate venture outside New York. By this date, she enjoyed good health, a prestigious heritage, some financial security, a loving son and a Manhattan residence. Her domestic relationship, if not domesticity itself, had become Elizabeth's "cross to bear." As Elizabeth pondered her need for spiritual renewal, she began also to question her duty to Stephen and her need to satisfy the expectations of others for her marriage. She considered whether her refusal to grant her husband's wishes signified a personal failing. Because Elizabeth understood submission to God as an essential of her Christian faith, she wrestled with her obligation to submit to the requirements of domesticity as well as to the community's pressures to conform to the reality of an unhappy marriage.

Elizabeth, like her social equals, could not consider divorce as a remedy to her domestic circumstance. She could see no possible existence for herself other than her role as wife and mother. Moreover, society sanctioned those women who turned away from their marital obligations. Elizabeth could not risk severing all ties to the family and friends around whom she had structured her life to date. Their continued support became increasingly

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[252] EWM, Diaries, "Notes on Sermon by Dr. Alexander on October 7, 1888," n.p., 1888.

critical to her attempt to maintain her social status. Thus, Elizabeth would continue to serve the concerns of a man whom she apparently did not love or respect. Her grandmother Howland's legacy, however, gave her the ability to finance her husband's life away from New York. This use of her money seemed a small price to pay to unburden herself of some of her domestic responsibilities. In ameliorating her household situation and in furtherance of her own interests, Elizabeth also purchased freedom for Stephen Merchant. Stephen's inability to fulfill his familial duties also speaks to the strength of the domestic construct. As his business and personal difficulties mounted, Stephen increasingly sought refuge away from the social and financial pressures of New York society. Those people familiar with Stephen's shortcomings knew that Elizabeth's inherited wealth represented a renewed opportunity for both Elizabeth's happiness and that of her husband.

Elizabeth Wolcott Merchant: A Home Away

Elizabeth Merchant seldom escaped the ordinary necessities of household management. Despite financial worries, Elizabeth organized and staffed a home appropriate to her patrician expectations. The Merchants, once established in their own residence, normally needed the services of at least a full-time cook and two maids. Routinely, this staff cleaned the house, prepared and served meals, and tended to laundry and ironing. The Merchant children also required full-time attention by a nurse whose duties appear confined largely to child care. Elizabeth called upon daily help that lived outside the home for yard work, laundry, sewing and other related tasks. While the presence of servants suggests that Elizabeth enjoyed an uncomplicated life of domestic ease, quite the contrary is true. She approached all aspects of her domesticity with seriousness. She personally directed everything relative to the maintenance of her home and its contents. Additionally, she superintended household provisioning, meal planning and preparation. The extent of Elizabeth's involvement at home erroneously suggests that her domestic pursuits confined her to the home, with few personal outlets to relieve the tedium of her daily routine.

Although Elizabeth Merchant lived quietly relative to many of her friends, she participated completely in city life. Elizabeth, in fact, liked the bustle and noise of city streets. Because she lived in Queens for much of her married life, Elizabeth used any

pretext to travel into Manhattan. Sometimes she accomplished her trips into the city with the loan of one of her father's carriages. More usually, she availed herself of public transportation into the city to accomplish personal errands and appointments.

This chapter discusses Elizabeth's domesticity in terms of the kinds of household duties that required her presence at home. Secondly, this chapter looks at how Elizabeth moved through the urban landscape. Particular attention is given the public ferry transportation system across the waterways surrounding Manhattan. Lastly, this chapter examines some of the reasons why Elizabeth traveled regularly into New York, including: household and personal needs, doctors and dental appointments, searching for servants, membership in the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, her support of the New York House of Industry, and the calling ritual.

This chapter also considers the limited nature of Elizabeth's social life. There are many reasons why Elizabeth did not pursue a more active social calendar, including: confinement during pregnancies; extended periods of mourning; Stephen's lengthy absences; and the fact that her primary residence remained in Queens for much of her early married life. The Merchants' deteriorating finances may have also curtailed her discretionary spending on the wardrobe to support an extensive social life. Nonetheless, Elizabeth Merchant maintained friendships and family ties with ease. She moved freely and with confidence throughout the city as an urban woman.

Some Household Duties

Although most homes of the wealthy included conveniences like indoor plumbing by the late nineteenth century, the simplest household task required a concerted effort.

Even daily bed making became a complex challenge to the uninitiated. Mattresses of organic fiber, usually horsehair, cow's hair or wool, were available to suit a variety of household requirements. Modern chain-spring mattresses could also be purchased. These costly innovations still required a hair mattress over them, as well as an additional covering over the chains to prevent the springs from damaging the mattress. The upper mattress also required its separate protective covering. If the bed had no metal springs, a softer feather mattress could be added on top of the hair mattress. Without this luxury, the hair mattress needed a separate binding or under blanket. All of these components needed shaking or turning on a daily basis to offset the tendency of natural fibers to mat or clump. Traditionally, bed linens included the following items: an under sheet, tucked into the bottom mattress, to protect from soot; a bottom sheet; a top sheet; multiple blankets or quilts; a bolster and pillow covers; and bolster and pillow cases.[1]

The ordinary maintenance of bedding required a set routine as not all sheets and coverings received laundering at the same time. Most households disassembled bedding for airing and cleaning as a part of the extended semi-annual household cleaning. Down or feather mattresses and pillows required semi annual airing. Every few years, these luxuries had to be disassembled so that lumps in the ticking could be broken up and washed and the feathers sifted to eliminate dust.[2] Otherwise, upper and lower sheets were rotated so that each sheet could be laundered separately once a month. Blankets and other heavier coverings, by contrast, only required laundering on an annual basis. Despite

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[1] Judith Flanders, Inside the Victorian Home, 46-47.

[2] Ibid.

the precision associated with the maintenance of a bed, problems arose in most homes.

Because beds, whatever their composition, contained nothing but organic matter, they attracted a variety of household pests. Elizabeth's dismay over mattresses "alive" with moths is understandable in view of the work associated with the elimination of such pests.[3] Thorough homemakers, monitored the condition and cleanliness of all beds in the house on a weekly basis. In the event of an infestation, beds needed to be disassembled for repeated scouring with chloride of lime and a disinfectant until the problem had been eliminated. If the problem persisted, the bed and its components needed to be placed in an airtight room so that sulphur could be burned to prevent the spread of moths, fleas or other insects to the walls and flooring.[4]

In addition to household pests, home ownership entailed other unforseen emergencies which, for Elizabeth, meant assorted plumbing mishaps, frozen pipes and the collapse of the dining room ceiling.[5] On these occasions, Elizabeth called upon the assistance of outside specialists. These repairs also required her personal supervision. Semiannually, Elizabeth managed a special household cleaning which usually consumed several weeks of intense activity. The "swashing and drenching" of a thorough spring cleaning, for example, taxed even the most assiduous homemaker.[6] This well-ordered ritual included a thorough scouring of every floor and window, a seasonal change and

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[3] EWM, Diaries, Friday, May 13, 1881.

[4] Judith Flanders, 50.

[5] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, January 24, 1883; Thursday, October 14, 1886; Saturday, March 21, 1886; Monday, December 13, 1886, passim.

[6] "Hints in House-Cleaning Time," Scribner's Monthly 10, no.2 (June 1875): 246.

refurbishing of draperies and carpeting as well as the cleaning and reorganization of every closet and drawer. When Elizabeth and her family occupied a room in her father's home, Elizabeth habitually undertook the seasonal cleaning and reorganization of her family's possessions. Once she and Stephen had moved into their own home, every book, bibelot and picture throughout the house required separate dusting and replacement. During one such period, Elizabeth found her parlor to be "so full of things" that its cleaning became "quite an undertaking."[7] Elizabeth usually needed outside help to accomplish some of the specific tasks associated with these semi-annual undertakings.

In April of 1873, for example, Elizabeth initiated her spring cleaning ritual by scheduling a succession of outside workers to remove the double windows, service the plumbing and maintain the lawn.[8] Once these chores had been completed, Elizabeth's household staff proceeded in an orderly fashion throughout the house. Elizabeth preferred to complete all of the tasks associated with a particular room before moving on to the next. Her home received a systematic cleaning from top to bottom. Usually, the front parlor became the last room to be readied for the coming season. Often she used the verb "regulate" to describe the supervisory nature of her participation in household routines. Even so, her reliance upon others to execute her standards of cleanliness, thrift and order could produce frustration. Once pushed to the point of exhaustion, Elizabeth concluded that in routine domesticity "[i]t scarcely pays to get so used up."[9] After another trying

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[7] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, May 27, 1882.

[8] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, April 23 - Friday, April 24, 1873.

[9] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, July 3, 1886.

period of domestic work, she complained that housework amounted to little more than "sundry odds and ends that show for nothing."[10]

Several aspects of household management required Elizabeth's direct involvement. Though her culinary abilities appear largely limited to meal planning, she occasionally prepared fruit jams and jellies for family consumption and as gifts for friends. On one productive afternoon, for example, she preserved "thirteen glasses of raspberry jam and sixteen of current jam."[11] Elizabeth judged other attempts at baking cookies and cakes as "failure."[12] Elizabeth also bore the primary responsibility for kitchen provisioning as indicated by her accounting records. Whether she or her cook purchased foodstuffs for the family, Elizabeth, in all events monitored the quality of everything brought into her home. In this regard, Elizabeth accounted for the deliveries of hard and soft coal as well as the bulk purchases of staple kitchen ingredients including potatoes, flour, tea and butter.[13] She purchased seasonally some items like potatoes in large quantity in the interests of economy. Elizabeth monitored her inventory of such staple commodities both for purposes of planning and as a check on the honesty of her employees.

Her daily accounting ledgers also indicate more timely purchases of fresh meat, seafood, and vegetables as well as special treats, including candy and ice cream. To assist

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[10] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, October 14, 1886.

[11] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, July 20, 1881; See also Thursday, September 12; Saturday, September 14, 1872; Thursday, November 21, 1872; Monday, September 14, 1874; Saturday, October 21, 1876; Tuesday, January 4, 1881; Saturday, July 16, 1881.

[12] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, October 26, 1876.

[13] EWM, Diaries, n.p. 1881 - 1886.

home managers like Elizabeth, the New York Times published a weekly column specifying changes in market prices of fresh foods, staple provisions, game and the supplies of fish. This feature, entitled "The Household" also advised readers of the relative freshness of perishable foods. One such article, for example, warned that "[g]ood poultry and game were scarce...there was a large quantity that would require high seasoning to disguise bad odors, and skillful cooking to render palatable."[14] In all events, as indicated by her financial ledgers, Elizabeth tried to operate her home economically, with an eye to sound kitchen management. To do otherwise would have reflected poorly on her character as well as her domestic abilities.[15]

Of her many household duties, family sewing and personal wardrobe maintenance regularly occupied Elizabeth's time. Laundry and ironing, though executed by household staff, depended upon conditions favorable to drying. This fact alone may explain why Elizabeth routinely framed her daily diary entry with a reference to the weather. Furthermore, women's multilayered attire and the clothing of an active son demanded constant mending and small adjustments. Simple wardrobe maintenance could become an unwieldy, complex task. One example of the apparel intricacies of the period is the clothing required for a woman's warmth and comfort on a winter sleigh ride. Elizabeth mentioned her pleasure in one such "perfectly lovely" occasion with her father.[16] For this outing, women traditionally required the following layers of clothing: first, heavy, ankle-

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[14] New York Times, 5 October 1879, 9.

[15] Judith Flanders, 121.

[16] EWM, Diaries, Friday, February 4, 1881.

length underwear; canton flannel panties ruffled to the knees and buttoned, back front and sides to a ferris waist; an embroidered flannel petticoat, also buttoned to the ferris waist; a white muslin skirt, which also depended on the same buttons; heavy woolen stockings under stout footwear; a heavy woolen dress; a heavy coat of fur or cloth; a knitted hood of some bright color; a bright knitted scarf called a fascinator, gathered at the top and bottom with a matching satin bow; and mittens.[17] With the need to maintain so many different articles of clothing, many affluent women employed special maids solely devoted to their family's sewing needs. Elizabeth, without this convenience, routinely scheduled Ellen, a popular dressmaker, for difficult alterations and to fashion wardrobe additions. Although she sometimes also employed a part-time "sewer," Elizabeth met many of her family's basic sewing essentials. She, in fact, sewed constantly. Elizabeth appreciated the accomplishment gained in the completion of a project, frequently noting the hours she devoted to sewing. For example, one entry simply recorded a day "busy hemming fifty diapers."[18] There is no evidence, however, that Elizabeth satisfied her love of needlework with embroidery projects or other decorative stitchery. She sewed principally for utilitarian household purposes.

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[17] Jennie Prince Black, I Remember, (New York: privately printed, 1938), 46. Jennie Prince was born in New York in 1864. In 1870, her father Dr. Christopher Prince moved the family to Irvington-on-Hudson in Westchester County, New York, where Jennie married and spent most of her adult life. She married Henry Van Deventer Black a lithographer and philanthropist. She helped to found the Hudson River Music school and the Robbins Nest home for crippled children. She wrote almost one hundred vocal and instrumental works before her death in 1945. New York Times, 21 September 1945, 21. See also New York Times, 13 June 1941, 19.

[18] EWM, Diaries, Monday March 24, 1873.

Elizabeth regularly contributed her handiwork to church fairs and other charitable interests just as she presented friends and families with knitted afghans and blankets. She mended damaged clothing, darned stockings, and marked linens. Even as the convenience of ready-made clothing gained acceptance among the elite, Elizabeth continued to enjoy making some of her own clothes. Though she did much of this sewing by hand, she appreciated the convenience of labor-saving technology, finding that a seam done "on the machine . . . helps me."[19] On at least one occasion she made a "jacket" for the family pet Rover."[20] As a mother, however, she found special pleasure in making baby clothes, which required careful and elaborate decorative stitchery. She spared no expense sewing a "little coat" for Charlie of "white cloth trimmed with blue velvet," noting that the materials alone cost "nearly $20."[21] Elizabeth's accounting ledgers as well as diary entries indicate her regular purchases of fabrics, trim and other sewing notions.

Elizabeth: Out of the House

Elizabeth Merchant dutifully committed herself to the traditional responsibilities of feminine domesticity. At the same time, she enjoyed a public identity somewhat independent of her role as wife and mother. Her embrace of the public sphere resonates throughout the pages of her household diary. While living in or near Astoria, Elizabeth enjoyed the opportunities for shopping, church, cultural and social events afforded by her family's proximity to Manhattan. That Elizabeth punctuated the tedium of household life

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[19] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, February 25, 1874.

[20] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, September 12, 1889.

[21] EWM, Diaries, Friday, February 9, 1866.

with day trips into "town" is not surprising. These trips into New York occurred with frequency during the years that she and Stephen lived in her father's household under the supervision of "Mother"during the 1860's. The accelerated pace of urban life both mystified and excited many women who had learned to experience its benefits as their family's principal consumers. City merchants realized several decades before the Civil War their need to tailor merchandise presentation to the tastes and habits of female shoppers. What is remarkable in the instance of Elizabeth Merchant is the extent to which she depended upon a modern urban experience as a personal outlet. She once confessed, in this regard, that "I feel so much better when I get some exercise."[22]

As defined by domesticity, Elizabeth theoretically inhabited a realm of sentiment and duty, divorced from the city streets. Her response to the needs of Stephen, her children, and other household members both shaped and limited her world. By 1860, domesticity had flowered into a hegemonic concept which regulated both male and female public behavior.[23] Accordingly, men moved freely between their public and private realms, returning home for relaxation and renewal after their public activity. Men could move at will throughout the city, consuming its sights and sounds impassively "through a

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[22] EWM, Diaries, Monday, March 3, 1873.

[23] Griselda Pollock, Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art, (London: Routledge, 1988), 69. See also Jenny Ryan, "Women, Modernity and the City," Theory, Culture & Society 11, no.4 (November 1994): 35-63; David Scobey, "Anatomy of the Promenade: The Politics of Bourgeois Sociability in Nineteenth-Century New York," Social History, 17 (May 1992): 203-27; Elizabeth Wilson, "The Invisible Flaneur," New Left Review 191 (January/February 1992): 90-110; Janet Wolff, "The Invisible Flaneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity" Theory, Culture & Society, 2, no.3 (1985): 37- 46.

controlling but rarely acknowledged gaze, directed at other people as goods for sale."[24] By this interpretation, men retained their "custody of the eyes" or the means by which information from the urban landscape filtered into their consciousness. As the eyes could receive information that spiritually corrupted the individual, the guardianship of one's sight became essential to the definition of the flaneur, or casual stroller. For some men, the liberty to wander, watch and browse the streets provided an opportunity to escape or evade the limitations of their traditional roles as husbands and fathers.

Women theoretically did not enjoy comparable freedom of movement in the city because women were thought to be more susceptible to the spiritual corruption of the city streets. Females, presumed to be most comfortable in their homes, ventured into public only for specific occasions like household shopping or visiting with friends. In these limited circumstances, women relinquished the predictability and control that they exercised at home. A solitary promenade along New York streets required that women mingle with crowds of mixed social composition. As women navigated the city, they risked the loss of reputation when confronted with the inquiring gaze of strangers. Although women elites needed public exposure to confirm their status, convention also prescribed that women maintain their private household's respectability away from home. Because the nineteenth century conflated femininity with morality, women's reputation could be soiled by mere visual contact with men she did not know. Prescriptive literature devoted chapters of advice on polite conduct for men and women on the city's streets.

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[24] Griselda Pollock, 67.

Much of this counsel aimed to shield women from men's inquiring eyes.[25]

If Elizabeth Merchant harbored any reservations about this double standard which governed her public life, she did not reveal them in her diaries. Nor did she acknowledge any assumption of risk by traveling into New York. Instead, she found countless excuses for trips into the city. Elizabeth sometimes planned her trips, accepting the loan of one of the Wolcott family carriages for shopping and social calls. Most of her excursions, however, suggest impromptu opportunities to accomplish small, unspecified errands. On these occasions, Elizabeth used public transportation. Regular ferry service had connected the city with Queens since the 1833 charter of the Hurl Gate ferry which terminated at the foot of Eighty-Sixth Street.[26] Auctioned in 1855, this franchise became the East River Ferry Company which connected Hunter's Point with the terminus of the Flushing Railroad. For a fare of three cents, Elizabeth could easily travel from her family's estate in Queens to the foot of James-slip in lower Manhattan or to Thirty-Fourth Street.[27] A second ferry line, established in 1843, connected Astoria with Ninety-Fourth

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[25] Late Victorian society reserved its harshest judgement for the unmarried woman who overtly provoked male scrutiny when in public. Ellen J. Goldner, "The Lying Woman and the Cause of Social Anxiety: Interdependence and the Woman's Body in The House of Mirth," Women's Studies 21, no. 3 (1992). As a guarantor of feminine respectability, many elite families by the 1880's paid chaperones to accompany their unmarried daughters when in public. These female guardians functioned as a signs of elite status and sexual propriety. Chaperones also accelerated the unmarried woman's access to consumerism, commercialized leisure and new forms of transportation. Maureen E. Montgomery, "'The Fruit That Hangs Highest': Courtship and Chaperonage in New York High Society, 1880-1920," in Journal of Family History 21 (April 1996): 172-191.

[26] New York Times, 23 April 1856, 2.

[27] New York Times, 4 September 1870, 6.

Street.[28] Once in Manhattan, Elizabeth relied upon hansom cabs or the Second Avenue "elevated road" to complete the balance of her journey. As further indication of the importance of her mobility within the city, her diary indicates that by 1873 the tracks of the "Second Avenue cars" had been extended to the Astoria ferry terminus.[29]

Elizabeth's mobility in the early 1860's is all the more compelling in view of the dangers that supposedly awaited respectable women on the city's streets. The journalist Junius Browne viewed the ferry house as a "theater" in which "all classes are mingled, lawyers and ladies, merchants and beggars . . . courtesans and prudes."[30] The historian Timothy Gilfoyle concurs that Manhattan ferry terminals swarmed with prostitutes and other criminal elements.[31] These observations seem counterintuitive in view of the financial incentive of mass transit companies to provide safe and reliable service that appealed to women. A study of the development of London systems of mass transit in the nineteenth century finds companies eager to fill buses and trains with women in the afternoons, once the flow of early morning commuters had subsided.[32] Mass transport became "an essential component of consumer culture," that linked the growth of the department store to improvements in public transportation."[33]

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[28] Ibid.

[29] EWM, Diaries, Friday, March 28, 1873.

[30] Junius Henri Browne, 103.

[31] Timothy J. Gilfoyle, City of Eros, 50-51.

[32] Ana Parejo Vadillo, "Phenomena in Flux: The Aesthetics and Politics of Traveling in Modernity," in Women's Experience of Modernity, 1875 - 1945, edited by Ann L. Ardis and Leslie W. Lewis, (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 209.

[33] Ibid.

Elizabeth Merchant, despite the potential of unsavory contacts, did not hesitate to avail herself of the convenience and thrift of public transport. Weather and health permitting, Elizabeth usually traveled alone into the city three or four days a week from Astoria. Her use of public transportation indicates a democratization which eliminated the gender differences that theoretically governed her access to public life.[34] Elizabeth's journeys, in this respect, became an "optical venture" in which she learned how "to look."[35] Although the gaze of the male flaneur dominated the streets, the spatially crowded and confined conditions of mass transit forced women to learn how and when to look at strangers. As women gained the "custody of their eyes" in these new public settings, prescriptive literature began to advise women on how to discourage an unwanted gaze. To discourage a man who stared, Henry Stacy Marks suggested that women fix "your eyes firmly on his boots...and smiling ever so faintly. This treatment utterly routs and demoralizes him."[36]

Elizabeth's mastery of the unspoken rules that governed her conduct on ferries and street cars, does not imply that she enjoyed all of her trips into Manhattan without incident. On one occasion, "Mother came from town lamenting the loss of her purse and $25.00."[37] Similarly, Elizabeth expressed "concern" over her own loss of $50 after a

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[34] Ibid., 211.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Henry Stacy Marks, Pen and Pencil Sketches, 2 vols. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1894), 2:97-98. Cited in Ana Parejo Vadillo, 212.

[37] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, April 3, 1866.

shopping trip to the jeweler Tiffany.[38] These unsettling inconveniences, however, seemed a small price to pay for the liberty of a trip into the city. If Elizabeth's immediate family expressed any anxiety over her loss of reputation or personal safety while she traversed the city, she did not record their objections.

Rather, her trips to "town" demonstrate her freedom to leave the house as her personal needs dictated for shopping, medical consultations and to visit friends and family. A trip into Manhattan offered Elizabeth a pleasant and adventuresome alternative to the hours that she spent at home. After one lengthy confinement due to an undisclosed illness, Elizabeth recorded her pleasure in a city outing as the "first time in nearly five months!"[39] On another occasion, she expressed her "great disappointment" in her father's decision that she not travel to town during a "great storm."[40]

The best indication of the importance Elizabeth attached to her public outings is the space that she devoted to them in her household diary. Typically, she described her activities in the city as a day in which she "saw Mrs. Crooks about making an alpaca . . . met Lizzie Draper there and she went shopping with me . . . lunched with her and then went to see Lou Minturn and her baby."[41] Elizabeth, as well as those among her close acquaintance, used the city's public spaces as an important vehicle for impromptu sociability. Elizabeth generally shopped and lunched alone unless she encountered

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[38] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, December 22, 1868.

[39] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, May 30, 1867.

[40] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, January 11, 1873.

[41] EWM, Diaries, Monday, April 9, 1866.

someone she knew. On these chance meetings, Elizabeth did not suffer a lack of dining alternatives. Occasionally, she mentioned casual lunches at the home of friends or family or she noted her solitary meals in hotel dining rooms or at the tea room of the Woman's Exchange.[42] Elizabeth, for the most part, did not specify where she ate in Manhattan, simply recording the modest sums spent on transportation and food when in the city.[43]

In addition to shopping, Elizabeth also traveled into the city to consult a variety of medical specialists. She supplemented the more generalized medical advice of a family doctor, who lived near Astoria, with specialists who treated her eyes, feet and a variety of skin problems.[44] Of these health issues, Elizabeth expressed particular concern over her deteriorating vision. After one visit to an eye doctor, she wrote that "[h]e gave me rather a discouraging account and wants me to wear glasses."[45] Elizabeth continued to complain

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[42] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, May 3, 1881. See also Friday, February 26, 1886.

[43] One study of dining establishments catering to women in London concludes that by 1860 women enjoyed many dining alternatives, including hotels, coffee houses and confectioner's shops. See Robert Thorne, "Places of Refreshment in the Nineteenth-Century City," in Buildings and Society: Essays on the Social Development of the Built Environment, Anthony D. King, ed., (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 228-244.

[44] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, May 26, 1881. Elizabeth, throughout her adult life, suffered a variety of skin problems. In 1881, for example, a "painful and disgusting" boil on her chin confined her to her room for several days. As a result, she missed the funeral of her cousin Frederick Rankin, as she "did not look fit to go." She ventured forth for church a few days later as she "covered my face with a net veil." EWM, Diaries, Thursday, December 1; Saturday, December 10; Sunday, December 11, 1881. See also Tuesday, October 17, 1882; a remedy for "achne" appears in the back of Elizabeth's 1883 diary. This nostrum included the application of a mixture of sulphur and camphor and "even 'green soap,' if necessary." n.p. 1883. See also, Wednesday August, 26, 1885; Wednesday, November 7, 1888; Wednesday, February 13, 1889; Thursday, March 14, Monday, May 6, Wednesday, October 23, 1889.

[45] EWM, Diaries, Monday, January 29, 1872.

about "troublesome" eyes, gradually realizing the practical need to forgo her vanity.[46] An eye examination by another doctor who "dilated the pupil of one" of Elizabeth's eyes confirmed her need for glasses.[47] A third doctor advised "glasses to be ground to suit my eyes."[48] Elizabeth slowly adjusted to the inconvenience of new spectacles.[49] Elizabeth also resisted her son Huntington's need for glasses, stating that "I shall certainly shall consult some other authority before I consent to that."[50] A second physician confirmed that Huntington had "an error of vision in the right eye" which would necessitate corrective lenses.[51] Huntington's eyes, however, continued to cause difficulty requiring him to study only during day light hours.[52]

Elizabeth's medical needs extended to her teeth, requiring numerous trips into the city.[53] Women elites' concern for dental health is supported by the coverage that the Home Journal devoted to the physiology of teeth as well as recommendations for dental hygiene

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[46] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, February 1, 1872. See also Monday, March 11; Wednesday, March 19; Wednesday, March 27, 1872.

[47] EWM, Diaries, Monday, January 24, 1881.

[48] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, January 25, 1881.

[49] EWM, Diaries, Monday, January 31, 1881.

[50] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, January 11, 1881.

[51] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, February 9, 1881.

[52] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, October 19, 1884. See also Thursday, October 23, 1884. Several months later, an "occulist" diagnosed Huntington's condition as "eye strain" and recommended "fresh air and exercise" for this problem. EWM, Diaries, Saturday, December 13, 1884. See also Thursday, September 8; Monday, October 3, 1885; Saturday, December 3, 1887.

[53] Early references to dental appointments include Tuesday, June 7, 1864; June 27, October 6, 1866; January 10, 1867; Thursday, June 23, 1870; Thursday, July 15, 1870; Wednesday, Marcy 8, 1871; Thursday, May 18, 1871; April 19, 1873; Friday, June 13, 1873.

beginning in the early 1850's.[54] This publication regularly provided its readership with such topical, health-related information. By mid century, New York City Directories contained several pages of listings for dentists.[55] Concomitant to the demand for dental services, is the "rapid" growth of dentistry as a profession.[56] In 1820, medical doctors functioned as "tooth pullers" as there were "hardly more than thirty practicing dentists" in the country.[57] By the 1860's, the number of dentists had risen to around five thousand, spurring the growth of several manufacturing firms catering to their special needs. The practice of dentistry included the use of chloroform and nitrous oxide by 1861 to ease the pain of office procedures as well as steady technical innovation.[58] By 1864, a new process for the manufacture of lighter dentures through the use of India rubber plates was

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[54] Home Journal, 26 April1851, 2; 3 April 1852, 4; 15 February 1852, 5; 19 June 1852, 4.

[55] Trow's New York City Directory, 1854-55, 46-47.

[56] New York Times, 30 June 1860, 3.

[57] Ibid.

[58] New York Times, 10 July 1863, 5; 6 January 1866, 5. The use of chloroform and nitrous oxide continued to provoke public interest after their introduction as neither substance proved to be entirely risk free. New York Times,13 May 1869, 1; 26 September 1871, 3; 22 March 1872, 5. For technical progress in dentistry see New York Times, 7 March 1865, 5; 22 March 1865, 5; 23 October 1867, 4; 3 February 1868, 5; 10 February 1868, 5; 1 February 1869, 5; 22 December 1875, 4. The field of dentistry steadily progressed towards professionalization with the formation of a national association which met annually for the presentation of papers and the discussion of scientific advances. New York Times, 6 August 1866, 6; 10 August 1866, 8; 27 August 1869, 7; 5 August 1868, 5; 8 November 1875, 1; 20 October 1875, 5. In 1866, the New-York College of Dentistry held its first commencement exercise. The school's clinic performed 4,000 operations during that same year. New York Times, 17 March 1869, 4. See also 5 April 1870, 8; 5 March 1871, 5; 2 March 1875, 10. American dentistry received international recognition, winning medals at the Paris and Vienna Expositions. New York Times, 16 May 1874, 5. By 1874, American dentistry had a national organization as well as 100 separate state and local societies for the exchange of information. The profession also sponsored at least six monthly journals, plus numerous other works pertaining to dental science. Ten schools of dentistry had also been formed by that date. New York Times, 18 August 1874.

introduced. The finished product was said to be "smooth and hard as glass."[59] As a result of this progress, Elizabeth seldom remarked upon the nature of these visits and only occasionally noted "quite a hard time at the dentist."[60] Huntington also required regular dental visits as well as the installation of a special "plate for his teeth" at age fifteen.[61]

On balance, it is difficult to assess the extent to which Elizabeth enjoyed unfettered access to Manhattan's streets in view of the emphasis on household matters in her diaries. Certainly by 1887, she could enjoy a day in the city with her cousin Mary Baird spent simply "prowling about."[62] For the earlier years that she maintained a record, the demands of domesticity required her presence in the city. Numerous shopping excursions fulfilled her clothing and household needs as well as those of her children. Additionally during the year, she routinely purchased cards and gifts for birthdays, weddings and at Christmas to honor family obligations. Once ensconced in her own home, she perused the city's stores and auction houses for home furnishings and other decorative items. Many women considered such shopping to be a "business which required time and careful management."[63]

The Merchant's move to their first permanent address in Astoria in 1874 necessitated a series of special shopping excursions. Though the home was purchased in

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[59] "American Dentistry: Process of Setting Teeth on India Rubber Plates," Scientific American 10, no.5 (January 30, 1864): 71.

[60] EWM, Diaries, Monday, March 8, 1886.

[61] EWM, Diaries, Monday, November 10, 1884. See also Tuesday, December 2, 1884.

[62] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, September 20, 1887.

[63] Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair, Public Lives: Women, Family and Society in Victorian Britain, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 151.

February, the family delayed the move until early April so that Elizabeth could "make our alterations."[64] As Stephen's business took him away from the city, Elizabeth relied upon the advice of her Father, stepmother and sister Alice in selecting furniture, wall paper, linens, china and kitchen essentials.[65] While organizing the contents of her new home, Elizabeth also managed additional activities, including: supervision of the cleaning and move from a rental home; her son Huntington's bout of whooping cough; a seven-month birthday observance and a christening ceremony for her daughter Alice; the death of her friend Tillie Tisdale; and series of unscheduled house guests and other small entertainments that she hosted.[66] Elizabeth also undertook the "making over the attic carpet" which she thriftily observed to be "hard work."[67] Elizabeth's effort to refit an old carpet for her new home is understandable. Interior carpeting, while viewed as a necessity by the elite, often amounted to "two-thirds" of the costs of the rest of a room.[68] As Elizabeth's preparations for her new home stretched into the summer months, the family moved temporarily back into a room at her father's estate. Here, Elizabeth found herself "too busy to write" as she was "going back and forward to shop in town and to supervise

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[64] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, March 17, 1874.

[65] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, April 1; Friday, April 3; Tuesday, April 21; Friday, April 24; Monday, April 27; Thursday, May 14; Monday, May 25, 1874, passim.

[66] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, April 9; Thursday, April 16; Monday, May 25; Tuesday, March 3; Friday, January 30; Friday, March 8; Sunday, March 1; Tuesday, April 7; Thursday, March 26; Thursday, April 16, 1874, passim.

[67] EWM, Diaries, Friday June 5, 1874.

[68] "Hints in Housecleaning Time," 246.

improvements to the new house."[69]

Amid this flurry of intense activity, Elizabeth remarked that the children's nurse Annie had telegraphed from town "to our dismay" that she would not be home. [70] Although the maid Bridget appeared "dreadfully worried" over this situation, Elizabeth voiced only a mild "concern."[71] Annie eventually returned to the Merchant children. Elizabeth, "after learning her story, decided to keep her. The dear baby went to her at once and knew her notwithstanding the seven weeks of absence."[72] Elizabeth's decision to retain the children's nurse after her sudden absence of seven weeks is not surprising. Elizabeth experienced continuous difficulty in securing and keeping reliable servants. The hardships associated with maintaining an adequate household staff threads throughout Elizabeth's forty-five year record.

Even as a young bride living in her father's home, Elizabeth bore the responsibility for vetting the requisite maids and nurses for her separate needs. This duty in and of itself accounted for numerous, often frustrating, trips into Manhattan during which Elizabeth answered classified advertisements, visited employment agencies and conducted interviews. In 1864 when her nurse Ellen left "abruptly with a day's notice," Elizabeth immediately journeyed into New York to search for a replacement.[73] As on numerous other occasions, she traveled "all over the city answering advertisements [and] finally

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[69] EWM, Diaries, Monday June 29, 1874.

[70] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, May 27, 1874.

[71] Ibid.

[72] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, July 16, 1874.

[73] EWM, Diaries, Monday, September 19, 1864.

engaged a nice looking girl."[74] A few days hence, the girl Mary appeared . Mary left the Merchants after few months. Elizabeth replaced her, after another search, with a woman named Delia Slovinski who "promises to do well."[75] Delia remained with the Merchant family for only a week. Elizabeth quickly hired another woman Alice Willoughby.

With every new addition to her household, Elizabeth traveled into the city for a protracted search. Her record of her household's changing composition stems from her need to preserve precise dates of service for purposes of remuneration. Even so, the maintenance of a single children's nurse became a formidable challenge for Elizabeth In one ten month period during 1866, for example, the Merchant's difficulties with nursing help ran a predictable gamut of problems, including: "grumbling"and impertinence; a "fracas in the kitchen"; illness; "too ignorant and . . . rather irresponsible;" and "taking money from my desk!"[76] From these experiences, Elizabeth decided to retain nurse Lizzie because "we'd like to do better but fear to do worse."[77]

In searching for reliable household staff, Elizabeth found a ready supply of individuals willing to accommodate her needs. Eight per cent of the labor force listed their occupation as servant in 1870.[78] The supply of immigrant labor, particularly in cities like

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[74] Ibid.

[75] EWM, Diaries, Friday, May 1, 1865.

[76] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, May 24, 1866; Saturday, October 20, 1866; Sunday, December 30, 1866; Thursday, June 28, 1866;Thursday, March 7, 1867; Thursday, October 30, 1873, passim.

[77] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, September 28, 1867.

[78] Daniel E. Sutherland, Americans and their Servants: Domestic Service in the U.S. from 1800 - 1920, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 45. See also Faye E. Dudden, Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth Century America, (Middletown,

New York, provided wealthy families a steady stream of candidates for household positions. For immigrant women, who frequently lacked alternative skills, domestic work became the only viable employment opportunity. Desperate for work, many immigrants accepted the long hours, demeaning labor and lack of status associated with household service. For their efforts, a children's nurse received from $10 to $15 as a monthly wage, depending on their suitability, level of skill and number of children in the household.[79] Employment as a children's nurse usually entailed long hours in the least desirable room of the home. Specific rooms for children were usually unornamented and simply furnished. Colorful, plush rooms, designed for play, did not become popular until the end of the nineteenth century.[80] A job in the Merchant home also meant that live-in servants reside in Queens, away from friends and family in Manhattan. Some women like nurse Mary found the Merchant's situation "too much confined and lonely" to be of mutual benefit.[81]

On balance, Elizabeth had greater success in finding and retaining general household staff. These household servants, however, required training and oversight. In a small family like Elizabeth's, a single servant preformed a variety of duties. Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, in this regard, considered household "'order'" to be "Heaven's first

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Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1983), Chapter 3.

[79] Elizabeth Merchant viewed $15 a month as the upper salary range for a children's nurse. When Huntington's nurse Margaret asked for a raise to that amount, Elizabeth decided to comply because "she is very nice and I should hate to lose her." EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, May 10, 1871. See also New York Times, 7 April 1875, 6.

[80] Karin Calvert, Children in the House: The Material Culture of Early Childhood, 1600 - 1900, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), Chapter 6.

[81] EWM, Diaries, Friday, February 8, 1867.

law."[82] Elizabeth trained her servants in a manner that reflected her own sense of discipline and order. In most homes, a maid hired for general housework also doubled as a waitress who served the family's meals in the dining room. Morning duties, for example, required that this maid rise early, between the hours of five and six, so that she could open the blinds, doors and windows of the home. Afterwards, this maid cleaned the home's front steps, swept the walk and polished the door pull. She then cleaned the hearths on the first floor, disposed of the ashes and laid the fires in the grates. Afterwards, she collected the shoes and boots from their place before the bedroom doors and retreated to the laundry room to brush and polish them. Once finished cleaning the shoes, she returned them to their respective owners. Following this task, the maid "made herself neat and clean" before she began to lay the table for the family's breakfast."[83]

After brushing and tidying about the dining room, the maid set the table, observing the correct placement of dining utensils, dishes and napery. Mrs. Sherwood advised that the mistress of the home "preside" over these many duties to see that they were performed correctly.[84] All being in order, the maid then roused the family for a breakfast prepared by the cook. The maid served and cleared this meal before beginning to make the beds upstairs. During the course of the week, this multi-purpose servant also tended to laundry, ironing, polishing of silver and brass as well as general cleaning chores. Most women like Elizabeth scheduled these tasks on a weekly basis so that Thursdays, for

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[82] Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, The Art of Entertaining, 385.

[83] Ibid., 387.

[84] Ibid.

example, became the day that the home received its thorough sweeping. Women elites like Elizabeth depended upon a good and loyal cadre of servants who both understood and could respond to the needs of their particular household.

As homes became more elaborate and costly to maintain and as the city's pool of immigrant labor shifted from northern to southern European countries, servant issues intensified. No family it seems was immune from staffing difficulties. In this regard, the lawyer George Templeton Strong recorded the unfortunate death of Mrs. Mary Cunard who was "killed by an emeuté among the Irishry of her numerous household."[85] The contemporaneous author Mary Elizabeth Sherwood devoted several chapters in her advice manual to the direction and duties of household servants. Mrs. Sherwood premised her counsel on ethnic stereotypes of the immigrants available for domestic service. She applauded French servants for their economy, neatness and skill as cooks and seamstresses. She concluded, however, that French servants "make trouble about their food [and] they do not tell the truth, as a rule."[86] Mrs. Sherwood and others generally found Irish servants to be the most reliable.[87] "Children love Irish servants . . . They are not good cooks . . . and are wanting in the head, management, and neatness; but they are

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[85] George Templeton Strong, Diaries, Tuesday, May 29, 1866, 4:87. Several years earlier, Strong's family faced the prospect of a "domestic revolution" which Strong attributed to the nurse Marie whom he found to be a "Tartar of the deepest dye, who keeps the household in hot water." Thursday, May 27, 1852, 2:94.

[86] Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, The Art of Entertaining, 207.

[87] Ibid. See also Katherine Lydig Brady, 19; Frederick Van Wyck, 58 - 59; Constance Cary Harrison, Recollections Grave and Gay, 282-284.

willing; and a wise mistress can make of them almost anything she desires."[88]

Many foreign visitors, however, observed that Americans, without a tradition of service, often suffered at the hands of inferior household staff. [89] Price Collier remembered that in a "large establishment at Newport...my patent-leather evening shoes were returned to me nicely blacked instead of polished."[90] Maria Theresa Longworth complained that "[s]ervants, who are actually designated 'young ladies and addressed as Miss and Madam,' are the plague of American life. Servant-women will scarcely do anything menial."[91] Many American immigrants quickly adopted the country's egalitarian attitudes.[92] Hermann, the German manservant of the historian and diplomat George Bancroft, frequently extended his care to advise dinner guests "sotto voce advice upon wines to be taken or avoided."[93] In sum, it is not surprising that the New York journalist Ralph Pulitzer noticed that dinner table conversation among women elites invariably degenerated into the "gloom of the servant question."[94]

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[88] Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, The Art of Entertaining, 207.

[89] Maria Theresa (Yelverton) Longworth, II: 266 - 271; Sir Philip Burne-Jones, 43 - 53; Price Collier, America and the Americans; from a French Point of View, (London: William Heinemann, 1897), 62 - 67.

[90] Price Collier, 63.

[91] Maria Theresa(Yelverton) Longworth, vol II, 268.

[92] Grace A. Ellis, "Our Household Servants," The Galaxy 14, no.3 (September 1872): 349-355.

[93] M.A. DeWolfe Howe, 279.

[94] Ralph Pulitzer, New York Society on Parade, (New York: Harper, 1910; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1975), 41.

A Spiritual Life

Women like Elizabeth Merchant quickly learned that the expeditious resolution of servant issues became a part of their domestic duty. Servants allowed wealthy women the freedom to escape the drudgery of household routine. Like many of her peers Elizabeth participated in activities outside the home to distract from the conundrum of staffing issues. Many of these personal pursuits required regular trips into the city. Of Elizabeth's interests, her involvement in the life of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church at Nineteenth Street and Fifth Avenue figured prominently in her diary. Many people regarded this particular institution as the city's wealthiest house of worship.[95] The church dated to the 1807 founding of the city's first Presbyterian congregation in a small church on Cedar Street. Elizabeth's great-uncle Oliver Wolcott had been among the church's twenty-eight original members.[96] From this location, the congregation expanded to enlarged quarters at Duane and Church streets in 1835. In 1852, the congregation again relocated to a site at Nineteenth Street and Fifth Avenue to accommodate "that portion of society residing in the neighborhood.[97] In 1867, the church called the Rev. John Hall who quickly established a reputation as a pulpit orator. Church membership rolls swelled, forcing the congregation to relocate again. In 1872, the congregation purchased the

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[95] By 1895 New York's Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church had achieved national renown for its wealth. The minister Dr. Hall complained publicly of the numbers of "begging letters" that "flooded" his office. In a letter to the New York Observer, Hall requested that these letters cease. Hall cited not only the capacity of the church and its pastor for giving, but "even the opportunity...for reading or paying any attention to the appeals." New York Times, 28 December 1895, 9.

[96] New York Times, 1 June 1874, 1.

[97] Ibid.

north-west corner of Fifty-Fifth Street and Fifth Avenue. Reportedly, the cost of the land alone amounted to the largest amount ever paid in the country for land for religious use.[98] Several years later, the cornerstone was laid for a new Gothic structure of Scotch granite, designed by the New York architect Carl Phieffer. Once completed, the new church would accommodate 2,000 souls.[99] Construction expense placed the final costs for the new building at nearly one million dollars. To offset this debt, the congregation auctioned pews to its membership. With premium prices ranging from $300 to $6000, the debt was successfully eliminated in a single evening.[100]

For many contemporary observers, religion as practiced by wealthy congregants like Elizabeth Merchant amounted to little more than fashionable hypocrisy.[101] While church sponsored activities did provide many women an opportunity for social contacts, Elizabeth Merchant cultivated a spiritual life as component of her personal growth. Her Calvinist beliefs embraced the sobering limits of free will. She once remarked during a difficult period that she tried always "to believe whatever is, is best and well ordered for me."[102] Elizabeth's understanding of her role in a divine plan enabled her to accept personal hardship that sustained her throughout her life. A copy of a prayer found in the back pages of her 1864 diary illuminates her belief. This petition asked that God bless

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[98] New York Times, 28 October 1872, 2.

[99] New York Times, 10 June 1873, 8.

[100] New York Times, 18 May 1875, 10. There is no indication that Frederick Wolcott purchased a "premium" pew. Other members of the congregation, however, purchased seating at its assessed value on a first-come-first-served basis at the auction.

[101] Julius Henri Browne, 166-174.

[102] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, November 6, 1866.

that "dear person whom Thou hast chosen to be my husband."[103] The supplicant's use of the word "Thou" indicates Elizabeth's understanding of her marriage as a part of a divine plan. This belief gave her the ability to distance herself from temporal, marital difficulties. Elizabeth learned to cope with marital problems because her life with Stephen became an expression of divine will rather than her individual failing. On the occasion of her twenty-sixth birthday, she reflected that "[i]t is a trial to be growing older so rapidly. Youth sped away and care and sorrows come. Yet blessings are many and my heart is thankful."[104] Elizabeth's fatalism enabled her to accept difficulties and to enjoy the positive features of her life.

Elizabeth's personal belief reflected the conservative teachings of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church. This institution disapproved of revivalism, although it did support foreign and domestic missions and the growth of frontier churches.[105] Florence Jaffray Hurst Harriman recalled that the wealthy and socially prominent Robert Lenox, instrumental in the church's early organization, once threatened to withdraw his pew memberships if the congregation purchased an organ.[106] Lenox preferred the unadorned liturgy and service of his conservative Scottish forebearers. Harriman also noted that her Episcopalian father referred to the church's formalistic minister the Reverend Dr. John

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[103] EWM, Diaries, 1864, n.p.

[104] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, April 22, 1866.

[105] Other conservative Presbyterian congregations in New York City included Brick Presbyterian, and the First Presbyterian Church. Encyclopedia of New York City, s.v. "Presbyterians."

[106] Florence Jaffray Hurst Harriman, 6. See also Dictionary of Notable American Women, 1971, s.v. "Harriman, Florence Jaffray Hurst."

Hall as the "Presbyterian pope."[107] Hall, born in 1829 to Scottish parents in County Armagh, Ireland, was schooled in an austere religious tradition. After attending Belfast College, Hall received his licence to preach at age twenty and accepted the leadership of the First Presbyterian Church of Armagh. From this post, he moved to a prominent Protestant congregation in Dublin where Queen Victoria recognized his homiletic talent. While on a visit to New York in 1867, the congregation of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church invited him to preach. According to the New York Times, Hall " became and continued to be the most powerful and influential minister in the United States."[108] In 1872 the church had 873 communicants. Within eleven years, the church grew to 1,900 members so that by Hall's death in 1898, the church had over 2,600 members.[109]

For Elizabeth Merchant, participation in the life of Hall's church offered practical guidance for daily living. She habitually attended his Wednesday and Sunday worship services as well as a weekly Wednesday afternoon Female Bible Study group which he also conducted. Elizabeth found Hall's sermons instructive. She frequently recorded their titles along with summaries of their content in her diary. She noted, for example, an "intensely interesting" sermon on "Absalom and the Training of Sons" as relevant

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[107] Florence Jaffray Hurst Harriman, 7. See also Jennie Prince Black, 11-12.

[108] New York Times, 18 September 1898, 1.

[109] Ibid. In addition to his church-related duties, Hall served as Chancellor of New York University for ten years, beginning in 1882. He was president of the Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church, a Vice President of the American Tract Society and a Director of the American Bible Society. He also served as a Trustee of Union Theological Seminary, Princeton University, Wellesley College and Wells College. Hall authored numerous books and contributed a weekly column to The New York Ledger. He died in Belfast, Ireland, in 1898.

commentary on an immediate experience with her son Charlie.[110] Elizabeth did not passively accept Hall's teachings, however. She once complained that she judged his sermon "not very interesting."[111] Nevertheless, Elizabeth valued her personal associations with Hall, finding him to be "kind, and sincere, and sympathetic."[112]

Even though her husband Stephen, an Episcopalian, worshiped at Calvary Church, Elizabeth strenuously upheld the Wolcott tradition of regular attendance at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian church until 1884. By this time, her life had begun to center around her Astoria home and she began to frequent a more conveniently located house of worship. This practice began Elizabeth's shifting focus away from Manhattan towards her family and home in Astoria. As Elizabeth withdrew from the spiritual life of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, she became more involved with an Astoria church. In 1884, Elizabeth and her sister Alice joined the Astoria Dutch Reformed Church. As the Dutch Reformed denomination derived its doctrine and liturgy from Calvinist principles, Elizabeth needed only a "letter of transfer" from her former church. She did not undergo

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[110] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, January 23, 1872.

[111] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, April 6, 1873. Elizabeth habitually remarked upon the sermons of other ministers that she heard. She found the homilies of the Episcopal Bishop Little "disappointing." EWM, Diaries, Sunday, April 20, 1873. After hearing a sermon by Dr. Terhune of Williamsburg, she complained that "his manner is very distressing, such shouting." EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, January 14, 1885. She reserved her most caustic comment for an unnamed minister's remarks on the prodigal son which she found "dreadful...and in the worst possible taste!" EWM, Diaries, Sunday, May 29, 1887.

[112] EWM, Diaries, Friday, March 22, 1871. See also EWM, Diaries, Saturday, March 28, 1874.

a period of formal instruction prior to membership in this new denomination.[113] Though Elizabeth liked her new pastor, Reverend Mr. Haines, she did not hold him in the same esteem as Dr. Hall. She attended her new church with the same regularity, but did not devote the same coverage in her diary to Haines' sermons that she gave to those of Dr. Hall. Elizabeth came to value the friendship and counsel of Mr. Haines, however. She sought his advice, for example, in hiring a tutor for her son Huntington.[114] In 1884, she helped to organize contributions from the congregation into a "purse containing $240" in commemoration of Haines' tenth anniversary with the congregation.[115] The following year, Reverend Haines married and left the Astoria Dutch Reformed Church. Elizabeth liked the new minister Mr. Crammer and his wife whom she found to be a "pleasant little woman."[116] Though Elizabeth voiced some reservations about Crammer's homiletics, she continued her active involvement in church affairs.[117] She arranged flowers on the altar of the sanctuary.[118] She also regularly sent holiday cards, packets of old newspapers and magazines and other small gifts to parishioners serviced by the church's Shut-In Society. She found this work on behalf of the Shut-Ins "in whom I am so interested" to be

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[113] Her son Huntington also joined the Dutch Reformed congregation at this time by public confession of faith. Elizabeth Wolcott Merchant, Diaries, Sunday, December 7, 1884.

[114] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, January 13, 1881..

[115] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, June 1, 1884.

[116] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, July 8, 1885.

[117] Elizabeth wrote Mr. Crammer a note "telling him how much everybody enjoys his preaching, but was sorry I did it afterwards." EWM, Diaries, Monday, September 20, 1886.

[118] EWM, Diaries, Sunday October 24, 1886.

particularly rewarding.[119]

Elizabeth also actively supported the Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the church, reflecting her longstanding interest in the need for overseas and domestic Christian mission. Previously, her diary noted her involvement with the "Zulu Society." This Manhattan organization gave Elizabeth as a young woman the opportunity to see "familiar faces of the past" as well as the chance to "make a dress" for use by missionaries in southern Africa.[120] In another instance, a series of lectures that Elizabeth heard while on a trip to Boston sparked her interest in missionary work with the American Indians.[121] Upon her return to Astoria, Elizabeth wrote notes "asking people personally to come . . . and hear Miss Collins talk about the Indians. She came at three and at five. We had quite a pleasant gathering of ladies . . . all much interested."[122] Elizabeth's efforts on behalf of the Indians resulted in additional work with the Astoria church's Missionary Society.[123]

Elizabeth's affiliation with the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, and later the Dutch Reformed Church of Astoria, provided her with an important alternative to her daily domestic life. Elizabeth, however, did not describe any social benefit she may have derived from regular church attendance. Instead, she valued only the connection to a network of like-minded women who shared her imperative to further Christian belief both

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[119] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, December 9, 1886; Wednesday, December 22, 1886. For Easter and Christmas mailing to Shut-Ins see EWM, Diaries, n.p., 1886.

[120] EWM, Diaries, Monday, March 23; Tuesday, March 31, 1868. See also Tuesday March 22, 1870.

[121] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, April 1, 1886.

[122] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, April 28, 1886.

[123] EWM, Diaries, Friday, October 1, 1886.

at home and overseas. Like other similarly situated women, however, Elizabeth's church related activity opened her to the possibilities of life beyond her parlor.

The House of Industry

In addition to her church related activities, Elizabeth Merchant supported vocational education for indigent females. In 1863, the lawyer George Templeton Strong noticed women elites' commitment to public charity as "a very significant thing and would have been held a marvel ten years ago."[124] The founding of urban charities in the mid-nineteenth century replaced, to some extent, the religious outreach of the old tract and missionary societies. Newer forms of benevolence focused upon local problems with a "new secularism and professionalism."[125] Many of these new charities reflected a mounting awareness of the problems of urban disorder in the late antebellum period. Wealthy elites, in particular, sought ways "to transform immigrant masses into models of respectable society.[126]

Responding, in part, to a study of police reports, an "assemblage of philanthropic and influential women" met in March 1850 in the parlor of the New York Hotel to form

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[124] George Templeton Strong, September 26, 1863, 3:359

[125] Paul S. Boyer, Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820 - 1920, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 65. The work of the Ladies Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church also directed its charity to the needs of the immigrant and slum dwellers of New York's Five Points. The first missionary to the Five Points Louis M. Pease found intemperance and unemployment to be the major causes of urban poverty. Pease succeeded in getting local textile manufacturers to provide piecework to indigent women so that by 1851, 60 adults had useful jobs. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, The New York City Mission Movement, 1812-1870, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), 225-244. See also Anne M. Boylan, The Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston, 1797-1840, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

[126] Paul S. Boyer, 122.

the New York House and School of Industry.[127] The group's wealthy founders hoped to establish an "extended association for supplying work to the female poor."[128] Women elites, through the offer of sewing classes, hoped to encourage self sufficiency among indigent women. Catharine Beecher, who advocated training in the domestic arts queried, "[W]here is trained handicraft more important than in making, mending, and preserving the clothing of a family?"[129]

The House of Industry reflected a conservative approach to philanthropy, whereby patrician women avoided the troubling connotations of "aiming their efforts at prostitutes and pursued the tradition of aiding the 'worthy poor.'"[130] According to the historian Anne Boylan, organizations like the New York School and House of Industry gave women elites the opportunity to express "in institutional form their definition of themselves as daughters, wives, mothers or widows."[131] The extent of a woman's participation in the House of Industry reflected her personal circumstances, so that older women had more time to devote to the project than younger women engaged in the process of starting their families.

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[127] New York House and School of Industry, Undated, miscellaneous pamphlet, Manuscript Collection, New York Historical Society, New York, New York..

[128] Unattributed newspaper article, "Needs of School of Industry," March 2, 1910, New York House and School of Industry, Manuscript Collection, New York Historical Society, New York, New York.

[129] Catharine Beecher, "Woman's Profession Dishonored," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 29, no.174 (November 1864): 766. See also New York Times, 11 August 1869, 6.

[130] Lori D. Ginzberg, 121.

[131] Anne M. Boylan, "Timid Girls, Venerable Widows and Dignified Matrons: Life Cycle Patters Among Organized Women in New York and Boston, 1797-1840," American Quarterly 38 (Winter1986): 781.

Among the leadership of the fledgling organization, the author Catharine Maria Sedgwick wrote an important funding appeal for the group.[132] By late April, sufficient monies had been raised to secure a small house at 120 West 16th Street on land formerly owned by John Hone. Samuel Shaw Howland, who owned the property, offered it for sale at $7000 or as a rental at $450 per annum. Howland apparently harbored reservations about transacting business with a "society of mere women" and required that a male intermediary lease the property so that the House of Industry initially sublet the building.[133] Howland's doubts about the financial viability of the new organization appear to have been misplaced, however. The State Legislature incorporated the New York School and House of Industry in 1851. By 1852, the group had raised $20,000 to put the charity on a sound financial basis.[134] The charity ultimately purchased the property from Howland where they remained in operation for one hundred years.[135]

Throughout its long history, supporters of the New York House and School of Industry helped poor women by providing them the training to work as seamstresses. The Twenty-Second Annual Report, published in 1873, indicates the growth of the charity beyond its original mission. By that time, the charity employed the services of 250 women

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[132] Dictionary of Notable American Women, s.v. "Sedgwick, Catharine Maria." See also New York Times, 1 August 1867, 4.

[133] Unattributed newspaper article, "Needs of School of Industry," March 2, 1910.

[134] "Untitled Pamphlet," 1905. New York House and School of Industry. Manuscript Collection, New-York Historical Society, New York, New York.

[135] In 1951 the New York House and School of Industry consolidated with Greenwich House a settlement home as a subsidiary organization to train elderly people for modern employment, including typing and secretarial skills.

to sew previously cut goods in their homes. The variety of merchandise for sale by the charity included "every article from an iron holder to a woman's dress or a man's wrapper."[136] The school also employed the services of thirty-five accomplished sewers for "fine ordered work." In 1873, these genteel women in reduced circumstances together earned over $4,000 in income from the charity.[137] The institution also sponsored a Sewing School, which by 1873 had an enrollment of 125 students. These young girls, whose ages ranged from 6 to 16, met for classes twice a week to learn to button hole, fell-seam and embroider.[138]

The Infant Industrial School offered hot meals and classes to 170 "ragged, dirty and ill-fed" children.[139] Although worthwhile, this particular branch of the organization proved to be a financial drain on the institution as a whole. Organizational minutes indicate an ongoing dialogue about the feasibility of continuing the Infant School program. In 1877, the group petitioned Charles Loring Brace of the Children's Aid Society for additional funding for the Infant School. Brace had pioneered in opening residences for poor children in New York's slums where a bed and hot meals could be obtained for minimal cost. His agency also sponsored vocational schools, reading rooms, gymnasiums and seaside vacation homes. Brace found foster homes for homeless youths in the

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[136] New York House and School of Industry. Twenty-Second Annual Report, (New York: E. Wells Sackett & Bro., 1873), 14. New York House and School of Industry, Manuscript Collection, New York Historical Society, New York, New York.

[137] Ibid., 13.

[138] Ibid., 19.

[139] Ibid., 16.

Midwest on the assumption that farm families offered the greatest opportunity for the outcast children from urban slums.[140] Brace, after several months of negotiation with the House of Industry, agreed to pay up to $1500 a year with the understanding that the organization raise an additional $700 a year through subscription or donation.[141] To accommodate this bequest, the group limited its enrollment to 100 students.

The New York School and House of Industry attributed its longevity to the production of institutional clothing for orphanages, schools, hospitals and asylums. Organizational minutes suggest that the female Managers regularly petitioned hospitals and other charitable institutions for orders for uniforms, bedding and gowns. The women Managers also closely monitored the quality as well as the quantity of the goods sold. The Manager's Minutes of 1879 includes a detailed report on the popularity of "unbleached chemises,"specifying the costs of labor and material as they related to profits on the item.[142] Because the organization operated on a non-profit basis, its products sold for less than commercially manufactured goods which, in turn, permitted higher wages for female workers. To supplement the monies earned from the sale of goods, the House of Industry

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[140] Charles Loring Brace, The Dangerous Classes of New York and Twenty Years Work among Them, (New York: Wynkoop & Hallenbeck, 1872; reprint, Washington: National Association of Social Workers, 1971); Emma Brace, The Life of Charles Loring Brace Told Chiefly in His Own Letters, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894). See also Stephen O'Connor, Orphan Trains: The Story of Charles Loring Brace and the Children He Saved and Failed, Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001; Encyclopedia of New York City, s.v. "Brace, Charles Loring" and "Children's Aid Society."

[141] New York School and House of Industry, Proceedings of the Board of Managers at the Monthly Meeting, 1877-1884, November 11, 1877. Manuscript Collection, New York Historical Society, New York, New York.

[142] Ibid., January 9, 1879.

also sponsored special teas and needlework exhibitions. With the services of accomplished sewers, the House of Industry could provide an array of customized products, including: a monogramming service; special trousseaus and layettes; and the design and embroidery of clerical linen and choir vestments. Newspapers helped the charity with small advertisements published at no cost. Advertising cards placed in shop windows by the Committee of Managers also increased public awareness of the institution's shops and services. By 1905, the House of Industry required a permanent paid staff, including a Director and a Supervisor of Sewing which supplemented the staff of part-time instructors and maintenance personnel.

In large measure, the financial success and institutional longevity of the New York School and House of Industry can be attributed to the charitable interests of patrician women who volunteered their time and financial support. Institutional minutes indicate that individual members of the Board of Managers continually contributed small amounts of money to fund treats and outings for the children in their care as well as improvements to the property. Membership in this organization, however, required a personal commitment of time beyond financial support. Extant minutes of meetings indicate that, as a rule, membership grew through the introduction of an interested party by an existing member. In 1878, for example, the membership unanimously approved Mrs. Minturn's proposal of the wealthy and socially prominent Marion Anthon Fish to the Board of Managers.[143]

Elizabeth Merchant's grandmother, Louisa Howland served as an early member of

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[143] Ibid., March 14, 1878.

the Board of Managers of the School and House of Industry. Elizabeth's cousin Abby Howland Woolsey also served in the 1850's in this same capacity.[144] Although Elizabeth's grandmother and cousin actively supported the House of Industry, it is difficult to determine Elizabeth's participation. References to the organization in her diary do not indicate any direct involvement. The House of Industry's records also do not include her name among its Managers or regular contributors. It is mere coincidence that Elizabeth's great-uncle Samuel Shaw Howland owned the property where the group ultimately headquartered. Elizabeth did, however, regularly visit the institution just as she relied upon its services as in the instance when she ordered "six little dresses."[145]

Elizabeth's absence from the leadership of the House of Industry reflects the tendency of benevolent women "to abandon their organizational activity—either permanently or for a lengthy period of time —to devote themselves to their families' needs."[146] Elizabeth's effort to build a family, her extended periods of bereavement and her Astoria residence may have curtailed her interest in Manhattan charitable work. As a young woman Elizabeth also had yet to demonstrate her organizational and financial abilities to the society matrons who managed the House of Industry. By the time her family settled into their permanent home in Astoria, Elizabeth had more time to devote to benevolent interests. She had also matured into a dedicated woman with the ability to

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[144] Dictionary of Notable American Women, 1971, s.v., "Woolsey, Abby Howland." See also Bacon, Georgeanna Woolsey and Howland, Eliza Woolsey eds., Letters of a Family during the War for Union, 1861 - 1865, 2 vol., (n.p.: privately printed, 1899).

[145] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, February 25, 1872. See also Friday, January 9, 1874.

[146] Anne M. Boylan, "Timid Girls, Venerable Widows and Dignified Matrons," 781, 784-786.

influence her peers. In 1881, she helped organize a charity in Astoria not unlike the House of Industry. The degree to which the New York House of Industry served as a model for this new organization is unknown. Elizabeth, however, seemed pleased with the outcome of the group's first meeting in the chapel of the Dutch Reformed Church which generated "good attendance and much interest."[147]

For the six years that the Merchants lived in Astoria, Elizabeth periodically referred to attending Employment Society meetings and to the success of its fund raising fairs.[148] She does not specify the extent of the services provided by this local organization in her household record. Furthermore, there are no extant records for the Astoria Employment Society. Elizabeth's diary indicates only that the charity offered sewing classes for young girls. Funding raising efforts helped to defray the cost of the group's supplies. Elizabeth served the group in several official capacities, including her 1884 election as President Pro Tem and later as Treasurer during the same year.[149] At the time of her brother Frederick's final illness in January 1885, Elizabeth requested that a friend assume her duties as Treasurer.[150] In 1887, Elizabeth became president of the Astoria Employment Society. She agreed to accept this position on the condition that the group's vice-president "do the work under my advice and direction."[151]

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[147] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, February 16, 1881.

[148] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, March 31, 1881; Thursday December 7, 1882; Friday, February 1, 1884; Thursday, November 19, 1885; Tuesday, March 1, 1887, passim.

[149] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, March 11, 1884.

[150] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, January 6, 1885.

[151] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, October 20, 1887.

With the exception of her work on behalf of foreign church missions, Elizabeth concentrated her energies upon local issues that affected her immediate surroundings. Her interest in the New York School and House of Industry complemented her personal proficiency in needlework just as it spoke to the need for competent sewers to fill positions in local homes and businesses. Overall, Elizabeth's references to outside charitable work are limited. The small pages of her diaries did not permit anything other than a glimpse into this part of her life. In sum, Elizabeth recorded her charitable work in the same abbreviated fashion that she gave to the scheduling of laundry and other household duties. Elizabeth rarely supplemented her references to the New York School and House of Industry or the Astoria Employment Society with any relevant details other than those pertaining to her own increased responsibilities with the local organization. She did not comment upon the importance of charity to her personal life or the role that it played in widening her social network. Elizabeth saw her public charitable activities as an extension of her private domesticity, reflecting her perception of the need for women's vocational training.

A Social Existence

Elizabeth Merchant contented herself with the gleam of polished silver and the security of an organized closet. Her protracted periods of mourning, her husband's absences as well as her family's Astoria domicile limited her active participation in New York's society. Elizabeth enjoyed shopping for clothes. While she would not have considered herself to be a woman of fashion, she did make regular seasonal additions to her wardrobe. Elizabeth also may have felt stigmatized by other's awareness of Stephen's

shortcomings. Other than attendance at family weddings, Elizabeth commented only once in the forty-five years that she maintained a diary on her presence at a purely social function with her husband. In 1887, she and Stephen attended an evening reception hosted by Mr. and Mrs. John Crosby Brown honoring the Chinese Minister Chang Yen Hoon and his party.[152] At ease in the home of the wealthy and socially prominent Browns, Elizabeth noted that "[w]e met quite a number of old friends and had a real nice time."[153] Elizabeth's mention of this particular event indicates that she enjoyed social outings as well as their importance to her. Elizabeth habitually recorded the social activities of her sister Alice who enjoyed the social life New York society permitted an unmarried woman.[154] Elizabeth does not comment on any vicarious pleasure she may have received

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[152] John Crosby Brown, born in May 1838, was the son of an influential banker and philanthropist. After graduating from Columbia college in 1859, Brown trained in the Liverpool office of his father's firm. He rose to senior partner of Brown Brothers & Co. which had offices in several American cities and in London. He was Treasurer of the New York State Charities Aid Association and served on the Board of Directors of Columbia University, Union Theological Seminary and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In 1864, he married Mary Elizabeth Adams, daughter of Rev. Professor William Adams Faculty Chairman of Union Theological Seminary. Together the couple had six children. The Browns lived at 36 East 37th Street in Manhattan and in Orange Mountain, New Jersey, where they cultivated specimen flowering plants and roses. Mary Brown also collected rare musical instruments which she donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1889. John Crosby Brown died in 1909. New York Times, 26 June 1909, 7. See also New York Times, 7 September 1880, 2; 22 February 1898, 11; 22 March 1892; 25 October 1891, 11; 2 May 1893, 11. Mary Adams Brown died in February 1918. New York Times, 16 February 1918, 11. See also New York Times, 19 February 1889, 8; 31 October 1995, 3; 12 April 1895, 16. Elizabeth later noted her attendance at the wedding of Bessie Brown "John Crosby's young daughter...enjoyed it very much...met several old friends." EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, November 9, 1887.

[153] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, April 21, 1887.

[154] Alice participated in several tableaux in the home of Leonard Jerome. EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, April 9, 1872; Tuesday, November 5, 1872; Saturday, March 16, 1867; Alice attended the First Assembly. EWM, Diaries, Thursday December 12, 1865. Alice attended several functions in the home of the banker August Belmont and his wife Caroline. EWM, Diaries,

from her sister's social life. Instead, the brief notations of Alice's social engagements reflect Elizabeth's desire for order and her need to account for the whereabouts of close family members. For much of her life, then, Elizabeth structured her social obligations around her home. She routinely hosted small luncheons and dinners for extended family members and friends.[155] As a rule, these intimate gatherings included traditional meals served by Elizabeth's household staff over four to six courses.

Elizabeth preferred relaxed sociability in predictable settings. Her family's summer holidays reflect a similar taste. As a young couple, Elizabeth and Stephen Merchant regularly vacationed at West Point with other members of the Wolcott household. The military record of Stephen's father insured that the Merchants received preferential treatment at the Academy functions they attended. The combined Wolcott-Merchant households usually quartered at Cozzens Hotel which consistently provided its guests with"perfection of good living...good society, and good mountain air."[156] Beginning in 1863, the two families enjoyed Cozzens for several consecutive summers. Elizabeth remarked upon the hotel's "comfortable rooms, " finding West Point generally to be "pleasant and gay."[157] For young wives like Elizabeth, a holiday at Cozzens also included

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Saturday, March 19, 1864; Wednesday, March 13, 1867; Thursday, February 6, 1868, passim.

[155] For Elizabeth's comments on some of these occasions, including menus, see EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, November 5, 1872;Wednesday, March 23, 1881; Friday, March 5, 1886; Friday, May 27, 1887, passim.

[156] The Home Journal, 6 June 1857, 3.

[157] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, September 6, 1866; Friday, September 7, 1866.

morning musicales, afternoon carriage rides to scenic spots and evening dances.[158] By 1867, however, improved rail and steam service to New York gave Stephen a convenient means to return to business in the city, leaving Elizabeth alone to enjoy the hotel's ball and "elegant supper."[159]

Elizabeth enjoyed another family outing to Narragansett, Rhode Island, in 1870. In this instance, she relied upon the advice of her Boston cousin Mamie Frothingham to secure appropriate accommodations. Elizabeth voiced her "disappointment" that her husband could not accompany her, her infant son Huntington, her sister Alice and two maids on the seven hour journey by rail from Grand Central depot to Kingston, Rhode Island.[160] From Kingston, the family traveled by stage before finally settling into their hotel. Elizabeth's ability to complete this journey without her husband suggests the acceptance of public travel for women. Several days after her arrival, Elizabeth recovered from the effects of her trip to complete a series of "about thirty calls" on family and friends also summering in the vicinity. Many elite valued Narragansett for "not being fashionable."[161] Elizabeth enjoyed the resort's easy atmosphere and the variety of shore activities. On this trip, Elizabeth noted her sister Alice's "walk with Mr. Satterlee" while she "went to see the bathing."[162] While Alice pursued her social life, Elizabeth "took my

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[158] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, September 8, 1866. See also Monday, September 10; Tuesday, September 11, 1866.

[159] EWM, Diaries, Friday, August 13, 1867.

[160] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, August 11, 1870.

[161] New York Times, 2 August 1876, 5.

[162] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, August 14; Monday August 15, 1870.

first bath and enjoyed it more than expected altho' I do not like the costume and coming out in such a crowd."[163]

Despite only a brief appearance at the resort by her husband, Elizabeth enjoyed her time at Narragansett, extending her stay for another week. Elizabeth's vacation in this unfamiliar setting became a pleasant memory, made all the more so by the presence of friends and extended family. Bearing this in mind, Alice's decision in 1882 to refurbish the historic Wolcott family home in Litchfield, Connecticut, is understandable. The renovation of this property offered the family the enjoyment of a permanent residence outside the city for their extended use in warm weather. Elizabeth undertook a journey with Alice by train to reconnoiter the old house, roaming "over it, looking into every nook and corner...found it very interesting but cold"[164] After securing suitable rooms at a nearby boarding house, the two sisters left Litchfield with "measurements" for draperies and carpeting.[165] The effort to reopen "The Homestead" proved rewarding as Elizabeth and Huntington occupied the house during the summer. She later expressed pleasure that "we have slept in the Home of our ancestors! It is perfectly lovely and we are all so please and happy and thankful."[166]

Litchfield's location in the rolling countryside of western Connecticut as well as the promise of extended family gatherings with Boston relatives justified Elizabeth's

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[163] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, August 16, 1870. See also Monday, August 29, 1870.

[164] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, March 21, 1883.

[165] EWM, Diaries, Friday, March 23, 1883.

[166] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, July 3, 1883.

decision to summer there regularly. Routinely, she trained to Litchfield in early July in the company of Huntington, household help and family pets. Stephen occasionally visited his family on weekends as this trip took only several hours by rail. Huntington's development reinforced the Merchant's need for a rural retreat. By the fall of 1883, Huntington, then age thirteen, had passed a "satisfactory examination" to enter the Third Form at Columbia Grammar School in New York.[167] Litchfield offered him a wholesome, outdoor alternative to the competitive demands of his schooling. The Merchants soon joined a nearby Tennis Club where Huntington played regularly, competing successfully in several tournaments.[168] Litchfield's congenial atmosphere also inspired him to build his own camera and experiment with photography.[169] While Elizabeth played Whist, visited friends and enjoyed outdoor concerts on the town commons, her son also began to develop a social life independent of his mother.

Elizabeth did not directly comment upon this change other than to note Huntington's attendance at the home of Edith Perkins where "he had a good time."[170] Huntington attended enough parties to warrant his reciprocal entertainment for a group of "boys and girls" for an evening of parlor games before the family returned to Astoria.[171] Parental supervision of their children in settings like Litchfield relaxed over the summer

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[167] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, September 19, 1883.

[168] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, September 8, 1885. See also Saturday, May 30; Tuesday, June 23; Wednesday, August 19; Saturday, August 22; Saturday, August 29; Saturday, September 12, 1885.

[169] EWM, Diaries, Monday, July 27, 1885.

[170] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, August 5, 1885.

[171] EWM, Diaries, Friday, September 4, 1885.

months in contrast to the more rigorous requirements of urban life.[172] Elizabeth based her equanimity over her son's budding social life on the security suggested by Litchfield's small summer community. Huntington socialized the households of people she knew and whose values she shared. Elizabeth also enjoyed her family's historic prestige in what the sociologist C. Wright Mills terms a "local society." In this limited social setting, established families like the Wolcotts formed an "endogenous cousinhood, whose clan piety and sense of kinship lead to a reverence for the past...in which the clan has for so long played such an honorable role.[173] As Litchfield reinforced Elizabeth's social status, she flourished. She filled her diary with cultural events, small dinners, teas and receptions. Many men, moreover, continued to work in the city while their families enjoyed a summer residence. This custom made Stephen's long absences over the summer months unremarkable to those outside the family. As a consequence, Elizabeth and Huntington enjoyed a succession of pleasant Litchfield summers. In contrast, a short trip to a resort on Lake Mohawk in upstate New York proved to be "rather dull, [with] few people we care about."[174] When away from home, Elizabeth like other women elites needed the security of surrounding herself with people she knew.

Because Elizabeth enjoyed limited social activity in New York, she depended upon her established networks of extended family, childhood friends and church acquaintances as a way to maintain her social visibility. She nurtured these existing

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[172] Florence Adele Sloane, 125.

[173] C. Wright Mills, 32. In Litchfield, Elizabeth remarked upon a Mr. Clapp's visit as one from "a new cousin." EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, August 6, 1890.

[174] EWM, Diaries, Monday June 14, 1886.

personal relationships with regularly scheduled rounds of social calls. In the 1860's these social "visits" theoretically permitted Elizabeth the pleasure of calling once or twice a year on everyone within her circle of acquaintance. Her friends, in turn, reciprocated the courtesy by paying calls on her. This custom of social visiting helped to cement Elizabeth's place and that of her family within the wider New York community. As women acted as social arbiters, they structured rituals like "visiting"and the leaving of cards to shape and stabilize their society.[175]

The etiquette authority Mary Elizabeth Sherwood viewed women as "leaders" and as vital "conductors of social politics."[176] Sherwood attached such importance to the "pasteboard protocol" of social calling that she devoted the first chapter of her prescriptive treatise to its formalities.[177] Adherence to the subtleties of the procedures surrounding visiting and leaving cards helped women to classify those outside their immediate circle. A home-centered social life, such as that observed by Elizabeth Merchant, permitted the minute regulation of personal habits that enveloped her home and those of other elites in an impenetrable formality. Despite Elizabeth's relatively uncomplicated tastes, she maintained a patrician reserve. Even in her diary, Elizabeth distanced herself from certain individuals, including members of her own family. Elizabeth's nuanced conduct is indicated by the way she referred to Virginia Merchant's husband "Mr. Maben." This man first appeared in Elizabeth's diary in 1870 when he

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[175] Lenore Davidoff, The Best Circles: Society, Etiquette and the Season, (London: Croom Helm, 1973), 15.

[176] Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, Manners and Social Usages, 14-15.

[177] Ibid., 14.

began to court Stephen's younger sister Jenny.[178] After his marriage to Jenny Merchant in 1871, "Mr. Maben" threaded through Elizabeth's narrative in a series of cordial encounters. Elizabeth, however, never once referred to him by his given name in her diary, always writing his more formal surname. Perhaps Elizabeth simply disliked "Mr. Maben." Perhaps, she deeply resented the imposition of her mother-in-law's younger siblings into the Wolcott household and did not wish a deeper friendship with Jenny. Elizabeth for some unstated reason did not desire a greater familiarity with her brother-in law John Maben.[179]

Mrs. Sherwood, considered well-versed in New York's social customs, also approached new acquaintances with caution. Sherwood advised that before initiating a call, a woman "should have met the new and desirable acquaintance, should have been properly introduced, should feel sure that her acquaintance is desired."[180] For Mrs. Sherwood, too much haste in making new acquaintances or "'pushing,'as it is called--cannot be too much deprecated."[181] In New York and other large American cities, longstanding residents customarily initiated the social contact with a new acquaintance.

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[178] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, July 12, 1870. See also Friday, July 29, 1870; Thursday, October 5, 1871.

[179] "Mr. Maben" can be identified as Colonel John C. Maben, C.S.A. who arrived in New York in 1869 to begin a Wall Street career. A descendant of Governor Spotswood of Virginia, Maben was also a cousin of Confederate General Robert E. Lee. During the Civil War, Maben served on the staff of General James Longstreet. Maben accumulated some money in New York before relocating finally to Birmingham, Alabama. At the time of his death in 1928, his estate was valued at $279,571. New York Times, 5 December 1928, 15. See also New York Times, 16 November 1910.

[180] Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, Manners and Social Usages, 14.

[181] Ibid.

Strict etiquette differentiated between calls and merely leaving a personal card at the door. If a woman simply returned her card to the home of someone who had just paid her a visit, her gesture would be interpreted as an indication that she did not wish to pursue the friendship. In other words, a call was returned by a call and a card by a card.

As a rule, polite society preferred plain, unornamented cards. Men used small, unglazed cards with their names modestly engraved in small script. Many elites included their address at the lower corner of the card as a sign of good taste. Women customarily used a slightly larger version of the men's card. Men deposited their cards as a courtesy, usually through some feminine agency, after their attendance at a social function. Men did not initiate a call upon a lady without an explicit invitation or a formal letter of introduction from a third party, however. Women routinely made calls in recognition of ceremonial occasions like marriage or childbirth. Calls also could be used to acknowledge hospitality, always within three days of the particular event. Courtesy mandated that a woman conduct a series of calls after an extended absence from the city "if she expects to entertain or to lead a gay, social winter."[182] In return, women elites designated certain days during which they remained at home to receive the calls of their friends. On other specified days, elite women circulated by carriage through the city to accomplish their rounds of calls. Most social calls occurred in the middle of the afternoon so as not to disrupt the household's morning activities. Etiquette, however, permitted more intimate friends the luxury of late afternoon and Sunday calls. Regardless of their hour, prescriptive literature insisted that all social calls be brief, with conversation restricted to

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[182] Ibid., 17.

light, informal topics.

Different rules established formalities regarding the delivery and receipt of calling cards. Ideally, a woman seated in her carriage handed her card to a servant who, in turn, delivered it to a house servant, who tendered it to the mistress of the house. A woman, in turn, received the card and decided whether she was "At Home" to receive the visit. Women could also send cards in advance of their visit, or deputize their husbands to leave a card. Young daughters, during their debutante season and as newly married women, traditionally made social calls with their mothers. For these occasions, the daughter's name was engraved below that of their mother. A turned-down corner on a card traditionally indicated that the card had been personally delivered with the intention of making a visit.

Patrician women understood the calling ritual not only as a vehicle for sociability but as an extension of their domestic duty. Elizabeth Merchant, for example, recorded the numbers of calls that she made and received. In one instance, she traveled into New York to make "about a dozen calls and was so thankful to have them off my mind."[183] Elizabeth customarily did not specify on whom she called, unless she visited the home of an elderly relative like her grandmother Louisa Howland. In these instances, Elizabeth's call provided her the opportunity to comment upon her grandmother's health or the nature of their social visit. Elizabeth used the calling ritual to solidify her existing relationships with friends and family. For her, social visitations became another domestic task that required regularity and efficiency.

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[183] EWM, Diaries, Friday, April 5, 1872.

For other women elites, however, the calling ritual linked the individual to a wider network of social obligation. Caroline Perry Belmont, for example, maintained a "Calling List." In a neatly arranged Moroccan leather-bound volume, Mrs. Belmont included the names and addresses of everyone who called at her Fifth Avenue home in 1871.[184] Caroline alphabetized the complete entries, undoubtedly gleaned from calling cards, and further classified them by marital status and gender. Her arrangements of acquaintances into "Single Ladies," "Single Gentlemen" and married couples as "Ladies and Gentlemen" provided a convenient reference of people known socially to the family. Caroline's categories also reflect the practical desire of a leading New York hostess to recall individuals as potential guests for entertainments. Along with prominent residents of Fifth Avenue, Gramercy Park and Greenwich Village, the Belmont book contains the name of Elizabeth's sister Alice Wolcott as well as Stephen's nephew Leslie Chase.[185]

For wealthy elites like Caroline Belmont, the protocol of the calling ritual reaffirmed bonds of friendship and social obligation just as it distinguished those less well-bred.[186] Florence Jaffray Hurst Harriman remembered visits with her "very austere"

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[184] "Mrs. Belmont's 109 Fifth Avenue Calling List, 1871." Belmont Family Papers, Box 3, Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, New York, New York.

[185] Ibid.

[186] Elites used formalized rituals of behavior in all spaces that they occupied. Etiquette became the tool that separated the establishment from its pretenders. Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr. remembered the lessons on etiquette and protocol from his mother, the former Grace Wilson. "My sister and I, age fourteen and twelve...had our daily lesson in savoir faire, conducted around the tray filled with the place-cards of the guests expected for dinner...Many a time my sister and I were left without dessert for our failure to distinguish between a full-fledged Ambassador and a Minister Plenipotentiary." Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., Farewell to Fifth Avenue, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1935), 20-21. See also Kathryn Grover, ed., Dining in America, 1850-1900, (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987; John F. Kasson, Rudness & Civility;

mother-in-law who "had a sense of caste...that none of us had been brought up to." Mrs. Harriman included her daughter-in-law in her rounds of calls, examining her lists of friends and commenting on whom it would be appropriate to drop. Mrs. Harriman would "name some pleasant old-fashioned unworldly friend who wasn't–she was quite right there–of the slightest consequence in society. How could she know [that] some of those very humble, simple black-listed friends would become 'the top of the heap.'"[187] Maria Lydig Daly once complained of a visit that she and her husband made on the elderly merchant Marshall O. Roberts and his new third wife. Maria found Mr. Roberts "coarse and vulgar," wondering why a "young, pretty woman should be content to marry a man old enough to be her grandfather." Maria Daly reserved her severest judgement, however, for the young Mrs. Roberts who "made a great mistake in making her visitors faire l'antichambre before admitting them into the parlor. I had a great mind to walk out."[188] Maria Daly like Mrs. Harriman applied the rituals governing women's public conduct in a highly nuanced fashion, making the subtleties of their social judgements often difficult to fathom.

Elizabeth Merchant, unlike Maria Daly and Caroline Belmont, did not benefit from an extensive social life shared with her spouse. For Elizabeth, the obligation of personal calls presented a respite from the domestic routine. Extended visits with friends provided the opportunity for important personal interactions. For the etiquette authority Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, such visits provided women the opportunity "[t]o wander from one

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Pierre Bourdieu, 65-74.

[187] Florence Jaffray Hurst Harriman, 61-62.

[188] Maria Lydig Daly, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," December 22, 1872.

pleasant interior to another, to talk a little harmless gossip, to hear the latest mot, the best piece of news, to see one's friends, their children, and the stranger within their gates...it is the Utopia of society."[189]

In 1897, Mrs. Sherwood lamented the passing of this "agreeable" custom whereby one called "once or twice a year on all one's friends personally, with the hope of finding two or three at home."[190] New York's steady spatial growth and its concomitant social complexity made the ritual of social visiting impossible for women to accomplish expeditiously. Not only did the numbers of social acquaintances increase over time, few families could afford to maintain the carriages needed to make large numbers of calls. The traffic of crowded city streets as well as the distances between polite urban neighborhoods made it difficult to complete a series of social calls in an afternoon. Alternatively, women began to hold evening receptions on prescribed days as a substitute for the personal call. For Mrs. Sherwood, this form of hospitality soon suffered from the abuse of "social bores, who are too apt to congregate in numbers, and to wear out the lady of the house by using her parlor as a spot where they are safe from the rain...and free to bestow their tediousness."[191] Maria Lydig Daly shared Sherwood's opinion, complaining after one reception that she "met ...every man and woman whose acquaintance I had striven to rid myself of ...all the soiled doves...all the old society hacks."[192] Maria, frustrated in this

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[189] Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, Manners and Social Usages, 62-63.

[190] Ibid., 58.

[191] Ibid., 60.

[192] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," January 26, 1872.

instance, understood her that these encounters renewed her obligation to pursue these unwanted social contacts with her own calls or the inclusion of these individuals at her receptions.

Eventually, the elaborate evening reception required to maintain social acquaintances took the form of the less-demanding afternoon tea. By the early 1890's, even the use of home teas as a mechanism for social screening had declined. One could presumably continue a social acquaintance by simply sending a calling card in an envelope by mail. As indicated by its application of calling etiquette, New York society struggled to locate the appropriate balance between ritual, hospitality and the requirements of a modern urban circumstance. The city's changing social composition left much to individual discretion. Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, however, continued to advocate ceremonious visiting. This courtesy depended solely upon the exchange of cards without the necessity of a personal visit. To assure uniformity in this practice, Sherwood specified certain "immutable" rules which provided elites a courteous means of weeding the socially unworthy.[193] She insisted minimally on the quick acknowledgment of a card by a recipient, the observation of socially established hours for receiving visitors, and the leaving of separate cards for mothers and daughters of the same household. Sherwood understood the value of these ritualized courtesies in maintaining friendships.

Socially conservative women like Mary Elizabeth Sherwood and Elizabeth Merchant could never truly accept teas or posted cards as a way to maintain close

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[193] Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, Manners and Social Usages, 63 - 65. See also New York Times, 9 January 1881, 6.

friendships. Nevertheless, the etiquette surrounding the custom of social visiting privileged feminine domesticity, allowing women to evaluate those they received into their homes. Lacking an institutional structure of social governance, women relied upon visits to acquire broader knowledge of a social nature. In this way, women shielded themselves from the uncertainties of social newcomers. At the same time, modern urban life required that women like Elizabeth Merchant adapt to the city's growth. Over time, the custom of social visiting became less dependent upon personal contacts and more reliant upon the convenience of large social gatherings and improved postal service. Until the advent of telephone service, women would seek alternatives to the regularly scheduled home visits that connected their homes to the larger community.

Elizabeth, who did not participate in an extensive social life, found her path to independence through her church and her limited participation in benevolent work. Elizabeth also used her regular access to the city's streets as a way to enlarge her horizons. The Merchant's private home sanctuary could not exist in a vacuum independent of its surrounding community. As the city beyond her parlor impinged upon her domesticity, Elizabeth gained confidence and began to mature. With this new awareness, her understanding of her obligation to home and family began to change.

Conclusion

Though removed from the male world of commerce and industry, women elites could not escape its influence. Elizabeth Merchant once commented favorably on a homily by Dr. Dix of the Episcopalian Trinity Church entitled the "Discipline of Domestic

Life."[194] Her notation of this particular sermon mirrors the almost mechanistic approach shared by women elites towards household matters. Because the home environment did not exist in a vacuum, many elite women drew their inspiration for home management from the speed and efficiency they observed in their husband's conduct of business outside the home. Elizabeth's diary, if nothing else, represents the desire of many similarly situated women to rationalize the smallest detail of their private realm. Efficient household management served family interests and opened a woman's life to other possibilities outside the home. Elizabeth's domestic example reflects an ordered approach to seasonal cleanings and countless hours "regulating" staff. Proper home management also entailed an awareness of costs, budgeting and expense control. Elizabeth, in particular, governed her home with efficiency and practicality. In much the same manner, Caroline Perry Belmont organized friends' cards deposited at her door into a "Calling List," for future hospitality.

Because women elites like Belmont enjoyed the luxury of servants, they received little recognition for such domestic effort. Elizabeth Merchant, however, recorded many long hours spent in anonymous household tasks as "busy all day in my own quiet way."[195] After the death of her third child Eliza Huntington, Elizabeth described her grief as "my occupation gone."[196] Like other patrician women, Elizabeth never quantified her household work in terms of a fixed wage. That the wealthy considered women's work

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[194] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, February 4, 1872.

[195] EWM, Diaries, Monday, February 23, 1874.

[196] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, January 6, 1866.

outside the home to be incompatible with their elite status makes Elizabeth's choice of words all the more revealing. Rather than dismiss her use of the word "occupation" as indicative of one woman's need to justify a domestic existence, it is more fruitful to consider the implications of Elizabeth's view of the practice of domesticity. Elizabeth saw many aspects of her household effort as productive labor. Elizabeth, without a significant maternal example, could only observe men like her father and grandfather. As she benefitted by their standards, Elizabeth learned to apply the fundamentals of business organization, financial planning and corporate management to her domestic enterprise. In adapting these male values, she, like other women, found satisfaction in their household duties. At day's end, though tired and often frustrated, Elizabeth could take pleasure in her "house all in nice order."[197]

While other women elites shared her domestic model, Elizabeth's life also diverged significantly from that of her peers. Elizabeth's personal circumstance did not permit the opulence often associated with her social status. Her life can be characterized as one of quiet refinement, without undue frivolity. For the most part, Elizabeth seemed content to center her life around her home and church, making most social engagements secondary to her family responsibilities. Although other women elites shared her priorities, Elizabeth's life is marked by an absence of social activity. Elizabeth's desire to relocate her family to New York is but one indication of her unstated wish for greater social interaction with her friends. Her mood visibly brightened on trips to Boston where she shared the society of her wealthy and prominent friend Pauline Shaw. While living in Queens, Elizabeth

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[197] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, September 27, 1873.

preferred comfortable dinners in her dining room and quiet parlor games to the more elaborate entertainments frequented by many of her wealthy friends in Manhattan. Elizabeth's diary also does not indicate that she even received invitations to participate in the city's elegant society. Constrained by her pregnancies, the deaths of four children and an absentee husband, Elizabeth confined her participation in society to the pursuit of those individuals of importance to her. She accomplished this goal by attending to social calls in the city. This polite ritual punctuated Elizabeth's days of household duty, continuing her connection to a wider network of her extended family and social peer group.

Like others among the elite, Elizabeth preferred to associate with people who shared her values and traditional outlook. She valued summers of pleasant sociability in a Connecticut town founded by her forebearers. In settings like Litchfield, Elizabeth could relax with old friends amid familiar surroundings. As she undertook much of her social activity alone, Elizabeth responded best to those situations that she could shape and control. This measured approach to life is also represented in the manner Elizabeth approached feminine benevolence. The extent of her participation in a leading New York charity, the House of Industry, is masked by her relatively young age and inexperience at the time she referred to this institution in her diary. Elizabeth later used the House of Industry as a template for her work in founding the Astoria Employment Society. In this less demanding social arena, she assumed several leadership positions before relocating to Manhattan. Except for this single charity, Elizabeth limited her public participation to regular church attendance several afternoons and evenings a week as well as to religious auxiliary groups. Elizabeth realized here the personal freedom that often eluded her at

home. In church, she assumed responsibility only for her own spiritual well being rather than the varied concerns of her family and household staff.

Despite her conservative preferences, Elizabeth's household diaries indicate that she was never confined by her domestic existence. Although she resided in Queens for most of her early married life, Elizabeth continually traveled into Manhattan. Arguably, a majority of her trips into the city can be seen as an adjunct to her household obligations rather than a significant public undertaking. Elizabeth shopped for clothes and household furnishings. She attended church. She visited friends and consulted with medical personnel. Nevertheless, the frequency with which Elizabeth journeyed into New York is compelling. She never hesitated to take public transportation, including the ferry and street cars, alone into the city. She did not mention her need to travel in the company of a household servant or another family member. No one, in fact, commented upon her many excursions into New York. Like other aspects of Elizabeth's life, her solitary travel on public conveyances was unremarkable to both her family and those included among her friends. Her social life when in the city often centered around impromptu lunches and shopping trips with friends whom she encountered. To this extent, Elizabeth's experience in Manhattan suggests the ways in which women elites used the city as an urban alternative to their lives at home.

By the early 1870's, Elizabeth's perspective began to extend far beyond her home. Her travel now included solitary train rides to summer resorts and other cities within a day's distance of New York. City excursions had seasoned Elizabeth as to what she could reasonably expect to encounter on public transportation. By 1887, she could comfortably

enjoy an overnight train trip alone across the country from New York to Chicago to Duluth, Minnesota. No one in her family broached any reservation about her ability to undertake this lonely journey. Thoroughly acclimated to a public experience, Elizabeth had gained the confidence to handle any unforseen difficulty that might arise. As she accepted greater possibilities for herself, Elizabeth learned to rely upon her own judgements of unfamiliar people and places. In gaining public confidence, Elizabeth also acknowledged that her private happiness did not depend upon Stephen. She assumed the responsibility for her own emotional and financial well-being, relying less upon her need to please others and more upon her own wants. As a consequence of her changed outlook, Elizabeth would continue attentively to manage her domestic enterprise while also pursuing avenues of personal growth.

Maria Lydig Daly: A Woman of Influence

The published and unpublished diaries of Maria Lydig Daly suggest that she shared a great deal in common with Elizabeth Wolcott Merchant. Although Maria was sixteen years older than Elizabeth, the two enjoyed at least one social connection. Maria, on several occasions, mentioned her favorable opinion of Elizabeth's cousin Laura Wolcott Gibbs. Laura was the daughter of Oliver Wolcott, Secretary of the Treasury under George Washington and John Adams. Although Laura Gibbs was nearly seventy when she first appeared in Maria's diary, Maria found her to be "so full of enthusiasm, patriotism, of mental activity...that she will never grow old."[1] If nothing else, Maria's attention to the ancestry of Laura Gibbs in this passage speaks to the prestige of the Wolcott name among New York elites.

Both Elizabeth Wolcott and Maria Lydig were born into prominent families. While Elizabeth traced her roots to colonial New England, she enjoyed the benefits associated with the commercial success of her father and grandfather in New York's business

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[1] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, October 7, 1861, 57. Laura Wolcott married Colonel George Gibbs, a noted mineralogist, at age sixteen. The couple had three sons: including Alfred(1823-1868) who gained the rank of colonel of the 130th New York Volunteers; George, a lawyer; and Oliver Wolcott, a noted chemist. Maria's other references to Laura Gibbs include May 19, 1862, 132-133; April 17, 1864, 290; May 18, 1864, 297.

community. Maria Lydig also took great pride in her family's contributions to the growth of New York. Though of German ancestry, Maria considered herself to be a member of the city's wealthy Knickerbocker establishment. The written records of both women indicate the educational and cultural advantages of privileged childhoods. Both sets of diaries share experiences common to all women of their period just as they reveal personal challenges. As the oldest children of their respective families, both Elizabeth and Maria had independent natures. Both women wed outside their familiar network of social acquaintance. The quality of their two matrimonial experiences varied substantially, however. Elizabeth's disappointing relationship with Stephen Merchant provides a striking contrast to Maria's joy and contentment in her marriage to Judge Charles Patrick Daly. Though separated by age and circumstance, both women acquired a sensitivity to the importance of wealth as a determinant of status.

Both Maria Daly and Elizabeth Merchant maintained personal diaries for extended periods. Elizabeth's forty-six year record of household activity is matched by Maria's determination to inscribe her thoughts for thirty-two years. Their personal narratives also overlap through the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Both sets of diaries reveal an awareness of the importance of wealth to social status, as each woman attempted to compensate for the financial deficiencies of their households. There is, however, a substantial difference between the two records. Elizabeth's quiet reliance upon household activity contrasts with Maria's active pursuit of a public life. Maria's public activity completes a picture of women elites that is only partially revealed by Elizabeth's focus on domestic detail.

Maria Daly's diaries are also unlike the records of Elizabeth Merchant in style and format. Maria recorded her thoughts on large lined pages of leather-bound ledgers, measuring roughly fourteen by sixteen inches. She began to keep a diary in January 1861 while on a trip with her husband to Washington, D. C. Cognizant of the historic implications of the Civil War, she wrote with some regularity of life in New York during the war years. While historical inaccuracies mar her presentation of the Civil War, Maria's record of the conflict's effect on the city compensates for her errors.[2] Although she continued to maintain her record after the war, she did not write with the same frequency. After the war, she concentrated on her own benevolent and social life in New York. With lapses of months, and sometimes years, between entries, Maria's summaries of her activity lack the immediacy of a daily record. Nevertheless, the wide net cast by her public life, when coupled with her lively and opinionated prose, compels as it informs.

Maria maintained her diary for many reasons. Because she valued her own heritage, she often wrote to protect the legacy of her politically prominent husband Charles Daly. Maria frequently chronicled his contributions to local and national affairs. Her husband's career also brought her into contact with leading military, diplomatic and political figures. Maria enjoyed the richness of their varied associations, once remarking

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[2] Maria confuses the information regarding the career of General John Adams Dix, a leading city Democrat. The Dalys knew Dix well as Judge Daly also participated in Democratic politics. Harold Hammond, principal biographer of Charles Daly, suggests that Maria might have filled in the details of Dix's political career at a later point in her life. MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, June 17, 1861, 27; xvii-xviii. Maria also misidentified the individual who served as second in command at Fort Sumter. MLD, November 7, 1861, 69.

that "[w]e don't travel in respectable ruts."[3] She viewed herself as a domestic complement to her husband's career. In the process of serving his interests, she created her own public identity. Maria entertained frequently, opening her home to many prominent people. As she shared the news of the day with her husband and others, she formed opinions of personalities and events.

Maria liked recording her impressions and considered herself to be an author of some potential. She wrote about the people she met, sometimes indulging in extended descriptions. Occasionally, she transcribed complete conversations as if to hone her skill with dramatic dialogue. In 1862, she worked on a translation of Les Salons to which she added an introduction. She confided her excitement over the possibility of Scribner's publication of her manuscript and "the sensation it will give me."[4] Despite this enthusiasm, Maria doubted that she would publish under her own name "for fear that it might not read as well in print as in manuscript."[5] Although Maria does not reveal whether or not Scribner's published her translation, her reluctance to accept attribution is compelling. Her hesitancy is indicative of her lifelong habit of avoiding any publicity regarding her private habits.[6] Maria also could have been reticent about receiving credit for a literary translation in view of the scholastic limits of women's education.

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[3] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, Sunday, December 11, 1864, 324.

[4] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, April 9, 1862, 115.

[5] Ibid.

[6] A reporter from the New York World interviewed Maria for an article on household servants. Reluctant to speak, Maria finally granted the interview. Afterwards, she wrote to the paper's editor requesting that her name not appear in the article. MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," March 21 and March 29, 1876.

Nevertheless, she continued to write. In 1864, she considered a story to illustrate the career of a wartime profiteer.[7] She later rejected the idea that she write a story of English country life because "I can't write about what I don't know. If I am to be an exponent of the time I live in, I must write what I see."[8] In keeping with this statement, Maria's diary records primarily her first-hand observations.

Subsequently, Maria indicated that she had "been writing a little book which some day I must publish. Called Idle Woman. But I must wait till I can spare the money."[9] Maria's ambivalence over others' awareness of her writing as well as her desire to publish her work through a vanity press explains her jealousy for successful women authors she knew socially. Maria took exception to the journalist and etiquette authority Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, once describing the latter's appearance as "a bed of peonies in full bloom."[10] On another occasion, Mrs. Sherwood wore a "round hat and feathers...as if she had been playing one of the merry wives of Windsor.[11] Maria judged Mrs. Sherwood to be "a most remarkable person...[S]he talks very smoothly with very little matter, dust which blows first this way and then another. She has been writing a novel called 'The Sarcasm of Destiny,' a great title for a very small work."[12]

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[7] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, October 31, 1862, 194.

[8] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," November 22, 1872.

[9] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," November 27, 1875. If Maria ever published this work, she did so under an unknown pen name.

[10] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," June 3, 1877.

[11] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," December 25, 1877.

[12] Ibid.

Maria obviously did not value the literary achievements of Mary Elizabeth Sherwood. Whether motivated by envy or personal dislike, Maria's pointed comments about Mrs. Sherwood reflect her need for a place to air her views. One of the pleasures of her written record is the freedom with which she expressed her opinions. Maria, in this regard, appears to have been a woman with many acquaintances but few close friends. As a result of this absence, most women in her diary are not presented favorably. Maria, for example, valued Arabella Griffith Barlow as a personal friend as indicated by her use of Arabella's given name in her diary. In 1861, Arabella married General Francis C. Barlow, a man ten years her junior. Despite their friendship, Maria could not resist describing Barlow as "Arabella's boy-husband," parodying the couple as the "young soldier and his mother."[13]

Maria's cynicism stems from troubled family relationships surrounding her decision to marry a man who did not share her family background or Protestant faith. Maria reveals herself to be a bitter woman, suspicious of peoples' motivations. Keenly aware of others' self-interest, Maria prided herself on her "accurate judgement of...true character" in her diaries.[14] This self-congratulatory comment reveals precisely why Maria continued to maintain her record through the years. "[T]he more accurate I am the more interesting will be the record. When old and unable to live actively in the present, I shall turn for my enjoyment to the past and look backwards into life."[15]

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[13] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, August 6, 1861, 46; November 24, 1861, 80.

[14] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," December 5, 1866.

[15] Ibid. See also MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, June 8, 1864, 298.

This chapter principally examines Maria Daly's life and charitable activity through the years of the Civil War. Maria is introduced through her Lydig family heritage. Despite her frustration with various family members, Maria took pride in the commercial and social accomplishments of her forebearers. The details of her Lydig pedigree indicates how New York's monied society valued ancestry as a component of their social identity. Next, this chapter examines Maria's courtship and marriage to Charles Patrick Daly. During the early years of their marriage, Maria openly sought to advance her husband's judicial career. Her actions invite conclusions about the security of Maria's social position as well as they reveal a the presence of a determined will which would serve her subsequent benevolent work. Maria's involvement in her husband's career also represents women's indirect effort to influence others. This chapter considers what little is known of Maria's benevolence before the Civil War which as a presage to her subsequent charitable activity. During the Civil War, Maria's limited participation in the United States Sanitary Commission served as a platform for her charitable work after the war. Her refusal to join friends in the Knickerbocker Kitchen, a popular display at the Sanitary Commission's Metropolitan Fair, indicates Maria's increasingly independent attitudes towards benevolence. Finally, this chapter considers Maria's effort to establish her own wartime charity.

Maria's Pedigree

On her father's side, Maria traced her family's American origins to Philip Lydig. Born in 1723, Philip immigrated to America around 1750 from Schwab Hall in Germany. Philip initially settled in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he engaged in business as a

grain merchant. Some ten years later, he relocated to New York City. He had five children: Philip, born in 1745, Margaret, Frans, and two daughters whose names are unknown.[16]

Maria's great-grandfather Philip Lydig, the son, also came to New York in 1760. His family apprenticed him to the leather merchant Peter Grim. In 1763, Philip married the widow Margaret Ebert, a daughter of Peter Grim. The couple had two children. Margaret Grim Ebert Lydig is recalled in her maturity as a "fair faced, healthy, handsome old lady, with her plain cap, scrupulously neat dress, and of distinguished manner."[17] The Philip Lydigs lived in lower Manhattan on the southeast corner of Ferry and Gold Streets in the city's commercial district. They worshiped in the German Lutheran Church located on Skinners Street which later became a part of Cliff Street.[18] In 1766, Lydig along with Jacob Grim purchased lots at the corner of Frankfort and William Streets for the construction of a larger church building. Lydig is said to have traveled to Germany to appeal for funding from the denomination for this project. During the American Revolution, Hessian mercenaries frequented the church which was known colloquially as the "Swamp Church." The Church survived the conflict with Hessian support.[19] Philip prospered as a grain merchant and also opened a bakery that supplied ships with sea biscuit. He became the largest baker in the city. During the Revolution, Lydig "did not

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[16] William Smith Pelletreau, Historic Homes and Institutions and Genealogical and Family History of New York, 4 vol. (New York: Lewis Publishing, 1907), 1: 394.

[17] Unattributed source. Cited in Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., 1: 395.

take a partisan course."[20] He profiteered during the war by supplying bread to the British army and is also said to have engaged in espionage for General George Washington.[21]

Philip Lydig died in 1784. His son David, Maria's grandfather, ultimately became one of the city's most prosperous merchants. Born in New York City in 1764, David inherited both his father's thriving business and the assets accumulated from his wartime activities. At the outset of his mercantile career, David Lydig operated a flour business at 21 Peck Slip, living over his store. In 1790, he married Maria Mesier, daughter of Peter and Catherine Slecht Mesier. Another daughter Jane Mesier married John Suydam also a prominent city merchant. The Mesier family, originally from France, immigrated to America most immediately from Holland. Peter Mesier, a prosperous New York realtor, had been ruined financially as the result of a fire in New York in 1776 which destroyed fifteen houses that he owned in the vicinity of Cortlandt and Mesier Streets.[22] Peter Mesier moved his family out of the city to his 1400 acre country estate in Wappingers Creek, New York.[23] David and Maria Mesier Lydig lived for thirty-five years at 35 Beekman Street in lower Manhattan. In 1818, Lydig purchased a home at 225 Broadway from Jonathan Fisk for $25,250 which he sold in 1831 to John Jacob Astor as the site for

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[20] Walter W. Spooner, Historic Families of America; Comprehending the Genealogical Records and Representative Biography of Selected Families of Early American Ancestry, Recognized Social Standing and Special Distinction, 3 vol. (New York: Historic Families Publishing Association, 1907), 2:125.

[21] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, xxxiv.

[22] Walter W. Spooner, 2:129.

[23] Henry Suydam, History and Reminiscences of the Mesier Family of Wappingers Creek, n.p.: privately printed, 1882, 9.

the Astor House hotel for $32,500.[24] Lydig then built a town house 34 Laight Street in Manhattan where he resided with his wife and only child.

David Lydig, in addition to his grain and flour business, profited in real estate. His prescience regarding the future development of upstate New York included mill holdings at Buttermilk Falls in Cornwall, New York where he built flour mills to supply his wholesale outlet in New York at South and Davis Streets. His prosperity enabled the purchase of another property, supplied with water and a mill, on the former DeLancey estate in the Bronx. On this land, he built his family's substantial country estate West Farms. He also served as a Director of the Merchants' Bank, incorporated in 1805. Additionally, David Lydig served as Treasurer and later President of the city's German Society. By 1828, David Lydig had acquired assets valued from $25,000 to $50,000 worth of real and personal property.[25] Lydig foresaw the impact of the 1825 completion of the Erie Canal on his business. According to his logic, the new canal would eventually force New York's flour producers into competition with plentiful Midwestern wheat. Therefore, Lydig sold his grain interests and retired in the early 1830's.

Contemporaries valued David Lydig as "a man of good education, carefully brought up, handsome in person, of good sense and judgement, refined and courteous in manner."[26] Well-liked by his peers, David Lydig helped to organize The Club, a group of civic-minded businessmen who met weekly for dinner and conversation in each other's

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[24] William Smith Pelletreau, 1: 394.

[25] Edward Pessen, "The Wealthiest New Yorkers of the Jacksonian Era: A New List," 159.

[26] William Smith Pelletreau, 1: 395.

homes.[27] Many people considered David Lydig a convivial host and a "noted judge of madeira."[28] After a visit to Lydig's West Farms estate, former mayor Philip Hone wrote, "The beautiful grounds on Bronx river are in fine order, and such a profusion of roses and other flowers, I have scarcely ever seen. We had an excellent dinner, Lydig's fine old wines, and abundance of delicious strawberries, with a welcome hearty as the one and unstinted as the other."[29] David Lydig died on May 16, 1840, leaving an estate in excess of a half a million dollars.[30] Philip Hone memorialized his "intimate friend and associate" as a "just man, prudent and careful in the management of his affairs, unexceptional in his deportment, with some old-fashioned aristocratic notions, an exceedingly good liver, fond of old wines, which, however, he drank in moderation. He was, in short, a gentleman of the old school."[31]

Philip Mesier Lydig, Maria Daly's father, was the only son of David and Catherine Lydig. Born in 1799, Philip Lydig entered into business with his father in 1824, operating under the firm name of David Lydig & Son at 160 South Street. Profits from the sale of the family's grain interests and the 1840 inheritance of his father's estate amounted to

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[27] Edward Pessen, "Philip Hone's Set: The Social World of the New York Elite in the 'Age of Egalitarianism,'" 290.

[28] Walter W. Spooner, 2:128.

[29] Philip Hone, June 18, 1839. See also Henry Suydam, 18.

[30] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, xxxv.

[31] Philip Hone, May 16, 1840. See also Henry Suydam, 19. As an old woman, Maria remembered Philip Hone as a "handsome tall dignified man with curling grey hair and bright blue eyes and Roman nose. So courteous and affable, he always addressed me in French and called me Mlle. Marie when as a child I went with Grandpa on a Sunday after church to see him." MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," December 2, 1889.

more than $500,000. These monies enabled Philip's early retirement from active business. Philip married his cousin, the former Catherine Mesier Suydam, the oldest daughter of the wealthy merchant John Suydam in 1821. The Suydam family traced its American origins to the 1663 immigration of Hendrick Rycken from Holland to New Amsterdam.[32] In retirement, Philip Lydig served as a director of several commercial institutions and tended to his investments.[33] Philip Lydig left the German Lutheran church of his forebearers to worship at Trinity Episcopal Church. In 1869, he was elected vestryman of Trinity Parish.[34] His principal interest, however, appears to have been the maintenance of his homes at 34 Laight Street and West Farms, the family's country estate. Upon his death in 1872, contemporaries remembered Philip Lydig largely for his ability "peaceably and pleasantly to glide down the hill of life."[35]

Maria was born September 12, 1824 to Philip Mesier Lydig and the former Catherine Mesier Suydam. She was the oldest of ten children, three of whom died in

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[32] Rev. J. Howard Suydam, Hendrick Rycken: The Progenitor of the Suydam Family in America, (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1898), 4. In 1679, Rycken moved from New Amsterdam to Brooklyn. He purchased land near Flatbush where he lived for twenty-two years. He married Ite(Ida) Jacobs, with whom he had six children. The family worshiped in the First Dutch Reformed Church of Brooklyn. He died in 1701. In 1710, the sons of Hendrick Rycken assumed the name Suydam, meaning "South of the Dam." This is a probable reference to Zuyt-dam, Hendrick Rycken's hometown in Holland. The first official use of the name appears in a 1715 registry of the Kings County militia. Rev. J. Howard Suydam, 7, 18, 32, 33, 35, 36, passim.

[33] New York Times, 18 January 1859, 7.

[34] New York Times, 31 March 1869, 4.

[35] "Obituary Notes," The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record, 3(1872): 151. See also New York Times, 24 February 1872, 5.

infancy.[36] Of her siblings, Maria's oldest brother Philip Mesier Lydig, born in 1837, graduated in 1861 from Columbia Law School. Philip enlisted in the military at the outbreak of the Civil War, receiving a Captain's commission in 1862. He participated in a number of military campaigns throughout the South, retiring from the Army in April 1865 with the rank of Brevet Colonel. In October 1865, he married Pauline Hecksher, daughter of Charles A. and Georgianna Coster Hecksher.[37] Maria's second brother David Lydig lived in New York and Lenox, Massachusetts.[38] Her three sisters include, Margaret, wife of Carl Otto of Berlin; Catherine, wife of Judge John R. Brady; Rosalie, wife of John J. Staples; and Florence, wife of Frank K. Sturgis.[39]

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[36] William Smith Pelletreau, 397; New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record, "Obituary Notes," 1872, vol.3, 151.

[37] William Smith Pelletreau, 1:399. Philip Lydig died in 1868. His only son Philip Mesier Lydig was born on August 16, 1867. An 1889 graduate of Harvard College, Philip received the commission of Captain in the army in 1897 during the Spanish-American War. Afterwards, he served for several years in Honolulu, Hawaii, as chief and purchasing commissary. He resigned from the military July 1, 1899. In 1902, he married Rita de Albay de Acosta, the former wife of W. E. D. Stokes and the daughter of a well-known merchant in Havana and New York. William Smith Pelletreau, 1: 401- 402. See also New York Times, 6 February 1902, 9.

[38] David Lydig married Hannah M. Tompkins, a descendant of Daniel D. Tompkins, the fifth Governor of New York and the Vice President through both administrations of President James Monroe. The couple had no children. An 1861 graduate of Columbia University, David Lydig was an active club man in New York and Lenox, Massachusetts. He died in 1917 leaving an estate in excess of $300,000 which he bequeathed to his wife and several charitable institutions. New York Times, 25 October 1925, 15; 27 December 1917, 5. In 1919, Hannah Tompkins Lydig inherited $200,000 from her lifelong friend Frederick Augustus Schermerhorn. New York Times, 1 June 1919, 11. She died in 1930. New York Times 30 December 1930, 21.

[39] Margaret Lydig Otto died in 1878. Of her three children, her daughter Emy appears in Maria's diaries from 1884 through 1886. Catharine Lydig Brady married Supreme Court Justice John R. Brady and figures prominently in Maria's diaries. Florence Lydig Sturgis married the wealthy banker Frank K. Sturgis and remained a prominent member in the societies of New York, Newport and Lenox, Massachusetts. She died in 1922, leaving her estate valued at $225,000 to her husband and several charities. New York Times, 17 March 1922, 14; 26 May 1922, 18. Her

These contemporaneous family members appear in Maria's diary periodically. Nonetheless, her adult relationships with her siblings appear to have been influenced by her family's response to her wish to marry Charles Daly. Maria did, however, express her fond memories of her grandfather David Lydig. That the nucleus of the Lydig fortune had been accumulated through the efforts of a profiteer during the American Revolution did not diminish Maria's reverence for her heritage. The Lydigs, though prosperous and responsible citizens of New York, were simply rich. The Lydig family had not distinguished itself through any display of civic contribution or personal accomplishment other than the accumulation of wealth. Unlike the forebearers of Elizabeth Wolcott whose ancestor signed the "Declaration of Independence," Maria's family abetted the enemy of the new republic. Bearing this in mind, Maria's sense of aristocratic entitlement, like that of other monied elites, hung suspended by a slender thread over the heads of the newly rich who would challenge New York's social hierarchy.

Courtship and Marriage

Maria Lydig, as a member of a wealthy and prominent family, confounded New York society when she accepted the courtship of an Irish Catholic member of the city's judiciary. Charles Patrick Daly had been born in New York in 1816 to an immigrant Irish carpenter and hotel manager and his wife Elizabeth. Charles Daly briefly attended Catholic parochial school before leaving home at age thirteen to seek his fortune. He

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Husband Frank K. Sturgis, who served for several years as President of the New York Stock Exchange, died without issue in 1932. New York Times, 16 June 1932, 21; 18 June 1932, 12; 19 June 1932, 12. Maria's youngest sister Rosalie married John J. Staples who predeceased her. Rosalie died in 1925. New York Times, 28 April 1925, 21.

worked for a time as an apprentice quill-maker in Savannah, Georgia, and for several years as a merchant seaman where, according to the journalist Stephen Fiske, Daly gained fluency in six foreign languages.[40] He returned to New York in 1832 as an apprentice cabinetmaker and pursued his own education by reading at night in the library of the Mechanic's and Tradesman's Society.

In 1836, Charles Daly apprenticed himself to a law firm, passing the state bar examination three years later. With the support of New York City's Democratic party organization Tammany Hall, Daly won election to the New York Assembly in 1843. He became involved in a controversial investigation of the administration of the Leake and Watts asylum trust which brought him public prominence. Declining the opportunity for a second term in the Assembly, Daly accepted an appointment as a judge to the Court of Common Pleas of New York in 1844 which was, at that time, the highest court in New York City.[41] The couple first met in late 1855 at a social gathering at the Lydig family's Laight Street home at the invitation of Maria's father. Afterwards, Maria sent the Judge,

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[40] Stephen Fiske, Off-Hand Portraits of Prominent New Yorkers, (New York: Geo. R. Lockwood & Son, 1884; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1975), 80.

[41] During the nineteenth century, the Court of Common Pleas was considered the highest court in New York City. The court, in 1896, dissolved and its jurisdiction divided between the Supreme Court, the Superior Court, and the General Sessions Court. Charles Daly won election to the Court of Common Pleas for four consecutive terms. In 1871, he rose to the position of Chief Judge, a post that he held until his retirement at the mandatory age of seventy in 1885. Encyclopedia of New York City, s.v. "courts." See also The Collected Papers of Charles Patrick Daly are on repository in the Manuscript Division of the New York Public Library, New York, New York. Hereafter they will be referred to as the Daly Papers; Harold E. Hammond, A Commoner's Judge: The Life and Times of Charles Patrick Daly, (Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1954); Stephen Fiske, 79-84; Bulletin of the American Geographical Society, 31(1899): 398; New York Times, September 20, 1899; Encyclopedia of American National Biography, s.v. "Daly, Charles Patrick."

then age thirty-nine, a book entitled The Art Student with a brief note inviting him to accompany the family to a production of "Rip Van Winkle." For his part, Charles Daly later remarked that "upon first sight he had decided that she was the one and only woman whom he wished to marry."[42]

Correspondence between the two, indicates that Maria pursued Charles Daly with determination. In late January of 1856, she inquired whether he would take his "usual walk ...tomorrow or when I shall see you as I would not choose to be out. Since I first met you, I have felt that I knew you a long while ago. You do remind me of my dear grandfather."[43] Unmarried at age thirty-two, Maria, the oldest child of a large family, possessed a clear sense of her own needs. She had matured beyond the age that social convention deemed suitable for a woman's marriage. Maria, eager to achieve the independence of her own household, saw herself as a "bold navigator who showed them the way through the shoals and breakers to the shore of matrimony."[44] The Lydigs, however, refused their unconditional support of the relationship. Maria weighed the possibility of an elopement. A marriage without the sanction of her wealthy family, however, would have removed the couple from any possibility of a dowry and Maria's share in her father's estate. In a long letter to Charles in 1856, Maria wrote, "Father, I fear, is a little insane. I do not think he will ever consent, but what is this to us? I am of age; and so are you. What God has joined, let no man put asunder. Let neither our

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[42] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, xxxvii.

[43] Maria Lydig, "Letter to Charles Patrick Daly," January 27, 1856. Daly Papers.

[44] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, June 15, 1862, 145.

tempers or pride disjoin us."[45] Maria wrote extensively to Charles during their courtship in 1856. In another letter, she complained, "I am no one's chattel and my marriage is only of my own contracting."[46] And again she wrote, "[W]e shall be happy despite unnatural and irrational parents."[47] As the more cautious of the pair, Charles finally required Maria's prodding to meet her father to discuss the matter. Philip Lydig could find no easy resolution to the "painful affair."[48]

Lydig could not understand his daughter's interest in Charles Daly. Though prominent in civic circles by that time, Daly's immigrant, Irish heritage deeply troubled the Lydigs. Philip Lydig had to look no further than the servants in his own household to summon a host of stereotypical impressions of the city's Irish immigrants. Occupationally clustered in menial positions, Irish-born servants comprised a majority of domestic household workers in New York by 1855.[49] Beyond the Lydig home, many of the city's Irish resided in crowded tenements, rife with problems concomitant to long-term poverty, including alcoholism, domestic violence, prostitution and crime. By the 1850's the Irish comprised a quarter to one-half of the city's total population.[50] Politically active and through the force of their sheer numbers, the Irish presence in New York threatened social

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[45] Maria Lydig, "Letter to Charles Patrick Daly," February 1856. Cited in MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, xxxvii.

[46] Maria Lydig, "Letter to Charles Patrick Daly," 1856. Cited in MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, xxxviii.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Philip Mesier Lydig, "Letter to Charles Patrick Daly, May 22, 1856." Daly Papers.

[49] Encyclopedia of New York City, s.v. "Irish."

[50] Ibid.

conservatives like the Lydigs.[51] In addition his Irish heritage, the self-tutored, poorly paid Charles Daly had accumulated no personal fortune. Because Maria came from a wealthy family, the inequities of the couple's finances called into question the purity of Daly's motives. These differences in family backgrounds and the imbalance of their financial situations invited the gossip and speculation of those outside the family circle.

Despite these aforementioned concerns, the Lydig's principal objection to the union centered upon Charles Daly's Roman Catholicism. Sensitive to issues of social propriety and religion, Philip Lydig considered the possibility that Maria, once married, could convert to Catholicism. Catholics, as perceived by those outside the faith, participated in alien devotional rites requiring a separate version of the Bible. With their own schools and benevolent associations directed by the church's Roman leadership, many elites viewed the Catholic church as a subversive institution that sought to undermine the existing social order, if not the very fundamentals of Protestant Christianity.[52]

Throughout her marriage, Maria sometimes attended Catholic services with her

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[51] Robert Ernst, Immigrant Life in New York City, 1825-1863, (Originally published 1949; Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994); Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher, eds., The New York Irish: Essays toward a History, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

[52] Protestant hostility towards Catholics increased after the New York Draft Riots which lasted from July 13 to 16, 1863. Irish Catholic immigrants, fueled by personal hardship, participated in the riots in large number as a protest against government attempts to enforce new federal conscription laws. The riot, which resulted in extensive property damage, swept quickly through many sections of the city and often targeted the wealthy. Archbishop John Hughes and other Catholic leaders eventually prevailed to end the riot. Some Protestant clergy, however, delivered anti-Catholic sermons. Maria Daly discussed one such homily delivered by Arthur Cleveland Coxe at the Protestant Episcopal Calvary Church on Fourth Avenue at 21st Street. Encyclopedia of New York City, s.v. "draft riots." See also MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, March 11, 1864, 277.

husband while maintaining her own Episcopal faith. She frequently entertained members of the Catholic clergy in her home, numbering some of them among her close personal friends. Her observations on Catholicism thread throughout her diary. She remembered that her "Grandmother so feared a Catholic...did she know that her favorite granddaughter had married one[?]"[53] Notwithstanding her family's prejudice, Maria often commented on the beauty of the Catholic service and dedication of its priests. She extolled the "sanctified, religious, virgin life of the true Catholic priest [as]...the nearest to the imitation of Christ."[54] Maria came to see institutional Catholicism as a unifying force in American society. She considered that the "Roman Catholic Church organization is the only one that can succeed in America, overrun as the country is by foreigners of that persuasion, and the more we strengthen Her hand and purify Her teachings, the better for us."[55] Despite her tolerance of the Catholic faith, Maria's nativism towards the Irish masses sometimes surfaced. She also addressed the need for "American priests who speak our language, at least correctly."[56] For Maria, the Catholic mass, conducted in Latin, became a significant barrier to Christian unity.[57] At the same time, Maria could also express her desire to have been "born a Catholic."[58]

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[53] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," Wednesday, January 31, 1872.

[54] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, January 25, 1862, 97. See also July 30, 1861, 45; November 10, 1861, 74; February 16, 1864, 275; March 11, 1864, 277.

[55] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, December 5, 1861, 84.

[56] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, April 20, 1862, 123.

[57] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, November 10, 1861, 74.

[58] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, December 5, 1861, 84. See also November 10, 1861, 74.

Maria's stated desire to affiliate formally with the Catholic church originates in her negative opinions of the Episcopal clergy. She particularly disparaged members of the unmarried Episcopal clergy, finding them "great sources of scandal; their egregious vanity is never satisfied...They seem to think that they may be trusted and allowed greater freedom than other men."[59] Maria's hostility towards these unmarried Protestant clerics reflects the experience of her sister Catherine who for five years endured the attention and "passionate declarations" of the Reverend Mr. W. Rodman, rector of Grace Episcopal Church in West Farms, New York.[60] Maria correctly sensed the vulnerability of an unmarried young woman to a minister's solicitations. Maria's opinion is also consistent with the process of religious secularization that culminated in a clerical disestablishment.[61] Many ministers depended upon the emotional and financial support of women who constituted the majority of their congregants. Maria remained fearful, however, that this reality would "ruin our church."[62] Her outrage over the conduct of New York's Episcopal diocese peaked with the1863 marriage of the dwarf Tom Thumb to the midget Lavinia Warren at Grace Church in New York. Embarrassed, Maria found the Episcopal church

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[59] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, September 13, 1861, 53.

[60] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, October 6, 1861, 56. In June 1862, Catherine Lydig became engaged to Judge James Topham Brady, a justice of the Supreme Court in New York City and Charles Daly's close friend.. Though Maria expressed reservations about the suitability of the match, she encouraged the courtship out of a desire to see her sister marry. Maria valued Brady's "very clear mind, great imitative powers, and is very capable in conversation, witty and clever at repartee." December 1, 1861, 83. The couple married in January 1863.

[61] Ann Douglas, 17- 44.

[62] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, October 6, 1861, 56. See also November 10, 1861, 74; Sunday, March 20, 1864, 282.

in this instance to be "on a par with Barnum's Museum."[63]

Despite their reservations about Charles Daly, the Lydigs ultimately honored their daughter's desire to wed. Maria could no longer "bear any more words, harsh looks and actions" from family members. She urged Charles to "see father as soon as possible...It must be decided before this week passes for us to make our own arrangements."[64] No details survive of the simple Episcopal ceremony conducted at West Farms on September 27, 1856.[65] Throughout her life, Maria remained bitter towards family members who had questioned her wish to marry Charles. Some family members did not attend her wedding. As these tensions persisted, Maria remained sensitive to small slights directed towards her husband. She focused much of this hostility on her mother's brother Lydig Suydam and the "trouble about our marriage set on foot by [his] pious meddling."[66] Her uncle Lydig's "hypocritical face always acts as a wet blanket upon any pleasure to the Judge."[67] Maria found other Suydam relatives "cold and undemonstrative."[68] This negativity extended to her mother. "I am nothing to her I fear except an annoyance for she neither understands my happiness...nor do I hers. God forgive me."[69] Though she continued to see her

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[63] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, February 13, 1863, 220. See also Neil Harris, Humbug: The Art of P.T. Barnum, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973).

[64] Maria Lydig, "Letter to Charles Daly," September 1856. Daly Papers.

[65] New York Times, 30 September 1856, 8.

[66] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," January 18, 1877.

[67] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, December 29, 1863, 269.

[68] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," January 18, 1877. See also September 18, 1861, 54-55; December 6, 1862, 205.

[69] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," February 26, 1872.

mother to celebrate family occasions, Maria did not waiver in her opinion of a shallow, self-interested parent, concluding "how she still loves the world, its pomp and vanities and how little she considers her children."[70]

Maria also harbored unflattering opinions of her father and several of her siblings. She had little use for her father as she neither admired his inactivity nor his initial rejection of Charles as a suitor. "If Father could but realize how much he had made us lose....by his sad mistake and unreasonableness, he would make it up; but he does not"[71] Unlike her mother Catherine, Philip Lydig eventually accepted his son-in-law. Maria wrote that the "more Father sees of the Judge, the more he evidently loves and esteems him."[72] While Maria appreciated this change of heart, she sometimes disagreed with her father on financial matters. Disappointed that her father refused to sell the Dalys four acres of the West Farms estate, Maria reflected that she had "cost him so little."[73] Similarly, her ambivalence towards her younger sister Margaret Lydig Otto can be traced to the "selfish treatment" Maria received when she married.[74] Margaret wrote to Charles, "Forgive me if I have not behaved as well as you might have expected...The greatest evil that could happen to me, my sister getting married has arisen as a skeleton in my future...as long as she is happy, I do not care what becomes of me and all I wish is not to cast a shadow on

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[70] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," June 18, 1878.

[71] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, June 15, 1862, 145.

[72] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, October 6, 1861, 55.

[73] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, June 24, 1862, 162.

[74] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, September 13, 1861, 53. Maria's sister Margaret married a German named Karl Otto and resided in Switzerland for the balance of her life. Margaret's daughter Emy Otto Hoyt figures prominently in Maria's later diaries.

the brighter fate of others."[75] Margaret included the gift of a cheese knife with her note as a token of her regret. Despite her sister's apology, Maria viewed their relationship as "polite."[76] Maria maintained an emotional distance from her other siblings as well. She and the Judge enjoyed social occasions with her sister Catherine and her husband Judge James R. Brady. Maria, however, could never truly overcome her deep distrust of her family and its uncaring behavior towards her husband. To Maria, the Lydigs seemed more than willing to sacrifice her happiness to maintain their community standing. Catherine's marriage to Judge Brady only awakened "old grievances."[77] The only Lydigs who consistently merit Maria's fondness are her paternal grandparents Maria and David Lydig. Maria recalled her grandmother's "passionate temper but wholesome rule" and her grandfather Lydig as the person she loved "better than anyone in the world."[78]

Though the Lydigs finally grew to appreciate Charles Daly's "stability of character and high principle," he never merited their unconditional acceptance.[79] Despite this reality, Maria expressed joy that she had followed her heart in her decision to marry. She reflected, "My life has been happier than I hoped."[80] Although the couple had no children,

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[75] Margaret M. Lydig, "Letter to Charles Daly," September 1856, Daly Papers.

[76] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, June 8, 1864, 300.

[77] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, January 14, 1863, 214.

[78] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, September 13, 1861, 52.

[79] Catherine Mesier Lydig, "Letter to Charles Patrick Daly, 1856." Cited in Ibid., xxxix.

[80] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893 June 18, 1878. See also MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, July 15, 1861, 35; December 26, 1863, 269; December 25, 1865, 382.

Maria sometimes wished her husband had an "heir to his name and reputation."[81] Maria could also rationalize the absence of children in her life. "How dreadful to have a stupid animal for a child to drag about all one's life, or how wearisome...to combat with a violent of sullen temper...perhaps it would not add either to mine or my husband's happiness."[82] Despite the absence of children, the marriage of Maria Lydig to Charles Daly proved a "splendid" union.[83] To the journalist Stephen Fiske, their marriage "opened the most exclusive circles of New York society to Judge Daly, whose handsome presence and rising reputation made him equally sought and admired. His receptions began to be noted...as among the intellectual and social centers" of the city."[84] Maria's abilities as a hostess also impressed the attorney George Templeton Strong who noted in 1857 that "Mrs. Daly is just what Maria Lydig was, and appears very well as mistress of her own house."[85]

Judge Charles and Maria Daly began their married life with a $20,000 dowry, a gift from her father. Philip Lydig also purchased in cash a $12,000 house for the couple in lower Manhattan at 84 Clinton Place.[86] Together these gifts totaled over $500,000 in contemporary dollars.[87] Irrespective of her father's generosity, Maria continued to grumble over her unfair treatment, struggling to accommodate her husband's income with

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[81] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, July 15, 1861, 35.

[82] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, October 17, 1861, 65.

[83] Stephen Fiske, 82.

[84] Ibid., 82-83.

[85] George Templeton Strong, January 24, 1857, 2:319.

[86] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, op.cit., xxxix.

[87] Scott Derks, The Value of a Dollar, 2.

her social expectations. In 1865, Charles informed his wife of a $1000 increase in his salary which Maria thought would ameliorate their "straitened" financial condition.[88] During the Civil War, Maria complained of rising prices. "Beef is selling for thirty cents per pound, butter at fifty-five cents, coffee at sixty-five cents, and tea at one dollar and a dollar and twenty-five cents."[89] She also noted the eighty dollar annual cost of a pew at St. Francis Xavier Roman Catholic Church, at 36 West 16th Street, where the Judge worshiped.[90] The house at 84 Clinton Place remained the couple's primary residence for most of their married life. Their social life, however, sometimes required that Maria prevail upon her Mother for the use of her larger home. After the death of her father in 1872 and with more discretionary income from her inheritance, Maria and Charles built a second home in Sag Harbor, Long Island, New York. Maria noted the pressure of this additional expense upon the couple's finances. She remarked upon a $750 landscaping bill, estimating that "the place will have cost us about $10,000, I fear."[91]

Charles Daly, while serving on the bench, remained involved in local and national Democratic politics. Though affiliated with Tammany Hall, Daly became a Union Democrat during the Civil War and belonged to the party's reform wing. During the war, he counseled the cabinet of President Abraham Lincoln on several maritime matters

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[88] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, January 5, 1865, 329.

[89] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, March 30, 1864, 284.

[90] Ibid. See also MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, October 9, 1861, 60; December 20, 1861, 87; February 26, 1862, 110; October 10, 1862, 185; May 26, 1863, 239; April 7, 1864, 288; September 25, 1864, 305-306.

[91] MLD, Diaries, 1866-1893, April 16, 1872. See also February 8, 1874.

pertaining to the conflict.[92] Well regarded as an orator, Daly frequently delivered patriotic speeches on behalf of the Union war effort and presided at dedications and public meetings. Maria often used her domestic role as companion, hostess and confidant, to further her husband's public interest. In response to General Michael Corcoran's efforts to see her husband, Maria took the initiative and "sat down and wrote a few lines to Corcoran and explained the Judge's apparent neglect, inviting the General to dine with us if possible the next day."[93] In this instance, Maria's effort to ameliorate her husband's inattention towards Corcoran, an old family friend, is understandable.[94]

In 1862, however, Maria began a campaign to secure a seat for her husband on the United States Supreme Court. She began her effort with a series of letters shortly after Charles Daly assisted the Lincoln government with the diplomatic crisis surrounding the

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[92] In 1861, the United States placed crew members of the Confederate privateer Jefferson Davis on trial for piracy. In retaliation, the Confederate States threatened to execute Union prisoners if the sailors were condemned as pirates. Daly advised the Lincoln cabinet to redraft the charges and incarcerate the sailors as prisoners of war. This policy became the norm for the balance of the conflict. Similarly in 1861, Daly counseled the cabinet in the Trent affair during which the Union navy seized Confederate emissaries traveling on a British vessel. Daly, among others, advised Lincoln to release the emissaries on the basis of international law to avoid the intervention of the British government on behalf of the Confederacy. After the war, Daly continued his involvement in national politics. He personally assisted the Democrats George McClellan, Samuel J. Tilden and Winfield Scott Hancock in their unsuccessful bids for the Presidency. He also worked strenuously behind the scenes for Grover Cleveland in his three attempts to gain the Presidency. Encyclopedia of American Biography, s.v. "Daly, Charles Patrick."

[93] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, February 22, 1863, 221.

[94] Michael Corcoran, an Irish immigrant, enlisted in the Irish 69th New York Regiment as a private. In 1859, the Regiment elected him colonel. Two years later, Corcoran received a commission as brigadier general. When Corcoran was taken prisoner at the first battle of Bull Run, Daly worked strenuously to effect his release. Corcoran ultimately returned to New York to a hero's welcome before rejoining his regiment. He died apparently of natural causes on December 27, 1863. See MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1863, xvii.

Confederate emissaries John Slidell and James Mason. Maria first wrote to her friend General James Shields, commander of a large Union troop contingent, who promised his support. Maria also wrote to other friends in Washington, including the Baron Friedrich von Gerolt, the Prussian minister to the United States and the journalist Nathaniel Parker Willis. Disingenuous, Maria remarked that she undertook this action "without Charles knowledge or consent. I hope I did no wrong. It was done with a good motive."[95]

Maria, whose own prestige would rise should her efforts prove fruitful, had taken a bold initiative on her husband's behalf. She did not entertain the possibility that her advocacy of Charles for a federal judgeship could cause him embarrassment, or worse, damage his chances of future advancement. She did not hesitate in her attempt to promote her husband's judicial career. As a woman, Maria had no voice in any political outcome. She did not refrain, however, from inserting herself into the male realm of Washington politics. Rather, she concluded that "[t]here is such a field for intriguing, clever women in Washington."[96] Maria, in this respect, understood herself to be a woman capable of some influence. She speculated on the likelihood that "Western politicians might be easily imposed on by Eastern beauty, and talent and savoir faire...women rule everything and can get anything."[97] Maria's diaries also indicate that other women she knew had acted ambitiously to promote their husbands' interests. Maria noted the effort of the "pretty little" wife of Colonel William H. Emory "who went crying and coaxing to

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[95] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, April 1, 1862, 114.

[96] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, November 24, 1861, 80.

[97] Ibid.

the President" to achieve her husband's military reinstatement during the Mexican War.[98] Judge Whili, according to Maria, owed his appointment to the bench to "his wife's enterprising piety."[99] Maria knew that wives could exercise considerable sway over their husbands. She prevailed on General George B. McClellan's wife, "telling her of the reports about her husband, and urging her to use her influence."[100]

In the end, Maria's efforts on Charles' behalf proved to no avail. She did mention, however, the substance of a letter written to Mary Todd Lincoln by the journalist Nathaniel Parker Willis. Willis, in his letter, referred to Maria as "one of the most superbly beautiful women of America, a luminous ornament of society."[101] Maria's inclusion of this flattery in her diary helps to frame her public advocacy of Charles. Women had for decades contributed indirectly to American political life.[102] Women like Dolley Madison and Louisa Catherine Adams used their unofficial, social roles as wives and hostesses to cement and extend their husbands' political careers. These wives cloaked their political activity in the social conventions of domestic purity, working to advance their husbands's interests in the name of family prestige and reputation. Women, as moral guardians of the home, maintained the family's public image which, in turn, could be significantly enhanced through male success. In this light, Maria's interest in Washington

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[98] Ibid.

[99] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, July 4, 1862, 159.

[100] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, January 29, 1862, 100.

[101] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, April 1, 1862, 114.

[102] Catherine Allgor, Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government.

politics can be seen as a part of her feminine duty. The language of Maria's diary supports this conclusion as she describes the political efforts of other prominent wives in the vocabulary of domesticity. Colonel Emery's wife is portrayed as weak and dependent while Judge Whili's spouse is referred to as pious. Like Mrs. George McClellan, Maria Daly cajoled through her use of influence.

The word "influence" originally connoted the heavenly stream of an ethereal fluid that effected the character and destiny of men. Less literally, influence came to imply the human exercise of power or virtue or a mysterious, occult force similar to that of a heavenly power. Finally, influence pertained to an inflowing or immersion of any kind of divine, spiritual, moral or secret power in which the operation is unseen or perceptible only by its effects.[103] Influence, as it suggested nineteenth century feminine power, addressed the quiet and unassuming manner by which women achieved their goals. Women's talent to influence reflected their inherent spiritual superiority. Seen as more intuitive than men, women imperceptibly directed the actions of others through their higher, spiritual natures.

Women like Maria Daly understood the power of feminine influence. She could draw upon her facility for gentle persuasion to sway her husband. Family governance rested upon a wife's ability to inspire and motivate her husband in shaping activities that pertained to the family. Within the wider public sphere, feminine influence acquired a broader significance. Maria followed her own self interest outside her home as a putative extension of her domesticity. Beyond the circumstance of her immediate family, she

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[103] Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd edition, 1989, s.v., "influence."

wielded her influence over men and women in her social peer group. Maria's ability to persuade and the extent to which others yielded to her influence confirmed her power among New York's elite. In sum, the extent to which Maria successfully shaped the actions of other women demonstrated her prestige.

Civil War Benevolence

Maria Daly's record of benevolence exemplifies how one woman used feminine influence for personal gratification and to maintain her family's social status. She considered herself, by virtue of her birthright, entitled to social leadership. She also appreciated the limits of her power to persuade. In 1862, for example, she rejected her husband's suggestion that she "induce the ladies of New York to join in discountenancing calls and entertainments."[104] Maria demurred because "I don't think that I should have influence enough."[105] Maria did not wish to waste her influence in a cause that could not prevail among her peers. She reasoned that "[i]n America, the young rule; all is subservient to them."[106]

At age thirty-eight, it is doubtful that Maria's reference to rule by the young alluded to a generational disparity in New York society. Her remark, in this instance, hinted at the influence of newly minted wealth in New York during the war years. As Maria and her husband did not benefit from large amounts of discretionary income, they could not host lavish entertainments. Maria, therefore, could not publically suggest that

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[104] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, January 8, 1862, 95.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid.

society forego its pleasures during wartime without sounding self-serving and disingenuous. The Dalys' entertainments, with or without the pressure of a wartime economy, were modest by the standards of many women elites.

Maria's account of the war years in New York is characterized by her ambivalence towards wealth and social position. Though she identified with the wealthy urban elite, she spared no criticism of their hypocrisy and excess. She considered, for example, the corrosive influence of money and luxury on society, longing for the day when popular opinion would "put the leaders of fashion, those dead respectables, in the obscurity which they deserve, and give a chance to the real aristocracy of nature to invade their ranks and make them recognize some other title to distinction than money and dancing masters' manners."[107] Maria esteemed her husband Charles as a "natural aristocrat," complaining that "[w]e are ruled from beneath. Mediocrity is king, and money our ultimatum."[108]

Maria took particular exception to society's "shoddy" pretenders.[109] She criticized the crass consumption of these wartime profiteers. She observed a "common-looking woman" who purchased diamonds from the jeweler Tiffany, marking her sales receipt with

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[107] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861 - 1865, July 28, 1861, 41.

[108] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861 - 1865, January 29, 1862, 99.

[109] The term "shoddy" refers to profiteers who made vast fortunes during the Civil War. In 1861, the federal government assumed the responsibility for supplying the United States Army. The inefficiency and corruption of this government program resulted in wealth procured in an unscrupulous manner, which fed the aspirations of the socially ambitious. The word "shoddy" is derived from woollen yarn obtained by shredding woollen rags which with the addition of some new wool is woven to resemble a superior cloth. Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "Shoddy." See also George Templeton Strong, March 21, 1865, 3:566; Cornelia Jay, Friday, December 26, 1862, 85.

a cross as she was unable to write her own name.[110] Another anecdote describes the significant purchase of jewelry by a saddler's wife whose husband "before the war could scarcely get his bread."[111] That the Lydig family fortune had originated in the sale of grain to the British army during the American Revolution did not sway Maria's strong distaste for the economic gain of others during war. She continued to complain of "apple-sellers or fruit-carriers...dressed in velvet and satins."[112] Maria also judged Mary Todd Lincoln as a "vulgar, shoddy...who does not know what to do with her money."[113] In these passages, Daly expressed her anxiety over the ways in which expensive clothes and jewels masked true character. Mindful of the poseur, these references also reflect Maria's moral objection to money fraudulently obtained at public expense. She explained, "These diamonds, if not of the finest water, are the best blood of the country. Would to God these wretches could be exposed."[114]

The excessive spending of the "shoddy" parvenu only reminded Maria of the sacrifice of friends and family away at the front. Others' extravagant wartime purchases also heightened her own awareness of family financial pressures. The need to economize could prove frustrating to a status-conscious woman like Maria Daly. Though her own household budget strained with rising prices and a depreciating currency, many other elites did little to alter their lives during the war. Maria concluded that "[s]ociety seems to have

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[110] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, July 14, 1863, 248-9.

[111] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, October 24, 1862, 192.

[112] Ibid.

[113] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, July 14, 1863, 248.

[114] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, October 24, 1862, 192.

gone mad, giving itself up to every kind of extravagance and dissipation."[115] Her friend, the artist Albert Bierstadt also remarked that he had been "offered more than he had asked for his pictures."[116] Cornelia Jay agreed that "shops were never more crowded...This does not look like ruin."[117]

Maria scrutinized the material excess of her patrician peers during the war. She evaluated the appearance of Eleanor Ruggles Strong, wife of the lawyer George Templeton Strong, finding her to be "painted like a wanton."[118] She described William Reid's attire at a New Year's open house as "black velvet from head to foot, white cravat and diamond sleeve buttons. He looked well, but ridiculously; it's sort of shoddy."[119] At another function, Maria described Mrs. Ronalds' hat as "a bird's nest with eggs, making her head a hatchery...if there is enough brain to hatch anything on top."[120] She similarly

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[115] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, March 18, 1864, 281. For other similar remarks by Maria see also February 13, 1863, 218; March 19, 1863, 224.

[116] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, December 20, 1862, 209.

[117] Cornelia Jay, Wednesday, October 22,1862, 77.

[118] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, December 11, 1864, 321.

[119] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, January 3, 1865, 327-328.

[120] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, January 9, 1863, 213-214. In 1859, Mary Frances Carter of Boston married the wealthy Pierre Lorillard Ronalds, son of William Ronalds and Dorothy Lorillard, a daughter of Pierre Lorillard. Noted for her beauty and singing, Mrs. Ronalds attracted attention in Paris where she became an acknowledged leader of a clique known as the "Tuilleries Americans." The Ronalds had two sons. They separated while on a trip to Europe in 1867. Mary Frances Ronalds, said to be an intimate of Queen Victoria, remained in London where she became a leader of its society. She died in London in 1916. New York Times, 31 July 1916, 5; 3 August 1916, 9. See also Frederick Townsend Martin, Things I Remember, (New York: John Lane Company, 1913), 221; Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Found It, Annotated Edition, 182, 196. Pierre Lorillard Ronalds became widely regarded as the "Father of American Coaching." He never remarried, living in New York and at his estate "Castle Ronald" in Newtown, Connecticut. He died in 1905. New York Times, 24 October 1905. Ronalds, also a

described Mrs. William F. Ritchie as a "pretty woman who aids nature by a little art."[121] After observing the "Phrygian" hair-style of Mrs. Ritchie, Maria recommended that some ladies "study Livingston's travels in Africa...[for] some suggestive wood-cuts for new styles of coiffure in the present fashion."[122] This coiffure included "two great hills on either side of her head, the center being occupied on full-dress occasions with a bunch of hair full of feathers, birds, or flowers."[123] .

Maria Daly's view of the New York charities that arose in response to the Civil War also reflects her strong opinions on the spending habits of some of the wealthy elite. Maria, like other women elites, wished to demonstrate her patriotism. In May of 1861, she joined with the prominent sugar refiner William Rhinelander, the German-born physician Louis Anthony Gescheidt and her mother in presenting a flag to the Steuben Regiment.[124] Remembering the German origins of the Lydig family, Maria reasoned that

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devotee of spiritualism, willed several properties to his medium Elizabeth N. Blake. New York Times, 26 October 1905, 1.

[121] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861 - 1865, January 9, 1863, 213 - 214..

[122] Ibid.

[123] Ibid.

[124] "Steuben's Rangers," comprised of Union volunteers of German descent, were attached to the 86th Infantry Regiment, organized at Elmira, New York. MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, May 26, 1861, 16-18. William C. Rhinelander was the son of William Rhinelander, one of three brothers who immigrated to America sometime before the Revolution. The family fortune originated in the importation and refining of sugar. The Rhinelanders were also among the earliest ship builders in the American colonies. William married a daughter of John Rogers with whom he had four children. The family lived at No. 14 North Washington Square, said to be the first home built on Fifth Avenue. New York Times, 21 June 1878, 5; 23 June 1878, 2. Rhinelander left a fortune valued at between $50 and $75 million dollars upon his death in 1878. New York Times, 25 June 2878, 5. Dr. Louis Anthony Gescheidt died in 1876. His patients included Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt. New York Times, 28 August 1876, 5.

"those of German descent should show their sympathy to the brave foreigners now lately arrived and settled among us."[125] Later that May, Maria noted that she had been "busily engaged in making havelocks out of white linen which the linen merchants mostly have kindly contributed for the 69th."[126]

Because of her husband's Irish heritage, Maria devoted special attention to raising money for a banner for the Irish 69th. She also followed their participation in the war. When a retreating ensign dropped her standard at the first battle of Bull Run, Maria decided that "[i]f anyone asks me about it, I shall say that one of the ensigns was killed and nothing more."[127] Sensitive to any hint of cowardice among the Irish Brigade, Maria raised funds for new standards consisting of "three United States standards and three green flags with Irish emblems and mottos and the guide colors. They will cost about $600."[128] Later she indicated that she raised $65 for the new banners and "as that is one-eighth part of the whole, I shall make no further effort."[129] Maria's resolve not to participate further in this activity is best explained by her reluctance to oppose openly the interests of Mrs. Thomas F. Meagher, wife of the commandant of the 69th. Maria observed that Mrs. Meagher "rather desires to keep all the glory and renown to herself and her husband. At the meeting which she called at her house, she had a pretty little

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[125] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861 - 1866, May 26, 1861,18.

[126] The 69th refers to the Irish 69th New York Regiment comprised of volunteers of Irish descent. MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, May 30, 1861, 18.

[127] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, July 28, 1861, 41-42.

[128] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861,1865, October 8, 1861, 60.

[129] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, October 14, 1861, 63.

formula which she had written out about her not having had the blessings...of having been born in the Ancient Faith, at not belonging to the great warm-hearted, devoted, but oppressed nation...I rather think that she would have been quite willing that I should have stayed away."[130]

Maria's remarks on Mrs. Meagher indicate the importance of charity to women and the extent to which a woman like Maria cultivated and protected her public image through benevolent work. Her unwillingness to participate further in the project also raises questions about the sincerity of her philanthropic motivation. Maria simply did not wish to become involved in a project where the value of her contribution could be misconstrued. Maria harbored reservations about the social worthiness of Mrs. Meagher. The two women did not share a personal friendship which is indicated by Maria's refusal to refer to Mrs. Meagher by her given name.[131] Her diary references demonstrate that Maria's wish to maintain a formal distance from Mrs. Meagher. Eager to avoid a public disagreement over credit for the banner project and risk the possibility of unflattering gossip, Maria simply withdrew her support.

Maria understood the necessity of benevolence as part of her domestic responsibility. This perception had been ingrained in her conservative outlook. As a consequence, Maria sometimes presented her charitable work as coincidental to her other activities. For example, she notes in passing her involvement with a Widows' Society.

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[130] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, October 14, 1861, 63-64.

[131] See also MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, December 1, 1862, 202; April 15, 1863, 229.

Characterized as a "project of mine," Maria sought advice from her friend Father Bernard O'Reilly, chaplain of the 69th Regiment, regarding her desire to aid poor Catholic women, widowed by the Civil War. Maria envisioned relocating each widow and her family to an existing household headed by a male in the western United States. She undertook this effort in the hope that she would have "made a few families comfortable, and since God has denied me a child that some will feel that I have not lived quite in vain."[132] This project would have required that Maria either obtain a substantial parcel of land through donation or raise adequate funds for the purchase of western farms. Furthermore, the project required the identification of needy families just as it required the support of sponsoring families. However ambitious her proposal might have been, Maria only noted that she would have to "beg for money."[133] Her diaries do not contain any additional information on this undertaking which may have existed only in its most formative stages.

In a like manner, Maria referred to her association with the Workingwoman's Protective Union. Founded in 1863, this group of prominent men and women advocated better working conditions for and the protection of the rights of working women. Charles Daly, had been instrumental in the group's founding and remained chairman of its board of directors for thirty years.[134] Maria, however, does not elaborate on the nature or extent of her own involvement with the group, excepting a single reference to a donation of "thirty

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[132] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, February 22, 1863, 222.

[133] Ibid.

[134] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, March 22, 1864, 281n.

dollars for a particularly hard case of which I spoke."[135] Her subsequent mention of charity to aid working women only provides a pretext for flattering commentary on Charles' abilities as a speaker before the membership.[136]

Maria also acknowledged her interest in the Council Board of the School of Design for Women at Cooper Union. Here, her attendance at the group's meetings provoked unflattering appraisals of the other women she encountered.[137] There are no other details in her diary of her work at the school. Though she frequented the School of Design with some regularity, she recognized her need to devote greater attention to "her duties there a little more thoroughly, although Mrs. Field may be chairman."[138] Maria did not like Laure Desportes Field. Prior to her marriage to Henry M. Field, Laure Desportes had been involved in a widely publicized murder case in France.[139] Though she ultimately married into a wealthy American family and found social acceptance in New York, Maria Daly judged Mrs. Field to be an "ambitious" woman with a "very hard face."[140] Maria fully appreciated the social sway of other women just as she cultivated her own public

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[135] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, November 28, 1864, 317.

[136] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, March 22, 1864, 283-284; November 28, 1864, 317; December 11, 1864, 323.

[137] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861 - 1865, January 8, 1862, 95- 96; February 18, 1862, 107; November 24, 1865, 378.

[138] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, February 18, 1862, 107.

[139] In 1851, Laure Desportes married Henry M. Field, brother of Cyrus W. and David Dudley Field. A Williams College graduate, Henry Field trained for the ministry before accepting a pastorate in St. Louis, Missouri in 1842. After traveling extensively in Europe, he settled in New York City where he became owner and editor of the Evangelist. MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, February 18, 1862, 107n.

[140] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, February 18, 1862, 107.

identity. As in the instance of the aforementioned Mrs. Meagher, Maria did not wish a direct confrontation with Mrs. Field. Maria consequently began independently to pursue benevolence rather than subject herself to the influence of women who would not prove of social benefit.

Maria's independence guided her participation in Civil War charities. In April 1861, the prominent Unitarian minister Henry Whitney Bellows invited ninety-two of New York's most influential women to a morning meeting at Cooper Union to organize the "benevolent purposes of all into a common movement."[141] At this initial meeting, women elites formed the Woman's Central Association of Relief. This group sought to consolidate and rationalize existing forms of women's benevolence in aid of the Union war effort. Female charity in the war had heretofore included uncoordinated contributions of labor, skill and money in the preparation of lint, bandages, and other stores to assist the needs of the army's medical staff as well as personal service as nurses at the front. This new organization of women, exerting feminine persuasion and moral pressure on the Department of War and the medical profession, hoped to improve conditions in military camps and hospitals so as to prevent needless suffering and loss of life. This centralized women's relief agency finally coalesced under the leadership of Louisa Lee Schuyler who managed existing women's charities and soldiers' aid societies.[142] The women's effort

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[141] "To the Women of New York, and Especially to Those Already Engaged in Preparing Against the Time of Wounds and Sickness in the Army." Cited in Charles J. Stille, History of the United States Sanitary Commission, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1866), Appendix No. 1, 523.

[142] Dictionary of Notable American Women, s.v., "Schuyler, Louisa Lee."

paralleled the formation of the male-sponsored United States Sanitary Commission. Henry Whitney Bellows, the lawyer George Templeton Strong, the noted sanitary reformer Dr. Elisha Harris and the landscape architect and city planner Frederick Law Olmstead headed the men's voluntary organization.[143]

The extent of Maria Daly's participation in the Woman's Central Association of Relief is difficult to determine. While she did receive an invitation to the initial organizational meeting at Cooper Union, she does not mention this fact in her diary.[144] The group's Annual Reports do not credit the participation of individuals. Lists of individual contributors, in the back of each Annual Report, do not indicate that the Dalys provided money to the group. Some contributors, however, wished to remain anonymous and are listed simply as "Friend" or "Friend of the Soldier." Maria's diaries, however, reveal some effort on behalf of the organization. She gathered "shirts, sheets, old linen, towels, clothes of all kinds and thanks to Grandma and some friends, I shall have a good bundle to send."[145] Another reference indicates her "mending up all the old clothes I could beg...particularly shirts, and a woman is here doing them up. I think I shall have forty,

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[143] For an account of women's role in the founding and work of the United States Sanitary Commission see Lori D. Ginzberg, 133-174; Jeanie Attie, Patriotic Toil: Northern Women and the American Civil War, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998); Sylvia G.L. Dannett, ed. and comp., Noble Women of the North, (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1959). See also Charles J. Stille; Marjorie Barstow Greebie, Lincoln's Daughters of Mercy, (New York: G.. Putnam's Sons, 1944); William Quentin Maxwell, Lincoln's Fifth Wheel: The Political History of the United States Sanitary Commission, (New York: Longmans, Green, 1956); Robert H. Bremner, The Public Good: Philanthropy and Welfare in the Civil War Era, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980).

[144] Charles J. Stille, 525-526.

[145] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, May 14, 1862, 130.

which, when cleaned, I will take to the Sanitary Commission."[146]

Maria also regularly spent time visiting the sick and wounded in local hospitals. In these instances, her diaries relate conversations with individual soldiers. On one occasion, she provided a soldier with a chicken leg, finding that she "never had so much pleasure before in spending fifty cents, for he ate it with such satisfaction."[147] Though Maria enjoyed her hospital visits, she recognized that she had "little or no experience myself in taking care of the sick."[148] She volunteered to read and write letters at the City Hospital, but upon learning that "I should have to go among the typhoid fever patients...I gave up my charitable intention."[149] Maria wisely realized the limits of her abilities and the pressures that war-related benevolence made upon her time. She resolved that lest she be found "wanting" she would go "twice a week to the Park Barracks and give one day to working at the Central Relief Association at Cooper Institute.[150]

While Maria realized her need to appear committed to the work of the Central Relief Association, she observed that the "ladies of the Committee do not like to be interfered with.[151] She also noted that some soldiers complained of the "officiousness of

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[146] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, May 16, 1862, 131. See also May 18, 1862, 132.

[147] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, May 16, 1862, 130. See also May 14, 1862, 129;

[148] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, May 16, 1862, 131.

[149] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, May 16, 1862, 132.

[150] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, May 18, 1862, 132.

[151] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, May 16, 1862, 130.

some of us ladies."[152] One soldier when asked by a female volunteer if she could wash his face, replied, "If it will give you any satisfaction to do so, madam,...but it has been washed four times already this morning."[153] In relating this encounter, Maria also could not help noticing that Eleanor Ruggles Strong, wife of the lawyer George Templeton Strong, "had washed the faces of seven men."[154] Maria took such exception to Eleanor Strong that she revisited the incident in a subsequent entry, adding that Mrs. Strong had appeared at the hospital "with rouge pot, crinoline and maid."[155] Again, to avoid unwanted associations with some of her peers, Maria seemed gratified to learn that Park Barracks had "plenty of nurses for the transports and the hospitals...I had no mania for being useful, but had plenty of pleasant occupation and could now go to it with a clear conscience, since I had offered my services."[156]

Although Maria did not allude to her further participation, the semi-annual and annual reports of the Woman's Central Association of Relief reveal an increasing demand for women's benevolence as the war lengthened.[157] Records indicate growing receipts for all manner of supplies categorized as cotton or woollen, including: socks, slippers, mittens, wrappers, pillows, sheets, pillow cases, blankets, quilts, cushions, lint, bandages,

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[152] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, May 16, 1862, 131.

[153] Ibid., 132.

[154] Ibid.,131.

[155] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, May 19, 1862, 134.

[156] Ibid.

[157] Woman's Central Association of Relief, Annual Report of the Woman's Central Association of Relief, New York, May 1, 1862 - July 4, 1865.

groceries and jellies. To coordinate the receipt of these supplies and forward them to the areas at the front in greatest need required the cooperative labor of many women. Concurrently, the group's own operating expenses increased. An expanded Third Annual Report, issued in 1864, included an explanatory statement of what happened to the monies raised by the Commission in acknowledgment of these rising costs.[158] Though these annual accountings itemized individual contributions, few donations of money were significant sums, generally amounting to less that thirty dollars each.

To raise additional money and garner positive publicity for the Commission's work, women involved in the work of the Sanitary Commission proposed a large metropolitan fair. Fairs or bazaars had been used by women in the past as a successful fund raising device. In the instance of the New York Metropolitan Fair, sponsors envisioned a grand event in order to maximize the public's involvement in the work of the Commission. Women planners conceived of large booths of saleable merchandise donated by public-spirited individuals and established merchants. A committee of socially prominent women, headed by Mrs. Hamilton Fish, catalogued and coordinated the thousands of items donated for sale. Carolyn Pryor Pine recalled her mother's gift of Canton china. She remembered that it seemed "very strange that anyone should want to buy our old things."[159]

In conjunction with the Fair, elite benefactors opened their homes to the public

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[158] Woman's Central Association of Relief, Third Annual Report of the Woman's Central Association of Relief, May 1, 1864, (New York: Sanford Harroun, 1864), 31.

[159] Carolyn Pryor Pine, 2. See also Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, Epistle to Posterity, 89.

and sponsored raffles, concerts, theatricals and lectures. Cornelia Jay stated that "illuminated books and dolls with trousseaux" proved the most popular raffle items.[160] She further recalled Mrs. Astor's purchase of such a doll for a hundred dollars which she later returned to the Fair for resale.[161] The August Belmonts opened their picture gallery in their Fifth Avenue mansion, to the public for an admission charge of $1. Caroline Perry Belmont sponsored a home concert of leading musicians for which she charged admission to raise additional monies.[162] Jessica Benton Fremont, wife of General John Charles Fremont and her sister Madam la Baronesses Gauldieu Boileau gave weekly concerts in their homes, charging two dollars a ticket.[163] Maria estimated that she had "expended a good deal of money upon it (although it is not yet open) in tickets for concerts, raffles."[164] She concluded that the Fair "is a good excuse to many, not that it will do much good and that many of those who are very busy in it would do nothing otherwise."[165]

The Fair opened its doors on April 4, 1864. The following day, The Evening Post reported that a "magnificent event" had occurred. Custom-built structures, situated at Fourteenth Street and Union Square, had been erected to house the bazaar. A large main building faced Union Square at Fourteenth while wings on either side fronted on Fourth Avenue and Broadway, respectively. Most news accounts featured an extended

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[160] Cornelia Jay, March 30, 1864, 166.

[161] Ibid.

[162] David Black, 240-241.

[163] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, February 16, 1864, 276.

[164] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, March 18, 1864, 281.

[165] Ibid.

description of the west wing of the structure which one entered from Broadway. Here interior ceilings, measuring forty-five feet in height, were lit by two hundred sixty gas jets. A large fountain with a basin of twenty feet in diameter threw a continual stream of water. Decorative bunting in patriotic colors as well as numerous arrangements of flowers and evergreens contributed to the grandeur.[166]

The Fair lasted for three weeks, consistently drawing large crowds. Relatively high ticket prices of fifty cents limited access to New York's more affluent citizens. Once inside, patrons perused an exhaustive array of salable, donated merchandise, ranging from carriages and furniture to soaps, hats and lingerie. Separate stalls, wreathed with flowers and evergreens, had been organized around Machinery, Arms and Trophies, House Furnishings, Mathematical and Nautical Instruments, Lingerie and Indian Rubber. The Fair contained a Music Room, an Autograph Department, a concert hall, a Salmagundi summer house and a large Children's Department. The Fair also housed a number of historic and patriotic displays, including: a colonial Knickerbocker kitchen; and a replica of Matthew Brady's photographic studio with portraits of General and Mrs. George McClellan. Services for patrons of the event included a restaurant, child care, and a fully stocked library.[167] Every corner of space offered some item or service for sale. The most unusual item at the Fair proved to be the "Hairy Eagle" whose wings had been feathered with cuttings of hair from Abraham Lincoln and the members of this Cabinet. Though some questioned the authenticity of this piece, many others contributed an additional

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[166] The Evening Post, 5 April 1864, 1.

[167] Jeanie Attie, 208.

dollar to send their autograph to the President.[168] The Fair proved to be a financial success that raised over one million dollars to benefit the work of the Sanitary Commission.[169]

Although many New York elites participated in the success of the Metropolitan Fair, the occasion was not without controversy. The lawyer George Templeton Strong deplored the "quantity of gossip, intrigue, and personal pique" that had surrounded competing committees of men and women responsible for the Fair's organization.[170] Local newspapers fanned a competitive spiral of generous donation by publishing descriptions of the more costly items for sale as well as the names of their contributors. The patrician Harriet Woolsey took exception to the competitive displays of wealth associated with the event. In a letter to her cousins, Woolsey wrote that "New York is really in a disgusting state of fashionable excitement; nothing is talked of, or dreamed of...Mrs. Parker has her thousand dollar tea-sets to dispose of; Kate Hunt, her two-hundred dollar curtains; Mrs. Schermerhorn her elegant curtains; and Mrs. Somebody else, the beautiful jewelry sent from Rome for the Sanitary Commission."[171]

Maria Daly, like Harriet Woolsey, found aspects of the Metropolitan Fair to be distasteful. Though Maria had contributed her time and resources to the Woman's Central

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[168] The New York Herald, April 7, 1864, 1:3. The Herald estimated that the sale of autographs would bring a thousand dollars.

[169] Jeanie Attie, 213.

[170] George Templeton Strong, March 28, 1864, 3: 419 - 420.

[171] Harriet R. Woolsey, "Letter to J. and G.," March 1864., in Gorgeanna Woolsey Bacon and Eliza Woolsey Howland, Letters of a Family during the War for the Union, 1861-1865, 2 vol. (New York: Bacon and Howland, 1899), 2:570.

Association for Relief and financially supported many of the events associated with the Fair, she questioned the publicized participation of some of the wealthy She thought the involvement of some individuals to be "the apotheosis of fashionable and cheap patriotism on the part of many, particularly the lady portion (those who have given excepted). My Uncle Lydig, for instance, has given nothing–not even a hundred dollars to the war, but his name is flourishing in all the papers."[172]

While Maria lauded the generosity of some contributors, she herself declined extensive participation in the Fair. Her diary during the months preceding the April event is mute on the subject save her own disinclination to dress in costume and serve tea and baked goods to visitors in the Knickerbocker Kitchen. Many observers found this kitchen display "quite plain."[173] Organized by Mrs. Judge James Roosevelt, the Kitchen displayed period furniture donated by patriotic families of Dutch descent, including a chair reportedly used by Washington Irving. Portraits of early Dutch settlers hung on the walls. Overhead, festoons of dried apples hung with rows of dip-candles and large ears of seed corn. Newspapers praised the Kitchen's authenticity down to the "genuine Virginia 'nigger,' who, besides beating the wooden 'citizens of African descent' in dancing breakdowns, possesses wonderful powers as a ventriloquist."[174]

Maria Daly betrayed both her social prejudices and personal vanity in stating her decision not to serve in the Knickerbocker Kitchen. She confided that she was "too

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[172] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, April 3, 1864, 286.

[173] The Evening Post, 5 April 1864, 1.

[174] The New York Times, 9 April1864, 8.

knickerbocker to be sufficiently democratic and did not particularly fancy the idea of being seated in a cap, short gown, and petticoats, pouring out tea to the rabble...that would come to give their mite."[175] Maria's remarks address her desire to maintain the privacy associated with feminine domesticity when in public. Though Maria's youngest sister Rosalie appeared "very anxious" to participate in the Knickerbocker Kitchen, Maria herself did not.[176] Maria worried that visitors to the colonial display would be "gratifying their curiosity, and I would be part of the show. My name, too, being so public a one, would be sure of being in the papers."[177] Maria refused a second chance to don a costume at the Fair, declining the opportunity to join a tableaux of a Flemish picture because she had been asked to portray a "blooming girl of eighteen, and I am more than double that age...My refusal will spare me just and critical remarks and a great deal of trouble."[178]

Vanity notwithstanding, Maria Daly expressed ambivalence over appearing in public. Although she did not hesitate to appear publically for charitable causes, she required some control over the nature and extent of her visibility. Maria did, of course, visit the Metropolitan Fair on several occasions before finally supplying tickets to her household staff so that they might attend.[179] She particularly inspected the Knickerbocker

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[175] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, March 17, 1864, 280.

[176] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, March 30, 1864, 285.

[177] Ibid.

[178] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, March 18, 1862, 282.

[179] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, April 5, 1864, 286-287; April 7, 1864, 287-289; April 17, 1864, 289 - 291; April 21, 1864, 291.

Kitchen to find Mrs. Judge Roosevelt dressed in a costume that "made her look like an old woman." Mrs. Roosevelt related her experience with a man who requested that she "wait upon" him for "two shillings extra."[180] Maria decided that, like Mrs. Roosevelt, she too would have complied with the wish of this stranger. Even so, she felt that the man would have "gone and boasted that they had been served by Mrs. Judge Daly, and my portrait would have been in every newspaper. I saw them sketching the ladies for Frank Leslie's paper."[181] Even in the name of a worthy cause, the implication that Maria "wait upon" a strange man for money proved distasteful and beyond the scope of her socially conservative understanding of her domestic obligation. Maria did not wish to see her name printed in the newspapers, even for such a worthy cause.

Newspaper accounts of the success of the Knickerbocker Kitchen confirmed Maria's personal reservations about the project. Though the sponsors of the booth charged an admission fee of ten cents, the Kitchen was "continually crowded by the curious."[182] The Kitchen ultimately proved to be one of the most profitable venues at the Fair with receipts averaging over a thousand dollars per day.[183] The New York Times thought the Kitchen "without exception, the jolliest, liveliest, pleasantest place in the fair; in fact, the only place that looks and is comfortable...Ladies come to see the crème de la crème of New York voluntarily waiting on tables for the sake of charity, for which they

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[180] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, April 7, 1864, 287.

[181] Ibid.

[182] The Evening Post, 8 April 1864, 1.

[183] Ibid. See also The New York Times, 10 April 1864, 8; 13 April 1864, 9.

willingly sacrifice their time, comfort and pride."[184]

Maria Daly derived some satisfaction in the Kitchen's success. She took great pride in her lineage and the contributions of her forebearers to the growth of New York. She must have enjoyed the level of public interest generated by the display as an acknowledgment of the continuing importance of her heritage. At the same time, she could not have welcomed what amounted to a trivialization of her ancestors and their presentation to others as a curiosity. Public fascination in the Knickerbocker Kitchen indicated the extent to which New York City had moved away from the shared values of the early Dutch. As the Kitchen displayed the material culture of the Knickerbockers, it also referenced the behavioral standards of a "quiet and orderly set [who knew] well how to take themselves to the happy social development of occasions of this kind."[185] Maria had been tutored in those same uncomplicated values. The unadorned costumes and simple caps of the women who served as well as the plain kitchen furnishings recalled as the thrift and industry of the Knickerbocker housewife. The Kitchen also spoke to the importance of community as the basis for social organization. On some level, Maria Daly appreciated that her comfortable values of economy, simplicity and community were becoming increasingly anachronistic in New York's competitive social landscape.

Women's Patriotic Association

Maria did not share Mrs. Roosevelt's tolerant standards for women's public behavior. Rather than place herself in an awkward situation, Maria considered a charity

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[184] The New York Times, 10 April 1864, 8.

[185] The New York Herald, 5 April 1864, 1.

more compatible with her values. Maria had previously demonstrated her loyalty to the Union cause through her various contributions and work with wounded soldiers. She also had indicated her prominence among her social equals by refusing to participate in the Knickerbocker kitchen and Flemish tableau. Maria knew that she would not suffer undue censure from other women elites by her refusal to dress in costume. Maria had attained the status in benevolent circles whereby she could independently structure charity according to her own assessment of need. Freed from the supervision of other women, Maria could exercise her own judgement as well as direct the labor of others. Maria, in this regard, began to address the national financial emergency brought about by the government's war-related expenditures.

The economic consequences of war upon the national coffers became a theme that threaded through Maria's diaries. Throughout the war, Maria commented upon the, commerce, politics and diplomacy associated with the conflict. Many of these topics supposedly lay beyond her areas of feminine interest. Nonetheless, the economic consequences of the war engaged her thought and challenged her creativity. In late 1861, she recorded that "Charles and I have invested all our spare money in the government loan. I feel quite proud to do even that little"[186] When the Union army failed to take Richmond, the gold dollar reached a seventeen percent premium over paper, compelling Congress to authorize a new issue of paper money.[187] Maria expressed anxiety over the government's "load of debt" and worried that "property, it has no value. I do not feel that

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[186] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, October 7, 1861, 60.

[187] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, 180n.

banknotes are safe by day. As for gold and silver, one never sees such a thing any longer."[188] A family friend and confident, Valdemar Rudolf Raasloff, the Danish minister to the United States, confirmed Maria fears over the mounting national debt.[189] Again Maria fretted over the American economy. "Our money is 27% below par; gold is at 20% premium."[190] As she weighed the consequences of the country's fragile condition, she wondered, "What is to become of the poor?"[191]

Maria had experienced the effects of wartime economy in her own household, watching the prices for food and other staple commodities increase. As she struggled to accommodate rising expenditures with her personal budget, she noted her husband's application of the principles of household finance to the nation's economic crisis. Charles had once remarked to a friend that "our expenses do not exceed the income of our national wealth, which is always increasing despite the war."[192] During the Metropolitan Fair in April 1864, Maria commented on her inability to participate more generously. "Everybody asks of us to give or to buy. I answer that, as the Judge gives forty percent to the government and the soldiers by the depreciation of paper."[193]

By early 1864, Maria had begun to formulate a new patriotic enterprise. In late April, prior to the closing of the Metropolitan Fair, Maria expressed the germ of her idea

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[188] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, September 28, 1862, 180.

[189] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, October 5, 1862, 184.

[190] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, October 10, 1862, 185.

[191] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, February 22, 1863, 222.

[192] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, October 24, 1863, 259.

[193] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, April 7, 1864, 288.

in her diary. She complained that "[a]ll foreigners look at us with astonishment...to see how little we as a people seem to feel the dreadful state of the country. Its finances are crazy and its government is crazy."[194] Maria envisioned encouraging "the ladies, the old aristocracy of the country, to give up buying any imported goods whilst this war lasts. They should especially give up buying expensive silks, laces, shawls, wines...to stop the wild extravagance which seems the fashion by making it vulgar."[195] Her interest in this project echoed the similar efforts of patriotic women who wore home-spun garments and organized spinning bees to dramatize the need for industry and frugality in colonial households during the American Revolution.[196] On May 16, 1864, the Women's Patriotic Association for Diminishing the Use of Imported Luxuries organized under the aegis of the women of the Executive Committee of the Metropolitan Fair.[197]

News accounts of the group's initial meeting, held at the Cooper Institute, indicate that two thousand five hundred ladies attended.[198] Instrumental in publicizing this new women's initiative, the Executive Committee of the Metropolitan Fair had been asked to "call upon the women of New York to show their patriotism."[199] Maria realized that she needed the support of the large umbrella organization of women volunteers to insure

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[194] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, April 17, 1864, 290.

[195] Ibid.

[196] Mary Beth Norton, Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1980), 164-170.

[197] Women's Patriotic Association for Diminishing the Use of Imported Luxuries, Report, (New York: Sanford, Harroun & Co., Printers, 1864).

[198] New York Tribune, 17 May 1864, 8.

[199] Women's Patriotic Association for Diminishing the Use of Imported Luxuries, 16.

widespread participation in her project. The decorated hall featured a dais hung with "various articles of home manufacture." A "large and enthusiastic" audience listened to speeches by the wealthy realtor and philanthropist Peter Cooper, a Reverend Tyng and the businessman William E. Dodge. Charles King, President of Columbia College, presided over the meeting,[200]

The male advisors who spoke at the meeting praised the women in attendance, appealing to their patriotic instincts. Peter Cooper spoke of the "prodigality and extravagance as that which was now spreading its influence over our land."[201] Charles King pointed out the need for "some acts of personal self-denial on a point that was supposed to be very dear to the female heart."[202] All of the women present at the meeting understood their need for male guidance in such an undertaking. The work of the Association and its implications for the war and national economy also required the steady support of men to frame the serious and complicated issues addressed by Maria's project. As a practical matter, women required men's help to obtain the necessary legal incorporation from the state legislature. Maria Daly complained afterwards that the men at the meeting had "prosed fearfully."[203] To her friend Laura Wolcott Gibbs, Maria confided her dislike of their patronizing comments. "They patted us on the back and said they were sure we would be good little dears and give up our laces, French bonnets, and

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[200] New York Tribune, 17 May 1864, 8.

[201] Ibid.

[202] Ibid.

[203] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, May 18, 1864, 297.

sugar plums, if we knew how well the gentlemen would think of us...[T]hey would think us just as pretty in homespun. Mr. Charles King then addressed us as females, a word suggesting, as Mrs. Delafield said, a cat with kittens."[204]

The principal speaker a Professor Hoffman, though equally condescending towards the women, focused upon the economic implications of their decision to forgo imported luxuries. He provided his audience with a statistical analysis of the growing deficit in the nation's trade balance and the concomitant rise in the amount of gold exported as payment. Hoffman estimated that the nation needed to reduce its debt by some seventy-five million dollars in order to fund the costs of the war. He reasoned that the "thing can be done if it be only made fashionable to do it."[205] Hoffman explained that women need not entirely abandon the purchase of finery, rather that one simply "reduce her own personal expenses in dress and jewels."[206]

In addition to the men's speeches, the principal business of this initial meeting concerned a debate over the precise wording of a pledge to be circulated for signatures. Miss Susan B. Anthony of Rochester, New York, spoke to the group on the "indefiniteness of the pledge."[207] After the women's leadership conferred with the men on the dais, the following oath passed by a small majority. "We, the undersigned, during the continuance of this war of rebellion, pledge ourselves to refrain from the purchase of

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[204] Ibid.

[205] New York Tribune, 17 May 1864, 8.

[206] Ibid.

[207] New York Times, 17 May 1864, 8. See also Dictionary of Notable American Women, s.v. "Anthony, Susan B."

imported articles of luxury for which those of home manufacture or production can be substituted."[208] Despite this straightforward statement of intent, many in attendance had desired a more "stringent" oath. Others claimed that the group's lack of unanimity regarding the pledge could be attributed to the large numbers of importers who attended the meeting.

The meeting adjourned with the women of the Executive Committee of the Metropolitan Fair "having discharged the duty which they undertook in regard to the movement against imported luxuries...and leave it to be organized and carried forward by others."[209] Women held a second meeting a few days later at the home of Louisa Lee Schuyler at 2 Great Jones Street. At this time, those in attendance elected Maria Daly to serve as President of the new group. Others named as officers included Mrs. Ogden Hoffman as Treasurer and Miss Anne S. Edwards as Secretary.[210] Several committees were also appointed to carry out the association's business regarding the city, national correspondence, and manufactures. A pledge book was presented for signatures and signed by the several hundred women who attended the meeting.

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[208] New York Times, 30 May 1864, 9.

[209] Ibid.

[210] Mrs. Ogden Hoffman, daughter of Honorable Samuel L. Southard of New Jersey, was the widow of a notable criminal attorney in New York City. Ogden Hoffman moved to New York in 1826 where he established his reputation as a prosecutor. Hoffman became interested in politics and won election to several state and national posts, including United States Congress. Hoffman also served as New York State Attorney General from 1854 to 1855. Hoffman is best remembered for winning an acquittal for Richard P. Robinson, the man accused of murdering Helen Jewett. Ogden Hoffman died in New York at age sixty three in 1856. New York Times, 2 May 1856, 4;3 May 1856, 1; 5 May 1856, 3. See also Timothy J. Gilfoyle, 92 - 98; 100 - 101. Anne S. Edwards, the daughter of George Edwards of New York, died in 1898 at the age of seventy-five in Plainfield, New Jersey. New York Times, 3 December 1898, 8.

The 1864 report of the Women's Patriotic Association indicates the hard work and dedication of the fledgling group's membership. The New York organization corresponded with women in Boston who began to organize a satellite movement "against extravagant and mischievous expenditure."[211] This Boston association, in turn, contacted the Ways and Means Committee of the United States House of Representatives for an opinion on the feasibility of the matter. In New York, Louisa Schuyler undertook a letter writing campaign in which she began to contact domestic manufacturers requesting statistical information and pattern cards. Additionally, the President of New York's Metropolitan Bank responded to a query from the Association regarding his opinion on the practicability of the women's proposal. In short, he concluded that if the reform could be accomplished "even partially," it would effectively "raise the value of paper much nearer the standard of gold, reduce prices of all commodities, and gradually...restore the Government."[212]

Several days later, on May 30, an article addressed to "The Women of New York" identified by commodity some of the items called into question and the amounts spent nationally on their importation. This analysis, gleaned from import and export tables cited the following goods as luxuries. These items included: buttons; cotton goods, viz: cords, galloons, gimps, thread, twist, yarn and piece goods; dolls and toys of all kinds; feathers and flowers, artificial and ornamental; glass; gems, set and not set; jewelry; hats and bonnets; laces and embroideries; boots and shoes; paper–as fancy boxes, cards, paper

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[211] Woman's Patriotic Association for Diminishing the Use of Imported Luxuries, 18.

[212] Ibid., 21.

hangings, writing paper, etc.; silks, manufactured; soap, perfumed and otherwise; umbrellas, parasols and sunshades; wood, manufactured as furniture, etc.; wool and worsted, manufactured.[213] This study further asserted that a substantial reduction in the quantity of these imported items would not significantly impact the national income derived from customs duties as any loss would be off-set by an appreciation in the value of the currency. If successful, this women's movement could result in a gold surplus in the national Treasury.

The Women's Patriotic Association also aimed to discourage the importation of luxury items by merchants and the substitution of a domestically made product whenever appropriate . The organization's report included a letter of May 11th addressed to Louisa Lee Schuyler from J. C. Howe & Co., a Manchester, New Hampshire, textile manufacturer.[214] Schuyler had previously distinguished herself through her efficient and orderly management of the Women's Central Association of Relief. The Howe firm's communication asserted that some retail establishments "disguised" American goods with "foreign tickets and labels to insure a more ready sale."[215] The Howe firm, in complimenting the women's initiative, also included pattern cards of its wares. The Howe firm's letter further stated that it employed 2,000 hands, resulting in a daily government tax of over $500 per day. Regardless of the numbers of domestic textile workers who would benefit from the anti-luxury movement, Maria Daly concluded by September that

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[213] Women's Patriotic Association for Diminishing the Use of Imported Luxuries, 6-7.

[214] Ibid., 21-22.

[215] Ibid.

"our manufacturers are very little worthy of our patriotic assistance." She considered that domestic suppliers were "[n]ot content, as manufacturers abroad are, with a certain percentage, they at once raise their prices to as high a mark as will enable them to undersell the foreign article. And having no pride in making a good article, they make it as flimsy as possible, compatible with its sale." Daly also remained suspicious of the excessive prices charged for food. She concluded that "nonconsumption" was the only available means to lower merchants' demands.[216]

Despite her concerns over enlisting the full support of New York's merchant community, Maria remained optimistic over the outcome of the Association's proposal. For her, the principal difficulty in achieving the group's purpose lay within the membership itself. Maria complained of the urgency with which some ladies approached the task, finding that they "wish to push it forward much too fast." For her part, Maria desired that the work of the Association proceed "gradually and systematically." She complained of the "zeal" of Miss Mary Hamilton and Miss Schuyler. Mary Hamilton, a granddaughter of Alexander Hamilton, had also played an instrumental role in the organization of the Women's Central Association of Relief. Maria confided, "I plainly see they have made me president but wish to rule themselves. I shall have to give my opinion officially, and I am afraid of Miss Mary. I must try and write out my views on the subject."[217]

Maria did not waiver in her refusal to accept a token position with an organization that she had originated. At the same time, she realized that the Women's Patriotic

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[216] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, September 25, 1864, 306, passim.

[217] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, June 8, 1864, 299.

Association required the support and organizational skills of the female leadership of the Metropolitan Fair. Maria knew that she must be prepared to express the logic behind her advocacy of a gradual approach in order to maintain control of the organization. Mrs. Meagher once realized her need to write her remarks on the fund raising for military banners when challenged by the wife of an influential judge. Maria now understood her own need for preparation when faced with the opposition of her social equals. Wary of the public sway and proven administrative abilities of women like Mary Hamilton and Louisa Schuyler, Maria clarified her reasoning for the group's gradual approach. She knew from her experience with Mrs. Meager that advance preparation could deflect the legitimacy of extemporaneous counter-proposals, demonstrating her desire to serve as the group's leader. Furthermore, Maria fully understood the social importance attached to her ability to retain more than nominal position within the organization.

Maria did not wish to lose the prestige attached to the presidency of the Women's Patriotic Association. She appreciated her own lack of discretionary income necessary to the maintenance of her elite status. Consequently, her ability to assume a leadership role in this new charity became critical to her public identity. Maria had previously shown that she could not always subordinate her interests to the direction of other women. While she did not wish a confrontation with the leadership of the Metropolitan Fair, she knew that she would have to justify her continuing role as president of the new organization. Maria realized that if she bowed to the wishes of others, her personal prestige and that of her family would suffer. Maria Daly did not need public philanthropy as a social ladder to enhance her prominence among New York elites. Instead, charitable work became the

means by which Maria maintained her family status. In this way, Maria's skillful application of feminine influence became instrumental to the realization of her social goals.

Conclusion

The surrender of Confederate forces in April 1865 at Appomattox, Virginia, obviated the need for the Women's Patriotic Association. Although this charity concluded its operations, Maria Daly continued to seek benevolent solutions for her social concerns as patriotic expression and to address need. Nonetheless, the years of Civil War forced Maria to recognize the importance of wealth to New York's women elites. Maria owed her elite status to the Lydig family's ability to accumulate and maintain wealth. In choosing to marry Charles Patrick Daly, a man of humble background and modest means, Maria risked losing the comfortable circumstances that had characterized her previous life. Maria persisted, however, in her determination to marry for love rather than accommodate the wishes of her prominent family.

As a married woman, Maria lived well by the standards of the day. Her father contributed a house in a polite neighborhood as a part of Maria's wedding settlement. Maria also entered marriage with a dowry of $20,000. Despite this money, Maria often found the need to economize. Her husband, a Justice on New York's Court of Common Pleas, received only a modest annual income. Determined to protect her social position, Maria reconciled her household income with her patrician expectations for participation in New York society.

The years of Civil War made this task more burdensome as prices for household commodities rose and the currency depreciated. Maria, however, possessed the luxury of

time to devote to charitable projects. Benevolent work became one way that Maria could maintain her social prominence. This is not to imply that Maria did not recognize the genuine merit of causes she championed. She displayed in her charities the same determination and independence that had informed her decision to marry. Lacking the money to wear the lavish fashions enjoyed by many of her friends, charity became important to Maria's self-definition and the means by which she established her social power.

The war years also saw the rise of new fortunes in the city. Maria commented upon the spending of shoddy entrepreneurs who profited at the expense of the Union cause. These newly wealthy individuals now had access to the same clothes and jewelry that separated society from others. Maria did not acknowledge that her own family had prospered under similar circumstances during the American Revolution. Instead, the new wealth of others alarmed her, threatening the security of her social standing. Much of the activity surrounding the United States Sanitary Commission's Metropolitan Fair reinforced Maria's anxiety. The rich conflated patriotism with their ability to donate and purchase goods at the Fair. Newspapers fanned a competitive spiral of public giving by printing the names and contributions of the wealthy. Wealthy women had similarly distinguished themselves through their material display at the Prince of Wales Ball in 1860. Just four years later at the Metropolitan Fair, the amount of one's contribution to the Sanitary Commission brought social recognition. Although Maria complained of the hypocrisy of this phenomenon, she, too, was disingenuous. The Dalys literally could not afford to see their names listed with those of other generous contributors.

Already a woman of some social authority, Maria declined the opportunity to participate in the Fair's Knickerbocker Kitchen. Ostensibly, she acted out of a desire to protect her womanly privacy and discourage the scrutiny and comment of casual visitors to the Fair. The booth, however, reminded Maria as well as others in society of their need to honor the past and its traditions. The public's interest in the Knickerbocker display also indicated a willingness on the part of the community as a whole to consider the relevance of the city's history to its present circumstance. Maria formulated a plan for the Women's Patriotic Association that seemingly merged the past into the present. In targeting the excessive spending of the wealthy as a means to alleviate the national war debt, Maria blended her own status concerns with issues of wealth and patriotism. Her resolve to retain leadership of this project foreshadows how she would direct other charities that attracted her interest. Cleverly, Maria concealed her own social ambition in an expression of patriotic intent. Her new organization drew the support of wealthy women because it permitted them the opportunity to restate the homespun values of the Knickerbocker Kitchen, thereby reinforcing their own status concerns. The economy of purchasing domestically made products now informed the tastes of the wealthy. Yet in making the purchases of imported luxuries unfashionable, wealth and how it was used again became important to social status.

WOMEN, WEALTH AND POWER: NEW YORK CITY, 1860 - 1900

by

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Maria Lydig Daly: Charities on Her Own

Maria Daly' organization of the Women's Patriotic Association during the final year of the Civil War indicates the manner in which she would structure her future charitable work. Maria had learned how to create solutions to social problems at a time of national emergency. She also demonstrated her ability to attract the interest and commitment of other women. At the same time, Maria proved herself to be a woman of determination and grit. She did not always respond to the direction of others. Rather, she often preferred to follow her own path.

This chapter considers how Maria's independent nature served her charitable and social purposes from 1866 to 1890. Much of Maria's philanthropy during this period centered upon charities that she organized and personally directed. That other women joined Maria in her varied causes speaks to the need of many women to find personal fulfillment and social opportunity in benevolence. Throughout this period, charity continued to unite women in common purpose. Although Maria focused much of her energy on local problems, she also collaborated with women outside the city on patriotic causes.

During this period, the nature of benevolence began to change. Charities increasingly relied upon public money to maintain their services. State and local

governments increased standards of accountability, requiring oversight of those charities that accepted public funds. In New York, the State Charities Aid Association formed to coordinate and supervise the efforts of local institutions. Although one of her charities required government financing, Maria resisted the attempt of outside monitors to manage her organization. She believed in the efficacy of women's direct participation in charity. Maria's traditional approach to benevolence resonated with other women throughout the Gilded Age.

This chapter considers chronologically the specific projects that captured Maria's imagination after the Civil War. Initially, Maria focused her energy upon the Union Home and School, an institution established to assist children displaced by the Union war effort. To secure the orphanage's financial security, Maria undertook an innovative fund raising method that drew criticism in some circles. She weathered the existence of a competing institution and a public scandal over the Home's accounting practices. Through all of this adversity, Maria maintained the public's interest in the Home through her use of people and events that kept the orphanage and its mission before the public. Maria's management of the Union Home and School, however, consumed her resources of time and social influence.

To some extent, Maria governed her charitable participation according to her social needs. She withdrew her support from the Nursery and Children's Hospital, a fashionable charity supported by other socially prominent women. She later became involved with the Women's Centennial Union, an organization that raised money to honor feminine accomplishment at the national Centennial Exposition held in Philadelphia in the

summer of 1876. As Maria participated in this cause, she received an overture to assume the leadership of the state chapter of the Mount Vernon Association. Flattered by this offer, Maria's response indicates the careful thought she gave to her charitable commitments.

Finally, this chapter looks at two local charities that Maria helped to organize. The first of these, a kindergarten project, reflects Maria's longstanding interest in the needs of children. Initiated under the auspices of the Children's Aid Society, the Kindergarten ultimately put Maria at cross purposes with the parent organization. By this point, however, Maria had gathered the commitment of other wealthy women to sustain the venture. Maria also played a role in the formation of a cooking school, mirroring her interest in women's vocational education. The New York Cooking School and its Director Juliet Corson innovated in the field of scientific cookery, attracting wide public interest. In both of these undertakings, Maria drew upon her experience with the Union Home and School to fund and staff her charities in a manner that would insure their future.

A Pet Institution

Following the Civil War, Maria Daly devoted much of her energy to the Union Home and School. There is some indication that Maria helped to found this institution, serving as first vice-president under the leadership of Mrs. Drake Mills.[1] The Union Home's First Report, however, does not reveal Maria's participation in the Home's early history. The First Report names Mrs. A. D. Gillette of 37 West 23rd Street as President,

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[1] Harold E. Hammond, A Commoner's Judge, 196.

with Mrs. Drake Mills of 23 Fifth Avenue serving as Vice-President.[2] Once involved in administration of the Union Home and School, however, Maria's commitment occupied significant amounts of time.

In May 1861, shortly after the fall of Fort Sumter, South Carolina, a group of "ladies resident of the city" organized the Union Home and School.[3] This orphanage addressed the needs of children either temporarily or permanently displaced during the Civil War. Originally located in a building on West 75th Street at Eleventh Avenue, the Home furnished clothing, board and schooling for children left in its care. In the beginning, the Home relied upon private donations to maintain its services. The New York Attorney General initially refused state funding because of the wording of the original charter.[4] Having failed to meet the statutory requirement for governmental

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[2] Union Home and School, First Report, (New York: Livesey Brothers, 1863), 3. Mrs. Drake Mills, the wife of a businessman in the city, was also the mother-in-law of mayor Fernando Wood. In 1872, Mrs. Mills fell to her death from a hotel window in Washington, D. C. while trying to cool herself. New York Times, 5 July 1872, 5; 7 July 1872, 1. Hannah J. Gillette was the wife of Rev. A. D. Gillette, pastor of Cavalry Baptist Church. Gillette served this church from August 1852 until poor health forced his retirement in 1863. Under his leadership, the church relocated from lower Manhattan to West 23rd Street. Gillette subsequently served as pastor of the First Baptist Church of Washington, D. C. and the Baptist Church of Sing Sing, New York. He died in 1882. New York Times, 25 August 1882, 5. Hannah Gillette died in New York in 1902 at the age of 85. New York Times, 28 September 1902, 16.

[3] Union Home and School, Charter and Constitution, (New York: G. F. Nesbitt & Co., 1867), 3.

[4] Union Home and School, First Report, 6. As a result of this statutory reading, the Male Advisory Board of the Home on February 13, 1862 determined the organization to have "no legal existence as an incorporated society...yet approving of the object contemplated by the managers suspend or discontinue their operations under their present organization; and we recommend that there be formed for the same or similar objects, a society or association under the general law...We consider that our duties in the premises have been discharged and are now terminated." New York Times, February 27, 1862, 8.

assistance, the group officially reincorporated on April 22, 1862. From that date the orphanage operated as "The Union Home and School for the Education and Maintenance of the Children of our Volunteers who are Left Unprovided For." Reincorporation, in addition to the promise of funding by state and local governments, gave the institution's Managers the power to purchase and hold real estate.[5]

Even without government support, the First Report of January 1863 indicates that the Home had provided for one hundred twenty-two boys and girls between the ages of eighteen months and thirteen years since its founding.[6] An average of sixty children, at any given time, resided in the institution. Without state sanction, the Home could not receive funds from the New York City Board of Education or the city's Common Council. Consequently, the new institution depended largely upon private contributions of money and supplies. The Treasurer's Report for 1863 itemized individual monetary donations, small offerings of five and ten dollars each. Sponsors raised additional capital through a Fair, which generated income of two hundred fifty-six dollars. With small stipends from the City Relief Committee and the Relief for Deaf Mute Children, the Home generated sufficient income to meet its expenses of $10,561.90 for the first eighteen months of operation. This sum averaged an expenditure of about $621.28 per month or about eighty-six dollars per child.[7]

In view of the organization's precarious financial picture, the publication of its

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[5] New York State Laws, 1862, chapter 420, 752. See also New York Times, November 11, 1863, 5.

[6] New York Times, 8 November 1863, 5.

[7] Union Home and School, First Report, 9.

First Report helped to increase public awareness of the institution. The report, written to elicit sympathy, stated that most children arrived at the Home in "utter destitution."[8] Some residents had literally been rescued from the street while others had been placed under institutional care by parents either too poor or fragile to provide for their children. Not only did the report list the Home's present occupants, it designated children who had lost their fathers in battle. A statement from a physician who volunteered his services attested to the "general good health" of the residents.[9] Additionally, testimonials from some of the children confirmed the impression of a well-intentioned, though under-financed, organization struggling to cope with pressing need.

Within six months of the publication of its First Report, the charity qualified for government assistance. In May 1863, the New York State Legislature appropriated $3,000 for the Home which enabled a three year lease in larger quarters on West 58th Street near Eighth Avenue.[10] This new location included adjacent outdoor space for a children's play area and a garden for the cultivation of flowers, fruits and vegetables. News accounts indicate that the Home's leadership steadily worked to enhance public awareness of the institution. The Home's managers held a gala second anniversary celebration at the Academy of Music in June 1863.[11] A second Fair, planned for October of the same year, featured the contributions of public school children to "show us what

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[8] Ibid., 25.

[9] Ibid., 8.

[10] New York Times, May 26, 1863, 2.

[11] New York Times, 10 June 1863, 2.

little folks can do."[12] This bazaar, held at the City Assembly Rooms, included contributions from "some thirty or forty" Protestant congregations arranged at separate tables. The Fair also contained separate performance space for dramatic readings and choral concerts.[13] In December, a choral performance at the Academy of Music by one hundred and twenty-five children from the Home dramatized the continuing need for orphanage.[14]

Despite this effort on the part of the management, the Union Home and School struggled financially. Female managers organized a subsequent Fair in October 1864 to generate revenue.[15] Periodic newspaper articles on the Home's activities helped to remind the public of its mission.[16] The Third Annual Report of January 1865 indicates an operating deficit of $728.74. By this date, the institution relied upon stipends from the city's Board of Supervisors and Common Council as well as New York state for its principal funding. Though Fair proceeds and cash contributions had increased, the Home's annual income amounted to less than $16,000. Moreover, the Third Report described conditions at the facility as "overcrowded." By 1864, the orphanage had aided two hundred seventy-eight children for the prior year and presently housed one hundred twenty-two residents.

The Third Report suggests the frustration of the women Managers who, without

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[12] New York Times, 7 October 1863, 8.

[13] New York Times, 27 October 1863, 8.

[14] New York Times, 13 December 1863, 8.

[15] New York Times, 22 October 1864, 8; 26 October 1864, 1.

[16] New York Times, 10 July 1864, 8; 20 October 1864, 8.

adequate money, balanced their desire for a home-like atmosphere with the realities of an institutional environment. The Home's behavioral guidelines applied the standards of "parental discipline" to maintain order. The children observed regular schedules and undertook assigned chores necessary to the Home's upkeep as a part of their daily routine. Residents could not leave the facility without permission which suggests that some children ran away. Rudimentary schooling aimed to help children "to learn and perform faithfully the duties belonging to their several spheres in life." Although the orphanage boasted of special Thanksgiving and July Fourth celebrations, it lacked a permanent address, a library, and nursery furniture for its youngest residents. The Union Home, during its early years, struggled to accommodate a "floating population" as some fathers quickly reclaimed their children upon their return from the front, while other children required long term care.[17]

As structured and maintained, the Union Home and School typifies the accepted approach to child welfare in the mid-nineteenth century. The Home, a privately chartered institution, served the needs of poor families impacted by the war crisis. Often such families, including extended members, could not care for children and sought the services of an asylum. Though technically an orphan asylum, only a few of the children at the Home had actually lost both parents. Available records of the Home indicate that some children were "half-orphans" who had lost a father at the front and whose surviving mother could not keep the family intact. Most of the children, however, had two living

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[17] Union Home and School, Third Annual Report, (New York: S. Halett, Printers, 1865), passim.

parents and could anticipate family reunification after a period of time. Asylums like the Union Home proved instrumental to the lives of poor children.[18] As the Union Home and School specifically served the needs of soldiers' children, applicants needed only to produce the "papers of the father to show they are truly children of soldiers" in order to gain admission.[19] The Home did not require "papers binding children for a certain number of years" as a further indication of the temporary nature of most placements.[20] The Home promised "gladly" to reunite families as soon as the "needy mother or disabled father" could receive their children.[21]

Like other similar institutions, the Union Home and School needed both private and public monies in order to survive. Throughout much of its early history, the Home remained under the private control of its Managers, requiring extensive fund raising projects. The historian Timothy Hacsi observes that such privately managed institutions operated according to three ideal types: "protective, isolating, and integrative asylums."[22] The Union Home and School practically served as a combination of the protective and integrative prototypes. The Home both sheltered and nourished dependent children. It did not attempt to serve as a replacement for adults whose parental skills had been found lacking. As a consequence, the Home's residents had frequent outside contact with family

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[18] Timothy A. Hacsi, Second Home: Orphan Asylums and Poor Families in America, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 1. See also Homer Folks, The Care of Destitute, Neglected and Delinquent Children, (Albany, New York: J. B. Lyon Co., 1900), 36-39.

[19] Union Home and School, Fifth Annual Report, (New York: G. F. Nesbitt, 1867), 5.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Timothy A. Hacsi, 6.

and other interested parties. As a non-sectarian institution, the Home did not attempt to preserve any particular religious or ethnic tradition. Elementary schooling and Sabbath Day training educational programs attempted to prepare residents "to occupy positions of usefulness and respectability."[23] In many instances, the Home provided out-placement services for the children in its care. Annual reports, however, do not provide any information regarding the numbers of children placed in private homes. Regardless of its effort to secure individual placements, society accepted institutions like the Union Home and School as an alternative for dependent children.[24] For children set adrift by the Civil War, an orphan asylum offered a relatively safe environment, sufficient food, some health care as well as moral training and a rudimentary education.

City and state governments relied upon the services of privately maintained institutions to ameliorate family dislocations produced by the wartime emergency. Slowly, the Union Home and School began to attract the support of New York's women elites. The Home's Managers reached out to prominent women. In May 1865, Maria Daly received an unsolicited letter from the Home's president Mrs. Drake Mills requesting the "favor of a visit from you at the Institution."[25] Though Mrs. Mills expressed her willingness to "conduct" Maria's visit to the Home, the precise circumstances surrounding her decision to accept responsibility for the maintenance of the orphanage and its finances

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[23] Union Home and School, Eighth Annual Report, (New York: Douglas Taylor's Commercial Printing, 1870), 20.

[24] Geraldine Youcha, Minding the Children: Child Care in America from Colonial Times to the Present, (New York: Scribner, 1995), 173-74.

[25] Mrs. Drake Mills, "Letter to Maria Lydig Daly," May 3, 1865, Daly Papers.

are unknown.[26] Maria's diary first referred to the Home in late 1865. On this occasion, she traveled "through all the rain ... to see how the changes I had ordered in buying butler's meal wholesale had worked. Found it would be much more economical and much better liked."[27] Maria, having ordered the substitution of a kitchen staple, clearly had assumed some administrative responsibility for the Home by the end of 1865. A few weeks later, on Christmas Eve, she helped to prepare a holiday dinner for the children.[28] In her final entry of 1865, Maria remarked upon her work in "getting an appropriation passed" for the orphanage "in which I find myself deeply interested."[29]

Maria's commitment to the Union Home and School flowered in the years following the Civil War. The institutions's Fifth Annual Report, issued in January 1867, indicates the increasing presence of women elites thoroughly seasoned in the work of benevolence. By this date, Maria Daly had been elected Acting President of the institution. Many of the Home's former officers and Managers had either accepted lesser administrative roles or had been replaced by women better known in the circles of fashionable philanthropy. Under Maria's administrative scheme, Julia Dent Grant, wife of General Ulysses S. Grant, served as the organization's President. Jessie Benton Fremont,

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[26] Ibid.

[27] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, 24 November 1865, 378.

[28] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, December 24, 1865, 381. See also MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, Christmas Day, 1865, 381 -382.

[29] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, December 30, 1865, 382. New York City's Board of Aldermen first authorized a payment of $5000 in December 1865. New York Times, 28 December 1865, 3.

wife of General John C. Fremont had joined the group as First Vice President.[30] Like Maria herself, there is no evidence that any of these women had previously served the Union Home and School. Maria realized, however, that these prominent women could generate the financial support necessary to the Home's survival. The involvement of such well-known women would attract commitments of time and money from less prominent women who would now wish to have their names linked to the undertaking. Maria also understood that even nominal participation from the wives of military leaders would help to remind the general public of the patriotic necessity to support children displaced by their father's service to the Union cause.

Maria Daly knew those women whose aid she solicited. She first made the social acquaintance of General and Mrs. Grant when they visited New York in November 1865. The Dalys paid a social call upon the Grants as Charles Daly had been designated to inquire whether the General would "accept" a reception in his honor from the city. Maria commented afterwards on Julia Grant's "pleasant, honest smile" and gracious manner.[31] That same evening, the Dalys attended the opera where they received an invitation to join the Grants in their proscenium box. Flattered by the Grants' attention, Maria took pains to note the details of the "great reception" that honored the couple a week later. New York's civic and social elite feted the Grants at the Fifth Avenue Hotel amid a "shower of fireworks" and the cheers of a "dreadful" crowd of around two thousand persons

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[30] Union Home and School, Fifth Annual Report, (New York: G. L. Nesbitt, 1867), 4.

[31] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, November 15, 1865, 371.

assembled outside.[32] Throughout the noisy celebration and the jostle of prominent elites who scrambled to position themselves near the Grants, Maria observed Julia Grant to be "very natural and unaffected...[with] a ladylike self-possession which is pleasing."[33]

Unlike her superficial, social acquaintance with Julia Grant, Maria Daly knew Jessie Fremont well. Jessie Fremont, born in 1824, was the second child of the five-term Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton and his wife Elizabeth McDowell.[34] Jessie, a precocious child, benefitted from Washington's rich social atmosphere. Schooled by private tutors in foreign languages, Jessie later attended Miss English's Academy in Washington and read in the Congressional Library. She credited her principal education, however, to her father who often engaged her in literary and historical discussions. Jessie frequently served as her father's official hostess as her mother remained a semi-invalid for much of her life. In 1840, Jessie met then Lieutenant John Charles Fremont who had just completed a topographical exploration of the Dakota territory. Jessie's father initially tried to discourage his daughter from pursuing the penniless Fremont. Nonetheless, the couple married secretly in October 1841. Once Benton approved the match, the Fremonts settled in Washington.

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[32] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, November 21, 1865, 375-376.

[33] Ibid. See also MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," March 4, 1866. As the corruption of Ulysses Grant's presidency unfolded, Maria changed her positive assessment of Julia Grant. Maria concluded that Julia Grant viewed the Presidency as "her family crib at which to feed." MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," June 11, 1880; September 13, 1880.

[34] Phillips, Catherine Coffin, Jessie Benton Fremont: A Woman Who Made History, (San Francisco: Nash, 1935); Dictionary of Notable American Women, s.v. "Fremont, Jessie Benton." See also Fremont, Lily, Recollections of Elizabeth Benton Fremont, Daughter of the Pathfinder General John C. Fremont and Jessie Benton Fremont, (New York: Hitchcock, 1919); Nevins, Allan, Fremont, Pathmaker of the West, (New York: Longmans, Green, 1955).

Throughout her married life, Jessie Fremont took an active interest in her husband's career. She collaborated with him in writing the official reports of his first two scientific expeditions to the West. Fremont's third expedition did not prove fruitful as he became militarily involved in the controversial annexation of California. Jessie defended her husband's actions in an extended interview with President James K. Polk The Fremonts settled on a large estate west of San Francisco, prospering in land speculation and through the discovery of gold. Now wealthy, the couple travelled in Europe where Fremont's reputation as the American Pathfinder eased their access to fashionable circles. At the outbreak Civil War, Fremont became commander of the Department of the West, with headquarters in St. Louis. Jessie went to Washington to defend her husband's emancipation of slavery in Missouri to President Abraham Lincoln. Jessie did not succeed in her attempt to influence Lincoln who ultimately relieved Fremont of his military command. Despite this reversal, she continued to support the Western Sanitary Commission, raising funds and recruiting volunteers.

The lives of Maria Daly and Jessie Fremont converged in many points of shared experience. Both women had enjoyed privileged childhoods in prominent households. Both women had resisted family pressure to marry men from modest backgrounds. Both women, whose husbands achieved public prominence, enjoyed apparently happy and successful marriages. Each woman had also acted to protect and further her husband's career. Finally, both Maria Daly and Jessie Fremont shared an interest in western settlement. Jessie Fremont helped her husband write of his explorations of the West, spending lengthy periods of her married life in California and Arizona. Maria Daly, after

her husband discontinued his land investments in Minnesota and Wisconsin, continued to finance a family friend Edward Peltz in projects that encouraged emigration to the Midwest.[35] Finally, both women shared literary aspirations.

In view of their many similarities, Maria Daly recognized Jessie Fremont as an "enterprising, ambitious woman."[36] Jessie Fremont cultivated Maria's friendship with private carriage rides through Central Park and invitations to visit the Fremont estate near Tarrytown, Westchester County, New York.[37] Cosmopolitan in her outlook , Jessie Fremont was unfamiliar with New York society. Fremont cultivated Maria's friendship in her campaign to secure her position among the city's women elites. As a result of Fremont's solicitations, Maria softened her judgement to see Jessie as "very brilliant and original...[with] no affectation of manner and no hypocrisy."[38] Nevertheless, Maria still questioned Fremont's ability to succeed in New York society because "[n]obody likes so much fresh breeze and so much sunlight; it disturbs the lazy and frightens the hypocritical.[39]

Fremont's initial reluctance to serve as a officer of the Union Home and School is surprising. In an 1865 letter, Jessie offered Maria a number of excuses stating why she would be a poor candidate for the orphanage's senior management. Fremont indicated

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[35] Maria underwrote the expense of several trips made by Pelz to Washington, D. C. where he lobbied government officials on behalf of his projects. MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861 - 1865, xxv. See also December 6, 1862, 203 - 204.

[36] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, February 16, 1864, 276.

[37] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, April 23, 1864, 292;

[38] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, December 6, 1864, 321.

[39] Ibid.

that she "could literally be of no service during summer weather and it is merely a form to put my name among those who really work...I'm no power like Mrs. Grant."[40] Fremont's modest dismissal of her own fitness for office confirmed Maria's shrewdness in enlisting the name of Julia Grant for her charity's letterhead. That Maria ultimately persuaded Jessie, confirms Maria's ability to prevail upon her peers.

The Dalys visited the Fremont estate in Tarrytown in December 1866. Maria praised the Fremonts' "beautiful place...everything in excellent taste, picturesque yet comfortable, elegant but useful." Maria thought Jessie a "charming hostess" with "old Virginia hospitality in her." Nevertheless, Maria continued to question Fremont's social ambition as well as the extent of her commitment to the Union Home and School. Maria speculated that Jessie Fremont "[w]ould like to be a woman of fashion, having acquired many ideas from French romances and would like to have a salon. It is not likely she will succeed...She would like to be a queen."[41] To achieve her goal, Jessie Fremont had charted a course to the upper reaches of fashionable society by involving herself in New York's elite charities.

Maria noticed Jessie's participation in the management of The Nursery. This organization had been founded in May 1854 by Mary Delafield Dubois, wife of a prominent Gramercy Park attorney, and Anna R. Emmet, wife of a local medical specialist in the diseases of women and children. Begun in a small house on St. Marks Place in lower Manhattan, The Nursery became the first American institution devoted to the day

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[40] Jessica Benton Fremont, "Letter to Maria Lydig Daly," 1865, Daly Papers.

[41] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," December 5, 1866, passim.

care and medical needs of the children of poor, working women. From the outset, The Nursery's organization cultivated the participation of women elites who donated time and money and staged an annual Charity Ball as a benefit.[42]

Maria commented upon The Nursery in January 1866 when she attended a meeting at the home of Mary Dubois and accepted election as a Manager of the organization.[43] Maria wrote that the "question was to incorporate the Infants Hospital which will take in foundlings. We should have a great work...thousands of children perhaps in time. It was a shocking day."[44] Maria's mention of her election to office of the organization indicates that she was honored by the recognition. Maria's "shock" at the meeting alludes to the discussion surrounding the group's decision to accept foundlings. Public debate over matters of a delicate, sexual nature violated conventional standards of polite behavior. The social implications of an unwanted pregnancy were equally unsavory to a conservative woman like Maria. The Nursery gradually instituted eligibility requirements for foundlings it accepted, offering service only if a pregnancy was the mother's first and if she further qualified as a victim of male lust. "The mother must produce evidence of having borne a good character until the dark shadow of him who ruined her fell across her path."[45] Despite these conditions, The Nursery lost its appeal for Maria within a year. She complained that it "<u>was</u> the most fashionable charity in the city. It is now got rich, second

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[42] Some observers considered The Nursery's Charity Ball to be "*the* great ball of the year in New York." James D. McCabe, Jr., 143.

[43] <u>New York Times</u>, 5 March 1866, 2.

[44] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1896," January 25, 1866.

[45] Unattributed source cited in Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, 811.

rate hands, the crème de la crème having taken up Episcopal Orphans."[46] Maria quickly left The Nursery "because I did not like its management [and] was associated with many...ladies whom I meet no where else."[47]

Maria's experience with The Nursery and her extended remarks on Jessie Fremont suggest the social importance that women elites attached to benevolence. Women, in the decades before the Civil War, used charity to address a range of social issues, including: prison reform; temperance; unemployment; and prostitution Moreover, women launched more radical campaigns against slavery and for woman's rights.[48] As such, public benevolence offered women an acceptable means to express their personal belief and

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[46] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," December 5, 1866.

[47] Ibid.

[48] For literature that frames reform issues in an urban antebellum context see Paul S. Boyer, Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978); Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Religion and the Rise of the American City: The New York City Mission Movement, 1812-1970, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971). For studies of antebellum female benevolence as it relates to evangelical religion see Barbara J. Berg, The Remembered Gate: Origins of American Feminism: The Woman and the City, 1800-1860, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Estelle B. Freedman, Their Sisters' Keepers: Women's Prison Reform in America, 1830-1930, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan press, 1981); Barbara Leslie Epstein, The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America, (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1981). See also Mary P. Ryan, "A Women's Awakening: Evangelical Religion and the Families of Utica, N.Y., 1800-1840," in Janet Wilson James, ed., Women and American Religion, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), 89-110. For further analysis of antebellum reform as it pertains to the intellectual and class issues surrounding feminine benevolence see Mary P. Ryan, Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Nancy A. Hewitt, Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822-1872, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Anne M. Boylan, The Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston, 1797 - 1840, (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002) and "Women in Groups: An Analysis of Women's Benevolent Organizations in New York and Boston, 1797-1840," Journal of American History 71 (December 1984): 497-523;

moral principles. To women like Jessie Fremont, who wished to further a social agenda, a charity's neutral setting offered a valuable opportunity to portray herself favorably to other women elites. Benevolent work introduced women to each other, providing them the chance to apply their domestic values to the greater good. If a striver could not obtain an invitation to the home of a woman elite, she could become better acquainted with the more desirable woman, concealing her social ambition in a worthy cause. Charities also provided many women with the chance to develop organizational and managerial skills which brought the opportunity for personal growth to benevolent work. Many women elites learned that philanthropy could bring immense personal satisfaction. For Elizabeth Christophers Hobson, who pioneered in nursing education, charitable work became "almost a vice."[49]

Through their charitable participation, women ostensibly worked to assist the economic circumstance and moral uplift of others. Maria Daly concluded that "there are so many attractions to tempt all kinds of saints."[50] Maria understood both the complexities of New York society and the range of benevolent alternatives available to women elites. Within the parameters of feminine domesticity, the "saintly" enterprise of public charity spoke to a woman's social values as it reflected her spiritual purity. Charities addressing the needs of dependent children ostensibly served to extend a woman's private standards beyond the home. The Union Home and School demonstrated the feminine "disposition to care for the little orphans..with no other resort than their

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[49] Elizabeth Christophers Hobson, 186.

[50] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," December 5, 1866.

tender care or the poor house."[51] No one could question the social need to assist children displaced by war. In associating herself with child welfare, conservative women like Maria Daly could display their impulse to moral reform while avoiding unwanted associations with less desirable populations in need.

Sincerely moved, countless women like Maria devoted their time and resources to the social and moral betterment of the less fortunate. Women could involve themselves in a particular charity for any number of reasons. It would be naive to conclude, however, that a woman forego all implications of personal advantage in selecting a particular charity. Maria Daly had left the Management of The Nursery within a matter of months. The haste with which she departed this organization indicates how women elites shopped for a charity compatible with their personal benevolent outlook and in keeping with their social ambitions. Maria Daly discontinued work for The Nursery over unstated issues of personal delicacy. She revealed to her diary, however, that she dropped the charity because its membership included many women whom she did not know socially. In view of her time constraints, Maria ended her involvement with The Nursery because its membership did not offer her a potential social benefit. The motivation behind Maria's dedication to the Union Home and School also addresses Maria's desire to leave a personal legacy of accomplishment. Childless, Maria had the time to devote to the orphanage. Cloaking her decision in the vocabulary of private domesticity, she stated her wish that the Home would "do in place of children to keep our names alive before men."[52]

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[51] New York Times, 21 November 1866, 8.

[52] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," December 5, 1866.

In the end, Maria could only question the ambition of Jessie Fremont because she recognized those same tendencies in herself.

That Maria enlisted Jessie Fremont to join Julia Grant and herself in the management of the Union Home and School is an indication of Maria's determined vision for the institution. She noted that the Home's management included "[n]o fashionable women but ourselves."[53] Realizing Jessie's "very lukewarm" response to the organization, Maria surrounded herself with others who could devote time and resources to the Home, including her sister-in-law and three of her sisters. Charles Daly, moreover, now chaired an expanded twenty-two member male Advisory Committee along with three army generals and others of social and political prominence. Maria also joined the Home's Executive and Purchasing Committees.

Maria's diary indicates the energy she devoted to what came to be known as "my pet institution."[54] Her correspondence files, reveal significant amounts of time simply devoted to writing letters to groups and to individuals requesting money and public support for the work of the Home.[55] One letter she received from Thomas Godwin, clerk of the New York Common Council advised that she "address all the Aldermen of the whole board by name in your notes, as well as on the envelope. It will prepare them to act

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[53] Ibid.

[54] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," March 6, 1866.

[55] William Boese, Office of the Clerk for the Board of Education, "Letter to Maria Lydig Daly," December 29, 1865; Andrew Warner, "Letter to Maria Lydig Daly,"June 22, 1866; Major General Stewart Van Vliet, "Letter to Maria Lydig Daly," August 16, 1866; Office of the Secretary of State of New York, "Letter to Maria Lydig Daly," December 3, 1866; W. A. Coffert, Office of the Tribune, "Letter to Maria Lydig Daly," December 5, 1866, Daly Papers.

more promptly...This will involve upon you the additional labor of writing eleven more...it would be better to address them to their private residences, than drop them in their boxes in this office."[56] Maria also worked with her friend, the actor Edwin Booth, in staging a benefit for the Home.[57] This prompted more letters to individuals regarding the sale of tickets for the event.[58] The Home's administration needed more specialized correspondence as in the instance of several queries from Father J. T. Hecker of Saint Paul's Church, who complained of the lack of Catholic instruction in the orphanage.[59]

Despite Maria's commitment of time to the Union Home and School, the institution remained chronically underfunded. Maria, in addition to financing the Home's daily services, hoped to raise enough money to construct a "large building for the beginning of a hospital."[60] The Home's management, regarding this goal, planned a huge fair, a gift concert and charitable lottery to be held over a two week period in December 1866. Of these events, the fair staged at the Public Hall on the corner of Broadway and 23rd Streets remained open from December 10 to 22, 1866. Maria felt obliged "to attend once every day so that I can do nothing else."[61] This proven fund raising device failed to

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[56] Thomas Godwin, Office of the Clerk of the Common Council, "Letter to Maria Lydig Daly," December 3, 1866, Daly Papers.

[57] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," March 6, 1866.

[58] General Francis C. Barlow, "Letter to Maria Lydig Daly," December 11, 1866, Daly Papers.

[59] Father J. T. Hecker, "Letters to Maria Lydig Daly," December 8; December 13; December 20, 1866. Daly Papers.

[60] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," December 21, 1866.

[61] Ibid.

excite the public's imagination and ultimately fell short of Maria's own expectations. By 1866, New York City had enjoyed a surfeit of fairs. Disappointed, Maria hoped that the the lottery's "purchasing committee" would buy any unsold goods to enhance the profits of the fair venture.[62] The ten day fair finally produced only $3,855.56 in revenue for the Home.[63]

To supplement these proceeds, the Home's managers planned a Grand Presentation Festival for the fair's conclusion. This event featured a lottery drawing for items totaling $100,000 in cash and merchandise. As structured, each purchaser of a $1.00 ticket became eligible to participate in the lottery. The Managers of the Home hoped to realize fifty cents from the sale of each ticket, with the remainder used to fund expenses and the purchase of some of the "gifts" distributed to eligible ticket holders.[64] Local merchants donated a majority of the prizes distributed to lottery winners. Maria optimistically noted brisk ticket sales of 30,000 per day as the December 22nd drawing approached.[65]

On the day of the lottery, a crowd of about one thousand people assembled around ten o'clock at Cooper Institute for the first lottery drawing. A total of 422,625 tickets had been distributed to various agents for sale. Of these, 69,763 tickets had been returned as unsold and were subsequently destroyed under police supervision. A balance of

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[62] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," December 21, 1866.

[63] Union Home and School, Fifth Annual Report, , 30.

[64] Ibid., 34.

[65] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," December 21, 1866.

352,962 numbered tickets remained eligible. Every effort had been made to insure the fairness of the public drawing. Major General Stewart Van Vliet presided over the assemblage. Auditing clerks employed by Thomas and Company verified the eligibility of individual tickets. More clerks from the Court of Common Pleas recorded the results. General Van Vliet along with members of the male Advisory Committee, several resident orphans of the Home and a well-known blind teacher of the visually impaired took turns withdrawing tickets from a huge rotating wheel. At first, all prizes valued in excess of seven dollars were drawn. Some of the larger prizes awarded to ticket holders included the following: the present of $10,000 in United States greenbacks; a country residence in Westchester valued at $12,000; a $4000 corner house and lot on Avenue E in Jamaica, Queens, New York; a carriage, complete with horses and bridles; and a $1,500 Steinway grand piano.[66] Less valuable prizes included Harlem real estate, jewelry, gold watches, china and silver plate. The following evening another drawing was held for lesser prizes featuring small amounts of cash, teaspoons and napkin rings. This second event attracted a "different class of people" for whom "a small prize was yet an object."[67] In all, the lottery conferred prizes on 200,000 ticket holders.

The Grand Presentation Festival, though financially successful, generated its share of controversy. Female benevolence had previously raffled donated goods to raise funds. Women had never, however, attempted a lottery on the scale of the Home's planned event. The lottery's success depended upon the large quantity of advance ticket sales to

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[66] New York Times, 29 January 1867, 8.

[67] New York Times, 30 January 1867, 8.

fund the substantial cash awards that had been promised. Some individuals questioned the propriety of feminine participation in what could be construed as a gaming enterprise. The religious press "attacked" the gift lottery, prompting Maria to visit an offending editor. Of this encounter, she noted her "sarcastic" remarks, adding "if we satisfied the law it would be easy to satisfy the Gospel."[68] Doubts over the lottery's suitability persisted in some circles. The New York Times noted the presence of "not more than fifty women and girls" in the large crowd assembled for the first drawing.[69] Furthermore, the male Advisory Committee felt compelled to address the actions of the Home's women Managers in its report of the following year.[70] Pointing to the financial needs of a worthy charity, the Committee sought vindication in the lottery's success. While assuring its readership that the women Managers had acted only at the behest of men, the Advisory Committee noted that the lottery had added $98,998.40 to the coffers of the Union Home and School.

A more serious problem arose over the fees paid to the event's auditors Thomas and Company. Several weeks prior to the drawing, this contractually retained firm attempted to renege on its original agreement and extract additional money from the proceedings. The substantial advance ticket sales for the drawing suggest that Thomas and Company, by the kindest interpretation, underestimated its management costs for the lottery. As a consequence, the firm began to make bank deposits into accounts not

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[68] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," December 5, 1866.

[69] New York Times, 29 January 1867, 8.

[70] Union Home and School, Fifth Annual Report, 32.

authorized by the Union Home and School's management. Maria fully understood the severity of this situation which ultimately threatened the success of the entire venture as well as her own reputation. "Suddenly we find ourselves in the hands of two men, evidently sharpees, professing however at first the greater patriotism. The agreement which the ladies signed I found has been fraudulently altered."[71] To prove these serious charges, Maria relied upon a copy of the group's original agreement. The Home's management now had "reason to doubt the integrity of said Thomas and Company."[72] A statement, signed by the Home's entire Board of Managers, charged that the "paper which Thomas and Co. declare to have been signed by the ladies being not the one read by Mrs. Daly at the meeting."[73]

Maria quickly dispatched members of the male Advisory Committee to assure that the Home received its agreed upon, contractual share of the lottery proceeds. She noted that her husband had been "very active in the matter and by means of giving thirty-three percent to the management."[74] That the lottery had also involved the work of "so many honorable names" only compounded Maria's worry over the situation. In the end, she elected not to rely solely upon the Home's Advisory Committee to remedy the problem. Maria, understandably agitated, met with Mr. Thomas, threatening publication "in every paper, a card disowning the whole enterprise saying we feel no confidence in the

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[71] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," December 21, 1866.

[72] "Grand Presentation Festival," December 1866, Daly Papers.

[73] Ibid.

[74] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," December 21, 1866.

management."[75]

Maria, with the aid of her husband, prevailed in the matter as Thomas and Company honored the terms of their original contract. Judge Daly's judicial prominence finally determined the successful outcome of the episode. Maria, however, did not hesitate to defend the orphanage and its fund-raising activities. Her willingness to challenge publically the auditor's authority indicates both the strengths and limitations of feminine influence. Maria concluded that she "deceived them entirely as to my character because I have blue eyes and a soft complexion. I am generally thought to be a very malleable person."[76] Whether Maria actually threatened the auditors with public exposure in the newspapers is impossible to verify. The substance of her angry remarks could, in fact, be a form of wish fulfillment, stated after the meeting.

Regardless of what she may have said, her fury caught the principals of Thomas and Company unawares. The auditors undoubtedly appreciated the business implications inherent in Maria's threatened exposure. That Thomas and Company attempted to defraud the women Managers in the first place demonstrates the cluster of ideas surrounding women's abilities outside the home. The auditing firm saw the women as easy targets for a fraudulent conveyance. Women, after all, could not be expected to appreciate the complicated details of a business agreement. For her part, Maria remained undaunted by the whole experience. She determined, however, that in future dealings she

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[75] Ibid.

[76] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," December 21, 1866, passim.

would "embark in no enterprise for a charitable purpose which I cannot entirely direct."[77]

Unfortunately, for Maria and the others responsible for the Home's management, the money received from the Grand Presentation Festival continued to cause problems. Sometime during 1867, Maria presented the Home's treasurer Mary M. Voorhies a check for $50,000, a substantial portion of the lottery proceeds. According to a statement later prepared by Mrs. Voorhies, this check had been "drawn to my order." Mrs. Voorhies then deposited the sum "in my name as Treasurer of the Union Home and School." Maria called, shortly thereafter, "anxious about the money." Maria threatened legal action in which Mrs. Voorhies could face imprisonment of two years and forfeiture of a sum twice the amount in her possession. Mrs. Voorhies withdrew Maria's check and cancelled the endorsement. Despite her protestations to the contrary, the Managers and Advisors of the Union Home and School had no further dealings with Mrs. Voorhies. Mrs. Voorhies "to silence slanderous tongues" published her own accounting of the orphanage's finances.[78] The Voorhies' report, for the most part, itemized expenditures for food and other supplies necessary to institutional maintenance. Mrs. Voorhies listed these expenses, however, without any supporting documentation. Furthermore, the largest expenditure recorded is the purchase of a $200 silver tea service for Maria Daly.

The Home's First Report indicates that Mrs. Olive M. DeVoe originally served as the group's Treasurer, with Mrs. John Voorhies as a member of the Board of Managers.

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[77] Ibid.

[78] Union Home and School, Copy of Treasurer's Book, December 17, 1864 to December 31, 1867, (New York: John W. Amerman, 1868), passim.

By 1865, at the time of the Third Annual Report, Mrs. John S. Voorhies of 56 Montague Street, Brooklyn, had been named Acting Treasurer.[79] According to Mary Voorhies' published statement, she "never sought office," only taking it "in accommodation during the Treasurer's absence in Europe."[80] Other available documentation regarding the Home's expenditures is insufficient to challenge the veracity of Mary Voorhies' version of events. Subsequent reports from the Home, however, indicate a managerial response to the entire episode. Voohies issued her statement in March 1868. The Seventh Annual Report of 1869 makes no reference to the Voorhies matter except to indicate that a restructuring of the Treasurer's Office had occurred. A newly formed Finance Committee of five women now replaced the Treasurer's duties. The authority of the Finance Committee included: the power "to direct all investments of funds not needed for immediate use;" annual audit authority, "or more, if needed;" and the power to call for the assistance of the Advisory Board.[81] The first report of the newly-formed Finance Committee appeared in the Eighth Annual Report of 1870. With the Voorhies accounting already in circulation, the Finance Committee had to address what could be publically seen as a financial irregularity at the Home. By letter, James Gordon Bennett, owner and editor-in-chief of the New York Herald, advised Maria on the efficacy of a public

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[79] John S. Voorhies, an attorney, died in 1862. The Voorhies family traced its roots to the early settlement of Gravesend, Brooklyn. In 1926, the old Voorhies homestead was listed as one of the oldest original dwellings in the state. New York Times, 4 April 1926, RE2.

[80] Union Home and School, Copy of Treasurer's Book, 1.

[81] Union Home and School, Seventh Annual Report, (New York: Douglas Taylor's, 1869), 9.

statement to "disarm any maliciously inclined person."[82] The Home's detailed accounting of 1870 includes the only available official reference to the Voorhies episode. Accordingly, the Managers used their1866 Festival proceeds in part to pay "back debts of 1866 and other moneys advanced to the Treasurer. These figures are not yet audited as she declines giving her original vouchers to the Finance Committee although she has been repeatedly and formally called upon by the Board of Managers to do so."[83] The Eighth Report further indicates Maria's return of the silver tea service shown in the Voorhies' accounting, reflecting $154 in income garnered from the auction of the service.[84]

There is no timely record of Maria's version of the episode or of her encounter with Mary Voorhies. After December 1866, Maria did not add to her diary until February of 1868. A letter from Jessie Fremont written in August 1867 suggests that Maria suffered an accident or serious illness during this period.[85] Maria did not mention the Voorhies incident until after she traveled with her husband to Albany, New York, in 1870 to request funding for the Home from the state legislature. Though pleased to receive state assistance, Maria voiced some disappointment that the Home had received only a seventy-five dollar per child annual allotment. She wrote, "We have had to fight. Mr. Voorhies who tried to get our money bribed the legislature...to oppose our bill and

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[82] James Gordon Bennett, New York Herald Establishment, "Letter to Maria Lydig Daly," January 20, 1870, Daly Papers.

[83] Union Home and School, Eighth Annual Report, (New York: Douglas Taylors, 1870), 16.

[84] Ibid., 30.

[85] Jessie Benton Fremont, "Letter to Maria Lydig Daly," August 27, 1867, Daly Papers.

attacked us in the papers because I had insisted on an honest account...and succeeded in saving our festival fund from the clutches of his in-law who was then in difficulties."[86]

The situation with Mary Voorhies threatened the integrity of the Union Home and School's management. Maria Daly understood the pressing need to defend the Home's reputation in order to continue to receive public support. She desired to avoid further scandal over the matter at all costs. She wisely sought the advice of James Gordon Bennett on how to proceed. The available record, however, does not permit a valid conclusion regarding the actions of Mary Voorhies. Whether Voorhies attempted a fraudulent misappropriation of the Home's monies or simply suffered from her own stupidity will remain unknown. Nonetheless, the problematic Voorhies accounting methods together with the Thomas and Company episode raised legitimate concerns about the need to guard against the unscrupulous use of the Home's monies in the future. The creation of a Finance Committee to replace the Treasurer's office effectively diffused the responsibility for the Home's money among several individuals. Maria understood her need to staff the Home's management with prominent individuals with reputations above reproach. The participation of high ranking military personnel in the Home's public functions also reinforced the legitimacy of its work with war orphans. Additionally, Maria relied on her conviction that her husband's "affiliation with a charity placed it above suspicion."[87]

At the same time, Maria remained aware of the potential harm of "public money

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[86] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," June 26, 1870.

[87] Harold E. Hammond, A Commoner's Judge, 197.

spent in selfish amusements."[88] Questions about the legitimacy of any charity could damage the credibility of all similar institutions. Bearing this in mind, Maria expressed her concern over "another sister institution gotten up after this one just as a private speculation on the part of a clergyman's wife, whose husband has no parish but the field."[89] Maria here made reference to the second New York orphanage serving children made dependent by the Civil War. Founded a year after the Union Home and School, the Patriot Orphan Home began its operations on December 12, 1862. The Institute of Reward, an auxiliary of the Bible House, had previously dispatched several ministers to loyal western states to determine the public's interest orphan schools built upon land set aside by Congress for agricultural experimentation.[90] By 1864, this project became the work of the New-York Ladies' Educational Union. According to the Patriot Home's 1865 Annual Report, the organization "did not hesitate to incur large debt" and purchased property in Flushing, Queens.[91] The Flushing orphanage consisted of a large three story building sited on seven acres of cultivated land. This acquisition permitted the Patriot Home to close its original facility on Sixth Avenue in Manhattan, and move to new quarters that housed one hundred twenty-four children. Fortunately, a single donation of $20,000 funded this financial obligation.[92] The report of 1865 also indicates that the

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[88] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," December 5, 1866.

[89] Ibid.

[90] New York Times, 15 December 1862, 1.

[91] New-York Ladies' Educational Union, Patriot Orphan Home, Annual Report, (New York: M.B. Brown & Co., 1865), 8.

[92] Ibid.

Patriot Home received donations in excess of forty thousand dollars for the year which included the large individual bequest. The "Abstract of the Treasurer's Account" reflects costs normally associated with an institution serving children, including fuel, rent, clothing and the salaries of supervisory staff. Two unusual expense items appear as "publishing a paper" and "invested through E. Fitch." Together these costs total $5,777.96 or an excess of fourteen percent of the Patriot Home's operating budget for 1865.[93]

The 1868 Annual Report of the Patriot Orphan Home indicates that, by that date, the orphanage had ceased publication of its newspaper. The group, however, continued to shelter and care for one hundred twenty-five children, requiring for this purpose an operating budget of $17, 320.49.[94] This report also indicates, that in addition to traditional sources of income, the Patriot Home relied upon funding from several unnamed church congregations. Perhaps in reference to the Union Home and School and its Grand Presentation Festival, the Patriot Home declared that it had "always avoided any ostentatious demands"and with "no fashionable connections to aid us" depended only upon the public's "general sympathy."[95] Available documentation does not permit a year-to-year comparison of the two orphanages. In 1869, the Union Home and School served two hundred seventy children, requiring almost $73,000 in expenditures, at least half of which involved real estate as the charity relocated.[96]

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[93] Ibid., 12.

[94] New-York Ladies Educational Union, Patriot Orphan Home, Sixth Annual Report, (New York: David Williams, 1868), 9.

[95] Ibid., 5.

[96] Union Home and School, Seventh Annual Report, 17, 23, passim.

Over time, the Union Home and School increased the number of dependent children in its care. The Patriot Home, by contrast, appears to have done less well. The Patriot Home's Ninth Annual Report of 1871 indicates that its operating budget for the year had declined to slightly over twelve thousand dollars annually. Despite the Flushing location and the numbers of children in the city requiring assistance, Maria Daly viewed the Patriot Home and its organization with hostility. As the Patriot Home's stated mission paralleled that of the Union Home and School, Maria appreciated the need to protect the legitimacy of her institution as well as the avoidance of any confusion in the public mind.[97] She complained of unpleasant encounters with the Reverend Dr. Stephen H. Tyng who chaired the Patriot Home's Board of Counselors. Not only did Maria suspect that the Patriot Home had been organized and funded for Tyng's personal benefit, she understood that Tyng had "told falsehoods about the ladies and our institution"[98] Tyng aroused Maria's ire in late 1866 during the time of the Union Home's Grand Presentation Festival. Provoked, Maria wrote to Mrs. Claudius Monell president of the Patriot Orphan Home. Maria subsequently received a letter from Anna Monell, denying the existence of "unfriendly feelings...in our Board towards the ladies connected with the Union Home and School."[99] Maria also personally visited Tyng to discuss the matter. Of their meeting, she wrote that "I always tell the story of how boorishly he received and treated me. It will do

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[97] William Pryor Letchworth, Homes of Homeless Children, (Originally published 1903; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1974), 377.

[98] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," December 5, 1866.

[99] Anna Monell, "Letter to Maria Lydig Daly," January 10, 1867, Daly Papers.

him some harm."[100]

Maria's ability to challenge Tyng, if not undermine the success of the Patriot Orphan Home, speaks to the importance she attached to her own reputation as essential to the viability of the Union Home and School. Both orphanages aided the children of deceased and disabled soldiers. The Union Home and School thrived under Maria's leadership until it formally dissolved in 1884. The fate of the Patriot Home, by contrast, is difficult to determine. In 1867, the institution changed its name to Patriots Orphan Home and Institute for Disabled Soldiers and Respectable, Aged Indigent Men. With this expanded focus, the Patriot Home attempted to obtain a $200,000 appropriation from the state legislature for the purchase of lands and the erection of buildings.[101] The annual reports of the Patriot Home, however, do not indicate that the state provided this money so that the institution continued to serve only children. Because the Patriot Home received limited publicity, all that is known is that it continued to operate as late as 1872.[102] By this time, Maria noted her satisfaction that "[w]e are beginning at last to reap some pleasure and gratification from our work in the home which is at last prosperous and recognized as the only soldiers' orphans home in the state."[103] A year later, the Union

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[100] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," December 5, 1866.

[101] New York Times, 13 January 1867, 6.

[102] The Patriot Home received an unspecified grant from the American Bible Society in 1871. New York Times, 7 January 1871, 2. A list of New York City charities receiving assistance from the state in 1872 indicates that the Patriot Home received an allotment of $3,000. The Union Home and School received $7,800 for the same period. New York Times, 17 February 1872, 11.

[103] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," January 16, 1871.

Home received "[t]hirteen of the children from the Flushing Home."[104]

In contrast to her relations with the principles of the late Patriot Home, Maria Daly continued to cultivate favorable publicity and the support of prominent individuals for the Union Home and School. For example, one brief notice in 1867 reported on a ceremony in which the Mayor received about fifty boys from the Home, dressed in grey uniforms and carrying small wooden sabers. This article also mentioned Julia Dent Grant's involvement with at the Home.[105] With such positive notices, Maria kept the institution and its mission before the public.[106] She managed the Home's operations for over twenty years, realizing her dream of seeing the children installed in permanent quarters.

By early 1867, the Union Home and School had purchased for $28,000 the property it formerly rented at 58th Street and Eleventh Avenue. With its lottery proceeds, the charity also bought two adjacent lots for future expansion. Upon further consideration, the Managers ruled against expansion in the city, finding construction and real estate too costly. With an additional $10,700, the Managers then bought a "large frame building" formerly known as the Laurel Hill Seminary at Deposit, Delaware County. The charity repaired this building for an additional $16,000 and relocated two hundred ten children in late 1867. During this transitional period, the Home continued to provide for fifty children, including staff, at the old 58th Street location. The Home, however, "did not prosper" in its new rural environment. Many children became chronically ill due to the

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[104] New York Times, 12 April 1873, 9.

[105] New York Times, 15 October 1867, 5.

[106] New York Times, 24 December 1868, 5; 25 December 1868, 10; 27 December 1868, 5; 9 February 1869, 5; 19 December 1869, 6; 24 January 1870, 3.

conditions of a "cold house" with poor drinking water. Staffing for the Home became problematic. Because Deposit lay some "one hundred seventy-seven miles distant" on the Erie Railway, it became difficult for the Home's managers to provide proper oversight.[107]

The situation in Deposit forced another move in the spring of 1868. At this time, the Managers purchased the former Field Mansion and ten additional lots at 84th Street and Eleventh Avenue. In addition to this purchase of $32,000, the charity spent $11,140 in renovation costs. This move forced the Managers to borrow money as well as sell the old 58th Street property. The relocation proved temporary as the city required an easement on the property in order to widen Eleventh Avenue. In the meantime, the Deposit property burned. The Managers temporarily sheltered the children in a building on 132nd Street.[108]

Fortunately, the Managers executed all of these moves at a profit before finally constructing a "new" facility at 151st and Eleventh Avenue. This five story brick building was actually a reconstruction of the former Field Mansion. Builders moved and renovated the former structure before raising its roof to add two additional stories. The new orphanage, which officially opened on June 10, 1870, contained three large classrooms, a chapel and three floors of dormitory space. A visit by a reporter several years later observed around one hundred fifty children eating a meal of mutton stew, potatoes, bread and pie in a facility deemed "scrupulously clean from basement to attic."[109] This project,

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[107] Union Home and School, Eighth Annual Report, 13.

[108] Ibid., 14-15.

[109] New York Times, 12 April 1873, 9.

completed at a cost of $77,000, was the charity's last significant expense.[110] Maria Daly realized her desire to see the Home "permanently established" within five years of assuming managerial control of the organization. Although the new property was mortgaged for $30,000, the Home received an offer of $150,000 for the facility.[111] Maria speculated that the charity would be "offered a still higher price when we finished with our care for the orphans of the war...in ten years they all will have become men and women."[112]

Throughout its various locations, the Home continued to provide for around two hundred resident children at any given time. Even with the lottery proceeds, the need to fund the institution's operating expenses remained a concern. Without the immediacy of war, the women Managers relied upon the publicity generated by visiting dignitaries as well as fairs and concerts to raise money.[113] In 1869, for example, the Home sponsored ceremonies to welcome a visit by President-elect Ulysses S. Grant.[114] Maria Daly in 1868 added Virginia L. Farragut, the wife of the Admiral David G. Farragut, as Vice President. With the 1870 collision of an American frigate with a British vessel in the Sea of Japan, the Home extended its services to include the children of sailors "made fatherless" by this

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[110] New York Tribune, 24 June 1870, 8:3; New York Herald, 24 June 1870, 8; New York Times, 24 June 1870, 2.

[111] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," June 26, 1870.

[112] Ibid.

[113] New York Times 11 December 1870, 5; 16 December 1870, 1; 8 January 1871, 1.

[114] New York Times, 9 February 1869, 5. See also Union Home and School, Eighth Annual Report, 17.

event.[115]

In 1870, the Home announced its "amalgamation" with the Grand Army of the Republic of the State of New-York.[116] Maria's correspondence indicates that she initiated contact with the Grand Army of the Republic as early as 1867.[117] Subsequent correspondence reveals that leadership of the Grand Army of the Republic "investigated" the Home prior to their association with the institution.[118] Under the new arrangement, the women's Board of Managers increased to thirty members, equally divided between representatives of both groups. Other standing committees of the Union Home also increased, enlarged with equal representation by the Grand Army of the Republic. This new arrangement insured that the state would now provide an "appropriate per capita allowance for the children now under the care of the Union Home and School."[119] The Home also began to accept referrals of dependent children from throughout New York state.

Newspapers remarked upon the success of the Union Home and School, crediting "that beautiful and angelic spirit of benevolence" of its women Managers.[120] Maria's work for the orphanage, however, was often anything but ethereal. After the Home's

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[115] New York Times, 26 April 1870, 8.

[116] New York Times, 9 February 1870. 8.

[117] Benjamin Pardee, Commander Post No. 8 Grand Army of the Republic, "Letter to Maria Lydig Daly," June 17, 1867, Daly Papers.

[118] Stewart S. Woodford, Brooklyn Daily Union, "Letter to Maria Lydig Daly," March 14, 1870, Daly Papers.

[119] Ibid.

[120] New York Times, 19 December 1869, 6.

relocation, she continued to devote many hours a day to the institution and its needs. The unrelenting pressure to raise funds to meet the Home's expenses required that Maria stage increasingly imaginative events. In 1870, the Home arranged to open the tunnel and works of the Beach Pneumatic Transit Company at the corner of Broadway and Warren Streets for tours by the public for a fee of twenty-five cents. This five day event attracted around eight thousand visitors and netted $1,288 in revenue for the orphanage.[121] In 1871, the Home organized another lottery drawing of donated cash and prizes. The women Managers of this event issued one thousand tickets at ten dollars each. Prizes were distributed to the holders of the first two hundred tickets drawn, valued in all at $8,000.[122] Unlike its predecessor, this lottery had been arranged to appeal to the city's more affluent citizens and also to avoid any criticism over its propriety. In two separate drawings, winners received pieces of jewelry and paintings. The Gift Distribution for jewelry awarded a top prize of a five-stone ring with a carat and one-quarter center diamond. Several winners claimed cash awards of one hundred dollars a piece. Tickets for the second drawing featuring works of art proved less successful. Nonetheless, the Gift Distribution ultimately added $3,575 to the coffers of the Union Home.[123]

In October of the same year, the Home sponsored a "military festival and fête champêtre" consisting of various matches of "almost every game of skill now in vogue in

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[121] New York Times, 8 March 1870, 5.

[122] New York Times, 5 February 1871, 8; 8 March 1871, 5.

[123] New York Times, 6 April 1871, 3.

the community."[124] The Home now housed about three hundred children. Managers hoped that "by this festival enough money can be raised to enlarge the present building."[125] The series of competitions had been planned to last for two weeks, excepting Sundays. Managers offered "large" prizes for various contests of strength and skill.[126] As the event was planned for a location in West Flushing, New York, the railroad serving this site "volunteered to donate one-third of the gross receipts received from the sale of excursion tickets."[127] The grand Fête Champêtre began amid the pomp of three military bands on October 2, 1871. The opening day's events concluded with a trot for the Queens County Purse of $300. News accounts of the day noted only "fair" attendance, however.[128] There is no available documentation to indicate the financial outcome of the series of contests. Shortly thereafter, Maria complained that the orphanage had "absorbed all my time and energy...It nearly broke me down and ruined my eyes."[129]

Families, whose principal providers suffered war-related disabilities, continued to prevail upon the services of the Union Home and School. Though the Home did not expand its 151st Street location, the pressure to accommodate dependent children remained. The Home continued to entertain visiting dignitaries to publicize its mission. Harlow Hoyt, whose mother Mrs. David Hoyt had served as the Home's Secretary, wrote

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[124] New York Times, 10 August 1871, 2.

[125] Ibid.

[126] New York Times, 15 August 1871, 1.

[127] Ibid.

[128] New York Times, 3 October 1871, 5.

[129] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," November 18, 1871.

several letters concerning the planned visits of Generals William T. Sherman and Ambrose Burnside. General Burnside, according to a subsequent letter from Hoyt, was so "gratified with all he saw that he asked permission to bring his wife and mother so they might see the Sunday School in operation."[130] By 1872, the Home had added a musical department to supplement its educational offerings. A "shoe-shop, tailoring establishment, carpenter shop [and] laundry" had also been added to offset the expense of these outside services.[131] Children also received a civics lesson as they assumed part of the responsibility for discipline and order in the institution. Older boys, who helped to manage younger children, were "honored with titles of master-at-arms, captain of the guard, fire-warden, and any boy refusing to obey the orders of any of these who may be on duty, is liable to punishment."[132] These resident "officers," elected quarterly by their peers, brought cases for rules infractions before "courts of inquiry." Residents also elected "judges" who impaneled juries and arbitrated punishments. Those children found guilty of infractions retained the right to appeal their verdict to the Home's management before the punishment occurred.[133]

Though the Home's financial picture stabilized, Maria continued to worry about educational and placement issues regarding the children. Like other women Managers, Maria made frequent, unannounced visits to the facility to monitor conditions at the Home

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[130] Harlow M. Hoyt, "Letter to Maria Lydig Daly," September 6, 1871, Daly Papers.

[131] New York Times, 29 November 1872,1.

[132] New York Times, 12 April 1873, 9.

[133] Ibid., passim.

as well as to observe the children's progress. Her correspondence files indicate the extent to which she personally addressed the need to place individual children. A letter from Charles Loring Brace suggests the possibility of "placement in a western home" for some of your "interesting" orphans.[134] Maria also corresponded with Vassar College about the possibility of a scholarship for preparatory education for one girl.[135] Additionally, she attempted to secure placement at the United States Military Academy for outstanding male residents of the Home.[136] A letter from one such boy expresses his joy over his first-term grades at the Academy, stating "I am confident now that I can complete the second year."[137] Maria also considered another boy "whom I think I shall take into the house and bring him up as a Secretary and Reader for the Judge and myself.[138] There is no indication, however, that Maria pursued this idea. For the majority of students, Maria simply hoped to "get something from the general government at Washington to build a workshop to teach the children trades."[139]

By 1875, according to an independent observer, vocational training had been

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[134] Charles Loring Brace, "Letter to Maria Lydig Daly," April 11, 1871, Daly Papers. Brace later commented on his willingness to assist in the placement of Union Home residents "in the best homes of the country." New York Times, 5 March 1875, 4.

[135] Professor Charles Hinkel, Vassar College, "Letter to Maria Lydig Daly," January 8, 1872, Daly Papers.

[136] Major General Ed. Schriver, Inspector General, United States Army, "Letter to Maria Lydig Daly," November 11, 1869, Daly Papers. A similar effort on behalf of another boy occurred in 1872. New York Times, 29 November 1872, 1; MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," January 16, 1872.

[137] Thomas Davis, "Letter to Maria Lydig Daly," January 1, 1873, Daly Papers.

[138] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 1, 1876.

[139] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," January 16, 1872.

added at the Home to supplement its other educational programs. The New York State Board of Charities, by that date, surveyed all privately managed institutions serving dependent children, including the Union Home and School.[140] The State Board of Charities accumulated data in the hopes of starting an outplacement program for orphans, that would permit the admission of children from the poor house into private facilities, without enlarging the state's own asylum system. William Pryor Letchworth, a commissioner of the New York State Board of Charities visited the Union Home and School in October of 1875. Letchworth found one hundred seventy children in the facility, with an average age of eleven. At that time, the Home did not keep children over the age of sixteen, attempting to place older children in private homes. Letchworth commented upon the availability of vocational training, noting that "[t]he girls are taught to do housework and to sew on the machine...and make all their own clothing. The boys are taught telegraphy."[141] The Home's financial picture as presented by Letchworth indicates total expenditures of $24,865.14 with income for the same period at $25,604.20.[142]

In addition to the report on the Union Home and School, Letchworth's 1875 survey contains information on forty-four additional associations sponsoring asylums for children and youth in the city. Some of these organizations had multiple facilities like the

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[140] E. V. Smalley, "A Great Charity Reform," The Century, 24, no.3 (July 1882): 401-408. See also "A Glimpse at Some of Our Charities," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, 56, no.334 (March 1878): 596 - 608.

[141] William Pryor Letchworth, 377-378.

[142] Ibid., 378.

New York Infant Asylum which maintained separate Maternity Houses, a Nursery Home and its Flushing Home. Other institutions visited by Letchworth served the needs of children with a particular disability such as the New York Institution for the Blind and the New York Institute for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb. Religious groups sponsored their own institutions, including the Hebrew Benevolent Orphan Asylum Society, the New York Catholic Protectory and the Roman Catholic Orphan Asylum. Finally, the city operated a separate Association for the Benefit of Colored Orphans.

The standards of care, discipline and instruction varied widely in these institutions. As privately managed asylums, individual homes were regulated by committees who could institute new procedures at any time. The State Charities Aid Association, managed by Louisa Lee Schuyler, attempted to supervise and coordinate visitation committees throughout New York state in an effort to standardize operating procedures in similar institutions. Building on her experience with the United States Sanitary Commission, Schuyler emphasized the role of expert intervention between government and those in need of assistance. For this purpose, the Commission employed associate managers and formed local visiting committees of unpaid volunteers in an effort to promote efficient and independent investigative work. Schuyler's effort can be viewed as part of the larger movement for civil service reform which ultimately aimed to professionalize benevolent work.[143]

Maria Daly, who had worked to maintain the Union Home and School for over a decade, voiced skepticism over the efficacy of Schuyler's approach. Maria reported on

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[143] Lori D. Ginzberg, 191.

her own visit with Virginia Farragut to a city hospital that had fallen under the purview of Louisa Schuyler and her associate Mary Hamilton. Maria noted that Schuyler and Hamilton had "had a great deal of printing done. One of her rules is to give nothing but tracts...Mrs. Farragut does not understand it so she gave the poor men fruit...Another of the rules is to take off your bonnet."[144] Maria consequently decided to "divest myself, according to the rules, of any article of clothing hereinafter which may interfere with my duties...sent oranges against the rules because the physician said they would do much more good than tracts."[145]

Maria also observed that the State Charities Aid Association had become the "present, fashionable, all absorbing charitable and philanthropical body...[A]ll the widows and idle women of society are getting roped into it...a kind of unpaid police upon the public charities." Women, organized into visitation committees, monitored abuse in the dispensation of charity, including all aspects of providing adequate care of the sick and indigent children. Maria did not dispute the necessity of this "admirable" work. She did, however, practically comment upon Louisa Schuyler's habitual travel during the summer months. As a consequence of Schuyler's absences due to "nervous" exhaustion, "[t]he in command does the same and nobody comes back until November...The matrons, superintendents and underlings know this and everything goes back to the old condition." Maria admitted that she participated in the State Charities Aid Association only "to keep

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[144] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," February 17, 1872.

[145] Ibid.

watch over the Union Home and School...I don't wish Louisa to meddle."[146]

Maria's attitude towards charitable work differed radically from the bureaucratic approach of Louisa Schuyler in several important ways. Firstly, Maria disapproved of Schuyler's impersonal rules which effectively removed women elites from direct contact with those in need. Maria remarked that Schuyler and others "don't seem to grieve or feel...[T]hey leave the caring out." Schuyler seemed to limit her interest in a particular charity to "the money that they draw in." As Maria had demonstrated her own self interest in fostering the Union Home and School, she remained mindful of this same tendency in others. She criticized Schuyler's proclivity to "write and publish, with the first money, rules and regulations and prospectus with her name as author." Maria feared that women's benevolence would soon become simply a question of money and procedure. Gradually, this new methodology threatened to supercede women's direct, personal involvement that had characterized Maria's own charitable work. Under Schuyler's methods, benevolence was becoming just an expeditious means for "getting new people acquainted with the leaders of society." As individual charities restructured into larger bureaucracies, the work of women elites became more supervisory in nature. New managerial structures relegated the real work of charity, perhaps its most satisfying component, to paid professionals. In the end, charities reformulated the commitment of elite benefactors to the simple need to make a donation. Maria found many socially ambitious women lacking in true charitable purpose. In her experience, two or three women "having filled up their

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[146] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," November 27, 1875, passim.

visiting list, now did not care to devote themselves but thought it a waste of time."[147]

Maria's observations on the changing nature of feminine benevolence also hold a deeper significance. Maria saw her participation in benevolent work as a positive means by which she distinguished herself and complemented her husband's charitable interests. Benevolence had become an important component of her public identity that sustained the prominence of her household. Maria's resistance to bureaucratic regulation is understandable. She had, for more than ten years, protected the financial interests and management of the Union Home and School. In so doing, she had occasionally exceeded the bounds of polite conduct. She had challenged fraudulent auditors and deflected criticism over inadequate accounting practices. Maria, through her effort, had insured the survival of the Union Home and School. Maria resisted Schuyler's involvement in the Union Home and School because that orphanage had become a critical part of Maria's public persona. The attempt of the State Charities Aid Association to subsume the Home into a supervisory web of similar institutions, blurred Maria's effort into that of other benevolent elites. Proud of her accomplishment and in recognition of her years of hard work, Maria could not bear to see the Union Home and School reduced to a page in a procedural manual. In light of her personal misgivings, Maria realized by 1873 that the Union Home and School could not exist "more than seven years longer as orphans born of Union soldiers and sailors will be able to provide for themselves."[148]

At the same time, Maria took pride in her "model institution" which operated like

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[147] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," March 1, 1872, passim.

[148] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," March 23, 1873.

"clockwork."[149] Maria's mechanistic metaphor for the successful maintenance of the orphanage mirrors her application of the commercial standards of industry and finance rather than the quieter values of home and heart to the Home's maintenance. Maria attributed the Home's longevity to the use of standard business practices. "We have reduced the servants to one half and the expenditures one fourth, if not more."[150] Other than the continued support of the State Charities Aid Association, there is little in the public record to support the efficacy of Maria's cost-cutting measures. Perhaps the best indication of Maria's accomplishment is the extent to which the Union Home and School began to fade from the pages of her personal diary.

As the Union Home and School continued to operate in "admirable order," Maria used the time spent with her diary to record other activities.[151] Her primary philanthropic interest, however, remained issues and individuals related to the needs of children. Maria voiced skepticism regarding Charles Loring Brace's work to alleviate poverty among the city's youth. Brace's Children's Aid Society firmly espoused the same principles of self-help that Charles Daly had practiced as a young man. While Maria did not take exception to Brace's approach, she did question his prominence in New York's philanthropic circles. Maria hoped that public education would ultimately replace Brace's industrial schools because "Mr. Brace has...too much money to pass through his hands...when a man gets his

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[149] Ibid.

[150] Ibid.

[151] MLD, "Diaries, 1860 - 1893," October 13, 1876.

living by philanthropy he ought to be especially looked after."[152]

Maria's awareness of the potential for abuse in public charities stemmed from her own experience with the finances of the Union Home and School. In addition to difficulties with the Home's former treasurer Mary Voorhies and the attempted misappropriation of funds by Thomas and Company, Maria confronted fraudulent individuals who solicited public money in the Home's name. In 1875, a "notorious" colonel "went about with a small company in uniform," collecting money during the war for soldiers' orphans.[153] In 1876, a man calling himself Captain William Chambers solicited Maria on behalf of the Union Home at the Daly's residence. After summoning the police, Maria asked the man about "Mrs. Daly," only to learn that she "remained behind in Europe for her health...We expect her home in a few months."[154] The police arrived to arrest the imposter who received a sentence of three years. Nonetheless, this fraudulent individual had collected twelve hundred dollars for the Union Home and School before he was caught.[155]

Maria noted that the Home had no "collector" as the "Institution keeps within the allowance made to it per capita by the different counties of the state."[156] Maria's remark refers to New York's adoption of a per capita system of charitable funding for institutions aiding the poor. In the city, a two percent charitable excise tax on alcohol, as directed by

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[152] MLD, "Diaries, 1860 - 1893," November 1, 1876.

[153] William Pryor Letchworth, 377.

[154] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," March 21, 1876.

[155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid.

the Board of Estimate, principally funded the public network of asylums, hospitals and orphanages. Though Managers could raise additional money to compensate for budget deficits, institutions like the Union Home and School increasingly relied upon public money to meet ordinary operating expenses. One indication of this phenomenon is the media coverage of allocations of public money to city charities, with less attention paid to private fund-raising activities.[157]

The increasing reliance upon public financing by the city's private charities increased the need for oversight. The State Charities Aid Association continued to monitor the direction of public money to charities through regular inspections of facilities and their financial records. In 1876, Josephine Shaw Lowell became the first woman member of the Board of Directors of the State Charities Aid Association.[158] Lowell, a year later, won the legal right to inspect individual charities and publish her findings in a case brought by the New-York Juvenile Guardian Society against the State Charities Aid Association in New York's Court of Common Pleas before Chief Justice Charles P. Daly. Contemporaneous newspaper accounts of this proceeding indicate the potential for charitable abuse just as they reveal public exposure as a powerful deterrent.[159] Despite the

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[157] References to public appropriations for the Union Home and School during this period, include: New York Times, 20 January 1873, 4; 30 January 1873, 2; 3 March 1875, 6; 15 January 1878, 8; 20 June 1878, 3; 17 April 1880, 8; 17 April 1881, 13.

[158] William Rhinelander Stewart, The Philanthropic Work of Josephine Shaw Lowell, containing a biographical sketch of her life, together with a selection of her public papers and private letters, (New York: Macmillan, 1911); Notable American Women, s.v. "Lowell, Josephine Shaw;" New York Times, October 13, 1905, 9; November 14, 1905, 10.

[159] In this matter, the State Board of Charities determined through public hearings in February 1877 that the records of the Juvenile Guardian Society had been altered to conceal monies diverted to pay the personal debts of the charity's secretary D. F. Robertson. The charity

publicity surrounding this case, abuses in the state's per capita system of reimbursement to charities continued. Josephine Lowell observed that the per capita system "was tempting people to establish charitable institutions as a commercial speculation."[160] She continued that "[a]ll people would have to do...would be to hire a house, take in some children, and come to the City for its allowance."[161] In addition to fostering a duplication in facilities, per capita funding contributed to overcrowding in existing homes. Some charities existed solely on per capita reimbursements which often reduced incentives for "economy in the management of the institution."[162] Lowell also argued for limitations in parental power to commit children to charitable institutions. Some people, aware of the existence of per capita funding, simply took advantage of the existing system. Lowell characterized a family's ability "to foist children upon the public at the most troublesome periods of their lives and afterwards take them back" as "evil."[163]

The public funding of charitable institutions altered the landscape of feminine benevolence. Instead of staging large fairs and hosting gala benefits, women like Maria Daly now turned to city officials for money. Maria noted her own visit to the city

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sought an injunction in March in the city's Court of Common Pleas against the Board of Visitors, including Josephine Shaw Lowell, to test the powers of the Board of Visitors under the law. In May, Chief Justice Charles Daly dissolved the injunction restraining the Board of Visitors from publishing their findings. New York Times, 10 February 1877, 3; 17 February 1877, 10; 22 February 1877, 2; 1 March 1877, 2; 11 March 1877, 12; 3 April 1877, 2; 4 May 1877, 3.

[160] New York Times, 30 March 1880, 6.

[161] Ibid.

[162] New York Times, 31 March 1880, 8.

[163] Ibid.

Comptroller for a "two year appropriation."[164] Institutions like the Union Home and School grew accustomed to independent oversight. For Maria Daly, public funding and its concomitant monitoring brought a mixed blessing. On the one hand, Maria found the time to pursue other interests as some of the burdens of the Home lifted with per capita reimbursement. On the other hand, Maria also freely admitted to "not liking to have a superior."[165]

In an extended passage in her diary, she described a conversation with Josephine Shaw Lowell regarding other city charities directed to children. Maria held strong opinions about the Children's Aid Society and its founder Charles Loring Brace. To diffuse Lowell's advocacy of Brace, Maria repeated a rumor that "Dr. Brace brought the meat wholesale for the schools and sent all the tenderloin and good pieces to his own house." To this gossip, Maria shared the speculations of her friend James Gordon Bennett, owner and editor-in-chief of the New York Herald, who also found Brace to be "a fraud but had so many fashionable and powerful friends that it was impossible to touch him." Maria further complained to Josephine Lowell of the poor governance and expensive maintenance at the Nursery and Children's Hospital. Maria finally confided her suspicions regarding The Home for the Friendless which she regarded as the "home of the Superintendent or rather the Hotel for his Family...[with] members of the same family there receiving salaries."[166]

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[164] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 -1893," January 3, 1879.

[165] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 -1893," June 3, 1877.

[166] Ibid., passim.

Maria encouraged Lowell's regular visits to the Union Home and School. Nonetheless, Daly's reliance upon gossip and rumor to deflect Lowell's interest in the Home indicates that power had shifted in the management of the states charitable institutions. Maria felt disenfranchised under the new system. She revealed her lack of power in the new supervisory scheme by resorting to rumor and gossip to discredit the work of other charities. Maria ostensibly wanted to see the Union Home and School receive adequate funding. She also wished to discourage any alteration to her managerial decisions, resisting the tendency to standardization advocated by the state authority. Maria complained that other institutions had "persecuted" her charity. She expressed pride that the Home had "succeeded in silencing them...I have made them give up their opposition. None dared attack the Judge's wife without proof." [167]

Though Maria could voice satisfaction in her own accomplishment at the Home, her diary reflects an increasing disaffection with institutional forms of benevolence. At the end of 1877, Maria began to plan for closing the orphanage. Her foremost consideration in this decision involved her husband Charles and the "time and annoyance" the Home had cost him. Of her own experience, Maria reflected that the charity had "brought me into contact with politicians. It has taught me a good deal of the worst part of human nature, but at the same time brought me acquainted with a few very rare specimens of disinterested goodness." Maria's glum assessment extended to the Home's residents whom she found to have "little real refinement and but little talent has been developed."

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[167] Ibid.

Maria concluded that "the worst home develops a child better than an institution."[168]

That Maria maintained the orphanage for six more years attests to her stubborn resolve to act as the Home's final arbiter. This determination is attributable, in part, to Maria's refusal to accede to the recommendation of Louisa Schuyler and Josephine Shaw Lowell that she close the Home at an earlier date. Maria, "granted equal intelligence and experience...could not give up [her] judgement" to other women. She believed that "a man would see matters in a different light [with] wider views and different aims. Women are adapted by nature for protection to their own and we are all too partisan to be at the head of great general movements for the good of all." Maria's chauvinism regarding Schuyler and Lowell reflect her own conservative values regarding the public role of women. Maria approved of the conventional separation that prescribed the duties of men and women. To her, powerful public women like Louisa Schuyler and Josephine Lowell undermined feminine domesticity. Maria criticized Schuyler and Lowell, not for their managerial talent, but as women who lacked the "practical ability" to care for children. Neither woman, according to Maria, could succeed in a domestic capacity as neither woman possessed "a particle of judgement." Maria had disagreed with Schuyler and Lowell over issues of funding and managerial control. In frustration, she now attacked her adversaries a women, lacking in those domestic attributes that defined their femininity. As a consequence of her strong views, Maria came to see subsequent encounters with Lowell as "intrusive" and "unfriendly."[169]

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[168] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," December 29, 1877, passim.

[169] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," March 10, 1878, passim.

In 1879, circumstances again required that Maria "put on a harness to fight for the Union Home and School." On this occasion, the city's Board of Estimate reduced its subsidy to the orphanage because the Home "had no right to take children born after the war." To rectify this situation, the Home sought a legislative extension of its charter. The State Board of Charities opposed this effort, arguing that the Home "needed investigation." Maria angrily speculated that this new demand for oversight stemmed from the old "Voorhies cabal." The Home, by this time, housed sixty children requiring immediate placement in order to bring the institution into compliance. While Maria busied herself with the notification of the children's next of kin, Judge Daly met with Josephine Shaw Lowell to curry the support of the State Board of Charities. Lowell finally dropped her opposition to the Home's requested extension. The entire episode, however, provided Maria another opportunity to fault Josephine Lowell's judgement. She pointed to Lowell's recommendation to the Sisters of the House of Refuge that its "inmates not be locked up, but divided from each other only by curtains, which, I said, she should have directed to be ordered at the School of Design." Here, Maria disparaged Lowell's inability to heed the suggestions of those directly involved in the charity, characterizing Lowell's approach to problems as an "esthete way of doing good."[170]

Though Maria received a five-year extension to operate the Union Home and School, she continued to question the efficacy for the bureaucratic oversight of charity. In 1879, former residents brought a lawsuit in England against the Home for "money left us by Mr. Ward of London to the institution." Maria elaborated that a lawyer named

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[170] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," February 18, 1879, passim.

Cleveland had "induced" twenty boys to "subscribe ten dollars a month" in pursuit of the matter. Maria's sympathies lay with the "poor children. We meant to do them good and having paid out for them before they left and as they began life what we thought would be their proportion." Though there is no further mention of the lawsuit in Maria's diary, the episode only confirmed her negative view of institutional benevolence. She continued that "the life, do all that you may, is not a beautiful one; the children are malicious and selfish; the employees, careless and self-seeking and hardened. You have to keep constant watch. Were I to begin my life with my present experience, I would not belong to anyone, nor give to them. The poor should be helped at home, not in herds."[171]

In view of Maria's growing disenchantment, the Union Home and School announced its closing in March 1884.[172] At this time, only one hundred two children resided in the facility. Begun as a home to benefit destitute children of volunteer soldiers and sailors, news accounts commented upon the Home's successful operation "[u]p to the past few years."[173] Managers mailed notices to interested parents and friends regarding placement of the remaining children. Surplus funds were donated to St. Mary's Free Hospital for Little Children.[174] Maria's only reference to the Home's closing in her diary was the sale of its brick building at 151st Street to the American Geographical Society where her husband served as president. She seemed relieved to be "free" at last from the

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[171] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," October 26, 1879, passim.

[172] New York Times, 10 March 1884, 8.

[173] Ibid.

[174] New York Times, 8 May 1884, 5.

responsibility.[175]

Other Charities

To some extent, Maria's appraisal of her work at the Union Home and School was influenced by her interactions with other women elites. Both intelligent and strong-willed, Maria liked to prevail in any matter that required the substantial investment of her talent and emotional energy. She did not retreat from controversy. Instead, she carefully chose her battles, vigorously defending her actions in her diary. Her charitable interests, in addition to the Union Home and School, reflect both her patriotism and her interest in child welfare. In her other charitable projects, Maria both participated in an existing organization or she formulated a benevolent response to a particular need. In all cases, she won the support and participation of her peers. Her continuing ability to influence other women could not have occurred if Maria were, in truth, the uncompromising taskmaster sometimes suggested by her diary.

Throughout the years that she maintained a diary, Maria expressed interest in the wider world of American politics. Because she valued her heritage as an important part of her social identity, she participated in the Centennial Celebration commemorating America's revolutionary past. Centennial organizers envisioned a large exposition, honoring American achievement, to be held in Philadelphia's Fairmont Park for the summer months of 1876. Plans for this event also included the restoration of Independence Hall and the collection and display of appropriate historic memorabilia. On February 13,1873, Mrs. E.D. Gillespie, a great-granddaughter of Benjamin Franklin,

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[175] MLD, "Diaries, 1863 - 1893," February 27, 1884. See also MLD, December 29, 1877.

formed a committee of thirteen prominent Philadelphia women to assemble artifacts scattered among families whose forebearers had played a role in the American Revolution.[176]

As the Centennial date neared, Gillespie's Philadelphia organization successfully raised over ninety-five thousand dollars in a national campaign. This effort also attracted the interest of other countries in attaining exhibition space. To honor women's collective participation in the nation's accomplishment, Gillespie announced her group's intention to sponsor a separate Women's Pavilion devoted exclusively to the exhibition of the "inventions and industries of women."[177] Within four months, this new appeal had generated another thirty thousand dollars. To raise the additional fifteen thousand dollars needed to erect a Women's Pavilion, the Philadelphia organizers turned to the ladies of New York, also requesting that they name a delegate to participate in their group's decisions.

New York's socially prominent women organized a committee to raise funds for "a banner, bearing the arms of the City of New-York, with an appropriate motto" for presentation to the Philadelphia Women's Centennial Committee as a "substantial expression of the interest taken by the women of New-York in this grand national celebration."[178] The New York group, know as the Women's Centennial Union, divided its organization into the following committees: Banner, Loan, Entertainments, Schools,

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[176] New York Times, 5 July 1873, 3.

[177] New York Times, 23 February 1876, 5.

[178] New York Times, 11 February 1876, 5.

and Churches. Elizabeth Hamilton Cullum, wife of General George W. Cullum and the granddaughter of Alexander Hamilton, chaired the local association which included other prominent women elites.[179] Maria Daly agreed to serve on the group's newly-formed Executive Committee. The organization planned to fund the design and production of a suitable banner through public subscriptions of five dollars. The Philadelphia Centennial's national outreach mimicked the coordination of the United States Sanitary Commission during the Civil War, whereby local efforts at fund-raising and supply became a part of a national goal. Similarly, the women of Philadelphia reached out to women in other states to fund and manage a project with national implications. This combined effort met initially with public approval.[180] In March 1876, Mrs. Gillespie met five hundred interested women in New York's Chickering Hall to explain the origins and aims of her organization and ask for help.[181]

Because the Women's Centennial Committee enlarged its goals, the Women's

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[179] Ibid. Elizabeth Hamilton Cullum was the widow of General Henry Halleck. She died at her Newport, Rhode Island, residence in September 1884. New York Times, 17 September 1884, 4. She divided her $400,000 estate principally between her second husband George Cullum, her sister Mary Hamilton Peabody and the New York Cancer Hospital. New York Times, 14 December 1884, 7. General George W. Cullum, born in New York in 1809, died in February 1892. Cullum's long military career began with his 1833 graduation from West Point. During the Civil War, Cullum served as chief engineer and chief of staff to Major General Henry W. Halleck. He married Halleck's widow in 1875. Cullum also authored numerous treatises on military engineering, policy and history. New York Times, 29 February 1892, 5. See also Encyclopedia of American Biography, s.v. "Cullum, George Washington." Cullum left and estate of over $1,000,000 which he willed to the United States Military Academy, the New York Cancer Hospital and the American Geographical Society where he served as vice president from 1877 to 1892. New York Times, 7 March 1892, 2; 10 March 1892, 8.

[180] New York Times, 26 February 1876, 5; 28 February 1876, 4; 29 February 1876, 4.

[181] New York Times, 10 March 1876, 8.

Centennial Union of New York needed to generate an additional fifteen thousand dollars. For this purpose, a state organization was formed. This group, headed by Mrs. Howard Townsend a daughter of Stephen Van Rensselaer, began to solicit women's support throughout the state as well as obtain samples of women's work for exhibition.[182] By the spring of 1876, Maria Daly had a full calendar of charitable commitment at the Union Home and School. She weighed the importance of her participation in the Women's Centennial Union, concluding that "Mrs. Cullum evidently likes to manage everything herself and although one of the Advisors Committee, so little heed is given to suggestion from any other source by her that, having a good deal to do, I have abstained from going to meetings."[183]

Despite doubts about Elizabeth Cullum's management style, Maria supported the group's fund-raising activities. In early April, the Women's Centennial Union hosted a benefit concert by the Mendelssohn Glee Club in Chickering Hall[184] Several weeks later, the group's Dramatic Committee sponsored a performance of "Cinderella" by two-hundred fifty children at the Academy of Music.[185] A gala ball at the Academy of Music highlighted the women's appeal for funds. In addition to public ticket sales, sponsors sold the Academy's boxed seats at a premium to prominent individuals. The evening's featured event included a quadrille with seven "Centennial sets, in which the participating ladies

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[182] New York Times, 20 March 1876, 5.

[183] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," March 24, 1876.

[184] New York Times, 2 April 1876, 7.

[185] New York Times, 21 April 1876, 8.

wore their hair powdered and arranged after the style of 100 years ago."[186] The social arbiter Ward McAllister later recalled that Maria's dress as Lady Washington was "to all eyes the most attractive costume there."[187] Maria enjoyed the compliments she received for her efforts. "They said I looked well. The Judge said it gave me an air of gentleness."[188] Other concerts and lectures on behalf of the Women's Centennial Union took place in private homes and art galleries. Maria attended "beautiful" tableaux vivants in which "different ladies of our acquaintance" dressed in costume to portray a variety of historical scenes, including: a Puritan family at prayer; a Puritan wedding; a trial for witchcraft; Knickerbocker festivities; Franklin and Lafayette at the Court of Louis XVI; the return from Bunker Hill; and the court of Lady Washington.[189]

During this period of activity, Maria noted that she had been "asked to be President of the Ladies Mount Vernon Association."[190] This patriotic group, formed before the Civil War, had raised sufficient funds to purchase George Washington's historic homestead in March 1860.[191] Maria had served on the local chapter's Executive Committee before the Civil War.[192] After the war, the group resumed its effort to maintain the home and its grounds as well as fund the purchase of furniture and other Washington

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[186] New York Times, 26 April 1876, 5.

[187] Ward McAllister, Society as I Have Found It, Annotated Edition, 326.

[188] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," March 24, 1876.

[189] Ibid.

[190] Ibid.

[191] New York Times, 10 March 1880, 8.

[192] New York Times, 1 December 1858, 3; 8 December 1858, 8.

memorabilia. The Association's mission became critical as Washington artifacts dispersed, becoming more difficult to secure. Maria, upon further inquiry, declined the opportunity to lead the Mount Vernon Association. She learned that Mrs. Howard Townsend "has begun the matter...it would be absurd to have a President in the city and state both."[193] Maria also decided not to participate in the Mount Vernon Association because it would "make ill feeling in the Women's Centennial Union."[194] Later, she noted the "pleasant" outcome of her meeting with Mrs. Townsend in which she "succeeded in having her appointed the President of the Mount Vernon Association."[195]

In this instance, Maria demonstrated the continuing ease with which she chose her charitable work. Her ability to broker the leadership of another organization attests to Maria's talent for influencing others to suit her purposes. In promoting the leadership of Mrs. Townsend, Maria protected herself from the criticism of the women involved in the Women's Centennial Union.[196] Maria also did not wish to associate herself with a cause that some might consider secondary to the work of the Women's Centennial Union. At the same time, she took issue with the "unwise"decision of the Women's Centennial Union

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[193] Ibid.

[194] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," March 24, 1876.

[195] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," March 21, 1876.

[196] By 1877 the Association had opened Mount Vernon to tourists and had entertained prospective bids from steamboat operators to convey visitors to the historic site from Washington, D. C. New York Times, May 24, 1877, 1. The Association, consisting of a representative from each state in the Union, continued its work to build upon the revenues generated by tourists' admissions towards an endowment of $100,000. New York Times, June 14, 1878, 4. Mrs. Howard Townsend served as New York Regent of the Mount Vernon Association before accepting the Presidency of the newly incorporated society of Colonial Dames of the State of New York. New York Times, May 11, 1893.

to exclude the Mount Vernon Association from its centennial project. Had the two charities combined, funding priorities and the nature of the display would have diluted the accomplishment of women. Maria felt, however, that a combined effort "would have made us popular," thereby producing more money for the exhibit. Maria also took exception to Philadelphia's decision to send the German composer Richard Wagner $5000 for a musical composition honoring the centennial observance. Maria expressed "disgust" that Mrs. Gillespie had funded the work of a "man of ill life who ran away with the wife of von Bulow. We women should have nothing to do with him, much less send money out of the country to a German when we are trying hard to bring foreign money here."[197] Maria's outrage stemmed, in part, from the 1876 collapse of the nation's financial institutions and economic hardship of this period. To Maria, this money could have been better spent to further the Mount Vernon Association. In the end, Maria saw the Philadelphia leader Mrs. Gillespie as "cross and despotic."[198]

Maria remained critical of the overall New York women's centennial effort. In her opinion, the Women's Centennial Union had been "badly managed and the sympathy of New Yorkers is not with it." In her opinion, the group had sponsored too many simultaneous entertainments so that "we cannot sell tickets and the heads of the committees are not careful enough in making their agreements with those who get up the entertainments so that they frequently lose." Thoroughly seasoned in institutional fund-raising, Maria felt that "one great effort in the beginning" would have produced a better

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[197] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," March 24, 1876.

[198] Ibid.

result. "Now everybody has been called upon for a trifle and everyone feels they have given to it."[199] Despite Maria's misgivings, the Women's Centennial Union managed to raise $21,161.72 to cover New York's portion of the costs associated with the Women's Pavilion.[200]

The Philadelphia Centennial opened in July 1876. The Exhibition represented the women of New York state with one hundred art exhibits, ten inventions and thirty other "skillfully wrought articles."[201] The Women's Centennial Union also presented an embroidered silk standard, measuring 16 by 12 feet, designed and made by Tiffany and Company in consultation with the group's Banner Committee. Coincidentally, Elizabeth Merchant's younger sister Alice Wolcott served on the Banner Committee in a design capacity. As executed, the banner bore the inscriptions "God and our Country," the dates "1776" and "1876"and the words "From the Women of the City of New York." It also displayed the official Arms of the City of New York, whose iconography depicted the city's Dutch and English origins. After an official presentation at the Centennial, the banner was placed in the Women's Pavilion along with a list of names of the women who embroidered it.[202]

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[199] Ibid., passim.

[200] New York Times, 11 May 1876, 5.

[201] Ibid.

[202] After the close of the Centennial, the banner was placed on permanent exhibition in Independence Hall in Philadelphia. A separate record of the names of the contributors to the banner's expense is on repository in the New-York Historical Society. Women's Centennial Union of the City of New York, Report, (Organized February 8, 1876. Dissolved May 8, 1876). Manuscript Division, New York Historical Society, New York, New York.

Maria and her husband Charles Daly attended the Centennial for a week in July. Maria generally thought the event "hot and noisy and uncomfortable." At the same time, the Exposition proved "a wonderful sight." Maria liked the American Building's "superb display of ores, minerals, machinery, antiquities and Indian relics...as well as the progressive rise of the country." She enjoyed the "fine" displays of consumer goods at the Japanese, Chinese, Russian and Swedish exhibitions. She inspected the "very artistic and beautiful" English china and silver displays and admitted that the "Japanese and Chinese fabrics made me covetous." Maria, however, had "little desire to buy, [as] seeing so much makes you indifferent." Economic considerations aside, Maria confessed that she "dislike[d] having too many things to take care of."[203]

Maria Daly had enough to do without mourning the loss of purchasing opportunities at the Centennial. In 1875, as she considered the Home's future, she recorded the substance of a visit by Professor Felix Adler.[204] At this meeting, Adler asked Maria to "lend her name to a new undertaking." Adler's solicitation of Maria is understandable in view of her husband's advocacy of the rights of minorities, including both Irish and Jewish immigrant populations, and his scholarly interest in Jewish ethnography.[205] Called the Children's Charitable Union, this proposed organization was an auxiliary of the Children's Aid Society. The new group hoped to encourage "rich

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[203] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," July 13, 1876.

[204] American National Biography, s.v. "Adler, Felix." See also New York Times, April 26, 1933, 15.

[205] Charles Patrick Daly, The Jews of New York, (New York: The American Hebrew, 1883); The Settlement of the Jews in North America, edited, with notes and appendices, by Max J. Kohler, (New York: P. Cowen, 1893).

children to put three cents a day in a school box to feed a poor child. Mr. Brace says that he can furnish a meal for three cents to the children of the ragged schools in their school rooms."[206] Maria quickly saw the need for the project as she had taught in a school at the New York Half Orphan Society prior to her marriage.[207] Maria accepted Dr. Adler's proposal regarding the use of her name and quickly invited interested friends to attend an organizational meeting in her home the following week with Dr. Brace.

A week later, Maria indicated that she had accepted "against my will" the Presidency of the new group because "the name of my good husband carries so much influence with it, I feel obliged."[208] Maria realized that her husband's well-known interest in immigrant minorities as well as the impoverished circumstance of his background underscored the importance of free schooling to similarly situated youth. In view of her husband's prominence, Maria knew that to refuse participation in the Children's Charitable Union could undermine the credibility of the new undertaking and otherwise reflect poorly on her. Her experience with children at the Union Home and School could also prove beneficial to the Children's Charitable Union and its parent organization the Children's Aid Society. As her involvement at the Union Home and School began to require less of her time, this new opportunity would insure Maria's continued prominence in philanthropic

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[206] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," December 22, 1875.

[207] The Eleventh Annual Report of the New York Half Orphan Society lists Miss M. J. Lydig as a Manager and member of the Education Committee, indicating the likelihood that Maria served as an instructor in the institution. Protestant Half Orphan Society, (New York: W. E. Dean, 1847), 22, 24, passim. The Twelfth Annual Report of 1848 indicates the same level of participation by Maria Lydig. Protestant Half Orphan Society, (New York: W. E. Dean, 1848), 24, 25, passim.

[208] MLD, "Diaries, 1860 -1893," December 30, 1875.

circles.

Other than a single reference to a meeting, Maria did not specify the nature of her duties with the Children's Charitable Union.[209] According to the organization's Third Annual Report, the group began operations in January 1876 with its original purpose of supplying warm noonday meals to the pupils of the Industrial Schools of the Children's Aid Society. The organization, for the years 1876 through 1879, compiled full reports with all details and statistics.[210] For the winter of 1879 - 1880 alone, the charity raised sufficient money to provide seventy-five thousand hot meals to needy children.[211] As the women of the Children's Charitable Union visited the schools they sponsored, they concluded that "the work of the society was not sufficiently far reaching."[212]

By the late fall of 1876, Maria had begun to record her suspicions regarding the integrity of Charles Loring Brace. While she does not reveal what produced her antipathy, the two did clash over the direction of the Children's Charitable Union. The women associated with the satellite organization wished to start a kindergarten program for young children prior to their enrollment in either the public school or in an Industrial School sponsored by the Children's Aid Society. In early 1878, Maria visited the Board of Education to advocate that the city establish kindergartens to "try to supplement those of Dr. Brace which I feel to be a very poor substitute for our public school." Brace attended

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[209] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," March 4, 1876.

[210] Children's Charitable Union, Third Report, "Secretary's Report," (New York: Philip L. Sondheim, 1880), 4.

[211] Ibid.

[212] Ibid.

this meeting where he, according to Maria, "carried on as a Job." Moreover, Maria, found the President of the Board of Education to be a "very conceited man, barely courteous, shall never go to see him again."[213]

Maria did not win local government funding for her kindergarten project. Undeterred, she with the aid of "some German ladies," opened a small school on Fourth Street near Avenue C in October 1878. Private donations supplied the necessary funds to purchase furniture and supplies and pay half of a teacher's salary. The Children's Aid Society provided a rent-free location as well as the balance of the instructor's stipend.[214] During this period, the Children's Charitable Union continued to provide hot meals to the students in Brace's industrial schools. Maria, however, saw the Children's Charitable Union and its new kindergarten project at cross purposes with the Children's Aid Society. She reasoned that "a great many of the children who go to Dr. Brace's schools might go to the public school, if they could be relieved of the care of their little brothers and sisters."[215]

In November 1878, the Children's Charitable Union sponsored a fund-raising children's lecture by Paul Du Chaillu, the noted African explorer and a personal friend of the Dalys.[216] Vindicated by the public response to this occasion, Maria penned a brief newspaper clipping from The New York World regarding the event to the pages of her

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[213] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," March 27, 1878, passim.

[214] Children's Charitable Union, Third Report, 4.

[215] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," June 10, 1878.

[216] New York Times, 20 November 1878, 8.

diary. She judged the lecture a "great success." The band "played delightfully" and the children present "cheered Du Chaillu enthusiastically."[217] The kindergarten opened with an enrollment of forty-eight children.[218] Nonetheless, the need to raise private money became critical. Maria noted that Brace's Industrial Schools had received a $7500 appropriation from the Board of Education. More modestly, she hoped to raise a thousand dollars to fund the new kindergarten, writing "a great many notes and sent circulars to some forty or fifty persons."[219] With the kindergarten adjacent to the German tenements of Manhattan's Lower East Side, Maria directed much of her solicitation to friends and acquaintances of German descent, including prominent Jewish families. She realized three hundred fifty dollars for her effort, noting in her diary a donation of fifty dollars from the Rhinelander family. Maria, reminded of the Lydig family's origins, reflected that "Germans well directed are the best of citizens."[220]

Enrollment at the kindergarten increased rapidly so that by the winter of 1880 ninety-three children attended its program.[221] Additionally, the Children's Charitable Union continued to provide warm meals during the winter months, and lunches of bread and fresh milk during May and June, to the children of the Industrial Schools. The Children's Charitable Union also began to distribute Christmas gifts of clothing and new shoes to the children it served. Yet despite the success of this new outreach, Maria

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[217] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," November 24, 1878.

[218] Children's Charitable Union, Third Report, 5.

[219] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," November 22, 1878.

[220] Ibid.

[221] Children's Charitable Union, Third Annual Report, 5.

resigned from the organization in October 1880. She based her decision on a bronchial ailment which restricted her public activity. In a rare instance that she mentioned her health, Maria stated that she had "been leeched and medicined until, though better, I am weak...if I only get well, I shall be most thankful."[222]

Maria could no longer muster the energy to defend the kindergarten's program to Charles Loring Brace and the Children's Aid Society. The Children's Charitable Union practiced the methods of the German pedagogue Friedrich Froebel whose approach to education contrasted with more traditional scholastic teaching. The Froebel approach to early childhood education had been promoted for twenty years in America by the Boston educator Elizabeth Peabody.[223] Froebel's instructional methods sought to satisfy natural childhood curiosity with a "series of inventions...consisting of building blocks, material for braiding, embroidery, and platting, [and] clay for models."[224] With these tools, and without more traditional books, children learned freely and at their own individual pace. The object of kindergarten became "more to form and open the mind of childhood than to fill it."[225] By 1880, educators had organized The American Froebel Union to "protect the purity and consequent efficiency of the genuine kindergarten from the deterioration and

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[222] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," October 26, 1879.

[223] Bruce A. Rhonda, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody: A Reformer on Her Own Terms, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999); Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, Letters of Elizabeth Palmer Peabody: American Renaissance Woman, Edited, with introduction, by Bruce A. Rhonda, (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1984); Dictionary of Notable American Women, s.v. "Peabody, Elizabeth Palmer."

[224] New York Times, 12 August 1873, 4.

[225] Ibid.

travesties" of other teachers of young children.[226] Froebel advocates believed that children should not undertake primary schooling until the age of six. This practice put the Kindergarten of the Children's Charitable Union at odds with the policies of the Children's Aid Society whose more traditional policies permitted students to enter school at age five.

In addition to her disagreement with the Children's Aid Society over policy issues, Maria seemed pleased that she would "not again have to meet Dr. Adler." Maria reported Adler's conduct at the May meeting of the Children's Charitable Union during which a representative of the Children's Aid Society explained "how we stood with Mr. Brace." Adler, who would later found the modern ethical culture movement, addressed the group and "spoke so dictatorially and was so bigoted in his infidelity...so disrespectful in my presence of Jesus that had it not been in my own house I should have said what I thought." Adler's conduct reminded Maria of a "man wise in his own conceit. I thought that in acting with Jewish ladies, I was safe in taking for granted that they believed in God." In the end, Maria judged Felix Adler a "mischievous teacher, one who will lead his people astray." Adler's synthetic approach to belief proved more than the spiritually conservative Maria could tolerate. She remained firm in her resolve to resign from the Children's Charitable Union and "declined all argument on the subject."[227]

Despite Maria's withdrawal from the kindergarten project in 1879, the Children's Charitable Union continued its work with tenement children. The group under the leadership of Mrs. M. Landmann continued to express frustration over its affiliation with

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[226] New York Times, 1 April 1880, 2.

[227] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," October 26, 1879, passim.

the Children's Aid Society. According to its Third Annual Report, the kindergarten's teacher "never attains all the results she strives for." Furthermore, "being a Society within a Society preclude[s] our exerting that influence upon the management which we consider absolutely necessary." After "mature deliberation," the Children's Charitable Union, hoping to bring the Froebel system to "its full development," severed its connection with the Children's Aid Society in 1880. Thus the Kindergarten continued to teach students "habits of order and cleanliness as to enable them to be admitted at the primaries of our public schools instead of attending the inferior charity schools." Maria Daly, though not otherwise involved, continued to support the Kindergarten financially.[228] Available records also indicate that the Children's Charitable Union actively sponsored a Kindergarten school adjacent to the tenements of Manhattan's Lower East Side until at least 1895.[229]

Around the time of her involvement with the Children's Charitable Union, Maria began a second project. In early March of 1878, Maria reported that she had taken some girls from the Union Home and School to visit "Miss Corson's Cooking School. I made them make the soup she had taught. It was quite well done."[230] Juliet Corson overcame childhood invalidism and an unhappy family life before finding employment as Secretary at the Free Training School for Women. This institution, founded in 1873 by the Women's Educational and Industrial Society, provided practical training and employment in useful

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[228] Children's Charitable Union, Third Annual Report, 5, passim.

[229] Children's Charitable Union, Seventeenth and Eighteenth Annual Reports, (New York: Stettiner, Lambert & Co, 1895).

[230] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," March 23, 1878.

branches of industry for working women.[231] The school offered instruction in machine sewing, shorthand, photography, proofreading and accounting as well as various aspects of domestic economy. Initially, Miss Corson hired a chef to instruct pupils in "practical French cooking" as well as tutor in the "art of judicious purchase of provisions and household effects."[232] When no chef appeared at the School, Miss Corson began to teach after first educating herself in the principles of nutrition and foreign cuisine. As she was then inexperienced, Corson used a French chef for demonstration purposes.[233] Corson's lectures proved so successful that by May 1874, the Free Training School for Women had opened a women's restaurant on the ground floor of their premises at 47 East 10th Street in the hopes of making the charity self-sustaining.[234] In addition to practical instruction, the Free Training School for Women offered its pupils evening programs of lectures, musical concerts and dramatic readings.[235] The charity's Managers also organized a summer outing for some seven hundred working women to Rockaway Beach.[236]

Maria returned to Corson's school on St. Mark's Place a few days later.[237] After her second visit, Maria concluded that Juliet Corson was "a very intelligent woman,

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[231] New York Times, 8 November 1874, 10.

[232] New York Times, 31 January 1874, 8.

[233] New York Times, 3 January 1879, C8.

[234] New York Times, 4 May 1874, 8.

[235] New York Times, 19 June 1874, 8; 17 July 1874, 5.

[236] New York Times, 21 July 1874, 5.

[237] New York Times, 5 May 1878, 9.

studying the chemistry of food. Is a philanthropist."[238] By 1876, Corson had opened her own instructional center called the New-York Cooking School on St. Marks Place. There, in a well-equipped kitchen, groups of ten to twenty matrons learned to use herbs and make sauces. As the school's sole instructor, Corson also escorted students to the Fulton Market where they learned to test chickens for plumpness and examine beef for marbling. The relatively new field of "scientific cookery" applied laboratory principles to food preparation with an emphasis on precision in measurements, the duration of cooking temperature and knowledge of the ingredients of a particular dish.[239] This new approach to food preparation mirrored women's desire to rationalize kitchen procedures in a manner that complemented the technological advances of the outside world. Corson's classroom lectures included an analysis of the carbohydrates, nitrates and phosphates in the foods prepared as well as their effect on the body.

That Corson's application of these advanced procedures also produced toothsome cuisine convinced Maria Daly of the utility of her new undertaking. While there is no prior record of Maria's involvement with the Women's Educational and Industrial Society, she had worked previously with the Workingwomen's Protective Association. Interested in issues pertaining to women's employment, Maria acknowledged the need to assist "those who must depend upon their own exertions for a livelihood."[240] Cooking as vocational

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[238] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," March 27, 1878.

[239] New York Times, 21 June 1885, 4.

[240] New York Times, 21 July 1874, 5.

education for women seemed to Maria to be "far more important...than drawing."[241] Maria, upon consideration of her own practical needs, was also familiar with the difficulties of obtaining adequate household staff. As she entertained frequently at home, she commented on several occasions regarding the insufficiencies of her own cook.[242] For Juliet Corson, engagement by Maria's new charity provided the security of a reliable income and the time to promote her advanced views of kitchen management. In the end, Maria resolved to "devote" herself to the Cooking School as well as the kindergarten project so that she might "try to get such added to the public schools."[243]

Within a few months, Maria had organized the New-York Cooking School into a private charitable enterprise with Juliet Corson as Superintendent and Mrs. Robert L. Stuart as president. In view of her other charitable commitments, Maria did not have the time to lead a third charity. Hence she prevailed upon her friend Mary Stuart, widow of the wealthy sugar refiner Robert L. Stuart.[244] Maria Daly, cognizant of the "vanity of

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[241] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," June 10, 1878.

[242] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 17, 1879; November 6, 1880.

[243] Ibid.

[244] Mary Stuart, born in 1811, was the daughter of the wealthy merchant Robert Macrea. Her husband Robert L. Stuart, along with his brother Alexander, became the largest sugar refiners in New York, owning several large factories in the city. The Stuart brothers used their wealth liberally to endow a number of religious and cultural institutions. Robert Stuart died in 1882, leaving his wife Mary to dispose of his remaining assets valued at between five and six million dollars. Upon her death in 1892, Mary Stuart upheld her husband's conservative principles by revoking two prior bequests to cultural institutions, stating that any disposition of her assets remain contingent upon a strict Sabbath observance. New York Times, 13 December 1882; 16 December 1882; 6 January 1892, 8. See also "Biographical Sketch of Robert L. and Alexander Stuart," Encyclopedia of Contemporary Biography of New York, vol. II, (New York: Atlantic Publishing, 1882), 5; New York Times, 24 December 1879, 5; Catalog of the Library of Robert L. Stuart, (New York: J. J. Little & Company, 1884).

riches,"appreciated the Stuart's reputation for generosity.[245] In contrast, she criticized another Scotsman, the wealthy department store entrepreneur Alexander T. Stewart, for "the little he had done for the city in which he made his millions."[246]

Early the following year, Maria reported on her progress in establishing the cooking school. With the aid of Juliet Corson, Maria found suitable basement quarters at 73 East 17th Street. Maria also assembled a committee of twenty Managers for the project to serve with Mary Stuart as president and herself as vice president. She noted that all concerned were "rich women whom I hope will be liberal in supplying the means." Maria suggested that Patrons of the project contribute twenty-five dollars annually because "$5 subscribers take so long to accumulate." Maria hoped to encourage "leading clergymen" to supply young girls from their "charity schools" as students. Over time, she hoped to improve the cooking in the city by "teaching...an economical and wholesome way of preparing food and bettering the condition of the working man."[247]

As planned, the New-York Cooking School principally instructed the wives and daughters of working men in the principles of plain cooking. The School opened for classes during the winter of 1876-77. By the end of the following year, two thousand pupils had received instruction. Buoyed by this demand, the Managers expanded the school's curriculum into three levels, with concomitant gradations in tuition costs. The "first artisan course" provided lessons in the "cheap and palatable cooking of the simplest

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[245] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," November 22, 1878.

[246] Ibid.

[247] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 3, 1879, passim.

and least expensive kinds of food, together with training in kitchen work and dining room service." The "second artisan course" gave lessons in the "economical preparation of food." The third or "plain cook's course" provided training to "domestics engaged in families whose fare is good and inexpensive." The Managers of the new school announced their intention to enlarge the facility so they could "include all branches of housework" in their offerings. Sponsors began to make arrangements to draw pupils from the "immigrant classes and from the mission and industrial schools...[to] open a field of useful labor to those who have been compelled to enter the already overcrowded ranks of sewing women and shop attendants."[248]

The school's superintendent Juliet Corson enhanced the institution's reputation with the 1877 publication of a book on cookery and household management.[249] This volume explained the principles of domestic economy taught in the New-York Cooking School. Corson divided her book into sections reflecting the graded levels of instruction at the school, adding a fourth section captioned the "Ladies Course." Many observers praised Corson's practical presentation and the "pithy manner in which her receipts are given."[250] Corson numbered the various stages in the preparation of a dish to simplify her instructions. A separate appendix on the chemistry of food and an index increased the

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[248] New York Times, 29 December 1878, 12, passim.

[249] Juliet Corson, Cooking-School Text-Book and Housekeeper's Guide to Cookery and Kitchen Management, (New York: Orange Judd Company, 1879). Other books by Corson include: Everyday Cookery, Table Talk, and Hints for the Laundry, (Chicago: Adams & Westlake Mfg., Co., 1884); Family Living on $500 a Year; a Daily Reference Book for Young & Inexperienced Housewives, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1888); and Miss Corson's Practical American Cookery and Household Management, (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1886).

[250] New York Times, 30 December 1878, 3.

book's utility.

Building on her New York experience, Juliet Corson organized a similar institution in Montreal during the summer months. She wrote to Maria Daly of the success of this new venture, promising to "return in time for the opening of our own school.[251] The Managers of the New-York Cooking School also sponsored local events to spread the wisdom of Corson's household methods and to attract publicity for the charity. Miss Corson used the income from her private lessons and advanced courses to help the needy. Moved by the unemployment caused by the railroad strike of 1877, Corson wrote, printed and distributed fifty thousand pamphlets entitled "Fifteen Cent Dinners for Workingmen's Families."[252] In 1880, Miss Corson gave an illustrative lecture on Blackwell's Island to pupils in the Training School for Nurses on the preparation of food for the sick.[253] Over the years, contemporaneous news accounts of Corson's presentations conveyed the practicality of her methods. In one lecture on the preparation of "Terrapin with Cream," Corson began with advice on how to best kill the animal. As a general rule, she avoided decapitation of the live animal as summer terrapins could inflict a "cruel bite" and the more "torpid" winter terrapin kept its head concealed. Corson practically instructed that simply "plunging the terrapin into the boiling water kills it at once."[254]

Despite Miss Corson's innovative and informative methods and her continuing

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[251] Juliet Corson "Letter to Maria Lydig Daly," November 16, 1878, Daly Papers.

[252] New York Times, 3 January 1879, C8.

[253] New York Times, 5 December 1880, 2.

[254] New York Times, 13 March 1881, 9. See also New York Times, 19 December 1880, 9.

ability to generate positive comment, the New-York Cooking School remained underfunded and without permanent quarters. The institution existed mainly on the small fees charged for its courses and the annual contributions of its wealthy sponsors. In February 1880, Maria reported the substance of her fund-raising appeal to the women Managers at a meeting in the home of Mary Stuart. "We really did something. Mr. Cooper gave $1000 and offered a house and in the meeting, the ladies raised $6000 more. A beginning of something at last. I was beginning to despair–two years without progress. I thought of resigning."[255] Maria prevailed upon the generosity of her friend Peter Cooper who donated the use of a house that he owned on the Bowery by giving the existing tenant a thousand dollars to move.[256] Afterwards, Maria calculated that the School would raise nearly $10,000 to fund its operations as two of the Managers had contributed a thousand dollars each and the others five hundred.[257]

With the successful funding of the New-York School of Cooking, Maria had again demonstrated her ability to shape the philanthropic interests of other women elites. Though the charity now had the resources to expand to larger quarters, it required additional money to expense supplies and salaries to cover two years of operation. Ultimately, the Managers hoped to raise an additional $10,000 to make the institution self-sustaining. In 1881, the charity issued its First Report. By this date, Maria Daly had resigned from the group as her name does not appear in this publication except as a

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[255] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," February 11, 1880.

[256] Encyclopedia of New York City, s.v. "Cooper, Peter." See also New York Times, April 5, 1883, 1; April 8, 1883, 1; April 12, 1883, 5.

[257] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," February 14, 1880.

contributing Patron.

The First Report provides a useful summary of the history of the New-York Cooking School since its establishment by Juliet Corson in 1876 and subsequent incorporation as a charity by Maria Daly and her friends in 1878. Now occupying a rented house at 22 East 17th Street, the charity continued its mission to "establish a home where young women of intelligence and good moral character can be careful trained in all branches of domestic service."[258] For the winter of 1879-80, the School generated income of $5,943.88 and provided lessons to thirteen hundred seventy students.[259] The institution's expenses, including a three hundred dollar stipend for Juliet Corson, amounted to $2,101.54.[260] The school also added a program of Free Evening Lessons to Working Women that attracted another five hundred pupils.[261]

The New-York Cooking School operated successfully for another thirty-six years. Juliet Corson died in 1897, having been previously honored at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition and by the United States Commissioner of Education for her pioneering contributions to American cooking.[262] Without Corson's leadership, the institution scaled back its operations to offer fewer classes. The school continued to attract the support of women elites through its ability to adapt the curriculum to changing

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[258] New-York Cooking School, First Report, (New York: Anson, D.F. Randolph & Company, 1881), 2.

[259] Ibid., 6-7.

[260] Ibid., 7.

[261] Ibid., 6.

[262] New York Times, 3 January 1979, C8.

times.[263] One of the last news items related to the school reported in 1917 that twenty-six sailors from the Brooklyn Navy Yard had received instruction prior to their service as cooks on boats carrying troops to France.[264]

Conclusion

Once questioned about the extent of her charitable work Maria replied, "I am not rich enough to be worshiped and listened to as a sovereign by pastors and matrons and managers. And I am not humble enough to be a subject and have nothing to say."[265] Maria's statement, spoken in 1880, reflects the changes in women's benevolence that had taken place since she began to record her philanthropic activities. Maria had grown comfortable with her role as an elite matron when she began to keep a diary in 1861. Married to a prominent member of the city's judiciary, she saw charity as a part of her domesticity duty and as a complement to her husband's career. At age thirty-seven, benevolent work had become second nature to Maria. Her contempt for the absence of philanthropy in the life of the wealthy merchant Alexander Stewart reflects her own understanding of the need for prominent individuals to benefit the less fortunate. Through charity, Maria demonstrated that she had the time as well as the means to address social ills. The Lydig and Daly names linked her to a network of wealthy friends and political

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[263] New-York Cooking School, Ladies Classes at the New-York Cooking School, (New York: n.p., 1896). See also New York Times, 28 February 1882, 6; 3 April 1884, 2; 18 November 1885, 2; 28 March 1886, 3; 12 December 1886, 12; 17 April 1887, 8; 24 April 1887, 3; 6 May 1888, 5; 27 October 1887, 8; 12 December 1888, 3; 24 February 1895, 25; 15 January 1896, 7; 9 January 1898, A2; 19 April 1908, 9; 30 April 1908, 16.

[264] New York Times, 30 December 1917, XX8.

[265] MLD, "Diaries, 1863 - 1893," December 10, 1880.

associates that she could turn to for help in her public projects.

Just as Maria's wealth and social standing connected her to wealthy and prominent people, they also privileged her view of the less fortunate. Maria could only devote herself to issues that did not test her conservative social values. She could not participate in a project to benefit foundlings and unwed mothers because this work challenged her sense of propriety. Instead, she encouraged patriotic causes, helped destitute children and provided vocational alternatives for women. No one could reasonably question the need for her outreach. During the Civil War, Maria joined with other prominent women in the work of the United States Sanitary Commission. She limited her participation, however, when it impinged upon her social status and sense of domestic obligation. Although she collected donations and visited hospitals, she would not display herself or her Knickerbocker heritage for public consumption. Maria preferred instead to organize other women elites into a patriotic society to limit the purchase of luxuries, reflecting her own standards of thrift and sobriety.

In 1865, Maria undertook the leadership of an orphanage which served children displaced by the wartime emergency. This project consumed her resources of time and energy. She involved herself in all aspects of the institution, including its fund raising, supplies and staffing. She also found time to work with individual children. The Union Home and School brought to the fore Maria's considerable social influence, as she drew upon her social contacts with other prominent women and distinguished members of the military. Maria effectively kept the institution and its mission before the public. In the process, she defended the Home from the challenge of a competing organization and

managed an internal crisis in the Home's accounting practices.

As the Home attained financial solvency and ebbed from the public consciousness, Maria turned to other forms of charity. She worked with the Women's Centennial Union to highlight women's contributions at the Centennial Celebration of 1876 in Philadelphia. This occasion provided her with another opportunity to express her patriotism and demonstrate her capacity for leadership. She accepted another challenge to start a hot meal program in the industrial schools under the benevolent umbrella of the Children's Aid Society. Within a few years, this project had evolved into a separate Kindergarten initiative which helped poor children from New York's tenements. Lastly, Maria organized and raised funds for a charitable cooking school which offered poor women vocational alternatives and instruction in scientific cookery.

Some short-lived projects like the Union Home and School and the Women's Centennial Union addressed a specific issue for a discrete period of time. Maria's other charities, including the Kindergarten and the New York Cooking School, enjoyed greater longevity. In all of these undertakings, Maria premised benevolence upon her desire to empower the poor and disenfranchised with the opportunity to make informed choices through access to education and vocational skills. She sponsored projects that encouraged personal initiative. Her motivations originate, in part, from her husband's rise from humble circumstance to judicial eminence. Therefore, the Union Home and School provided residents with useful skills to enable their adult lives of self-reliance and independence. The Kindergarten project steered children towards public schooling which Maria felt would provide them greater future opportunity. The New York Cooking

School gave some women useful skills, while enabling others with greater knowledge of domestic economy. Similarly, her two patriotic projects centered around issues of women's accomplishment and the potential of women's collective empowerment to alleviate the national debt.

In all of these undertakings, Maria demonstrated her capacity for firm and decisive leadership. With the formation of the Women's Patriotic Association in 1865, Maria began to show her ability to influence other women. Nevertheless, Maria consistently furthered her own social agenda in laboring for a worthy cause. With limited discretionary household income, Maria could not easily afford New York's lavish standards of hospitality. Maria understood the fluid nature of New York's social landscape and the growing importance of wealth. Therefore, she sometimes weighed charitable participation in terms of the women with whom she would work. During the war years, she questioned the benefit of working with Laure Field in much the same way that she complained of the social composition of The Nursery's Management. Similarly, Maria could recognize Jessie Benton Fremont as socially ambitious because she too fell prey to her own self-interest. In 1876, Maria declined to lead the Mount Vernon Association to avoid criticism by her patrician peers in the Women's Centennial Union.

As Maria Daly attracted the support of prominent women, she also enlisted the aid of powerful men. Maria understood men and women to have different abilities. She did not question that her charities required Male Advisors to maintain their credibility before the public. Prominent men guided her efforts to shape the Woman's Patriotic Association. Male advisors provided the Union Home and School's financial difficulties with a

protective layer. She used retired military personnel to publicize the need for the Home. She relied upon her husband's political connections to obtain necessary public funding before state and local legislative bodies. Charles' advice and legal assistance also proved invaluable in preserving the Home's financial integrity as well as defending it from unwanted supervision by the State Charities Aid Association. In addition to her husband, Maria sought help from other important men. The publisher James Gordon Bennett counseled her regarding the negative publicity surrounding Mary Voorhies' financial mismanagement. She turned to the businessman Peter Cooper for help in securing a facility for the New York Cooking School.

Both determined and resourceful in her own right, Maria participated in charity out of a sense of civic duty. Despite her lack of franchise, she participated fully in the life of her city. Maria understood that women played an important public role in a participatory democracy. That she rarely commented on the daily routine of her domestic existence indicates the importance that she attached to her public life. While it is unlikely that her home operated smoothly and without incident, Maria's emphasis in her diary is upon the satisfaction and frustration associated with her public life.

Away from home, however, Maria did not always evince the polite manners associated with an elite woman. Maria sometimes forsook the indirect influence routinely associated with feminine domesticity to become confrontational and argumentative. Her transition is evident in the language she used to describe her benevolent work. Once she accepted responsibility for the Union Home and School, she changed the way in which she spoke about charity. The benevolent lady who dispensed oranges to wounded soldiers

during the Civil War quickly accustomed herself to finding the means to finance an orphanage. The Union Home and School needed money in order to provide an acceptable level of service to its children. In directing the Home and other subsequent charities, Maria learned to sublimate softer notions of femininity to adapt herself to the need to raise money. Without adequate funds, her charities would not last. With the exception of holiday celebrations at the Home during which she distributed gifts and special meals, Maria devoted much of her discussion of the Home in her diary to the institution's need for funds and improved services.

In New York's crowded philanthropic setting, Maria learned the value of publicity for the Home and its mission. She hosted prominent military leaders at the Home and staged other events to remind the public of the need for the orphanage and its services. Her diary does not reveal the truth of the institution's home-like setting for impoverished children. Newspaper articles and the reports of impartial observers supply these critical details. Maria writes of the orphanage's business practices and its need for permanent housing. In the end, Maria voiced her pride in her ability to finance and administer a model institution that operated efficiently. Maria's methods in managing the orphanage also translated into her subsequent charities. She relied upon publicity to remind others of the underlying necessity of her benevolence. She targeted her appeals for money to those groups which had an interest in the success of a particular cause. In formulating her Kindergarten project, Maria reached out to those of German descent, particularly those of German Jewish heritage, who could potentially support a project to benefit recent German immigrants. Similarly, the New York Cooking School attracted the support of wealthy

women who responded to the need for vocational training of household staff. The cooking school, through the appeal of its founder Juliet Corson, continued to be newsworthy.

Maria's ability to transition from the quieter standards of feminine domesticity to the competitive world of public philanthropy raises several corollary issues. Maria's experience in benevolence confirms the existence of separate though complimentary roles for men and women in the late nineteenth century. Maria's understanding of a woman's domestic responsibilities positioned her at the dinner tables of fashionable New York, just as it facilitated her successful marriage. Maria did not challenge men's public role. Rather, she accepted that prominent men would counsel and support her charitable work. Excepting her lack of political equality, Maria's domesticity did not silence her public voice. Maria's comfort away from home suggests the existence of a permeable boundary between women's public and private lives. Maria, when in public, assumed the attitudes of the businessmen who counseled her charities. Her confrontational methods, when dealing with men, differed substantially from the softer manner in which she influenced women. Maria bullied the minister Stephen Tyng whose Patriot Orphanage undermined the credibility of the Union Home and School. She threatened the male auditors at Thomas and Company with public exposure of their misdeeds. She begged the businessman Peter Cooper for money to finance her cooking school project. In these instances, Maria did not cloak her goals in the polite vocabulary of domesticity. She bullied, threatened and begged to achieve her purposes, taking pride in her ability to achieve a successful result. Importantly, she prevailed in these confrontations without any

apparent harm to her reputation.

In the late nineteenth century, circumstances permitted polite women like Maria to shed their domestic persona in public. When dealing with other women, however, Maria continued to rely upon the indirect methods of moral suasion. In staving off Louisa Lee Schuyler's suggestions for the Women's Patriotic Association, Maria did not pursue direct confrontation. Instead, she formulated a written response to deflect Schuyler's criticism of her approach to women's wartime consumption. In responding to the oversight of Josephine Shaw Lowell and the State Charities Aid Association, Maria made herself available to answer any questions regarding the continuing necessity of the Home. She relied upon the use of rumor and gossip, traditional methods used by women to shape situations that they could not control. Maria, cognizant of Lowell's power, used gossip at their meeting to undermine the credibility of other charities that she competed with for funding. With the exception of her confrontation with the hapless Treasurer Mary Voorhies, Maria dealt with women in the gentle language of moral suasion. She appealed to the better natures of well heeled German Jewish women to gather support for her Kindergarten project. Similarly, she coaxed money from her wealthy friends to assure the future of the New York Cooking School. Maria did not see the separate tactics that she used for men and women as incompatible. Her shift in manner underscores the limits of traditional domesticity just as it affirms Maria's adaptive capacity to meet the complex challenge of her public life.

Maria fully appreciated that New York's philanthropic community was changing. Institutional reliance upon public money required a concomitant increase in the

independent oversight of agencies like the State Charities Aid Association. This fact alone suggests the decline of the potential usefulness of traditional forms of women's moral suasion. For a woman elite like Maria Daly, the public's need to monitor benevolence implied a litter of impersonal statistics compiled by anonymous observers rather than the personal accomplishment of a single, influential woman. The availability of public money for charitable institutions also allowed for the employment of salaried professionals, obviating the need for cadres of elite volunteers. In the end, Maria preferred to work on projects that provided her with direct participation in charity. Smaller institutions like the Kindergarten project and the New York Cooking School suited her traditional values and complimented her social agenda. By the time she became involved with the Kindergarten and the New York Cooking School, she had a proven formula for success. Maria could exercise control over these small local charities and avoid the supervision of regulatory agencies. Using her powers of persuasion, she continued to attract the interest of other wealthy women. She used publicity to remind others of the necessity of her work as well as to demonstrate her influence among her peers. In this way, Maria continued to further her own social goals.

The Social Whirl: Maria Lydig Daly and Mrs. Paran Stevens

Maria did not like to stay at home. She needed to hear the "clever woman's talk" of New York's fashionable drawing rooms.[1] She once confessed that she "would not like to live in the country in winter. Should miss society."[2] Maria enjoyed her social life as the wife of a prominent member of the judiciary. The Dalys were welcomed throughout the city in a variety of intellectual and social circles. Maria once described her active social life as a veritable "whirl."[3] Maria Daly socialized in a variety of ways, including: evenings at the opera and theater; balls; dinners; receptions; teas and kettledrums "innumerable."[4] Maria also regularly entertained at home. She opened her parlor for large, formal receptions and she gathered friends for musical performances and lectures. Maria particularly enjoyed assembling from six to twelve individuals for small dinner parties. Finally, Maria's management of the social introduction of her niece Emy Otto confirms the importance that the wealthy attached to the socialization of young women.

As a woman of conservative tastes and habit, Maria understood New York society

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[1] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," March 23, 1873.

[2] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," January 23, 1866.

[3] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," February 7 - 10, 1877.

[4] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," February 12, 1874.

and the requisite qualities for inclusion in its upper crust. Maria worried about the growing importance of wealth in society and the increasingly lavish standards of dress and hospitality that she observed. The Dalys, though comfortable, did not possess great wealth. They could not afford a standard of living comparable to that of the city's richest families. Maria depended upon her family associations and her own prominence in philanthropic circles to compensate for this deficiency. Maria's resistance to the influence of wealth on social activity, however, runs deeper than simply her own lack of money or the threat to her social leadership posed by the newly rich. Maria, with a traditional outlook, came into contact with many rich women at the functions who seemed to flaunt her conservative standards of public conduct. From her diaries emerges a strong sense of the social rivalry that existed in New York during the late nineteenth century.

This chapter views comparatively the social lives of two women, Maria Daly and Mrs. Paran Stevens. In public, Maria maintained the dignity associated with her husband's judicial career and his cultural interests. Mrs. Stevens, the wife of a wealthy hotel owner, possessed the means and the inclination to behave with greater independence. Maria is seen largely through the pages of her private journal. Because she disliked public mention of her social activity, her name seldom appeared in the newspapers. Maria viewed her public life as an extension of her private life. Mrs. Stevens, in contrast, encouraged the public's awareness of her private activity. She emerges through the newspaper records that blended her public and private matters into a steady stream of press clippings.

To understand Maria's conservative perspective on woman's place in New York society, this chapter will first consider the origins of her point of view. Maria had very

clear notions of how women should conduct themselves in public. Her opinions resonate throughout her descriptions of the events she attended and the people that she encountered. Maria's traditional hospitality is examined in keeping with her conservative social preferences. Her social life also indicates the extraordinary range of her social acquaintances.

The approbation gained by wealthy women like Marietta Reed Stevens both alarmed and dismayed Maria Daly. Maria feared the social inroads made by Mrs. Stevens, devoting several entries in her diary to the increasing prominence of this particular woman. This chapter considers Mrs. Stevens as a newly rich woman seeking social recognition in New York society. Mrs. Stevens, a woman of obscure background and comfortable fortune, demonstrates the means by which money and publicity could be used to achieve social prominence. Mrs. Stevens succeeded in New York despite her numerous litigations and the often unflattering commentary about her in the printed media. Nevertheless, the very public quality of Mrs. Stevens' life reveals her to be a worthy adversary, more than willing to confront other rich women in her social ascent.

This chapter provides a more complete understanding of the social rivalry between women of old and new wealth. With Maria Daly, one learns why a woman who premised her claims to social status on her family's accumulated fortune could so bitterly oppose a woman like Mrs. Stevens. As the newly rich used wealth to capture the media's attention and ascend the social ladder, they suggest an alternative to conventional feminine behavior. To this extent, the social life of the Gilded Age can be viewed as more than a series of social contests characterized by a competition among women over dresses and

jewelry. The period's rivalries represent, instead, an intense debate over woman's place and what women risked in their assumption of a public life.

Mrs. *Charles P. Daly*

In December 1865, Maria Daly attended a performance of Giacomo Meyerbeer's opera L'Africaine at the Academy of Music. While she found the music "beautiful" and the production "a very fine spectacle," Maria devoted her discussion of the evening to the "bedizened audience" inside the Academy.[5] She saw a Mrs. McBicker dressed in "gold, silver and glass, white and gold dress and cloak" and the accompanying "bevy ...who looked like ballet girls...And how they did seize on the men and how they laughed and talked and shook their heads at them! I thought they would eat the young fellows up."[6] The dress and conduct of these other women represented a "perfect Vanity Fair" to Maria.[7] In her allusion to William Mackepeace Thackery's novel of a woman's climb from social obscurity, Maria indicated her disapproval of some women inside the Academy. Her reference to the women's "droll hats with gold cords and birds on them and glass beads, the wooly-looking hair crimped to death" conflated the dress of women in the audience with the costumes worn on stage.[8] For Maria and other observers, an evening at the opera gave wealthy women an opportunity to display their expensive taste in the

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[5] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861 - 1865, December 5, 1865, 380. See also New York Times, 8 December 1865, 5. See also Maria's similar comments regarding Helen Russell's behavior towards Lord Cavendish at the opera which "served the purpose of an entr'acte to us." December 1, 1862, 201.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

prominent grand-tier boxes that ringed the great concert hall. This "radiance of satin, scintillation of diamonds...[and] glow of rubies" provided a spectacle that only New York society could "endure."[9] Many of the wealthy possessed only a "negligible" appreciation of music.[10] An evening at the opera gave the rich an opportunity only for "display and notoriety."[11]

Maria Daly's remarks on the fictive Mrs. McBicker suggest the conclusions of the sociologist, Erving Goffman. Goffman employs a stage analogy to dramatize human interactions in social situations so that the self becomes a series of performances between actor and audience. This analysis is based upon the social actor's need for his observers to "take seriously the impression that is fostered."[12] Through her visual display, Mrs. McBicker challenged other wealthy onlookers to accept her as a member of their society. Women like Maria, however, required a "confirming consistency" among "setting, appearance and manner" in order for Mrs. McBicker to succeed in her role as wealthy matron.[13] Mrs. McBicker's performance required a "coherence" in order to suggest the "ideal type" that she hoped to replicate.[14] Mrs. McBicker invited the attention of others in the audience as a display of her social status. In so doing, she dramatized the separation

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[9] Ralph Pulitzer, 52, 50.

[10] Ibid., 54.

[11] Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, The Social Ladder, 110. See also Sir Philip Burne-Jones, 119-120; Price Collier, America and the Americans; from a French Point of View, 42- 44.

[12] Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, (Woodstock, New York: The Overlook Press, 1973), 17.

[13] Ibid., 24.

[14] Ibid., 25.

between her attempt and the expectations of her performance by a woman elite like Maria Daly. Mrs. McBicker's inability to succeed in her role as society matron invited Maria's negative opinion. Maria understood that "status...is not a material thing, to be possessed and then displayed; it is a pattern of appropriate conduct, coherent, embellished, and well articulated...[I]t is something that must be enacted and portrayed, something that must be realized."[15]

First impressions, like those conveyed by Mrs. McBicker, mattered to Maria Daly. While she did not divulge the extent to which she accommodated the demands of fashion to her social identity, Maria gave considerable effort to her own public performance. She understood even as a child the effect of her appearance upon others. Maria enjoyed the fact that her family included her at their adult functions because she "was a pretty child...and I was always present to share the honors on such occasions as my sister was not."[16] As a mature woman, Maria only recorded the "compliments upon my grey hair."[17] The social arbiter Ward McAllister, however, described Maria as a "remarkably handsome woman with a grand presence and a noble carriage."[18]

Maria, however, did not wish to draw attention to herself when she circulated at public functions. Although she enjoyed compliments, she disliked scrutiny by those people she did not know. Maria expressed her standard for women's public conduct in her

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[15] Ibid., 75.

[16] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," April 19, 1877.

[17] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," March 4, 1879.

[18] Ward McAllister, Society as I Have Found It, Annotated Edition, 326.

mention of an invitation to join General and Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant in their opera box. In 1865, when many prominent New Yorkers coveted an association with the Grants, Maria declined the opportunity because "it might make us conspicuous."[19] Maria's wish to deflect public attention from herself originates in her ambivalence towards women's public behavior. Maria saw her social life as part of her marital duty and as a cornerstone of her domestic responsibility. Her ability to perform properly as a wife outside the home required that she subsume her public self into the interests of her husband and others around her. Similarly, she refused a carriage ride with a male friend in Central Park so as not to appear "ridiculous."[20] Maria simply wished to maintain the privacy traditionally associated with her personal habits and the feminine sphere of social influence.

Maria chose to remain unremarkable when in public. Conservatives like Maria regarded feminine privacy as a social necessity which signified that a woman had sublimated her selfish inclinations to the discipline and order of her household. Women who unduly drew attention to themselves for selfish reasons subverted the social order implied by the accepted differences between men and women. Maria disapproved of women who used expensive finery to create notice. She expressed her longing for a time when it was "fashionable to be simple in dress and manners."[21] Although Maria's practicality arguably arose out of her wealth relative to other women, she remained

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[19] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, November 15, 1865, 371.

[20] Ibid., April 19, 1863, 231.

[21] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," November 18, 1871.

convinced that "they kept better style in those days."[22]

Maria valued her unostentatious dress requirements in social settings other than the opera. In January 1865, she attended "an old New York party" hosted by John W. and Catherine Livingston Hooker Hamersley. Within society, the wealthy and aristocratic Catherine Hamersley represented a "long ancestral moral culture and refinement of feeling."[23] For Maria, however, the Hamersley ball became another excursion "into Vanity Fair."[24] She scrutinized the inappropriate costume of other women at the ball. The elderly Mrs. Philo Ruggles, for example, displayed her "bare neck and arms" with "an imitation white lace scarf carelessly thrown over her shoulders...and bright pink roses in her scanty and faded hair instead of a nice matronly cap, and a tawdry necklace."[25] Another woman, "bare to the waist" had similarly "dressed for show."[26] A Mrs. Paum, who "must be fifty-five at least," appeared fashionably gowned in a "flashy, low-necked silk dress.[27]

Maria also noticed excessive jewelry worn by some women to draw attention. Maria liked the discrete taste of "dear old Mrs. Astor who seldom wore any, except one beautiful large solitaire set as a broach."[28] The simplicity observed by Mrs. William B. Astor contrasted with the diamond ornaments usually worn by the two Astor daughters-

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[22] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," October 22, 1870.

[23] New York Times, 21 February 1867, 5. See also New York Times, 8 June 1889, 4.

[24] MLD, Diary of a Civil War Lady, 1861-1865, January 11. 1865, 331.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 6, 1878. See also Marian Gouverneur, 72.

in-law "who wear too many of them to look beautiful."[29] Mrs. John J. Astor, III, the former Charlotte Augusta Gibbes, traveled publically with a detective "when she went out with her diamonds on as she did to her sister-in-law's on Wednesday."[30] Maria Lydig had known Augusta Gibbes, since childhood. Maria considered Augusta an intimate friend as indicated by the repeated use of her given name in her diary. Married to John Astor in 1846, Augusta enjoyed intellectual pursuits, gaining fluency in three languages and as a composer and portraitist.[31] She sponsored charitable work including the Children's Aid Society, the Women's Hospital and the Cancer Hospital, reportedly giving away most of her $100,000 annual income.[32] Although Maria thought her friend "a very good woman,"she did not spare her scathing judgement. When formally gowned, the slender Augusta appeared to Maria as a "skeleton" that reminded her "of the relics of the old saint I went to look at in the Cathedral in Fribourg, Germany, whose bones were covered with

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[29] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 6, 1878.

[30] Ibid.

[31] New York Times, 13 December 1887, 5. See also David Sinclair, Dynasty: The Astors and Their Times, (New York: Beaufort Books, Inc., 1984), 172 -175, 188-189.

[32] Ibid. See also 18 February 1879, 3; 14 January 1880 8. Augusta Astor died on December 12, 1887. She was memorialized in a simple Episcopal service at Trinity Chapel as a "friend in time of need, and whose gifts, always well chosen, had been received in opportune moments." New York Times, 16 December 1887, 5. Her will, drawn June 18, 1886, itemized the following large charitable bequests, including: Woman's Hospital in the State of New-York; Young Women's Christian Association; St. Luke's Hospital; and the Children's Aid Society. Additionally, she left large bequests to the Hampton Institute, Hampton, Virginia, as well as several domestic missionary projects sponsored by the Protestant Episcopal Church. In 1888, John Astor donated his late wife's collection of laces, valued at $40,000, to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. New York Times, 5 February 1888, 5. A year later, a new Industrial School, operating under the auspices of the Children's Aid Society, opened at 256 Mott Street in lower Manhattan, funded by John Astor in his wife's memory. New York Times, 8 February 1889, 5. John J. Astor, III, died the following year. New York Times, 23 February 1890, 1.

precious stones and sewed in brocade and lace."[33]

Maria did not like that Augusta wore jewelry to state the prominence of the Astor name rather than rely upon her own reputation for generosity. Augusta's use of gemstones also signified to Maria that Augusta attached a greater importance to the Astor wealth than to her own benevolent interests. This tendency of other women to use their expensive tastes to define themselves disturbed Maria. She recorded her conversation on this subject with a woman who "looked like a chickadee."[34] In their discussion, Maria stated that she only wished to "get my husband from his court" because she "could live upon little as I had a camel's hair shawl, a diamond broach, a velvet gown...and no desire to spend."[35] This remark prompted the other woman to "boast" that she too had "numerous shawls and diamonds...but I do not care for dress."[36] Then, the woman added, "Father wants Mother to wear her diamonds but she says she does not need them. She is Mrs. Livingston, that is sufficient."[37] The value that Maria attached to her camel's hair shawl, diamond broach and velvet gown suggest the prerequisites for the fashionable display of luxury at their minimum. Maria unwittingly acknowledged that she, too, needed certain status emblems for her own self definition.

While she could stand in judgement of other women, Maria knew the importance of these status goods. Without their public display, Maria could not set herself apart from

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[33] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 27, 1878. See also Eric Homberger, 247-248.

[34] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," February 7, 1880.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

others as a fashionable woman. Maria also realized that she could not literally wear her heritage which she also considered an essential part of her identity. When Maria wore her "very much observed" miniature of her Grandfather Lydig, she noted that its admirers "seemed surprised to hear whose likeness it was."[38] Those complimenting the miniature had seen the broach only as a piece of jewelry rather than as a statement of Maria's pedigree.

Maria harbored no illusions about the social world that she inhabited. Although she expressed pride in her lineage, Maria did not premise social leadership solely on the basis of her family's past accomplishment. With her understanding of the importance of wealth to social status, Maria emphasized a moral basis for membership in the city's upper crust. "In old times, to be received at certain houses was a guarantee that you were a man of integrity. If a woman, a woman of good character. These very simple and broad qualifications, however, are no longer necessary."[39] Maria understood society as a "bonne bourgeoises which controlled public opinion and who had an honest and honorable ancestry and traditions....[T]hese were, to the man, what an aristocracy should be. It required talent and good character to be admitted into this social circle and riches were of comparative little consequence."[40] From her perspective, Maria concluded that "talent and honesty and other lovely virtues...are of little use in a circle whose only bond is

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[38] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861-1865, November 25, 1865, 379.

[39] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1879," February 15, 1866.

[40] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," February 22, 1874.

amusement."[41]

Throughout the years that she maintained a diary, Maria worried about the corrosive influence of wealth on social values. Although her standard of living lay beyond the reach of most ordinary people, Maria desired only sufficient wealth "to do what I like. Money in large quantities corrupts the character."[42] Because Maria herself did not possess great wealth, she could not acknowledge its importance to other elites. She looked for subtleties that indicated a person as well bred. Sometimes she based her opinions upon the simple demonstration of good manners. She found the journalist Henry Stanley, for example, to have "not even the rude politeness often found in a boor but is a rude man. [He is] a good deal set up by the attention he has attracted."[43] Maria could be equally judgmental of friends. She observed after the wealthy socialite Temple Prime and his sister Nina were her guests in Sag Harbor, New York, that "Temple has grown too selfish to be a pleasant guest....I shall let him stay at home next summer."[44]

Like other society women, Maria took a nuanced view of social conduct. She once remarked upon her "very successful dinner, well cooked and well served, of twelve persons" for Catherine Lorillard Wolfe and the portrait artist Eastman Johnson.[45] Though

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[41] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," December 5, 1866.

[42] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 3, 1881.

[43] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," November 28, 1872. See also Maria's lengthy exposition of the address given by Henry Stanley before the American Geographical Society. "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," November 26, 1872.

[44] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," September 24, 1876. See also New York Times, 26 February 1903, 9.

[45] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," February 14, 1878.

pleased with her hospitality, Maria stated her annoyance with Francis A. Stout who "should not have come as he and Miss Wolfe did not speak and as he was invited to meet her, he should have declined."[46] For Maria, the rituals surrounding food service and table manners framed an evening intended to "reinforce and justify existing social relationships."[47] Many people considered Catherine Wolfe, the only child of the wealthy merchant and land owner John David Wolfe and the former Dorothea Lorillard, to be "the wealthiest unmarried lady in America."[48] Maria attended several social functions in Wolfe's Madison Square home, invariably commenting upon the "lovely flowers that made you feel you were in the midst of summer."[49] Philanthropically inclined, Catharine Wolfe gave a significant collection of shells and a conchology library to the Museum of Natural History where her father had served as first president.[50] She also funded the construction of the East Side lodging house for newsboys and bootblacks in 1880 which opened in

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[46] Ibid.

[47] John F. Kasson, "Rituals of Dining: Table Manners in Victorian America" in Kathryn Grover, ed., Dining in America, 1850 - 1900, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 141. See also John F. Kasson, Rudeness & Civility, 182 - 214.

[48] New York Times, 14 December 1886, 8. John David Wolfe, born in New York in 1792, prospered as a hardware merchant before retiring from active business in the early 1840's. He invested his considerable fortune in real estate which appreciated with the city's growth. Throughout his life, Wolfe contributed his personal supervision and wealth to numerous local philanthropies. Wolfe also sponsored charity related to the growth and influence of the Protestant Episcopal denomination in America. Additionally, Wolfe contributed generously to leading New York cultural institutions, serving as first president of the American Museum of Natural History. He died on May 19, 1872. New York Times, 20 May 1872, 5. Dorothea Lorillard Wolfe, daughter of Peter Lorillard, died on August 20, 1866. New York Times, 21 August 1866, 5.

[49] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 31, 1878; January 18, 1877; February 4, 1878. See also New York Times, 9 May 1883, 1; 14 December 1886, 8.

[50] New York Times, 14 March 1874, 2.

1880 under the auspices of the Children's Aid Society.[51] Bearing this in mind, it is not known precisely why Maria Daly took umbrage at Francis Stout's inattentive behavior. It is reasonable to assume, however, that Maria hoped to win Catherine Wolfe's financial support for one of her charitable projects.[52] At the very least, Maria sensed that Stout's lapse in decorum had upset the carefully crafted harmony of her dinner gathering.

Maria liked Francis Stout, however. His interest in political reform as well as his participation in institutions like the American Geographical Society suited the Dalys' civic concerns.[53] In 1884, Maria honored Stout's Newport marriage to Emily Meredith Read with a pair of Sevres vases.[54] To this extent, Maria understood the limitations of premising personal judgements solely upon the exercise of good manners. She appreciated that manners "make an insipid person all the more so because they give no perceptible cause of offense."[55] Furthermore, she knew that in her social life she could not avoid individuals she did not like. She took exception to the wealthy Edwards Pierrepont

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[51] New York Times, 23 July 1880, 8.

[52] Catherine Wolfe died in April 1887 leaving an estate valued from at from $8,000,000 to $10,000,000. In addition to generous bequests of money and real estate to members of the Lorillard family, she bequeathed her substantial art collection to the Metropolitan Museum of Art as well as monies to fund the construction of the Grace Church Chantry and Grace House adjacent to Grace Episcopal Church in her father's memory. New York Times, 10 April 1887, 3. Miss Wolfe also provided $200,000 for the preservation and maintenance of her art collection to the museum. New York Times, 8 April 1887, 1; 9 April 1887, 1; 9, 4.

[53] New York Times, 21 July 1892, 3.

[54] New York Times, 22 August 1884, 2.

[55] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861 - 1866, June 11, 1862, 144.

who like her husband enjoyed considerable political and judicial influence in New York.[56] Maria, however, questioned Pierrepont's integrity during the Civil War on more than one occasion.[57] After the war, Pierrepont's interest in national Republican politics won him a prestigious diplomatic appointment in London. Here, according to Maria, Pierrepont and his wife Margretta "made themselves odious and had no social success."[58]

Maria's dislike of the Pierreponts could reflect a professional jealousy over the career of the wealthy and successful former jurist. She once wished that "Charles were more ambitious. He would shine in public life and be an ornament to the country."[59] Despite this admission, Maria determined not to extend herself socially to Pierrepont and his associates. She once encountered the couple along with the Edwin W. Stoughtons at a Whist Club function. Stoughton, a successful member of the New York bar, served as Minister to Russia in the Grant administration.[60] Although Maria found the Stoughtons to be "gracious exceedingly, asking me to call, but I shall not. I don't want to go to their dinners and don't want them here."[61] As indicated by this remark, Maria distinguished

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[56] For some of the news articles reflecting the trajectory of Edwards Pierrepont's public career see New York Times, 28 April 1869, 7;19 June 1869, 8; 29 April 1875, 6; 1 August, 1876, 2; 14 October 1877, 1; 7 March 1892, 1; 10 March 1892, 8. See also Encyclopedia of American Biography, s.v. Pierrepont, Edwards. In 1846, Edwards Pierrepont married the former Margretta Willoughby of Brooklyn. She died in 1902. New York Times, 13 October 1902, 9.

[57] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861 - 1865, November 7, 1864, 310; November 17, 1864, 316; March 7, 1865, 342; March 10, 1865, 345.

[58] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," June 11, 1880. See also June 9, 1880.

[59] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861 - 1865, November 6, 1862, 196.

[60] New York Times, 30 April 1880, 5; 23 January 1881, 7; 8 January 1882, 7; 14 January 1882, 8; 3 March 1882, 8.

[61] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," April 10, 1880.

between those with whom she could exchange social pleasantries in public and friends whom she invited into her home.

Similarly, Maria disliked the historian and diplomat George Bancroft.[62] The Bancrofts, with homes in New York and Washington, D. C. and a summer cottage in Newport, Rhode Island, circulated easily among the upper crust where they often met the Dalys at social and cultural functions.[63] Of Elizabeth Bancroft, however, Maria concluded that "the parvenu shines out everywhere."[64] Maria especially sensed the Bancroft's reverence for wealth, noting Mrs. Bancroft's eagerness to be included at the home of the merchant Alexander Stewart. Maria commented that "the only difference between Mr. Bancroft and himself is that one went into politics and the other into merchandise, but I said and being the richest man in the city next to Mr. Astor, that being our standard of aristocracy, I think the acquaintance worth cultivating."[65] Maria questioned the sincerity of Elizabeth Bancroft's social motives. This assessment is born out by the Bancroft's behavior when the Dalys planned a European trip. "They have been so profuse in their offers...that I wrote to ask Mrs. Bancroft about the climate and my dress and likewise that I would be glad if she would speak of me to her friends as she had proposed...I have

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[62] New York Times, 18 January 1891, 5; See also Encyclopedia of American Biography, s.v. "Bancroft, George;" Mark Anthony DeWolfe Howe, The Life and Letters of George Bancroft.

[63] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861 - 1865, February 18, 1862, 107; November 6, 1864, 308-309; December 6, 1864; 320; December 11, 1864, 321-322; March 2, 1865, 338. See also "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," February 27, 1866; March 4, 1866; May 23, 1882.

[64] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861 - 1865, February 18, 1862, 107.

[65] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," February 27, 1866.

strangely enough received no answer. People say that this is just like the Bancrofts."[66]

Implicit in Maria's opinions of others lay the qualities that she valued in people. Because she considered herself to be a woman of moral soundness, she placed a premium upon personal integrity. Maria accepted few individuals at face value, remaining suspicious of their goals and their ability to perform according to her personal standards. Yet despite her strong views, Maria did occasionally compliment other women. She appreciated, for example, Mrs. Alexander Stewart's "lady-like and unostentatious" demeanor.[67] She praised the wife of President Rutherford B. Hayes for her "modest, unassuming and self-possessed" manner.[68] Similarly, Maria complimented the "naturalness" of Frances Folsom Cleveland, the young wife of Grover Cleveland.[69] Among her local acquaintances, Maria expressed her fondness for Margaret Brevoort Renwick, mother of the noted architect James Renwick, adding that "her daughter is charming, so frank and affable like the old New Yorkers."[70]

Maria valued a straightforward manner in the people she met, uncluttered by artifice or pretense. She did not like people overly impressed by great wealth. Maria considered herself to be a woman of relatively uncomplicated taste and habit. She valued these same qualities in her social life. In late 1877, she hosted a series of three home

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[66] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," May 22, 1881.

[67] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," February 25, 1866.

[68] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," June 3, 1877. See also New York Times, 17 May 1877, 5.

[69] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," June 20, 1889.

[70] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," December 5, 1877. See also Encyclopedia of American Biography, s.v. "Renwick, James, Jr.;" New York Times, 25 June 1895, 9.

receptions. Maria, pleased with their success, commented upon the numbers of people who attended "considering that we have no daughters, no showy house, no dinners and little patronage. There is no such thing in this country recognized as official rank in fashionable society. The rich go to the rich, and the others who are not rich choose the fine houses to give their time and their best clothes to."[71]

For couples like the Dalys, a predetermined calendar of social events governed the city's social activity. By the late 1870's, the New York Season of social events had acquired a definite form. Premised upon the regularity of London's social events, winters in New began with certain balls which inaugurated the season, honoring debutantes with a supper and dance at the restaurant Delmonico's.[72] Traditionally, the second Monday in January was reserved for the private ball of Caroline Schermerhorn Astor, sister-in-law of Augusta Gibbes Astor. Throughout the winter months, hostesses entertained at home receptions and formal dinners. Steady social activity abated, excepting those events arranged for charitable purposes, during the weeks of Lenten observance preceding the Easter holiday in the spring.[73] During the summer months, many of the wealthy traveled abroad or relocated to permanent vacation homes outside the city. The months of July and August in Newport, Rhode Island, became "a rehearsal for New York" society with

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[71] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," December 5, 1877.

[72] Elizabeth Duer, "New York Society a Generation Ago," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, 105(1908): 109-114. See also Leonore Davidoff, 27, 37 - 49.

[73] Maureen E. Montgomery, Displaying Women: Spectacles of Leisure in Edith Wharton's New York, 24.

the "same pressures attendant upon aspirants."[74]

Despite the implication of rigid conformity, the New York Season altered over time to reflect the city's growth. Traditionally, the women opened their homes on the first day of the new year to receive gentlemen of their acquaintance. This holiday, based in the neighborly informality "of the simple Dutch settlers," provided New Yorkers the opportunity to renew friendships and express well wishes.[75] The holiday initially helped to solidify New York's blended Dutch-English elite into a Knickerbocker social identity.[76] By 1830, "every house of any pretension" participated in the ritual.[77] The celebration also gradually grew more elaborate, extending to every segment of the population, with preparations beginning several weeks in advance.[78] In addition to large buffets of food, many hostesses provided an alcoholic punch, brandy or wine in addition to hot beverages.[79] Most fashionable households opened their doors to receive guests around noon on New Year's Day. Men planned an expeditious circuit to visit the women they wished to see, so that most visits became brief and perfunctory. Women tallied visitors in

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[74] Maureen E. Montgomery, "Gilded Prostitution," 40. See also Maureen E. Montgomery, Displaying Women, 24-26.

[75] The Letters of John Pintard, 4 vols., (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1937-1940), January 2, 1822, 2:117.

[76] Stephen Nissenbaum, 49-67.

[77] Julia Ward Howe, 30. See also New York Times, 3 January 1893, 2.

[78] Elizabeth Story Palmer, 10; Mabel Osgood Wright, 9; Elisabeth Marbury, 37.

[79] Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, The Social Ladder, 44; See also Julia Ward Howe, 32.

guest books for "emulative boasting" with friends in the New Year.[80]

New Year's visits became increasingly difficult to accomplish, however. As fashionable districts stretched north from lower Manhattan, it became hard to maintain the tradition of neighborliness originally associated with the holiday. Differences in wealth and standards of entertainment eroded the old sense of community. Impossibly crowded streets and poor weather conditions added to the day's adversities for some. Although some men rented hacks for the afternoon, their cost proved "prohibitive save for the solvent citizen...[I]t was common for four of the intending visitors to unite in paying forty dollars for the hire of a ponderous old hack, of the Irish funeral variety."[81] By the late 1870's, the custom lost its social necessity.[82] Some women, not wishing to accept callers, placed baskets at their doorstep for the cards of men who continued to honor the custom. Hostesses complained of the young men who called "in squads at houses...consuming the refreshments provided for other guests, and making themselves disagreeable."[83] The religious and secular celebration of the Christmas holiday eventually superceded New Year's as the important year-end family occasion.[84] Maria Daly generally enjoyed the observance, often recording her impressions of those she saw.[85] By 1882, she noted the

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[80] Ibid., 31. See also Cornelia Jay, January 2, 1863, 163; Catherine Elizabeth Havens, 64; Elisabeth Marbury, 37.

[81] Constance Cary Harrison, Recollections Grave and Gay, 274.

[82] Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, Manners and Social Usages, 235.

[83] Julia Ward Howe, 32.

[84] Stephen Nissenbaum, 49-90; 132-176; 176-219.

[85] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 2, 1866; January 1, 1876. See also Diary of a Union Lady, January 4, 1863, 211; January 2, 1864, 273; January 3, 1865, 327.

passing of the old tradition without any expression of regret. "The old New Year's Day is extinct. We had only some twenty-five visitors. The younger people went on sleighing parties or to country houses of which there are so many within easy reach of the city. So we may chronicle the death of an old custom."[86]

With the demise of New Year's visitations, Maria and Charles Daly continued to frequent other social events. Maria periodically mentioned her attendance at some of the glittering balls that comprised the city's social season.[87] It is difficult to determine, however, the full extent of the Dalys' evening social life because Maria avoided public mention. After attending a ball at Caroline Astor's, Maria remarked that she "was amused to find myself and dress in the morning paper. The lace was good, but who could have been near enough to describe it."[88] Both Maria and her husband also maintained active daytime schedules which made late evening functions more onerous as they matured. In 1872, she confessed that "I do not believe in going anywhere except to bed at eleven."[89] With this remark, Maria regretted an evening party at the John Jacob Astor's. Finally, without children to socialize, the Daly's did not need to attend many of the city's evening social functions. Augusta Gibbes Astor, who had "no daughters to introduce," also found "some excuse for not attending all the balls and other society diversions in which dancing

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[86] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 3, 1881. Five years later, the New York Times echoed Maria's sentiment, noting a "great silence in fashionable portions of the city...due to the absence of each and every person who could by any possibility get out of town." New York Times, 3 January 1886, 3.

[87] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 30, 1866; December 16, 1877; January 4, 1878.

[88] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 4, 1878. See also January 10, 1879.

[89] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 21, 1872.

forms the great attraction."[90]

The Dalys' social activity, shaped by age and personal preference, altered when Maria's niece Emy Otto joined their household. Emy's mother Margaret died in 1878.[91] Emy had been brought up in Berlin and schooled in Switzerland. In 1882, Maria honored her niece's visit with a "series of receptions," noting her "parlors filled, everyone being glad to welcome her back from several years seclusion in Europe."[92] Emy was described as a "face recalls that of the Lydig family with a strong reinforcement of the German element...a fine, fresh combination. Miss Otto is highly accomplished in music...speaks six languages fluently."[93] Maria worried about her ability to introduce a girl of nineteen into New York society, acknowledging her own need "to go out a little more into company."[94] Maria quickly reordered her social priorities to reflect her niece's social needs. She recorded a month later that she had been "so very busy getting the house ready, receiving company and getting our dresses arranged." [95] Maria fretted over how her niece would be received by others, afraid that "she looks too German. She has a beautiful figure but a little too stiff and martial in her carriage. We must let her alone, however, and not make her conscious. She is so sweet, both in looks and character."[96]

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[90] New York Times, 13 December 1887, 5.

[91] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," June 8, 1878.

[92] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," October 6, 1882.

[93] Unidentified newspaper clipping found in MLD, "Diaries, "1866 - 1893."

[94] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," October 6, 1882.

[95] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," November 8, 1882.

[96] Ibid.

Although Maria worried that Emy's European background might impede her New York social introduction, she dutifully recorded her niece's social progress. Emy attended the Patriarch's Ball on the arm of a Mr. Cliff. Maria's younger friend Meredith Stout, proved to be a valuable "ally in giving Emy a pleasant winter."[97] The Simon Bernheimers, family friends of the Dalys, also invited Emy to a party for two of their daughters in their 57th Street home.[98] Maria's younger siblings, Florence Sturgis and David Lydig, also entertained for Emy at social events. Maria, however, viewed Emy's first season in New York with mixed results. "She has been much invited to dine out and to smaller parties. She does not care so much for the balls as she does not know so many of the dancing men...She is much admired by the older men and by the women and should she stay here,

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[97] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," April 4, 1883.

[98] New York Times, 19 December 1883, 8. Simon Bernheimer was one of three sons of Emanuel Bernheimer who immigrated from Germany in 1844 to prosper in New York as a brewer. New York Times, 29 March 1890, 4. Simon Bernheimer's daughter Addie married the banker Joseph Seligman. The Dalys attended the ceremony which "created considerable stir in fashionable circles." New York Times, 6 June 1878, 8. Maria found the rites to be "very light on ceremony as they belong to the Temple–the reformed Jews. The young people were evidently much attracted to each other. We sent a pretty little present." MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," 6 June 1878. The Dalys also attended other Bernheimer family weddings. New York Times, 9 December 1884, 5; 30, October 1884, 4. Additionally, the Dalys invested in real estate with the Bernheimer brothers. Charles Daly purchased for $23,000 each, "five four-story and basement brown-stone front houses" on West 58th Street with Isaac Bernheimer. These newly constructed properties, which had sold in foreclosure, required another $3,500 per building for completion. New York Times, 9 June 1874, 6. Maria, in 1879, referred to her investment in an "apartment building with Mr. Bernheimer." MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," August 4, 1879. She commented upon the "good progress" of this property at 224 East 59th Street "called the Park View flats. I have been looking over mantles and fireplaces for it–at least patterns...[I] thought it admirably planned." MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," October 26, 1879. The Park View flats became available for occupancy the following year. New York Times, 14 March 1880, 11.

would have a legion of friends...What she has gained has been by her own influence."[99] Maria completed this overview of Emy's social season with an enumeration of the gentlemen who had sent flowers.

Of these possible suitors, Maria expressed a fondness for one "charming young fellow...wish that he and Emy would fall in love with each other. It would just suit us. The family are so reliable and they have European traditions as to spending and I think he likes books and music."[100] Maria, continued to record the names of friends who complimented Emy, as she monitored her active social schedule.[101] Emy's return to Europe in May 1884 proved difficult for Maria, who "saw her sail away with sobs."[102] The two corresponded weekly, prompting Maria's observation that her "long letters to Emy have taken the place of my journal."[103]

Without mentioning her niece in the following months, Maria expressed "surprise" at Emy's news of her engagement in early 1885 to Henry R. Hoyt.[104] Maria approved of this choice which reflected her own conservative standards. Harry, "the son of Mrs. Alfred Hoyt, Aunt Mary Suydam's niece," came from an family of prominent merchants. The wedding plans changed, however, as Harry's family became entangled in a lawsuit over the estate of Harry's uncle Jesse Hoyt. Jesse Hoyt, a leading purveyor of grain and

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[99] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," April 4, 1883.

[100] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," April 17, 1883.

[101] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," February 27, 1884.

[102] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," May 11, 1884.

[103] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," October 15, 1884." See also November 11, 1884.

[104] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," March 1, 1885.

flour died in 1882 leaving a fortune valued at between ten and fifteen million dollars which he accumulated in the "old fashioned mercantile style, by legitimate transactions."[105] Under the terms of Hoyt's will, his widow Helen Maria and his daughter Mary Irene received income from two trusts valued at $1,250,000 each. Helen Hoyt also received an outright bequest of $750,000. Upon the death of these individuals, the residuals passed in equal shares to his nieces and nephews. Other large bequests included $600,000 to his brother Alfred to be divided equally among his six children.[106]

By any measure, Emy's affianced Harry Hoyt stood to realize a comfortable inheritance without the benefits that might accrue to him from the estate of his father. Litigation over the Hoyt estate began immediately as Mrs. Hoyt and her daughter Irene united to challenge the will.[107] Maria only noted that the "lawsuit of the crazy daughter of Mr. Jesse Hoyt" had interfered with the wedding plans.[108] Irene Hoyt initiated legal action against the estate and its trustees, asserting that her father's will had been drawn under the undue influence of his two brothers, who as executors had aided in her incarceration in an insane asylum. Newspapers covered every step of the legal proceedings due to the size of the Hoyt estate, the number of motions argued in the matter, the participation of noted lawyers and the increasingly eccentric behavior of Irene Hoyt.[109] The closing arguments,

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[105] New York Times, 15 August 1882, 5.

[106] New York Times, 30 September 1882, 8.

[107] New York Times, 31 October 1882, 8; 10 November 1882, 8; 9 December 1882, 8.

[108] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," October 13, 1885.

[109] Senator William Evarts, Joseph H. Choate and Elihu Root argued the matter on behalf of the estate, while General Benjamin Butler, General Roger Pryor and Senator Roscoe Conkling presented the case for the plaintiffs. In 1886, Charles Daly, then in private practice, entered the

which lasted a week in 1885, played to a courtroom packed with people who had brought their lunch.[110]

As the Hoyt family awaited the Surrogate's decision, Emy considered the possibility of a New York wedding. In November of 1885, however, Harry Hoyt left New York for Berlin. Maria complained, "I am disappointed that I cannot have Emy here, but the family evidently do not think that the rooms I took are sufficiently elegant.[111] Maria groused as she forfeited her deposit on the New York wedding venue. The wedding stalled again when the family learned of the legal requirements for the marriage of a German citizen to an American. Frustrated, Maria wrote, "Why could not Otto have telegraphed to see the German Consul General and not lose twelve days?"[112] A wedding ceremony was finally preformed in Berlin on December 9, 1885.[113] When the couple returned to New York the following February, Maria entertained at a home reception in their honor. She expressed utter delight in their happiness, noting that "the young girl is merged, and properly merged, into the wife."[114] A few months later, the Surrogate upheld

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case in association with Elihu Root and Joseph H. Choate. On this occasion, Irene Hoyt demanded the balance of the money earned from her father's legacy. New York Times, 24 December 1886, 8.

[110] New York Times, 30 September 1885, 8; 2 October 1885, 8; 7 October 1885, 7; 8 October 1885, 2; 9 October 1885, 8; 10 October 1885, 8.

[111] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," November 20, 1885.

[112] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," November 29, 1885.

[113] New York Times, 28 December 1885, 5.

[114] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," February 25, 1886.

the will of Jesse Hoyt, ruling in favor of the estate and its executors.[115]

Maria's decision to honor the newly married Henry R. Hoyts in her home is consistent with her conservative tastes in hospitality. Throughout their lives, the Dalys enjoyed ceremonial dinners and elaborate receptions in some of the city's finest homes.[116] Maria also sometimes commented upon hospitality in public venues. She remarked upon one "lavishly expensive" dinner for thirty-two people at Delmonico's where the "flowers [were] unsurpassably beautiful...but nothing good or wholesome to eat."[117] Maria preferred the intimacy of evenings in the homes of friends like Franklin and Laura Delano. Like the Dalys, the Delano name did not appear with any frequency in newspaper coverage of New York social events.[118] Laura Astor Delano, born in 1824, was the granddaughter of the first John Jacob Astor and a sister of John Jacob, William and Henry

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[115] New York Times, 29 April 1886. This decision was upheld on appeal before the General Term of the state Supreme Court. New York Times, 19 June 1887, 4. Irene Hoyt's behavior continued to generate attention after the matter had been resolved. In 1887, she was jailed for assault against a servant and a policeman. New York Times, 18 June 1887, 1. Her mother later took action to have her daughter declared legally insane. New York Times, 4 August 1887, 8; 19 August 1887, 1. Mrs. Helen Hoyt died intestate in 1888 with the question of her daughter's sanity unresolved. New York Times, 12 November 1888, 8; 7 January 1889, 8.

[116] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 20, 1866; February 25, 1866; March 4, 1866; January 18, 1877; February 24, 1877; April 17, 1880; January 21, 1882. Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, in her article on New York residences, comments upon some of the homes frequented by Maria Daly, including the John J. Astor's, Miss Wolfe, D. O. Mills, and F.W. Stevens. M.E.W. Sherwood, "Certain New York Houses," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, 65, no.389 (October 1882): 686, 688, passim.

[117] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," June 14, 1870.

[118] New York Times, 31 January 1883, 5; 6 February 1883, 9; 11 April 1883, 8; 25 October 1893, 8;

Astor.[119] Laura Astor married Franklin Hughes Delano in 1844.[120] Many people regarded Delano as "one of the handsomest and most dashing young men in society."[121] In addition to their city home at 190 Madison Avenue, the Delanos entertained friends at their villa "Steen Valetje" in Barrytown, Dutchess County, New York.[122] Here the Daly's experienced a "very charming" visit, after which Maria wrote that "the house is very fine and full of exquisite pictures ... Everything that can be had to embellish a life of ease is to be found there and they live in great style and luxury. Three men always at the table."[123]

In 1881, the Delanos invited the Dalys to a small dinner in their New York home. On this particular evening, Laura Delano included her brother John and sister-in-law Augusta Astor, Sophia and Robert Kennedy and Miss Eleanor Blodgett. Johnston Livingston completed the table. Robert Kennedy, son of the late banker David S. Kennedy,

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[119] New York Times, 17 June 1902, 9. In 1886, the Delano's endowed at a cost of $300,000 the Laura Franklin Free Hospital for Children on One Hundred and Eleventh-Street near Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. Dedicated as a memorial to their niece, the hospital, which could accommodate fifty patients, was given to the management of the Sisters of St. Mary of the Protestant Episcopal Church. New York Times, 30 October 1886, 6. The Delano's only child Sara married James Roosevelt of Hyde Park, New York, making Laura Astor Delano Franklin Delano Roosevelt's grandmother. Sara Roosevelt died two years before her mother's death in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1902.

[120] David Sinclair, 141-142.

[121] New York Times, 17 June 1902, 9. Franklin H. Delano, born in 1812, was the son of a commander of sailing packets in the firm of Minturn, Grinnell & Co. Delano maintained an association with this firm and also worked briefly in the office of William B. Astor. Delano held membership in several prominent men's clubs, including the American Geographical Society. At the time of his death in Monte Carlo in 1893, Delano was one of the oldest members of the Union Club, having joined in 1839. New York Times, 24 December 1893, 5; 25 December 1893, 5. See also 14 June 1893, 20. Delano left an estate valued at over $1,000,000. New York Times, 12 January 1894, 5; 24 June 1894, 13.

[122] New York Times, 25 October 1893, 8.

[123] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," April 17, 1883.

was also the nephew of the wealthy philanthropist James Lenox.[124] Eleanor Blodgett, an unmarried family friend, participated in a variety of charitable activities, achieving appointment as a Manager of the State Charities Aid Association in 1886.[125] The Delano's daughter Sara Roosevelt later honored this family friendship by naming Eleanor Blodgett the godmother to her son Franklin Delano Roosevelt.[126] Lastly, the businessman Johnston Livingston shared a familial relationship with Laura Delano through her grandmother Alida Livingston, a sister of Chancellor Robert Livingston.[127] The composition of this guest list indicates Laura Delano's desire for a relaxed and convivial evening. Although all assembled had a stake in the city's commercial and civic viability, the bonds of friendship

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[124] New York Times, 3 February 1853, 4. See also 4 February 1853, 8. Kennedy's mother was the former Rachel C. Lenox. New York Times, 25 March 1880, 3. Kennedy, a Vice President of the National Bank of Commerce, served as a Director of numerous financial institutions and as President of the Lenox Library New York Times, 17 September 1887, 8. For additional information regarding Kennedy's business and charitable interests see also New York Times, 18, October 1880, 5; 27 May 1880, 8; 17 November 1880, 5; 23 April 1881, 8; 9 October 1884, 5; 27 April 1887, 2. After his death in 1887, Kennedy's substantial personal collection of rare books and manuscripts was sold at public auction. New York Times, 28 March 1889, 4.

[125] New York Times, 6 December 1886, 8. See also 15 February 1888, 8; 17 March 1995, 16; 26 November 1908, 5; 28 November 1909, 11; 18 December 1914, 2; 24 October 1914, 15; 29 April 1917, 54. Eleanor Blodgett was born in 1855 to William Tilden Blodgett and the former Abbie Blake. William Blodgett moved to Manhattan in 1832 where he prospered in the varnish business with his uncle William Tilden. Blodgett invested in real estate in Manhattan and Newport, Rhode Island. He died in 1875. New York Times, 6 November 1875, 6; 9 November 1875, 5. Blodgett left a considerable estate to his wife and two children, including a large art collection which was sold at auction. New York Times, 18 November 1875, 2; 28 April 1876, 10. Eleanor Blodgett died in 1930. Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt was among her mourners. New York Times, 1 March 1930, 13.

[126] New York Times, 27 February 1930, 29. See also 1 May 1930, 13.

[127] Johnston Livingston, president of the National Express Company, divided his time between his home New York and a country estate in Tivoli, Dutchess County, New York. New York Times, 8 May 1911, 11. See also 16 May 1911, 13.

and mutual interest for most at the table originated in their shared Knickerbocker heritage. Laura Delano had assembled a gathering that brought together old friends and family for a relatively informal evening of dinner and conversation. Maria discussed "old times" and New York real estate values with John Astor who advised that she ask "$3000 per acre" for the Lydig property at West Farms in the Bronx.[128] The group gossiped and "had a laugh over Mary Hamilton's engagement to Judge Peabody."[129] According to Maria, "old Hamilton is behaving very badly. Will not speak to the elderly lovers so Mary has taken sanctuary at Mrs. Cullum's where I saw her and congratulated her in Judge Peabody's presence. His children are as little pleased as her father and sisters."[130]

Like her friend Laura Delano, Maria enjoyed at-home evenings that could be described as entertaining as well as "elegant without being overdone."[131] Maria remarked upon the hospitality extended her during a visit to Washington, D.C., finding it to be both "easy and inexpensive,"[132] Maria regularly organized small dinners in her Clinton Place

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[128] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 21, 1881.

[129] Ibid. Mary Hamilton, unmarried prior to her engagement, was a granddaughter of Alexander Hamilton and also a cousin of William Astor. Maria worked with Hamilton's sister Elizabeth Cullum on behalf of the Women's Centennial Union in 1876. Their father John Church Hamilton, one of the last surviving sons of Alexander Hamilton, died in July 1882. New York Times, 28 July 1882, 8. Charles A. Peabody, a lawyer and jurist, served as Provisional Judge of the District of New Orleans under Abraham Lincoln. Peabody's first wife had been Julia Caroline Livingston, the daughter of James Duane Livingston. Before his death in 1901, Charles Peabody married for a third time the former Athenia Livingston, widow of General James Bowen, Commissioner of Charities and Corrections of New York. She died in 1910. New York Times, 4 July 1901, 7. See also New York Times, 8 January 1889, 4; 27 December 1910, 9; 27 December 1910, 9.

[130] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 21, 1881.

[131] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," June 6, 1877.

[132] MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," April 3, 1883.

home. The etiquette authority Mary Elizabeth Sherwood considered the execution of even a "simple dinner" to be a "great intellectual feat," requiring a "French cook, several accomplished servants, a very well-stocked china closet, plate chest, and linen chest, and flowers, wines, [and] bon-bons."[133] Similarly, Sherwood enumerated the components of a correct dining room, placing a premium on the need for a plain, long extension table. For small dinners, she recommended that the "table is covered first with a crimson cloth, over which is thrown the decorative lace work table cloth; this again is covered with a large mat of velvet on which stands the silver salver lined with mirror, on which again elevates itself the silver epergne or the basket of flowers. On the lake of mirror float Dresden swans, lilies and aquatic plants."[134]

Maria understood the need for these decorative items as a matter of course that did not require her further attention. Although she rarely referred to household matters, she did note her difficulties with kitchen staff, indicating the importance she attached to this domestic responsibility. One dinner honoring former mayor Edward Cooper, gave Maria the opportunity to "pay off almost all our present dinner invitations."[135] Of this evening,

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[133] Mary Elizabeth Sherwood, Manners and Social Usages, 314. See also Dorothy Rainwater, "Victorian Dining Silver," in Dining in America, 1850-1800, Kathryn Grover, ed., (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 173-205; John F. Kasson, Rudness & Civility, 182-214.

[134] M.E.W. Sherwood, "Certain New York Houses," 689. See also Kenneth L. Ames, Death in the Dining Room & Other Tales of Victorian Culture, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 44 - 96; Clarence Cooke, "Beds and Tables, Stools and Candlesticks," Scribner's Monthly, 13, no.6 (April 1877): 816-21; New York Times, 10 January 1875, 4.

[135] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 17, 1789. Edward Cooper, son of the industrialist Peter Cooper, was born in New York in 1824. While at Columbia College, he became friends with Abram S. Hewitt who later married his sister Amelia. Cooper and Hewitt formed an iron business and managed a mill near Trenton, New Jersey. In 1863, Cooper married Cornelia

Maria also remarked that the "cook is improving. Since I lowered her wages a dollar, she begins to think that I am in earnest."[136] At a time when many wealthy hostesses competed for the services of foreign trained chefs, the ability of a prominent entertainer to maintain competent kitchen staff became crucial. It was with some relief that Maria noted, "I have a good cook at last. A nice little woman without any pretensions to intellectual pursuits....careful and literal."[137]

Maria valued her apparent reputation as a hostess among her peers. She recorded the Washington lobbyist Sam Ward's request that she hostess a dinner for the Secretary of State William Evarts. Sam, the brother of the author Julia Ward Howe, had a reputation as one of New York's "most finished gourmets."[138] Maria, however, declined Ward's

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Redmond of Trenton. Cooper, a life-long Democrat, also became interested in political reform and worked to oust the notorious Tweed Ring from city government. He was elected mayor of New York in 1879. Amelia Redmond Cooper died in 1894. Throughout his life, Cooper remained active in several philanthropies, notably serving as President of the Cooper Union, an institution begun by his father. He died in 1905. New York Times, 26 February 1905, 1; 28 February 1905, 8; 1 March 1905, 9. See also Encyclopedia of American Biography, s.v. "Cooper, Edward." Cooper's will designated a gift of $100,000 to the Cooper Union for the advancement of science and art. New York Times, 9 March 1905, 3.

[136] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 17, 1879.

[137] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," November 6, 1880.

[138] Ward McAllister, Society as I Have Found It, Annotated Edition, 258. Sam Ward, the son of a wealthy and prominent banker, was born in New York in 1814. Reared in luxury, Ward "developed a strong tendency to spend money rapidly, instead of accumulating it." Upon his graduation from Columbia College in 1831, Ward's father sent him to Europe to complete his education. Ward used this opportunity to spend four years in the study and observation of French and German cuisine and wines. Ward pursued his interest in fine food and drink, while making and losing several personal fortunes in the process. Ward's skill as an entertainer enabled his career as a political lobbyist in Washington which lasted for almost eighteen years. Known for his personal generosity, Ward returned to reside on Clinton Street in New York in 1881 where he continued to entertain lavishly. He died in Italy in 1884. New York Times, 20 May 1884, 5. See also Lately Thomas, Sam Ward, "King of the Lobby, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1965).

offer, musing "I suppose that he has something to do with Secretary Evarts and thought that it would be convenient to meet him here."[139] At other times, impromptu guests presented a different set of issues. Maria once complained about an unscheduled dinner for three gentlemen, because she "did not know until six and then had to send for more chops, oysters. In the good old times, the colored man was told to cut another steak from a side of beef or chops from a whole sheep....Enough for a fortnight should unexpected guests come and servants, in those days, had nothing to say."[140]

A hostess's ability to set the proper tone for her dinners could prove difficult to orchestrate, however. For the contemporaneous critic Robert Tomes, "[e]ase of body is as essential at the table as ease of mind."[141] By 1880, Maria declared she had "given up having large dinners with liveried waiters and cooks and like our own cooking and my own people much better. I feel easier and can give all my attention to my guests."[142] Maria, with this admission, confirmed the importance of a woman's ability to provide her guests with a relaxing dining experience. Nevertheless, the circumstances surrounding a particular evening could tax the tact and charm implicit in this interpersonal skill. Maria composed her guest lists with care. At a dinner honoring Abram and Sarah Amelia Cooper Hewitt, Maria included the sculptor William Wetmore Story to add variety to the social mix at the

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[139] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," February 10, 1879.

[140] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," December 30, 1880.

[141] Robert Tomes, "Before, At and After Meals," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, LII, no.307 (December 1878): 733.

[142] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 3, 1880.

table.[143] Maria had met Story at a reception in his honor where he impressed her as an individual who "certainly deserves to be treated with distinction."[144] After her dinner, Maria lauded Story's conversational gifts, noting that she "laughed so hard that I am quite stiff in consequence."[145]

Other evenings recorded in her diary involve hospitality extended to the explorers and intellectuals who lectured before the American Geographical Society. Simply stated,

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[143] Abram S. Hewitt was born into a family of modest means in Haverstraw, New York, in 1822. A product of New York public schools, Hewitt won a scholarship to Columbia College where he graduated at the head of his class in 1842. After traveling in Europe with his friend Edward Cooper, Hewitt entered Columbia Law School which he completed in 1857. As he was unable to practice law due to poor eyesight, Hewitt formed a partnership with Cooper. The firm prospered through continuing technical innovations that facilitated the growth of new companies. In 1855, Hewitt married Hewitt married Sarah Amelia Cooper. Influenced by Samuel Tilden, Hewitt served as a five term Democratic Congressman from New York, beginning in 1874. He also served as chairman of the Democratic National Committee in 1876. In 1886, with Tammany support, Hewitt was elected Mayor of New York Maria Daly wrote of Hewitt's electoral victory that "everyone is so relieved...not because Hewitt is so much liked, but because Henry George, the communist, did not get in." MLD, "Diaries, 1866-1893," November 3, 1886." Hewitt remained philanthropically active throughout his life, principally serving as chairman of the board of trustees of the Cooper Union. He died in 1903. New York Times, 19 January 1903, 1; 22 January 1903, 9; 27 February 1903, 7. See also 31 July 1902, 8; The Encyclopedia of New York City, s.v. "Hewitt, Abram Stevens."

[144] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," December 25, 1877. A native of Salem, Massachusetts, William Story was born in 1819. His father Joseph Story, a Harvard law professor, also served as a justice of the United States Supreme Court. Story, a graduate of Harvard and Harvard Law School, initially pursued art and literature as avocations. In 1843, he married Emelyn Eldredge of Boston. In 1845, Story became involved in plans for a permanent memorial to honor his father. This project led to his study of art in Europe. In 1856, he settled permanently in Rome with his family where he and his wife presided over an urbane and affluent circle of friends. Throughout his life, Story contributed regularly to literary magazines and opinion journals and lectured widely on art. He died in 1895. New York Times, 16 February 1908. C1. See also Encyclopedia of American Biography, s.v. "Story, William Wetmore." The novelist Henry James wrote a two volume biography of Story which was published in 1903. New York Times, 10 October 1903, BR18.

[145] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 6, 1878.

Maria observed that the organization "fills a large place in our lives."[146] Charles Daly's role as president of the group provided Maria with a social platform through which she met many distinguished visitors to the city that others in society wished to know. In early 1878, for example, the Earl of Dufferin, the Governor-General of Canada, lectured before the Geographical Society on Arctic exploration.[147] Maria met the Earl several days later at a reception in the home of Catherine Lorillard Wolfe where she "had to introduce the Earl to Miss Wolfe but relinquished the lion's paw, pleasant as he made himself, as soon as possible as I did not care to share the honors."[148] This courtesy ingratiated Maria to the wealthy Catherine Wolfe who later confided that the Earl "had written her a charming note about her pictures."[149]

By 1880, Maria acknowledged that the Geographical Society included "some of the most distinguished men of the city and...is growing quite fashionable."[150] To honor the "English Arctic Expedition" Maria assembled a prominent group of interested business and cultural leaders in her home. Among those included, United States naval commander Henry H. Gorringe had previously lectured before the Geographical Society regarding his exploration of classical sites along the north African coast. While in the Mediterranean,

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[146] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," February 22, 1874.

[147] New York Times, 1 February 1878, 3. The Earl of Dufferin, himself a widely regarded Arctic explorer, authored the classic Letters from High Latitudes in 1859 in which he described his North Sea yachting expedition. Born in 1826, Dufferin rose steadily in the British diplomatic service, becoming Viceroy of India in 1884. Before his retirement in 1896, he served as Ambassador to France. Dufferin died in 1902. New York Times, 13 February 1902, 9.

[148] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," February 4, 1878.

[149] Ibid.

[150] MLD, "Diaries, 1863 - 1893," 28 February 1880.

Gorringe retrieved the Alexandrian Obelisk from Egypt, brought it to New York and later superintended its installation as a permanent monument in Central Park.[151] The Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art General Louis Di Cesnola, also a guest, had built a reputation for expertise in classical antiquities.[152] Commander Gorringe sought Di Cesnola's advice on the inscription for the new Central Park monument. The banker Joseph W. Drexel, who belonged to the Geographical Society and served on the Board of

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[151] New York Times, 28 July 1880, 8; 31 July 1880, 8; 16 March 1881, 2. Gorringe also amassed a large collection of Egyptian, Greek and Roman antiquities. New York Times, 16 January 1881, 7. Gorringe later formed the American Ship-building Company with Cornelius Vanderbilt and J. Frederick Tams for the purpose of making and repairing vessels. New York Times, 6 March 1883, 8. Gorringe died in 1885 and the company's assets were subsequently auctioned. New York Times, 9 July 1885, 8; 28; 28 October 1885, 1; 3 December 1881, 5.

[152] In 1880, Di Cesnola's claims, over his excavation of Cypriote antiquities and his handling of their restoration and repairs, were challenged by Gaston Feuradent of the American Numismatic and Archeological Society of New York. As Di Cesnola had sold his collection to the Metropolitan Museum, its Board of Directors conducted an examination. Charles Daly participated in this process in his capacity with the American Geological Society. New York Times, 12 December 1880, 10. See also "The Metropolitan Museum and Its Director," The Century 24, no.4(August 1882): 625-34. Because of the claims and counter-claims in this matter, Feuradent brought a libel suit against Di Cesnola in 1883. The ensuing public trial received daily press coverage in New York. During the course of the proceedings, it was learned that Di Cesnola did not receive a promotion to Brevet Brigadier-General during the Civil War as claimed, nor was he an Italian count as he also asserted. New York Times, 15 December 1883, 8; 20 December 1883, 8; 22 December 1883, 8. The jury in the case found for Di Cesnola on two counts of the indictment while failing to reach a verdict on the third. Noting the absence of credible experts on the subject of classical artifacts in the country, the New York Times concluded that there "has probably never been a case tried in this city in which the humanizing influence of dinner parties played so large a part." New York Times, 3 February 1884, 5,6. A few months later, the same questions arose again regarding the authenticity of Di Cesnola's collection and the integrity of the man himself. These new charges, made by a European scholar, labeled Di Cesnola a fraud, calling him "one of the most fortunate treasure seekers of the age." New York Times, 24 November 1884, 4; 17 August 1885, 3; 16 May 1893, 1. Despite these charges, Di Cesnola continued in his capacity as Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art until his death in 1904. New York Times, 22 November 1904, 5; 24 November 1904, 7.

the Metropolitan Museum, attended.[153] Maria also included the geologist Clarence King who had lectured to the Geographical Society regarding his work on behalf of the U.S. Geological Survey.[154] The newspaper publisher James Gordon Bennett, the artist Albert Bierstadt and the epicure Sam Ward completed Maria's table. Thoroughly pleased with this effort at bringing people together, Maria thought the outcome "agreeable, instructive and gay as well as a good dinner."[155]

Charles Daly's political interests inspired other dinners at the Dalys. Maria's effort to construct a pleasant table did not always prove fruitful, however. She seemed disappointed in the outcome of a dinner for Grover Cleveland which included the former President and his young wife Frances as well as the banker Charles S. Fairchild and his wife Helen. Fairchild had served as Secretary of the Treasury in Cleveland's first administration.[156] The young editor and writer Richard Watson Gilder and his wife the painter Helena de Kay brought both youth and conversational variety to the table.[157] Other

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[153] New York Times, 26 March 1888, 1.

[154] New York Times, 12 January 1881, 3. See also Encyclopedia of American Biography, s.v. "King, Clarence Rivers."

[155] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," April 20, 1882.

[156] New York Times, 29 November 1924, 12. See also 26 November 1924, 18. Charles Fairchild, the president of New York Security and Trust Company from 1889 to 1904, was also active in local New York Democratic politics. His wife Helen Lincklaen Fairchild died in 1931. New York Times, 6 May 1931, 23.

[157] Under Gilder's leadership, the Century magazine became the most popular American monthly magazine. Encyclopedia of American Biography, s.v. "Gilder, Richard Watson." Gilder was memorialized upon his death in 1909 with the creation of the "Richard Watson Gilder Fund for the Promotion of Good Citizenship" to be used for the endowment of the "Gilder Fellowships" at Columbia University. New York Times, 3 May 1910, 12; 19 November 1910, 10; 22 February 1910, 2.

guests included a couple referred to only as "the Olneys."[158] Maria complained afterwards that Mrs. Olney and Mrs. Gilder talked too much across the table about their children. The other three women of us had none, so conversation was arrested."[159]

Maria did not appreciate her guests conducting conversations that excluded others at her table. Although she found Mrs. Fairchild "charming, cultivated, refined, lady-like," Maria thought she detected "a shade of regret in Mrs. Cleveland's face."[160] With this cryptic reference to Mrs. Cleveland's unease at the table, Maria restated her glum assessment of the evening. She concluded of her hospitality that she had "missed the well bred manner of a former time."[161] To her, both Mrs. Olney and Mrs. Gilder had indulged themselves in their disregard of the other women at the table.

Maria admired women who had the finesse to moderate their public behavior according to the needs of others. She responded to the direct, unassuming manner of women who showed restraint in displaying their wealth. She disliked ostentation of any kind, disavowing anything that drew the unnecessary attention of others or provided the basis for competition. This does not imply, however, that Maria surrounded herself with bland representatives of womanly gentility. To the contrary, Maria's diary indicates that those in her circle of acquaintance were not immune to public scrutiny or scandal.

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[158] The Olney's identity cannot be determined as the early career of Cleveland's future Secretary of State Richard Olney is associated with Massachusetts and a lawyer Peter B. Olney of New York later served as a federal bankruptcy referee. New York Times, 12 February 1922, 20; 15 February 1922, 3.

[159] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 -1893," November 27, 1889.

[160] Ibid.

[161] Ibid.

Public scandal encouraged the interest of strangers into private matters, inviting undue speculation and gossip. Maria understandably expressed dismay over the conduct of her former friend Annette Wilhelmina Wilkens Hicks who became "the talk of the whole city" in 1878.[162] Annette descended from an old colonial family who traced its New York origins to a land patent near Fishkill, New York, received by her great-great-grandfather Sir Francis Rumbolt, an English nobleman[163] Annette Hicks was born in Surinam in 1835 to Wilco Peter Wilkens, a wealthy Dutch planter, and Adelina Schenck, a Rumbolt descendant.[164] The family lived on their New York estate until Peter Wilkens' death around 1845. Annette, known for her "great beauty and spirit," caught the eye of the merchant Thomas Hicks, a man considerably older than she. The couple married after which Hicks settled a large tract of land near Toledo, Ohio, upon his bride. The Hicks moved to Manhattan where they lived quietly until the death of Thomas Hicks in 1866. Although Hicks had been reportedly near bankruptcy when he died, the revenue from Annette's Ohio real estate gave her a comfortable source of income. She opened a home at 10 West 14th Street, quickly earning a reputation for her beautiful clothes and magnificent entertainments.[165] Annette also traveled regularly to Europe where she received introductions to fashionable circles in London and Paris, spending handsomely to fund her

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[162] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 6, 1878.

[163] New York Times, 7 August 1896, 9.

[164] Bureau of Vital Statistics, Health Department of the City of New-York, in New York Times, 6 January 1878, 7.

[165] The only New York references to Mrs. Thomas Hicks during this period reflect her position as Manager of the Nursery and Children's Hospital and her sponsorship of that organization's Charity Ball. New York Times, 2 March 1875, 10; 31 January 1875, 11.

European social ascent.[166]

In November 1877, Annette Hicks returned to New York to provoke widespread comment over the announcement of her secret marriage to the wealthy, retired merchant Thomas Lord. The couple wed in a private ceremony conducted by Catholic Archbishop McCloskey in his official residence on November 21, 1877.[167] News accounts described Thomas Lord, a widowed father of six, as a "hale and hearty" gentleman of eighty-three who suffered from "considerable difficulty in walking."[168] Learning of the marriage, friends and relatives of the bridegroom believed him to have "entered his dotage."[169] Nonetheless, Thomas Lord took measures to guarantee the secrecy of his intention to marry Annette Hicks as well as to protect the couple's privacy after their nuptials. While Lord's children instituted legal proceedings against their father before the Lunacy Commission, rumors circulated that the couple had not traveled outside the city but had honeymooned instead in the Fourteenth Street home of the bride.[170] With the press maintaining a vigil outside this residence, a servant eventually confirmed that the couple had secluded themselves inside because Mr. Lord had taken "seriously ill."[171]

Less than three months after his marriage, Thomas Lord died in the Fourteenth

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[166] She received introduction at Court to Queen Victoria in 1874 by the American Minister General Robert Schenck. New York Times, 7 August 1896, 9. Mrs. Hicks also hosted a London reception to honor President Ulysses S. Grant. New York Times, 3 January 1878, 5.

[167] New York Times, 6 January 1878, 7.

[168] Ibid.

[169] Ibid.

[170] New York Times, 6 January 1878, 7; 7 January 1878, 8; 24 January 1878, 5.

[171] New York Times, 31 January 1878, 8.

Street home of his second wife.[172] Annette Lord reached an undisclosed settlement with the surviving Lord children over her second husband's estate valued at several million dollars. While living in Europe, Annette had financed her social ambitions with approximately $700,000 borrowed from Thomas Lord. In return for relinquishing her dower right to Lord's holdings, his children agreed to forgive this obligation.[173] Maria Daly did not discuss any details of her former friend's escapade with Mr. Lord. Maria's longstanding antipathy originated during "the first year of my marriage, as it cost me the loss of perhaps being a mother. I have reason to remember my discovery of her real character.[174] While Maria does not elaborate on the nature of her confrontation with Annette, she declared that "[d]espite the success she has met with after becoming a Catholic, I have never spoken with her."[175]

Annette Lord easily compromised any sentimental notions of romantic attachment in order to gain the financial means to support her expensive tastes. To outside observers, Annette Hicks did not love Thomas Lord. She had married him only to further her own pecuniary interests. She had also betrayed the probity suggested by her Knickerbocker lineage. To conservative women like Maria Daly, however, Annette Lord's pursuit of a fashionable life at any cost gave greater concern. Through her hastily arranged marriage to

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[172] New York Times, 8 February 1879, 1.

[173] The management of Lord's commercial real estate in lower Manhattan was left to two trustees. Distribution of Lord's assets as well as income realized from his rental properties remained undisclosed. New York Times, 19 February 1878, 8.

[174] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 6, 1878.

[175] Ibid. Maria referred to a woman named "Annette Gilkins" at a luncheon she hosted in 1866. MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 18, 1866. In view of Maria's sometimes illegible penmanship, it is possible that this is a prior reference to Annette Wilhelmina Wilkens Hicks Lord in Maria's diaries.

an elderly, enfeebled man, Annette "could not have succeeded ....in more thoroughly attracting the attention of the public to herself."[176] As people in all parts of the city discussed the Annette Lord's personal affairs, questioning her motivations for marriage, she relinquished all pretense of womanly virtue.[177]

To many observers, Annette Hicks-Lord had bartered her feminine privacy for wealth and notoriety. Because of this, the name Hicks-Lord became synonymous with women's opportunistic marriage.[178] Maria's dim view of this practice is echoed in her judgement of the French actress Sarah Bernhardt. Bernhardt had earned a reputation for theatrical brilliance by the time of her first American tour in 1880. In the wake of the publicity surrounding Bernhardt's initial New York venue, Maria declared, "Shall not go to see Sarah Bernhardt. Her character is so disgusting that I do not wish to look at her."[179]

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[176] New York Times, 6 January 1878, 7.

[177] Annette Hicks-Lord resumed her social life in New York. She purchased the residence of General George B. McClellan at 32 Washington Square West where she "began to entertain with a lavishness that occasioned much comment." Although her name appeared with some regularity at cultural and social events, Annette Hicks-Lord "never succeeded in making a social success in New York.." She died in New York in 1896, leaving an estate of around $150,000. New York Times, 7 August 1896, 9. See also New York Times, 5 February 1888, 5; 1 January 1897, 7. In 1925, her home on West Washington Square was demolished for the construction of an apartment building. New York Times, 12 April 1925, RE1.

[178] New York Times, 7 August 1896, 9. In 1883, the thirty-eight year old widow of Col. Reid, brother of Whitelaw Reid, of the New York Tribune, quietly married the seventy year old John M. Quackenbos of Brooklyn. The New York Times captioned the news of this marriage as "Another Hicks-Lord Affair." New York Times, 4 May 1883, 1.

[179] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," November 4, 1880. Unlike Maria Daly, the author Mary Elizabeth Sherwood did attend Bernhardt's performance in "Camille,"recalling that she "could die better than any other actress on the stage." New York Times, 6 November 1897, BR1. See also 9 November 1880, 1. Several days after this triumph, the actress privately exhibited her painting and sculpture at the Union League Club Theater to a number of prominent people. New York Times, 14 November 1880, 1.

Maria's strong opinion does not reflect an assessment of Bernhardt's professional talent or the fact that she pursued a career as an actress. The Dalys numbered many theatrical performers, including the noted tragedian Edwin Booth, among their personal friends.

Maria simply disliked the extent to which Bernhardt invited the public into the most intimate aspects of her private life. Sarah Bernhardt enjoyed a modern celebrity. The press and public regularly parsed the details of her professional feuds, erratic behavior, personal habits, health and romantic attachments in a manner that blended fact, rumor and speculation. Of Sarah Bernhardt, "[i]t was said that she dressed like a man within doors, that she slept in a satin-quilted coffin–anything would do if only it involved a departure from the usages of her sex the truth is, she was sowing the wild oats of genius in a sort of extravagant assertion of her own individuality."[180]

In contrast to Maria, Bernhardt lived a throughly public life which helped to insure the longevity of her theatrical career. Like Sarah Bernhardt, Annette Lord sacrificed her privacy to achieve a larger goal. Lord took a bold step that invited the public into her domestic affairs in order to maintain her expensive tastes. Annette Lord's actions had clearly reduced social status into a commodity that could be purchased. Both Sarah Bernhardt and Annette Lord succeeded through their ability to become public spectacles. To Maria Daly, the actions of both women represented a profound moral failure. In their pursuit of wealth and fame, both Annette Lord and Sarah Bernhardt rejected the traditional values associated with home and family. For Maria, these conservative standards formed the basis of women's feminine identity. Because of her conviction, Maria could not sanction

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[180] New York Times, 12 January 1878, 2. See also 13 January 1879, 2.

the conduct of any woman who selfishly publicized her private life for personal advantage. A woman's ability to maintain at all times her dignity and decorum served the feminine obligation to the larger community. In the final analysis, Maria saw both Sarah Bernhardt and Annette Lord as subversive figures who undermined the order and stability represented by women's traditional domesticity.

Mrs. Paran Stevens

Maria's aversion towards women in the public eye crystalized in the persona of Mrs. Paran Stevens, a well-known New York society matron. Maria summarized Mrs. Stevens' personal details as follows:

> "Mrs. Paran Stevens, the wife of the keeper of the Fifth Avenue Hotel and formerly of the Tremont in Boston is decidedly a leader of fashion, although Mrs. Belmont does not visit her. Her story is that of a respectable Becky Sharpe. A girl of eighteen, she married old, stupid Stevens. They say she was a Lowell factory girl, educated herself after marriage, being clever, found that music was the open sesame to society. Could not hope to be visited in Boston. Cultivated her sister's voice. Went to Europe in the wake of President Fillmore who was good natured and simple. Returned and set up a society establishment in New York."[181]

Despite their prejudicial nature, Maria's remarks accurately reflect the pertinent details of Marietta Stevens' biography prior to 1866.

Born July 20, 1827 into a greengrocer's family in Lowell, Massachusetts, the former Marietta Reed received education to become a school teacher.[182] Upon the completion of her schooling, she moved to Boston where she met the wealthy hotelier Paran Stevens. Stevens, a native of Claremont, New Hampshire, had been born on September 11, 1802 to

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[181] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," February 15, 1866. See also December 22, 1877.

[182] Mrs. Stevens exact birth date first appeared engraved on a silver plate atop her coffin. New York Times, 9 April 1895, 8..

Colonel Josiah and Matilda Stevens. Educated at a local academy, Stevens entered business at a young age. He managed a local Claremont hotel where he earned a reputation for commercial competence. In 1837, he joined a group of businessmen to build an eight hundred spindle cotton mill and he invested in a carriage factory. Stevens relocated his family to Boston at the age of thirty. There, as a widower with a young daughter from his first marriage, he met Marietta Reed then a girl of nineteen.[183]

Throughout his hotel career, Stevens gambled on the future. In 1848, he purchased land for a hotel on Fifth Avenue for $5000, although others thought him "crazy."[184] He eventually owned several hotels in New York, including the Fifth Avenue Hotel, "the Stevens House, the Victoria Hotel, and a row of shops adjoining Daly's Theater."[185] In addition, he served as principal proprietor of the "Continental, Philadelphia; the Battle House, Mobile, and the Revere and Tremont hotels in Boston."[186] Stevens, in his capacity as hotel owner and manager, planned buildings, supervised contracts, furnished interiors, organized managerial systems, and directed employees. He achieved a reputation as an innovator with his early use of fireproofing and elevators.[187] In 1870, Stevens announced his retention of the architect Richard Morris Hunt for the design and construction of an apartment-style hotel on Fifth Avenue at Twenty Seventh Street. Large suites of rooms

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[183] "Memorial Services and Address in Honor of the Late Paran Stevens in the Town Hall, Claremont, New Hampshire, June 21, 1872," (Claremont, New Hampshire: Printed at the National Eagle Office, 1872), 13.

[184] New York Times, 21 July 1895, 25.

[185] New York Times, 4 April 1895, 1.

[186] New York Times, 21 April 1872, 1.

[187] Ibid.

containing bathrooms, kitchens, closets, a dining room, parlor and several bedrooms had been planned to rent at from "$1,500 to $2,000 per annum."[188] Stevens' continuing ability to prosper permitted his family an expansive life. In 1856, the Stevens traveled through Europe in the party of former President Millard Fillmore, a personal friend. Through their association with Fillmore, the Stevenses received introductions to European crowned heads.[189] In 1867, President Andrew Johnson appointed Paran Stevens one of ten Commissioners to represent the United States at the Paris Exposition.[190]

Maria Daly did not characterize Paran Stevens as "stupid" in reference to his business abilities. Rather, she questioned the disparity in age between the elderly Stevens and his young bride Marietta. Maria had previously opined on such "curious" marital unions after meeting Susan Endicott, the young wife of the wealthy merchant Marshall O. Roberts, who had married for the third time at age seventy-five.[191] Maria, after meeting these newly

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[188] New York Times, 10 September 1870, 1. See also 1 November 1870, 8.

[189] Ibid., 16.

[190] Paran Stevens, Report on Clothing and Woven Fabrics, Being Classes Twenty-Seven to Thirty-Nine of Group Four, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1870).

[191] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," November 23, 1875. Marshall O. Roberts, born in 1813, rose from the position of ship chandler to amass a fortune in the merchant shipping business. In 1850, Roberts, along with several others, formed the United States Steamship Company to deliver mail and passengers on the Atlantic side of the San Francisco sea route. Roberts eventually purchased the company from its other investors. In 1860, he withdrew from this enterprise to form the North Atlantic Steamship Company. During the Civil War, Roberts profited from the government use of his fleet of steamships as well as through his investment in United States government bonds. A shrewd investor, Roberts also put his capital into the Erie and Southern Pacific Railroads and the Atlantic Cable Company. He filled his Fifth Avenue home, appraised at over $750,000, with an extensive art collection. Married three times, Roberts fathered four children, including an infant son by his wife Susan Endicott. Roberts died in 1880, having accumulated a fortune estimated at $10,000,000. He was survived by his four children. New York Times, 12 September 1880, 5; 13 September 1880, 8; 15 September 1880, 8. In his

weds, decided that "old men are less to be trusted than younger ones. They are too easily flattered."[192] The Stevens relocated from Boston to New York soon after the completion of the Fifth Avenue Hotel. Marietta Stevens desired a social prominence in New York compatible with her husband's commercial success. To achieve this ambition, Mrs. Stevens relied upon the social entree provided by the musical talent of her younger sister Fanny Reed.

Fanny, born in 1834, wrote a memoir of her cultural accomplishments and friendships with famous composers.[193] Although this work provides no details of the Reed sisters' upbringing, it does confirm the value of a cultivated talent in acquiring access to patrician circles. Fanny recalled her performance in Newport, Rhode Island, of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" in 1860. On this occasion, her voice moved many in the "fashionable audience" to tears, including the song's author Julia Ward Howe.[194] In 1864, the Dalys attended a party at the George Bancrofts where Maria encountered a "number of worthies"and heard a musical performance by Fanny Reed. Reed again sang "Mrs. Howe's battlesong...Mrs. 'Fifth-Avenue-Hotel' was there, of course, with her sister. I would rather

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will, Roberts left his wife the use and contents of their New York residence as well as a $40,000 annual annuity. The balance of this wealth was left in a trust whose proceeds were to be apportioned among his children and grandchildren. New York Times, 19 September 1880, 12. Susan Endicott Roberts married the English Colonel Ralph Vivian of the Queen's Scots Guards in 1892 and moved with her son to England. New York Times, 8 January 1892, 5. Years later she successfully litigated the management of the Roberts estate, resulting in the selection of a new trustee. New York Times, 11 April 1910, 18; 20 September 1915, 6. She died in London in 1926. New York Times, 24 March 1926, 23.

[192] Ibid.

[193] Fanny Reed, Reminiscences, Musical and Other, (Boston: Knight and Millet, 1903).

[194] Ibid., 5. See also Frederick Townsend Martin, Things I Remember, 92-95.

dispense with the music than have to take Mrs. Stevens with it."[195]

Despite Maria's misgivings, Fanny Reed's musical performances grew in popularity with elites. Frederick Townsend Martin recalled that "everyone flocked to Mrs. Stevens's Musicales to hear Miss Fanny sing; indeed it was said that she had sung her sister into society."[196] In Europe, Reed's "fresh, powerful voice" and her renditions of nursery lullabies attracted the interest of the Prince of Wales. This royal favor assisted Marietta Stevens in her social aims and ultimately encouraged Reed's pursuit of a continental career.[197] Fanny Reed eventually established a permanent home on the Rue de la Pompe in Paris where she encouraged young musical talent and participated in the city's social life. When Fanny moved to Paris, some in society remarked upon the "decided falling off in Mrs. Stevens' Sunday night concerts."[198]

Described as a "tall, handsome brunette with a magnetic personality, who dressed in exquisite taste," Mrs. Stevens continued to build her social reputation.[199] She lived with her husband in a large home 244 Fifth Avenue and summered in a "modern" villa in Newport "which was considered quite an improvement on the older residences."[200] She entertained expansively. Eleanor Ruggles Strong remarked after a visit to the Stevens' home in

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[195] MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861 - 1865, December 6, 1864, 320. See also George Templeton Strong, November 18, 1865, 4:51.

[196] Frederick Townsend Martin, 92-93.

[197] Ibid. See also Frederick Townsend Martin, 10-11.

[198] Frederick Townsend Martin, 95.

[199] Ibid., 92.

[200] Ibid., 96.

Newport that "she would not be bothered by Mrs. Stevens' fourteen servants for all that lady's wealth."[201] The social arbiter Ward McAllister, however, admired her taste as that of an "extremely talented woman of the world."[202] Mrs. Stevens had two children, including: a daughter Mary Fisk, called Minnie, born in 1859 and a son Harry Leyden born in 1865. In addition, Mrs. Stevens became a Manager of the Nursery and Children's Hospital.[203] Paran Stevens died in 1872 while his wife and daughter traveled in Europe.[204] Mrs. Stevens held a memorial service in her husband's home town of Claremont, New Hampshire, and burial services in Mount Auburn cemetery near Boston.

A few years later, the news of a London robbery in which Mrs. Stevens lost a quantity of fine jewelry confirmed her to be a woman of wealth with expensive tastes.[205] Ward McAllister thought Marietta Stevens a "brilliant society woman."[206] Similarly, Frederick Townsend Martin lauded Mrs. Stevens' "unassailable" abilities as a hostess.[207]

Mrs. Stevens' effort to achieve social recognition had not been won without cost, however. Ward McAllister recorded an exchange between Mrs. Stevens and Mrs. Kernochan, a wealthy member of the New York establishment. Catherine Kernochan, a

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[201] George Templeton Strong, July 24, 1866, 4:94.

[202] Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Found It, Annotated Edition, 160.

[203] New York Times, 27 January 1866, 8; 20 February 1867, 6.

[204] New York Times, 26 April 1872, 1; 30 April 1872, 5.

[205] New York Times, 28 July 1875, 5. See also 6 August 1875, 5. A year later, Mrs. Stevens fell victim to a plot to rob her New York home. New York Times, 29 May 1876, 8.

[206] Ward McAllister, Society as I Have Known It, Annotated Edition, 324.

[207] Frederick Townsend Martin, 92.

daughter of Peter Lorillard, was the wife James Kernochan, the son of a wealthy Louisiana sugar planter.[208] While escorting Mrs. Stevens into a ball, McAllister saw Mrs. Kernochan arrayed in a "blaze of jewels," carrying an "old Spanish fan, such as a queen might envy." Mrs. Kernochan completed her ensemble with a headdress "of the most superb ostrich plumes ...which towered above her, and as she advanced would bend gracefully forward, nodding to you, as it were, to approach and do her honor." As the two women met, Mrs. Stevens, impressed with this "gorgeous apparel" inquired, "Good gracious, my dear...what have you got on? Let me look at you." To which the "royal dame" replied, "What have I got on? Why Madame, I had a grandmother!" Unfazed, Mrs. Stevens responded, "Had you, indeed! Then, if that was her garb, she must have been Pocahontas, or the Empress of Morocco!"[209]

This exchange indicates the considerable antipathy that women elites like Catherine Kernochan held for social newcomers like Mrs. Stevens. Catherine Kernochan's

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[208] James Powell Kernochan, born in New York in 1831, was the son of a wealthy Louisiana sugar planter. His marriage to Katharine Lorillard united two large fortunes. Kernochan's business career involved his supervision of their two estates as well as service on several corporate boards. The couple had two children, a son James Lorillard and a daughter Katharine or "Kitty" Lorillard. The Kernochans, who resided in a mansion at 384 Fifth Avenue, remained actively involved in social events in both New York and Newport, Rhode Island, where they maintained a summer cottage. Reports of a fire in their New York home in 1881 indicate that the property and its contents had been insured for $65,000. New York Times, 2 December 1881, 8. In addition to his membership in several leading men's clubs, Kernochan actively supported the organization of the Patriarch's cotillions. After the death of Ward McAllister, Kernochan was recognized as the group's "ruling spirit." James Kernochan died unexpectedly in 1897 after being struck by a wagon while crossing Fifth Avenue. New York Times, 6 March 1897, 7; 9 March 1897, 7. Catherine Kernochan later served as Regent of the New York City Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. She died in 1917. New York Times, 28 February 1917, 10.

[209] Ward McAllister, Society as I Have Found It, Annotated Edition, 325.

unwillingness to indulge Mrs. Stevens with superficial pleasantries demonstrates her jealous regard for the other woman. Certainly the two women enjoyed a passing acquaintance in New York as well as Newport where each owned summer homes. By the time of their unpleasant encounter, Marietta Stevens had established a reputation as a hostess. Mrs. Stevens, furthermore, had entered the ballroom on the arm of Ward McAllister, well-regarded among elites for his powers of social discrimination. With her reference to the Stevens' uncertain pedigree, Mrs. Kernochan indicated that Mrs. Stevens needed to be reminded of her place in society's pecking order. Catherine Kernochan, desiring obeisance from a woman she considered her social inferior, began the "war of words."[210] Marietta Stevens, however, displayed confidence and independence in the face of Kernochan's affront. Mrs. Stevens disregarded Catherine Kernochan's assertion of privilege, and instead traded insults with a woman she considered to be her social equal.

The annotated memoir of Ward McAllister provides the only record of this exchange, making it difficult to assess the effects, if any, of this particular episode. In view of the conservative society's dislike of undue publicity, news of litigation involving Mrs. Stevens must have produced vindication in some circles. Mrs. Stevens did not prevail in several suits, including one brought by the architect Richard Morris Hunt, over non payment of fees.[211] Similarly, Mrs. Stevens, who had "gotten foreign notions of cookery" failed in

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[210] Ibid.

[211] New York Times, 18 January 1878, 3. See also New York Times, 22 March 1877, 3. Mrs. Stevens did not prevail in either matter, however. Information regarding both litigations appeared in a publication catering to architects and the building trades. "Responsibility of Architects," The Manufacturer and Builder, 10, no.2 (February 1878): 44.

her efforts to have the proprietors of the French restaurant "Menards" evicted from one of her properties.[212] These small reversals paled, however, with the July 1878 announcement of the marriage of Mrs. Stevens' daughter Minnie to Arthur Henry Paget, a Lieutenant and Captain in the Scots Fusilier Guards, and the eldest son of Lieutenant General Lord Alfred Henry Paget, Clerk Marshal of the Royal Household, and fifth son of the first Marquis of Anglesey.[213]

While Arthur Paget did not have a royal title, he was considered to be an aristocrat as the grandson of the first Marquis of Anglesey. Mrs. Stevens had been preceded in her effort to secure a titled husband for her daughter by the success of two other New York families.[214] The Stevens' foothold in London society had, however, been "somewhat precariously secured after six years of unsuccessful courtships with French dukes and Irish lords."[215] Although some questioned the extent of the Stevens' wealth, Mrs. Stevens obtained the support of Frances, Lady Waldegrave and Consuelo, Lady Mandeville, both accomplished London hostesses.[216] By the time of the wedding in 1878, both Mrs. Stevens and her daughter had access to the London circles frequented by the Prince of Wales. A

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[212] New York Times, 22 February 1878, 3.

[213] New York Times, 29 July 1878, 3.

[214] In 1874, Jennie, the daughter of the businessman Leonard Jerome married Lord Randolph Churchill. In 1876, Consuelo Yznaga married Lord Mandeville, the Duke of Manchester's heir. At the large wedding held at Grace Episcopal Church in New York, both Minnie Stevens and Kate Kernochan served as bridesmaids. New York Times, 23 May 1876, 8. See also Clarice Stasz, The Vanderbilt Women, 83-84, 117-18.

[215] Maureen E. Montgomery, Gilded Prostitution, 129. See also Ruth Brandon, The Dollar Princesses: The American Invasion of the European Aristocracy, 1870-1914, (London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1980), 65-66.

[216] Maureen E. Montgomery, Gilded Prostitution, 130.

financial transaction, however, cemented the match between Minnie Stevens and Arthur Paget. Although Minnie's dowry was smaller than previously thought, the Stevens' money featured in the pre-marital negotiations.[217] One estimate by a "persevering calculator" determined that Minnie's dowry amounted to "nearly L200, 000."[218] In addition to money settled before the wedding, court records reveal that Mrs. Stevens also supplied the Arthur Pagets an annual allowance of $20,000, as an ante-nuptial settlement.[219]

The Prince of Wales attended the couple's late July wedding, held in a fashionable church on London's Eaton Square. The royal favor is also indicated by the "gold serpent bracelet set with sapphires, diamonds, and rubies," presented to the bride by the Prince as a gift.[220] Even though the Prince and other nobility drew attention at the wedding, Minnie Stevens became the "cynosure of all."[221] Gowned in white satin, the bride completed her costume with a bouquet of orange blossoms and six diamond stars in her hair. Press reports of the nuptials commented upon the "affable manner" of the royal family in attendance.[222] On the following day, the Prince of Wales further "evinced extraordinary condescension, paying a personal visit to the mother of the bride."[223]

A year later in London, the Prince of Wales stood as godfather to the couple's son,

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[217] Ruth Brandon, 65.

[218] New York Times, 18 November 1893, 8.

[219] New York Times, 4 October 1887, 1.

[220] New York Times, 29 July 1879, 3.

[221] Ibid.

[222] Ibid.

[223] Ibid.

christened Albert Edward Sidney Louis Paget.[224] Mrs. Paran Stevens, lacking unqualified social acceptance in New York, had managed to trump that city's social establishment. She demonstrated that a sufficient American dowry could compensate for any doubts about a family's pedigree. In view of the elite scramble to gain access to the Prince when he visited New York in 1860, Mrs. Stevens pride herself on her abilities. Implicit in her desire to see her daughter marry a titled European is her recognition of the reverence of New York society for aristocracy. Mrs. Stevens hoped that her daughter's marriage would confirm, if not elevate, her social position. In New York, Minnie lacked the marital options her mother wished. Mrs. Stevens' exchange with Catherine Kernochan suggests that Minnie Stevens could not easily have married a conservative son of the city's wealthy society.

Minnie Stevens wished to please her mother. In contrast, the Kernochan's only daughter Kitty eloped in 1883 to marry Herbert C. Pell, a man her family deemed highly unsuitable.[225] Minnie, however, understood the importance of her marriage to the Stevens' household. The necessity that patrician women broker suitable marriages for their children is heard in Maria Daly's comments regarding Augusta Astor's involvement in her son Willie's courtships. Maria observed that "the young man has singed his wings before but whilst his mother is near, has been safe...What Augusta will do, if Willie marries not to please her?"[226] With the news of young Astor's engagement to Mary Dalghren Paul of Philadelphia, Maria gossiped that "Mistress Paul the mother is a thorough highway woman

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[224] Ruth Brandon, 67.

[225] New York Times, 24 February 1883, 5.

[226] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," December 22, 1877.

in the roads of matrimony, stopping all eligible matches. Cries stand and deliver to either a son or daughter. A few days ago, she secured a Miss Drexel the rich banker's daughter for a son and now she has taken the Astor."[227] In 1878, Augusta Astor celebrated her son's wedding to Mamie Paul with a gift of $1500 to the Children's Aid Society, permitting homeless youth to "look back in future life to this wedding day as the beginning of a new life."[228]

Because Augusta Astor would not have so generously honored her son's marriage to Minnie, Marietta Stevens persisted in seeking alternatives for her daughter outside New York. That she searched Europe for six years indicates that a suitable American match could not be found. The Stevens' experience in London, as well as that of other families who followed their example, are satirized in Constance Cary Harrison's 1890 novel The Anglomaniacs. The former Constance Cary moved to Manhattan after the Civil War with her husband Burton Harrison, former private secretary to the Confederate leader Jefferson Davis.[229] In New York, Constance Harrison earned a literary reputation, while her husband began his legal career. The Harrisons, who did not have great wealth, found friends in many of the city's social and cultural circles. Constance Harrison viewed New York's upper crust from the inside, labeling many of its practices "pretentious" and "artificial."[230] Her

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[227] Ibid. See also MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 27, 1878. See also David Sinclair, 252-255, 265-266.

[228] New York Times, 6 June 1878, 3.

[229] Dictionary of Notable American Women, s.v. "Harrison, Constance Cary." See also New York Times, 22 November 1920, 14.

[230] Constance Cary Harrison, The Anglomaniacs, (New York: Cassell Publishing Company, 1890), 83.

character Mrs. Floyd-Curtis who sought a European match for her daughter viewed New York as a "flour of materialism by which the world is leavened."[231] Harrison intended Mrs. Floyd-Curtis to be woman of fashion, including her hyphenated name which had been "acquired and packed up with her latest batch of London stationary."[232]

Constance Harrison penned her satirical portrait of parvenu values at a time when the press routinely advertised American heiresses available to wed European nobility. By 1890, there existed a publication devoted solely to the European marriages of American women. This book Titled Americans, published and revised annually in New York, provided all relevant details of successful transatlantic unions, including renderings of armorial bearings.[233] In the end, Harrison questioned how an American woman could sacrifice her freedom to the "picturesque side of an exalted ancestry to find how cheap its modern representatives account for their centuries of tradition."[234] Harrison ultimately intended her work as a sentimental endorsement of romantic love.

For Mrs. Paran Stevens, who sublimated her amorous idealism, the London marriage of her daughter Minnie to Arthur Paget reaped immediate social dividends in New York. Mrs. Stevens demonstrated that she was not a woman who could be dismissed. Caroline Perry Belmont an undisputed social leader in New York paid a social call to the Stevens'

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[231] Ibid., 126.

[232] Ibid., 6.

[233] Titled Americans. A List of American Ladies Who Have Married Foreigners of Rank, (New York: Street & Smith, 1890).

[234] Constance Cary Harrison, The Anglomaniacs, 184.

Fifth Avenue home after the marriage.[235] Many people, including Ward McAllister, saw Caroline Belmont as the "queen of society."[236] "All did homage to her...for she had every charm, and never seemed to over-appreciate herself."[237] McAllister's intentional use of a royal metaphor to characterize Caroline Belmont reflects society's longing for the stability of a hereditary class system. To McAllister and others, Caroline Belmont deserved the esteem due a woman literally "worshiped by everybody."[238] Caroline's social call on Marietta Stevens acknowledged the latter's arrival at the upper rungs of New York society.

After Minnie's London marriage, Mrs. Stevens passed from the pages of Maria's diary. Marietta Stevens had ascended to a level of society that did not include the Dalys. Mrs. Stevens, however, compensated for Maria's lack of notice of her activity. Although she habitually spent a portion of the winter social season in the South of France, the Stevens name often appeared at social events sponsored by Ward McAllister. At the Patriarch's Ball of 1880, for example, Mrs. Stevens was among those noticed for the "splendor and taste" of their toilettes.[239] Mrs. Stevens also received invitations to fashionable weddings, including the 1881 marriage of Louise Dickerson to the attorney Charles Gould which the Dalys also

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[235] Ruth Brandon, 67. As additional confirmation of the regard that Mrs. Stevens held for Caroline Belmont is her presence at the latter's funeral in 1892. New York Times, 23 November 1892, 8.

[236] Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Known It, Annotated Edition, 117, 127, 196.

[237] Ibid., 127.

[238] Ibid.

[239] New York Times, 21 December 1880, 2. See also 12 May 1882, 12; 25 January 1884, 6 January 1891, 8.

attended.[240] Similarly, Mrs. Stevens pursued an active social life during the summer in Newport, Rhode Island.[241] A talented hostess, she extended her hospitality on numerous occasions to visiting dignitaries and members of the European nobility. She entertained President Chester A. Arthur in 1882, for example, at a dinner for fourteen guests in her Newport villa on Bellevue Avenue where the first floor apartments had been "refurnished most magnificently, the ceilings being perhaps the richest in our cottage city."[242] The following year in Newport, another "brilliant affair"in honor of Chester A. Arthur became front page news in New York.[243] Similarly, a dinner dance for the Duke of Marlborough at "Marietta Villa" attracted public interest.[244]

In view of her active social life and travel in Europe, Mrs. Stevens' philanthropy is not extensive. She continued to support the Nursery and Children's Hospital through 1884.[245] She joined other women elites in the Bartholdi Statue of Liberty Fund, sponsoring

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[240] New York Times, 21 January 1881, 5. See also New York Times, 16 April 1884, 8; 26 November 1889, 8; 5 June 1890, 4.

[241] New York Times, 6 July 1882, 5; 10 August 1882, 5; 25 September 1887, 12; 10 August 1890, 10.

[242] New York Times, 30 August 1880, 5.

[243] New York Times, 24 September 1883, 1.

[244] New York Times, 1 September 1887, 2. Mrs. Stevens threatened to leave Newport because of unfavorable press comment generated by the Duke's visit. New York Times, 9 September 1887, 1; 10 September 1887, 5. Mrs. Stevens left Newport, vowing to "find out the party who is writing about her in a New York weekly paper and up to the present time she has succeeded in narrowing the number 'under suspicion' to five." New York Times, 9 October 1887, 11.

[245] New York Times, 16 December 1883, 15.

a concert at the Academy of Music to raise money for the pedestal fund.[246] In a related matter, she also became interested in the Ladies Dress Co-operative Association. This project, based upon a London model, aimed to emancipate women from the "thralldom of shopkeepers who deal in female wearing apparel.[247] Kate Field, a socially prominent author and lecturer, organized the New York effort. A St. Louis native, Field had been groomed for the cultural and social elite by her Boston uncle Milton Sanford who financed her American schooling and European study. Field's eventual alienation from her uncle forced her to support herself. By the time of her arrival in New York in 1880, she had established a reputation as a journalist and author.[248]

Once in New York, Field announced plans to raise $250,000 to establish a co-operative system for the manufacture and sale of women's apparel. She envisioned a "co-operative store, well stocked with ladies and children's wearing apparel, which is to be furnished to stockholders at a small percentage above cost price."[249] The prospectus for the organization promised that low profit margins could be maintained by the direct purchase of foreign materials and favorable contracts with domestic manufacturers. Many women elites responded positively to Field's initial proposal in view of the success of the London organization.[250] Mrs. Stevens hosted the group's second meeting in her Fifth Avenue home

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[246] New York Times, 17 January 1883, 5.

[247] New York Times, 24 February 1880, 8.

[248] Dictionary of Notable American Women, s.v. "Field, Kate." See also New York Times, 31 May 1896, 5; 15 June 1996, 12.

[249] New York Times, 24 February 1880, 8.

[250] Ibid.

for a discussion of plans for official incorporation as well as a response to letters "pouring in from all sections" from interested women.[251] Although questions arose over the extent of Kate Field's leadership of the group, participation in the venture finally opened to the public.[252] A large advertisement in 1881 named the official patrons of the new organization, including political and military leaders and representatives of prominent households from across the country.[253] The name of Mrs. Paran Stevens does not appear on this public offering of shares, however. Either Mrs. Stevens could not participate due to her commitments outside New York or she sensed the impracticality of the venture and quietly withdrew her support. Although stockholders had been promised "exceptional advantages" and "exclusive fashions" from "experienced management," the Ladies Co-operative Dress Association declared insolvency within six months of its first annual meeting.[254]

For all of its well-heeled support, the Ladies Co-operative Dress Association failed due to inadequate capitalization and poor management.[255] Mrs. Stevens learned of the project perhaps through a prior association with Kate Field. The available literature on this short lived venture does not reflect any desire on the part of the founders to empower disadvantaged women with vocational training or employment opportunity. Mrs. Stevens and other interested parties simply wished to economize on apparel. Marietta Stevens, in

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[251] New York Times, 6 March 1880, 6.

[252] New York Times, 7 March 1880, 7; 9 March 1880, 2; 12 March, 1880, 3; 27 March 1880, 6; 3 March 1881, 8.

[253] New York Times, 10 May 1881, 8. See also New York Times, 10 March 1881, 5.

[254] Ibid.

[255] New York Times, 29 December 1882, 8, 8. See also New York Times, 12 April 1882, 8.

particular, had premised her social reputation and lavish lifestyle on her ability to spend freely. She contributed a significant annual amount to her daughter's London household. In this regard, continuing litigation concerning the management of her husband's estate reveals Mrs. Stevens to be a woman chronically in need of money. Under the terms of Paran Stevens' will, Mrs. Stevens received about $1,000,000. As Stevens had invested heavily in real estate prior to his death there was insufficient personalty to fund this legacy. The trustees "decided to pay Mrs. Stevens out of the real estate after the hotel property...had been set aside for the children."[256] Shortly after her husband's death, Mrs. Stevens instituted a series of legal proceedings involving the estate's income and the management of the Stevens properties. In 1884, she began a proceeding in Surrogate's Court seeking the removal of two of the three trustees who managed the estate in addition to herself. Newspapers characterized this attempt by the widow Stevens as "collecting dollars wherever she could."[257]

Litigation concerning Mrs. Stevens' second attempt to remove two executors of the estate became front page news in 1887. Specifically under the terms of Paran Stevens' will, Mrs. Stevens got the lifetime use of the couple's homes and their contents in New York and Newport as well as the use and contents of two Twenty-Third Street stables in Manhattan. In addition to an outright bequest of $100,000, Mrs. Stevens received the lifetime income from a $1,000,000 trust, to be paid annually. Paran Stevens entrusted the balance of his assets to his three children, with the remainder to be distributed upon their deaths to his

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[256] New York Times, 26 April 1884, 8.

[257] Ibid.

grandchildren. In her suit, Mrs. Stevens sought removal of two executors: John S. Melcher, the deceased's son-in-law who had married his daughter Ellen; and Charles S. Stevens of Clinton, Massachusetts, a brother of the deceased. A third executor George F. Richardson of Lowell, Massachusetts, had married one of Mrs. Stevens' sisters. Charging the gross and incompetent mismanagement of Paran Stevens' assets, Mrs. Stevens asserted that John Melcher had wrongfully converted part of the estate for the use of his wife Ellen, Paran Stevens' daughter by his first marriage.[258] Melcher, when interviewed regarding this litigation, "fairly shuddered in his easy chair as he thought of [Mrs. Stevens], and glanced nervously at the door–perhaps to see if it was chained."[259] Melcher, a slightly built man, alleged that Mrs. Stevens had physically assaulted him on three occasions using an umbrella, her fists and an inkwell, respectively. "Her language I will not attempt to repeat. She is the most dreadful woman."[260] As news of this lawsuit spread, the town of Claremont, New Hampshire, revealed that it had not received a $40,000 payment, plus interest, from the estate that the decedent had specified for educational purposes.[261]

A counter claim, filed by John Melcher, alleged that Mrs. Stevens had seized assets from the trust and "kept without a shadow of right."[262] In a subsequent hearing, refereed by former judge William G. Choate, Marietta Stevens proved herself to be "not an ordinary witness." Wearing "buff gloves and a wine colored suit, with a Winter jacket and fur neck-

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[258] New York Times, 4 October 1887, 1.

[259] Ibid.

[260] Ibid.

[261] New York Times, 22 October 1887, 2.

[262] New York Times, 29 October 1887, 8.

piece," Mrs. Stevens became "excited and hysterical without any provocation" when delivering her testimony.[263] She "persisted in interjecting remarks, asking questions, and making running comments," despite the repeated rebukes by the attorneys present.[264] At the conclusion of the proceedings, a reporter observed Mrs. Stevens "smiling and laughing coquettishly" with one of the lawyers present.[265]

Despite her performance as a witness and after months of additional argument, Mrs. Stevens lost her bid to remove the trustees of her husband's estate.[266] In 1891, Judge Choate issued a lengthy opinion, finding in favor of John Melcher and against Mrs. Stevens. Choate determined that Mrs. Stevens had received from 1872 to 1877 more than $574,000 and, in fact, owed the estate over $83,000 for monies that she had improperly taken. This opinion also cited Mrs. Stevens for inadequate records, for "unnecessary and vexatious litigation" and the frequent and unexplained changes of counsel.[267] Despite this reversal, Mrs. Stevens continued to litigate. In 1892, the trustees obtained an injunction, forbidding her from collecting any rents from the properties owned by her late husband.[268] In Boston, she became involved in another dispute with the trustees over the tenants who occupied a Tremont Place

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[263] Ibid.

[264] Ibid.

[265] Ibid.

[266] New York Times, 1 January 1888, 1. See also New York Times, 18 November, 1887, 8; 7 December 1887, 9; 14 December 1887, 2. A year later, an appellate court denied Mrs. Stevens' appeal. New York Times, 2 November 1889, 8.

[267] Ibid. Mrs. Stevens prevailed in an appeal before the Supreme Court in the amount of about $100,000. New York Times, 14 October 1894.

[268] New York Times, 24 March 1892, 10; 29 March 1892, 6.

house.[269]

Amid this acrimony, Mrs. Stevens became embroiled in an unrelated legal matter which again became front page news.[270] Miss Sallie Gibbons, who sold art from a store owned by Mrs. Stevens, sued the latter for trespass and assault. According to the "lamblike" Miss Gibbons, Mrs. Stevens had "visited the store...used very abusive language, threatened to drive her out, finally assaulted her, and had to be removed by the police."[271] Mrs. Stevens, "emphasizing her meaning with an astrakhan muff," testified at trial that she had entered the store only to inquire about making improvements to the property.[272] A jury, who also heard testimony of supporting witnesses, awarded Miss Gibbons fifty dollars plus costs.[273] A few years later, when sued for $500 by a French chef whom she had fired, Mrs. Stevens declared, "You know, I am a fighter, and I will fight this case if it costs $20,000."[274]

This refusal to recognize the interests of others drew Marietta Stevens into legal controversies until the end of her life.[275] The coverage of these public battles suggest that

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[269] New York Times, 23 March 1893, 1.

[270] New York Times, 22 February 1887, 1.

[271] Ibid.

[272] Ibid.

[273] New York Times, 24 February 1887, 8.

[274] New York Times, 22 November 1891, 10.

[275] Differences between Mrs. Stevens and the executrix of the estate of Arthur Leary, a manager of Mrs. Stevens interests, were settled out of court. New York Times, 2 September 1893, 2. Some attributed Mrs. Stevens renewed interest in litigation to the death of Arthur Leary who had discouraged her from seeking more legal remedies. New York Times, 22 October 1893, 13. In 1893, Mrs. Stevens brought a new suit, seeking removal of the trustees of her husband's estate, in the Court of Common Pleas. New York Times, 15 October 1893, 9; 28 December 1893, 9. In 1894, Mrs. Stevens, acting as trustee for the portion of her son Harry's estate

other aspects of Mrs. Stevens' life also gave newspaper editors a continuous stream of content. Mrs. Stevens achieved a measure of fame or notoriety, depending upon one's point of view. Her difficulties with her jewelry suggest one of the negative effects of public awareness. In 1888, an Italian maid relieved her of diamond jewelry valued at $30,000.[276] Several years later, Mrs. Stevens claimed to have been robbed of diamond jewelry in her Newport cottage.[277] These gems reappeared in the Stevens home a few days later.[278] Newport police surmised that the theft had been the work of an employee in the Stevens household who had been deterred from selling the jewels by the publicity surrounding the theft.

Other wealthy woman also fell victim to household thievery. The theft of diamond jewelry from the Madison Square home of Townsend Burden, a wealthy partner in the Burden Iron Company of Troy, New York, became front page news.[279] London police eventually recovered the Burden jewels, valued in excess of $58,000 from two former

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bequeathed to her daughter Minnie, filed a New York action seeking removal of the trustees of her late husband's estate. New York Times, 15 February 1894, 8; 6 June 1894, 9; 16 June 1894, 8. Mrs. Stevens did not prevail in this renewed effort to have John Melcher removed. New York Times, 29 July 1894, 4. In 1894, in a separate jury trial, Mrs. Stevens was ordered to pay $125 to Colonel Gebhard for legal services. New York Times, 11 May 1894, 9. That same year, a former butler also sued Mrs. Stevens in Newport for unpaid wages, having previously initiated another suit against her for slander. New York Times, 22 September 1894, 1.

[276] New York Times, 6 October 1888, 1. See also New York Times, 24 November 1888, 5.

[277] New York Times, 11 July 1890, 5.

[278] New York Times, 13 July 1890, 10.

[279] New York Times, 29 December 1895, 1. See also New York Times, 30 December 1895, 1.

household servants.[280] Mrs. Burden, the former Evelyn Byrd, had good reason to be "overjoyed." at this outcome.[281] The fortunate Mrs. Burden ultimately recovered her collection of jewels, including her diamond necklace valued at $30,000. More routinely, professional thieves or "climbers" disassembled precious jewelry and melted the settings into bullion. Unmounted stones, which proved difficult to trace, usually sold to unscrupulous third parties for a fraction of their value.[282] Newspapers provided informative detail on robberies in New York and other cities to warn the wealthy against the careless display of their valuables. Robbers boldly entered homes while families slept as well as while they dined.[283] More daring thieves snatched valuables through open windows. [284] Robbers also victimized the wealthy who vacationed in prestigious resorts.[285]

Mrs. Stevens accepted the consequences of the publicity regarding her personal matters with an "imperial disdain."[286] According to her friend the socialite Frederick Townsend Martin, she often reacted to "spiteful gossip" with the motto "live and let live."[287] The extent to which Mrs. Stevens actually governed her life with this modern, individualistic creed is best understood in the circumstances surrounding the engagement of her son Harry

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[280] New York Times, 18 April 1896, 1.

[281] Ibid.

[282] New York Times, 25 July 1890, 2. See also New York Times, 29 December 1895, 1.; 9 December 1888, 13.

[283] New York Times, 5 January 1888, 2; 11 February 1889, 8.

[284] New York Times, 16 December 1888, 2.

[285] New York Times, 20 July 1890, 10; 7 August 1890, 5.

[286] Frederick Townsend Martin, 96.

[287] Ibid.

Leyden to the future novelist Edith Newbold Jones. Harry Stevens had been educated by his mother at St. Mark's school and in Europe. Both handsome and personable, Harry circulated easily in a "charmed circle" of sportsmen in New York and Newport.[288] Shy, bookish and socially inexperienced, the young Edith Jones seemed an unlikely match for Harry Stevens. Nonetheless, Mrs. Stevens must have been gratified over a union between her household and that of the Joneses, who were related to the prestigious Rhinelander and Schermerhorn families. Harry's marriage to Edith Jones would strengthen Mrs. Stevens social leverage in New York. Even the prospect of a serious relationship between the young couple reinforced her social position, indicating the extent of the Stevens' access to elite circles. Conversely, the Stevens' wealth and their ties to the Court of Saint James allowed Edith's mother Lucretia Jones to permit Harry's solicitations.

In 1880, Harry and Edith summered in Bar Harbor, Maine, where her family vacationed for several months. He accompanied the Jones family to the South of France the following year where they had relocated to restore the failing health of Edith's father. George Frederic Jones ultimately died in Cannes in March 1882. Harry Stevens made himself useful within the Jones household, providing consolation to Edith and other grieving family members. A few months later, the Jones returned to America and Harry resumed his courtship of Edith in Newport. On Thursday, August 19th, the Newport Daily News announced the "engagement of Mr. Harry Stevens, only son of Mrs. Paran Stevens, to Miss Edith Jones, daughter of the late George F. Jones."[289] Because this edition of the paper

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[288] Shari Benstock, 42.

[289] Newport Daily News, 19 August 1882, n.p., Cited in Shari Benstock, 45.

featured several other articles that prominently mentioned Marietta Stevens, there is speculation that Mrs. Stevens orchestrated the placement of her son's engagement.[290] That the groom's name precedes that of the bride in this press account supports this conclusion.

News of the engagement appeared also in the Newport Journal and Weekly News as well as the New York society weekly Town Topics.[291] Whatever private reservations members of the extended Jones family had about Edith's pending marriage to Harry Stevens, most concurred that Marietta Stevens would make an "impossible mother-in-law."[292] Edith's mother Lucretia Jones so valued her personal privacy that her name never appeared in a City Directory after her husband's death. Mrs. Stevens, in contrast, predicated much of her social identity on the public's knowledge of her. Bearing this in mind, Town Topic's announcement on Thursday, October 28, that the wedding had been postponed "indefinitely" came as no surprise.[293] While Mrs. Stevens probably placed this family news before the public, the reasons underlying the cancellation of the Jones-Stevens nuptials are more remote. Edith's young cousin Helen Rhinelander concluded that the young couple had not "changed their feeling for one another, but that Mrs. S. is at the bottom of it all."[294] Although Edith's mother Lucretia could have undermined the engagement, Marietta Stevens had a clear

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[290] Shari Benstock, 45.

[291] Ibid.

[292] Emelyn W. Washburn to Elisina Tyler, "Letter," October 16, 1938. Cited in Shari Benstock, Ibid.

[293] Town Topics, 28 October 1882.

[294] Helen Rhinelander, "Letter to Brother," n.d. Cited in Ruth Brandon, 68.

financial motive for ending the match.[295] Under the terms of Paran Stevens' will, Mrs. Stevens received income from and control of her son's assets, which amounted to more than $1,000,000 until he married or reached the age of twenty-five. As Harry was twenty-three at the time of his engagement, Mrs. Stevens had good reason to delay his marriage. Mrs. Stevens possibly acted out of spite due to the coldness shown her by members of the extended Jones family.[296] She had previously demonstrated that she could disavow all sentimentality when considering the future happiness of her children. She had pursued a relentless European campaign to marry her daughter Minnie to satisfy her own social ambition. By 1880, Mrs. Stevens, however, had calculated that she could succeed in New York without the tacit social endorsement of families like the Jones.

Harry Stevens disappeared from the life of Edith Jones literally without a word from her on the subject of their brief engagement. Edith did, however, paint a satirical portrait in The Age of Innocence of Mrs. Stevens who appears in the novel as Mrs. Lemuel Struthers, the parvenu widow of a shoe polish magnate who had once featured her image in his advertisements.[297] In 1885, Edith Jones married the Boston businessman Edward R. Wharton in a quiet ceremony at Trinity Church chapel.[298] Harry Stevens died a few months later at his mother's home in Newport.[299] Although newspapers had reported upon Harry's suffering and his arrival in Newport by private train before he died, the precise nature of his

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[295] Shari Benstock, 46; See also Ruth Brandon, 68.

[296] Maureen E. Montgomery, "Gilded Prostitution," 55.

[297] Edith Wharton, The Age of Innocence, 30.

[298] New York Times, 30 April 1885, 5. See also Shari Benstock, 55-57.

[299] New York Times, 19 July 1885, 7.

illness remained unknown.[300] A few days after his death, Mrs. Stevens ordered an autopsy by three prominent New York physicians before the funeral. This procedure determined the cause of death as a cancerous stomach tumor which doctors attributed to "too violent exercise at athletics."[301] These autopsy findings received front page placement in the press.

It is impossible to know exactly how the media learned of the Stevens' autopsy. Yet Mrs. Stevens' apparent willingness to share this intimate detail of her private life provides a compelling window into her character and personality. In her hour of tragedy and loss, Mrs. Stevens revealed both her strong will and her determination to manipulate the opinions of others. She ordered the autopsy to quell any gossip that Harry had languished with a broken heart, exacerbated by Edith's recent marriage.[302] Mrs. Stevens simply wished to absolve herself publically from any role in contributing to the death of her son. She could now assume the control of her son's assets with the knowledge that Harry had succumbed to a physical ailment.[303] Mrs. Stevens, with public proof in hand, could also command the respect and attention due any grieving mother. She permitted publication of the details of her son's death out of the desire to shape public opinion in the grand spectacle that became her life. Her performance as society matron, however, sometimes exceeded reasonable expectations for a woman of good taste, as in the instance of the circumstances surrounding the death of

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[300] New York Times, 21 June 1885, 3.

[301] New York Times, 20 July 1885, 1.

[302] Emelyn W. Washburn, "Letter to Elisina Tyler, " December 8, 1938. Cited in Shari Benstock, 58.

[303] Mrs. Stevens became executor of her son's assets upon the 1893 death of Arthur Leary. New York Times, 20 October 1893, 5.

her son. Nevertheless, Mrs. Stevens had acted in keeping with the public's expectations for her.

After suitable bereavement, Mrs. Stevens resumed her patterned existence of social outings and courtroom battles with a clear conscience. Newspapers regularly acknowledged her presence at fashionable weddings and receptions.[304] In New York, she also frequented debutante cotillions and private balls.[305] She continued her practice of "handsome" entertainments" for visiting nobility, as in her 1892 dinner for the Duchess of Marlboro.[306] Later that same year, she trained privately with friends to Cumberland Gap, Tennessee, for

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[304] New York Times, 18 February 1891, 1; 25 March 1892, 8; 12 September 1892, 16; 14 March 1893, 8; 17 May 1893, 8; 24, February 1894, 3; 23 March 1894, 8; 30 March 1894, 8; 24 October 1894, 730 March 1895, 8.

[305] New York Times, 24 December 1890, 9; 6 January 1891, 8; 20 January 1891, 5; 19 December 1891, 2; 19 February 1892, 5; 6 January 1893, 8; 14 November 1893, 8; 10 December 1893, 17; 20 December 1893, 2; 4 January 1894, 1; 9 January 1894, 8; 19 January 1894, 6; 2 February 1895, 4; 6 February 1894, 3; 9 December 1894, 19; 11 December 1894, 9.

[306] New York Times, 10 April 1892, 12. The Duchess, the former Lillian Price of Troy, New York, had been widowed by Louis C. Hamersley who left her the income from a $6,000,000 estate, with the powers of reversion to the male heirs of his cousin J. Hooker Hamersley. Well-known as a "profligate," the Duke had been divorced by his first wife Lady Albertha Hamilton, daughter of the Duke of Abercorn in 1869 on the grounds of marital infidelity and cruelty. In 1888, Mayor Abram S. Hewitt married the Duke to the wealthy Lillian Hamersley at New York's City Hall. Because Marlboro had divorced his first wife, Queen Victoria refused to receive his second wife at Court. Due to her "equivocal social position" in London, the second Duchess spent considerable time traveling. She devoted her financial resources to the modernization and restoration of Blenheim House, her husband's ancestral home. The Duke of Marlboro died in 1892. New York Times, 10 November 1892, 1. Other functions hosted by Mrs. Stevens for visiting European royalty include the following: a Newport dinner for the Marquis de Chassaloup Loubat. New York Times, 28 August 1892, 10; a New York party for the Duke and Duchess of Veragues. New York Times, 21 April 1893, 2; a New York dinner for Lord Dunraven. New York Times, 15 October 1893, 10; a Newport garden party for Sir John and Lady Lister-Kaye of Derby Grange, Yorkshire. New York Times, 2 September 1894, 13; a Newport dinner for Prince and Princess Respoli of Rome. New York Times, 1 October 1894, 4; 3 October 1894, 3.

the opening of a fashionable sanitarium.[307] The following year, she entertained Lord Dunraven at a dinner dance in conjunction with the Americas Cup yachting races.[308] Observers acknowledged that Mrs. Stevens had "regained her old time zeal in social affairs."[309] A few months later, she announced her intention to hold a dinner party every Sunday during the Lenten season.[310] As the pre-Easter Lenten observance traditionally required a reduction, if not the elimination of extraneous social events, Mrs. Stevens' confident proclamation sounded an alarm in conservative homes. The following year at the Madison Square Garden Horse Show, she "renewed her youth and held court in her box in a gown that was pronounced by the ladies to be a dream."[311] By 1893, this event had become a social function that permitted the public to scrutinize the wealthy to the extent that the horses were generally forgotten.[312] Mrs. Stevens relished this opportunity to state her social authority before the receptive crowd.

In the midst of these activities, Mrs. Stevens moved uptown from her Fifth Avenue home at Sixteenth Street into a marble mansion at One East Fifty-Seventh Street. This house had been completed in 1870 by Edith Wharton's aunt Mary Mason Jones. Wharton based the character of the New York dowager Mrs. Mingott in The Age of Innocence upon her

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[307] New York Times, 10 April 1892, 12; 17 April 1892, 12.

[308] New York Times, 15 October 1893, 10.

[309] New York Times, 15 October 1893, 10.

[310] New York Times, 9 February 1894, 2.

[311] New York Times, 14 November 1893, 1. See also New York Times, 19 November 1893, 13; 17 November 1894, 2.

[312] New York Times, 18 November 1893, 8. See also 13 November 1894, 1; 17 November 1894, 2; 18 November 1894, 2.

eccentric aunt's commanding social presence. Mary Mason Jones, the mother of six children, had been widowed in 1854 by the banker Isaac Jones.[313] Recognized for her shrewd business ability as well as her social leadership, Mary Jones built on Chambers Street in 1818 the first city home to contain a bathtub and gas fixtures. Against the advice of friends, she later built a block of marble residences on Fifth Avenue between Fifty-Seventh and Fifty-Eighth Streets when this location was little more than a "rocky barren."[314] Mary Jones persisted in her plans for these luxurious homes, working with an architect to implement her adaptation of Fontainebleau.[315] As fashionable neighborhoods continued to spread northward along Fifth Avenue, Mary Jones also financed the construction of the Mason apartments on East Fifty-Eighth Street, which were completed in 1883.[316]

Mrs. Stevens' decision to acquire the Jones mansion on Fifty-Seventh Street is not mere coincidence. With this move, Marietta Stevens sounded a coda to her son Harry's failed relationship with Edith Jones. By the end of 1892, Mrs. Stevens assumed control of her new property to begin extensive renovations.[317] Within a few months, she held a musical performance there by members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra for sixty guests.[318] A

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[313] New York Times, 16 March 1854, 3. Jones achieved his business reputation through his leadership of the Chemical National Bank which he took over from his brother-in-law John Mason in 1839. Jones' son John Quentin Jones served as president of that institution from 1844 until his death in 1878. New York Times, 3 January 1878, 2.

[314] New York Times. 30 May 1891, 2.

[315] Ibid.

[316] Ibid. See also New York Times, 30 May 1891, 5.

[317] New York Times, 2 October 1892, 10; 22 November, 1892, 8.

[318] New York Times, 18 March 1893, 8.

subsequent description analogized the home's opulent interiors to the "time when France was a kingdom."[319]

In addition to her active New York schedule, scarcely a week passed during the Newport season that the press did not note Mrs. Stevens at a social gathering. By 1894, many considered Mrs Stevens a "prominent cottager," if not the colony's "foremost entertainer."[320] That same year, a mid-July hailstorm shattered the glass skylight of her home and rain poured into the interior.[321] Mrs. Stevens "caused comment" by sending for out-of-town glaziers to repair the damage rather than employ local workers.[322] These repairs delayed the opening of her summer home for several weeks. Nonetheless, by early August, she had mailed a "flood of cards" bearing the simple inscription "Mrs. Stevens at home Marietta Villa, Sundays 9:30 to 12 p.m."[323] Customarily, she opened her home for a large dinner party at eight, reserving the balance of the evening to receive guests who called.

In addition to her evening engagements in Newport and New York, Mrs. Stevens filled her days with fashionable musicales and lectures.[324] She also busied herself with several charitable projects. Consistent with her musical interests, she supported a fund raising effort

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[319] New York Times 28 January 1894, 13.

[320] New York Times, 15 July 1894, 12; 4 July 1894, 8.

[321] New York Times, 15 July 1894, 1.

[322] New York Times, 29 July 1894, 10.

[323] New York Times, 5 August 1894, 12.

[324] New York Times, 22 January 1893, 8; 21 February 1893, 8; 4 March 1893, 8; 21 February 1894, 8; 4 March 1894, 13; 13 March 1894, 8; 20 March 1894, 3; 3 April 1894, 8; 16 April 1894, 12; 18 April 1894, 8; 20 April 1894, 5; 14 October 1894, 16; 13 December 1894, 13; 14 December 1894, 8; 5 February 1895, 8; 12 February 1895, 13; 26 February 1895, 8; 14 March 1895, 8; 21 March 1895, 8; 27 March 1895, 8; 28 March 1895, 8.

featuring the Indian Band and Choir from the Government Industrial School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.[325] Her sponsorship of the work of the Kindergarten and Potted Plant Association, however, reflects her friendship with the children of the financier Jay Gould. Mrs. George J. Gould, the former Edith Kingdon, had organized the Kindergarten and Potted Plant Association in 1892 to benefit children of the city's working poor. The group had been formed to encourage children "to cultivate flowers and plants in their homes, and to teach them that to plant a tree is to make a friend."[326] The group maintained a kindergarten on Broome Street in lower Manhattan and sponsored outings to flower shows and farms so that the children could "study landscape gardening and floriculture."[327] Mrs. Stevens agreed to

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[325] New York Times, 14 April 1894, 8. See also New York Times, 13 April 1894, 1; 15 April 1894, 9.

[326] New York Times, 30 April 1893, 9.

[327] New York Times, 21 July 1894, 8. See also 6 May 1893, 12; 9 November 1893, 4; 21 July 1894, 8. To supplement the contributions of patrons, the Kindergarten and Potted Plant Association sponsored a benefit concert in Bar Harbor, Maine, to raise funds for the purchase of a flower farm. New York Times,20 August 1893, 13. The group also successfully hosted a benefit concert in New York. New York Times, 24, January 1894, 5; 26 January 1894, 8; 2 February 1894, 4. In late 1894, the group met to consider it official incorporation as a charity. New York Times, 5 November 1894, 9. In 1895, the Kindergarten and Potted Plant Association planned a benefit performance of "society women in representations of pictures." New York Times, 3 May 1895. This event received a great deal of publicity, including the names of some of the women scheduled to appear in the performance. New York Times, 5 May 1895, 11; 13 May 1895, 9. Helen Miller Gould, the sister-in-law of Edith Kingdon Gould and a vice president of the organization, questioned the use of some professional actors in the performance. Other women objected to the use of their names in the advance publicity. New York Times, 15 May 1895, 9. Despite these controversies, advance ticket sales remained high and the "successful" performance netted over $2000 for the charity. New York Times, 16 May 1895, 8; 17 May 1895, 9. Shortly after the event, Mrs. Theodore Sutro, the former Florence Clinton, who also served as a vice president, resigned over the questions raised by Helen Gould and others. New York Times, 20 May 1895, 9. Florence Sutro subsequently restaged the benefit to raise funds for the New York Music Room at the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition. New York Times, 9 June 1895, 11; 12 June 1895, 8. A letter from F. H. Sutton, the husband of an officer in the organization, defended Mrs. Sutro's management of the benefit. New York Times, 16 June 1895,

serve as Vice President of the group.[328] The charity attracted the support of women elites across the social and generational spectrums, including the patronage of Maria Lydig Daly. Mrs. Stevens, however, became involved with the group for different reasons.

Jay Gould, notorious as a railroad magnate and stock speculator, inspired both fear and loathing among New York's conservative business establishment.[329] Upon his death in 1892, the New York Times editorialized that Gould's business methods could "be conveyed only by negative words as 'wrecking,' 'depredation,' and 'looting, not by any words that denote the creation and enhancement of values."[330] Many conservative elites, in assessing the manner by which Gould made his fortune, associated his ruthless methods with labor strikes and civil unrest. Jay Gould suffered the social condemnation of many of his financial peers.[331] His six children, who benefitted from the comfortable upbringing permitted by their father's wealth, moved with greater ease in social circles. Nonetheless, some individuals saw the Gould children as tainted by their father's aggressive capitalism.

During her years in New York, Marietta Stevens had also suffered small snubs and cold shoulders. Her experience made it easy for her to befriend George, the oldest Gould son, and his young wife Edith Kingdon a former actress. George Gould married Miss Kingdon with his parents approval at his father's Westchester county estate at Irvington-on-

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11. After the publication of this correspondence, there is no further information on the Kindergarten and Potted Plant Association.

[328] New York Times, 5 November 1894, 9.

[329] Matthew Josephson, The Robber Barons: The Great American Capitalists, 1861-1901, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1934 and 1962). See also 3 December 1892, 1,3.

[330] New York Times, 3 December 1892, 4.

[331] Matthew Josephson, 329.

Hudson in 1886. Prior to their marriage, Miss Kingdon, a "Brooklyn native of modest circumstances," had joined the Daly theatrical company in 1884.[332] By the time his father died in 1892, George Gould, with a seat on the New York Stock Exchange and membership on several corporate boards, had earned his own reputation as a prudent and conservative businessman.[333] As their mother had died in 1889, the six Gould children equally inherited their father's estate, estimated at between seventy and ninety million dollars. Leaving no charitable bequests, the senior Gould further designated his oldest son George as "arbiter in case of differences of opinion" between the siblings regarding the management of these assets and also as guardian to the younger children Frank and Anna.[334]

As a valued friend, Mrs. Stevens took a particular interest in the socialization of Anna. Unlike her older sister Helen, Anna Gould required supervision. Once Anna reached the age of twenty-one, rumors began to circulate regarding her romantic attachments. In January 1894, newspapers announced Anna's engagement to William M. Harriman, the thirty-seven year old son of the Reverend Edward Harriman and nephew of the banker Edward Harriman.[335] When this romance ended, the family decided that Anna, described as a brunette with "musical and artistic tastes," required an extended European experience.[336] Anna moved to Paris to live with Mrs. Stevens' sister Fanny Reed. Reed's social contacts accustomed Anna to cultivated drawing rooms, schooling her tastes in art and fashion. Reed

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[332] New York Times, 15 September 1886, 1.

[333] New York Times, 8 December 1892, 1.

[334] Ibid.

[335] New York Times, 24 January 1894, 3.

[336] Ibid.

undoubtedly accepted a fee to chaperone Anna with the "intense and adsorbing interest" that a family expected for such a social guardian.[337] In 1894, rumors reached New York that Anna had become engaged to the Austrian Prince Isenberg von Bierstein who had previously summered in Newport.[338] This romance did not lead to nuptials, later prompting the Gould family to deny the rumor that Anna intended instead to marry the former actor Harry Woodruff.[339]

Anna and her family ultimately decided upon the Parisian Count Boni de Castellane as a suitable marriage partner. Castellane first met Anna Gould in the Paris drawing room of Fanny Reed in the Spring of 1894. According to de Castellane, the Goulds had given Reed, a woman of "nonexistent taste," "carte blanche" to outfit and entertain her charge.[340] As Parisians speculated upon the Gould's "boundless wealth," Castellane followed Anna to New York, arriving later in the Spring of 1894 without even the funds to pay cab fare to his hotel.[341] Castellane, as a titled Frenchman, quickly attracted the attention of the press and fashionable society. He received invitations to visit Newport where he achieved a reputation as a "most accomplished cotillion leader," directing Mrs. Stevens' "surprise cotillion."[342] Several weeks later, Castellane led the "Farewell Cotillion" at a dance that Mrs. Stevens

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[337] New York Times, 6 August 1883, 6. See also Maureen E. Montgomery, Displaying Women, 52-57, 105-106, 108-109.

[338] New York Times, 5 June 1894, 8.

[339] New York Times, 13 January 1895, 10.

[340] Boni de Castellane, How I Discovered America, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1923), 14.

[341] Ibid., 13, 14, passim.

[342] New York Times, 19 August 1894, 13.

hosted for one hundred guests.[343] The extent to which Mrs. Stevens encouraged the relationship between Anna Gould and Boni de Castellane is not known. In early February, however, the George Goulds announced Anna's betrothal to Castellane coupled with a statement that the family would settle two million dollars on the bridegroom.[344] The New York arrival of the Count's family laden with "fifteen huge trunks," some of which presumably "contained valuable presents for Miss Gould," became front page news.[345] Helen Gould celebrated the coming nuptials by giving her sister the "Esterhazy diamond" and treating the children at two Industrial Schools to a "feast" of turkey sandwiches.[346] In early March, Archbishop Corrigan performed a Roman Catholic ceremony in the Fifth Avenue

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[343] New York Times, 7 September 1894, 2.

[344] New York Times, 10 February 1895, 11.

[345] New York Times, 25 February 1995, 1. See also 26 February 1895, 7; 27 February 1895, 8.

[346] New York Times, 4 March 1895, 8. Unlike her sister Anna, Helen Gould remained philanthropically inclined throughout her life, disbursing a large portion of the wealth inherited from her father. Notably, she donated $100,000 towards the military campaign to free Cuba during the Spanish-American War, personally participating in hospital relief efforts in this country. She received a Congressional Medal for her wartime work. Over the years, she gave hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Railroad Young Men's Christian Association which served employees of rail lines that her father had controlled. She also sponsored four annual scholarships to Vassar College as well as the work of a number of religious and patriotic organizations. Nationally recognized for her benevolence, Helen Gould largely shunned society. She married Finley J. Shepard, who had formerly worked for her father, in 1913. The couple adopted three children. She died in 1938 at the age of seventy. Celeste Andrews Seton, Helen Gould Was My Mother-In-Law, as told to Clark Andrews, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1953); Alice Northrup Snow, The Story of Helen Gould; Daughter of Jay Gould, Great American, (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1943); New York Times, 21 December 1938, 1; 24 December 1938, 15. Helen Gould Shepard willed the majority of her estate to her husband, with eleven small charitable bequests totaling $31,000. New York Times, 26 December 1938, 26. Helen Gould's estate was finally valued at $3,272,918. New York Times, 11 April 1942, 11. Finley J. Shepard died in 1942, leaving the balance of his late wife's assets in trust for their adopted children. New York Times, 23 August 1942, 41; 26 August 1942, 19.

home of George and Edith Gould.[347] For this occasion, florists within a radius of five hundred miles, assembled over 35,000 blooms to decorate the home. Sherry's restaurant catered a wedding breakfast for the assembled guests that included truffled eggs, lamb cutlets and asparagus. Because the family desired that Anna maintain her Presbyterian faith, a private civil ceremony was conducted afterwards.[348] Despite the publicity surrounding the occasion, the Gould family had planned the wedding as a small family affair. Nonetheless, Mrs. Stevens attended, praising the beautiful decorations to eager reporters.[349]

By 1895, Mrs. Stevens enjoyed an open and easy relationship with the media. Over the course of her life in New York, newspaper coverage of social events grew into a publishing vehicle for building circulation. Previously, newspapers sporadically included social activity as news of general interest. Small articles, lacking in descriptive detail,

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[347] New York Times, 5 March 1895, 1.

[348] The marriage of Anna Gould to Boni de Castellane failed amid a stream of public recriminations surrounding the groom's reputation as a duelist, his profligate spending, and his numerous, ill-concealed relationships with other women. New York Times, 2 July 1900; 22 July 1900, 7; 15 November 1906, 1. During the course of their marriage, the couple spent over three million dollars of the Gould fortune and incurred almost five million dollars in debts New York Times, 19 January 1900, 7; 1 November 1900, 1. The Castellane's financial obligations drew the Goulds into litigation in New York. New York Times, 27 November 1900, 1; 18 December 1900, 9. The marriage produced three sons before a civil divorce was finally granted in Paris in 1907. Under the terms of the settlement, Anna Gould agreed to pay her husband's creditors. New York Times, 15 November 1906, 1; 17 July 1907, 5. Over the objections of her family, Anna remarried a cousin of her former husband, the Duc de Talleyrand-Perigord. New York Times, 7 April 1908, 1; 31 March 1908, 3. A son and a daughter resulted from this marriage. After the 1937 death of her second husband, Anna returned to America in 1939 to live in the Gould estate at Lyndhurst, near Tarrytown, New York. She died in 1961 at age ninety-six. New York Times, 30 November 1961, 31. After his divorce, Castellane supported himself as an author and salesman of men's suits. He died in Paris in 1932. New York Times, 30 October 1932, 21. The memoir of his marriage to Anna Gould, entitled How I Discovered America, was published in 1924. See also New York Times, 2 November 1924, BR3.

[349] New York Times, 5 March 1895, 1.

remained limited in scope and merely identified guests. According to George Wotherspoon, who covered social activity for the New York Herald and later the Sunday New York Times, reporters assembled partial guest lists by interviewing "a man named Johnson" who delivered invitations after Isaac Brown ceased to perform that function.[350] Wotherspoon endorsed social coverage confined to society's "doings" not its "goings-on," distancing himself from publications like Town Topics that trafficked unsubstantiated rumors and gossip.[351] Wotherspoon acknowledged the March 1883 costume ball hosted by William K. and Alva Smith Vanderbilt as a turning point in the genre of society reportage.[352] For this event, reporters canvassed florists, costume makers and caters to provide complete coverage. The New York Herald pioneered with a series of articles, beginning three weeks in advance of the ball to heighten public interest. These descriptive articles also included a diagram of the first floor of the Vanderbilt's new Fifth Avenue mansion, an early attempt at newspaper illustration of a social event.[353]

At the Vanderbilt ball, Mrs. Stevens appeared as Queen Elizabeth in a brocade gown with a high ruff of point lace, wearing "superb diamonds."[354] Yet despite the public's

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[350] George Wotherspoon, I Hunt in the Attic, (Typed Manuscript, c. 1940), Part 3, 6. Manuscript Collection, New York Historical Society, New York, New York. See also New York Times, 9 October 1949, 92.

[351] Ibid., 18.

[352] Ibid., 7.

[353] A photographic collection of some of the guests at the Vanderbilt ball is available at the New York Historical Society. Costume Ball Photograph Collection, PR-223, Department of Prints, Photographs, and Architectural Collections, The New-York Historical Society, New York, New York.

[354] New York Times, 27 March 1883, 1.

growing appetite for information of this kind, society reporters or "personal journalists" had drawn criticism for years. As early as 1870, the author Richard Grant White complained that these "pests of the period" lived "by fawning, by feeding vanity, and by pandering to petty curiosity."[355] White deplored not only the journalistic use of such information but also the willingness of some people to provide reporters with private details. He disliked the descriptive characteristic of society journalism that included information on food, costume, decor and the details of a woman's physical appearance. White reasoned that this persistent "dirty groping after trifles" injured the community as it helped to elevate inconsequential persons.[356] White called for standards of "decent journalism" that would respect the "barrier of private life."[357]

Mrs. Stevens did not embrace this longstanding conservative opinion. Moreover, the frequency with which her name appeared in the papers suggests her use of a professional publicist. Although the presence of a press agent in Mrs. Stevens' employ is impossible to verify, wealthy women did use them by the late 1880's. Heretofore, such media professionals had been the province of theatrical management which effectively discouraged their use by socially prominent individuals. Schools and churches, however, began to employ publicists to relay news to alumni and other interested parties.[358] The New York Times first referred to society's use of professional publicists in 1889. Several years earlier, the Times had

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[355] Richard Grant White, "'The Pest of the Period:' A Chapter of the Morals and Manners of Journalism," The Galaxy 9, no.1 (January 1870): 102.

[356] Ibid., 105, 106.

[357] Ibid., 111.

[358] New York Times, 15 July 1894, 10.

increased its society news with a column called "The Social World" which invited contributions from readers of club activities, entertainments, travel plans and other items of a personal nature.

For women with busy social calendars like Mrs. Stevens, a media professional became a convenient way to connect one's personal activity to the increasingly large and complex community. Mrs. Stevens appreciated that she could not always control the gossip about her. As she circulated in public, however, she could superintend the association of the Stevens name with the city's wealthy and powerful citizens. Her social life thrived under the glare of media attention. Her use of a press agent gave her deniability, distancing her from the negative consequences of public notice. At the same time, a press agent assisted Mrs. Stevens in the continuing refinement of her public identity. Just as she considered the style of her dress, she controlled much of the information that others received about her, shaping their conclusions. The New York Times excused the press agent's bombastic language or "beating of drums" in the instance of unfamiliar young women who wished to gain a foothold in society.[359] That a woman like Mrs. Stevens, "whose position is already assured" would also require "the sounding of gongs" can only be attributed to her own practical need to place her name before others.[360] Ward McAllister, who possessed a "firm hold on the affections of ...newspapermen with whom he is pretty constantly in touch," also appreciated a press agent's "delicate" responsibilities and could periodically have served in this capacity for

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[359] New York Times, 24 November 1889, 11.

[360] Ibid.

his friend Marietta Stevens.[361]

Mrs. Stevens, though not without controversy herself, accepted the friendship of social aspirants like the Goulds. She accommodated herself to changing times Both strong-minded and independent, she considered the implications of larger social issues and allied herself with the cause of woman suffrage.[362] Having litigated her own civil interests for years, Mrs. Stevens realized the need for a permanent, public role for women beyond the home and family. Woman's full equality signified a relationship with the larger community, entirely outside the boundaries of traditional family responsibilities. Reportedly, Helen Miller Gould had been encouraged by her father "to do what she could" for the cause because she "would have as much property to take care of as her brothers, and should have something to say about it."[363]

In early 1894, like-minded women elites organized a petition to strike the word

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[361] New York Times, 14 January 1894, 11.

[362] Some standard works that treat the development of the American suffrage movement include Alice S. Rossi, "Introduction: Social Roots of the Woman's Movement in America" in The Feminist Papers: from Adams to de Beauvoir, Edited and with Introductory Essays by Alice S. Rossi, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 241 - 281. See also Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1959). The movement's rhetoric is analyzed by Aileen S. Kraditor, The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890 - 1920, New York: W.W. Norton, 1981). The growth of a feminist ideology with the suffrage movement is available in Ellen Carol Dubois, Feminism and Suffrage: the Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848 - 1869, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978) and Nancy F. Cott, The Grounding of Modern Feminism, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987). Several recent studies examine the women's opposition to suffrage. Susan E. Marshall, Splintered Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Campaign against Woman Suffrage. See also Manuela Thurner, "'Better Citizens without the Ballot:' American Antisuffrage Women and Their Rationale during the Progressive Era." Journal of Women's History 5, no.1 (Spring 1993): 33 - 60.

[363] New York Times, 25 February 1894, 13.

"male" from the state constitution. The State Constitutional Convention, scheduled to meet in Albany, New York, on May 8, had last convened in 1867.[364] This timing gave the suffrage movement a sense of urgency. Women surveyed the "laws in the various states" which made them "indignant, because they bear hard upon women."[365] Others supported suffrage because women had been barred from voting in recent elections for School Commissioner.[366] Many women elites saw their lobby for the franchise as an extension of their domestic responsibility. Because of the connection some made between suffrage and domesticity, many elite women wished to keep their support of the cause a private matter. Refusing even to share petition signatures with reporters, one anonymous woman declared, "We do not want advertising. We shun it. We do not want our names made public...We want enfranchisement, not notoriety."[367] In keeping with this sentiment, many women elites also distanced themselves from the "professional 'woman's rights' agitators," preferring instead the subtle application of womanly influence.[368]

The desire of some women elites to avoid publicity over the suffrage issue precludes the precise identification of their leadership. Dr. Mary C. Putnam Jacobi, a medical specialist in children's and nervous diseases, however, spoke publically on the issue and ultimately

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[364] New York Times, 13 April 1894, 1.

[365] New York Times, 19 April 1894, 5.

[366] Ibid.

[367] New York Times 11 April 1894, 1.

[368] Ibid.

addressed the Albany Convention on behalf of the movement.[369] The extent of Jacobi's role in formulating the suffrage strategy is unknown. Society women headquartered themselves in a "dainty white and gold" room at the restaurant Sherry's where volunteers distributed literature and offered the petition to the "stray men" who entered.[370] The group also planned house-to-house canvasses as well as a series of Saturday receptions throughout March and April of 1894. The movement's vitality, however, stemmed from small "parlor meetings," held in individual homes. Women compiled "house lists" of friends, inviting prominent men for discussions. The parlor setting succeeded in attracting signatures because "under the influence of the aesthetic surroundings of the drawing room, they bring out their house lists, and prepare for an argument which convinces the most hardened among the male visitors."[371] Parlor suffrage meetings became a hallmark of the Winter social season that spread from homes to private girls schools, church societies, and women's clubs.[372] By centering their discussions in the private intimacy of the parlor, women both exploited their traditional powers of feminine influence and tied their domesticity to political activism.

As interest in the issue spread from Manhattan to Brooklyn, the home-centered

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[369] An 1864 graduate of the Women's Medical College in Philadelphia, Jacobi later became the first woman to earn a diploma from the Ecole de Medicine in Paris, afterwards receiving election as the first woman Fellow of the New York Academy of Medicine. New York Times, 12 June 1906, 9. See also New York Times, 12 June 1906, 8; 5 January 1907, 7. Dictionary of Notable American Women, s.v. "Jacobi, Mary Corinna Putnam."

[370] New York Times, 25 March 1894, 11.

[371] Ibid. See also New York Times, 13 April 1894, 1; 14 April 1894, 2; 15 April 1894, 18; 17 April 1894, 8; 19 April 1894, 5; 25 April 1894, 5.

[372] New York Times, 23 April 1894, 5. The Long Island chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution debated the issue in the Willow Street parlor of their Regent Mrs. Horatio C. King, an opponent of woman suffrage. New York Times, 1 May 1894, 9.

format of the 1894 women's suffrage campaign attracted a vocal opposition.[373] Conservative Manhattan women previously petitioned the legislature in 1885 against the passage of suffrage legislation. The name of Mrs. Charles P. Daly appeared among these signatures.[374] Maria also signed a petition in 1890 urging the men of New York to vote against "the body of corrupt politicians who now hold our City Government."[375] Many conservative women did not see their petition as inconsistent with feminine interests. In 1894, the suffrage debate "broke friendships, separated select coteries...[and] rearranged the routes of afternoon calls."[376] Carolyn Putnam, the wife of the stockbroker William A. Putnam, organized an opposition petition drive from her Willow Street home in Brooklyn.[377] The opposition movement, which also canvassed homes and sponsored parlor discussions, quickly gained signatures as it spread to New York.[378] The suffragist position, that women could potentially serve as something other than wives and mothers, emboldened conservatives. Although anti-suffragists also extended their domestic influence through political involvement, they framed their opposition in the language of domesticity. Mrs. Lyman Abbot, wife of a prominent

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[373] Susan E. Marshall, 17-57.

[374] New York Times, 28 March 1885, 5.

[375] New York Times, 23 October 1890, 5.

[376] Ibid.

[377] Carolyn Haines Putnam remained active in Brooklyn civic and social affairs throughout her life. Her husband, a noted art connoisseur, served as a director of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences. Together, they donated portions of their extensive art collection, including a group of Rembrandt etchings, to the Brooklyn Museum where Mrs. Putnam later funded the creation of a Print Room in her husband's memory. Carolyn Putnam died in 1940. New York Times, 1 January 1941, 23.

[378] New York Times, 3 May 1894, 9; 4 May 1894, 8; 7 May 1894, 2.

Brooklyn minister, asserted that "the duties of suffrage are not consistent with the duties of women...[Woman] has been shielded from strife and temptation. Suffrage would reduce her to a condition where she would be no longer thus shielded. Woman should not be a bread winner."[379]

Despite mounting opposition, supporters of the constitutional revision remained optimistic. Mrs. Theodore Sutro, in advocating her position, declared that "Mrs. Paran Stevens never likes to be connected with anything that is a failure."[380] Mrs. Sutro, the former Florence Clinton, had worked with Marietta Stevens and Helen and Edith Gould on behalf of the Kindergarten and Potted Plant Association. An outspoken advocate of suffrage, Mrs. Sutro had previously enrolled as the first woman law student at the University of the City of New York, graduating in 1891 as valedictorian.[381] Despite Mrs. Sutro's persuasive abilities and a petition containing 20,582 signatures, the campaign to extend the New York franchise was defeated.[382]

Certainly, Mrs. Stevens appreciated the approval of younger, accomplished women like Florence Sutro. Mrs. Stevens had consistently defined herself through her ability to keep her name before the public. Mrs. Sutro's remark confirmed Mrs. Stevens as a social leader just as it characterized her as a tenacious woman with a progressive outlook. A few weeks after the marriage of Anna Gould to Boni de Castellane in 1895, the Victoria Hotel, in which

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[379] New York Times, 23 April 1894, 5.

[380] New York Times, 11 April 1894, 1.

[381] New York Times, 26 April 1906, 11.

[382] New York Times, 30 May 1894, 5; 1 June 1894, 2; 22 July 1894, 4.

Mrs. Stevens owned a controlling interest, faced insolvency. The issue of maintaining the hotel under its current management threatened to draw Mrs. Stevens into new litigation with the trustees of her husband's estate.[383] As angry hotel workers picketed the Victoria for back wages, news spread that Mrs. Stevens lay "prostrated" over the situation.[384] She died within a few days of apparent heart failure.[385]

Mrs. Stevens' sudden death came as a surprise to those who knew her. She had recently attended a dinner at the Waldorf Astoria where, in the wake of the troubles over the Victoria Hotel, she had complained to friends that she had spent nearly $250,000 in legal fees since her husband's death. Because of her legal difficulties, "[n]o woman in New York society was better known than Mrs. Paran Stevens." Both opinionated and impulsive, the press memorialized Mrs. Stevens' generous nature. "Her generosity to the poor was not ostentatious, but it was liberal." Described also as "ambitious" and "eager for social prestige," Mrs. Stevens "stamped out everything that stood in her way." Customarily, Mrs. Stevens began her business at the breakfast table and worked until she went to dinner. She employed a private secretary which enabled her to pursue an "incessant" leisure schedule. Mrs. Stevens also received credit for launching young people into the "social maelstrom...Her good nature in this respect was apparently illimitable."[386]

Even after her death, Mrs. Stevens continued to be newsworthy. Plans for her

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[383] New York Times, 29 March 1895, 2. See also New York Times, 3 April 1895, 5.

[384] New York Times, 2 April 1895, 1.

[385] New York Times, 4 April 1895, 1.

[386] Ibid., passim.

upcoming funeral received extended coverage while her daughter and other relatives traveled to New York.[387] In the meantime, a second testimonial to Mrs. Stevens heralded her as a woman who "became the center for all that is commendable in social life. She not only strove to make it the rallying place of people merely conspicuous for fashion, but for those who attained eminence in the learned professions, in statesmanship, politics and the arts."[388] This tribute praised Mrs. Stevens for the "secrecy" of her good deeds. "It was not her way to conquer the admiration of people by publishing herself largely on fashionable subscription lists for charity. In her private life she was simply a kind, generous, sympathetic woman."[389]

Mrs. Stevens herself could not have written a more satisfactory statement. Her friends honored her with numerous floral tributes at an Episcopal service, performed at Calvary Church on April 9.[390] Later, she was buried in Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in a "most conspicuous lot" near the main entrance.[391] The media continued to cover matters relating to the resolution of her estate. Mrs. Stevens bequeathed the bulk of her personal fortune, valued at $1,500,000 to her daughter Minnie.[392]

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[387] New York Times, 5 April 1895, 5; 6 April 1895, 5.

[388] New York Times, 7 April 1895, 11.

[389] Ibid.

[390] New York Times, 9 April 1895, 8.

[391] New York Times, 14 April 1895, 29.

[392] New York Times, 16 April 1895, 3. Minnie Paget became a leading figure in London society, famous for her jewels, beautiful clothes and stylish parties. As Lady Paget, she also acquired a reputation for benevolence. She complimented her husband Sir Arthur Paget's military and diplomatic postings by raising funds for hospitals and medical relief. During the Boer War, she raised funds to equip a hospital ship. In Belgrade, where her husband served as Minister, she worked tirelessly in local hospitals, endearing herself to the populace who later named a square in her honor. During World War I, she worked with the American Red Cross to maintain a hospital

Her furniture, carriages and works of art sold at series of public auctions in New York and Newport. At one sale in lower Manhattan, "even broken and dilapidated" articles along with worthless engravings and sofa pillows sold to antique dealers and "women carrying their lunch" as bargains.[393]

By any yardstick, Marietta Stevens did not represent the values of New York's conservative society. As the curious fingered through her personal effects, even her private possessions became a matter of public record. Mrs. Stevens left no diaries or letters to add insight and texture to her personal experience. She survives only in the newspaper archives that record the details of her clothes, parties and personal animosities. As a consequence, Mrs. Stevens remains somewhat obscure. She is seen and understood only as she made herself available to the printed media. It is impossible to verify the existence of her discrete charitable inclinations or the premium that she supposedly placed upon her personal relationships. The testimonials to Mrs. Stevens as a woman of kindness and generosity are not present in the coverage of the numerous litigations that consumed her attention. Friends remembered Mrs. Stevens in the traditional vocabulary of feminine domesticity. Mrs.

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in Serbia. The mother of three children, she died of influenza in London in 1919. New York Times, 21 May 1919, 17. See also New York Times, 7 April 1907, SM5. Lady Paget's wardrobe and " rare collection of brocades and embroidery" were sold at auction in London. New York Times, 18 October 1919, 3.

[393] New York Times, 11 May 1895, 8. The sale of her carriages in Newport brought only modest results with her "favorite spider phaeton" bringing only twenty dollars at auction. New York Times, 2 June 1895, 16. A month later, the sale of the contents of Mrs. Stevens' Newport villa proved more successful. New York Times, 12 July, 1895, 4. Mrs. Stevens art works were auctioned separately in New York. New York Times, 26 November 1895, 5. Her villa in Newport finally sold to a group of investors who announced their plans to convert it into a hotel. New York Times, 8 March 1908, 1. Mrs. Stevens' sister Fanny Reed died in Paris at the age of seventy-one. New York Times, 24 January 1915, 8.

Stevens, however, never accepted those same social limitations. Ambitious and independent by nature, Mrs. Stevens set out to become prominent in New York society. She continually pushed at the boundaries of domesticity, redefining woman's public role in the process.

If one measures success in the ability to realize an individual goal, then Mrs. Stevens fulfilled her personal dreams. Although her ruthless pursuit of social recognition dismayed traditionalists, Mrs. Stevens achieved what she set out to do. To some, Mrs. Stevens subverted women's role in her numerous litigations and courtroom performances. To others, she triumphed in her unwillingness to accept defeat. In her personal life, Mrs. Stevens proved equally controversial. She generated comment in fostering a trans-Atlantic marriage for her daughter. Unwilling to play the social role designated for her by others, Mrs. Stevens engineered a union that surpassed society's expectations of her abilities. Mrs. Stevens had shrewdly assessed the New York elite's reverence for a titled European heritage. In this regard, she proved no less attentive to her daughter's marital interests than other concerned mothers who frequented the city's fashionable drawing rooms. Mrs. Stevens, however, accomplished her goals outside the established networks of education and family that had served New York's wealthy society in the past.

Mrs. Stevens did not seem to mind her lack of unqualified social acceptance. Even at the time of her death, there remained in New York many affluent women who adhered to their mothers' values. Mrs. Stevens, however, flaunted conservative expectations of domesticity. Using her taste and style, her personal charm as well as her talent for exploiting the media's interest in her, Mrs. Stevens doggedly followed her own path. She freely adapted to change, tutoring aspirants like the George Goulds who stood at the threshold of

social acceptance. Mrs. Stevens understood that the Goulds, wealthy and powerful in their own right, would forever remain in her debt. Intuitively, she schooled herself through experience to demand civil justice in her personal affairs. Mrs. Stevens appeared to be driven by self interested materialism. When in public, she did not defer to the conservative values of home and family. She was a modern woman driven only by her desire to succeed.

Conclusion

Both Marietta Stevens and Maria Daly participated in the social whirl of New York society during the Gilded Age. Superficially, the two women had little in common. Excepting their shared gender and mutual interest in attaining social prominence, these two women could have lived at different times. Like other conservative women, Maria Daly remained an intensely private individual. Though married to a highly visible public man, Maria's likes and dislikes are obscured by the domesticity that shaped her public life. Other than her charitable duties, Maria scrupulously avoided the kind of public notice that Mrs. Stevens craved. Maria Daly reveals herself only through the content of her journal rather than the trail of press clippings that defines Mrs. Stevens. Unlike Mrs. Stevens, Mrs. Daly did not transmit her core beliefs through her home's furnishings or the details of her costume. Only Maria's diary reveals the nature and extent of her social obligations. Clearly, Maria Daly preferred the substance of her days to the style exhibited by Marietta Stevens.

To this extent, Maria Daly remains fixed in time. Her friendships and personal preferences had been inculcated since childhood. Neither her core beliefs nor the manner in which she conducted herself changed during the thirty-three years that she maintained a record of her experience. Maria's values remained constant in an era rich with economic and

social change. At the same time, Maria adapted to many of the challenges presented her. Her public benevolence, including her orphanage, her kindergarten project and her cooking school, all reflect her ability to seek creative alternatives to social problems. Intellectually curious, she continually opened herself to new people and new ideas. Maria, however, remained self-righteous to a fault, holding fast to her convictions regarding woman's place.

Maria understood herself as the social complement to her husband's interests. As a married woman, she adapted herself to her husband's public life. Though she considered herself independent, Maria seldom stepped beyond the traditional expectations of feminine domesticity. She could never approve of a woman, like Mrs. Stevens, who compromised her womanly virtue in pursuit of a public life. Maria privileged the sanctity of her parlor to those outside her circle of acquaintance. For any woman to do otherwise undermined the community's social fabric. Conversely, Mrs. Stevens accepted full responsibility for her own economic and social well being. Unlike Maria Daly, Mrs. Stevens openly exhibited the competitive individualism more routinely associated with market capitalism. Mrs. Stevens answered to no one.

Mrs. Stevens' unapologetic pursuit of her goals threatened the domestic identity and social status of conservative society. Maria, like other women, resisted the social inroads made by such women of new wealth. Mrs. Stevens, however, did not need to rely upon the traditional networks of feminine influence that served the social interests of women like Maria Daly. Mrs. Stevens succeeded in society with the means available to her. She used her wealth to exploit the wealthy's appreciation for fine clothing, beautiful homes and entertainment. She purchased a socially advantageous marriage for her daughter.

Capitalizing on the media's interest in herself and her family, Mrs. Stevens gained the social prominence that she desired. Through her success, she exposed the hypocrisy of families who denied the importance of wealth to social status. Increasingly, women like Mrs. Stevens demonstrated that wealth mattered in New York. Money enabled the purchase of fashionable wardrobes and jewels just as it facilitated lavish forms of socialization that appealed to the rich and famous. Wealth kept women in the public eye.

Even Maria Daly's professed desire to dedicate herself to the needs of others stemmed from financial considerations. As a married woman, Maria did not enjoy the financial security necessary to fund her social aspirations. Maria compensated for her family's lack of ready income. Ambitiously, she protected the Lydig name as well as her household's reputation through a protracted series of highly publicized charitable ventures. Similarly, she offered a gracious standard of home hospitality to shore up the Dalys' social standing. She used her husband's intellectual interests to maintain her own ties to families of wealth and civic prominence. One cannot impugn Maria's motivations, however. Rather, one admires the extent to which she veiled her true intentions, operating under the rubric of selfless femininity.

In the end, Maria Daly and Marietta Stevens shared a great deal. Both socially ambitious women dedicated themselves to the complexities of New York's social arena. Mrs. Stevens sought to achieve the social recognition that Maria Daly fought to protect. If Mrs. Stevens appears more inclusive in her associations, it is only because she could not enjoy the luxury of Maria's longstanding snobbery. Each woman, however, used different means to achieve their ends. Maria understood that her ability to sublimate her social

pursuits to her husband's political and cultural interests would assist her oblique navigation of New York society. She opened her home, as a wife and hostess, ostensibly to further her husband's political and civic interests. Seemingly selfless and well-intentioned, Maria worked for the greater good. Shrouded in the moral authority that shaped her domesticity, Maria concealed her selfish tendencies. Mrs. Stevens, in contrast, directly confronted her immediate social environment. Equally driven and determined, Mrs. Stevens allowed nothing to stand in her way. Although she sacrificed much of her traditional femininity in the process, Mrs. Stevens reconfigured women's social expectations.

Mrs. Stevens proved herself outside the boundaries of home and family. She did not serve her family's interests, rather she used her sister and her children to further her social climb. In achieving social prominence, Marietta Stevens threatened Maria Daly's core beliefs. Maria, who recognized her own gritty determination in Mrs. Stevens, understood that the traditional domesticity which had sustained women for generations could not withstand the monied power of Mrs. Stevens and those like her. Mrs. Stevens had forced the public's realization that status could be purchased with charitable donations and through the offer of entertainment in polite drawing rooms. Mrs. Stevens, through her publicized courtroom appearances, had also shown that as women demanded full civic responsibility, they risked forfeiture of the virtue that had traditionally shielded them and so ordered their public lives.

Maria Daly could not accept this reality as women's future. She could not see the possibilities for women beyond their traditional domestic obligations. In this regard, Maria once commented upon a woman physician who called on her to raise money for a "dispensary for working women and girls in University Place." Although Maria found the

unnamed woman to be "agreeable enough," she did not enjoy their conversation that "made me wince and blush, despite my half a century at the familiarity with which she discussed the mysteries of nature and physiology." This "unmarried lady...a Quakeress by descent" had "brought eighty babies into the world and was only thirty-one." Maria admitted that her "first impression was greatly in her favor." Upon further thought, however, Maria concluded that "she is too much turned inside out and that the next time I see her she will be like a sucked orange."[394]

Through this passage one appreciates the extent to which Maria conflated domesticity with women's potential, if not femininity itself. She did not wish to lose her femininity in order to acquire a more complete public voice. While Maria understood women's desire to modify their social role, she viewed this as a dangerous undertaking, fraught with risk. Maria did not wish to redefine herself. Just as she protected her social status, she would also continue to shelter herself from a fuller participation in public life. Maria remained fearful of exceeding the social limitations that bound her to her household. While she did not suffer physical confinement, Maria stayed true to the domestic values that had shaped and nourished her. Because of her steadfast beliefs, Maria could never acknowledge the more modern accomplishment of women like Marietta Stevens.

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[394] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," February 11, 1880, passim. Maria expressed similar reservations regarding women's abilities to succeed in the medical profession when asked to serve as a trustee of the Medical College for Women in 1865. While she approved of a supervisory role for "matronly women" in dispensaries, she questioned whether the movement could succeed "without the aid of learned, experienced medical men." MLD, Diary of a Union Lady, 1861 - 1865, February 26, 1865, 338.

Society's Last Stand: Ward McAllister and Caroline Astor

The novelist Edith Wharton portrayed the ease with which parvenus like Mrs. Lemuel Struthers could "push in and get a footing" in times of social uncertainty.[1] Traditionalists in Wharton's novel The Age of Innocence recalled that Mrs. Struthers had first gained ground by opening her home during an epidemic of chicken-pox in New York. While anxious mothers tended to their sick children, husbands "slipped away" to enjoy evenings in the Struthers' parlor.[2] Wharton's conservative elite understood their need to "stand in the breach" to discourage others from replicating the Struthers' example.[3]

Edith Wharton distilled her distaste for social opportunists into the characterization of a single individual in the Age of Innocence. The truth of New York's growth during the late nineteenth century presented the city's social establishment with a greater challenge, however. After 1845, the city's population almost tripled in three decades.[4] New York's ability to accommodate and sustain this growth reflects its increasing importance to national economic life. By 1880, the city included 1.2 million inhabitants.

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[1] Edith Wharton, The Age of Innocence, 242.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] David M. Scobey, 71. See also Sven Beckert, 46-47.

The population grew by another 200,000 within a decade, so that by 1890, 1.4 million people lived in Manhattan.[5] The city's ability to attract and sustain capital investment encouraged much of this expansion. By 1892, twenty-seven percent of the nation's millionaires lived in New York.[6] Much of this wealth originated in the city's merchant and landed elite who accounted for two-thirds of the millionaires in the city as well as sixty percent of the leadership of major corporate and financial institutions.[7]

In addition to the concentration of wealth and power among established families, New York attracted the rich from other cities. Not only did local businessmen seek investment opportunities in other parts of the country, rich Americans, who had accumulated their fortunes elsewhere, moved to Manhattan. The "dense networks of business contacts and specialized experts," including legal, financial and accounting services as well as convenient access to financial markets drew commercial newcomers to the city.[8] Not unlike the socially ambitious Mrs. Paran Stevens, newer individuals among the commercially successful desired the approbation of the social establishment, presumably to validate their business achievement.

To accommodate this urban growth, the elite establishment sought ways to preserve their status as well as find an orderly process to admit newcomers to society. This need for social integration also required a replacement for the discrete services

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[5] Sven Beckert, 237.

[6] "American Millionaires. The Tribune's List of Person's Reputed to be Worth a Million or More," Tribune Monthly 4 (June 1892). Cited in Sven Beckert, 238.

[7] Frederic Cople Jaher, The Urban Establishment, 253, 255.

[8] Sven Beckert, 239.

provided by Isaac Brown. Brown's death in 1880 left a void in the informal social apparatus that vetted the city's newly minted wealth. Whether the services of a church sexton could have reliably maintained the society's credibility under the challenge of rapid urban expansion remains open to question. Brown, without social credentials of his own, had outlived his usefulness as a practical way to manage society. The sheer numbers of new people threatened to overwhelm existing society. As newspapers expanded their regular coverage of social activity, the general public learned of the splendid contents of large homes and of the increasingly lavish standards of leisure and hospitality among the wealthy. Society needed a way to maintain the authority of its social judgements before this widening audience.

This chapter examines the social careers of two individuals who helped society realize its goals. Ward McAllister and the all male "Patriarchs" joined together to offer society a formal mechanism for extending social recognition. Like his predecessor Isaac Brown, McAllister served as a surrogate for some wealthy families in hosting a regular series of social events that conveyed the impression of society's orderly processes. The very need for McAllister and a group like the Patriarchs confirms the social anxiety of the Gilded Age. The extent of their social influence is arguable, however. Wealthy women, throughout McAllister's years of service to society, sponsored equally prestigious debutante cotillions that finally undermined McAllister's pretense to social leadership.

Caroline Astor demonstrated the continuing ability of women to manage society and its process of accepting new members. Understanding the need for social growth Caroline acknowledged both the newly rich and the young. She succeeded in her mission

because of what she represented to the city's wealthy society. Mrs. Astor, in her role as society queen, performed in a manner consistent with the expectations for royalty. Her opulent balls and formal dinners unfolded according to a prescribed ritual, emphasizing restraint and decorum. Caroline's regard for feminine privacy and her social preferences originated in her understanding of her domestic obligation to household and family. Thus, her home became the nexus for her important social activity. As Caroline Astor laid claim to the values and social practices of the late nineteenth century, other wealthy women organized small clubs around cultural and intellectual interests, reflecting the longstanding desire of the wealthy to portray themselves as something other than merely rich.

Society's Autocrat

Although women elites maintained the credibility of their traditional networks of school, church and family, they required a practical way to monitor the social change implicit in New York's continued expansion. In arbitrating the avenues to social exclusivity, women had in the past prevailed upon individuals outside their immediate circle. Isaac Brown a church sexton had informally assisted women in their management of social change through his ability to provide information on the suitability of unfamiliar individuals. As the city's size outstripped Brown's methods, Ward McAllister offered himself as a convenient alternative. McAllister, however, would have surely resisted this comparison.

Unlike Brown, Ward McAllister possessed a pedigree to fortify his claim to social authority. Samuel Ward McAllister, born in Savannah, Georgia, in December 1827, came from a family distinguished for its legal abilities. His grandfather Matthew McAllister had

served as Chief Justice of Georgia. His father Matthew Hall McAllister, after practicing law in Georgia, prospered as an attorney in San Francisco and later became a United States Circuit Judge there. Maude Howe Elliot remembered Judge McAllister, her cousin Ward's father, as a "grave man with fine manners."[9] Similarly, Howe recalled McAllister's mother, the former Louise Charlotte Cutler, as a "splendid looking woman, tall, very straight, with side ringlets and a small waist."[10]

Through his mother, Ward McAllister claimed kinship with several notable families along the east coast. His maternal grandmother, Mrs. B.C. Cutler, was the niece of General Francis Marion who earned the soubriquet "Swamp Fox" through his evasions of the British forces during the American Revolution. McAllister also had family ties to the Appleton's of Boston. McAllister had been named, however, for his great uncle Samuel Ward in honor of his family's New York kinships. Samuel Ward's first wife Emily, daughter of William Astor, tied McAllister by marriage to the wealthy and prestigious Astor and Chanler families. From his Ward relations, McAllister was also related to Mrs. Luther Terry, mother of the popular novelist Marion Crawford.

As a youth, Ward McAllister summered in Newport, Rhode Island, "which at that time was really a Southern colony," and it was the "fashion to lease...a farmer's house for the summer and not live in town."[11] These leisured holidays further strengthened his

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[9] Maude Howe Elliott, This Was My Newport, 41.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Found It, 7.

familial and social ties to the northeast. He entered Yale College at around age twenty.[12] On his first visit to New York, McAllister stayed in the home of a wealthy maiden aunt, whom he later identified as Miss Mary Telfair, in the hopes that she "would endow me with all of her worldly goods."[13] As it evolved, McAllister's aunt bequeathed her assets to the Presbyterian Church and the Georgia Historical Society. Disappointed, McAllister used his small legacy of a thousand dollars to fund a period costume for a ball at the home of Maria Livingston Stevens, wife of the Commodore of the New York Yacht Club. He later attended a "great fancy ball" given by the Peter Schermerhorns where "the lace and diamonds" worn by Mrs. Charles de Rham, the former Laura Schmidt, left a lasting impression on the young man who had dressed as Louis XV.[14] Without the Telfair legacy, however, McAllister remained on New York's social fringe, supporting himself as a bookkeeper. Around 1848, he returned to Savannah to read law in his father's office and gain admittance to the Georgia bar.

In the meantime, Ward's older brother Hall McAllister embarked for California in

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[12] New York Times, 1 February 1895, 1.

[13] Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Found It, Annotated Edition, 13. A second Mary Telfair died in Savannah in 1875. This daughter of ex-Governor Telfair also bequeathed an estate of over a million dollars to the Georgia Historical Society, the Independent Presbyterian Church and several benevolent institutions. New York Times, 6 June 1875, 1. McAllister's maiden aunt was the sister of Georgia Governor Telfair.

[14] Ibid., 15. The Charles De Rhams, married in May 1849, resided for many years at 24 Fifth Avenue and Cold Spring, New York. Laura De Rham was the daughter of John W. Schmidt who served for more than fifty years as Consul General in New York of Prussia, Saxony and Baden. She died in 1899 at the age of seventy. New York Times, 6 May 1899, 7. Charles De Rham was the son of Henry Casimir de Rham who immigrated from Switzerland in 1805 to form the banking firm of De Rham, Iselin & Moore. He died in 1909 at the age of eighty-seven. New York Times, 24 February, 1909. 9.

1849 with his cousin Samuel Ward of New York. An 1846 graduate of Yale College, Hall had also previously studied law in his father's Savannah office. Upon hearing of the discovery of gold in California, Hall decided to remain in San Francisco to open a legal practice. Within two months, his profits reportedly equaled those of his father's annual income, prompting him to invite both his father and brother Ward to join him in California. In May 1850, the two remaining McAllister men left Georgia for San Francisco where they formed the firm McAllister & Sons upon their arrival.[15] Judge Matthew McAllister quickly earned enough money to contemplate retirement. His son Ward, however, did not benefit from either the law or San Francisco's frontier atmosphere. Ward, clearly longing for eastern amenities, deplored the scarcity of staple foods and the cost of home furnishings. Despite these hardships, Ward earned a reputation in California for dinners "never seen surpassed anywhere."[16]

Ward McAllister returned East, stopping briefly in Washington, D. C., where he attempted to secure a diplomatic position with the American Legation in London. Failing this, he returned to New York in 1852 to resume his social life. He became engaged to Miss Sara Teintor Gibbons, the daughter of William Haywood Gibbons, a wealthy Georgia businessman with homes in New York and Madison, New Jersey. Sara's mother Abbie Louise Teintor descended from Governor Pynchon of Massachusetts and the

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[15] Ibid., 21. Hall McAllister continued his lucrative California legal practice until shortly before his death in 1888 at the age of sixty-three. He left a widow, one son and three daughters, the eldest of whom married Edward Wise, a nephew of Edward Everett. New York Times, 2 December 1888, 4.

[16] Ibid., 25.

Reverend Peter Butley, the second president of Harvard College.[17] The couple married in 1853. Sara McAllister, described as "stately" and "dignified," did not share her husband's interests in social matters, nor did she often appear in public.[18] For unstated health reasons, Sara McAllister also seldom graced the entertainments held in her own home.[19] McAllister honored his wife's privacy as there are no references to her or their marriage in his memoir.[20]

The McAllisters enjoyed a delayed European honeymoon of several years during which Ward refined his knowledge of fine cookery and European vintages. Their marriage produced three children. Of these, their daughter Louise became well known in New York as she often accompanied her father on social outings and presided over the family table in her mother's absence. Described as "not at all good looking," Louise possessed a "clever" gift for conversation which made her popular in society.[21] Her sharp tongue could sometimes prove embarrassing, however. The society columnist George Wotherspoon relates that Louise's "uncomplimentary" remarks once cost her father an

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[17] New York Times, 17 October 1911, X2.

[18] George Wotherspoon, 7.

[19] Ibid. See also New York Times, 3 February 1895, 16.

[20] Sarah's father William H. Gibbons died in 1887, leaving the bulk of his estate which included "rice plantations in Georgia and New York real estate" to Sarah's sister Mrs. Francis S. Lathrop of Madison, New Jersey. The McAllisters contested the will asserting that Gibbons was "of unsound mind." There is no further record of how this matter was resolved. New York Times, 23 December 1887, 3. Sarah McAllister died on October 13, 1909 at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York where she maintained a residence. She divided her estate, valued at $229,154.04, between her daughter Louise and her son Heyward Hall who were both named executors. Her older son Ward received nothing under this will as he had received a legacy from Caroline Gibbons. New York Times, 3 September 1911, 6.

[21] George Wotherspoon, 8.

invitation to the home of Frederic and Sarah Gracie King Bronson.[22] McAllister surely chafed at this refusal as Sarah Bronson enjoyed a reputation for "distinctive" entertainments "at which there is rarely to be seen any one whose pedigree is not well authenticated for at least fifty years back."[23] The McAllisters also had two sons named Ward and Heyward Hall. Young Ward, born in Newport, Rhode Island, on July 27, 1855, received his education at Princeton and later studied law at Harvard college. He eventually moved to California where he practiced law and received an appointment to the federal bench in the District of Alaska.[24] Little is known of the youngest son Heyward Hall other than his secret marriage in 1888 to eighteen-year old Janie Champion Garmany of Savannah, Georgia. The McAllisters publically disapproved of this match because their son had no prospects of employment. Because of this family opposition, the marriage remained secret for five years, only to be inadvertently disclosed by a relative of the bride.[25]

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[22] Ibid., 8. In 1920, Louise McAllister married A. Nelson Lewis of Philadelphia who had been a McAllister family friend for over thirty years. New York Times, 4 May 1920, 11. In New York, the couple lived at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel until her death a few years later. New York Times, 22 October 1923, 19. She left the bulk of her estate valued at $471, 270 to her husband. New York Times, 1 April 1925, 25.

[23] New York Times, 19 December 1886, 4.

[24] In 1893, Ward McAllister, Jr. became engaged to Catharine Nolan of San Francisco, the "daughter of a wealthy shoe dealer." New York Times, 25 October 1893, 8. He died in San Francisco in 1907. New York Times, 2 December 1925, 25.

[25] New York Times, 13 May 1892, 1. The couple divorced in 1892. New York Times, 21 September 1892, 5. Janie Garmany McAllister remarried Augustus Brandt of London in 1898. New York Times, 13 February 1898, 1. In 1908, Heyward Hall McAllister remarried Melanie Jeanne Renke, the daughter of a French army captain. He died in Menton, France, in 1908. New York Times, 2 December 1925, 25. Jeanne Renke McAllister died in Rye, New York, in 1939. New York Times, 15 September 1939, 29.

Ward McAllister did not allow such personal set-backs to interfere with his wish to flourish socially. He cultivated the city's wealthy business and social leadership, dining "constantly" at the William B. Astor's.[26] To reciprocate the Astor hospitality, McAllister entertained at an elaborate repast in 1859, after which William Astor reportedly predicted, "If you go on giving such dinners as these you need have no fear of planting yourself in this city."[27] McAllister's naive inclusion of this putative compliment in his memoir reflects that he was unaware of the transparency of his social aim. McAllister purchased Bayside Farm in Newport, Rhode Island, where he intended to live for nine months of the year with winters in the West Indies. Here he honed his hospitality, developing a reputation among the New York elite who had begun to frequent the resort after the Civil War. In the "luxurious and enjoyable" Rhode Island countryside, McAllister attracted the "very crême de la crême of New York society" through a series of picnics, "fishing parties" and "little farm dinners."[28] According to McAllister, his friend Mrs. Maturin Livingston, the former Ruth Baylies, confided that "[a]ny one can give a dinner...we want one of your picnics."[29]

McAllister, a skilled sycophant, admitted that he "had been taught to have a sort of reverence for the name of Livingston."[30] His ability to please individuals like the Maturin Livingstons, the wealthy and powerful residents of the "palatial" Livingston Manor, fueled

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[26] Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Found It, Annotated Edition, 78.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Found It, 110, 111, passim.

[29] Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Found It, Annotated Edition, 112.

[30] Ibid., 139.

his social climb. The reasons that the Maturin Livingstons would wish to associate with Ward McAllister are less obvious, however. McAllister's ability to flatter his social betters permitted them to defer to his often superior taste in food and wine. By Livingston standards, the McAllisters, though monied, lived modestly. Abandoning his plan to reside permanently in Newport, McAllister moved his family to New York where he situated his household in the Clarendon Hotel at 4th Avenue and 17th Street. Later, the McAllisters moved to homes at 39 West 21st Street and 16 West 36th Street, respectively.[31] A friend described McAllister as a balding man with "full, regular features, keen grey eyes, thick neck and stocky figure."[32] McAllister was "not handsome, nor at all conspicuous for his dress."[33] Nonetheless, he possessed a gentleman's manners as well as a useful knowledge of food and wine. As an outsider, he did not display any obvious competing social or commercial interests. He appeared, moreover, willing to devote himself entirely to the pleasure of other people. McAllister reliably secured the perfect turkey or filet de boeuf for his meals.[34] Sensitive to the comfort of his guests, he always assembled "the best of servants" for even simple collations of "ham and eggs and boiled chicken and cabbage."[35]

McAllister tested his ability to please the wealthy with a series of cotillion suppers in New York. He initiated these fetes at a time when "[t]here were not half a dozen chefs"

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[31] George Wotherspoon, 7.

[32] Ibid., 5.

[33] Ibid., 6.

[34] Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Found It, 96-97, 112,142-143, passim.

[35] Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Found It, 146.

employed by private households.[36] McAllister saw that a family's ability to retain a talented cook enabled "one or two men of fortune [to]...control, lead, and carry on society, receive or shut out people at their pleasure."[37] The practicalities of the narrowed structure of New York's social hierarchy provided McAllister with an opening. "We resolved to band together the respectable element of the city, and by this union make such strength that no individual could withstand us."[38] Without a large dining room of his own, McAllister prevailed upon the restaurant Delmonico's to provide subscription evenings of hospitality organized around dining and dance. He knew that he could control his costs by using seasonal ingredients to produce a fine meal. Bearing this in mind, he held his price "for seventy-five or a hundred people to ten dollars each person, music and every expense included" for his cotillion suppers.[39]

As these dinners proved to be popular, the wealthy grew increasingly comfortable in McAllister's presence, entitling him to an intimate knowledge of their preferences. He became privy to their rivalries and petty differences. For example, he witnessed the effect of Mathilda A. Rives' declaration that "she had lived longer in New York society than any other person" upon Sarah Morris Fish Webster, the daughter of a social rival."[40] He heard

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[36] Ibid., 157.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., 166.

[40] Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Found It, Annotated Edition, 158. Mathilda A. Rives was the wife of Francis R. Rives, and Virginia native and well-known lawyer in New York. The couple had two sons and three daughters. New York Times, 17 July 1891, 5. Sarah Morris Fish Webster, the eldest daughter of Hamilton Fish, was married to the lawyer Sidney Webster, a former Secretary to Franklin Pierce and a director of the Illinois Central Railroad. New York

the "criticisms" that Caroline Perry Belmont and Jane Sargent Duncan "made of and about" Mary Morton Sands as she entered the room.[41] Mrs. Robert Le Roy further disturbed McAllister's "serenity" by rearranging the place cards to avoid sitting near someone she disliked.[42] Though encouraged by the success of his cotillion suppers, McAllister realized that he could not continue to organize such events alone. "It occurred then to me, that if one in any way got out with the powers that be, his position might become critical, and he so forced out of the way as to really lose his social footing."[43] Marietta Stevens had exploited the wealthy's cultural longings through a series of musical concerts, featuring her sister, to gain a social foothold. Similarly, McAllister sensed the patrician desire to meet for purposes of dining well. McAllister, however, needed the support of his social peers in order to succeed. Lacking the Stevens spine, he concealed his self interest within the elite desire to associate with one another. McAllister acknowledged his own tenuous social position by seeking the safety of numbers.

In 1872, he prevailed upon a group of gentlemen to form the Patriarchs to assist

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Times, 31 May 1910. The couple had one son Hamilton Fish Webster. Sarah Fish Webster died in 1923. New York Times, 17 February 1923, 13.

[41] Ibid., 167. Jane Sargent Duncan, a New Orleans native, was the wife of the banker William Butler Duncan. The couple, who lived at 1 Fifth Avenue, had three children. Jane Duncan died in 1905, two years after the celebration of her golden wedding anniversary. New York Times, 23 November 1903, 7; 21 June 1912, 13, 23 June 1912, 17. Mary Morton Sands, the second wife of Mahlon Sands, who managed his family's New York drug importation business for many years. Mary Sands, known for her great beauty, was the niece of Vice President Levi P. Morton. After their marriage, the couple lived in London where they frequented the social circle enjoyed by the Prince of Wales. New York Times, 9 May 1888, 8. See also Frederick Townsend Martin, Things I Remember, 156-167.

[42] Ibid., 168.

[43] Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Found It, 210.

him in the organization of a series of winter balls. "Careful to select only the leading representative men of the city, who had the right to create and lead society," McAllister attracted twenty-five interested gentlemen.[44] Based upon his observations of society women, McAllister realized that he alone lacked the ability to overcome the divisions in fashionable society. Inflated by McAllister as to their importance to the greater social good, the twenty-five Patriarchs acknowledged their need to balance the "old Colonial New Yorkers, our adopted citizens, and men whose ability and integrity had won the esteem of the community, and who formed an important element in society."[45] The original Patriarchs were not among the city's wealthiest citizens, "nor were they actively involved in cultural or political life, nor were they...leading figures in the city's clubs."[46]

The men of the Patriarchs were, however, well regarded in social circles. McAllister premised the new association upon London's Almack, a "banding together of powerful women of influence for the purpose of getting up these balls,...making them the greatest social events of London society."[47] That he could attract the participation of over two dozen socially conscious males in this scheme indicates McAllister's existing influence among elites. Implicit in his decision to rally men, however, is the acknowledgment that the need for social integration had exceeded feminine abilities. Previous demonstrations of his skills as a host elevated McAllister's importance within this all male assembly and

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[44] In his memoir, McAllister enumerates the twenty-five original Patriarchs. See Ibid., 213.

[45] Ibid., 214.

[46] Eric Homberger, Mrs. Astor's New York, 189.

[47] Ibid., 212. See also Eric Homberger, 187.

mandated his own inclusion among the group's members.

Ostensibly, the Patriarchs formed to achieve a social unity that could accommodate the city's competing social interests between old and new wealth. The inherent difficulties in structuring a socially inclusive body that would, at the same time, remain exclusive apparently never occurred to McAllister or his friends. For the price of a $125.00 subscription, each Patriarch invited four ladies and five gentlemen to make each occasion "thoroughly representative."[48] Everyone pledged to include "only such people as would do credit to the ball."[49] This proviso made individual Patriarchs responsible for the conduct and style of their guests. Fifty "strangers" to the city, personally considered by McAllister, could also receive invitations.[50] McAllister realized that the group's strength lay "in making it extremely difficult to obtain an invitation...to make such invitations of great value; to make them the stepping stone to the best New York society."[51] McAllister wrote on every invitation the name of the guest and that of the subscriber extending the invitation. He then personally inscribed the name of each guest on the card of admission. He guaranteed that there would never be an uninvited guest at a Patriarchs Ball.

McAllister's command of the Patriarchs' management is apparent in the remnants of his correspondence with Eugene A. Livingston, an original member of the group.[52]

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[48] Ibid., 214.

[49] Ibid.

[50] George Wotherspoon, 9.

[51] Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Found It, 215.

[52] Eugene Augustus Livingston was born in 1813 to Robert L. Livingston and Margaret Maria Livingston. His first wife, the former Harriet Coleman bore him two children: a son Eugene who died during the Civil War and Mary Coleman who later married Maturin L.

Most of this correspondence concerns scheduling, guest lists and financial accounting. McAllister also forwarded printed notices of subscription monies due. In 1873, he pointed out to Livingston that the costs of the group's first ball "exceeded our estimate by $300, having entertained 395 people (when we counted on paying for but 300 and having consumed 125 bottles of champagne instead of 100 ($437.50 instead of $350)."[53] As a remedy, McAllister recommended hosting only one more ball for the season, supplementing the group's activity with a "Cotillion Dinner," costing ten dollars a person for young married people, young ladies and young men. "Of course," he added, "The Patriarchs' assessment will be lessened by one ball (or by a third)."[54] In addition to tracking the Patriarchs' finances, McAllister orchestrated the protocol of these evenings. He asked Livingston, for example, to escort Mrs. Robert Remsen into dinner because "she is the only lady left without an escort. I cannot leave it later as the table must be arranged."[55] In another letter, McAllister tartly reminded Livingston that "there are but 47 first seats and there are 38 Patriarchs. There are not enough first seats to give each Patriarch more than one...This is the rule."[56]

Delafield. With his second wife, the former Elizabeth Fisher, Livingston fathered three daughters and two sons. The Livingstons maintained residences on East Thirty-Sixth Street in Manhattan and at Tivoli, his country estate. He died in 1894. New York Times, 19 January 1894, 9.

[53] Ward McAllister, "Letter to Eugene A. Livingston," December 22, 1873. Livingston Papers, Manuscript Division, New York Historical Society, New York, New York.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ward McAllister, "Letter to Eugene A. Livingston," February 2, 1878. Livingston Papers, Manuscript Division, New York Historical Society, New York, New York.

[56] Ward McAllister, "Letter to Eugene A. Livingston," January 5, 1878. Livingston Papers, Manuscript Division, New York Historical Society, New York, New York.

As structured, the Patriarchs theoretically preempted the "sovereign's prerogative" of those few men who possessed a "royal fortune" and could arbitrarily accept or decline anyone of their choosing.[57] In offering themselves as collective judges of social merit, the Patriarchs premised social recognition upon intangible qualities of character, including "worth, respectability, and responsibility."[58] To be welcomed by the Patriarchs reflected a family's "secure social position."[59] In suggesting a moral basis for social leadership, the Patriarchs paid lip service to conservative standards, separating themselves from the commercial accomplishment required for their activities. Despite their disavowals of financial criteria, the Patriarchs spared no expense in staging galas that offered the best dining and the most lavish decorations that could be tastefully provided.[60]

Beginning in the winter of 1872, McAllister devoted his energies to arranging a series of balls under the Patriarchs' aegis. Like Isaac Brown before him, McAllister ordered the food and beverage, selected the musicians, determined the order of the dances and composed the guest list. Unlike Brown, McAllister "never was rewarded with money for his services nor did he ever expect remuneration of that kind. He would have refused, had it been tendered him, as being beneath his dignity to accept."[61] McAllister also possessed the creativity and the taste to vary the theme and content of these social occasions. This was no mean accomplishment. During the years that the Patriarchs

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[57] Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Found It, 216.

[58] Ibid., 217.

[59] Ibid., 215.

[60] Ibid., 215 - 216.

[61] George Wotherspoon, 14.

existed in New York, most functions occurred in the ballroom of the restaurant Delmonico's. Of McAllister, the society columnist George Wotherspoon concluded that "the importance of his position gratified him exceedingly. He was easily flattered, so great was his vanity."[62] McAllister admits only to the difficulties he suffered in refusing the supplications of those who wished to join the festivities. His dedication to this task earned him a place in Edith Wharton's novel The Age of Innocence as the character Sillerton Jackson who scrutinized people with the "patience of a naturalist."[63]

Throughout its existence the Patriarchs remained an organization of men. By 1880, the group had expanded to include fifty gentlemen, all of whom met the group's social and financial criteria. According to McAllister, the group's annual series of balls set the social standard in New York for their "undoubted tone and exclusiveness."[64] Nonetheless, McAllister's assumption of the social responsibilities associated with the Patriarchs, overlooked the value of women's traditional methods of social management. McAllister leaves the erroneous impression that he remained the sole arbiter of New York's social affairs during the years that he served the Patriarchs. The Patriarchs, however, had confined their vision to society's present needs. They had formed to preserve the status of those families at the top of the social pyramid with the hope of

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[62] Ibid.

[63] Edith Wharton, The Age of Innocence, 27.

[64] New York Times, 10 February 1880, 5. See also New York Times, 21 December 1880, 2;18 January 1881, 8; 15 February 1881, 5; 19 December 1882, 5; 16 January 1883, 8; 18 December 1883, 5; 29 January 1884, 5; 24 December 1884, 5; 25 January 1885, 3; 17 February 1885, 4; 27 January 1886, 4; 22 December 1886, 8; 16 January 1887, 4; 21 December 1887, 4; 18 January 1888, 5; 14 February 1888, 8; 11 December 1888; 5 February 1889, 8; 6 February 1889, 2; 5 March 1889, 9; 17 December 1889, 9; 21 January 1890, 8; 18 February 1890, 8.

integrating newer individuals into those ranks. As they recognized the current need for social cohesion, they neglected the generational continuity implicit in traditional forms of women's social activity. Women, through the social introduction of their daughters, orchestrated appropriate marriages among families, in the expectation that their conservative standards respecting the importance of family lineage and accomplishment would carry forward.

Alerted to this deficiency in the Patriarchs' social scheme, McAllister bowed to feminine interests. Hastily, he organized a second series of subscription balls to assist in the socialization of younger women and men. He confessed that the Patriarchs only suited the society matrons who became "the belles of the ball" at his functions.[65] His second group, called the Family Circle Dancing Class, initially met in private homes to separate its functions from the more formalized, patriarchal occasions. McAllister, who personally sponsored one early event, experienced first-hand "how contracted everything must necessarily be in a twenty-five foot house, to receive guests in it, give them a salle de danse and a supper room."[66] Afterwards, McAllister hired public venues for the new association, including the Dodworth Dancing Academy, the restaurant Delmonico's and the Metropolitan Opera House. With the creation of the Family Circle Dancing Class, McAllister increased his managerial responsibilities to nine social functions annually.

McAllister's duties soon became complicated with the formation of the New York Assemblies. This group, organized and managed by wealthy women, sponsored a

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[65] Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Found It, 225.

[66] Ibid., 226.

competing series of debutante cotillions. Somewhat shrouded in secrecy, the Assemblies distributed a limited number of invitations to subscribers who honored their daughters and their friends at a series of three balls a season. Managed by an unspecified committee of "elderly ladies of assured social position," the Assemblies offered "simple but tasteful" occasions that reassured society with quiet standards of exclusivity.[67] During the twelve years that the Family Circle Dancing Class held social functions for debutantes and their families, the New York Assemblies maintained its steady social presence.[68] Both organizations competed for the loyalty of subscribers, for dates on the city's crowded social calendar and for suitable public venues. Although some parents introduced their daughters under the auspices of both organizations, the presence of two similar groups drew funding from McAllister's subscription series. This financial drain on the Family Circle Dancing Class ultimately limited the number of annual functions that McAllister could successfully mount.[69] In 1882, women elites organized a third series of subscription balls, called the Cotillions. This series of balls, held at Delmonico's, provided social opportunity for young married couples, older girls and bachelors, further complicating McAllister's responsibilities for the Patriarchs.

Although lauded by some for the "great service" he provided debutantes, the press began to question McAllister's claims of exclusivity for the Family Circle Dancing Class

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[67] New York Times, 12 December 1884, 5.

[68] New York Times, 18 January 1885, 3; 20 December 1885, 3; 27 December 1885, 3; 15 January 1888, 16; 10 February 1888, 5; 6 December 1888, 8; 1 March 1889, 5.

[69] New York Times, 3 January 1883, 8.

by 1885.[70] He considered discontinuing the Family Circle Dancing Class to concentrate upon a new organization called the Junior Patriarchs, which would serve as an alternative to both the women's Assembly and Cotillion balls. Press reports confirmed that the "Cotillion dances, which were established three years ago by the ladies who organized the Assemblies, did much to interfere with the prosperity" of the Family Circle Dancing Class.[71] McAllister's functions had become overly crowded with newer people, while the Cotillions remained an exclusive social opportunity for the young. Some adults voiced additional concerns for the "health" of young people because of "too many dances during the Winter."[72]

With so many events competing for the loyalty of their subscribers, McAllister announced the dissolution of the Family Circle Dancing Class and the organization of the Junior Patriarchs.[73] Whether McAllister sought the counsel of the existing Patriarchs for this restructuring or acted on his own initiative is unknown. Nonetheless, this new association, like the Cotillion series, insured that young married couples, older girls and bachelors receive an exclusive series of parties not unlike the Patriarchs' functions. For the initial 1885-86 social season of the Junior Patriarchs, guests received invitations for a $12.00 series of four balls. McAllister announced the scheduling of these events as well as his intention to alternate the dances between the restaurant Delmonico's and the

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[70] Elisabeth Marbury, 39.

[71] New York Times, 30 August 1885, 3. See also New York Times, 13 September 1885, 14.

[72] Ibid.

[73] New York Times, 20 September 1885, 14.

Metropolitan Opera House.

The Junior Patriarchs' first ball, held at the Metropolitan Opera House in December 1885, stirred the society press. The New York Times remarked upon McAllister's "dangerous experiment" in selecting an alternative venue to Delmonico's, noting that many conservatives "shrugged their shoulders, shivered, and gave utterance to remarks about feeling like cats in a strange garret."[74] The Junior Patriarchs' second ball, held also at the opera house, did not generate much interest, despite McAllister's best efforts.[75] Social observers, in fact, concluded that this second ball "was not socially a success" because of the "indefinable sense of the presence of a new and strange element whose Delmonico ball experience had not been a long lived one."[76]

McAllister, pressured by competition from the New York Assembly and the Cotillion for the attendance of debutantes from prominently placed families, understood his need to reconsider the Junior Patriarchs. With the imperative that his management remain sensitive to the conservative desire for exclusivity, McAllister announced that the Junior Patriarchs would return to Delmonico's.[77] This use of the familiar, smaller space signaled that the "Junior Patriarchs' list will be very much cut down...if a new one is not already made out."[78] As a consequence, the group's December ball attracted only about

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[74] New York Times, 13 December 1885, 3.

[75] New York Times, 17 February 1886, 4. See also New York Times, 24 January 1886, 3; 31 January 1886, 3.

[76] New York Times, 21 February 1886, 3.

[77] New York Times, 5 September 1886, 4.

[78] New York Times, 12 September 1886, 3.

three hundred guests.[79] The female management of the New York Assembly soon tested the viability of the Junior Patriarchs. By 1886, the Assemblies included a committee of fifty women subscribers, each of whom possessed nine invitations for distribution to friends. Now dubbed "The Matriarchs" by the wealthy, the Assembly planned their own winter ball at Delmonico's, scheduling it just two days after that of the Junior Patriarchs.

Inevitably, the society press compared these two occasions. The New York Times determined that the social "reign of the once powerful leader" had not yet ended in New York.[80] Nonetheless, McAllister's ball, though ably managed, had lacked the presence of "a certain set of society girls" and had included a "sprinkling of the element which will again tilt up the noses of the ultra exclusives."[81] McAllister, under siege from the city's female establishment, now understood the futility of his social mission. Entrusted with the responsibility of vetting the credentials of applicants to society's inner circles, McAllister had by 1886 demonstrated only the impossibility of this thankless task. It became increasingly apparent that social unity could not be achieved through social organizations like the Patriarchs. Under the sponsorship of wealthy women, however, both the Cotillion and the Assemblies continued to offer conservative families the exclusivity that they desired. By attempting to enlarge the top of the social pyramid, McAllister had only exposed its commercial core. The New York Times pointed out that New York "had

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[79] New York Times, 8 December 1886, 5.

[80] New York Times, 12 December 1886, 4.

[81] Ibid.

always been a business city."[82] "[B]usiness obligations affect society," so that "when an invitation to the Patriarchs will secure a good account at one's bank, or afford a chance in some profitable speculation, the person who has the power of extending this invitation is not apt to hesitate."[83]

By the beginning of the 1886 winter social season, it had become clear to many that the management of New York society should remain in women's hands. The first Patriarchs' ball of that season left the distribution of invitations to individual subscribers without McAllister's "personal supervision."[84] McAllister's "storied career" as social arbiter was coming to an end.[85] In the spring of 1887, both Mrs. Buchanan Winthrop and Mrs. J. P. Morgan "discourteously" scheduled private balls for evenings previously reserved for the Junior Patriarchs.[86] These home events attracted many of "the more exclusive society set" who had previously supported McAllister.[87] Both hostesses had, moreover, avoided scheduling conflicts with the Assembly balls. In 1888, McAllister retreated from his management of social functions for young elites. He disbanded the Junior Patriarchs to devote his energies to a New Years ball for young men. By his

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[82] New York Times, 19 December 1886, 4.

[83] Ibid.

[84] New York Times, 26 December 1886, 14.

[85] New York Times, 8 January 1888, 12.

[86] New York Times, 20 February 1887, 14. Mrs. Winthrop, the former Sarah Helen Townsend, daughter of Isaac Townsend, married Buchanan Winthrop in 1872. Winthrop, a wealthy and socially prominent lawyer, descended from Roger Winthrop, first governor of Massachusetts. The couple had two children and resided in New York at 279 Fifth Avenue. Buchanan Winthrop died in 1900. New York Times, 26 December 1900, 7.

[87] Ibid.

actions, McAllister implicitly acknowledged that the New York Assembly had become the "social Rubicon" for debutantes and their families.[88]

Although McAllister's dazzling New Year's Ball confirmed his ability to stage large social functions, his influence among the social establishment had ebbed.[89] Despite this change, New York's intention to commemorate the centennial of George Washington's inauguration provided McAllister with another opportunity to assert his mettle. In December of 1888, Elbridge Gerry, chairman of a Committee of Plan and Scope, announced the city's plans to observe this historic occasion. A Committee on Entertainment, headed by Stuyvestant Fish, also stated its intention to sponsor a public ball for five thousand guests at the Metropolitan Opera House in April.[90] This group designated Ward McAllister as "manager of the ball and banquet" with the supervisory "control of all their details."[91] Within a few months, McAllister had completed his arrangements, including the names of men and women selected to dance the opening quadrille.[92] McAllister had, however, finished his ballroom strategy without consulting anyone.

McAllister had planned the dance to be "a stately affair of but a couple of simple

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[88] New York Times, 15 December 1889, 13.

[89] New York Times, 1 April 1888, 16.

[90] New York Times, 23 December 1888, 16.

[91] Ibid.

[92] New York Times, 9 March 1889, 5.

figures, suited to the dignity of the persons participating."[93] In his zeal to orchestrate a civic spectacle befitting the occasion, McAllister neglected to inquire whether highly placed political leaders wished to dance before a large audience. A number of prominent women, chosen as descendants of those who danced in the quadrille of 1789, also declined the opportunity to perform at a public function.[94] Branded a "dictator" for his high-handed methods, McAllister endured public rebuke. His Patriarchal sponsors realized that he had "actually brought them into scorn and ridicule by his dictatorship and thus their prestige."[95] McAllister relinquished his duties amid mounting recriminations.[96] In his resignation to Elbridge Gerry, McAllister complained that changes to his plans would turn the occasion into an "ordinary, common, political public Ball."[97] McAllister also requested "setting aside a sum of $10,000 to meet the deficiency that will arise in defraying [the] expense of the Ball."[98]Although the controversy surrounding the quadrille is generally stated as the reason for McAllister's withdrawal, the journalist George Wotherspoon points to allegations over McAllister's refusal to submit his expense

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[93] Ibid. See also Ward McAllister, "Letter to Elbridge T. Gerry," February 11, 1889. Jay Family Papers, Manuscript Division, New York Historical Society, New York, New York.

[94] Those declining McAllister's invitation included Mrs. John Jay, Mrs. Alexander Hamilton, Mrs. Gracie King and Mrs. William C. Schermerhorn. See George Wotherspoon, 11.

[95] New York Times, 9 April 1889, 8;11 April 1889, 4.

[96] New York Times, 15 April 1889, 1; 16 April 1889, 5; 19 April 1889, 5.

[97] Ward McAllister, "Letter to Elbridge T. Gerry," February 11, 1889. Jay Family Papers, Manuscript Division, New York Historical Society, New York, New York.

[98] Ibid.

vouchers.[99] In the end, the Centennial Ball took place as scheduled, while Ward McAllister found refuge in Washington, D.C. during the festivities.[100]

Amid this controversy, allegations of impropriety came to light regarding McAllister's son Ward, Jr. and his judicial appointment in Alaska. Reportedly, young McAllister became infatuated there with "a pretty Aleut Indian girl" whose missionary guardians ultimately had to appeal to Grover Cleveland for assistance in ending the relationship.[101] This action resulted in the "removal of the enamored judicial dignitary to another sphere of usefulness."[102] Because of Cleveland's involvement in the matter, Ward McAllister expressed his "vague doubts" about the social worthiness of President Cleveland in New York, determining "to be in no way regarded as the social sponsor of Mrs. Grover Cleveland."[103] McAllister's arrogant response to his son's inability to retain a federal appointment is symptomatic of his own proclivities for self-aggrandizement.

McAllister professed that he derived satisfaction only "from giving others pleasure through his own efforts."[104] Increasingly, he overlooked that he owed his New York

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[99] After a heated argument on the subject of his expenses with Stuyvestant Fish, McAllister reportedly challenged Fish to a duel. Fish accepted this challenge before witnesses. McAllister departed without naming his seconds and ultimately supplied proof of his expenditures. George Wotherspoon, 12-13.

[100] New York Times, 30 April 1889, 3, 5. See also MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," May 1, 1889.

[101] New York Times, 31 March 1889, 13.

[102] Ibid. Ward McAllister, Jr. subsequently became engaged to Catharine Nolan of San Francisco, the "daughter of a wealthy shoe dealer." New York Times, 25 October 1893, 8.

[103] New York Times, 31 March 1889, 13.

[104] George Wotherspoon, 14.

social presence to the sufferance of those he served. In conjunction with Centennial Ball, Stuyvestant Fish publically denounced McAllister as "a useless piece of timber."[105] Fish denigrated McAllister's ability to plan functions in a restaurant like Delmonico's where the proprietors assumed much of the responsibility for the details of an evening.[106] Undeterred by the criticism of Fish, McAllister boasted that he had "enlarged the circle of society" to include the 1,200 guests.[107] He explained that the Patriarchs "overlook[ed] a vast number of families who were entitled to participate" in their functions by continuing to use Delmonico's ballroom.[108] McAllister's response is all the more curious as he also credited himself for planning the Patriarchs' annual balls.

McAllister, determined to maintain his social sway, published a memoir in1890 which chronicled his life's work. As McAllister had made a career of planning balls and receptions, Society As I Have Found It included recommendations on food and wines for important occasions. McAllister wrote under the innocent assumption that interested readers would find this information useful. Rather than halt the decline of his reputation, however, the book generated negative reviews and controversy among his affluent patrons. Criticized for its grammatical errors and misuse of the French language, the book also exposed the foibles of elite society.[109] The memoir, initially published without proper names, provided enough information for cognoscenti to identify some of McAllister's

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[105] New York Times, 16 April 1889, 5.

[106] New York Times, 15 April 1889, 1.

[107] New York Times, 4 January 1890, 2. See also New York Times, 3 January 1890, 1.

[108] Ibid.

[109] New York Times, 19 October 1890, 19.

subjects. By any standard, the book disclosed "in a garish light" the pretensions of an elite cadre consumed with trifles.[110] For those who viewed the book as a social document, McAllister also revealed the "spiritual squalor...the inevitable consequence of conditions which incite men to a rivalry in money getting and women to a rivalry in money spending."[111] McAllister had, on balance, provided a humorous glimpse of a commercialized society's attempt to escape itself by reverting to the ideals of an aristocracy. The "moral earnestness" with which he pursued his social goals made him a laughing stock.[112] Nevertheless, as he exposed society's "ridiculous" practices, McAllister's book ultimately confirmed that "he did not create society; it created him; and if he is deplorable, society is to blame for him."[113]

Despite the adverse publicity surrounding his memoir, McAllister continued to plan social functions for the Patriarchs. These men appeared willing to endure McAllister's enterprise beyond their purview. To do otherwise would question the Patriarchs' collective judgement, their powers of discernment and their social authority for the twenty years that McAllister had previously managed their functions. In 1892, McAllister provided the press with a convenient listing of four hundred of society's most

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[110] Ibid.

[111] "From the Editor's Chair," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, 82, no.490 (March 1891): 642.

[112] New York Times, 19 October 1890, 19.

[113] "From the Editor's Chair,"Harper's New Monthly Magazine, (March 1891), 642. See also New York Times, 29 October 1890, 4. See also Sara Agnes Rice Pryor, Reminiscences of a Long Life, (New York: MacMillan Company, 1909), 413.

distinguished participants, including many of the Patriarchs among the chosen.[114] A year later, he revealed his employment as a society reporter. More honestly now described as a "haunter of dinners, a compiler of lists of names, a hunter of dances, and a gusher on gowns," McAllister worked to revive his prestige.[115] With access to the Patriarchs' balls, he provided first-hand details of their functions, while other reporters were denied access. He presented two annotated copies of his memoir, specifying the names of those included, to the New York Society Library in the interest of his journalistic responsibility for accuracy.

In February 1895, a month after the Patriarchs' second ball of the season, McAllister died unexpectedly from an attack of grippe suffered at home.[116] Many patricians learned of his death at the Charity Ball, an event that McAllister had "always ignored" in social importance.[117] Friends recalled his "knowledge of the parlor and the dining room, his carefulness, and his deference to women."[118] Questions immediately arose as to what would become of the Patriarchs without McAllister's dedicated supervision. "Poor, McAllister," someone said, "What a pity it is that he wrote a book."[119] Although memorialized for his attempt to accommodate the power of money to the

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[114] New York Times, 16 February 1892, 5. Arthur Bartlett Maurice indicates that McAllister initially revealed his tally of "those who count in a social way" to a reporter sent to interview him. Arthur Bartlett Maurice, 229.

[115] New York Times, 15 December 1893, 9.

[116] New York Times, 1 February 1895, 1.

[117] New York Times, 3 February 1895, 19.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid.

hereditary status claims of New York society, McAllister's death had, in the end, only "diminished the public store of harmless pleasure."[120] His funeral, at Grace Episcopal Church, attended by many in the society, was marred by an "indecent scramble for the wreaths and loose flowers made by many of the women present."[121] Observers like the socialite Frederick Townsend Martin also "could not help noticing" that only five representatives of the Patriarchs attended.[122] His former social ally Caroline Astor refused to cancel a dinner party that she had scheduled for the evening of his funeral, drawing her shades as McAllister's cortege passed up Fifth Avenue.

The Patriarchs made an effort to shoulder on without their leader. Although McAllister had commented upon a possible successor, this individual did not "desire that any honors should be thrust upon him."[123] The first ball after McAllister's death, in

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[120] New York Times, 2 February 1895, 4.

[121] New York Times, 5 February 1895, 9. See also Eric Homberger, 150-157.

[122] Frederick Townsend Martin, Things I Remember, 269. Born in Albany, New York, 1849 to Henry Hull and Anna Townsend Martin, Frederick received his education at a local boy's academy and at Albany Law School. Though he came from an old colonial family, Martin undertook a study of labor issues at an early age to better understand the life of the working poor. Later in life he devoted his resources to settlement work at the Bowery Mission in New York. A committed bachelor, Frederick and his brother Bradley became fixtures among the city's upper crust, earning reputations for the social events that they sponsored. Frederick wrote three books on New York society, one of which The Passing of the Idle Rich was dramatized in 1913. When he died in London in 1914, Frederick was at work on a new book called Snobs. New York Times, 9 March 1914, 1. After funeral services in London and New York, Martin was buried in a family vault near Albany, New York. New York Times, 10 March 1914, 4; 21 March 1914, 7. Martin left his collection of armor and engravings to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He left the balance of his $500,000 estate to his brother Howard and to other family members. New York Times, 28 March 1914, 13. Due to protracted litigation over estate taxes, Martin's assets increased to $725,000. New York Times, 8 January 1917, 6.

[123] New York Times, 14 October 1895, 8.

December 1895, appeared more remarkable for the "faces seen at the balls of the past" who chose not to attend.[124] The group staged three subsequent balls managed by a committee of gentlemen.[125] This attempt to delegate McAllister's old responsibilities proved fruitless. Within two years, the Patriarchs had officially disbanded by mutual consent of the membership. Reportedly, the group's affairs had been "unsatisfactory for some time" due to lack of interest by the membership, sparse attendance at meetings as well as the lackluster character of its social functions.[126]

Ward McAllister's work for the Patriarchs signified a departure from the gendered relationships that governed social activity. Although inspired by a London women's organization, McAllister had rallied a group of men to form the Patriarchs. This male effort to manage society speaks to the patrician unease about the need to recognize the families of new men whose contributions shaped New York's commercial expansion. The Patriarchs desired the appearance of a stable and socially integrated society which belied the city's rapid growth. Under McAllister, the Patriarchs created a quasi-public, transparent process of social recognition, whereby they set criteria and vetted aspirants desiring access to elite circles. The Patriarchs attempted to convey the importance of nonmaterial standards for social acceptance, including character and heritage. Their direct and orderly process of social review mirrored the city's exclusive men's clubs with which they had personal familiarity. Individual Patriarchs, held accountable by the membership,

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[124] New York Times, 24 December 1895, 8.

[125] New York Times, 2 March 1897, 7; 18 February 1896, 8; 22 December 1896, 5.

[126] New York Times 10 April 1897, 1. See also New York Times, 11 April 1897, 18.

sponsored guests to the group's annual functions. In view of the wealth and prominence of individual Patriarchs and the limited size of their membership, many of the wealthy sought to be included in their ranks.

Nonetheless, McAllister's pay-as-you-go brand of hospitality embodied the commercial values that otherwise defined the male experience outside the home. The group's fortunes rose and declined not unlike a business venture. The male attempt to consolidate competing social interests into a coherent structure reflected the changes occurring in the city's commercial environment. At a time when transportation networks and basic industries reorganized into new corporate structures, the men of the Patriarchs applied a similar business model to the workings of society. Setting themselves up as society's managers, the Patriarchs hosted most of their functions in public venues. Their removal of an important social process to a site other than the home came at a price, however. First, the public learned of the group's existence and its plans for social unity. The respect for feminine privacy in social matters no longer seemed appropriate in the instance of the Patriarchs. While knowledge of the Patriarchs can, in part, be attributed to McAllister's own fondness for self-promotion, public awareness fostered envy and competitiveness among those who wished to participate.

The Patriarchs accelerated the process of social recognition, reducing women's gradual, indirect social governance into a rapid succession of male-sponsored subscription balls. Moving confidently, the Patriarchs composed guest lists, designating McAllister to coordinate any duplications in names that might occur. An invitation to several of the Patriarchs' social functions nominally conferred social honor. Men sometimes relied upon

contacts made in the business community to serve as the foundation for their social introductions, however. This temptation to abuse the social distinction associated with the group for personal advantage proved a liability that ultimately diluted the Patriarchs' claims of exclusivity.

Inasmuch as the Patriarchs touted factors other than wealth as essentials to social recognition, they introduced the language of commerce to social activity. Published reports of their social occasions are presented in the vocabulary of business enterprise. Because the Patriarchs promised to deliver social exclusivity, their events became public contests. Just as old money vied with new wealth to achieve the Patriarchs' recognition, prominent men jockeyed with women's groups for advantageous scheduling and venues. As the press commented upon the guests at various occasions, they drew comparisons to determine an event's exclusive caliber. Decorations, food as well as the color and costliness of women's gowns provided a comparative basis to weigh an occasion's social importance. With the Patriarchs, New York's social life acquired a competitive cast that played out in the public press. After an event, newspapers now ranked female guests according to "the best gowned and handsomest women present, in the order named."[127] As the language of society increasingly reflected commercial values, wealthy women modified their view of membership in society.

Conservative matrons like Maria Daly disliked the women who circumvented social convention in order to rise in New York society. Although Mrs. Stevens' presence at the Patriarchs could suggest to some that she had succeeded in society, this acclaim

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[127] New York Times, 10 January 1997, 10.

would never substantially alter Maria's opinion. Maria would continue to encounter Mrs. Stevens at important weddings and evening social events that she attended with the Judge. If Maria ever saw Marietta Stevens as a social rival, it is only because she felt threatened by the latter's ability to succeed by subverting traditional feminine values. Publicity would continue to provide women like Mrs. Stevens with leverage, however. Publicity would increasingly guarantee that Mrs. Stevens received invitations to important events, forcing Maria into social contact with a woman that she did not like or respect. Maria, however, would never bestow the unconditional social recognition that Mrs. Stevens sought.

Caroline Schermerhorn Astor

Throughout Ward McAllister's association with the Patriarchs, New York's women elites continued to provide social opportunity for their children as they had in the past. McAllister's memoir, Society As I Have Found It, overlooks this steady, feminine social presence. Ultimately, McAllister's decision to abandon the Family Circle Dancing Class and organize the Junior Patriarchs can be seen as a response to the increasing prominence of the women's Assemblies and Cotillion organizations. Similarly, his decision to forego the Junior Patriarchs to concentrate on a New Year's gala for young men is a tacit admission of the superior quality of women's social functions. The extent to which women grasped the significance of their accomplishment is open to question. Nonetheless, the women of society had bested men in a public competition over the city's social calendar. As the Patriarchs and the so-called Matriarchs vied for the services of the restaurant Delmonico's and the loyalty of their subscribers, the ability of these competing groups to offer guests the exclusivity they desired became the critical determinant of

longevity. In the end, the flowers, food and wine provided by McAllister could not compensate for the greater social desirability of those families included in the women's functions.

McAllister also implies that he discovered and anointed society's future leader Caroline Schermerhorn Astor.[128] Caroline Astor left no personal records to dispute this assertion. Because members of the Astor family destroyed boxes of documents relevant to the estate, there are no pertinent contemporaneous sources.[129] As a consequence, McAllister's rendition of his relationship with Caroline Astor remains unchallenged. McAllister met Caroline Schermerhorn Astor at a time when she "had daughters to introduce into society."[130] In conjunction with the Patriarchs' organization in 1872, McAllister encountered this "silent power that had always been recognized and felt in the community."[131] McAllister had previously boasted of his "close intimacy" with Caroline's in-laws the William B. Astors, honoring their friendship with an elaborate dinner in 1859.[132] In view of this existing relationship, McAllister simply prevailed upon Caroline Astor to assist his social management agenda.

Caroline's motives for aiding McAllister are obscured, however, by her wealth and prominence at the time of their initial meeting. Described as a woman of "sweetness and

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[128] Frederick Townsend Martin also asserts that the "all powerful" McAllister designated Caroline Astor to serve as social leader. See Frederick Townsend Martin, Things I Remember, 259.

[129] Eric Homberger, Mrs. Astor's New York, 267.

[130] Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Found It, Annotated Edition, 221.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Ibid., 78.

tact," Caroline Astor did not need Ward McAllister to affirm her social credentials.[133] According to a Schermerhorn genealogist, the American branch of this Dutch family instinctively avoided "unusual publicity and conditions leading to conspicuous public notice."[134] The Schermerhorn name carried a "most serious sense of honor and self respect."[135] Prior to her initial encounter with McAllister, Caroline already enjoyed the recognition of "not only the fashionable people, but by the solid old quiet element as well."[136] Neither Caroline nor her family were strangers to New York society. Caroline Webster, the youngest of nine children, was born in New York on September 22, 1830 to Abraham and Helen White Schermerhorn. Her father's family traced its American origins to the 1643 immigration of Jan Jensen Schermerhorn from Holland to Albany, New York, where he traded European goods for animal skins with Indian tribes along the Hudson River. Accused by Governor Peter Stuyvestant of selling arms to the Mohawks, Schermerhorn relocated to New Amsterdam.

Unlike other prominent families of Dutch descent, the Schermerhorns did not receive land as an inducement to settlement. They flourished in New York through their talent for prudent commercial management and wise investment. At the time of the American Revolution, Peter Schermerhorn, Caroline's grandfather, removed his small

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[133] Frederick Townsend Martin, Things I Remember, 259.

[134] Richard Schermerhorn, Schermerhorn Genealogy, (New York: Tobias A. Wright, 1914), 48.

[135] Ibid.

[136] Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Found It, 221.

merchant fleet from New York to Hyde Park, New York, probably to avoid seizure.[137] Peter returned to Manhattan in 1783 to establish a shipping and ship chandlery concern on Water Street. Peter lived with his wife, the former Elizabeth Bussing, and five children in nearby homes also on Water Street. The family moved in 1799 away from the commercial district into a home at 68 Broadway. By 1796, Schermerhorn had been named a director of the Bank of New York, a position he maintained until his death in 1826.

In addition to his shipping interests, Peter began to invest in New York real estate which became the basis of his family's fortune. In 1795, he purchased, with his brother Simon, a 160 acre parcel of land in Gowanus, northwestern Brooklyn, where the family maintained a summer residence for many years. A portion of this property later served as the site of Greenwood Cemetery. In 1802, he purchased several acres at the foot of Eighty-Second Street in Manhattan Peter also built a row of nine federal style houses, known as Schermerhorn Row, near Fulton Street. In New York, Peter served as magistrate in the city government and became active in the laity of the Dutch Reformed Church. When his two sons Peter, Jr. and Abraham joined his ship chandlery business in 1802 and 1808, respectively, the firm reorganized as Peter Schermerhorn & Sons. Although Peter, Jr. joined his father as a director of the Bank of New York, the two brothers pursued separate commercial opportunities. Peter, Sr. eventually purchased his brother Simon's share of the Gowanus property and conveyed it in tact to his son Abraham in 1816. Caroline's grandfather Peter Schermerhorn died in 1826.

After initially joining his father and later his brother in the family's chandlery

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[137] Richard Schermerhorn, 159.

business, Caroline Astor's uncle, Peter, Jr., opened his own firm after his father's death. He married the New York heiress Sarah Jones in 1804. Peter's growing family, which finally included six children, required a series of family moves. In 1843, the Peter Schermerhorns built a large home at Great Jones Street and Lafayette Place. Active in social affairs, the Peter Schermerhorns' fancy dress ball of 1845 is recalled by former mayor Philip Hone as one of the most opulent entertainments of the period.[138] The Peter Schermerhorns also enjoyed a summer residence at Sixty-Seventh Street in Manhattan. Peter's wife Sarah inherited this property, a portion of the old Louvre Farm on the East River, from her father's estate. In 1818, Peter purchased an adjacent farm, renaming the combined properties "Belmont Farm." Elected to the Vestry of Grace Episcopal Church in 1820, Peter later served as church Warden, beginning in 1845. Additionally, Peter supported the Italian Opera Company and the Richmond Hill Theater as well as he participated in the founding of the Knickerbocker Society.[139] Four of his six children survived into adulthood: Jones, Peter, Edmund, and William Colford.[140]

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[138] Eric Homberger, 238.

[139] Ibid. See also Philip Hone, Saturday, September 29, 1832, 1: 79.

[140] John Jones Schermerhorn married Mary Hone, daughter of former New York mayor Philip Hone, in 1832. Of this union, Hone wrote that "my beloved child could not have made a choice more pleasing." Philip Hone, Diary, Tuesday, September 4, 1832, 2:74-65. See also Philip Hone, Diary, Wednesday, November 28, 1832, 2: 81. William Colford Schermerhorn became "the most notable" of his siblings. Educated at Columbia Grammar School and later Columbia College, he earned a law degree in 1860 also from that institution. In 1893, he became Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Columbia University. Instrumental in the relocation of the school from Forty Ninth Street to Morningside Heights, Schermerhorn made several large endowments for buildings on the new campus. Schermerhorn, a supporter of other large educational and cultural institutions as well as an active club man, married Annie Cottenet, the daughter of Francis Cottenet, in 1845. The couple had three daughters. New York Times, 2 January 1903, 1. The Manhattan real estate, auctioned after his death, included the Schermerhorn

Like his brother Peter, Caroline's father Abraham Schermerhorn became one of New York's wealthiest men, prospering initially as a ship chandler and then through real estate investment. Abraham owned Manhattan properties, a large tract on the Hudson River in Riverdale as well as the Brooklyn real estate that he received from his father. Former mayor Philip Hone recalled Abraham's profitable sale of Gowanus farm in 1835 for $600 an acre. "Four years ago, having got out of conceit of it as a residence, he offered it for sale at $20,000, and would have taken $18,000, today he pockets $102,000 and regrets that he sold cheap."[141] In addition to his commercial interests, Abraham became a communicant of Grace Episcopal Church. He joined the Union Club. In 1809, he married Helen, the daughter of Henry White and Anne Van Cortlandt. The couple had nine children, seven of whom survived into adulthood.[142] Of these, the two surviving Schermerhorn sons both died childless at an early age.

The Abraham Schermerhorns moved several times before they settled into a large home on Greenwich Street with a garden extending to the Hudson River. The lawyer George Templeton Strong characterized the Schermerhorn residence as a "palazzo."[143] The family summered on their farm in Brooklyn and later at their estate on the East River near Seventy-Third Street in Manhattan. His grandson Walter Suydam remembered

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farm at Sixty-Sixth Street and the East River. A portion of this property sold for $700,000 to John D. Rockefeller for the Rockefeller Medical Institute. New York Times, 10 February 1903, 16.

[141] Philip Hone, January 14, 1935, I:147-148.

[142] Richard Schermerhorn, 166.

[143] George Templeton Strong, October 6, 1873, 4:496.

Abraham's fondness for entertaining friends with meals of "bear meat and madeira."[144] The Schermerhorn's fancy dress ball of February 26, 1829, however, indicates grander standards of family hospitality.[145] Additionally, an invitation to one of the first New York Assemblies shows that Abraham Schermerhorn had lent his name to this group's management.[146] Caroline's four older sisters married within her parents' social circle: Anna who married Maria Daly's cousin Charles Suydam in 1849, Catherine who married Benjamin Welles in June 1850, Helen who married Washington Irving's brother John Treat Irving, and Elizabeth who married James J. Jones.[147]

As the youngest child, Caroline who was born September 22, 1830, became the last Schermerhorn daughter to wed. Nicknamed "Lina" by her family, Caroline received all of the advantages afforded by her privileged upbringing. Schooled in a private female academy managed by a French emigre, Mrs. Bensee, Caroline learned the social graces appropriate to a girl whose family possessed both wealth and social standing. She also began to cultivate what would become her lifelong preferences for French manners, art, fashion and cuisine. Fluent in the French language, Caroline, as an adult, spent several

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[144] Walter L. Suydam, "Letter to Richard Schermerhorn," n.d. Cited in Richard Schermerhorn, 168.

[145] Eric Homberger, 127-128. See also George Templeton Strong, November 30, 1848, I: 336.

[146] New York Times, 11 February 1894, 2.

[147] Anna Schermerhorn Suydam died in 1886. New York Times, 26 November 1886, 5. Benjamin Sumner Welles, a native of Boston, married Catherine Schermerhorn. Welles later discontinued his dry goods business to manage his estates in New York. The couple had a son Benjamin and two daughters. New York Times, 13 March 1904, 7. Elizabeth Schermerhorn Jones died in 1874. New York Times, 23 August 1874, 5.

months annually in her Paris apartment at 146 Avenue Champs-Elysees. Caroline's father Abraham Schermerhorn died in February 1850 which may have delayed her family's plans for her successful marriage. Now wealthy in her own right under the terms of her father's will, Caroline at age twenty required a husband of assured financial circumstance and family position.[148]

The Schermerhorns found a suitable match for Caroline in William Backhouse Astor, the second son of William B. and Margaret Armstrong Astor. By 1850, the Astors had made a "successful transition from 'new money' to a respected and generally admired position" among New York's social prominent.[149] The son of a German butcher, John Jacob, the first American Astor, rose from penniless immigrant to accumulate the nation's largest fortune.[150] Former mayor Philip Hone concluded that this "immense, gigantic fortune was the fruit of his own labor, unerring sagacity and far-seeing penetration. He came to this country...with a determination to be rich, and the ability to carry it into

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[148] In 1862, Caroline inherited the estate of her bachelor brother Archibald Schermerhorn, leaving her sisters Anna Suydam and Helen Irving "wrathful." George Templeton Strong, May 3, 1862, 3:222. In 1883, after the death of his widow, some of Abraham Schermerhorn's real estate holdings sold at public auction. This sale, including parcels of downtown Manhattan real estate and property in Riverdale, New York, brought "prices so low" that the auction was adjourned before all property was sold. Pew No. 165 at Grace Episcopal Church also sold for $2,200. Totally, this auction realized $349,900. New York Times, 31 January 1883, 3.

[149] Eric Homberger, 242.

[150] Viscount William Waldorf Astor, John Jacob Astor, (New York: Printed by Stiles & Cash, 1899); Kenneth K. Porter, John Jacob Astor: Business Man, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1931). See also John D. Haeger, "John Jacob Astor and the Historians: Old Myths and New Interpretations," Paper prepared for the Conference on New York and the Rise of American Capitalism, (New York: New-York Historical Society, May 18-19, 1984); Frederick K. Saunders, "The Astor Library," New England Magazine 8, no.2(April 1890): 149-159; "The Astor Family in New York," Scribner's Monthly, 11, no.6(April 1876): 879-886.

effect."[151] At the time of Astor's death in 1848, the bulk of these assets, valued at some eighteen million dollars, passed to his oldest son William Backhouse Astor. William doubled or trebled this legacy through his careful management of the family's extensive property holdings. In 1818, William married Margaret Armstrong who added a patrician decorum to the rough edges associated with the Astor's newly minted wealth. Her father General John Armstrong had served in the cabinet of President James Madison, while her mother had been born a Livingston. The couple lived first on lower Broadway before moving to a large home on Lafayette Place. Margaret and William Astor achieved a reputation for their polite, restrained entertainments, attracting the praise of social conservatives like Maria Lydig Daly. Even the lawyer George Templeton Strong, generally critical of the very rich, found William B. Astor "always very kind and polite...very liberal, unostentatious, and intelligent."[152]

Because of their great wealth and respect for New York's traditions, the William Astors required that their children marry well. To protect their holdings in tact, the Astors required that the husbands and wives of their five children relinquish any subsequent claim to the Astor fortune, including a woman's dower right to inheritance. The family celebrated the 1846 marriage of their oldest son John Jacob III to Charlotte Augusta Gibbes, the daughter of a wealthy and prominent South Carolina family. These nuptials, attended by former mayor Philip Hone, drew a "splendid crowd...The spacious mansion in

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[151] Philip Hone, Wednesday, March 29, 1848, 2: 844-850.

[152] George Templeton Strong, May 15, 1857, 2:336.

Lafayette place was open from cellar to garret, blazing with a thousand lights."[153] The 1844 wedding of their oldest daughter Laura to the landed patrician Franklin Hughes Delano brought equal satisfaction to the Astor household as did the marriage of their youngest daughter Mary Alida to the Englishman John Carey, Jr.[154] The marriage of the William Astor's youngest son Henry, in contrast, produced lasting family discord. In 1871, Henry married Malvina Dinehart, the daughter of his father's gardener, without any contractual protection of his inheritance. William Astor, as a consequence, reduced his son's patrimony from $150,000 to $30,000 and revoked two trust funds totaling $400,000. Throughout his life, Henry lived on an estate in Columbia County, New York, permanently estranged from his family.[155]

To the Schermerhorns, the William Astor's second son, William Backhouse, appeared to be a good marriage prospect. Born in July 1830, William graduated from

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[153] Philip Hone, December 16, 1846, 2:781.

[154] Alida Astor Carey brought a dowry of $200,000 to her marriage, with an additional $100,000 in property. With homes in New York and Newport, Rhode Island, the Careys participated in a variety of philanthropies, including the Sheltering Arms, and the Eye and Ear Infirmary. John Carey served president of the Saint George Society. John and Alida Carey died on April 2 and April 23, 1881, respectively. Their estates passed separately to their daughter Mary Alida. New York Times, 28 April 1881, 5; 22 May 1881, 5.

[155] For the rest of his life, Henry Astor and his wife lived quietly on their large West Copake estate. Henry invested in real estate in surrounding Columbia County, New York. He also received income from a trust, established for him by his grandfather John Jacob Astor, which included the rental income from 125 parcels of New York City real estate in the hotel and theater district. Upon his death in 1918, this property, valued at six million dollars, was auctioned with the proceeds divided among his siblings' heirs as Henry Astor died without issue. Henry Astor never reconciled with his family, remaining content to live quietly as a gentleman farmer. New York Times, 8 June 1918, 11; 9 June 1918, 10; 11 June 1918, 11; 1 August 1919, 12; 10 June 1920, 1; 7 February 1920, 20; 15 February 1920, W20; 29 February 1920, W22. See also David Sinclair, 143-144.

Columbia College in 1849 near the head of his class. He completed his studies with an extended trip, traveling eastward through Egypt and the Middle East. Upon his return, he worked in the Astor offices on Twenty-Sixth Street until his father's death in 1875. William, possessed of both wealth and intelligence, suited the Schermerhorn's requirements for Caroline. The two families reached a financial accord under which Caroline received life interest in an annual income of $75,000.[156] The couple married on September 24, 1853 at Grace Episcopal Church. With their combined fortunes, Caroline and William Backhouse Astor became one of the wealthiest households in the city. The lawyer George Templeton Strong snidely hoped that "the young couple will be able to live on their little incomes."[157]

The William Backhouse Astors first resided on Laight Street in lower Manhattan before moving into a home on East Twenty-Second Street. In 1859, they moved into a mansion on the southwest corner of Fifth Avenue at Thirty-Fourth Street. In this new home, Caroline devoted herself to her family. She bore five children within the first ten years of her marriage: Emily born in 1854, Helen Schermerhorn born in 1855, Charlotte Augusta born in 1858, Caroline Schermerhorn born in 1861, and John Jacob Astor IV born in 1864. Caroline Astor remained, throughout her life, a woman of intense personal privacy. Although there are no records of her charitable or social pursuits outside the

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[156] The ante-nuptial agreement included securities, valued at $184, 555, and the property at the southwest corner of Thirty-Fourth Street and Fifth Avenue, and the adjoining property of Thirty-Fourth Street. Income from this property was intended for the use of William Backhouse Astor for life. Upon his death, the income of $75,000 of the trust passed to Caroline, and upon her death to their issue. New York Times, 1 December 1894, 14; 25 December 1894, 3.

[157] George Templeton Strong, June 13, 1853, 2:126.

family, there is also nothing to indicate that she did anything other than fulfill her domestic obligations. Caroline honored her cordial relationship with Augusta Gibbes Astor by naming her third child after her sister-in-law. Other than this friendship, Caroline Astor is recalled as "kind and polite" by those who knew her superficially.[158]

Bearing this in mind, Caroline Astor's ascent from devoted wife and mother to the undisputed social leadership of New York requires an imaginative leap. Caroline is often presented as a woman driven by ambition who sought to overcome the reduction in social prestige implied by her marriage to the Astor's second son.[159] This motivation seems unlikely, however, as her sister-in-law Augusta's intellectual and charitable interests never threatened Caroline's social ambition. Caroline did, however, begin to follow a "methodical" social calendar of regular dinners and "one large evening reception" after her family moved into their Fifth Avenue mansion.[160] Habitually, she also traveled to Paris in February where she resided for several months before opening her Newport, Rhode Island, cottage in July for the summer.

The reasons for Caroline Astor's determined move into society are best understood within the interpretative framework of her own household. Her marriage to William Astor proved disappointing. After his father's death in 1875, William inherited one half of the family fortune, after payment of relatively nominal specific bequests from the large estate. Unlike his older brother John Jacob who personally supervised his

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[158] George Templeton Strong, June 4, 1874, 4:528.

[159] Jerry E. Patterson, 59; David Sinclair, 186.

[160] The Home Journal, unspecified reference. Cited in Jerry E. Patterson, 60.

holdings, William turned over the management of his assets to lawyers and other agents. William enjoyed the leisured life of a gentleman, indulging his fondness for horse breeding and cruising on his steam yacht. He also spent a considerable amount of time away from the city, traveling throughout Europe. When in America, he preferred winters in Florida or the country life of his "Ferncliff" estate on the Hudson River near Rhinebeck, New York, to his wife's social life in the city. Rumors circulated regarding William's philandering while away from home. Caroline responded to this situation by cultivating "the art of never looking at the things she did not want to see, never listening to words she did not wish to hear."[161] Accordingly, she "never gave vent to the faintest criticism of anything he did."[162] Upon his death in April 1892, William was remembered for his "wealth rather than his personality. He lacked the democratic ways of his elder brother and was by no means a familiar figure in this city."[163] This commentary reveals an absence of club associations as well as any scholarly or institutional interests that would have tied William to his peers in New York's elite community.

Left largely alone to rear five children, Caroline Astor proved susceptible to the flatteries of Ward McAllister. With four daughters nearing the age of social introduction, the Patriarchs promised that the Astor children would benefit through the family's participation in their new association. Caroline, like many other elites, responded to the

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[161] Elizabeth Drexel Lehr, 'King Lehr' and the Gilded Age, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1935), 84.

[162] Ibid.

[163] New York Times, 27 April 1892, 1. See also Jerry E. Patterson, 61-62; Eric Homberger, 256-257; David Sinclair, 187-188.

Patriarch's credo regarding the need for social unity. Furthermore, the group's promise of exclusivity corresponded with Caroline's own conservative standards regarding her role in the community. Caroline saw that she could serve her community's social interests through the use of her wealth and family prestige in a manner not inconsistent with her domestic duty. Caroline impressed McAllister with her "great power of analysis," "good appreciation of the value of ancestry" and "her understanding of the power of the new element."[164] Finally, Caroline possessed the means to entertain in keeping with McAllister's exalted standards.

In addition to her marital difficulties, Caroline suffered a protracted series of family disappointments and deaths which also influenced her need to distance herself from household matters. The oldest daughter Emily's decision to marry the wealthy Newport socialite James Van Alen dismayed the family. Slavishly devoted to English aristocratic traditions, Van Alen affected a monocle, peppering his speech with British colloquialisms. Emily's father William reportedly exclaimed upon learning of the 1876 nuptials, "Damned if I want my family mixed in with the Van Alens."[165]

Helen's decision to wed James R. Roosevelt in 1878 proved more compatible with Caroline's expectations for her children. Patricians viewed James Roosevelt, familiarly known as "Rosie," as a "gentleman of culture and of leisure, endowed with an ample fortune and with an honored name."[166] Through his late mother, James Roosevelt also

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[164] Ward McAllister, Society As I Have Found It, Annotated Edition, 222.

[165] Quotation attributed to William Backhouse Astor. Cited in Eric Homberger, 256.

[166] New York Times, 19 November 1878, 1.

claimed kinship with the Merediths of Baltimore and the Howlands of New York. Caroline Astor celebrated this union with an elaborate morning wedding at Grace Church where the "great good natured sexton Brown" received guests at the door."[167] Afterwards, one thousand friends and family gathered at the Astor home where the bridal party received guests in front of a large mirror on which the "name of the bride was inscribed in violets upon a bank of white carnations, tea roses and other flowers."[168] A year after Helen's marriage to James Roosevelt, the Astor's third child Charlotte Augusta married the Philadelphia banker James Coleman Drayton in a ceremony at the Astor mansion in 1879.[169]

In 1881, several deaths in the immediate family interrupted the progression of Astor daughters to the marriage altar. Caroline's mother Helen White Schermerhorn died in May at the age of ninety.[170] A few months later in November, Emily Astor Van Alen died in Newport, Rhode Island.[171] As the family mourned these losses, young Caroline, then age sixteen, expressed her wish to marry Marshall Orme Wilson, son of the Civil War profiteer Richard T. Wilson. Wilson, a Georgia native, amassed a $500,000 fortune from a store near Knoxville, Tennessee, selling cotton blankets, labeled as woollen, to the Confederate Army. After the war, Wilson represented the cotton interests of the former

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[167] Ibid.

[168] Ibid.

[169] New York Times, 21 October 1879, 5.

[170] New York Times, 26 May 1881, 5.

[171] New York Times, 23 November 1881, 5. James Van Alen died in 1923. His oldest son, James Van Alen, Jr. received a life interest in the residue of his father's estate, valued in excess of two million dollars. He died in Paris in 1927. New York Times, 31 May 1927, 21.

Confederate States in England, relocating his business to New York where he increased his fortune through speculation in cotton and horse-car franchises. Richard Wilson lived extravagantly with his wife and five children in the former Tweed mansion at 511 Fifth Avenue. Mrs. Wilson, the former Melissa Clementine Johnston of Macon, Georgia, orchestrated her family's social ascent in New York through the fortuitous marriages of her five children. In 1878, prior to Carrie Astor's decision, Orme Wilson's sister May married Ogden Goelet whose family's New York real estate holdings equaled those of the Astors.[172]

Initially, Caroline stood "bitterly opposed" to her youngest daughter's desire to marry the son of a shoddy merchant and refused her consent.[173] She relented, however, and staged an elaborate wedding in 1884 for the couple in the Astor home at 350 Fifth Avenue. Florists filled every corner of the mansion "with cameos of color against a background of green."[174] One thousand guests witnessed the Episcopal ceremony preformed in front of a fireplace, flanked by "huge pyramids" of pink and white roses which were joined by a "veil formed of lilies of the valley and pink roses interwoven."[175]

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[172] The marriages of the other Wilson children include: Belle Wilson's 1888 marriage to the Englishman Michael Henry Herbert, son of Lord Herbert of Lea; Grace Wilson's 1896 marriage to Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr.; Richard T. Wilson, Jr.'s 1902 marriage to Marion Mason of Boston. Clementine Johnston Wilson died in New York in 1908. New York Times, May 31, 1908, 9. By the time of his death in 1910, Richard T. Wilson had parlayed his Civil War profits into a $16,000,000 fortune. New York Times, 20 November 1910, 1; 27 November 1910, 13; 25 May 1912, 1.

[173] Elizabeth Drexel Lehr, 84.

[174] New York Times, 19 November 1884, 5.

[175] Ibid.

Wedding gifts, numerous and grand, included a new Fifth Avenue home from the bride's father as well as a $75,000 diamond necklace from the groom. Caroline's trousseau, purchased in Paris from the House of Worth, included two evening gowns, two shorter dinner dresses and an elaborate traveling costume.[176]

In 1891, the Astors joined in celebration of the marriage of their youngest child John Jacob to Ava Willing of Philadelphia. Ava, the daughter of Alice Barton and Edward Shippen Willing, came from a wealthy and accomplished family, prominent for several generations.[177] The Willing pedigree suited Caroline's hopes for her son Jack. Ava, said to be a "most superior and accomplished girl," appeared ready to accept the challenge of the Astor name in New York.[178] The New York press followed a parade of the city's wealthy, that included Mrs. Paran Stevens, to Philadelphia in February, noting the separate arrivals of the groom's "portly, aristocratic-looking" father and his "matronly-looking,... tall and very pale" mother.[179] The Episcopal ceremony, held in the Broad Street mansion

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[176] The M. Orme Wilsons became fixtures in New York and Newport society. In 1901, they moved into a new home which they built after a French palace at 3 East 64th Street in Manhattan. They opened this house with a musicale for three hundred guests, which included a performance by the tenor Enrico Caruso. The couple had two sons. Caroline Wilson became actively involved in animal rights, serving as vice president of the New York Women's League for Animals. Additionally, she served as a director of Beekman Street Hospital and the Merchant Marine Library Service. Orme Wilson, who joined his father in business, died in 1926. New York Times, 3 April 1926, 19; 6 April 1926, 29; 20 April 1926, 19. Caroline Astor Wilson died in 1948. New York Times, 14 September 1948, 29; 16 September 1948, 29. Shortly after her death, the Indian government purchased the Wilson mansion on 64th Street as its New York consulate. New York Times, 12 December 1848, 6.

[177] New York Times, 8 July 1902, 1.

[178] New York Times, 18 February 1891, 1.

[179] New York Times, 17 February 1891, 5.

of the bride's parents was followed by a wedding breakfast and a large reception for five hundred guests.[180]

Caroline Astor's ability to sublimate her grief over the loss of close family members and any misgivings she might have harbored about her children's marriages demonstrates her fortitude and her devotion to her family. Circumstances surrounding the marriage of Charlotte Augusta and James Coleman Drayton tested these qualities again.

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[180] The marriage of John Jacob Astor and Ava Willing ended in a publicized, divorce in 1909. The proceedings aroused controversy due to the identity of the parties involved and the secrecy surrounding the matter. One co-respondent was named in the sealed record. The couple agreed on shared custody of their two children. New York Times, 27 October 1909, 9; New York Times, 29 October 1909, 5. An interlocutory divorce decree was granted in New City, Rockland County, New York in November 1909. New York Times, 9 November 1909, 1. See also New York Times, 10 November 1909, 1; 10 November 1909, 8; 11 November 1909, 8, 18; 12 November 1909, 6. The final divorce decree was issued in May of the following year. New York Times, 2 May 1910, 1. Ava Willing Astor reportedly received alimony of $50,000, a year. New York Times, 3 March 1910, 1. John Jacob Astor, known as Colonel Astor for his service in the Spanish-American War, followed his business interests and pursued hobbies of yachting and aeronautics. An inventor, he also discovered a process to convert peat deposits into fuel for power. New York Times, 21 May 1909, 1; 8 December 1910, 13. In 1911, Colonel Astor at age forty-seven announced his engagement to Madeline Talmadge Force, the eighteen year old daughter of a New York businessman. New York Times, 2 August, 1911, 1. Prior to the marriage, which occurred on September 10, 1911, Astor settled the sum of $5,000,000 on his bride who relinquished her dower rights to the Astor holdings. New York Times, 10 September 1911, 1. In April 1912, John Jacob was lost at sea on the Titanic returning to New York after his honeymoon. New York Times, 19 April 1912, 1. His body was recovered and interred in the Astor vault at Trinity Cemetery. New York Times, 5 May 1912, 4. Madeline Force Astor survived to relate the circumstances of this ordeal. New York Times, 2 April 1912, 2. In August, she delivered a son by her late husband, naming him John Jacob. New York Times, 15 August 1912, 9. Most of Astor's estate, valued initially at $150,000,000, passed in tact to his oldest son Vincent. Three million dollars of this amount remained in trust for his unborn child. New York Times, 7 May 1912, 1. See also New York Times, 13 August 1912, 1. In 1916, Madeline Force Astor married, William K. Dick, a Manhattan sugar refiner, relinquishing all claims to the Astor estate. New York Times, 18 June 1916, 1; 23 June 1916, 11. In 1933, Madeline divorced her second husband to marry the Italian pugilist Enzo Fiermonte, whom she had hired as a boxing instructor for her children. New York Times, 5 June 1933, 12; 18 June 1933, 25; 5 September 1933, 22; 21 March 1933, 44. Ava Willing Astor, John Jacob's first wife, married the English Lord Ribblesdale, a widower. New York Times, 2 June 1919, 1.

Within a year of the Astor's marital triumph in Philadelphia, rumors circulated regarding the marriage of Augusta and Coleman Drayton. The couple had lived in New York before moving to Bernardsville, New Jersey, in 1886. By early 1892, letters appeared in the press indicating that Augusta had pursued an extramarital relationship with a New Jersey neighbor Hallett Alsop Borrowe, son of a vice president of the Equitable Life Assurance Society. News of the troubled marriage traveled to Europe where Coleman Drayton challenged Borrowe to a duel in France to assuage his honor. Acting under the advice of a French Jury of Honor, Borrowe refused this contest which prompted Drayton publically to brand his rival a coward. In New York, the Astors attempted to reach a financial settlement with Drayton whereby Augusta would pay her estranged husband $20,000 annually for his support and to retain custody of their four children.[181] In March, Drayton and Borrowe arrived in the city, having crossed the Atlantic together on the White Star steamer "Majestic."[182] Although Drayton refused all interviews and retreated to New Jersey, his coincidental crossing with Borrowe had fanned public interest.[183] The convivial Borrowe appeared unfazed by his notoriety, traveling throughout the city in the company of a seasoned duelist Harry Vane Millbank.[184]

Borrowe, a few weeks later, returned to Europe to duel with Edward Fox near

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[181] New York Times, 19 March 1892, 8.

[182] New York Times, 24, March 1892, 1.

[183] New York Times, 25 March 1892, 2 See also New York Times, 8 April 1892, 9.

[184] New York Times, 1 April 1892, 9. Millbank, a morphine addict in poor health, died in a sanitarium in Davos, Switzerland, a few months later. New York Times, 27 October 1892, 4.

Ostend, Belgium, over the publication of letters pertaining to the Drayton marriage.[185] Despite the best efforts of the Belgian police to stop this contest, the duel ended when Borrowe's bullet pierced the jacket of his rival.[186] On April 25, amid the on-going embarrassment, William Astor died of an aneurism in a Paris hotel. The family returned his body to New York for a brief Episcopal ritual at Trinity Chapel and burial in the Astor's granite vault at the church.[187] Coleman Drayton, Augusta's estranged husband, did not attend the services.

Under the terms of his sixty-six page will, William Astor assured "to leave no loophole by which any of the Astor property might be dissipated, and to make every possible provision" that the bulk of the estate pass to a single male successor.[188] While John Jacob inherited most of his father's assets, a codicil in the will revoked an $850,000 bequest intended for Augusta Drayton, leaving this amount in trust for her four children. William's widow Caroline received "in addition to an annuity settled upon her by an ante-nuptial agreement, the household and stable at 350 Fifth Avenue" and the house in Newport, Rhode Island and its contents.[189]

William had not been particularly generous with his wife in his will. Furthermore, a year after her husband's death, Caroline's daughter Helen Roosevelt died in Ascot,

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[185] New York Times, 24, April 1892, 2.

[186] New York Times, 25 April 1892, 1. See also New York Times, 26 April 1892, 1. A second duel in the matter occurred a few days later in Belgium between Harry Vane Millbank and an unnamed Frenchman who was wounded in the hip. New York Times, 29 April 1892, 5.

[187] New York Times, 13 May 1892, 9.

[188] New York Times, 14 May 1892, 8.

[189] Ibid.

England, in 1893.[190] Her sister Helen Irving also died at the end of this same year.[191] Her nephew William Waldorf's wife Mamie died unexpectedly in early 1895.[192] Caroline withdrew from society in bereavement for five years over the loss of these important family members. Despite her absence from public life, the details of the Drayton-Borrowe affair ground on in the press.[193] Caroline, throughout this period, supported her daughter Augusta with financial assistance and the emotional shelter of her home.[194] In 1894, Coleman Drayton sued his wife for divorce on statutory grounds, naming Hallett Alsop Borrowe as co-respondent.[195] Conservative families like the Astors frowned upon divorce as a remedy for marital unhappiness. The news media, however, spared no details

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[190] New York Times, 14 November 1893, 5. Upon her death, the couple's only son James R. Roosevelt inherited a fortune valued at $1,500,000. James R. Roosevelt, Sr. requested an annual allowance of $15,000 annually from the estate in 1894 for the maintenance of James and his sister. The justice who ruled in the matter remarked that "children should be brought up accustomed to prudence and moderation." Leaving Harvard College after his freshman year, James, Jr. married Sadie Messinger, without his father's consent, in a simple ceremony at New York's City Hall. New York Times, 19 October 1900, 1. James R. Roosevelt, Sr. remarried Elizabeth R. Riley in December 1914. He died at his Hyde Park estate in 1927. New York Times, 8 May 1927, 29. Elizabeth Riley Roosevelt died at Hyde Park in 1948. New York Times, 20 July 1948, 23.

[191] New York Times, 20 December 1893, 5. John Treat Irving, an 1829 graduate of Columbia College, practiced law in New York. He also authored several popular books, including "The Attorney" and "Indian Sketches." He died in 1906, survived by two daughters, Helen C. and Frances R. Irving. New York Times, 28 February 1906, 9.

[192] New York Times, 9 January 189, 3; 13 January 1895, 12.

[193] New York Times, 6 May 1892, 5; 18 August 1892, 8; 1 November 1893, 5.

[194] Elizabeth Drexel Lehr, 85. See also New York Times, 11 June 1893, 15.

[195] New York Times, 6 September 1894, 1.

of the troubled relationship.[196] Augusta eventually countersued Drayton on the grounds of desertion, asserting that she had attempted a reconciliation upon the advice of her late father for her children's sake. In March 1896, the matter concluded with a divorce decree which found that Drayton's "suspicions of his wife's infidelity were not destitute of foundation."[197] Despite these implications, both Augusta Astor Drayton and Hallett Alsop Borrowe followed separate paths after the divorce became final. In November 1896, Borrowe married Anna Austin Corbin whose late father had been President of the Long Island Railroad.[198] Augusta, left virtually penniless under the terms of her father's will, accepted a million dollar gift from her younger brother. She returned to Europe where in 1897 she eventually married George O. Haig, a wealthy Scotch distiller.[199]

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[196] New York Times, 6 September 1894, 2; 7 September 1894, 1; 1 November 1894, 1; 31 January 1895, 8; 5 February 1895, 9; 29 March 1895, 1; 28 February 1896, 1.

[197] New York Times, 24 March 1896, 2.

[198] New York Times, 8 November 1896, 5. Annie Corbin Borrowe did not prevail in an extended and bitter litigation over the trust accounting of her father's three million dollar estate. New York Times, 28 November 1897, 5; 22 December 1897, 1;23 December 1897, 1; 11 May 1898, 12; 2 July 1898, 4; 10 October 1898, 1; 3 January 1903, 2; 2 June 1901, 5; 16 June 1901, 3; 22 December 1903, 16. The Borrowes lived at 749 Fifth Avenue for most of their married life. During the Spanish American War, Borrowe volunteered as a private with the Rough Rider brigade organized by Theodore Roosevelt. Borrowe, with the aid of a new 'dynamite gun' distinguished himself at the Battle of Santiago, earning the rank of Captain. He entered World War I with the rank of Lieutenant, serving in France as a liaison officer. Borrowe was awarded the Croix de Guerre and retired from active duty with the rank of Major of Reserves. He died in 1921. New York Times, 23 May 1921, 10. Anna Corbin Borrowe died in 1930. New York Times, 14 October 1930, 25.

[199] New York Times, 10 December 1909, 11. George Haig died in 1907. In 1909, Mrs. Haig denied rumors of her intention to marry William Phillips, Secretary of the United States Embassy at London. Augusta Astor Drayton Haig died in 1920. New York Times, 31 July 1920. Coleman Drayton never remarried, spending much of his time abroad before his death in 1934. New York Times, 12 November 1934, 19.

As indicated by the sordid circumstances of the Drayton divorce, Caroline Astor could not manage the lives of her adult children. While she could offer support and comfort, she could not choose their marriage partners nor could she insure their happiness. Caroline, seasoned by her own experience with William Astor, understood that even marriages, forged as well-intentioned family alliances, could deteriorate into stressful relationships characterized by mistrust and strife. Caroline could, however, succeed in other ways. Through the encouragement of men like Ward McAllister, Caroline realized that she could control the form and content of her social life. Over time, she derived satisfaction in staging entertainments that both pleased and impressed her guests. McAllister, content to hide his own social ambition behind the skirt of Caroline Astor, saw a larger purpose in her talent as a hostess. Caroline's social abilities complemented the Patriarchs' mission of social integration. Caroline had personally experienced the need to accommodate the aspirations of wealthy, socially ambitious families. In 1883, Caroline swallowed her scruples and paid a social call on Alva Smith Vanderbilt, a monied hostess of increasing reputation. Caroline, through the exercise of this courtesy, extended her social recognition, insuring that the Astors would receive invitations to the Vanderbilt's much heralded costume ball.[200]

Caroline appreciated that Alva Vanderbilt's extravagant hospitality threatened to undermine the social unity sought by the socially conservative Patriarchs. Bearing this in mind, Caroline staged a series of regularly scheduled dinners, receptions and balls that included both social conservatives and newer, younger individuals. Ward McAllister

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[200] David Sinclair, 191; Eric Homberger, 270-272.

assisted in the management of these events with his simple declarations of their exclusivity. Whether or not, Caroline actually succeeded in her commitment to exclusivity is a matter of conjecture, however. Her guest lists always included "the very fashionable element, the leading old families, but also any distinguished foreigners or visitors to New York."[201] While she avoided extreme changes to her list, Caroline continually revised it so that her annual ball acquired a "pre-eminent significance" among elites.[202] By the turn of the century, however, her calling list contained over 600 names and invitations to her annual Christmas Ball often exceeded 2,200.[203] Sometimes, 800 to 1,000 guests crowded into her Fifth Avenue home to attend one of her large functions.[204] At her annual ball in 1898, Caroline sent invitations and ordered supper for five hundred guests. Of this number, only "three hundred fifty to four hundred guests" actually attended."[205] In 1901, some six hundred guests accepted the more than one thousand invitations delivered.[206] In reality, Caroline Astor, retained her reputation for social exclusivity because New York society deemed it necessary. Caroline's guests preferred to liken an Astor ball to an occasion in a "royal drawing room" rather than admit they had just attended another party.[207]

Caroline Astor maintained her reputation for exclusivity throughout her social

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[201] New York Times, 12 January 1904, 7.

[202] Lloyd Morris, Incredible New York, 146. See also Elizabeth Drexel Lehr, 86 - 87.

[203] Eric Homberger, 272.

[204] Ibid.

[205] New York Times, 18 January 1898, 7.

[206] New York Times, 9 January 1901, 1.

[207] New York Times, 7 January 1902, 7.

career. McAllister, acting as unofficial publicist, proclaimed her importance to a social hierarchy in need of titular leadership. Harry Lehr, a Baltimore native, succeeded McAllister as social confidante, assisting Caroline in the composition of her guest lists towards the end of her life.[208] The city's conservative establishment, who thought of themselves as society's rulers, required a figurehead to maintain their pretense of aristocracy. For her part, Caroline Astor by nature and inclination appeared willing to assume this obligation in keeping with her domestic duty to uphold the Astor name. In this regard, Caroline carefully constructed a public identity in keeping with her social prerogative. She avoided any confusion with other Astor family members, insisting that she be referred to only as "Mrs. Astor." Caroline did not need to qualify her existence with the inclusion of her husband's given name in her correct form of address. Keenly aware of her need to perform, she used her material advantage to convey her social authority. News of her weekly dinners, served by a liveried staff on gold plate, transmitted an image of her importance to others. The stately decorum associated with her other formal entertainments, her exquisitely tailored clothing and her impressive jewelry all contributed

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[208] Harry Symes Lehr, the son of a German consul in Baltimore, rose from relative obscurity to become a "social arbiter" in New York in the 1890's. In addition to Caroline Astor, Lehr became the friend and confidante of Mrs. Stuyvestant Fish, putting on parties "in which he displayed the originality and daring of Barnum." In 1901, Lehr married Elizabeth Drexel Dalghren, the daughter of the Philadelphia banker John W. Drexel and widow of John Vinton Dalghren. Before marriage, Elizabeth agreed to provide her husband an annual allowance of $25,000 in addition to his personal expenses. Later in life, Lehr devoted himself to business interests in Europe and to the care of wounded soldiers during World War I. He died in Baltimore in 1929. New York Times, 4 January 1929, 18. Elizabeth Drexel Lehr later chronicled the couple's loveless marriage in her book 'King Lehr' and the Gilded Age. New York Times, 25 August 1925, BR4. In 1936, Elizabeth Lehr married John Graham Beresford, Lord Decies, an Irish peer. New York Times, 12 May 1935, 25. She died in 1944. New York Times, 14 June 1944, 19.

to the actualization of her role as society's queen.

While McAllister touted her importance to the press, Caroline removed herself from the public's gaze. She closely guarded her public image, seldom appearing outside her home. She, in fact, only dined once in public towards the end of her life.[209] When she graced a private table, she insisted upon the seat of honor to the right of her host. She did not cultivate the public's interest in her personal life or opinions, refusing interviews and the intrusions of photographers. She avoided daytime social functions to discourage others' curiosity. Finally, Caroline accomplished her public identity in keeping with traditional standards of feminine domesticity. As a woman of conservative taste and habit, Caroline used her home as a platform for her important social occasions. Seated in her drawing room, she maintained her aura of domestic privacy despite the public's awareness of her importance to society.

Irrespective of the pretense associated with her service as society's leader, Caroline respected the values of her parents' generation. She used her wealth to uphold those standards among the rich. Because of her effort to preserve women's traditional role, she won the loyalty of social conservatives like Maria Lydig Daly. Maria's notation of her attendance at an Astor ball attests to the social importance of Caroline's invitation. In December 1877, Maria remarked that she would attend "Mrs. Astor's ball this winter to see the new faces."[210] Maria clearly understood Caroline Astor's obligation to represent

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[209] Elizabeth Drexel Lehr, 82 - 83. See also Derek Wilson, The Astors, 1763 - 1992, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 204.

[210] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," December 16, 1877.

traditional standards to an integrated society just as she respected the domestic privilege implied in Caroline's invitation. Afterwards, Maria wrote of the "most beautiful ball. Everything in the best taste. The dresses beautiful and the flower ornamentation very chaste and artistic. The new ball room, all white and gold, very festive looking. We had two bands of music, one for the matronly part of the company and one for the dancers. And the house is so large, that they did not conflict in the least."[211] Maria, seldom impressed by the ability of others, appreciated Caroline's skill as a hostess.

In 1896, Caroline moved into a new white marble mansion that adjoined the home of her son John Jacob and his wife just above Sixty-Fifth Street. Designed by the architect Richard Morris Hunt, this home reportedly cost three million dollars to construct, decorate and furnish in period French furniture.[212] A removable partition between the two homes created the largest private ballroom in New York as well as the most spacious private art gallery in the country. Caroline christened her new home with a "housewarming" for a thousand guests in early January.[213] In February 1896, she hosted her first ball in the new residence, achieving an apotheosis of her social rule. Described as the "largest and most elaborate private ball of the season," this function represented Caroline's complete return to society after the deaths of her husband, daughter and sister.[214] She received six hundred guests in an ivory and gold room adjacent to the great

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[211] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," January 4, 1878.

[212] David Sinclair, 194.

[213] New York Times, 12 January 1896, 10.

[214] New York Times, 4 February 1896, 8.

entrance room. Appropriately gowned in purple velvet gown and point lace to signify her recent mourning, Caroline completed her ensemble with a coronet of diamonds and a diamond stomacher, a large broach previously owned by Marie Antoinette.[215] Floral decorations included large banks of tropical plants, interspersed with large vases of American Beauty roses and clusters of violets. Guests, who had assembled around midnight, enjoyed an elaborate evening supper before starting to dance around one in the morning.[216]

This ball, like other occasions organized by Caroline Astor, reassured those in attendance with the familiar touches that signified her wealth and social position. Guests attending an Astor ball knew what to expect from Caroline's hospitality. At large events, she usually appeared wearing a gown from the House of Worth, with magnificent jewelry, worn in an intimidating abundance. She received while standing under a life-sized portrait of her painted by Carolus Duran or seated on a gilt settee placed upon a raised dais in her drawing room.[217] After she had personally welcomed everyone, Caroline usually retired for the evening as she did not particularly enjoy dancing. Large balls required the elaborate presentation of a catered midnight supper, consisting of hot and cold courses, fruits and dessert, accompanied by champagne and French mineral water. She loved fresh flowers, filling her home with elaborate displays of long-stemmed roses, orchids and other rare blooms.

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[215] Virginia Cowles, The Astors, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 98.

[216] New York Times, 4 February 1896, 8.

[217] Elizabeth Drexel Lehr, 88 - 89.

Below stairs, the Astor servants, dressed formal livery of dark green plush coats, red whipcord vests, knee breeches and black silk stockings, performed with efficiency and discretion. Large occasions also required the temporary hire of outside help. A ball in January 1897, for five hundred guests, necessitated the use of one hundred twenty five additional waiters, footmen and kitchen help to assist the eighteen full-time household servants.[218] For this evening, the entire menu had been prepared several days in advance by fifteen assistant cooks, supervised by Caroline's personal chef. "The Astor kitchen is as large as the dining room, 30 by 40 feet. The range, which is 18 feet long, has places for five fires"[219] Kitchen duties had been organized so that fifteen assistant cooks kept food at the appropriate temperature, each supplying seven or eight waiters. Those who served the dinner could be compared to "soldiers in an army commanded by a good general."[220] These professionals always knew that the canvasback duck would be requested by most guests, while the clear soup would be in less demand.

In view of the efficiency of Caroline's staff, her parties unfolded smoothly over the course of an evening. Newspapers predictably emphasized her gown, jewelry and floral decorations in reporting these occasions. When entertaining, Caroline preferred to wear gowns purchased from Maison Worth in Paris. By 1890, the fashions of Charles Frederick Worth were recognized for their "tempting appeal to the vanities and

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[218] New York Times, 10 January 1897, 13.

[219] Ibid.

[220] Ibid.

weaknesses of a woman's heart."[221] In addition to Caroline Astor, Worth dressed crowned heads in every European court as well as stage and opera performers. Worth had earned his reputation for luxurious, beautifully made clothing. An Englishman by birth and early schooling, Worth introduced a British regard for tailoring to women's fashion. Self-taught, Worth learned the subtleties of costume design and the process of fashion change through hours spent studying the portraiture in London's National Gallery. In 1845, he moved to Paris where he developed his knowledge of luxury fabrics working as a salesman in Gagelin, an exclusive Parisian textile shop. Worth began to make clothes in a small room adjacent to the Gagelin sales floor which gave women the convenience of obtaining custom apparel, made of superior fabric, from a single location.[222]

From this modest beginning, Worth slowly built his reputation. Gagelin exhibited his fashions in their booths at the London Exposition of 1851 and the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1855, where he won gold medals for his designs. More critically, Worth attracted the interest of the wife of the French monarch Napoleon III. In 1860, the Empress Eugenie designated Worth as her official couturier. Eugenie's patronage, and that of members of her court, enabled the opening of Maison Worth at No. 7 Rue de la Paix. From this location, Worth enjoyed a long and storied career due to his abilities as a fashion innovator, his use of fine fabrics and his unusual trimmings. In executing his

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[221] New York Times, 26 July 1885, 10. See also New York Times, 31 August 1875, 4.

[222] Diana De Marly, Worth: Father of Haute Couture, (London: Elm Tree Books, 1980); Jean Phillippe Worth, A Century of Fashion, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1928); A History of Feminine Fashion, (London: Edward J. Burrow & Co., 1920); Brooklyn Museum, The House of Worth, Exhibition held at the Brooklyn Museum. May 8 - June 24, 1862.

designs, Worth standardized the parts of a garment, making them interchangeable, so that a single sleeve could be adapted to different bodices. This innovation led to a workroom so organized that he could produce one thousand white ball costumes for one royal event in 1866. Each dress, completed within a week, had to incorporate novelties so that it would not duplicate the gown worn by another guest at the same occasion.[223] Worth also became the first to use live models in his store so that women could see how a finished garment looked and moved on the body. Assisted by his wife and two sons, Worth employed up to three hundred seamstresses and other assistants by 1885.[224] A gown by Worth did not disappoint. His garments fit superbly. Worth took endless, precise measurements so that his clothing would not require many additional fittings. Worth's real genius, however, came from his ability to dress his customers in ways that uniquely flattered individual hair coloring and skin tone as well as they compensated for any figure defects.[225]

In addition to her love of fine clothing, the press always noticed Caroline's jewelry. She preferred diamonds and pearls, which she wore in abundance, to colored gemstones. At the wedding of her daughter Helen to James Roosevelt, Caroline wore diamond rosebuds in her hair, an array of diamond pins and pendants on her chest, a row of

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[223] Brooklyn Museum, House of Worth: Exhibition Held at the Brooklyn Museum, May 8 - June 24, 1962, (Brooklyn: The Museum, 1962), 9-10. See also Ed. J. Burrow, History of Feminine Fashion, (London: Ed. J. Burrow & Co., 192?), 3 - 11.

[224] New York Times, 5 April 1885, 4.

[225] Ibid., See also New York Times, 21 June 1884, 3. Charles Frederick Worth died in March 1893. New York Times, 12 March 1895, 5. His two sons, Gaston and Jean-Philippe, continued to operate the business according to their father's standards. In 1952, Worth's great grandson retired from the business, closing Maison Worth.

diamond bracelets on each arm and solitaire diamond earrings.[226] When her daughter Caroline married Orme Wilson, the waist of her white satin gown "was literally covered in diamonds."[227] Caroline, on another occasion, wore a white satin dress, brocaded with silver, sapphires and diamonds.[228] To another ball she wore a cream satin ensemble with a "front bodice completely studded with diamonds, and a tiara of diamonds in her headdress."[229] At a Cotillion ball, onlookers described Caroline as "literally ablaze with diamonds," with her triple riviere of diamonds around her neck.[230]

Other wealthy women also displayed their jewelry in the manner of Mrs. Astor which provided society journalists a comparative basis to evaluate these "walking jewelry stores."[231] Prevailing taste and fashion dictated that jewelry could not be overdone. Beginning in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, women's ornaments could "hardly be too large or too staring."[232] The Empress Eugenie instituted the fashion for elaboration in evening toilettes by having the French crown jewels worked into the border of a ball gown that included: "rubies, emeralds, sapphires, turquoises, hyacinths, topazes and garnets blended together with many hundreds of diamonds."[233]

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[226] Jerry E. Patterson, 65.

[227] New York Times, 19 November 1884, 5.

[228] New York Times, 27 January 1891, 2.

[229] New York Times, 19 January 1897, 5.

[230] New York Times, 15 December, 1889, 13.

[231] New York Times, 10 January 1897, 10.

[232] Max Von Boehn, Ornaments; lace, fans gloves, walking-sticks, parasols, jewelry and trinkets, (New York: n.p. 1929; reprint, New York: Benjamin Bloom, 1970), 271.

[233] Ibid.

Caroline Astor's jewelry carried a deeper significance, however. Onlookers invariably described the visual effect of her jewels in the language of illumination. Caroline appeared "ablaze," entering a room "like a meteor."[234] Such descriptions reflect the Victorian fascination with the transforming power of light. Just as electrification turned night into day on the city streets, faceted stones refracted soft interior lighting of candles and gas lamps to wreath a woman's appearance in illumination. In this manner, jewelry altered a woman, concealing her true domestic identity to reveal another presence. Caroline wore her abundant diamond jewelry as mask that expressed her role as society leader. Caroline's diamond jewelry, worn as a mask, suggests "a descriptiveness founded on truth."[235] Caroline Astor, who desired to structure and lead society, assumed the mask of jewelry to convey an image of the city's orderly, social progress. Worn in this manner, jewelry enhanced Caroline's appearance as well as it stated the Schermerhorn and Astor talent for accumulating wealth. As the press described Caroline's jewelry, they enveloped her person in both beauty and commercial accomplishment. At a gala opening of the Metropolitan Opera, Caroline, "glittering" with diamonds, was thought to be "the most gorgeously gemmed of the older matrons."[236] At the opera, Caroline's "famous diamonds...created a veritable sensation...the Astor box drew all eyes."[237] Newspapers, in this manner, reminded their readership of Caroline's importance to the city. Jewelry

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[234] Jerry E. Patterson, 65.

[235] Martha Banta, Imaging American Women: Idea and Ideals in Cultural History, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 227.

[236] New York Times, 30 November 1998, 6.

[237] New York Times, 19 December 1999, 3.

tangibly represented her social authority to the wider community.[238]

Just as Caroline's display of jewelry signified her power, her use of flowers also imparted a statement of social leadership. Caroline loved flowers and elaborate floral displays. The society florist C. F. Klunder traditionally held annual flower shows in his shop near 307 Fifth Avenue to introduce new varieties of roses, rare specimen orchids and tropical greens to his wealthy clientele.[239] The attendance of the William B. Astors at one such event in 1884 marked its importance.[240] Just as jewels transformed a woman's appearance, flowers altered a home's interior space to create atmosphere. The florist's art, as well as the demand for flowers, had steadily progressed during the later decades of the nineteenth century. In 1860, hostesses used camellias, available in six colors, for table decorations because white carnations and violets were more difficult to obtain. For bouquets, florists interspersed camellias or carnations with clusters of 'bouquet green" bound together with yards of heavy wire. These creations, weighing from three to five pounds, turned a woman's indispensable ball accessory into a difficult complement to manage over the course of a long evening. Around 1870, florists began to force flowering bulbs like tulips, lilies and hyacinths for sale during the winter months which added both color and variety to their selections. Similax, a lighter and more attractive background

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[238] Ibid., 652.

[239] One of Caroline Astor's cousins opened a flower shop in 1893. Rawlins L. Cottenet, whose father married a daughter of Peter Schermerhorn, opened a "little shop" on East Thirty-Second Street. While this venture initially attracted the support of club men and society ladies, there is no indication that Caroline Astor patronized the store. New York Times, 2 November 1893, 11.

[240] New York Times, 25 March 1884, 8.

greenery, also became more widely available.

Initially, only the wealthiest people could afford the luxury of roses which cost around $1.50 a stem in 1867.[241] Roses gained wider use with the 1869 introduction of the tea rose in Boston. The first long-stemmed Gloire de Paris rose appeared in New York in 1870, quickly followed by other popular specimens. New rose varieties, cultivated primarily in England and France, appeared with some frequency so that the use of a particular bloom imparted a subtle message. Some afficionados believed that newer varieties had "not yet bettered the quality of the old white summer rose" which resulted as a product of nature.[242] Growers increasingly relied upon "artificial fecundation and hybridization" to produce new varieties.[243] The American Beauty rose, developed through the careful propagation of an older variety, first appeared in Washington, D.C., during the early 1880's.[244] Caroline Astor is credited with popularizing this long-stemmed rose in New York.[245]

As the availability of flowers increased over the years, their use became more important to the fashionable hostess. When Ward McAllister first arranged functions for the Patriarchs in 1872, "the question of dinner was the leading item; the question of floral decorations was hardly considered and quickly disposed of."[246] Within thirty years,

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[241] New York Times, 5 February 1893, 12.

[242] H. B. Ellwanger, "Old and New Roses," The Century, 26, no.3 (July 1883): 350.

[243] Ibid., 354.

[244] New York Times, 5 December 1893, 12.

[245] New York Times, 12 January 1904, 7.

[246] New York Times, 22 January 1893, 12.

however, increases in wealth and a change of custom mandated dazzling floral displays and forests of tropical palms as decoration for important events. For the hostess, her decorations became the first consideration in arranging a dinner or dance, with refreshments left largely to the caterer's planning and discretion. The costs associated with planning an event had risen accordingly. By one estimate, New York hostesses spent $800,000 on just American Beauty roses in 1893.[247]

As Caroline Astor was considered one of the city's most lavish entertainers, her extravagant use of flowers, particularly roses, evoked extended descriptions. Society florists provided journalists with details of her parties as a means of attracting prospective customers. For a ball in 1884, the florist Klunder transformed the Astor home at 350 Fifth Avenue with roses. In the front parlor, where chandeliers had been draped with roses and ivy, two large chiffonniers were topped with roses. In the center of the second parlor stood a rose tree, "bearing blossoms of pink and white to match the ornaments in the room."[248] The library contained twelve baskets of different colored roses. More roses filled the window sills and table of the dining room table. Bunches of roses had been placed in the ballroom. "The recesses in the hallways were filled with palms and exotic plants and roses peeped from behind screens of smilax in little nooks."[249] On a subsequent occasion, the society florist Fleischman, transformed Caroline's home with a "dome of pink bridesmaid roses, suspended from the ceiling, formed a bower and arch, which

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[247] Ibid.

[248] New York Times, 22 January 1884, 1.

[249] Ibid.

extended into the white and gold drawing room, where the mantels and small tables were filled with silver dishes and vases of pink roses."[250]

Caroline Astor frequently used roses for floral decoration for parties, both in New York and Newport, Rhode Island..[251] Her particular preference for the long-stemmed American Beauty rose suited late Victorian tastes and attitudes. Pruned to achieve stems four feet in length, the American Beauty evolved due to the "elimination of inferior vegetable growth from the plant in favor of a high degree of perfection."[252] The American Beauty is said to have first appeared in the Newport rose beds of the historian George Bancroft.[253] To the French journalist Paul Bourget, the American Beauty did not "seem like a natural flower. It requires the greenhouse, an exposition, a public display."[254] To some observers, the American Beauty symbolized national progress, won through the application of Darwinist principles. As an example of the law of natural selection, the American Beauty rose symbolized a philosophical system that justified prevailing methods of economic competition. Bearing this in mind, the oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller publically praised the splendor of the American Beauty, nurtured "only by sacrificing the

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[250] New York Times, 19 January 1997, 5. See also New York Times, 18 January 1898, 7.

[251] New York Times, 6 February 1885, 2; 19 November 1889, 5; 27 January 1991, 2; 2 February 1892, 5; 4 February 1896, 8; 30 July 1996, 3; 15 August 1896, 4; 12 January 1896, 10; 10 January 1987, 10; 18 January 1998, 7; 10 January 1899, 4; 22 December 1899, 7; 30 January 1900, 3; 16 December 1900, 7; 9 January 1901; 1; 7 January 1902, 7; 29 August 1902, 9; 13 January 1903, 3 11 August 1903, 7.

[252] Frederich W. Horlacher, "American Beauties and Robber Barons," Amerikastudien 22, no.2(1977): 293.

[253] Mac Griswold and Eleanor Weller, The Golden Age of American Gardens: Proud Owners, Private Estates, 1890-1940, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1991), 32.

[254] Paul Bourget, 50.

early buds which grow up around it. This is not an evil tendency in business. It is merely the working-out of a law of nature and a law of God."[255]

Inasmuch as the American Beauty rose symbolized the competitive individualism of the Gilded Age, it also suited women's images of themselves. Tall, heavily-perfumed, slender and graceful, this flower represented feminine perfection. American journalists, as a consequence, frequently used the language of flowers to describe women in their discussions of society events. Writers habitually referred to young girls or debutantes as "buds" to represent their unfulfilled sexuality. This floral metaphor could also extend to women of any age. One writer classified women guests at a Patriarchs' ball as either "a bud, a 2-year old, a half-blown or a full-blown rose, or just verging on that shadowy line between maid and matron, a belle to at least one admirer or in her own estimation."[256] The extent to which fashionable women actually embraced this floral idiom can be found in the dress of one "beautiful brunette of slender, lithe figure."[257] This belle accessorized her yellow silk gown with a single American Beauty rose, wrapping the long stem around her waist and securing it with a knot of ribbons. To an enthusiastic male admirer, the woman became "like a gorgeous tropical flower herself...indescribably attractive."[258] Similarly, in 1899 the William K. Vanderbilts tethered six beautiful young girls to rose

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[255] Quoted in Richard Hofstadter, Social Darwinism in American Thought, rev. ed. (Boston, 1967), 446. Cited in Ibid.

[256] New York Times, 13 December 1885, 3.

[257] New York Times, 7 December 1890, 12.

[258] Ibid.

trees, while gentlemen drew lots to untie them for a dance at a Newport ball.[259]

Through her use of flowers, Caroline similarly linked herself to the idealized femininity associated with the long stemmed rose. Her entertainments conveyed a sense of the city's progress. She included only the most distinguished among her guests. Despite the grandeur associated with these formal entertainments, people described Caroline as a woman of personal modesty and dignified reserve.[260] She observed an uncomplicated daily routine. Said to be "simple and frugal" in her habits, she routinely arose at eight in the morning for a light breakfast of tea and toast.[261] She lunched at the same hour each day and liked to retire early after a small supper. Although Caroline's private preferences seem incompatible with her public persona, her social leadership remained unchallenged for over thirty years. Caroline succeeded largely because she behaved publically in a manner consistent with people's expectations of royalty. Remote and somewhat mysterious, she transmitted her authority largely through the visible symbols chosen to represent her social leadership, including: her formal residences; her jewels; her discrete, but expensive tastes in apparel; and the quality of her stately entertainments. While she remained a public figure, Caroline maintained the privacy of her personal life with dignity and calm, never seeking the affirmation of others.

In her gracious performance of social leadership, Caroline conveyed the prerogatives of rule through loyalty to old friends and unfailing courtesy towards

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[259] Mac Griswold and Eleanor Weller, 33. See also New York Times, 12 January 1991, 711.

[260] Elizabeth Drexel Lehr, 83 - 84.

[261] Ibid.

strangers. With the assistance of Ward McAllister and later Harry Lehr, Caroline managed to balance her guest lists to accommodate many of those interested in participating in the city's social life. Lehr amused the elderly Caroline Astor with his talent for the piano, his ready wit and clever repartee. With Lehr's assistance, Caroline's functions continued to be socially relevant because she required that they not become mired in the past. While she respected the values of the city's heritage, she opened her home to people from her children and grandchildren's generations as well as less familiar individuals of wealth and accomplishment.

Many people valued and respected Caroline for what she represented. Those who knew her genuinely liked and admired her. An example of this regard is the Christmas surprise party staged in her honor by one hundred friends and family. Women guests at this elaborate affair dressed as white satin dominoes, while men donned the "long brown mantles and capes trimmed in white fur" of a traditional Santa Claus.[262] Without Caroline's knowledge and achieved "by a piece of strategy," the Astor ballroom had been secretly festooned in "snowballs of white carnations" and draped with mistletoe for the event[263] A gentleman guest distributed party favors from a floral sleigh decorated with holly and ribbons. Dancing and a light supper concluded the evening. This occasion, held on Christmas night, reflects the effort those in Caroline's life could make for no other reason than to please her.

Although Caroline recognized New York's future potential, she remained a

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[262] New York Times, 31 October 1908, 1.

[263] Ibid.

woman shaped by old school values and traditional domesticity. The socialite Elizabeth Drexel Lehr includes a portion of a letter written by Caroline to a young Harry Lehr regarding his wish to marry. In this message, Caroline, characteristically "full of tact and sympathy," observed, "To a woman a home is a necessity, not so for a man, whose life is so free and independent."[264] On balance, Caroline observed Lehr's present happiness, advising of the "risk in changing a certainty."[265] Like Maria Daly, Caroline Astor sensed danger in women's departure from traditional domesticity. Her remarks to Lehr also suggest her conservative embrace of a woman's obligation to home and family as well as her understanding of the limitations of this social role. Caroline could not envision an alternative to her role as wife and mother. With servants to execute her household routine, Caroline represented her family as society's leader, preserving the Astor legacy in New York. She accepted the challenge of social governance, succeeding over time through the skill of her performance as social ruler. Her understanding of the obligatory nature of her entertainments is implied by her removal from the late evening events that she sponsored in her home. Caroline, after staging her parties and assembling her guests, traditionally left her ball at and went to bed.

Caroline was not inclined towards traditional forms of women's benevolence. The media's notice of her butler's distribution of "a little money" to manual laborers digging a ditch near her Fifth Avenue window on a hot day only reminds of the absence of public

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[264] Caroline S. Astor, "Letter to Harry Lehr," n.d. Cited in Elizabeth Drexel Lehr, 81.

[265] Ibid.

charity in her life.[266] From her home, Caroline Astor served her community in other capacities, however. Rather than judge her for the superficial character of this social endeavor, it is more useful to consider what she signified to those around her. The fixity of her social presence provided an important counterweight to the competitive environment outside her home. During a period of rapid urban growth and social change, Caroline radiated an orderly serenity from her drawing room. The inevitable quality of her social functions contrasted with more ostentatious examples of the city's leisure activity. She maintained her home as the nexus for family sociability as well as a gathering place for friends and acquaintances. For those individuals welcomed into her drawing room, her implied approbation demonstrated, among other things, the continuing relevance of the domestic construct.

Caroline Astor showed that the home could continue to function as a vital private sanctuary. Because personal taste and habit shaped the form and content of family social obligations, these occasions allowed women like Caroline the freedom to exercise their personal preferences. A hostess could invite or discourage the media's attention in the social life of her home with the same regard that she gave to the composition of a guest list. While many of the wealthy both required and enjoyed the public notice that accompanied much of the city's social life, others maintained traditional standards of private home hospitality. Maria Daly's reliance upon small dinner gatherings to satisfy her household's social obligations exemplifies an important private, domestic alternative to New York's public social calendar. Without Maria's private journal, the social nature of

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[266] New York Times, 19 September 1884, 8.

many of her relationships with prominent people would remain within the confines of her Clinton Place residence in lower Manhattan.

Like Maria, many of the wealthy enjoyed a variety of other informal, home-centered social occasions. Patrician New York "possessed a genuine love for culture, but it insisted upon its own particular brand. Intellect, to be praised by the old Society, had to be accompanied by the companion virtues of birth and breeding."[267] Cultural affinities, therefore, became another mechanism for reinforcing the tribal standards of patrician New York. Maria and Charles Daly participated in several groups organized around literary and cultural interests. Principal among these is the Thursday Evening Club, a heterosocial organization, which met fortnightly in the homes of members for lectures, readings and musical recitals. This association, organized in February 1878, restricted its membership to one hundred sixty men and women. The Dalys, who attended the group's first meeting, found the address by Dr. Henry Codman Potter, rector of Grace Episcopal Church, to be a "witty and instructive little discourse upon clubs and society."[268] In this presentation entitled "Dream of the Thursday Evening Club of the Future," Potter envisioned the organization as "distinctly a place for the kindly collision and animated exchange of ideas."[269] Although Maria expressed pleasure "that we had undertaken to begin something sociable and informal," she worried that the new group might prove "too large to meet

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[267] Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, The Social Ladder, 128.

[268] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," March 2, 1878.

[269] Potter, Rev. Henry Codman, "Dream of the Thursday Evening Club of the Future," Address before the Thursday Evening Club, New York, New York, April 30, 1878. Thursday Evening Club(New York, New York), Records, 1978-1965, Manuscript Collection, New York Historical Society, New York, New York.

here in our little home."[270] Under the leadership of Eleanor Field Jay, the group's first president, the Thursday Evening Club integrated the intellect of Columbia College with New York's conservative elite domiciled around Washington Square.[271] Eleanor and John Jay enlisted the interest and support of their neighbor Thomas Eggleston, a professor at Columbia College, in forming the group. The new association, although purely social, aimed to become "a center of intellectual intercourse and recreation, by resisting every tendency to ostentation or extravagance in its entertainments and by welcoming to its fellowship those whose credentials are found in cultivated tastes and literary or artistic accomplishments."[272] Annual dues, fixed modestly at two dollars, encouraged participation, further demonstrating the Thursday Evening Club's cultural intent.

The group's by-laws, which circulated annually in small printed booklets, reinforced the membership's educational purposes. Initially, the club specified that refreshments were "expected to be very simple, and wines limited to claret, hock, sherry

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[270] Ibid. See also MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," April 17, 1880; December 10, 1880; April 3, 1883; May 1, 1889.

[271] Eleanor Kingsland Field Jay was born on May 29, 1819 to Hickson W. Field, a leading New York merchant in the China trade. She married John Jay, the son of the abolitionist William Jay and grandson of America's first Chief Justice, at the age of nineteen. The couple, who had five children, maintained homes in New York and at Bedford House, near Mount Kisco in Westchester county, New York. In 1869, her husband received an appointment by President Grant to the Austrian Court, a position he held 1875. In 1888, Governor Grover Cleveland appointed Jay the Republican member of the State Civil Service Commission which he retained until his death in 1894. Eleanor Jay died in 1909 at the age of ninety. New York Times, 20 October 1909, 9.

[272] New York Times, 5 February 1928, 131..

and punch."[273] Within a few years, however, this rule broadened to include "light refreshments [that] may be placed on a buffet or passed around on waiters, but no regular supper table shall be set and no champagne served."[274] In addition to curtailing the hospitable instincts of some members, the by-laws also structured the format of meetings. Evenings began promptly at half past eight. Lectures or performances, lasting no more than forty-five minutes, began promptly at nine. A committee of male members, responsible for programing, balanced scientific presentations with lighter offerings on cultural subjects. In 1883, Maria Daly satisfied her family's obligation to the membership by hosting a meeting at which Dr. Simonds, "formerly a physician in Japan, will present a paper on the 'Women of Japan.'"[275] Due to the small size of the Daly home, Maria decided to "enclose the piazza with an awning and hang some Japanese lanterns and stuff."[276] Afterwards, Maria remarked that the meeting proved "successful, except that so many did not come who had sent acceptances and I might have asked so many more personal friends."[277]

Over the years, the Thursday Evening Club's activities drew only modest attention

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[273] Thursday Evening Club, Officers, Members, Constitution and Bylaws, (New York: n.p., 1881), 9.

[274] Thursday Evening Club, Officers, Members, Constitution and Bylaws, (New York: n.p., 1884), 6.

[275] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," April 3, 1883.

[276] Ibid.

[277] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," April 17, 1883. See also Thursday Evening Club, "Membership List and Entertainment List," 1883, Thursday Evening Club, Records, 1878 - 1965, Manuscript Division, New York Historical Society, New York, New York.

from the society press.[278] Several exceptions to the group's desire to retain its standards of exclusivity include an 1884 musicale hosted by Cornelius Vanderbilt in his large West Fifty-Seventh Street mansion and an 1886 program arranged by Peter Marie.[279] Both events attracted press interest due to the Vanderbilt's great wealth and the unusual nature of the program planned by Peter Marie. Marie, known as the city's "society poet," asked that members provide their own original compositions for a meeting held in his Thirty-Seventh Street home in order to achieve "a system of mutual entertainment within the club itself."[280] His wish to encourage members to contribute their own cultural offerings rather than rely upon the services of outside guests for program content helped to maintain elite interest in the group into the twentieth century.

In addition to the Thursday Evening Club, Maria Daly belonged to similar

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[278] New York Times, 2 February 1883, 8; 21 December 1883, 5; 30 November 1884, 13; 1 February 1885, 3; 15 March 1885, 3; 10 January 1886, 14; 14 February 1886, 3; 21 February 1886, 3; 24 November 1889, 11; 6 January 1890, 4; 2 February 1890, 13; 23 February 1890, 12; 16 March 1890, 12; 16 March 1890, 13; 14 December 1890, 12; 11 November 1913, 11; 5 February 1928, 131.

[279] New York Times, 22 February 1884, 5; 14 February 1886, 3. See also Constance Cary Harrison's memories of the musical evening in the Vanderbilt home. Constance Cary Harrison, Recollections Grave and Gay, 333-334.

[280] New York Times, 14 February 1886, 3. Peter Marie descended from a prosperous family of French planters in the West Indies. His mother Leontine Arnaud immigrated to New York during civil unrest in San Domingo to marry the merchant John B. Marie in 1811. Peter, born in 1825, entered his father's mercantile business where he amassed a fortune enabling his retirement in 1865. Marie, a committed bachelor, enjoyed society where he earned a reputation for his witty, rhymed observations. He also became known for his collection of rare books and objects of art, including miniatures of beautiful women of his social acquaintance. Upon his death in 1903, most of Marie's possessions sold at a series of auctions. His miniature collection, having been previously rejected as "unsuitable" by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, was eventually accepted by the New York Historical Society. New York Times, 14 January 1909, 9. See also New York Times, 26 February 1903, 4; 2 April 1903, 8; 4 April 1903, 8; 7 April 1903, 9; 30 August 1903, 24; 24 February 1903, 3.

organizations that catered solely to women's educational and cultural inclinations. Maria, like most of her social peers, had received little formal education. Schooled in deportment and the social utilities of penmanship, needlework and dance, Maria read widely to keep abreast of current literature and the news of the day. Her journal, if nothing else, reveals her to be a woman with a breadth of intellectual interests. Women's informal cultural associations provided those who shared Maria's privileged circumstance with an opportunity for self-instruction as well as afternoons of relaxed sociability. Maria participated in several similar organizations which can also be attributed to her continuing need for less strenuous forms of socialization in her advancing years. Afternoon meetings of small clubs gave Maria social outlets that did not tax her stamina or her health. Later in life, she did not need to meet new people to establish herself in society and could remain comfortable in the company of old friends. Due to their limited memberships, however, some of these groups survive only in Maria's journal. For example, any knowledge of the women's Review Club is limited to several of Maria's entries in her diary. This club, presided over by Mrs. Howard Crosby, featured a "talk upon a given subject suggested by some member from three to five when all is quenched in a cup of tea."[281] Similarly, Maria

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[281] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," April 20, 1882. See also MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1892," February 14, 1880. Howard Crosby, born in New York in 1826, graduated in 1844 from the University of the City of New-York. Although Crosby descended from a long line of distinguished ancestors and benefitted from a sizeable inheritance, he devoted almost his entire life to benevolent work. In 1847, he married a Miss Givan. The couple had four children. After teaching classics for several years, Crosby accepted the pastorship of the Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church in 1868 From 1870 to 1881, Crosby served as Chancellor of the University of New-York, remaining on the institution's Board of Governance until his death. From his pulpit, Crosby advocated many social purity issues including temperance. Several attempts at the legislative reform of saloon licensing became known as "Crosby bills." In 1873, Crosby was named Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. He published a number of

remarked upon her attendance at a meeting of the "ladies of two clubs" at the home of Mrs. Sherwood at which Julia Ward Howe read a paper.[282] Maria enjoyed this "charming occasion" for which Mrs. Sherwood assembled "the most agreeable women in New York. We listened to a very well delivered paper. In a very refined voice, full of art appreciation."[283]

Maria, who enjoyed opportunities to broaden her cultural knowledge, also belonged to another women's cultural club Causeries du Lundi .[284] Formed in 1880, this organization, took its name, meaning Monday Chats, from a weekly nineteenth century literary column in a Paris newspaper by Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve. It is not known, however, whether Maria Daly attended the group's initial meeting organized by her friend Elizabeth Hamilton Cullum. The cryptic minutes of that first meeting indicate only where the meeting took place, the election of officers and the number of women present. Maria Daly, first referred to the Causeries in 1882 as "a club where we study and write little papers on the progress of art. [A] very pleasant set of ladies who meet once a fortnight at each others homes."[285] Early records of the Causeries indicate that the group's members

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books on religious themes and is considered to be one of the founders of the Young Men's Christian Association. Howard Crosby died in New York in 1891. New York Times, 30 March 1891, 1, 4. See also New York Times, 31 March 1891, 4, 5; April 1, 1891, 8.

[282] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," May 13, 1882.

[283] Ibid.

[284] She attended Oscar Wilde's public lecture in Wallach's Theater on "Decorative Art in America," finding the address to be "full of affectation but with much point in it." MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," May 13, 1882. See also New York Times, 12 May 1882, 8.

[285] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," April 20, 1882.

contributed essays on a range of literary and cultural subjects [286] For example, at a meeting in early March 1881, women read compositions captioned "Grecian Gems," "Grecian Mythology," "Selections from Bacon's Essays," and "Oracles in Greece." From the outset, the founders of the Causeries intended to covey that New York's "social life meant more than the pleasure-loving throng, given up to worldliness and frivolity."[287]

The early leadership of the Causeries desired that the club maintain a literary reputation, "to call out the pent up interests of women."[288] Limiting the group to fifty members, participation in Causeries required only a "pleasant drawing room, filled with intelligent women whose experiences come from well ordered lives, cultivated surroundings, duties made interesting...the highest incentives of life."[289] Katherine Hoppin echoed these sentiments in a paper on "The Woman Question" which she delivered to the group in 1900. For Hoppin, the "home is the foundation of everything."[290] Such conservative attitudes appealed to traditionally minded women like Maria Daly who remained active in Causeries for many years. In 1891, Maria organized a meeting, observing afterwards that her participation had helped to improve her own writing.[291]

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[286] Causeries du Lundi, "Lists of Papers," April 12, 1880 - 1996. Manuscript Collection. New York Historical Society, New York, New York.

[287] Causeries du Lundi, History and Recollections, "Our Causeries" by Mrs. J. Erving, President, 1902-1912, (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1912), 7.

[288] Ibid., 21.

[289] Ibid., 23.

[290] Katharine B. Hoppin, "A Glimpse of the Woman Question," A paper read at a meeting of Causerie du Lundi, December 3, 1900, (n.p.: for private circulation only, 1900), 21.

[291] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," March 3, 1891.

During the years that Maria maintained her membership, the club retained its silent social presence, attracting little public notice.[292] It survives into the present through its continuing appeal to women of intellect and talent.[293]

For Maria Daly, small clubs like the Thursday Evening Club, the Review Club and the Causeries provided select, home centered sociability. Memberships, culled from the roster of the city's wealthy families, frequently reflected women's traditional networks of association, excluding less familiar faces from their ranks. This observation does not imply that Maria liked everyone who participated in these clubs, however. She expressed satisfaction with Causeries, in part, because the "Hamiltonian element is out of it and Mrs. Sherwood is no longer the ringmaster."[294] Maria disliked Elizabeth Cullum's sister Mary Hamilton Peabody, who briefly assumed leadership of the group, and the author Mary Elizabeth Sherwood. Nonetheless, Maria responded to Causeries' educational pursuits as well as its exclusivity. To traditionally minded women, such social gatherings should not always be organized to reflect a family's material advantage. Small, home entertainments, quietly conducted, fostered the continuing respect for a woman's domestic privacy. Restricted memberships also allowed women to filter the social qualifications of others. Maria knew that New York society would and could not remain fixed in time. She could, however, savor those opportunities that permitted her the chance to socialize with women of her choosing.

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[292] New York Times, 5 December 1886, 4; 13 November 1887, 16; 31 March 1889, 13.

[293] New York Times, 12 June 2005, Section 14, 1.

[294] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," March 3, 1891.

Maria, however, could never restrict her public social activity to the tradition bound members of society who shared her values. Her charitable pursuits as well as her marriage to Charles Daly required that she maintain a broad circle of social acquaintance. With an institutional approach to social governance, Ward McAllister and Caroline Astor attempted the integration of New York's society by acknowledging women like Mrs. Paran Stevens. Despite associations like the Patriarchs and the efforts of Caroline Astor, other conservative families took a more insular view of society. Less inclusive, these elites continued to privilege lineage and tradition in setting their social parameters. Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer pointed out that these "haughty, self satisfied folk" remained suspicious of "unvouched for outsiders."[295] The patrician author Julia Ward Howe, who advocated the need for better manners, viewed such social exclusion as a form of "choice, the selection of one's associates."[296] Thus, some elite families, unable to overcome their reverence for the past, explicitly withheld their social acknowledgment as an exercise of personal preference.

One example of this conservative tendency is the 1887 debutante ball hosted by Mrs. Morris at the restaurant Delmonico's. The Morris family, well known for their forebearers' contributions to America's founding, reportedly spent an estimated $15,000 on this evening party. The Morris ball, however, became remembered for the exclusive caliber of its guest list. "Never was an invitation list so carefully compiled. The ancestral

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[295] Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, The Social Ladder, 184.

[296] Julia Ward Howe, Is Polite Society Polite?, (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1899), 13.

traditions of the Morris family sat pen in hand personified over blue books, social registers, and visiting lists for days and night...There was not the slightest doubt that every person present had at least a grandmother."[297] Despite this reverence for family heritage, one young guest declared that "it was not a corpse party."[298]

Nonetheless, the Morris family's hospitality had required rigorous social management. Their effort in compiling a guest list indicates society's increasing complexity. Traditional networks which had previously served women's social interests could not illuminate the three to four thousand names that appeared in The List. Beginning in 1880, this annual volume listed names, addresses and club memberships. The List also included seating plans for major theaters, a shopping guide, club directory as well as advertisements.[299] In 1887, the Social Register superceded The List.[300] This new publication, assembled "under the supervision of a committee," codified New York society into a more informative directory. For the cost of $1.75, subscribers obtained a listing of "certain" people.[301] Over time, the publication supplemented the names of society's members with the following information, including: permanent addresses; summer residences; women's maiden names; men's club memberships; club officers; social organizations; educational background; travel plans; and opera box subscriptions. The

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[297] New York Times, 11 December 1887, 16.

[298] Ibid.

[299] The List, a Visiting and Shopping Directory for the Season, compiled by Maurice M. Minton, (New York: List Publishing Co., 1880 - 1887).

[300] Henry Collins Brown, Brownstone Fronts and Saratoga Trunks, (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1935), 383-384.

[301] Social Register of New York, (New York: Social Register Association, 1887), 1.

Social Register proved a durable publication, expanding over time to represent twenty six major American cities by 1918. Compilations like The List and the Social Register theoretically helped women elites meet their obligation to pay social calls. Nonetheless, these alphabetical arrangements only reminded their subscribers of the growth and complexity of New York society as well as the inadequacy of traditional forms of social governance. The informative content of the Social Register, furthermore, established the polite parameters of acceptability, defining social status by residence, education and club affiliation. Annual editions grew with monthly supplements and the addition of more descriptive detail. By 1891, the Social Register included six thousand family addresses, becoming a tool to quantify social change. New York's social "center," by this date, lay at the southeast corner of Thirty-Seventh Street and Fifth Avenue.[302] Within six months the publication confirmed society's "continual movement," noting an increase in marriages, deaths and international travel over the previous edition.[303] By 1894, the "most central point" of the city's prominent families" had relocated further uptown to Forty-Fourth Street between Fifth and Madison Avenues.[304]

As a reflection of the demographics charted by the Social Register, the press noticed that of the 1,500 invitations mailed by the discriminating Mrs. Morris only three to four hundred people had actually attended. This response invited the inference that "two-thirds of New York's aristocracy are in mourning, in the country, or too old or too poor

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[302] New York Times, 26 November 1991, 2.

[303] New York Times, 28 February 1992, 12.

[304] New York Times, 27 November 1994, 13.

to attend balls."[305] This conclusion states the clear necessity of society's public component. Insofar as pedigree continued to matter in New York, those pretending to aristocracy needed to demonstrate publically their social authority. Increasingly, to be anything more than a recipient of a coveted invitation required both the dedication to social activity as well as the wealth and inclination to sponsor events of comparable significance Although conservative elites continued to limit their social activity to exclusive organizations and intimate private gatherings, this practice finally undermined the prerogatives attached to heritage.

In sum, real authority required active public participation in what had come to signify New York society. No individual understood this fundamental requirement better than Caroline Astor. Mrs. Astor regularly appeared at the opera and for other evening social occasions until failing health curtailed her public activity. Her last ball, held in New York in January 1904, climaxed that winter's social season. On this evening, Caroline received her guests in a trained gown of blue velvet trimmed with point lace and accessorized with diamonds. Everyone noticed the "perfect taste" of the floral decorations that included large vases of American Beauty roses.[306] After a supper, served at small tables of eight, guests danced to the music of Lander's orchestra. Due to her increasing frailty, Caroline seldom appeared in public afterwards. The socialite Frederick Townsend Martin regretted her absence, finding that society had become marked by

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[305] Ibid.

[306] New York Times, 12 January 1904, 7.

"chaos" without her unifying presence.[307]

In October 1908, the Delineator published an interview with Mrs. Astor, conducted by Rebecca Insley. This article, featured in a women's magazine known more for its coverage of dressmaking and needlework than society, provoked comment. Caroline's deteriorating health as well as her firm refusal to grant interviews throughout her life caused some of her friends to question the authenticity of the piece.[308] The New York Times provided the details of Caroline's "nervous condition" and deteriorating mental capacity, casting more doubt on the article's veracity.[309] Despite these cautions, the interview's conservative perspective on the New York society and women's role in social governance are not inconsistent with Caroline's longstanding preferences. Caroline, in stating her opinions to a popular women's magazine, had reached a wide audience. Furthermore, there is no reason to conclude that the otherwise reliable Delineator would fabricate an article, particularly in view of the wealth and power of younger members of the Astor family. In the piece, Caroline condemned the "undignified methods employed by certain New York women to attract a following. They have given entertainments that belonged under a circus tent rather than in a gentlewoman's home. Their sole object is notoriety."[310] On balance, Mrs. Astor called for greater exclusiveness among the wealthy,

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[307] New York Times, 3 May 1908, SM6. See also New York Times, 28 June 1908, C1.

[308] New York Times, 20 September 1908, X6.

[309] New York Times, 30 October 1908, 1.

[310] "An Interview with Mrs. Astor," Delineator 72(October 1908): 549-550, 638-639. Cited in Eric Homberger, 221-222. See also New York Times, 15 September 1908, 5.

decrying the "mad extravagance" of many hostesses.[311]

Within a few weeks of the publication of this interview, Caroline Astor died of heart failure in her Fifth Avenue home. A lengthy obituary, published on October 31, 1908, summarized Caroline's biographical details, providing the highlights of her "notable career" as social leader. Some observers credited Caroline's "uncommon degree of popularity" to the "fact that she never spoke ill of any person and did not condescend to gossip." Both gracious and kind, friends remembered Caroline for her "rare social discrimination and thorough self restraint. She never lost her temper and preserved complete self-control even in the most trying situations."[312]

Caroline's social leadership, recognized as a "conservative and restraining influence," had prevented society from "going astray." "The duties and obligations in connection with the exercise of an authority of this kind are very heavy and exacting in their nature." Caroline, though cognizant of the importance of "good form, refined taste and of breeding," had realized society's need to "keep abreast of the times and that it occasionally requires the infusion of new blood in order to endow it with the strength and vigor necessary to play a useful role." In the end, Caroline was commemorated for her "great power and influence, usefully employed" who never relaxed her personal standards of "culture, refinement and decency."[313]

The press memorialized Caroline in language reserved for a departed regent. Her

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[311] Ibid.

[312] New York Times, 31 October 1908, 1, passim.

[313] New York Times, 1 November 1908, SM3, passim.

funeral, however, was a simple Episcopal rite conducted for "intimate friends and family" in her Fifth Avenue home.[314] Her will, drawn in 1903, further revealed that her assets, principally inherited from her father, were "not so large as might be imagined."[315] Under the terms of this instrument, Caroline bequeathed the bulk of her estate to her two daughters, leaving some of her more important jewelry to her son John Jacob. Two codicils specified bequests of five thousand dollars each to her butler Thomas Hade and to the Asylum for the Destitute Blind.[316] A subsequent appraisal of Caroline's holdings fixed her net worth $1,631,231.[317] While this figure did not consider Caroline's assets outside New York, it included her jewelry which had been appraised for nearly $300,000.[318]

Caroline's collection of diamond and pearl jewelry had enabled her rule as society leader. Nonetheless, her important five-strand pearl necklace, appraised at $51,000, included ninety imitation pearls.[319] Other personal possessions also did not necessarily signify the credibility of her social leadership. When her estate settled, it was learned that Caroline owned no real estate, either in Manhattan or at Newport, Rhode Island.[320] Even her Fifth Avenue mansion belonged to her son John Jacob. Furthermore, according to a

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[314] New York Times, 1 November 1908, 9.

[315] New York Times, 20 November 1908, 8.

[316] Ibid.

[317] New York Times, 18 December 1909, 1. A second appraisal fixed her net worth at $1,726,187. New York Times, 21 December 1909, 3.

[318] Ibid.

[319] Ibid.

[320] New York Times, 21 December 1909, 3.

Tax Appraiser for the Surrogate's Court, Mrs. Astor had permitted her home's interior to become "dilapidated," so that she spent her declining years amid "tarnished splendor."[321] The dining room, site of Caroline's imperial formal suppers served on gold plate, contained furniture characterized as "old fashioned; old tables painted black with gold rims." The dining room hangings were "practically worth nothing." Similarly, "badly faded and very soiled" tapestries in the reception room were valued at only ten dollars. The Tax Appraiser's testimony enumerated the poor condition of other items of furniture, including a piano and several clocks as well as threadbare rugs and carpeting. Several paintings "after Boucher" had, in the end, only been "painted by some amateur." Even the ballroom's "ninety gilt chairs" were revealed to be "rickety," painted imitations.[322]

Conclusion

The contents of the home of Caroline Astor at 840 Fifth Avenue speak to her conservative habits and frugal nature. Caroline, in the tradition of her Schermerhorn forebearers, had filled her interior with articles from former homes as well as items passed down through her family. The worn contents of Caroline's home also reveal the toll that social leadership had taken on some of her personal possessions. At the same time, Caroline's threadbare surroundings indicate the extent of her social sway. New York's wealthy and powerful had crowded up her stairway for decades, seeking her polite acknowledgment. Among these guests, the city's conservative establishment continued to

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[321] New York Times, 19 December 1909, 1.

[322] New York Times, 19 December 1909, 1, passim. See also New York Times, 21 December 1909, 3; 25 September 1910, 6.

support Caroline's reign as queen because she reaffirmed their value to society. Newer families appreciated Caroline's recognition of their more immediate contributions to the city. Younger representatives of society, who also graced the Astor ballroom, knew that their participation in her social occasions signaled their own leadership potential.

Nonetheless, by the time of Caroline's death in 1908, New York society had outstripped the managerial abilities of any individual or group. The attempt to imbue social status with any permanency through membership in small clubs and directories like the Social Register only demonstrated the flux of New York society as well as its impermanence. Increasingly, social activity could be characterized in the competitive vocabulary of commerce. Status could be purchased through a listing in a society directory. Yet many of the wealthy continued to seek the social order implied by their presence in the Astor home. In the end, it is not difficult to understand why Caroline continued to matter to New York's monied elites When in her home, guests surveyed walls "covered with rare old paintings, portraits, and rich tapestries, and require no additional decorations."[323] One did not see the reality of worn furniture and frayed carpeting. Instead, people came to dance and enjoy a supper served amid floral abundance. Similarly, Caroline herself did not appear as the elderly, frail matron that she increasingly became. Rather, dressed in velvet and lace, Caroline appeared ablaze with diamonds, wearing a crown and extending a gracious welcome.

Caroline succeeded in New York because of her singular ability to shape what others saw and experienced. Like any good hostess, she simply gave her guests what they

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[323] New York Times, 19 January 1897, 5.

wanted. Her ability to perform as royalty permitted those around her to bask in a regal presence. Attendance at an Astor ball allowed the wealthy to step beyond their material success and civic prowess to become aristocrats of breeding and refinement. Caroline Astor, however, was not a queen. Her Schermerhorn ancestors had succeeded in New York through their prudent investments in real estate. The Schermerhorn fortune as well as her husband's wealth had allowed Caroline to flourish in New York's social chimera. Caroline achieved the imprimatur of royalty from those who chose to ignore the material truth that defined New York's upper crust. Because of her ability to act in a royal manner, others participated in an aristocratic social order that they desired. To the extent that guests in the Astor home confirmed their social status, they chose to overlook the commercial reality of New York's past and present, enjoying only those things consistent with their imaginings.

Through their management of the New York Assemblies and the Cotillions, women elites had demonstrated their commitment to the promulgation of patrician standards. No one from this group, however, would rise to replace Caroline Astor. After her death in 1908, New York society fragmented into a series of overlapping circles of friends and associates that allied compatible, and sometimes competitive, social and civic interests. In the end, New York's attempt to graft a European aristocracy over the city's commercial core had proven fruitless. Some individuals like the socialite Frederick Townsend Martin deplored the absence of social unity, complaining of society's fractious

decline into the "depths of boredom."[324] No individual appeared willing to devote the energy and dedication to society displayed by Caroline Astor. Younger women increasingly pursued alternative paths to fulfillment other than participation in social activity. Frederick Townsend Martin had been considered by some to be the inheritor of the Astor legacy of social leadership. Martin, however, died unexpectedly in 1914.[325] By this date, the old European order, which had inspired the attempts at New York's social organization, had begun to crumble. These aristocracies became embroiled in civil and global conflicts, which depleted their emotional and financial treasuries. Thus, the American urgency to structure a European social order faded into a dream, best left to the histories of the Gilded Age.

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[324] New York Times, 28 June 1908, C1. See also Frederick Townsend Martin, The Passing of the Idle Rich, (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1911).

[325] New York Times, 9 March 1914, 1.

Final Thoughts: Elizabeth Merchant and Maria Daly

In 1884, New York's wealthy society gathered for a private ball hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Ogden Goelet in their new mansion at 608 Fifth Avenue.[1] The five hundred invited guests included Caroline Astor, Ward McAllister and Mrs. Paran Stevens along with members of the Duer, Fish, Van Rensselaer, Jay, Belmont, and Livingston families. Dancing took place in oak-paneled drawing rooms carved in the style of the fourteenth century, featuring windows hung with tapestries embroidered with gold and chenille. The jeweler Tiffany produced special silver cotillion favors for the evening. The caterer Pinard served an elaborate midnight supper in the dining rooms on small Louis XVI tables. New York's elite gathered to celebrate the completion of the Goelet's new home and to initiate Spring's period of "social gayety."[2]

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[1] New York Times, 15 April 1884, 8. The Ogden Goelets became fixtures in the societies of New York and Newport as well as that of London and Nice. In 1877, Ogden Goelet married Mary Wilson, the daughter of the banker and businessman Richard T. Wilson. The couple had two children. In addition to their New York home, the Goelets built a red granite villa in Newport, completed in 1891. Ogden Goelet, an avid sportsman and club man, died on his yacht off Cowes, England in 1897 at the age of forty-six. New York Times, 28 August 1897, 7; 29 September 1897, 12. Mary Goelet continued to lead an active social life after her husband's death. Her daughter May married the Duke of Roxburghe in Newport in 1903. New York Times, 3 September 1903, 7; 10 November 1903, 3; 11 November 1903, 1. Mary Goelet died in New York in 1929 at the age of seventy-three. New York Times, 24 February 1929, 31; 26 February 1929, 20.

[2] Ibid.

Occasions like the one hosted by Ogden and Mary Goelet had become unremarkable in New York's by the 1880's. The evening's assemblage of wealthy and socially prominent families brought together many elements of New York society. Goelets, of French Huguenot descent, had derived their early fortune from the hardware business and through shrewd investment in Manhattan properties.[3] Peter Goelet and his heirs had prospered over time through their stubborn refusal to convert their land into capital.[4] Many of the guests at the Goelet ball, like the Astors and the Lorillards, represented the status that the rich attached to the maintenance of wealth through generations of family life. The inclusion of the Livingston, Fish and Jay families represented society's reverence for civic accomplishment. The presence of others, including August Belmont, Henry Clews and William Vanderbilt recognized the business accomplishment of newer men. Mrs. Stevens, both decorative and determined, had earned her place at the Goelet ball through her daughter's marriage to British nobility. This brilliant occasion also required the inclusion of Ward McAllister, notable for his attempt to accommodate the process of social recognition among New York's elites with their desire to emulate a European aristocracy.

Nevertheless, despite the McAllister's efforts, the single shared attribute of the guests invited to the Goelet ball was wealth. Everyone who danced in the Goelet's drawing room possessed a considerable fortune by the standards of the time. Whether their capital had been accumulated through the industry of a forebearer or under more

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[3] New York Times, 28 August 1897, 7.

[4] Ibid.

immediate circumstances, all the families in attendance had prospered in New York's opportunistic commercial setting. Despite this truth, society's desire to be seen as an aristocracy, as represented by large homes and grand entertainments like the Goelets, lingered throughout the Gilded Age. While it is difficult to associate the period's opulence with the frugal household of Elizabeth Wolcott Merchant or the charitable inclinations of Maria Lydig Daly, the personal narratives of both women attest to unrealistic social goals of New York's wealthy. In the end, Elizabeth understood that her family's legacy of civic contribution could not compensate for her lack of wealth. Similarly, Maria Daly knew that her household's prominence in benevolent and cultural circles could not guarantee her access to the homes of the city's wealthiest families. Together, the lives of Elizabeth Merchant and Maria Daly confirm the social anxieties of the chimera that characterized New York society. To this extent, the final years of both women serve as a prism through which to view the closing years of the nineteenth century.

Elizabeth Redux

In 1888, Elizabeth moved into Manhattan into a small house on East 11th Street. Finally, she achieved her dream of a home in New York. For the next few years, Elizabeth lived quietly, easing into a social life of polite teas and receptions at the homes of old friends. She entertained at small dinners and monitored the activity of her son who attended Princeton College. Elizabeth's domestic burden had begun to ease. Living comfortably on family inheritances and the income from several rental properties in Manhattan and Brooklyn, Elizabeth enjoyed life independently of her husband. Accordingly, she decided to finance her husband's desire to develop Wolcott family

property in Duluth, Minnesota, which she had inherited from her father's estate. By 1888, Duluth had attracted a cadre of wealthy wheat farmers, miners and lumbermen who built "handsome Queen Anne houses" along the shores of Lake Superior.[5] The presence of these homes held forth the promise of urban amenities in Duluth. The city's commercial center featured electric lighting and a main street lined with buildings of "iron and dressed stones and pressed bricks, but the larger number are cheap buildings of wood or rough brick."[6] Smaller merchants, selling candy, fruit and tobacco, operated out of tents pitched on nearby vacant lots. Although Duluth had several large dry goods stores and hotels, it also had "scores of saloons and real estate offices."[7]

While the prospects of life in Duluth did not appeal to Elizabeth, Stephen Merchant responded to the town's frontier atmosphere. He busied himself in Duluth for nearly four months before returning to his wife and son in 1889.[8] While Stephen remained in New York, Elizabeth filled her diary with the details of her son's social calendar, her chronic rheumatism and her own engagements. She expressed no sadness over her husband's return to Duluth a few months later. Stephen joined his wife to see Huntington graduate from Princeton with "high honors, about fifth or sixth in his class."[9] For the balance of 1890, Elizabeth occupied herself with luncheons, teas and visits with friends.

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[5] New York Times, 19 February 1888, 11. See also S. A. Thompson. "The City of Duluth." New England Magazine 16, no.3 (May 1894): 327 - 348.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, April 14, 1888.

[9] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, June 11, 1890. See also New York Times, 11 June, 1890, 4.

She began to entertain at small home dinner parties, recording their menus in her diary. She summered in Litchfield, Connecticut, at the Wolcott "Homestead." Elizabeth demonstrated her growing sense of well-being, using money from her Boston uncle Huntington Wolcott, to buy a sapphire ring for herself.[10] In November of 1890 at Stephen's urging, Elizabeth finally traveled alone by train through Chicago to Duluth.

On this visit she inspected Stephen's progress in the development of "Merchant Park" without additional comment in her diary.[11] This Wolcott property lay on an angle "southeast of northwest" of the city, comprising approximately fifteen city blocks.[12] Elizabeth returned to New York in early December of 1890, confessing that she "hated to leave Steve."[13] Back in New York, Elizabeth resumed her household responsibilities. At this time, Elizabeth also required extended periods of bed rest, ostensibly to treat her rheumatism. The penmanship in her diary also grew increasingly illegible, suggesting the presence of other pressing issues. In May, Elizabeth noted a communication with Stephen "about Alice's affairs."[14] Slowly, Elizabeth revealed the financial concerns that threatened her peace of mind. Stephen needed additional financial commitments from his wife to maintain the Duluth venture. Elizabeth visited a notary a few weeks later to "sign and

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[10] EWM, Diaries, Monday, March 24; Friday, March 28; Saturday, March 29; Saturday, May 17, 1890. Huntington Wolcott died in Boston the following January. EWM, Diaries, Sunday, January 4; Wednesday, January 7, 1891.

[11] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, November 5, 1890.

[12] C. P. Frank's Atlas of the City of Duluth, Minnesota. 1 vol. Compiled and Drawn from Official Records, Private Plans, and Actual Surveys by C. P. Frank, County Surveyor, Duluth, 1902. (Philadelphia: G. W. Baist, Map Publisher, 1902), n.p.

[13] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, December 11, 1890.

[14] EWM, Diaries, Friday, May 1, 1891.

mail a mortgage" to her husband.[15] In late May, Elizabeth expressed further dismay over a "trying day" in which Stephen telegraphed his intention to resign as trustee of "Father's estate. General upset and disturbance, and I am all used up....Everything looks rather gloomy."[16]

Elizabeth, accompanied by her son, departed New York for Duluth in late June 1891. Finding Stephen looking "real fat and well," Elizabeth went through the motions of inspecting boarding house accommodations. She did not comment upon any progress in her husband's affairs except to observe the dancing one evening at the "Merchant's Park Assembly."[17] By the middle of 1891, Stephen had begun to convert the Wolcott property into a residential neighborhood. Elizabeth returned to New York to attend to household obligations there.[18] A September 1891 entry finally acknowledged the reason for her unhappiness. "Hate to give up my Davenport and little high bureau which no one but myself has ever used."[19] With this entry, Elizabeth confirmed that she would leave New York to live permanently in Duluth. Several weeks spent sorting through the contents of her home left Elizabeth "pretty forlorn and perfectly exhausted."[20] Elizabeth said her good-byes to friends, training to Duluth late November of 1891 with Huntington. Once in Minnesota, Elizabeth wrote little of Stephen, except to note her disappointment that he did

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[15] EWM, Diaries, Friday, May 22, 1891.

[16] EWM, Diaries, Friday, May 29, 1891. See also Sunday, May 31, 1891.

[17] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, June 23; August 14, 1891.

[18] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, September 23; Saturday, October 3, 1891.

[19] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, September 26, 1891.

[20] EWM, Diaries, Friday, October 10, 1891.

not meet her arrival as promised.[21] The Merchants rented rooms in a boarding house which Elizabeth found "very crowded here in two small rooms and they have refused to give us a folding bed."[22] During her first few days in Duluth, Elizabeth could only muster the will to record the frigid winter temperatures outside. She persisted in this habit throughout the years she remained in Minnesota. She wrote at year end, "This is the last day of '91, but I do not feel sorry for it."[23]

Elizabeth managed to cope with life in Duluth and its crippling winter weather. Temperatures dipping well below zero and storms howling off Lake Superior frequently made even limited winter excursions outside unbearable. The family moved three times into different boarding houses the following year before settling into rooms at the downtown Spalding Hotel. Huntington began law school at the University of Minnesota. With little mention of Stephen, Elizabeth focused upon domestic matters, including her various moves, servant issues, sewing and a stray dog that the family briefly adopted. Elizabeth characterized this period as "rather hard times."[24] The arrival of a "fine cheque from the Howland estate" brought "much relief and satisfaction" to the Merchant's straightened finances.[25]

Elizabeth also learned to navigate her new city, walking and taking street cars in snowy winter weather to attend church and accomplish errands. Life in the Spalding

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[21] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, November 25, 1891.

[22] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, December 1, 1891.

[23] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, December 31, 1891.

[24] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, February 18, 1892.

[25] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, April 6, 1892.

Hotel also provided proximity to Duluth's cultural life. Elizabeth availed herself of lectures and concerts.[26] She organized a "small tea" for acquaintances at the Spalding.[27] Her diary also began to record the Merchants' presence at social events, including an evening reception at the Marshall's "beautiful house. Lovely roses everywhere and a very pretty party."[28] Elizabeth seemed happy to attend such occasions as her life in New York had been marked by the absence of social activity with Stephen. While Elizabeth eased into a semblance of the life she left had behind, she noted that Stephen was "very down as the market is dull and he can't accomplish what he wants."[29] Her mood brightened with the subsequent receipt of a "large cheque" from the sale of Wolcott property in East Newark, New Jersey.[30]

If Elizabeth harbored any reservations about the efficacy of continuing to finance her husband's Duluth enterprise, she did not confide them to her diary. She returned to New York and Litchfield with Huntington for the summer months. Despite a series of pleasant visits with old friends, the Merchant's deteriorating finances again effected Elizabeth's mood. Additionally, "Mother's" health began to fail. Elizabeth often admitted to feeling "nervous and anxious."[31] Huntington, who completed his legal studies in June of

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[26] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, January 4; Thursday, January 12, 1893.

[27] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, January 14, 1893.

[28] EWM, Diaries, Monday, January 2, 1893. See also Tuesday, January 24, 1893.

[29] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, February 1, 1893.

[30] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, February 7, 1893.

[31] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, August 29; Thursday, September 7; Wednesday, September 13; Saturday, September 16, 1893.

1893, looked into the property taxes and rental of the "Hill" estate in Queens and attempted to sell Elizabeth's rental property in Green Point, Brooklyn. Even with her son's assistance, Elizabeth seemed almost immobilized by her family's apparent need for ready cash. An "early business telegram from Stephen... startled" her.[32] A few days later, Elizabeth visited Central Park and "sat there alone and quiet for some time...I am very much troubled and can only pray."[33]

Elizabeth returned to Duluth in September of 1893 after an absence of four months. The Merchants settled into the "bright and cheerful" rooms of another boarding house.[34] Elizabeth complained, however, of this home's distance from the center of town and its location atop a steep hill. "I don't know how I shall get about."[35] Huntington stayed behind in New York to prepare for the local bar examination, resolve the family's financial obligations and tend to "Mother's" deteriorating health. Elizabeth complained frequently of her son's absence.[36] After several difficult months of boarding house life, the Merchants returned in November live at the Spalding Hotel in "Room 244 with a folding bed and two wardrobes and are very glad to be here."[37] Elizabeth determined, however,

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[32] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, September 17, 1893.

[33] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, September 19, 1983.

[34] EWM, Diaries, Friday, October 6, 1893.

[35] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, October 7, 1893..

[36] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, September 27; Saturday, October 7; Sunday, October 22; Friday, November 10; Monday, November 13; Friday, December 8, 1893.

[37] EWM, Diaries, Monday, November 6, 1893.

not to observe Christmas because "the times are so bad."[38] Elizabeth admitted at year's end that 1893 had been "a very trying year to us all owing to the financial troubles, the separations and family differences."[39]

The coming months did not alleviate the Merchants' hardships. The national economy sunk into a depression, characterized by widespread bankruptcies, bank failures, and a depressed stock market. Elizabeth understood the extent to which this national emergency impacted her personal situation.[40] Duluth's severe winter weather, "so cold and disagreeable, no sunshine," did not lighten her mood.[41] By 1894, Stephen Merchant had also become entangled in litigation with the Western Land Association involving the disclosure of his obligations in a realty trust.[42] The family continued to reside in the Spalding Hotel where Elizabeth busied her self entertaining friends at a "sociable" tea in their cramped quarters. Without the assistance of personal servants, she noted her need "to wash my dishes and put everything away."[43] Life had changed for Elizabeth Merchant. She filled her days sewing, reading, letter writing and with church activity. She became interested in animal rights and the work of the local Humane Association.[44] Plagued by

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[38] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, December 12, 1893.

[39] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, December 31, 1893.

[40] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, October 31, 1893.

[41] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, February 25, 1895.

[42] Merchant v. Western Land Ass'n, 56 Minn. 327, 57 N.W. 931, 1894 Minn. LEXIS 54 (1894).

[43] EWM, Diaries, Friday, February 8, 1895.

[44] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, February 10; Wednesday, February 13, Friday, February 15, 1895.

rheumatism, Elizabeth also spent several weeks in 1895 undergoing vapor baths at a spa in Mt Clemens, Michigan.[45] This popular treatment for chronic disease required lengthy periods of submersion in scalding water.[46] For Elizabeth, life at Mt. Clemens became a metaphor for her difficulties in Duluth. She recorded the difficulties of undergoing vapor baths by habitually recording the water temperatures, which sometimes reached 100 degrees. She complained, "[H]ad enough 'heroic treatment'...I am very weak and pale and cannot stand anymore."[47]

At her family's insistence, Elizabeth left Mt. Clemens for Pennsylvania to visit Stephen's sisters and "Mother." Huntington sent word of the arrival of stock dividends from Howland interests in Venezuela, "a delightful surprise."[48] Within a few weeks, Elizabeth was back in "New York!"[49] She shopped for clothes and visited her sister Alice's new apartment at 175 Second Avenue.[50] Elizabeth's mood continued to improve until business papers arrived in Manhattan from Stephen. She became "very much disturbed and troubled....I cannot determine what is my duty."[51] Elizabeth does not

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[45] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, March 23 - Tuesday, April 9, 1895.

[46] New York Times, 15 November 1882, 8. Appliances that enabled home vapor baths also became available by 1885. New York Times, 26 July 1885, 7; 2 August 1885, 7; 20; 6 December 1885, 9. Reports of fatalities associated with the use of home units also appeared in the press. New York Times November 1885, 5.

[47] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, April 9, 1895.

[48] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, April 10, 1895.

[49] EWM, Diaries, Monday, April 29, 1895.

[50] Ibid.

[51] EWM, Diaries, Monday, May 20, 1895. See also EWM, Diaries, Friday, July 5, 1895.

specify the nature of her financial obligations to Stephen. A summary of his case against the Western Land Association indicates, however, that he had retained Trusteeship of Frederick Wolcott's estate. Because Stephen had engaged in the Duluth venture on behalf of his wife's interests, any indebtedness incurred by the estate could force Elizabeth to sell her assets in a depressed market to meet her husband's loan obligations. Stephen's indebtedness also threatened the financial interests of Elizabeth's sister Alice, Frederick Wolcott's other principal beneficiary. As a consequence, Elizabeth weighed selling her property in Manhattan at 345 East 79th Street to accommodate the situation in Duluth.[52]

Elizabeth returned to Duluth in early October of 1895. Shortly afterwards, Stephen's sister and Elizabeth's "Mother" died "peacefully" at the "Hill."[53] Elizabeth comforted her husband by reading "aloud the beautiful burial service and some of the familiar hymns."[54] The Merchants did not attend "Mother's" funeral because Elizabeth "had been back for a few days and it was a very expensive trip for us to take."[55] A few months later, Elizabeth's younger sister Alice suffered a nervous breakdown. Huntington, who had remained in New York, took his aunt to Philadelphia to place her under the care of Dr. Weir Mitchell.[56] Mitchell, widely regarded as a neurologist, had developed a rest

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[52] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, July 6; Wednesday, July 10; Tuesday, July 16, 1895.

[53] EWM, Diaries, October 14, 1895. See also New York Times, 14 October 1895, 8.

[54] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, October 16, 1895.

[55] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, December 31, 1895.

[56] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, October 26, 1895.

cure, emphasizing isolation, bed rest and a rich, but bland diet for his women patients.[57] Elizabeth's rental property on East 79th Street in Manhattan finally sold which Elizabeth credited to her son's "energy and perseverance."[58] Despite this financial gain, Huntington decided to forego his New York legal practice and move to Duluth. Elizabeth realized that Stephen would require Huntington's help in unraveling the "snarl" of family finances.[59]

The Merchants' financial woes persisted. Huntington retained his own legal counsel which Elizabeth "felt to be necessary and right."[60] Elizabeth characterized her life as one of "[w]riting, mending, talking the same old story but it is enough for me if only I could eliminate the terrible money troubles."[61] Grateful to have her son at hand, Elizabeth resumed her familiar pattern of activity from her home at the Spalding Hotel. She taught a sewing class at the Duluth Industrial School and became active in the Missionary Guild of the local Episcopal Church. She seemed pleased to note that her "sewing class had

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[57] Mitchell, born in 1828 in Philadelphia, also contributed to the fields of pharmacology, toxicology and physiology, publishing 125 scientific and scholarly studies. Mitchell also won fame as a poet and dramatist and as the author of twenty-one novels of historical fiction. He died in 1914. New York Times, 17 November 1895, 28; 19 February 1905, SM3; 5 January 1914, 9. See also Anna Robeson Brown Barr, Weir Mitchell; his Life and Letters. (New York: Duffield & Company, 1929); Earnest, Ernest Penney, S. Weir Mitchell, Novelist and Physician, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1950); Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, 197-216, passim; Encyclopedia of American Biography, s.v. "Mitchell, S. Weir."

[58] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, November 15, 1895.

[59] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, December 31, 1895.

[60] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, January 30, 1896.

[61] EWM, Diaries, Friday, January 24, 1896. See also EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, February 4, 1896; Thursday, March 19; Saturday, April 4; Wednesday, May 6, 1896.

fourteen little girls."[62] Although Elizabeth does not elaborate on this involvement, her sewing class is reminiscent of her previous interest in the New York House of Industry and her work with the Astoria Employment Society. Stephen's business problems became so acute that Huntington's lawyer recommended that Steven "leave Duluth for a time."[63] Whether or not Stephen heeded this counsel is not known. His name reappeared in Elizabeth's diary several months later only to record his late evening arrivals.[64]

In 1896, the Merchants moved from the Spalding Hotel into a small house at 414 Eighteenth Avenue, East.[65] Elizabeth financed the purchase of this home through the sale of "some of my cable stocks."[66] The following year, Stephen listed the location of his real estate business at this same address.[67] After almost five years of living in boarding houses and hotels, Elizabeth finally could enjoy the comfort and convenience of her own home in Duluth. She sent for her furniture and belongings from New York and set about arranging her new home to her liking. Home ownership gave Elizabeth the pretense of a normal life. Bent on maintaining appearances, she readied the house for winter. She supervised the application of weather stripping around the windows, refit winter carpeting and covered

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[62] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, January 22, 1896. See also EWM, Diaries, Saturday February 12, 1898.

[63] EWM, Diaries, Monday, March 23, 1896.

[64] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, May 13; Wednesday, May 27; Thursday, May 28; Friday, May 29, 1896.

[65] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, April 14, 1896. See also Duluth News Tribune, 8 June 1901, n.p.

[66] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, April 4, 1896.

[67] Duluth Directory, 1897-1898, (Duluth: R. L Polk & Co., 1898), 351.

exterior plants. Her friend Pauline Agassiz Shaw surprised her with "a beautiful letter" and a "cheque which she asks me to use to help me in my daily life."[68] With small monetary gifts from her Boston family at Christmas, Elizabeth managed to outfit her new home.

Elizabeth's life in Duluth gradually acquired many of the qualities that had shaped her New York existence. She became Treasurer of the Women's Auxiliary of an Episcopal congregation that the family had joined.[69] She remained socially active throughout the long winter of 1897, conducting social calls and entertaining at small teas. Elizabeth mended spring under garments and marked her linens. Significantly, she refused election as President of the church Guild because "who can tell how long I may be in Duluth."[70] Despite the knowledge that she would someday return to New York, the routine of daily domesticity enabled her to cope with her circumstances. Her life in Duluth went forward in small but significant steps. Huntington joined a local law firm. Elizabeth made a few close friends. Her family's financial hardships did not improve over the near term, however. In 1897, she dispatched Huntington to New York to sell her home in Astoria and to look into selling or leasing the "Hill" estate. Later, Elizabeth traveled briefly to New York to sort through books and papers at the Hill with Alice who still seemed "depressed and nervous."[71]

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[68] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, October 8, 1896.

[69] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, November 24, 1896.

[70] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, February 17, 1897.

[71] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, April 20, 1897.

Elizabeth's ability to satisfy her domestic obligation to her family gave her life in Duluth continuity and purpose. Her regular fall and spring house cleanings proceeded as usual. She shopped for clothing on sale in the local stores. She continued to sew, read, write and sort through books and papers on the days that weather permitted little else. Even Elizabeth's difficulties with household help persisted in a manner not unlike her New York experience. She filled every page of her diary with some small accomplishment. Elizabeth managed to make a place for herself and her family in Duluth. She noted after an absence of several weeks from church that she received "quite a welcome from many friends."[72]

The Merchants' finances began to ease with income from the rental of her Astoria house and the "Hill" estate.[73] Stephen's affairs, other than his persistent late evenings, did not intrude into Elizabeth's daily observations. She now consulted with Huntington on "matters regarding the future."[74] She completed her "pedigree blank" for membership in the St. Paul chapter of the Society of Colonial Dames.[75] Elizabeth's interests extended to national politics as she celebrated McKinley's election and worried over the progress of the Spanish American War.[76] Her sister Alice, however, continued to suffer from anxiety

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[72] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, March 29, 1898.

[73] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, April 12, 1898. See also, Saturday, January 16; Sunday, January 17; Thursday, January 21, 1897.

[74] EWM, Diaries, Friday, February 26, 1897. See also EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, April 5; Friday, April 21, 1899.

[75] EWM, Diaries, Monday, December 15, 1898. See also EWM, Diaries, Thursday, September 9, 1897; Friday, March 3; Monday March 27; Wednesday, March 29, 1899.

[76] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, November 3; Wednesday, November 4; Saturday, November 7, 1896.Sunday, March 26; Monday, April 11; Friday, April 15; Monday, May 2; Saturday, July

and depression, requiring hospitalization at a sanitarium in Watkins Glen, New York.[77]

In the summer of 1899, Stephen traveled to California on behalf of his brother Clarke who owned a wholesale metals business in Philadelphia. In Stephen's absence, legal problems arose between the Merchant's Duluth realty interests and a local bank. Huntington could not locate "his Father's statement of rents due."[78] Elizabeth finally received a "letter from Steve, but no mention of the Bank matter...I felt so nervous and depressed, I could not stay in the house."[79] Although Huntington appears to have delayed the bank matter, Elizabeth received word from Clarke Merchant about Stephen. According to Clarke, "Steve does not answer his letters or telegrams or attend to his instructions."[80] Stephen remained unresponsive in California, leaving Elizabeth's "nervous system depressed and indigestion out of order."[81]

In January of 1900, with little mention of Stephen in her diary, Elizabeth learned that "the Bank had decided to sue us on the note! It is a hard blow!" Stephen's inability to meet interest payments on an outstanding loan with the American Exchange Bank had resulted in a civil action. The Bank refused "any offer of settlement."[82] Elizabeth and her

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2; Sunday, July 3; Monday, July 4, 1898.

[77] EWM, Diaries, Friday, December 16, 1898.

[78] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, July 9, 1899. See also EWM, Diaries, Monday, July 10 - Wednesday, July 12, 1899.

[79] EWM, Diaries, Monday, July 31, 1899.

[80] EWM, Diaries, Monday, August 21, 1899.

[81] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, November 15, 1899.

[82] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, January 18, 1900.

son each received a summons.[83] Frustrated, she confided that she "would now like to have Huntington leave Duluth and go myself." While Elizabeth and Huntington managed this latest crisis, Stephen remained in California. In May, Huntington learned through a third party that "Steve was well and prosperous and had gone to Fairhaven, Washington. We felt greatly relieved though puzzled."[84] Later, the family learned that Stephen had found short-term employment at a salary of $125 a month.[85] This assignment proved short lived as Stephen returned to Duluth on May 20th in failing health.

The future weighed heavily on Elizabeth during the winter of 1900. "We must make some change as we have about come to the end of our resources!"[86] Elizabeth considered renting her Duluth house and sending Stephen to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, to recuperate at the home of one of his younger sisters. Jennie Penrose, however, wrote that this plan "would not be advisable."[87] Elizabeth worried, "I do not see how we are going to live here through the winter."[88] The Merchants did, however, remain in Duluth. Stephen, now diagnosed with kidney disease and heart trouble, soon required the services of a full time attendant. Early in 1901, Elizabeth gratefully acknowledged a "lovely letter

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[83] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, January 23; Wednesday, January 24, 1900.

[84] EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, May 15, 1900.

[85] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, May 16, 1900.

[86] EWM, Diaries, Monday, July 9, 1900. See also EWM, Diaries, Saturday, July 14; Sunday, July 15; Monday, July 16; Thursday, July 19; Friday, July 20; Sunday, July 22; Friday, July 27, 1900.

[87] EWM, Diaries, Friday, August 17, 1900.

[88] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, August 18, 1900.

from Pauline Shaw enclosing a great big cheque."[89] Elizabeth needed this generosity. A few weeks later, she remarked upon her receipt of a "sweet note" from her aunt Louisa Fairchild in Chicago, "but no money as I expected."[90] Despite her financial burdens, Elizabeth briefly visited New York in March. Upon her arrival there, she worshiped at an unfamiliar church because " I felt too shabby to go where I would meet people I knew."[91]

Elizabeth returned to Duluth a few weeks later to nurse Stephen through his final illness. On June 6, 1901, Stephen "simply ceased to breathe...he died without a struggle and just slept away and the last word he said was 'Mother.'"[92] The Duluth press commended Stephen for his "active life, full of incident and experiences."[93] After funeral services at the Merchant home, Elizabeth sent her husband's remains to New York for burial at Green-Wood Cemetery.[94] Elizabeth did not undertake this journey, remaining behind in Duluth to manage Stephen's papers. Of her loss, Elizabeth only remarked that "my heart aches."[95]

In September 1901, Huntington married Mary Tallmadge of Minneapolis, Minnesota, at a small, family wedding. Elizabeth enjoyed this "lovely" occasion "in a

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[89] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, January 2, 1901.

[90] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, February 16, 1901.

[91] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, March 3, 1901.

[92] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, June 6, 1901.

[93] Duluth Evening Herald, 7 June 1901, n.p. See also Duluth News Tribune, 7 June; 8 June 1901, n.p.

[94] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, June 8; Sunday, June 10, 1901.

[95] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, June 16; Sunday, June 23; Sunday, June 30, 1901.

beautiful room full of books and flowers and with a big open fire."[96] Afterwards, Elizabeth traveled East to spend several months with family and friends. She returned to Duluth in December to ready her house for winter and to enjoy a "Happy Christmas Day."[97] Any worry that Elizabeth may have entertained about her future quickly dissipated after a "lovely and comforting talk" with Huntington.[98] With this brief notation, Elizabeth acknowledged that she would remain in her son's household for the rest of her life. Huntington soon liquidated the family's remaining assets "to pay all the debts."[99] In August, Elizabeth became grandmother to a little girl named in her honor. The Merchants returned to live permanently in Manhattan by late 1901, settling first into an apartment on West 93rd Street. As a token of welcome, Elizabeth's friend Pauline Shaw sent a "check for $500...a great surprise and pleasure."[100]

Elizabeth quickly acclimated herself to life in New York. Although Manhattan had changed during the ten years Elizabeth lived in Duluth, she maintained her diary as if this interruption had not occurred. Elizabeth, living in her son's household, continued to record a familiar pattern of domestic activity, including: her own health and that of other family members; staffing issues; and her granddaughter Betty's growth and development.

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[96] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, September 18, 1901.

[97] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, December 25, 1901.

[98] EWM, Diaries, Friday, February 21, 1902.

[99] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, April 23, 1901.

[100] EWM, Diaries, Thursday, January 15, 1903. See also EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, February 24, 1904; Tuesday, June 6, 1905; Tuesday, May 29, 1906. In 1906, the Shaw family cancelled outstanding notes of indebtedness from both Elizabeth and Huntington. "Such friends as they have ever been so loving, loyal and helpful. God bless them." EWM, Diaries, Thursday, June 11, 1908.

Huntington's business problems sometimes intruded into her thoughts.[101] She followed local politics and the stock market "where we have our little all invested."[102] In 1906, she attended a suffrage meeting in Boston's Fanueil with her friend Pauline Shaw, finding "much justice in their arguments for women voting."[103] Regular church attendance at Christ Episcopal Church met Elizabeth's spiritual needs and she began to participate in several church related activities. Elizabeth accomplished frequent trips to the center of Manhattan for shopping and lunch at the Women's Exchange, availing herself of public transportation. She noted the courtesy of old friends and extended family at social occasions.[104] She made calls and attended some meetings of the New York Chapter of the Colonial Dames of America.[105]

Elizabeth did not look back. She had learned to enjoy life's blessings in the present moment. In 1903, Elizabeth's family grew with the addition of Huntington's second child Livingston Tallmadge Merchant.[106] Elizabeth seldom included any reference

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[101] EWM, Diaries, Sunday, August 16, 1903. See also EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, February 2, 1904; Monday, April 17, 1905.

[102] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, July 25, 1903. See also EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, November 8; Wednesday, November 9, 1904.

[103] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, May 15, 1906..

[104] EWM, Diaries, Monday, February 2, 1903. See also EWM, Diaries, Tuesday, March 8; Wednesday, March 16, 1904; Saturday, May 6; Sunday, June 4; Monday, December 11, 1905; Friday, April 6, 1906; Tuesday, June 4; Sunday, June 7, 1907.

[105] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, May 27, 1903. See also EWM, Diaries, Thursday, May 23, 1907.

[106] EWM, Diaries, Monday, November 23, 1903. Livingston Tallmadge Merchant, known as Liv, graduated from the Hotchkiss School in 1922 and cum laude from Princeton University in 1926. After college, he joined the Boston branch of the investment firm Scudder, Stevens & Clark, becoming a partner in 1930. Merchant received a call inviting him to join the

to her life in Duluth, except to note in 1904 that the American Exchange Bank agreed to "settle our claim of $10,000 for $1300 and the securities!! It seems wonderful and we are so thankful."[107] Elizabeth appreciated that "happiness comes from little things: health, friendship, home, and the voices of little children."[108] On the anniversary of Stephen's death in 1903, she simply noted that she "just tried not to think."[109]

Elizabeth's final diary entry in 1909 expressed a motherly concern for Huntington's health. On the previous evening, Elizabeth had attended a concert with him at Carnegie Hall. After thirty-eight years of maintaining a personal record, there is nothing to indicate that Elizabeth decided to forego the practice. Little is known of where she lived or her quality of life during her final years. Huntington continued to practice law in Manhattan, notably representing the prison warden Thomas Mott Osborne in a suit against Sing-Sing correctional facility.[110] Huntington, however, died in Liberty, New York, in 1918.[111] His daughter Betty, Elizabeth's namesake, debuted at a luncheon

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Roosevelt administration after the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1942. Continuing the Wolcott legacy of public service, Merchant joined the State Department, becoming Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, twice Ambassador to Canada and an advisor to President Eisenhower at the Geneva Summit of 1955. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles once described Merchant as the "ideal of a Foreign Service Officer." Married to the former Elizabeth Stiles of Washington D. C. in 1928, Merchant's family included a son and a daughter. Livingston Merchant died in Washington, D. C. in 1976. New York Times, 17 May 1976, 32.

[107] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, April 27, 1904.

[108] EWM, Diaries, Wednesday, July 17, 1908.

[109] EWM, Diaries, Saturday, June 6, 1903.

[110] New York Times, 6 April 1916, 7; 12 November 1916, 5; 7 January 1916, 1; 9 March 1916, 8.

[111] New York Times, 22 May 1918, 13.

in 1920 at the Merchant home at 30 East 68th Street.[112] There is no indication, however, that her grandmother attended this event. Betty Merchant married Philip Gallatin Cammann at the Church of the Heavenly Rest in Manhattan in 1924.[113] A small reception followed the ceremony at the Colony, a private women's club. One wonders if Elizabeth was able to join this family celebration.

Elizabeth lived for another nine years after the death of her son. Her sister Alice died in February 1927, leaving Elizabeth, the oldest, and last remaining child of Frederick Wolcott. Elizabeth died in obscurity in August 1927 at the age of eighty-seven. No notice of her death appeared in the newspapers. Sustained by her family, her faith and her domestic obligation, Elizabeth Wolcott Merchant had lived a life of quiet accomplishment. With grace and dignity, she had endured an unhappy marriage, the deaths of five children, a series of financial reversals and the winters of Duluth, Minnesota. Green-Wood Cemetery records indicate that she was interred there on August 10, 1927 in the Wolcott family plot, near her father and children, those people whom she loved the most.[114]

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[112] New York Times, 8 December 1920, 16.

[113] Elizabeth Merchant, known as Betty, married Phillip G. Cammann at the Church of the Heavenly Rest on October 16, 1924. New York Times, 5 October 1924, X11. Cammann, a descendant of Albert Gallatin, Secretary of the Treasury under President James Madison, became a partner in the brokerage firm of Pearl & Co. The couple had two children. Phillip Camman died in 1934. New York Times, 19 December 1934, 23. Betty Cammann died in September, 1963. New York Times, 10 September 1963, 39.

[114] www.Green-Wood Cemetery.com In 1922, Mary Tallmadge Merchant became an interior decorator with Ruth Collins in a firm at 64th and Madison Avenues. Mary Merchant, active in New York society, had studied art prior to her marriage and gained business experience organizing a coffee shop for factory girls. In 1926, she also chaired a committee that opened the Blue Mart tea room, benefitting the Travelers Aid Society. Mary Tallmadge died unexpectedly of a chronic heart ailment in 1933. New York Times, 28 June 1933, 21.

Maria Daly, like Elizabeth Merchant, did not leave an extensive record of the final years of her life. In early May 1889, she recorded her recent activity after a lapse of almost three years. She returned to her journal then to record her impressions of the city's centennial observance of George Washington's inauguration. The Dalys viewed two days of parades from a balcony at the home of William Rhinelander.[115] Maria appreciated an event that roused the "greatest fervor of patriotism" from the assembled crowds along the route.[116] On this occasion, however, the departure of her niece Emy Otto Hoyt and Emy's young daughter, born in 1886, for Europe weighed most heavily on her mind. Maria admitted, "Since she has been here, I talk out everything so with her that the diary has been neglected."[117]

Charles Daly, now retired from the bench, had formed the law firm of Daly, Hoyt and Mason with several young attorneys. Socially, the couple remained active in the American Geological Society as well as the Thursday Evening Club. Newspapers occasionally noticed their appearance at other cultural events and at weddings.[118] It would seem that Maria, still involved with the New York Cooking School and her Kindergarten project in lower Manhattan, would have time for little else. Maria's name, however, is also associated with an organization known as The Dorothy. This group hoped to raise

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[115] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," May 1, 1889.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid.

[118] New York Times, 3 November 1891, 5; 6 November 1891, 8; 12 April 1893, 8.

sufficient funds, through dues and membership fees, to open an "institution for the exclusive accommodation of ladies" in the city.[119] The Dorothy planned to provide its members a restaurant, sitting and reading rooms as well as a retail shop stocked with fancy work and baked goods. The Dorothy also anticipated offering limited household services, including: child care; package services; and "servants and house cleaners to dismantle homes for the Summer and rearrange them for the Winter."[120] Unlike the more established New York Exchange for Women's Work, which assisted women in need of a respectable source of income, The Dorothy addressed the urban needs of the affluent.[121]

While there is no indication that the women sponsors of The Dorothy ever executed their plans, Maria's interest in the fledgling group suggests her continuing desire to participate in public projects. Her last significant charitable involvement required both her originality and perseverance. Many civic minded individuals, like Maria, felt that it was a "disgrace" that New York possessed neither a zoological nor a botanical garden, "both so generally regarded as valuable agents of popular education in Europe."[122] Sensing the absence of this cultural amenity, Maria undertook a long term project to convert her grandfather's Bronx estate at West Farms into a public botanical garden. Maria had a keen sense of personal stewardship and the obligation of the rich to use their wealth to

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[119] New York Times, 17 February 1889, 9.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Kathleen Waters Sander, The Business of Charity: The Woman's Exchange Movement, 1832 - 1900, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

[122] N. L. Britton, "Central Park as a Botanical Garden." The Century 27, no.6 (April 1884): 958.

"make some poor families happy."[123] She once mused on the "pleasant feeling to know that you have come from honest folk, giving you a desire to do them honor by your own life and conduct."[124] Maria also had a sentimental attachment to West Farms, clustering around her fondness for her grandfather, her happiness there as a child, and her memories of her courtship with Judge Daly.[125] Maria's idea required the cooperation of her siblings and adjacent property owners, the support of city and state governments and a substantial fund raising effort. Maria, though wealthy, did not have the means to purchase the land from her family and others for an outright donation. As previously demonstrated by her work with the Union Home and School and other charities, Maria did have the energy and the persistence to accomplish large, long-term projects. Skilled in the use of feminine influence, Maria could depend upon the support of a wide range of political and social acquaintances.

Maria first enlisted the aid of her husband, an active member of New York's Torrey Botanical Club.[126] Charles also began to persuade city officials on the need for a garden and the suitability of the West Farms site. In 1883, Maria commented upon the

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[123] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," November 3, 1886.

[124] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," May 9, 1889.

[125] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893" October 9, 1883.

[126] The Torrey Botanical Club took its name from John Torrey whose 1817 catalog of plants in the New York area established a fieldwork methodology for New York botanists in the nineteenth century. In 1856, Torrey became a trustee of Columbia College and was provided a house in exchange for opening his library and herbarium to the school. He established the Torrey Club around 1867. In 1870, the group began to publish the Bulletin of the Torrey Botanical Club, the first American periodical devoted to the subject of botany. Encyclopedia of New York, s.v. "botanical gardens."

outcome of the Judge's meeting with Councilmen on the subject. "They have fixed upon our estate [which] will make a lovely park and fulfill my dearest wish that the lovely old trees that I played under and gathered nuts from as a child...will be allowed to live out their innocent lives...How delightful to feel that it will never be cut up."[127] In 1886, three city Commissioners inspected the property prior to its appraisal.[128] Of the 653 acres under consideration, the Lorillard estate owned more than one half of the land while the Lydig estate held 170 acres. Within two years, the city had purchased the land as a part of a large capital expenditure for the addition of park lands. Maria's younger brother David Lydig received $234, 860 for his holdings. The land held separately by the remaining heirs of Maria's father Philip Lydig sold for $576,875.[129] In May 1889, Maria received "$79,000, my seventh of the money for the Bronx park. David has had a great piece of good luck that the old garden was likewise taken so he will get two-thirds more than anyone else."[130]

Although the city purchased the Lydig property for park use, monies still needed to be raised for a botanical garden on the site. New York's Torrey Botanical Club, the largest organization of its kind in the country, began to circulate a "general appeal" for public subscriptions.[131] This group envisioned the botanical garden as a place for "educational and scientific, pharmaceutical, horticultural" research as well as a place for

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[127] Ibid.

[128] New York Times, 24 October 1886, 4.

[129] New York Times, 6 October 1888, 8.

[130] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," May 9, 1889.

[131] New York Times, 13 January 1889, 6.

public leisure.[132] The funding of this broad mission would require a concerted, long-term effort. Maria noted in 1891 that her "present hobby and occupation is trying to get $250,000 for the establishment of a botanical garden in the Bronx Park. If the Torrey Club of Columbia College can raise that, the Commissioners will give the land."[133] Maria wrote personal solicitations to friends and acquaintances.[134] She hosted a dinner "to bring the garden project" to the attention of the Trustees of Columbia College...I think we succeeded in getting it a good reception launch."[135] Finally, Maria decided to bequeath a "sum to build a large greenhouse in memory of my Grandfather Lydig."[136] Maria concluded that she was "glad to be the lever to set this great project and I hope to delight multitudes not yet born."[137]

On April 28, 1891, the state legislature passed a bill permitting the use of the Bronx Park as a garden. Maria wrote intermittently of her project's progress. Cornelius Vanderbilt agreed to chair "pro tem" the fund raising effort, enlisting the aid of the business community. Maria also organized a meeting of three hundred ladies at "Mrs.

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[132] Ibid. See also New York Times, 16 February 1889, 8; 24 February 1889, 5.

[133] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," February 17, 1891. See also Charles P. Daly, "Want of a Botanical Garden in New York." Remarks of Ex-chief Justice Charles P. Daly. At a meeting held May 19, 1891, to take action under the law enacted....for the establishment of a botanical garden in the city of New York. [New York: Douglas Taylor, printer, 1891].

[134] S. P. Nash. "Letter to Maria Lydig Daly," January 27, 1891. Daly Papers.

[135] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," February 17, 1891.

[136] Ibid.

[137] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," May 5, 1891.

Fitzgerald's who kindly offered her house, taking most of the care from me."[138] Judge Addison Brown, president of the Torrey Botanical Club, presided.[139] Mrs. Charles P. Daly received public credit as "among those who worked hardest and most successfully" for the garden.[140] Regardless of this recognition, Maria later complained, that due to "small attendance" at her meeting, further action on the garden had been postponed until autumn.[141] The effort to raise money proceeded "slowly."[142] Maria noted that by 1893, J. Pierpont Morgan succeeded in "getting eight of his ten names at $25,000 a piece."[143] Despite this optimistic result, Maria wrote, "I am depressed this winter and wonder if I shall live to see it begin."[144]

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[138] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," May 17, 1891. See also New York Times, 20 May 1891, 8. Mrs. Fitzgerald was the wife of General Louis Fitzgerald, whose service in the Civil War and the New York National Guard earned him a promotion to Brigadier General in 1882. After the war, Fitzgerald became the President of the Mercantile Trust Company in Manhattan. He died at his country estate in Garrison, New York, in 1908. New York Times, 7 October 1908, 9.

[139] Addison Brown, a native of West Newbury, Massachusetts, graduated from Harvard College in 1852 and Harvard Law School in 1854. He moved to New York in 1855 where he entered private law practice. In 1881, he received appointment to the federal bench in New York by President Chester A. Arthur. In 1898, he became a bankruptcy referee under the terms of a new bankruptcy law that placed such matters under federal jurisdiction. In addition to his leadership of the Torrey Botanical Club, he collaborated with Professor N. L. Britton on the Illustrated Flora of the Northern United States and Canada, published in 1896-1898. Brown, a widower for seven years, married Helen Carpenter Gaskin in 1893. He retired from the bench in 1901. New York Times, 4 July 1901, 1. See also New York Times, 21 July 1893, 5.

[140] New York Times, 20 May 1891, 8.

[141] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," July 2, 1891.

[142] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," February 1, 1893.

[143] Ibid. See also Jean Strouse, Morgan: American Financier, (New York: Random House, 1899), 290.

[144] Ibid.

Maria's health had begun to fail by 1893, requiring extended periods of home confinement. She did not reveal the reasons for her "hibernating condition," noting only the flowers and the "delightful violinist" who played on Tuesdays to cheer her.[145] Maria's spirits brightened a few months later with New York's plans to observe the Columbian Centennial. She acknowledged that the "country has gone mad over Columbus."[146] The proposed visit of the Infanta Eualie of Spain to New York generated great excitement. "The last royal personage that was entertained by the City of New York was the Prince of Wales in 1860."[147] As a part of the city's celebration, a private subscription ball was planned for late May in Madison Square Garden. Some controversy surrounding the suitability the event emerged, however. Mrs. Paran Stevens wished, instead, to host a more exclusive function at her Fifth Avenue mansion, but could not find a "Chamberlain to conduct the affair."[148] Ward McAllister opined that May was too late for a fancy ball in New York. According to him, a more appropriate occasion would be a garden party in honor of the Infanta.[149] Other elites expressed concern over Spanish court etiquette, requiring people to kneel and walk backwards in the royal presence.

In the meantime, the Duke and Duchess de Veragua arrived in the city. Maria was "appointed as one of the ladies to receive" this royal couple.[150] Four thousand people

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[145] Ibid.

[146] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," April 26, 1893.

[147] New York Times, 5 May 1893, 9.

[148] New York Times, 14 May 1893, 1.

[149] Ibid.

[150] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," April 26, 1893.

crowded into a lavish reception in the ballroom of the new Waldorf Hotel. According to Maria, "the reception was admirably managed. The collection of fruits, flowers and the lunch very beautifully arranged and very magnificent. The Ducal party are true ladies and gentlemen, very simple, affable and delighted with everything."[151] With Maria in poor health, it is doubtful that the Dalys attended the grand ball in late May. Prior to the event, the Infanta relaxed etiquette requirements so that those presented to her could simply turn and walk away as with any introduction.[152] On the evening of May 26, flowers, lights and costly tapestries transformed Madison Square Garden into a beautiful ballroom. Mrs. Paran Stevens, who did attend, remained seated in her box and was not presented to Her Highness. Ward McAllister grandly proclaimed the brilliant affair to be "entirely worth New York."[153]

Maria did, however, attend a small luncheon honoring Eualie in early June at the Café Savarin in the Equitable Building.[154] As one of only twenty guests, Maria seemed pleased to encounter there "Mrs. Gardiner, May Van Rensselaer and Mrs. Delafield, all good friends."[155] Maria thought the occasion a "beautiful thing [with] flowers, flowers everywhere."[156] She also enjoyed her twenty minutes of conversation with the Infanta ,

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[151] Ibid. See also New York Times, 20 April 1893, 1.

[152] New York Times, 18 May 1983, 8; 24 May 1893, 8.

[153] New York Times, 27 May 1893.

[154] New York Times, 4 June 1893, 1.

[155] MLD, "Diaries, 1866 - 1893," June 4, 1893.

[156] Ibid.

observing her to be "charming, easy, natural and very pleasing."[157] Somewhat wistfully, Maria concluded, "It is so pleasant, when you are old, to find that you can still make yourself agreeable."[158] With these comments, Maria wrote one of her final diary entries, a fitting end to the life of a very public woman.

Maria Lydig Daly died in her seventieth year on August 21, 1894 at her summer residence in Sag Harbor, Long Island, New York.[159] A few days later, Episcopal funeral rites were conducted at the Church of the Ascension in lower Manhattan.[160] Maria was recalled as a "liberal dispenser of unostentatious charity."[161] She was particularly remembered for her work with the Union Home and School and "for the establishment in this city of a botanical garden."[162] Maria bequeathed most of her assets, valued at $250,000, to her husband Charles.[163] After gifts to servants and the designation of Lydig family heirlooms to relatives, Maria's bequests to institutions, including the New York Botanical Garden and the American Geographical Society, remained contingent upon her husband's death. Maria also left $20,000 in trust for her younger sister Rosalie Staples, with the principal to revert to the Botanical Garden upon her death.[164] Maria, would have

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[157] Ibid.

[158] Ibid.

[159] New York Times, 22 August 1894, 5.

[160] New York Times, 23 August 1894, 5; 24 August 1894, 5.

[161] New York Times, 23 August 1894, 5..

[162] Unspecified news citation in Harold Earl Hammond, A Commoner's Judge, 384.

[163] New York Times, 5 September 1894, 9.

[164] Ibid.

detested the publication of these financial details.

The work to fund the garden continued without Maria's presence. By June of the following year, Dr. Nathaniel L. Britton of Columbia College announced that "only $11,000 more [was] needed to complete the $250,000 we are obliged to raise before the city will set aside the 250 acres in the Bronx Park for the Botanical Garden, Museum, and Arboretum, and issue bonds for $500,000 to carry on the work."[165] Charles Daly continued to participate in the garden project, accepting a seat on the Garden's Board of Managers in 1896.[166] In the Spring of that year, the Managers, headed by Cornelius Vanderbilt, announced final plans for the site, including: a three story building near the entrance to serve as a museum, library, laboratory and herbaria; an iron and glass domed horticultural house; three miles of stone walkways; two driveway bridges; footpaths; temporary nurseries; and an extensive program of tree planting and landscaping.[167] The Managers also undertook a capital campaign to fund a $750,000 endowment for the new park.

Charles Daly died in his Sag Harbor home on September 20, 1899 at the age of

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[165] New York Times, 13, June 1895, 9. See also New York Times, 18 August 1895, 2. Nathaniel Lord Britton, biologist, author and educator, served for thirty-three years as Director of the New York Botanical Garden. A native of Staten Island, Britton received his training at the School of Mines at Columbia University. Britton, for most of his professional life, was associated with Columbia as a professor of biology and botany. He also served as a field assistant with the United States Geological Survey, and later the New Jersey Geological Survey. Britton authored many standard treatises on the flora of the northeastern United States and Canada. In 1885, he married Elizabeth Gertrude Knight, a noted bryologist. He died at his home in the Bronx, New York, in 1934 at the age of seventy-five. New York Times, 26 June 1934, 19.

[166] New York Times, 5 March 1896, 7.

[167] New York Times, 8 March 1896, 16.

eighty-four. By that date, the plans for the New York Botanical Garden were well near completion. Friends and associates remembered Charles Daly as a "distinguished, respected and useful personality."[168] After a funeral mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, he was buried beside his wife in Woodlawn Cemetery in Queens.[169] As Maria's goal for West Farms came to fruition, the Lydig and Daly names faded from their association with the origins of the New York Botanical Garden.[170] Instead, the Torrey Botanical Club received recognition for "the idea of the garden."[171] Upon the death of Rosalie Staples in 1925, Maria's endowment of $20,000 passed unencumbered to the Botanical Garden. At that time, the institution's trustees established The Charles Patrick Daly and Maria Lydig Daly Fund as a memorial to "two highly esteemed and valued advisors and benefactors of the Garden in its early years."[172] Maria Daly, who had devoted much of her adult life to civic betterment, would have appreciated this tribute.

Some Final Thoughts

This study of New York's women of wealth originated in the desire to learn more about the domestic life and social milieu of the women who participated in New York

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[168] New York Times, 20 September 1899, 14; 9 21 1899, 5.

[169] New York Times, 23 September 1899, 7. See also New York Times, 24 October 1899, 14.

[170] New York Times, 25 September 1898, 4; 19 August 1900, 22; 6 September 1903, 20; 15 May 1908, B4. See also George N. Pindar, Guide to the Nature Treasures of New York City, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons for the American Museum of Natural History, 1917); Ogden Tanner, The New York Botanical Garden: An Illustrated Chronicle of Plants and People, (New York: Walker Publishing, 1991); Harold Earl Hammond, A Commoner's Judge, 375 - 377.

[171] New York Times, 5 February 1896, 2.

[172] New York Times, 2 August 1925, E2.

society during the Gilded Age. The details of many women's lives and the values that informed their social practices are obscured, however, by the social conventions of their time. Many such women are virtually inaccessible to historical analysis. Their personal details are veiled by the domesticity that defined their daily existence. Most wealthy women elites contented themselves with private household matters, serving as domestic complements to the public lives of their husbands and fathers. Many women devoted themselves to benevolence and church activity. They did not necessarily seek wider recognition for their quiet accomplishments, preferring instead to subsume their public identity into the needs of others. People of importance in their private lives understood their contributions to home, family and community. Many women guarded their personal privacy. Reflecting this attitude, the novelist Edith Wharton's mother Lucretia Jones refused even to sanction a listing of her home address in the city directory. Scores of others would not permit the publication of their names on a suffrage petition.

An appreciation of the life and legacies of these women has required a broad approach to the subject of femininity in the late nineteenth century. From the outset, this inquiry has proceeded along two paths. First, it has used the substantial personal records of Elizabeth Wolcott Merchant and Maria Lydig Daly as the lens through which to view women's public and private experience. Secondly, this project has surveyed New York society from the feminine perspective in order to gain an understanding of the social reconfiguration that occurred during the period under review. This research has drawn upon a variety of sources, including first person narratives, archival records and newspapers as well as appropriate secondary material. In the process of uncovering the

values that informed the lives of wealthy women, much has been learned about the nature of Gilded Age society. During the late nineteenth century, New York City experienced rapid growth, becoming a nexus of social and economic change. Newly rich individuals flooded into the city to challenge the social values of the city's wealthy social establishment. Women historically managed society's subtle processes of social recognition as a part of their family responsibilities. Arguably, social acceptance depended upon factors other than wealth, including character, pedigree and accomplishment. Much of the social rivalry that characterized the period grew out of the effort of New York's existing society to deny the importance of wealth to their social status.

The 1860 public ball at the Academy of Music in honor of Edward Prince of Wales introduces both wealthy women and their society. Many of the wealthy elites occasion espoused the social values of their Knickerbocker ancestors, presenting themselves as aristocrats of breeding and refinement. Instead of revealing the existence of a genuine aristocracy, however, the ball only demonstrated New York's ability to provide their royal guest with the best that money could buy. Furthermore, those asserting their claims to social aristocracy appeared as a society consumed with the importance of material display. Wealthy women distinguished themselves with magnificent costumes, attainable only by families of great fortune. As the evening transpired, it became clear that genuine nobility required more than money and the proximity to royalty. The Prince of Wales Ball revealed New York society as little more than an enriched bourgeoisie, which had, from the outset, expanded its ranks by acknowledging the success of prosperous individuals. Throughout the Gilded Age the wealthy persisted in their attempt to transform their

commercial society into an approximation of aristocracy.

Women undertook this task through the application of their collective standards of taste and style which had been inculcated since childhood. Parents educated their daughters to succeed as wives and mothers and in the larger social arena. Wealthy women had been schooled in the necessities of household domesticity. Yet underlying women's polite education in needlework and penmanship, lay the material standards of a commercial society. Childhood friendships, nurtured in the city's wealthy neighborhoods, included those children whose families shared similar material comforts. Parents enforced childhood associations by enrolling their daughters in one of New York's female academies. Foreign travel extended girls' education, developing taste and sensitivity. Summer leisure in select, local resort communities further insured that young women would pursue a life of refinement with their social equals. Girls learned to appreciate their need for wealth. Clothing, like the correct dancing school, identified young women as entitled to enjoy the benefits of social entitlement. Early socialization, culminating in a debutante season, required purposeful parental supervision. Parents expected their daughters to marry within an acceptable circle of social acquaintance in order to transmit prevailing standards to the next generation.

Young women learned the importance of wealth to social status by an early age. Money informed their taste in clothes and their need for jewelry. Wealth determined the conditions under which they would establish their own households. It is not surprising, that women would also turn to material standards in their attempt to order society's expansion. Initially, women relied upon the services of Isaac Brown, the sexton of Grace

Episcopal Church, to superintend social newcomers. Brown quietly informed on lapses in the taste and decorum of others, just as he relayed the accepted standards of material display to those unaware of their significance. In the end, Brown only called attention to society's material requirements. Brown's successor Ward McAllister gave further credence to the material goods that the wealthy considered essential to their social practices. His memoir is filled with recommendations on menus, wine and table settings as well as his observations on feminine style. McAllister's all male Patriarchs organization attempted to orchestrate a social unity that would accommodate the city's new wealth with its old money. This undertaking, however, only exposed the commercial core of the city's wealthy society. The Patriarchs became a social opportunity used by men for business advantage, diluting the group's exclusive caliber. Under McAllister's tenure, social activity became more competitive and more deeply grounded in its material necessities.

Throughout McAllister's association with the Patriarchs, women's society marshaled, refusing to relinquish control of society's management. Women preferred a time-tested method of social governance that surrounded the introduction of young women. This accepted ritual provided the wealthy women an opportunity to vet the qualifications of families seeking social access. Under women's management, society could develop in an orderly fashion as younger members merged into the graded hierarchy of the city's social leaders. Yet as the desire for aristocracy persisted among the wealthy, society also acquired the language of nobility. To function as an aristocracy, society needed the leadership of a queen. She, in turn, required the assistance of male

chamberlains or advisors. For several decades, Caroline Perry Belmont filled this role, setting the standards for dress and hospitality. Caroline Schermerhorn Astor replaced her in the 1880's to lead society into the next century. Caroline Astor suited society's purposes during the Gilded Age. Like Caroline Belmont before her, the Schermerhorns had enjoyed several generations of wealth and social prominence in New York. The Astor fortune, like that of the Belmonts, enabled Caroline to stage a succession of fancy balls and elaborate dinners in her Fifth Avenue mansion. Her entertainments became hallmarks of the city's social season. Caroline Astor maintained her social prowess because society desired to see her realize a successful performance as queen. The wealthy preferred to see themselves as participants at a courtly occasion rather than admit the truth of Caroline's predictable hospitality amid the faded surroundings of her home.

The experience of Elizabeth Wolcott Merchant also speaks to society's aristocratic pretensions. On both sides of her family, Elizabeth's forebearers left a cumulative legacy of civic and commercial accomplishment. She directly descended from Roger Wolcott the colonial Governor of Connecticut. Her great-grandfather Oliver Wolcott signed the Declaration of Independence and commanded the Connecticut militia during the American Revolution. Elizabeth's great-uncle Oliver Wolcott served in the cabinets of George Washington and John Adams. Elizabeth's mother, the daughter of one of New York's wealthiest merchants, descended from John Howland, a passenger on the Mayflower. In contrast to Wolcotts, Caroline Astor's Schermerhorn forebearers waited out the American Revolution by moving their merchant fleet away from harm up the Hudson River. Similarly, Maria Daly's Lydig ancestors earned the nucleus of their fortune as profiteers

during the Revolution. Like the Astors, the Lydigs were simply rich. Both families, from humble European backgrounds, had found commercial opportunity in New York.

Elizabeth Merchant had been brought up in a prosperous household to expect a life of refinement. She shared an educational background, church affiliation and charitable interests with many of New York's wealthy women. Elizabeth, however, did not enjoy the luxuries of wealth as an adult. Her husband Stephen's series of commercial failures, as well as the death of four young children, precluded her active pursuit of a social life. She lacked the means to participate in the period's glamourous social activity. Without her husband's financial and emotional support, Elizabeth lacked the will even to make the effort. Though Elizabeth maintained access to wealthy and socially prominent households, she could not overcome her lack of wealth as the critical measure of status.

As indicated by Elizabeth's example, New York society remained a wealthy cadre focused upon the material determinants of status. Maria Lydig Daly understood this truth. The motivation behind Maria's extensive charitable involvement stems from her own understanding of the importance of wealth to society. Maria chose to marry outside her family's circle of influence. Charles Daly, a man of civic and cultural accomplishment, could not fund his wife's patrician expectations. Maria, though rich by the standards of the day, could not enjoy the same amenities as many of her social equals. Benevolence became the means by which Maria compensated for the absence of a substantial fortune. She often selected her charitable involvements based upon the exclusive quality of their participants, proving the social importance of benevolence. As she succeeded in founding new charities, she demonstrated her ability to attract other women of fortune and public

prominence. Maria understood the crucial importance of money to the success of her charities. She employed creative fund raising strategies, often targeting her rich acquaintances to sponsor specific projects.

Although Maria achieved the social recognition that she desired, she remained critical of society's material excess. She disparaged friends like Augusta Astor for her reliance upon diamonds to state her social status. Augusta, also charitably inclined, understood her need to represent visibly the Astor wealth. Augusta knew that she could not wear the evidence of her personal generosity, so that jewelry became the way she identified herself as socially important. Augusta's sister-in-law Caroline Astor also used diamonds and pearls to display her social authority. Maria Daly also learned that one could not visibly show their pedigree. Wearing a miniature of her grandfather, Maria's admirers only commented upon her beautiful jewelry without any reference to the man the miniature displayed. In truth, New York's wealthy elite only acknowledged money and those things that it could purchase.

Mrs. Paran Stevens proved that wealth could also buy social recognition. The wife of a successful hotelier, Marietta Reed Stevens came from an obscure background. In New York, she moved socially outside women's familiar networks of education, religious affiliation and charity. Mrs. Stevens used her husband's wealth to best society at its own game. Determined to achieve social prominence, Mrs. Stevens sought an advantageous marriage for her daughter in Europe. Mrs. Stevens, previously denied access to society's inner circles, acquired the recognition that she desired when her daughter wed an intimate of the Prince of Wales. Mrs. Stevens succeeded in New York through her ability to link

her family to a European aristocratic tradition.

Mrs. Stevens' expensive clothing and her abilities as a hostess insured that she would remain a social fixture throughout the Gilded Age. The Stevens' wealth also compensated for the absence of domestic obligation in her life. Mrs. Stevens did not present a conventional model of domestic femininity. Both self-interested and ambitious, she maintained her social position despite numerous, well-publicized litigations and personal disputes. Mrs. Stevens' social ascent had not been achieved without cost, however. Some women, like Maria Daly, did not approve of Mrs. Stevens or the material values she represented. Mrs. Stevens' conduct threatened women's domestic identity. Mrs. Stevens found fulfilment outside her home, disregarding the family obligations that theoretically defined women. She did not subordinate her personal interests to those of her children and sister. Instead, she used her family to further her social goals. She promoted herself with publicity, blurring her private life into her public image as a progressive woman of social importance. Conservative women elites could never sanction her need for public notice. Her release of her son's autopsy results to the press indicates the limits to which Mrs. Stevens would go to garner sympathy. To conservative women like Maria Daly, Mrs. Stevens' blatant self-interest represented a repudiation of the home and its cluster of associations. Many traditionally minded women derived their social outlook from an understanding of the differences between men and women. Marietta Stevens, in contrast, demanded social equality.

Like Mrs. Stevens, Maria Daly harbored social ambitions. Maria, however, concealed her motives within her domestic obligation. Maria derived her social standing

through her ability to originate and manage charitable causes. She worked for the greater good, helping needy children, sponsoring kindergartens and orphanages. She participated in several patriotic associations. Like other conservatives, Maria protected herself from publicity regarding her private affairs. Much of her recorded social life centered around the entertainment of her husband's intellectual and political friends. There would be no knowledge of her ability to attract New York's civic and cultural leaders to her small home dinners without the existence of her journal. The fact that she recorded the details of these gatherings, to the exclusion of others, indicates the significance that she attached to her domestic abilities and the importance of these dinners to her social reputation. Maria understood her need to advance her husband's career. Acting under the rubric of domesticity, Maria lobbied Washington friends in an attempt to gain a federal judicial appointment for her husband. Maria's domestic skill insured that the Dalys would remain prominent in New York society.

Caroline Astor served as society's leader out of a comparable sense of domestic obligation. Caroline displayed an unwavering devotion to her family. She tolerated her husband's extended absences, deflecting rumors of his philandering with grace and discretion. She supported her children's decisions to marry individuals often not of her choosing. She stood by her daughter Augusta through a highly publicized divorce proceeding at a time when correct society disapproved of the voluntary dissolution of a marriage. The media noticed some aspects of Caroline's life to satisfy public interest in the Astor name. Despite this prominence, Caroline kept her personal opinions and the privacy of her household away from others' consideration. The legitimacy of the single

interview that she granted at the end of her life remains moot. Caroline's insistence upon her domestic privacy enabled her to maintain her public dignity. With her traditional understanding of feminine domesticity, Caroline Astor earned the respect of her peers.

Caroline Astor clearly grasped her domestic duty. Through her social leadership, she promoted the Astor name, insuring its continued prominence among New York's wealthy households. Caroline, as social leader, promoted social unity and tolerance rather than rigid social exclusion. She appreciated society's need for orderly growth. She welcomed people of accomplishment, social newcomers, her children's friends and their children into her home. At the same time, she remained loyal to her old friends in New York's conservative establishment Caroline's formal social occasions conveyed restraint and taste to a society that needed to be reminded of the importance of those values. Towards the end of her life as her health began to fail, Caroline continued to entertain out of a sense of family obligation and social duty. Often, she assembled her guests only to retire before the dancing and dinner began.

Caroline Astor once wrote that men lived freely while women could only experience life in their homes. This comment suggests a physical limitation that domesticity placed upon women. For whatever reason, Caroline's decision to remain at home distanced her from others. Her interpretation of domesticity gave her a remoteness that increased her social authority. Other women elites did not share Caroline's wish to remain in the household. Maria Daly, who attended a variety of occasions outside her home, expresses the ease with which managed her public life. Maria's attention to her public duties outside the home in her journals also indicates the value that she placed upon

an active life. When she suspected a misappropriation of the Union Home's funds, she confronted the institution's auditors and its treasurer Mary Voorhies. She challenged the Reverend Tyng for his attacks on the credibility of the Home's mission. In these instances, Maria's departure from the polite demeanor associated with patrician women suggests her level of public comfort.

Elizabeth Merchant's pursuit of a public alternative to her household is equally compelling. Living in Queens, Elizabeth traveled into Manhattan with frequency. She took the ferry across the East River, which connected with street cars or the elevated railway, to maintain her social contacts and accomplish personal errands. Elizabeth attended church services and Bible classes several times a week, often availing herself of the thrift and convenience of New York's public transportation system. To her family and friends, Elizabeth's ability to travel freely in the city appeared unremarkable. Once she moved permanently into Manhattan, Elizabeth did not hesitate to stroll the city streets in order to shop, walk her dog or simply get some exercise. Domesticity did not restrain Elizabeth from fulfilling her domestic responsibilities. Rather, her city excursions gave her the confidence to journey across the country alone as well as acclimate herself to life in an unfamiliar city.

While domesticity did not restrict freedom of movement, it did position women as intellectual and civic subordinates of men. For most of the nineteenth century, most women elites did not have access to an education equal to that of men. Women could not vote. Women did not pursue meaningful careers because of the cluster of negative attitudes surrounding women's employment outside the home. Socially, women also

obliged a double standard of acceptable conduct. Domesticity bound Elizabeth Merchant to her husband, despite evidence of his repeated indifference to her emotional needs. Society readily tolerated male excess, while faulting comparable behavior in women. Despite these inequities, many women elites grew powerful in the exercise of their domestic responsibilities. Maria Daly, by the end of her life, had earned a reputation for hard work and dedication, sufficient to attract public support for a large botanical garden in New York. Caroline Astor rose from unhappy family circumstances to lead the city's society. Even Elizabeth Merchant, tied to a man who frittered away her assets, gained strength as she matured. Every day that Elizabeth remained in Duluth, she grew more confident in her ability to direct her own affairs.

This study has assessed the public lives of women elites through an examination of their private values. The use of the Prince of Wales Ball as a starting point for this analysis encourages a consideration of the domesticity that influenced women's social outlook. Every woman inside the Academy Music saw herself as the domestic complement of men. Women of wealth had been schooled to accept their household responsibilities without question. As the Gilded Age unfolded, women demonstrated their ability to find fulfillment in a variety of personal undertakings that supplemented their household existence. Elizabeth Merchant matured emotionally to find independence within her household. Maria Daly devoted her considerable energies to public causes. Caroline Astor managed a complex society of wealthy and demanding individuals in America's largest city. All of these women embraced an active public life to varying degrees and as a matter of choice.

Some, like Marietta Stevens, challenged the limitations that society placed upon women, demanding a consideration equal to that of men. Women's education improved, offering women an academic alternative to the limited schooling of female academies. The stigma attached to women's employment outside the home began to relax, encouraging some women of polite society to seek meaningful careers. Due to this progress, wealthy women no longer needed to limit their public identity to matters of social consequence. With the death of Caroline Astor, the desire for a unified social organization among the wealthy began to ebb. Nevertheless, as women gained more choices in their public lives, many still refused to relinquish their domestic identity. The reason for this denial of feminine possibilities lies at the heart of the domestic construct. Domesticity continued to give women continuity and purpose in their daily lives. Beyond the home, lay an American society divided by economic, social and cultural differences. Fraud and corruption tainted all levels of government, raising issues of trust in public institutions. Newspapers devoted pages to scandals and gossip. Domesticity remained women's eye of calm at the center of the storm. Domesticity, however, is only a part of the legacy of late nineteenth century women. As women like Elizabeth Merchant and Maria Daly furthered their personal agendas outside the home, they secured a public role for women in the twentieth century.

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