UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE

Past, Present, and Future: History and Memory in New York City, 1800-1860

DISSERTATION

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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by

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The dissertation of Jennifer E. Steenshorne
is approved and is acceptable in quality
and form for publication on microfilm:

Committee Chair

University of California, Irvine
2002
DEDICATION

To

my parents

and

in memory of

Joan Redmond Imperiale

and

Daniel Martin Redmond
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Past, Present, and Future: History and Memory in New York City, 1800-1860

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The first half of the nineteenth century saw New York City rise from a relatively small city to the largest metropolis in North America. The changes which affected the United States, from economic to demographic to cultural, appeared first in New York. New York City was a place of change and progress. At the same time, a new concern with the history of the City and concern with preservation arose. This study will examine how the need to balance preservation with change, the need to create an identity for New York, and the need to set New York's place in the nation, were explored in the early historical discourse surrounding New York, from formal chronicles to acts of preservation.

I have examined the preservation and publication efforts of the New-York Historical Society, Washington Irving's Knickerbocker History and its affect on New York's culture, local histories of New York City and State, and the controversies surrounding the removal of New York City's burial grounds in order to explore these issues. The attempt of the New-York Historical Society to act as custodians of the City's history raises the question of just whose history was to be preserved. Washington Irving's works brought the Dutch history of New York to life for many of its citizens
more vividly than any archive, and introduced the Knickerbocker character as a New York type. Local histories of New York City and State explored the relationship between regions and the nation as a whole. The efforts of New Yorkers to deal with the removal of burial grounds from New York City's boundaries show how important the past, particularly the personal past, was to New Yorkers of all classes and ethnicities. Themes of civic memory, the relationship between public and private, ideas of a usable past, and the relationship between myth and history run throughout this material. The historical discourse surrounding the New York of today was shaped by the historical discourse of the early nineteenth century.
Introduction

The early nineteenth century was an era of transformation, during which the United States was undergoing vast economic and social changes. New York rose from a small, relatively homogeneous city to become the largest, most diverse city in the Western Hemisphere. The historical works of the first half of the nineteenth century resonated with the issues that were challenging the nation, state, and city. This study will examine how the need to balance preservation with change, the need to create an identity for New York, and the need to set New York's place in the nation, were explored in the early histories of New York, from formal chronicles to acts of preservation.

The relationship of past and present dominates the historical discourse. What place did history have in a city that drew so much of its identity from progress and change? The idea of knowing the history of the City, even superficially, became important to the idea of understanding it, especially in fast changing times. How the authors and editors felt about the present, and consequently about change, affected their treatment of the past. Some were clearly unhappy with the rapid metamorphosis of New York, and wished to revel only in the glorious past. Others denigrated the past in order to trumpet the wonders of New York's advancement. Most interesting are those who neither ignored the past nor preferred it, but saw New York's future in its history. They emphasized progress, even while projecting ideas of preservation.

One of the changes which dominate these works was the influx of immigrants, of non-English and non-Dutch background. New York's multinational heritage and the cosmopolitanism of its culture were stressed in many of these works. Yet at the same
time, except for the Dutch and the English, the details of the population's diversity were
glossed over. The presence of new immigrants and their ignorance of the past were usu-
ally portrayed as destabilizing. How would these newcomers be incorporated into
American society? The history of New York could help supercede the differences, mak-
ing them all New Yorkers and hence Americans. History could be used to enculturate
des...
chronologies, often the story ending at the time of the writing, but there was very little discussion of past events as the origin of current conditions. The subject matter was largely confined to political and military events, with social customs often relegated to footnotes or appendices.

The nineteenth-century historians—who were usually not "professionals" but gentlemen, journalists, doctors, and ministers—inhired elements of both traditions. The moral tradition was suffused with a civic or nationalistic aura, promoting a vision of America exceptionalism. America's special mission could most often be seen in political events, such as the story of the Revolution and the formation of a Republic. There is a sense of inevitability in the chronicling of these events, as if the history of the United States is but a list of episodes, which illustrate America's predestination to be the most free and most prosperous nation in the world. The tradition of typology in interpreting the Bible\(^1\) was transferred to the interpretation of all events of American history as foreshadowing first independence and then American ascendancy.

German Romanticism, viewed through a peculiarly American eye, also shaped the historical vision, as young men began to pursue graduate education at German universities. In broad strokes, the romantic school's approach to history was to see history as a forward movement from society's origins to its ultimate fulfillment in a civilized state. The North American Review provided the greatest outlet for these ideas. Among its editors and contributors were George Bancroft, the first American to earn a German Ph.D., Jared Sparks, Edward Everett, and John Gorham Palfrey, all influential in the de-

development of American historical writing and editing.\textsuperscript{2} Johann Gottfried Herder had particular appeal to Americans, with his ideas of cultural nationalism and positive view of human nature. Herder's use of folklore and tradition as sources for historical understanding appealed to historians of both the nation and regions. Under such influence, historians such as Parkman and Bancroft presented a history of the United States that was perfectionist, positivist, and that looked mainly forward.\textsuperscript{3}

Three significant trends are evident in the historical output of this period: the formation of historical societies to collect and maintain documents relating to the history of the nation and the various states; the reprinting of these collections; and the publication of histories that explicitly and proudly used these documents as their sources. Individual states followed the national example, with New York being no exception. Local boosterism and interstate rivalries fueled these projects. The idea of the preservation of monuments, particularly those associated with national leaders such as Washington, and historical sites, including the struggle to save urban cemeteries, also gained momentum in certain quarters.

The same developments—historical societies, local and state histories, the preservation of historical monuments and sites—that appeared in the nation as a whole appeared in New York, for similar reasons. New York had regional rivalries, particularly with


New England, and this rivalry gave rise to a need to establish New York's place in the national and international context, and a rapidly changing and unstable character. Immigration and physical growth were perhaps more pronounced in New York City than elsewhere, with consequent effects on the character of its historical discourse. As the traditional means of preserving memory and the past became disrupted, works of historical content would take their place.⁴

**History and Memory**

The founding of historical societies, the publication of documents and histories, and the popularity of historical fiction, seem to indicate that their history, both local and national, were important to Americans of this time.⁵ However, despite the apparent rise in interest in history, be it national, state, or local, there existed a tension between the idea of the past and the concern with the present and the future. Monuments created, such as the Prison Ship monument in New York, were soon forgotten, and fell into decay after public interest waned. Historical societies lost membership and funding. Documents continued to be destroyed or lost. The reading public seems to have preferred exciting historical fiction to long histories filled with citations. Progress, not the past, was lauded. Nevertheless, early nineteenth-century Americans were beginning, passionately, to discover their past. How do we reconcile these two disparate phenomena, this coexistence of intense interest and equally intense indifference to history?

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⁵ See George H. Callcott's *History in the United States, 1800-1860* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), which examines the historical consciousness, through reviews and books lists. He sees a rise in the number of historical works published, and relates this to a rise in interest.
Michael Kammen⁶ has presented this situation in terms of a rivalry in American
culture—a battle between those who would preserve the past out of conservatism and fear
of change, and those who had no use for anything but the future. According to Kammen,
during this period, most Americans felt burdened by past, if they thought of it at all. Pro-
gress was the watchword of the day. Pluralism and immigration made the only common
ground for most Americans a shared present and future. Religious and philosophical
thought, such as "millennialism, utopianism, comeouterism, perfectionism, and especially
evangelicalism," emphasized destiny rather than history. The lack of stability in the
"usual institutional bulwarks of tradition—law, education, and social structure, in addition
to religion" meant that there was nothing to reinforce notions of history or custom. Fi-
nally, the "relentless and recurrent patterns of mobility" made the sensation of "newness"
and novelty the cultural norm, and feelings for the past unimportant.⁷ Those "traces of
the past and selective enthusiasms for tradition" that did exist were limited and are ex-
plained away as either half-baked mythologizations, such as Pilgrims, Puritans, and
Founding Fathers or venues for moralization, not true historical investigation.⁸

Kammen believes the Civil War to be the watershed for the development of an
idea of the past and memory in the United States. Despite the diversity and movement he
describes, Americans seemingly reached a consensus of attitude, across ethnicity, region,
and time. Ideas of the past and the future are equally uncontested, equally monolithic.
This analysis culminates a gross generalization about the antebellum period. The dichot-
omy between past-minded and present or future-minded seems too simplistic in light of

⁶ Michael Kammen, Mystic Chords of Memory: the Transformation of Tradition in American Culture
⁷ Kammen, Mystic, 50-51.
⁸ Kammen, Mystic, 62-63.
writers, such as William Dunlap and Mary Booth, who used the past in order to detail how the future might progress. An examination of the historical works of this period reveals a more complex perspective on the interrelatedness of the past, present, and future. This is evident in the American affinity for the German philosophers of history. The past cannot be considered without an idea of the future; the present and the future have their origins in the past. All must be considered together. This attitude can be seen in not only the works of Bancroft, Dunlap, and Booth, but also in the myriad number of popular works which detail the "past, present, and future" or "the rise, current aspect, and progress" of the nation, states, and cities. Certain events emblematic of progress, such as the building of the Erie Canal and laying of the Atlantic Telegraph, become subjects of historical "sketches" almost immediately upon their existence. Those who denounced history were still involved in a discussion about history. A medieval peasant with at most a cyclical idea of "history" would have no cause to reject ideas of the past. It is important to remember that even Walt Whitman, that champion of the present and the future, wrote historical sketches for the Brooklyn Eagle. Emerson's "America is the country of the Future" ("The Young American" 1844) and Bryant's unrelenting past, with its "fetters" ("The Past" 1828) are strong rhetorical strategies, filled with political content. The political nature of the presentist or futurist stance cannot be ignored.

Kammen relies on the narrow definition of "real" historical inquiry, as limited to the historical societies, their members, and their publications. However, if one is not limited to this narrow definition, the picture becomes more complex. Not all histories were written by gentlemen amateurs or savants such as George Bancroft. In New York

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9 See Kammen Mystic, 43, for his interpretation of these works.
State, at least, colonial documents were published, funded by the State Assembly. The
popularity of Sir Walter Scott inspired American authors such as Cooper, Hawthorne,
Irving, and Melville, to create works set in America's past. Guidebooks and articles in-
cluded historical background to descriptions of the present; events and places could not
be understood without knowing their past. The Revolution and its heroes were popular
topics. Franklin's Autobiography was published and George Washington began to be de-
ified.\(^{10}\) This diverse material has historical content, an idea of the past. The existence of
many different kinds of historical products at this time suggests that American attitudes
towards history were equally diverse. Should this material be ignored as mere mytholo-
gizations, somehow not worthy of expressing "true" historical interest? Roland Barthes
has written of the importance of such myths as expressions of national culture.\(^{11}\) Build-
ings, paintings, music, and artifacts are often far more effective carriers of historical
content about a place.

most histories unfavorably with literature, considering them dry and boring, the author
says "It is precisely the lack of this pleasurable trait which makes the greater part of the
annals of the past a dead letter to the world, and wins to romance, ballad, epic, fiction,
relic, and poetry the keen attention which facts coldly 'set in a note-book' never enlisted." He finds that most people--"the vast number of intelligent readers"--"derive their most
distinct and attractive impressions of the past from poetry, travel and the choicest works


of the novelist; local association and imaginative sympathy, rather than formal chronicles."\textsuperscript{12} The \textit{North American Review} expresses a similar position in preferring Washington Irving's biography of Washington to John Marshall's more "historic" treatment, citing Irving's literary approach.\textsuperscript{13}

All of these factors argue for a more dynamic understanding of the interactions between the variant modes of historical products and discourses. This understanding would move beyond the idea of a simple battle between two extremes towards an interplay between ideas of the past, the present, and the future that constructs a usable past. A key place to examine these interactions is in the role of historical discourse in the development of national and local identities. The early nineteenth century is the time of the rise of the modern nation-state; the birth of the United States is part of this process. The literature surrounding this is particularly rich; central to most of these studies is the idea that nationhood is more than a political structure, but rather a cultural and social one.\textsuperscript{14}

Cultural developments are thus both expressions of and tools in the formation of nationhood. Art, literature, music, public rituals, and folklore have all been examined in the role of fostering national identities.\textsuperscript{15} The United States experienced similar phenomena,

\textsuperscript{12} "Something About History," \textit{The Atlantic Monthly}, 6, no. 35 (September 1860): 298-309.
in an often-deliberate attempt to forge a national culture distinct from Europe's. This push for a national culture was mirrored in sometimes conflicting, sometimes complementary regional efforts. The Hudson River School, Asher Durand, Thomas Cole, and company painted landscapes of the natural wonders of America, projecting ideas of progress and manifest destiny. These were largely collected by urban capitalists, such as Luman Reed. Writers such as Cooper, Hawthorne, and Verplanck, who bemoaned its lack, hotly debated the search for a national literature in the literary journals and essays. Print culture, as a whole, in the form of newspapers, novels, and journals became more widespread.

How do these artifacts of culture make it possible for a people—who may not be aware of each other's existence as individuals—to conceptualize themselves as a nation? Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* focuses on the spread of print culture as the important development which makes this possible. Print enables the rise of the vernacular, the distinctive national language. In particular, the rise of the novel develops a new notion of time and space, of novelistic time. Borrowing from Walter Benjamin's critique of homogeneous, empty time, Anderson conceives of a shift in thinking which allows for a simultaneity which is "transverse. cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfill-

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ment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock or calendar." Print also
makes possible the creation of coherent national stories, through their telling and dis-
semination. For example, the French Revolution lost its overwhelming and bewilder-
cation of events experience by its makers and its victims" and was "shaped by
millions of printed words into a 'concept' on the printed page, and, in due course, into a
model." Similarly, the revolutions of South America and the culture of the United States
in the nineteenth century become equally sanitized, losing their conflicting narratives and
multiple voices. 20

Anderson's reliance on the importance of print culture, particularly the idea of
print capitalism, is problematic because it assumes literacy, and an even distribution of
and access to printed material. The model also assumes that everyone reads the same
material, and interprets that material in the same manner. While Anderson's assessment
of the process by which often confusing and tumultuous events are turned into a coherent
narrative is insightful, he does seem to say that one narrative is produced, and that this is
not problematic or challenged. He assumes that this narrative will be received and inter-
preted in the same way by all members of a community, without other influences. His
conception of the community is thus a rather simplistic one, without the nuances of con-
lict. Homi Bhaba's critique of Anderson in his essay "DissemNation" 21 centers on An-
derson's notions of the "meanwhile" and the "unisonance" or the "empty" time/space in
which the imagined community takes place. For Bhabha, Anderson's "meanwhile' is far
too homogeneous. Bhabha sees the 'meanwhile' as far more problematic, a place from

20 Anderson, Imagined, 24, 80, 81.
21 Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, And The Margins Of The Modern Nation," in Na-
tion and Narration, ed. by Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 291-322.
where "a more instantaneous and subaltern voice of the people, a minority discourse that speaks betwixt and between times and place" can emerge.\textsuperscript{22}

Anderson's depiction of how the writing of history functions to create a nationalist narrative does raise the crucial issue of the role of such history in this process. "Modern" historical inquiry can indeed be seen as the child of nationalist discourse. Dipesh Chakrabarty posits that 'History' is a knowledge system firmly embedded in institutional practices that invoke the nation state at every step."\textsuperscript{23} History and economics as disciplines are the representations of the capitalist mode of production and the modern nation state.\textsuperscript{24} The writing of national histories is not only symptomatic of the rise of nationalism; it is an integral part of nationalism. Historical inquiry was both the product and the producer of the process by which the nation state formed.

An influential look at the uses of history in this context is the collection of essays, \textit{The Invention of Tradition}, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger.\textsuperscript{25} In his introduction, Hobsbawm examines how seemingly longstanding traditions and practices actually emerged--whether deliberately "invented" or not, and were established in a very short time and yet perceived as ancient. Examples of such traditions would be the ceremonies surrounding the British Monarchy and Scottish Highland traditions, both of which date from the early nineteenth-century. These practices function to "to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable

\textsuperscript{22} Bhabha, "DissemiNation," 308-309.
\textsuperscript{24} Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality": 19.
historic past."26 [italics mine] Suitable is the operative word here, for these traditions are linked not to just any past, but one which enhances particular ideas of nationalism, order, and ethnic identity.

Old institutions and practices could be adapted to new uses, often by using the "well-supplied warehouses of official ritual, symbolism and moral exhortation—religion and princely pomp, folklore and freemasonry (itself an earlier invented tradition of great symbolic force).27 This can be seen in the employment of folkloric materials collected under Herder's influence, and how new folklore, songs, and celebrations are developed from these examples. Hobsbawm and Ranger's use of the word "invention" has led to criticisms that this process, as described, is far too deliberate, imposing, and elitist.28 The critiques have been important in asking questions such as why certain "invented" traditions may have more resonance than others may. A basis in older traditions, at least in form, seems to be an important reason for this. These essays do, however, show how quickly traditions can be established, and how histories and customs may be selected, deliberately or otherwise, to promote a cause or idea. They also highlight the importance of historical continuity in giving strength to a social or political movement.

The United States presents certain problems that confound interpretation. The United States was not an emerging nation-state of the type of Great Britain and France, based on an older form of national community. It was a former colony, but not of a peo-
ple conquered (the colonist having a hand in conquering the natives). It had imperialist ambitions of its own. Its history was relatively short, and not well documented. Disparate regions, with strong cultural and political identities, vied with each other for dominance. Mobility and immigration, both from the inside and out, complicate the picture, as people with their own loyalties and histories constantly confronted each other. The more totalizing theories surrounding national identity in Europe are found lacking when confronted with these colonial issues, compounded as they are by a multiplicity of competing histories and identities.

Chakrabarty raises another, important issue by examining the history of Indian histories. For a colony, or former colony. Europe (in his example) is always present, a given in the narrative. "That Europe works as a silent referent in historical knowledge itself becomes obvious in a highly ordinary way…Third-world historians feel a need to refer to works in European history; historians of Europe do not feel any need to reciprocate."29 The master narrative that dominates Third World historical discourse is that of Europe's; their histories are important only as part of Europe's. Chakrabarty's solution is to "provincialize" Europe, to place Europe in the conceptual margins, instead of using it as the model for understanding India's (or Kenya's, China's) history.30

In his review article "The Enigma of Nationalism" Yael Tamir asks why nations should be seen as more compelling, more permanent than other "communities." such as those of gender, ethnicity, and smaller or larger regions. 31 He cites as typical Anthony D. Smith's objection that local or regional identities cannot compete with national identity

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29 Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality": 2.
because they are not stable. "Regions can easily fragment into localities, and localities may easily disintegrate into separate segments."\textsuperscript{32} However, Smith's own work, which emphasizes the importance of older, ethnic communities, contradicts this objection. During the seminal era of nation forming, older regional identities might actually be more stable than national identity.

In the United States, the relationship between regional and national identities is central to understanding the development of the nation, especially during the early national and antebellum periods. The transition from quasi-independent colonies to states within a nation reconfigured the identity of each region. The identities of the new states were necessarily resituated in the context of the nation. No state or region could be considered alone, but drew meaning from the relationship with the nation as a whole and the other states. Local identities and histories contribute to the formation of national identity by describing the relationship with the nation. National identity and local identity are not so much in conflict, but in a symbiosis, drawing meaning from each other. Just as Europe is always present in the United States' history, the United States, or rather, the idea of the nation, is always present in regional histories. Rivalries between regions, such as New England and New York, are also always present. Regional histories often attempt to provincialize not the nation, but other regions.

The traditional response to local history has basically been one of scorn. Local histories were seen as amateurish, unimportant, and unconcerned with the great national project.\textsuperscript{33} This can be seen as rooted in the transformation of historical study from an


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avocation to a career the later nineteenth century. The founding of the American Historical Association in 1884 is symptomatic of the professionalization of history and the beginnings of the sharp divide between amateur and professional. Other scholars have been less harsh, recognizing the contributions of historical societies to accrual and dissemination of historical material. An early study of this type is David Van Tassel's *Recording America's Past: An Interpretation Of The Development Of Historical Studies In America, 1607-1884*. Although he brings attention to the role of historical societies, Van Tassel still emphasizes the difference between local and national history, seeing them as largely separate pursuits. National history, as practiced by Bancroft and Parkman, was still more significant than local histories.

With the growth of the New Social History, community studies, and later the influence of cultural studies and American studies departments, local history has gained more respect. Much of the more nuanced literature on local and regional history comes from the historians who now practice it. An influential look at the local history, historical societies, and the antiquarian impulse of the nineteenth and early twentieth century concentrates on millenialism and national purpose is Dorothy Ross's article "Historical Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century America," *The American Historical Review, 89,* no. 4 (October 1984): 909-928.


comes from David Russo. Russo finds in these phenomena a valuable particularism, while still seeing them as isolated efforts, unconnected with larger, national issues.

Yet there has been, on the most part, no attempt to analyze the interaction between local and national histories, and regional and national identities. A recent attempt to do this is Edward Tatsuya Hashima's study of local history in New York State, "To Win a Glorious National Inheritance: Local History, Nationalism, and the Formation of Identity in New York State, 1820-1860." Hashima sees the efforts of historical societies as rooted in a nationalist vision, especially based on the class concerns of their memberships. He links regional and national identity as it occurred in a specific place, exploring their distinct meaning for these people. "It is also an examination of the distinctive social, historical, and geographical circumstances in particular regions or locality that shaped expressions of nationalism for these Americans, and which continue to do so." The meaning of national identity is thus varied, changing between region. However, by limiting his study to upstate New York, Hashima does not fully explore the relationship between New York City and State and between the city, the state, and the nation as a whole. His concentration on the members and activities of historical societies does not allow him to address or even recognize the issues of competing and interacting histories resulting from the multiplicity of narratives of various population and areas.

This study will examine the relationship between the past and present in the early nineteenth century through the historical discourse surrounding New York City. Of cen-

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40 Hashima, "Glorious," 21
41 Hashima, "Glorious," 36.
42 Most significant is Hashima's interest in the role of geography and cartography in the establishment of a
tral importance to this is the development of specific New York identity born from these histories, and the place of New York City and State within the nation. The materials of historical discourse are to be found not only in published chronicles, but in the act of collecting documents, works of historical fiction, and the attempts to preserve the memory of the dead public displays of mourning. The publication of the many editions of Washington Irving's satiric, yet influential Knickerbocker History of New York, the full-length histories by those such as David T. Valentine, Mary L. Booth, and Daniel Curry, the historical sketches which appeared in newspapers, illustrated journals, and guidebooks, and the collection and reprinting of major documents relating to the history of New York, city and state, represent the diversity of the historical discourse centered on New York. By expanding the notion of what is historical, the conflicting and intersecting ideas of the City's past can be expressed.

Chapter One will examine the activities and publications of the New-York Historical Society. The N-YHS's early founding, elite membership, and possession of many of the important documents of the history of New York influenced contemporary and later efforts to tell the City's history. The founders of the N-YHS were motivated by a strong sense of civic duty and the idea that local patriotism was related to national patriotism. By fostering the knowledge of local history, the N-YHS would contribute to the understanding of the whole nation. New York's preeminence in the nation's history, as the best example of what was truly American, was another dominant theme. Whether or not their approach was agreed with, later chroniclers of the history of New York were in dialogue with the agenda of the N-YHS. Yet, while the members of the N-YHS may have assumed that they were the proper custodians of New York's past, this assumption
was always contested. This can be seen in the fluctuations of the N-YHS's fortunes, its internal disputes, and external reactions that ranged from apathy to mockery.

Chapter Two will focus on the works of Washington Irving, particularly his Knickerbocker *History of New York*. This work, first published in 1809, was a commentary on contemporary politics and a satire of New York society. One of its main targets was antiquarians and keepers of the City's past, a point not lost on the N-YHS. Enormously popular, the Knickerbocker *History* would go through many editions, and eventually transcend its beginnings as parody to become the major work on New York's history. Irving's work became the means by which most New Yorkers gained their ideas of New York under the Dutch. The character of Knickerbocker would be used in different contexts to signify New Yorkers of varying classes. The popularity of the Knickerbocker *History* and the importance of the character as a type in New York's culture expose how historical ideas are often most effectively transmitted by popular works.

During the early nineteenth century, full-length histories of the City, as well as the state and other regions within the state appeared. Chapter Three will examine how these histories attempted to negotiate the place of New York City and State within the context of the nation's history. A primary expression of this process is the use of incidents from the American Revolution in order to associate local history and identity with the values of patriotism. The rivalry between regions is apparent in these histories as well, as the importance given New England in the national histories contested. Through this process of negotiation between city, state, and national histories, ideas about New York's present and future were forged.
The physical embodiment of the vast changes experienced by the City was its northward expansion and the constant reshaping of its streets and structures. This destroyed the physical remnants of the City's past, most notably and poignantly, its cemeteries. Chapter Four will examine the debates over the removal of cemeteries and the beginnings of the rural cemetery movement within the context of the civic memory. While many New Yorkers may not have cared about the destruction of historical documents, the removal of the City's burial grounds, which affected all classes and races, personalized the debates about preservation and progress. These debates in turn affected the development of the rural cemetery, with its location outside the city and its elaborately detailed monuments. Expressions of civic memory took a less permanent form, as public funerals and parades.

This study shows that within the historic discourse of the early nineteenth century, the relationship between past, present, and future was explored. Out of these explorations, images and identities of New York emerged, which influence how we look at New York today. They created master narratives, a cast of characters, and ways, good or bad, of interpreting a complex city, with which we are still in dialogue.
Chapter 1

The New-York Historical Society and Civic History

Introduction

To mark its founding, the New-York Historical Society published "To the Public, the Address of the New-York Historical Society," in which the founders outlined their mission to uncover and preserve aspects of New York's (and the nation's) past before it was lost. This missive solicited "the aid of the liberal, patriotic, and learned, to promote the objects of our institution."\(^1\) To further this end, the Society included a shopping list of items it wished to collect and a set of queries about what it wished to investigate. These would set the agenda for subsequent publishing and collection efforts by the Society.

By addressing not only the "learned" but the "liberal" and "patriotic," the founders imbued ideas of preservation and history with a political purpose. While the materials they called for and collected encompassed a broad range of New York’s history, what the N-YHS published was dominated by ideas of civil history and the didactic nature of that history. This chapter will examine the activities of the New-York Historical Society, focusing on their published materials.

The concern with the patriotic melded with the local ideas of duty reflect the position in society these men held. The founders of the N-YHS were the social and political leaders of their day, deeply involved in the cultural and charitable institutions of both the nation and the City. Among their ranks were Clintons, Stuyvesants, and Jays. That they

were also economic as well as cultural leaders is yet another motivation for their desire to booster New York City and State. As members of the older elite, they represented tradition over change. As supporters of such ventures as the Erie Canal, they were also part of that change. It was a product of their station that they would assume that they would be the guardians of the City's past. They could ensure— or attempt to ensure— through preservation of the past their position as leaders of the future.

The justification the Society gave for their undertaking was a desire to benefit the nation in general, but the material they sought was distinctive in its regionalism. A perusal of the address reveals the importance to the founders of recovering details about New York's particular past, namely that of the Dutch and to a lesser extent, the Indian. New York's relationship with other regions also affected what was collected and published. The dominance of New England in chronicles of American history and the cultural and economic rivalry between New York and New England influenced the N-YHS's actions. This is clearest in the efforts to rehabilitate New York's role in the American Revolution. If the N-YHS claimed a patriotic duty in their efforts, part of that patriotism was at least partially local in nature.

The leaders and members of the N-YHS combined the antiquarian traditions of the eighteenth century with the idea that history and historical preservation held a civic function, thus melding private and public concerns. While practicing law, medicine, or commerce, they had the money, leisure, and education to pursue their private interests in history, antiquities, and science, just as their gentlemen forefathers in Europe and America did. However, the N-YHS was founded not merely as a social club, where like-minded gentlemen could gather, but for the public good. Just as an interest in history and
science was part of the role of a gentleman, so it was a reflection of their position in society that they be the ones to found such an institution. The somewhat uneasy relationship between the public and private, especially as society changed, can be seen in the ups and downs of the N-YHS's fortunes. While they might have had the public's good in mind, what was collected and how the N-YHS promoted the City was often out of touch with the needs and interests of ordinary New Yorkers. The social and cultural changes during this period caused the N-YHS to, deliberately or not, modify their original goals and purposes. The members of the Society still retained a belief that they were the proper guardians for the history of the City, but were forced to modify their claims of public service and turn inward.

The Gentlemen of the Society

The New York of 1804 was at once very provincial and very cosmopolitan. The population of the City was approximately 75,000; mainly white with a significant number of blacks (4,000), both free and enslaved (2,048). Most whites were of British, Dutch, Huguenot, or German descent, and more than other parts of the country, New York had inhabitants (both permanent and transitory) from throughout the world.² The City was becoming the financial center of the nation, already referred to as its commercial capital at this early date. Trade with Europe and the rest of the nation fostered communications and knowledge of the greater world. The loss of its status as the nation's capital in 1790 may have contributed to this international outlook, causing the City to turn away from

"Americaness" and embracing its unique internationalism. New York possessed neither the traditions nor institutions of learning of Boston or Philadelphia, but there were a nascent literati and a thriving coffee house and tavern milieu similar to that of London's. Newspaper and other publishing were beginning to flourish.

A growing number of wealthy elites who could sustain cultural and philanthropic institutions appeared at this time. Among these institutions was the New-York Historical Society. Founded in 1804 by such New York notables as John Pintard, De Witt Clinton, and Egbert Benson, the Society's membership of historical minded gentlemen, "agreed to form themselves into a Society the principal design of which should be to collect and preserve whatever may relate to the natural, civil or ecclesiastical History of the United States in general and of this State in particular." The Society was the second oldest such institution; the Massachusetts Historical Society predated it by six years. A query was published in the local papers, desiring answers to questions about New York history, such as what was the nature of commerce in the City under the Dutch and details of the Dutch regimes. The Society was housed in various locations, starting with rooms in Wall Street, finally finding its first permanent establishment on 2nd Avenue and 11th Street. The Society relied on gifts of books and bequests of collections and funds, and money raised from lotteries to support itself. The collections of the Society reflected its eclectic

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5 Massachusetts and New York were joined by Rhode Island (1822), Maine (1823), New Hampshire (1823), Pennsylvania (1824), Connecticut (1825), Indiana (1830), Ohio (1831), Virginia (1831), Louisiana (1836), Vermont (1838), Georgia (1839), Maryland (1844), Tennessee (1849), Wisconsin (1849), and Minnesota (1849). The American Antiquarian Society, based in Worcester, Massachusetts, was founded in 1827, and aimed for a national perspective. Most of these societies collected documents relating to their states, and began publishing them, albeit sporadically.
original call for donations, containing natural specimens, artworks, as well as manuscripts. Notably early acquisitions were eighteenth newspapers, Pintard's library, and, in 1858, the collections of the New York Gallery of the Fine Arts.6

The membership of the New-York Historical Society was drawn from the upper echelons of the City's society, representing physicians, lawyers, merchants, and politicians. They came from Dutch, English, and Huguenot stock. Most had attended Princeton (College of New Jersey), Columbia, or Yale, and many had legal or medical training. Politically, Federalists, later Whigs, and Democrats were represented, and many were prominent in both local and national politics. That so many of these men (and there were no women) were lawyers, physicians and surgeons, and ministers may seem at first unremarkable. These were the educated class of their society. However, all these professions shared the common concern with the idea of histories, of records. American law is based on case studies and precedent; medicine on case histories (especially how it was developing); and ministers had long been the record keepers for their flocks. One might even argue that the changing nature of commerce in this period would foster an interest in record keeping and history in the merchant class.

The lives of the Presidents of the Society illustrate the type of men who belonged to the N-YHS. Egbert Benson, the first President, was educated at Columbia and served in the state legislature, the Continental Congress, and as Attorney General of New York. A lawyer, his interests were in English and classical literature, and Dutch and Italian antiquities. Gouvernor Morris was a member of the noted Morris family, delegate to the Constitutional convention, American ambassador to France, and chairman of the com-

6The last had belonged to Luman Reed, the New York merchant who was the primary patron of Asher B. Durand, Thomas Cole, and other members of the Hudson River School.
mittee that recommended building the Erie Canal. De Witt Clinton was the nephew of Governor George Clinton, a United States Senator, Mayor of New York from 1802-1815 except 1807 and 1810, and a founder of the Free School Society, Literary and Philosophical Society, Orphan Asylum. As Governor of New York (in 1817 and 1824), he was a major backer of the Erie Canal. David Hosack was a noted physician who also served as president of the Literary and Philosophical Societies of New York, pursuing botany, mineralogy, and philanthropy in his leisure time. Chancellor James Kent was an influential legal commentator, professor of law at Columbia, and a member of the State Supreme Court. Morgan Lewis was a general during the War of 1812, Governor of New York (1804), son-in-law to Robert Livingston, and a founding trustee of New York University. Peter Gerard Stuyvesant was the lineal descendent of Peter Stuyvesant, who devoted himself to philanthropy and was a founding member of the St. Nicholas Society. Peter Augustus Jay was the son of John Jay, another supporter of the Erie Canal and abolition. Albert Gallatin was a banker who served as Secretary of the Treasury under Jefferson, Ambassador to France and Great Britain, and was the first president of the National Bank of New York. Gallatin was also a founding trustee of New York University and of the American Ethnological Society, reflecting his particular interest in American Indian languages. Luther Bradish was a major promoter of railroads and interior navigation, serving as Secretary of the Treasury under Millard Fillmore, President of the Bible Society. Bradish was an important supporter of the plan to build Central Park.7

The primary goal of the founders of the N-YHS was the collection and preservation of historical documents related to the history of the City and State of New York in particular, and the nation in general. Early acquisitions included documents related to the

American Revolution collected by a Tory clergyman named Chandler, portions of the libraries of John Pintard and the Reverend Timothy Allen, and a collection of colonial and contemporary newspapers formed by Peter Augustus Jay. By 1857, the collection numbered some 25,000 volumes, as well as maps and manuscripts relating to the history of New York. Few other repositories for such materials existed, and most remained in private hands. The N-YHS and other historical societies were the first organizations to believe these materials were important to preserve. However, their efforts were often limited by financial and storage constraints. Eventually, the N-YHS would initiate the larger New York State funded effort, to collect colonial documents from England, France, and the Netherlands. While the project was started by the N-YHS, it was soon taken over by the state. The N-YHS's influence was confined to convincing the state to publish the documents, which proved fortuitous when many of the originals were burned in a fire.  

A corollary to collecting was the goal to publish. This was important because while only members could access the physical collections, in situ, many more would have access to the published materials. The New-York Historical Society publishing efforts were of several types: the Collections of the New-York Historical Society, the Proceedings of the New-York Historical Society, 9 and individual monographs, usually reprints of papers delivered before the N-YHS. It was part of the initial decision, that like the Massachusetts Historical Society, the N-YHS would publish materials that it had collected, and contributions

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8 These were published as *The Documentary History Of The State Of New-York* (1853-1887), edited by Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan. The collection of these documents will be discussed fully in Chapter Three.

of historical monographs. The idea may have been for members to subscribe to the publications. Eventually, publication exchange arrangements were set up with other historical societies and libraries. The publishing committee, like other committees, was usually made up of the most active members. For example, the Reverend Dr. Samuel Miller, Anthony Bleecker, and John Pintard, Dr. David Hosack, and Dr. John W. Francis sat on the committees for Volumes One and Two. The first publication was the Constitutions and By-laws, Instituted the 10th of December, 1804, in 1805. In 1805 and 1809, the Address to the Public was published, first as a pamphlet and then as a broadside.

"To the Public": Civil History and Civitas

"To the Public, the Address of the New-York Historical Society" reveals both the confidence and the insecurity of the founders of the Society. That they viewed their mission as important can be seen in publishing it in three forms: in the newspapers, as a circular letter distributed to private individuals, and in the first volume of the Collections of the Society. The same document functioned in different ways in each form of the media it appeared in. The letter dated, February 12, 1805, is an interesting piece of early promotion. It reads: "Sir, A number of Gentlemen in this City having formed an Association, for the promotion of Historical Inquiries; pursuant to an Order of the Society, copies of their Constitution and Address are now transmitted to you, and you are hereby informed that you are considered an original Resident Member of the Society. Should you consent to become a member, you are requested to communicate your acceptance to the Corresponding Secretary."  

being "considered an original Resident Member of the Society," one already belonged to the group.

The New-York Herald published the Queries on February 13, 1805. By publishing the Constitution and the "Address to the Public," the Society established themselves, or perhaps hoped to establish themselves, as the acknowledged proper caretakers of the City's history. They were staking a claim and establishing jurisdiction. This can be seen in general in their despair over the fact that important papers, important pieces of history were in the possession of private hands, who loathed to entrust them to public institution. "To rescue from the dust and obscurity of private repositories such important documents, as are liable to be lost or destroyed by the indifference or neglect of those into who hands they may have fallen, will be a primary object of our attention."11 The materials of New York's history were not to be objects of private possession, but must be in a place where the public could benefit. In the context of the newspaper appeal, the Society would be a quasi-public institution, although in private hands, functioning for the public benefit. The newspaper appeal emphasizes the benefit of the N-YHS, the public benefit, to a public that might be suspicious of its motives, or even reject their cause as irrelevant to the interests of ordinary New Yorkers.

However, the N-YHS was not open to the general public. Access to materials was limited to members and those sponsored by members. While membership was open to anyone who could pay the ten-dollar admission fee and the annual dues of two dollars, a potential member had to be nominated by a standing member. In contrast to the Massachusetts Historical Society and the American Antiquarian Society, the number of members was not

restricted, nor were there residency requirements. However egalitarian this may appear, membership was still decidedly limited by money and, more importantly, knowing members. Within this context, an appeal to "The Public" takes on nuances of meaning beyond a straightforward address to all New Yorkers. Who was this public? It was a public comprised of those who would be members, by virtue of background and interest. One might say that this was the only public the founders could recognize; the "other" New Yorkers did not signify. It is very likely that it was outside of their conceptual framework that most people--woman of any class, workingmen, blacks, etc.--would possess these materials and would share their interests. At the same time, the bulk of New Yorkers could be addressed, as the founders announced their position as caretakers of the City's history. The same passage, addressed either directly to a private individual or read as such, is an appeal to civic mindedness, to the person who might have those items, as if to say that he was above selfish acquisition. Read by the general public, it was an announcement of the civic role the founders were taking for themselves.

Despite this self-assurance, the founders of the Society felt the need to justify their existence, if only by arguing that they had no need for said justification as "the experience of the most enlightened nations of Europe, and by that of our own country" showed that there was "no need, at this time, of any formal arguments in support of their claim ..." By citing the precedent of other such institutions, especially European and the Massachusetts Historical Society, the N-YHS was lent legitimacy and pedigree. "We feel encouraged to follow this path by the honourable example of the Massachusetts Society...without aiming to be

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13 N-YHS, Collections, 1,1: 6-7.
rivals, we shall be happy to cooperate with that laudable institution in pursuing the objects of our common researches; satisfied if, in the end, our efforts shall be attended with equal success." The explicitness of this denial of rivalry points to an assumption that they would be in competition.

The Society would not be concerned merely with the local and the antiquarian, but was linked to higher purpose: the larger cause of truth. Their work was needed "for without the aid of original records and authentic documents, history will be nothing more than a well-combined series of ingenious conjectures and amusing fables."\textsuperscript{14} By elucidating and preventing historical inaccuracies, truth would be served, and society as a whole would benefit. Historical mistakes are thus elevated from mere misconceptions to something that is practically dangerous to democracy. To the members of the N-YHS, providing the means for the proper investigation of the past was a patriotic duty. This also called into question the intellectual and political credentials of those who were not members.

The N-YHS proposed to collect only the raw materials of historical study. "Not aspiring to the higher walks of general science, we shall confine the range of our exertions to the humble task of collecting and preserving whatever may be useful to others in the different branches of historical inquiry."\textsuperscript{15} This modest ambition placed the N-YHS in the ranks of amateur gentlemen, acting as both servants of serious historical inquiry, but also as patrons. They would provide the means, the support, for others to conduct their research. It is important that they refer to "general science:" under the influence of the new sciences, human and physical, the collection of specimens was not an end unto itself, but evidence to be in-

\textsuperscript{14} N-YHS, Collections, 1,1: 7.
\textsuperscript{15} N-YHS, Collections, 1,1: 7.
terpreated by the scientist. Philology and ethnography seem to have had a particular appeal to many of these gentlemen scholars.

The most striking characteristic of the list of things they wished to collect is the great scope. This broad range of desired materials indicates the desire to obtain as complete a picture of New York as possible. The list contains the expected materials concerning the political and the legal history of New York, but it also encompasses customs, religion, topography, and commerce. Literature, newspapers, and diaries have their place alongside laws and treaties. The founders had a very broad idea of what constitutes the historical, which included the new geological science and the natural sciences. In this respect, they seem to have been inspired by the local histories produced in England, particularly in the eighteenth century, but were attempting it on a grander scale. These materials are also very specific, very rooted in place. The Society may have taken its inspiration from the Massachusetts Historical Society and various organizations in Europe, but what they sought was very distinctly of New York. The founders of the Society displayed a developed sense of place, of what made New York different than other colonies and states.

The importance of organizations such as their own to history is seen in their desire for "Minutes and Proceedings of Societies for the Abolition of Slavery, and the Transactions of Societies for Political, Literary, and Scientific Purpose." No distinction was made between organizations devoted to the political and to leisure; these were all the types of associations that members of their class, their New York, habituated equally. They would preserve the history of those like themselves, their ancestors if not in actuality, then in sen-

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timent and class. Organizations of other New Yorkers did not appear to have the same historical importance.\textsuperscript{17} These omissions may have been a reflection of the founders' inability to value the contributions of other New Yorkers, who were included only as the objects of these societies' studies, to be acted upon (charitably or otherwise).

The growing importance of the media resulted in their desire for "Magazines, Reviews, Newspapers, and other Periodical Publications, particularly such as appeared antecedent to the year 1783."\textsuperscript{18} Rather than seeing these materials as trash, useless once the news was past, this generation established the idea that it was important not only to save old newspapers and journals, but also to preserve current ones for future historical inquiry. New ideas of what constituted historical evidence were arising. The idea of preserving current documents for future history illustrates a sense of an historical temporality that sees the past, present, and future in the present. The founders were imbued with the idea of posterity, a word that appears frequently in essays published by the N-YHS.

This conflation of time is evident in the importance of ideas of science, especially new ideas of geography, geology, and statistics. "Topographical descriptions of Cities, Towns, Counties, and Districts, at various periods, with Maps and whatever relates to the progressive Geography of the Country; Statistical Tables; Tables of Diseases, Births and Deaths, and of Population; of Meteorological Observations, and Facts relating to Climate."\textsuperscript{19} The prehistoric is combined with current conditions in a way that exhibits nascent ideas of prediction of future events, particularly growth. It was in just these types of statistics, frequently kept by antiquarians and country gentlemen, that the embryonic business of actuari-

\textsuperscript{17} N-YHS, Collections, 1,1: 7-8.
\textsuperscript{18} N-YHS, Collections, 1,1: 7-8.
\textsuperscript{19} N-YHS, Collections, 1,1: 7-8.
ally tables began. By including geography and maps, the locality is emphasized. The con-
cern with geology placed a focus on the great antiquity of place, the creation of a long his-
tory for a new nation.

"As the Society intend to form a Library and Cabinet, they will gratefully receive
specimens of the various productions of the American Continent, and of the adjacent Is-
lands, and such animal, vegetable, and mineral subjects as may be deemed worthy of pres-
servation." The comprehensiveness of what they sought, and what they eventually collected
straddled both collections of past ages and the new scientific impulse of the nineteenth-
century. The use of "cabinet" was not a casual one; this public cabinet would be a descen-
dant of the early modern cabinet of curiosities. Rather than being random collections of
oddities, the cabinet of curiosities was in its inclusiveness, a microcosm of the world's won-
ders. Unlike the early modern cabinet, this new cabinet would contain materials with local
meaning, thus bridging the gap between the cabinet and the history museum. With the
nineteenth-century came a change in the conception of collecting and museums. The new
field of museology, as particularly developed by the Germans, rejected the all-encompassing
model of the cabinet. Mass collections became to be seen as less scientific and more suit-
able as entertainment. Objects would lose their historical meaning, be reduced to mere curi-
osities, if housed with natural history samples. Most collections, including that of the N-
YHS, were dispersed into specialized collections. Variety would be left to the Barnums of
the world.

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20 N-YHS, Collections, 1,1: 6-9.
21 Paula Findlen, "The Modern Muses: Renaissance Collecting and the Cult of Rememberence," in Muse-
22 Susan A. Crane, "Curious Cabinets and Imaginary Museums," in Museums and Memory, ed. by Susan A.
Accompanying this list of things the N-YHS wished to collect were a series of questions regarding the history of New York. These "Queries" range from the most general questions to the very specific and show just how little was known about the early history of the City and state. The first query is quite general, asking what was the "first settlement of your Town or District by white people" and how the settlers lived, and what their motives for the settlement. Queries 2 through 6 concern the Dutch settlement. General questions about the settlement of New York by the Dutch are followed by those concerning the documents relating first to the United States, but then to New Netherlands and its civil government, particularly the Chief Magistrate. Query 4 asks about the primary leaders of New Amsterdam, Wouter Van Twiller, William Twillers, William Keift, "who preceded Governor Stuyvesant in the Chief Magistracy," and the details of their careers and regimes. Query 5 concerns the forts at Albany "(then called Fort Orange,)" and New York, "(then called New-Amsterdam?)," and who the commanding officers before establishment of a Governor. Query 6 asks about the details of the population of the New-Netherlands, whether their livelihood derived from commerce or agriculture, and where these flourished. By focusing on issues of politics, leaders, commerce, and defense, these queries reveal what the founders thought was the proper subject of history. It also showed an interest in their own ancestors--actual or in terms of role-- of the New York of the present day.

While blacks appear only as the unspoken concern of the previously mentioned abolition societies, the native population was of more explicit concern. Query 12 asks about their condition at the point of contact. The condition of these Indians before or after contact was apparently not important. Query 13 asks "What were the Indian names of the mountains, valleys, rivers, lakes, springs, caverns, or other remarkable places in your neighbor-
hood? And what do well informed people suppose to be the import of those names?" The native population of New York appeared to exist conceptually only in the past; their relics were the place names of towns and rivers. The Indian origin of these place names has meaning only as it makes these places specific to New York. These names could only be understood via the mediation of the opinion of well-informed people, as opposed to the common mythology of the people.

The interests of what the founders of the N-YHS were expressed in these early missives. An interest in the civil history of the material published by the N-YHS in its Collections and other publications reflect this. The Collections appeared in two series during this period: Series One, Volumes One through Five, published between 1811 and 1830, and Series Two, Volumes One through Four, published between 1841 and 1859. These contain administrative and social records of the N-YHS, as well as documents from its (physical) collections and reprints of papers delivered at meetings. The publication pattern seems to have mirrored the general well being of the N-YHS, tapering off in the difficult 1830s.23 With the financial stability of the 1840s came the Second Series of the Collections and the appearance of the Proceedings, which were published yearly between 1843-1846. The Proceedings largely contained reprints of papers delivered before the Society on a variety of historical topics. The individual publications of the N-YHS also increased at this time, and ranged from administrative reports, historical monographs, membership lists, debates within the Society, and (perhaps mostvaluably) the catalog of the Library. Many more addresses given than were reprinted.

23 The periods which saw the most publication were between 1810 and 1830, with 44 monographs and the five volumes of Series One appearing, and after 1840, with 58 monographs, the four volumes of Series Two, and the seven volumes of the Proceedings (between 1843 and 1849). The 1830s saw only 9 monographs, six of which were published in 1839.
Much of what was published was material relating to the operation and history of the N-YHS. By publishing the "Address" in their own Collections, along side the documents and essays they collected and preserved of New York, the "Address" was made instantly part of New York's history. The documents and materials relating to the N-YHS's history were thus as worthy of collection as any other document relating to the City and state's past. This reflects a tremendous self-consciousness, a belief in their import of their own actions. Their history would take its place in New York's history. Included among the reprinted documents and historical discourses were "memoirs" of members past and present. The membership of the N-YHS was the kind of men who made history. Between 1805 and 1859, fully thirty-nine of the individual publications of the N-YHS concerned their business. From lists of members and the catalog of the Library, to appeals to the State legislature and reports of the building committee. The N-YHS was not alone in publishing what could be thought of as private business. Increasingly, with the changes in printing technology and the development of cheaper paper, companies and governments were creating a public record of what once had been private business. Annual reports, by-laws, and histories were published, for very likely small distribution, but were often collected by such organizations as the N-YHS. An example of this is the publication of the Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York by the City.

The introductory comments by the editors of these volumes reveal both the motives of the N-YHS and its view of the historical process. The Introduction to Volume One of Series One starts with the assertion that "Events of this nature, so curious and interesting in the annals of every nation, can be traced with less difficulty, and ascertained with more precision, in the history of our country, than in that of almost any other." Therefore, there was
no excuse for the lack of interest in exploring the nation's history. The author does not exam-ine this further; an explanation for the lack of interest might have been this lack of diffi-culty. "The documents contained in this volume are arranged for the most part, in chronological order. This method, though convenient, and deemed expedient in the present case, is by no means considered as essential, or even important in a compilation, professing to furnish materials for historical composition, rather than connected history." While the author states that there is no meaning beyond convenience in the chronological arrangement of the documents, claiming that this collection only provided the raw materials for future historians.24 This seemingly innocent statement obscures the fact that certain documents, especially chosen by the publishing committee, were being made available. These concerned the voyages of Henry Hudson, documents "concerning the early history of New York, from Hazard's 'Historical Collections';" and the Duke of York's laws, from 1664. Also included were the Constitution of the N-YHS and a discourse by Samuel Miller on Hudson's voyage. The voyages of Hudson, whether mediated by Miller or in a seventeenth-century journal, were the foundation of the Dutch settlement in New York. That Hudson was an Englishmen in the employ of the Dutch symbolized the dual heritage of New York. The Duke of York's laws established English rule in New York.

The Introduction to Volume Two of Series One apologizes for the delay in publication due to the lack of funds. The author expresses the urgent need for support, as "the growing taste for literature and science, so rapidly advancing in the United States, it is reason-ably expected that a laudable curiosity will be directed towards the study of our national history." "Liberal encouragement," or funds, would be needed so that N-YHS could save "from oblivion documents, which must constitute the materials for the use of the future his-

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24 N-YHS, Collections, 1,1: iiv-vi.
torian." The N-YHS's mission and efforts are put in the forefront of the crusade to save the evidence of the past from destruction. The author repeats the theme that what the N-YHS was doing was providing materials for historians. The documents, by themselves, had no meaning unless interpreted. The Introduction to Volume Three of Series One reports the new acquisitions made by the Library, including material relating to the American Revolution. A veiled reference is made to rival institutions, as the author declares the primacy, in quality and quantity, of the N-YHS's collections. The inclusion of the anniversary addresses is defended, as "they not only discuss subjects important in themselves, but intimately connected with the views of the Society." The beginnings of the division between amateur and professional scholarship appear in a defense of these addresses. "That the subjects are treated in a popular manner, will not, it is hoped, exclude them from the attention of the learned." 

The yearly anniversary addresses delivered before the membership of the N-YHS often touched upon larger themes of what was history and what purpose did it serve. While their approaches differed, the orators shared a belief in the importance of historical knowledge and that it served a didactic and cautionary purpose. In the 1810 lecture, "The Benefits of Civil History," Hugh Williamson, M.D., LL.D ponders the nature of historical inquiry in the past. Williamson was a member of the Continental Congress and the United States House of Representatives from North Carolina. After his retirement, he moved to New York to engage in literary and intellectual pursuits. His years of public service inform his notion of what purpose historical study served. He notes that it is a peculiarly modern idea

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25 N-YHS, Collections, 1,1: i.
26 N-YHS, Collections, 1,3: 3-4
to form a society to preserve the history of a nation "while that nation is still in its infancy."\textsuperscript{28} This endeavor is without precedent in the ancient world, as the Greeks and Romans and the Egyptians, the Chinese and the "Hindoos" did not record their past, instead using myth and religious fancy to detail their origins. Even Herodotus, the "father of history" was flawed, sacrificing facts to a good story. He notes that historians are too often "biased by national prejudices, which induce him to depart from the truth, or he may wish embellish his history by dealing in the marvelous."\textsuperscript{29} The scandalous, the bloody, the sensational are often focused upon, in order to grab the readers' attention. The purpose of historical study should be to offer example, instruction, and prediction. Civil History, while not the most entertaining, offers the most instruction. "Being creatures of yesterday, we are indebted to history for the greater part of what we know. We are tenants of a spot on this globe, and that for a few days only...History gives us an astonishing length of days: for it makes us co[n]temporary with every nation that ever flourished."\textsuperscript{30} By this, the past is ever present in the present and as is the future.

History, to Williamson, is the story of the rise and fall of nations, the main lesson of which are the benefits of a "free" government, and the private possession of land.\textsuperscript{31} He cites the examples of the ancients, such as the fate of the Egyptians, the height of whose civilization coincided with private ownership of land. Civil History is also prophetic. "The same causes will ever produce the same effects; and the things that have happened will happen again, the like circumstances."\textsuperscript{32} The history of the New Republic would be an example for

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\textsuperscript{28} Williamson, "Civil History," N-YHS, Collections, 1.2: 23.
\textsuperscript{29} Williamson, "Civil History," N-YHS, Collections, 1.2: 27.
\textsuperscript{30} Williamson, "Civil History," N-YHS, Collections, 1.2: 29-30.
\textsuperscript{31} Williamson, "Civil History," N-YHS, Collections, 1.2: 31.
\textsuperscript{32} Williamson, "Civil History," N-YHS, Collections, 1.2: 32.
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future generations, both in the United States and in Europe. "While we attend to the rise and
fall of other republics, we should not forget that historians should be considered as a species
of pilots who set up beacons to show us the rocks and shoals on which other nations have
suffered shipwreck." Mere reportage of events was not enough; the historian should "show
in what manner, and by what means, the inhabitants increased in useful knowledge and vir-
tue;" in order to provide a guide for "posterity." The historian also had duty to record cur-
rent events, in order to instruct future generations, particularly to inform them if "men in
public trust, instructed as they are by ancient history, and by the recent fate of European re-
publics, had been careful to check the dangerous progress of internal faction; to preserve
peace; to cultivate harmony among their fellow citizens, and to retain the confidence and
affection of the sister republics."34

Gouverneur Morris's Inaugural Discourse of 181635 begins with a thank you to the
state and the Corporation of New York for their financial support, believing that it "sheds
lustre on this great commercial emporium of the United States."36 He does not explain why
the N-YHS would enhance the commercial capital of the nation, but he implies that there is
a link between the economic success of the City and the knowledge of its history. Morris
poses the question "What is History? Is it the eloquence of Livy, the shrewdness of Tacitus,
or the profound sense of Polybius?" History instead is the "Science of Human Nature." He
rejects a belles lettres approach, believing that such history cannot teach: "it is, at best, and
entertaining novel, with the ornament of real names."37 Morris sees the Bible as the ultimate

33 Williamson, "Civil History," N-YHS, Collections, 1.2: 35.
34 Williamson, "Civil History," N-YHS, Collections, 1.2: 36.
35 Gouverneur Morris, "Inaugural Discourse," N-YHS, Collections of the New-York Historical Society, 1.3:
27-40.
36 Morris, "Inaugural Discourse," Collections, 1.3: 27.
model, for they show man in true light, showing consequences of actions, good and bad.

While the Bible might be his model, proper historical evidence was essential for creating a true record of the past. It is important to preserve these materials for future historians for by "establishing facts by indisputable authority, will enable the future historian accurately to deduce effects from the true cause, correctly to portray characters taken from real life, and justly assign to each his actual agency." This concern with future historians is in keeping with the idea that the mission of the N-YHS was not to interpret history, but provide the best documentation.

"The history of our day is, indeed, a school for princes; and, therefore, the proper school for American citizens." The United States would provide an example to the world; therefore it was very important that a correct history was preserved. This history was not only important to the present, but for the future. "These examples will be handed down, by your care, for the instruction and imitation of our children's children: make them acquainted with their fathers; and grant, Oh God! That a long and late posterity, enjoying freedom in the bosom of peace, may look, with grateful exultation, at the day-dawn of our empire." Morris ends his discourse on history by looking towards the future. "Hail Columbia! Child of science, parent of useful arts; dear country, hail!"

The more eclectic content of the earlier volumes changed with the 1826 edition (Volume Four) and again in the 1829 edition (Volume Five) of the Collections. These reprinted the revised 1763 edition of William Smith, Jr.'s The History of the Late Prov-

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38 Morris, "Inaugural Discourse," N-YHS, 1,3: 36.
39 Morris, "Inaugural Discourse," N-YHS, 1,3: 36.
40 Morris, "Inaugural Discourse," N-YHS, 1,3: 37.
41 Morris, "Inaugural Discourse," N-YHS, 1,3: 40.
ince of New-York, thus making available the earliest complete history of the City and Province of New York. A lawyer, jurist, and writer, Smith was the son of the judge in the Zenger trial and the 1741 "Negro Plot." He published a digest of colonial laws in 1752, contributed to the Independent Reflector, and published his history of New York in 1757. Smith served as Chief justice of the province in 1763, organized the Whig Club in 1767. He left with the British evacuation. The introduction, by John W. Francis, John Delafield, and David Hosack, starts with a brief discussion of Smith, but then links the work to the larger mission of the N-YHS. The importance of New York's history is emphasized. "The State of NEW-YORK, while she does justice to her great natural resources, ought not to be indifferent to her own fame, or the reputation of her distinguished sons. These are her property, not less valuable or productive than the tolls on her canals." New York must not ignore its past in preference to its present. They reiterate that only institutions such as N-YHS were equipped to preserve the past as "individual attempts are for the most part lost and ineffectual." By virtue of its past and present achievements. New York should take the lead in the new nation, positively influencing the other states. Although seldom made explicit, this contests New England's primacy. The New Englanders had long used their history as a justification for their position; the N-YHS believed that New York's history was not only as important, but could serve as an example to the other states.44

The Dutch, surprisingly, do not dominate the First Series. In the Second Series, the emphasis in the Collections had shifted almost exclusively to the Dutch. The excep-

44 N-YHS, Collections, 1:4: v-vi.
tion is in Volume One of Second Series which includes an account of the voyages of Ver-
razanno, which of course, places New York's exploration among the earliest in the New
World. In the introduction to that volume, the editor George Folsom repeats that only
original documents were included, "and therefore naked facts and unembellished states
are all that can be expected in the volume." These facts without interpretation were the
clay for the historian. He contrasts the serious use of history with the frivolous. An
author who made ill-use of such raw materials of history was Washington Irving, whose
History of New York (the Knickerbocker History) is described by Folsom as a "well-
known travesty" and an example of how New Yorkers denigrated their own history. He
accuses Irving of, among other things, being unpatriotic by making New York's history
the subject of parody.  

Folsom does not mention the three articles he wrote, which were included in this
volume. One of these articles was an "Historical Sketch of the Society." The account starts
with the founding and the first meeting on November 20, 1804. Of the founders, Folsom
writes "among them will be immediately recognized the names of eminent divines, illustri-
ous statement and distinguished jurists, together with others not less esteemed in their day
for profession skill, literary taste, and classical or scientific attainments." The narrative of
the events the history concerns not only the growth of the collections, but also the financial
difficulties and repeated changes of venues that the N-YHS experienced. This piece is the
last in the volume of materials which otherwise concern the seventeenth-century. The his-
tory of the N-YHS thus becomes not only part of the history of New York, but also part of

45 N-YHS, Collections, 1,2: iiv-iv.
46 Irving's relationship with the N-YHS will be discussed in Chapter Two.
47 George Folsom, "Historical Sketch of the Society," N-YHS, Collections, 1, 2: 459.
its "ancient" history. The N-YHS, with its lofty founders, was as important to the character of New York as the Dutch.

This volume also reprinted "Chancellor Kent's Anniversary Discourse," originally delivered on December 9, 1828. The reprinting of this address thirteen years after its delivery was not an exercise in nostalgia. Kent's discourse examined the special quality of New York's history and the need to preserve it. By publishing this, and placing it first in the collection, the N-YHS expressed its renewed mission, signaled by the resumption of the publication of the *Collections*. The Chancellor, as he was commonly known, was president of the N-YHS from and was one of the leading jurists of the time. His Discourse is an account of New York City's history, from the Dutch to the Revolution. Kent pays particular attention to the role of New York in resistance to the English crown before and during the Revolution, in a sense rectifying the conception that the City was purely Tory.

Kent is most forceful in talking about the importance of the preservation of New York's history. He compares such efforts in New York to other states, particularly Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, and finds New York lacking. His sense of competition is clear. "I trust we shall feel an additional stimulus to acquit ourselves of our duty, and throw back upon our own annals some of the light and lustre which emanate from the spirit of the age."  

New York's history was more important than its rivals: "there is no portion of the history of this country, which is more instructive, or better calculated to embellish our national character." The competition with New England was the keenest. Kent praised their efforts in commemorating their ancestors but asks

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Why should we, in this state, continue any longer comparatively heedless of our own glory, when we also can point to a body of illustrious annals? Our history will be found, upon examination, to be as fruitful as the records of any other people, in recitals of heroic actions, and in images of resplendent virtue. It is equally well fitted to elevate the pride of ancestry, to waken deep feelings, to strengthen just purpose, and enkindle generous emulation.\footnote{Kent, "Discourse," N-YHS, Collections, 2.1: 12-13.}

Kent clearly sees history as instructive, and New York's the most instructive all. Again he compares New York to Massachusetts, writing that while the monuments on Bunker Hill due justice to that state, "the records of this state, in the hands of some future historian, are capable of elevating a loftier monument, and one of less perishable materials, on which, not the rays of the setting sun, but the rays of a nation's glory, as long as letters shall endure, will continue 'to play and linger on its summit.'" Here, Kent is intimating that Massachusetts' glory was all in the past, while New York belonged to the future.

Kent asserts that he does not wish "to cherish or inculcate that patriotism which is purely local or exclusive," but that the lessons of New York's history were a benefit to the nation as a whole, and an example to the world.\footnote{Kent, "Discourse," N-YHS, Collections, 2.1: 35-36


This connection between local histories and national patriotism was made by the reviewer of Volume One of Series Two in Boston's North American Review\footnote{Review of the Collections of the New-York Historical Society, 2nd ser., vol. 1. "The Early History of New York." North American Review v. 54, no. 115 (April 1842): 299-338.} in April 1842. The opening paragraph of the review begins

In no department of literature has a greater revolution taken place in the course of a few years, than in that to which this volume is a contribution. The new taste which has grown up should be fostered and encouraged, as tending to give us a national character; as meliorating the feelings of the community.....The encouragement of such historical studies has been regarded as in itself an evidence of the advance of a people in civilized life.
The reviewer explicitly links this volume of local history to the development of a national identity. The reviewer applauded that "a more valuable collection of early documents has not been published at any time in this country."\(^{53}\) Chancellor Kent's thoughts on the history of New York were agreed with, as his view was "one which cannot in our judgment be commended too highly to the consideration of our citizens.\(^{54}\)

The introduction to Volume Two of Series Two stresses that it is primarily devoted to the history of New Netherland. The introduction celebrates the N-YHS's efforts in collecting the materials of New York's history, noting that "it is believed that there is no State in the Union, for the illustration of whose history, richer materials have been gathered." The N-YHS's efforts have transformed the Dutch era "a period so long regarded as obscured, dry and uninteresting, is likely to prove, in our present lights, one of the most interesting and instructive." Without the N-YHS, the editor seems to say, this period would have remained obscure and uninteresting. The members could have pride in "their successful endeavors to rescue the fast perishing memorials of the earliest history of the commonwealth, whose position, character and influence, have alike contributed to make her the Empire State." New York's past shaped its present. Instead of being antithetical to change, the preservation of the past was a necessary part of progress.\(^{55}\)

A. W. Bradford's discourse, published in the 1845 edition of the *Proceedings*,\(^{56}\) reflects the emerging ideas of nationhood and nations. Bradford was the Governor of Mary-

\(^{53}\) *North American Review*, April 1842: 300.


\(^{55}\) N-YHS, *Collections*, 2: ii-iv.

land who sided with the Union during the Civil War and prevented Maryland from seceding. Bradford regards nations as the true actors in history. A history of nations might not be as thrilling as that of "great men" but it is more important, for it reveals the universal laws of history. 57 History has a positive, substantial, organic subsistence." 58 History can teach, because the laws governing it are "divinely instituted." History is therefore "not only orderly and methodical, but its order is perfect, its method full of wisdom." Bradford finds this order not only in the spectacular events of history, but in the mundane, and regular, not just in politics and wars, but also in the arts and agriculture. 59 History, and the lessons it reveals, is "neither partial, narrow or contracted.--not bound down to the record of what has been done by individuals, nations or races, --no long Grecian or Roman, or French or English,--no long territorial. Dilating with an expansive impulse which bursts all bonds asunder. History thus becomes Universal." 60 Bradford is primarily concerned with the idea of progress and advancement, culminating, of course, in America. 61 He briefly reviews the history of the world, albeit in the West, declaring that "there are no accidents in history." 62 America, for example, was not "discovered" until the right time. In discussing America and its place in history, Bradford expresses a particularly millennial view of the history of the world. America's example, if followed, would result in a period of history without war. 63

The N-YHS was not only concerned with New York history. Part of its mission was to promote the understanding of the history of the entire nation. To that end, the N-YHS encouraged other historical societies, through the exchange of publications and the

organization of joint efforts. During the 1840s, the United States Democratic Review regularly published accounts of the meetings of the N-YHS. At the December 5, 1843, meeting, reported in the in January 1844 edition, Peter Jay gave a report from the Committee on Branch Associations. He urged the "propriety and probable usefulness" of measures to include members from other parts of the state. "Every intelligent inhabitant of the State must needs feel some interest; that there is scarcely a village within its borders that cannot contribute something to the stock of materials from which the history of New York is yet to be constructed; and that these can in no way be so easily collected and permanently preserved as through the medium of Historical Societies." The whole of the State's history was important, and Historical Societies were the best possible means to preserve that history. The N-YHS had always had non-resident members, and early on, established relationships with intellectual societies in the United States and abroad. The most important contribution these contacts made were the exchange of publications. After the Democratic Review ceased to publish the reports of the meetings, the American Whig Review, its rival, took over for the January 1846 meeting. The November 5, 1844, special meeting of the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the Society featured delegates from the "historical Societies of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Georgia, together with a delegation from the American Antiquarian Society." A "sumptuous dinner" at the New York Hotel followed the meeting.64

In April 1845, the N-YHS began to debate what would be a suitable name for the nation. They supported Allegania, "considering that it is derived from the grandest and most useful natural feature common to the whole country, an eternal type of strength and union, stretching from the Gulf of Mexico to the Great Lakes; that it is associated with the most

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interesting portions of our history; and that in adopting it we should restore to the land one of the primordial titles of the aborigines." A letter to "other historical Societies, and to eminent citizens in different parts of the country" would be sent to ask for their help in this matter. The report of the meeting ends with a note from the editors, expressing the view that the view of the N-YHS did not reflect their opinion. Instead, "We stand by the name of "AMERICA...looking forward to the day when we shall have carried it over the whole or nearly the whole of the Northern continent."65 The Democratic Review's editor, John L. O'Sullivan, was the coiner of the phrase "Manifest Destiny." The same issue had an article on the subject, citing Washington Irving's desire for a national name utilizing Alleghania. By the next meeting, the N-YHS had decided that "the terms 'America' and 'Americans' are only applicable in a national sense to the United States, and that it is therefore inexpedient to suggest any other name to denominate our territory or our citizens."66 These debates were later published by the N-YHS, as the Debate In The Society On "Columbia" As The New Name Of The Country, Instead Of "America," May 15, 1845 and Report Of The Committee Of The Society On A National Name, March 31, 1845. It is tempting to regard this debate in a humorous light, as an example of a useless intellectual exercise indulged in by gentlemen antiquarians. However, it does show that the members of the N-YHS took very seriously the idea of national character and they felt that the name of the nation should reflect its history. The historical society, rather than being superfluous to society, was an important part of building a national identity.

In 1857, Dr. John W. Francis, one of the founding members of the New-York Historical Society and a noted doctor, delivered a memorial address to the Society on the

65 "N-YHS," The United States Democratic Review, 16, no. 83 (May 1845): 519-520.
occasion of the dedication of its new home on Second Avenue. *Old New York: Or, Reminiscences of the Past Sixty Years*, was later enlarged and republished. In it, Francis recounts the changes of that occurred during the first half of the century, the people he knew—the elite of New York, and his medical career. Francis compares the City's past and present in a tour from the Battery northward, lamenting the disappearance of old landmarks, and chiding the present for forgetting the past. Francis emphasizes the role of the local historian, as it was the local historian who had "a great duty to perform, in rescuing from oblivion and recording with emphasis and completeness, the history of the men, the measures, and the events which render our native State and City illustrious."

Despite the efforts of the N-YHS and others, New York's history was still unknown, especially when compared with the "full annals of the smallest New England town." This deficit obscured New York's role in the nation's history, and contributed to the dominance of New England. He hearkens to another one of the N-YHS's founders to support his position and attack the ascendancy of New England. "Gouverneur Morris eloquently asserted the claim of New York to original and instinctive aspirations for Liberty, a fact which some of our eastern brethren, those prolific votaries of the pen, have either ignored or traced to a Puritan origin." Francis' comments could have been presented at the beginning of the N-YHS's history.

The publications of the N-YHS reflect a number of concerns. Civil history, the importance of the Dutch past, the contribution of New York to the nation's history, and the history of the N-YHS itself, all illustrated by deeds of illustrious men and the records

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of governments, dominate the publications. This raises the question of whose history the N-YHS was preserving, and whether their definition of the civic could include other New Yorkers.

**History and the Other New Yorkers**

New York's population explosion of the early nineteenth century was fueled by immigration, both foreign and domestic. The diverse character of the population, in terms of race, ethnicity, and class, was absent from almost all of the material produced by the N-YHS. The few exceptions are as telling as the omissions. A. W. Bradford's 1845 Discourse contains one of the few attempts to understand the diversity of America's population. America was not only an example, but its people were literally a new people. By mixing the nations into a new people, a truly national character would be formed.

But how were the people entrusted with so momentous a mission, and about to perform so important a part in the last age of the world, to be descended? Were they to come from one stock or from many?...A single lineage for these people would only have preserved and enlarged local peculiarities and prejudices. All that was partial and local was to be obliterated. The races of the old world were to be commingled, and fused into one mass in the new...Though the Anglo-Saxon element may predominate, yet this composite origin has produced a race of varied capacity and of liberal character.\(^\text{69}\)

In Bradford's conception, the "composite origin" of the American people was positive and would produce a people worthy of leading the world. However, in order for this to happen, "all that was partial and local was to be obliterated," the particularities of each group would have to be erased in the process of forming a new people. It was only through losing their old identities and adopting a new, American one, that the newcomers could be incorporated into society.

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Despite the founders' expressed interest in their initial "Address," to collect "Minutes and Proceedings of Societies for the Abolition of Slavery," very little use appears to have been made of this material. Indeed, slavery in particular and blacks in general do not make an appearance in the Collections until the Civil War. In 1862, John Gilmary Shea delivered "The New York Negro Plot Of 1741," later to be reprinted in the Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York in 1870.\(^{70}\) Shea's article deals mainly with the case against the supposed priest and the other whites, not with the black defendants.

The reports of the meetings of the N-YHS, published in the United States Democratic Review in the 1840s, offer more tantalizing information. The October 2, 1843 meeting, reported in the November 1843 edition of the Democratic Review\(^{71}\), focuses heavily on the discussion of Washington's attitudes towards slavery and his decision to free his slaves. Using primary evidence, such as a letter to Robert Morris, the members of the N-YHS concluded that Washington was against slavery. An announcement of the next meeting revealed that a paper by Dr. D. Francis Bacon, "An Ethnographic View of the African Tribes, from the Senegal to the Gold Coast," would be read at the December 5, 1843, meeting Bacon's paper discussed "their Geographical boundaries, their Affinities and Distinction of Language, Government, Customs, &c" and was "listened to with much interest."\(^{72}\) Blacks in New York or the United States were not interesting, whereas the African tribes were a suitable subject for ethnographic investigation.

At the May 7, 1844 meeting, a Dr. J. Beakley read a paper on "The Progress of the Caucasian Race in Science and Civilisation." A discussion resulted in which the idea the

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\(^{71}\) "N-YHS," The United States Democratic Review, 13, no 65 (November 1843): 556-557.

\(^{72}\) Reported in The United States Democratic Review, 14, no. 67 (January 1844): 106-108. Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate a copy of this paper.
superiority of the white race "owing to their physical organization and complexion" was discussed. A General Wetmore promoted a vote of thanks for the paper, but Peter Jay strongly objected to this resolution, as it "implied some degree of approval of the sentiments and theory advanced in the able paper, to the effect that a decided and irrevocably inferiority, both intellectually and morally, were the natural destiny of the black man, something that he (Mr. Jay) conscientiously regarded as false, impious, and cruel." The author then asked that the motion be removed, but Wetmore would not, although he protested that it was a mere courtesy, not an affirmation of those beliefs. It eventually passed, but with some objections.73

The relics of the pre-European history of the New World were described as "antiquities" thus creating an ancient history for America to rival that of Europe. Interest in these antiquities was long standing; Jefferson devoted much time to their study, and in New York, De Witt Clinton was well known for his interest. In 1846, for example, the N-YHS published The Antiquities of the State of New York,74 profusely illustrated with fourteen quarto plates and eighty engravings on wood. This was a joint project of the N-YHS and the Smithsonian Institution. E. G. Squier's "Report Upon The Aboriginal Monuments Of Western New York," and R. C. Long's "The Ancient Architecture Of America" treated these monuments much the same as classical ruins. The Indians were part of this ancient history; their languages, religions, and names were all researched. Farmar Jarvis, in a paper delivered on December 20, 1819, compared "The Etymology Of The Onondaga, Mohawk, And Lenape Or Delaware Languages With That Of The Hebrew." By this association, he confers a biblical, if not classical, lineage on the native languages, as well as

73 "N-YHS," The United States Democratic Review, 14, no.72 (June 1844): 663-664.
investigates the possibilities of the lost Hebrew tribe in North America. The interaction of the Dutch and the native people was included in those volumes devoted to the Dutch in New York. Volume One of the Second included the "Indian Tradition Of The First Arrival Of The Dutch At Manhattan Island" and Volume Three of the Second Series, a "Short Sketch Of The Mohawk Indians In New Netherland, Etc., By J. Megapolensis, Jr.; translation revised with an introduction by J. R. Brodhead" which described the natives through Dutch eyes. In 1856, the N-YHS published the monograph, Narrative Of A Captivity Among The Mohawk Indians, A Description Of New Netherland In 1642-43. And Other Papers. By Isaac Jogues. With a memoir of the author by J. G. Shea. This material, whether primary or secondary, all place the Indians in the far past. By associating them with antiquity, by limiting the discussion of them to the "ancient times" of the Dutch settlement, they ceased to exist as a contemporary people.

Africans and Indians were suitably exotic topics for investigation by the N-YHS. Slavery, as an institution, was a subject in keeping with the concern with civil history. Ordinary New Yorkers, of all varieties, had no place within New York's history as conceptualized by the N-YHS. The transformation of New York's population from a relatively homogenous one to one rich in variety was discussed indirectly through more general ideas of change. By concentrating on the distant past and ignoring the present, the N-YHS signaled its retreat from the public.

From Public to Private: the Transformation of the New-York Historical Society

The economic and social changes of the 1830s can be seen in the obstacles faced by the N-YHS. After weathering this period, a decade other similar institutions did not
survive, the N-YHS would change. While still an instrument of an intellectual and social elite, it would turn inward. The N-YHS survived, in part, because it ceased to be a quasi-public institution. While the N-YHS never abandoned its mission to collect and preserve the materials relating to the history of New York, it modified its claims of its civic role. As it turned inward, the N-YHS became increasingly more like a private club, less concerned with the public benefits of historical research and more with the minutiae of trivia.

Between 1816 and 1830, the organizations which made up the New York Institution of Learned and Scientific Establishments (or the New York Institution) occupied the former Alms House. This disused City building was rented to these organizations for the symbolic rent of one peppercorn per year. Beginning in the late 1820s, the leases were extended for shorter and shorter periods of time, with the warning that the City might soon need the space for itself. Finally, in 1830, the City did not renew the leases, ordering the New York Institute to vacate the building. This loss of quarters has been seen as indication of the hostility to elite cultural hegemony in the face of a growing artisanal political and cultural power.⁷⁵ No longer could these elites except unargued support for their quasi-public efforts from the City government. Politicians had to answer to rival forces as well. Evidence for this is seen in the report offered to the Common Council by the Committee of Repairs and Public Offices,⁷⁶ in which they state that "The great length of time during which so large an amount of public property has been suffered to be applied, without any material equivalent, almost exclusively to private uses, has been a subject of frequent and, it must be admitted, of just animadversion."⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Most forcefully by Thomas Bender. See Bender, New York Intellect, 76-77.
⁷⁶ Bender identifies the author as James I. Roosevelt. Bender, New York Intellect: 76-77.
⁷⁷ Minutes of the Common Council, 19: 78.
That this was a time of increasing changes in politics, both in the nation and the City, is undisputed. Indicative of this sort of change is the expansion of the franchise, the increased political activity by the artisanal class, the founding of such as institutions as the Mechanics Library (which continued to have its rents waived by the City), the rise of the Democratic Party, and alterations in the structure of the City's government. At this time, a charter revision split the City Council into the Board of Aldermen and the Assistant Board of Aldermen, and in 1833, mandated the popular election of the mayor. The government was growing in size and complexity, taking over many of the functions formerly assigned to the private sector. While the members of these institutions, particularly the N-YHS, saw their work as being in the public service, it was clearly not seen that way from the outside.

When one examines the entire report, and the one previous to it, it becomes clear that the needs of the City's government would supercede any vague private efforts at bettering the City through Culture. The May 31, 1830, report of the Committee of Repairs and Public Offices, by James N. Wells, Thomas T. Woodruff, Thomas Jeremiah, and Jeremiah Dodge\(^7\) states "that they have maturely considered that subject, and are of opinion that the entire building alluded to in the Resolution, is required for public purposes." The building would contain instead the Police Office, the House of Detention, the Grand Jury, the First District Watch, the Commissioners of the Alms House, the Collectors of Assessments, the Public Administrators Office and Court, and the Marine Court. Where the museum had been located, a "court room forty two feet by ninety three, with Judges Chamber, Clerks Office, and Jury Rooms connected therewith" would be

\(^7\) Minutes of the Common Council, 19: 76-78
located. The conclusion of the May 31, 1830, report by James I. Roosevelt, James N. Wells, David Bryson, Thomas Jeremiah, and Thomas T. Woodruff, reads in full:

The great length of time during which so large an amount of public property has been suffered to be applied, without any material equivalent, almost exclusively to private uses, has been a subject of frequent and, it must be admitted, of just animadversion. When to this consideration is added the present crowded state of the City Hall and its utter inadequacy to the accommodation of the numerous Courts and public Offices, the Committee are persuaded that no other argument need be urged to induced the Common Council, without further delay, to adopt some plan for the occupation of the building in question. 79

Public needs superceded private claims on the space. This reported effectively negated any claims by the N-YHS that it was a public institution, or even a private institution acting on the public's behalf.

James I. Roosevelt and the other authors of the report were not members of the artisanal or mechanics class themselves, but they did reflect a new political reality. The Roosevelt family was old and rich, but many of its men were professional politicians. James would served as a member of the New York State legislature, United States Representative (1841-43), state court judge, and as United States District Attorney for the Southern District of New York (1859-1861). In 1830, he was 35 years old, in the beginning of his career. He would later become part of the reform wing of the Democratic Party, the so-called meeting of Wall Street and Five Points. James N. Wells was a builder, real-estate broker, and developer who worked with Clement C. Moore to develop the area now known as Chelsea. Much of the West Village, including the Church of St.-Lukes-in-the Fields, was built by him. As Amy Bridges has pointed out, it is dangerous to make assumptions about political affiliation and behavior based solely on wealth.

Both Whigs and Democrats courted the "common man" and the Whigs may have done better with native-born artisans and mechanics. Violent political rivalries existed within classes. In the N-YHS for example, Giulian Verplanck (a Democrat) and De Witt Clinton clashed frequently. Increasingly, members of the N-YHS would participate more in state and national politics. They were more likely to hold these offices, not only as members of the state and national legislature, but in the judiciary and as foreign ministers. Their involvement in City politics was more likely to be informal, and one of influence rather than as elected or appointed officials. This is typical of this time, as members of the elite shifted their role in politics to behind the scenes.

The events surrounding the loss of N-YHS's quarters in the old Alms House were illustrative of the cultural and political realignments in New York, between working class and elite culture, private and public needs, and the role of government. The use of public space for private use, despite protests that it was for the public good, was no longer acceptable. The membership of the N-YHS could no longer count on their position in society to garner them preferential treatment. This was indicative that there was no cultural monopoly; even members with the same class could hold divergent views. The concerns of the present had triumphed over the preservation of the past.

Even those within the N-YHS had doubts over the role it would play. There appeared at times to be a disjunction between the lofty goals of the Society, and what was actually accomplished. George Templeton Strong is mainly known to us through his extensive and very observant diary which he began in 1835 while a student at Columbia College. The son of prominent lawyer, George Washington Strong, the son-in-law of

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80 See Amy Bridges, *A City in the Republic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984, 1987), Chapters 2 and 7 particularly.
Samuel Ruggles, the lawyer and real estate speculator who developed Gramercy Park, a graduate and trustee of Columbia College, a founder of the Union League Club, and a vestryman of Trinity Church. Strong belonged to the social and intellectual clubs frequented by members of his class. His diaries provide an interesting, often ascerbic, view of the social rituals he routinely took part in.

On May 2 1843, Strong was elected a member of the N-YHS. Albert Gallatin was the president and presided. "It reminded me of Poole's antiquary in Little Pendleton—with his disquisition of the antiquities of the ruined pump and his helmet of the time of Richard I, so strongly resembling a saucepan of the time of George IV. A letter was read from Crosby enclosing an 'interesting Revolutionary relic'—breathless expectation—namely a button cut from the coat of a spy—I forget which side—during the most memorable struggle."81 This meeting was reported by the United States Democratic Review in their June 1843 edition; the spy was apparently in the employ of the British.82 Strong despaired of the irrelevance of these efforts, disheartened by their uselessness. "'Scholars' are laboriously writing dissertations for the Historical Society on the First Settlement of the Township of Squanheim (Squanhum?), and consuming the midnight oil in elucidating and illustrating the highly interesting MS collection of letters in the possession of the Smith family supposed to have been written by Petrus Smith who died somewhere about 1690, to the great weariness and dreariness of the patient men who attend the meetings of that association."83 The City was filled with poverty and degradation, populated by homeless children and teenage prostitutes. These keepers of the past hid in the

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82 The United States Democratic Review, 12, no. 60 (June 1843), 666.
83 Strong, Diaries, 2:57.
past ignoring the problems of the day.

This sort of droning antiquarian loquaciousness was also mentioned, in more gentle terms, by the *United States Democratic Review*.

The monthly meetings, admirably presided over by the venerable and eminent statesmen of a time now historical, who fills the office of President of the Society, are always well, as well as numerously attended; and on all occasions, original papers are read, which rarely fail fully to repay the attention with which they are heard. If disposed to be captious, we might insinuate a hint, that a certain slight degree of the cacoethus loquendi is sometimes indulged in rather more freely than is absolutely necessary, —but not being that disposition, we scrupulously refrain there from, though 'we meiht an'if we would.'4

The membership and concerns of the N-YHS are thus seen as residing in the past. Its leadership belonged to "a time now historical." The same article talks of the membership recruitment, "honorary, corresponding and resident; and among the number are to be reckoned not a few names, in a high degree calculated to grace its list." This reflects the growing elitism or clubbishness of the N-YHS, and its transformation into a social club.

The career of John Pintard exemplifies this transition between high-minded civic goals and the effects of the realities of the changing society on the N-YHS. John Pintard was the primary mover in the founding of the N-YHS, and has been called the "Father of Historical Societies" in the United States. Pintard was born in 1759 to a wealthy Huguenot family, and raised by his uncle, the merchant Lewis Pintard. After losing his fortune through signing notes for William Duer, he abandoned business and devoted himself to public service, serving as Alderman, in the State Legislature, and as the City Inspector. Pintard advocated various projects for the fiscal good of New York, such as the savings bank of New York, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Erie Canal. Among his charita-

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4 "N-YHS," *The United States Democratic Review*, 14, no. 69 (March 1844), 325-326.

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ble endeavors were his roles in the establishment of the free school system in New York City, the founding of the American Bible society, and serving as treasurer of the Sailors' Snug Harbor.

Pintard's service during the American Revolution influenced him to collect and preserve historical materials. Pintard subsequently established the first museum in New York in 1791, associated with Tammany Hall of which he was the first sachem. This, the American Museum, was eventually sold by Tammany, and would form the nucleus of Barnum's Museum of Wonders. During the 1790s, Pintard promoted the idea of an American antiquarian society to such leaders as Thomas Jefferson and Jeremy Belknap of Harvard. This would lead first to the founding of the Massachusetts Historical Society in 1791, and consequently to the founding of the N-YHS in 1804. Pintard saw the promotion of cultural institutions as part of "the duties incumbent on all those who regard the morals of Society" believing that "gross dissipation always prevails where refinement is not cultivated." It was a moral as well as civic duty.

Through his letters to his daughter, Eliza Noel Pintard Davidson, written between 1816 and 1833, John Pintard rendered a lively commentary on his life, especially his numerous charitable and cultural endeavors. Favorite among these was the New-York Historical Society. Alternately calling it his "child" and his "brat," he constantly reaffirms his devotion to the Society. This affection is evident in his desire to continue his involvement with the N-YHS after he had decided to dedicate all of his attentions to charitable organizations in the 1820s. However, disillusionment and bitterness over the

86 Pintard, Letters, 1:25.

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squabbles between the leaders caused him to withdraw from active participation in the N-YHS.

Pintard's labors were not limited to mere promotion of the N-YHS. His library formed a significant part of its collection, including important materials relating to the American Revolution. He not only secured the rooms for the N-YHS, but also supervised the renovation, moving and arranging the books for the library himself (June 11, 1816). While he appears to have relished his work, Pintard was somewhat resentful of members who limited their participation, who felt that it was "sufficiently attentive on their part to call in once in a way to see me work" (July 5, 1816). This lack of active participation was a constant refrain of Pintard's during this early period. While he may have exaggerated in his feelings of exploitation, there was most likely a real fissure between those with a more personal interest in the N-YHS (like Pintard), and those for whom it was just another club. Despite his hard work, undertaken alone, Pintard made it clear to his daughter how important he felt the N-YHS would be, both in the present and the future. "But I take a pleasure in completing & bringing to life once more this embryo of a very valuable institution & legacy to posterity"(June 12, 1816). He took personal responsibility along with interest, noting that "this Society is my own child, and will I trust transmit some evidence of a useful existence"(July 5, 1816).  

Pintard's historical interests extended beyond the N-YHS. Having participated in the Revolution, he felt a need, a duty, to collect materials relating to the War. He concentrated much of his efforts for the N-YHS to obtaining materials for the library. Here, as elsewhere, he was aware of the legacy this would lead, believing that these materials

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89 Pintard, Letters, 1: 18-19
would "prove a most important legacy to posterity..." (December 16, 1817).\textsuperscript{90} Choosing to include historical material in daily paper mainly concerned with commercial news, he wrote about various incidents in the Revolution, most notably in the Daily Advertiser.\textsuperscript{91} Part of his reason for writing these pieces lay in his personal pleasure, despite his frequent complaints of the great effort and time he put into research (August 14, 1826).\textsuperscript{92} A greater reason was his belief that the nation owed its existence and consequently thanks to those who fought the Revolution, and that their sacrifice was in danger of being forgotten. In a letter of August 23, 1826, he describes to his daughter the effort in creating a chronology of events of the Battle of Long Island (published anonymously in the \textit{New-York Daily Advertiser}, Tuesday morning, August 22, 1826, on p.2). The brief piece took "days of research," but would "call up, if possible, the gratitude our country owes to the soldiers of the revolution." He felt that "the present generation know not their obligations to their predecessors" (August 23, 1826).\textsuperscript{93} Pintard had first-hand knowledge of the sacrifices made; he had seen the horrors of the prisons and prison ships in New York City as Deputy Commissary for American prisoners under his uncle, Lewis Pintard. In these remarks, Pintard exhibits both certain exasperation at the ignorance or indifference to the Revolution, and tremendous sense of obligation to rectify this situation.

Another reoccurring theme is that of the need to create a correct history, free from artistic confabulation. For example, on death of Napoleon he hoped for a history written by the Emperor himself would appear, predicting that "there will be spurious histories

\textsuperscript{90} Pintard, \textit{Letters}, 1: 18-19
\textsuperscript{91} The Daily Advertiser, which was founded and managed by Theodore Dwight, published between 1817-1836, and was, in 1825, the first American paper to use a steam driven cylinder press, which could produce 2,000 papers per hour. Frank Mott, \textit{American Journalism} (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 204.
\textsuperscript{92} Pintard, \textit{Letters}, 2:293,
\textsuperscript{93} Pintard, \textit{Letters}, 2: 293.
eno[ough] by bookmakers to gull the public" (August 9, 1821). In 1831, he had been asked by the editors of the New-York Mirror to write an introduction to a letter by James Fenimore Cooper concerning an incident during the Revolution, partially to correct some of the facts. "We are so much given to amplify & to throw into romance almost, the events of the Rev[olutionar]y war, as to be disgusting to those better acquainted with the incidents of that memorable struggle for the Independence of these U[nite]d States. Truth requires no fiction to blazon the almost romantic scenes of that war. In my time I have taken some pains to correct such errors, with little thanks from their fanciful authors..." (April 9, 1831). Again, Pintard exhibits both how important to correct the facts and preserve the correct memory of these events, and indignation, here at how little appreciated his efforts were.

His exasperation may also have had more personal roots; the increasing apathy of the public to the Revolution was in a way a rejection of his generation and their accomplishments. By the 1830s, they did not matter quite as much. Much of what he wrote about was not just the nation's or City's history, but his own. The events and places he researched were drawn from his own memories. During the 1830s, Pintard wrote historical sketches to accompany illustrations in the New-York Mirror. Writing these pieces gave him "some occupation, innocent & amusing" (November 18, 1831), as well as producing his usual half-complaining, half-bragging remarks on the amount of time and research they took. Among the topics he wrote about were the old and new City Halls, the Old Jail, the Sugar House prison, the destruction of Trinity Church in 1776 fire, and

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94 Pintard, Letters, 2: 73
96 Pintard, Letters, 3: 239.
97 Pintard, Letters, 3: 298-299.
the Walton Mansion House. These locations and events were vanishing, both in actuality and in consciousness, existing only in the memories of those like Pintard, who is at once resentful and proud of his role as a repository of history. "You may think me fond of scribbling in my old days...But as I stand almost alone as to past times, I am incessantly importuned to furnish some illustrative facts...But I do not altogether fancy becoming a chronicler of small Beer" (September 14, 1831).98 By the 1830s, Pintard had become an historical artifact, much like his subject matter or what was collected by the N-YHS. Instead of writing about grand topics such as the Revolution, he has become relegated to becoming a "chronicler of small Beer." of trivia. Even though Pintard maintained his historical dignity by not relying solely on his memory, on stories, and continued to re-search, to strive to be "authentic" (September 14, 1831)99 his life had been reduced to an antiquarian curiosity in a newspaper.

As he grew older, and the City changed more rapidly, his sense of purpose in preserve the old ways grew more urgent, or perhaps desperate. On his piece on the Walton Mansion House, he notes that the family, like (March 27, 1832)100 "most of our old burghers" were gone and "almost entirely unknown to the present race of inhabitants. I did what I considered right to rescue the name from total oblivion." These are strong words to describe the writing of a short newspaper sketch, but Pintard felt he was not merely recounting quaint tales. To "rescue the name from total oblivion" was "right"--to preserve this piece of history was a moral act.

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This sense of mission in the face of change was colored by bitterness. He re-
sented the newcomers to the City, particularly those with money. This motivated his in-
terest in his Huguenot ancestors and Dutch customs. He sent his article on the Huguenot
settlers, which appeared in the Daily Advertiser of June 18, 1833 (June 19
1833), urging her to "preserve it, for it is honorable to our race." Perhaps more inter-
esting is his article about the custom of visiting on New Year's Day, published in the De-
cember 22, 1832, edition, in which he signs himself Aurnia or Orange. The articles itself
mentions very little about the Dutch but is instead on the moral implications of the cus-
tom of visiting not only friends on New Years Day, but those with whom one has been
feuding. In his letters about the article, however, he targets the new money of the City.
"The introduction shows that some of our nouveaux riches who abhor vulgar associa-
tions, have attempted to put down the observance of our good old Dutch custom of visit-
ing our friends on that day." He cites the approval of George Washington of the custom
(December 24, 1832). Apparently he received much favor from "our original N. Y.
families," and once again criticizes the "fashionables--fashionables who wish to nullify
our antient usages, & to hold themselves above vulgar customs..." (January 1, 1833). Cornelius Bogert sent him a "New Year Dutch Honey Cake" in thanks and recognition
for the article. Pintard talks with regret of the disappearance of old things, believing that
"this kind of cookey I regret to say has gone out of vogue. The sugar cookey will proba-
bly soon follow, to be substituted by pound & plain cake as more costly & of course

103 Pintard, Letters, 4: 117. The footnote to this letter in the collection. (Footnote reads: Among the Pintard
MSS. owned by the Society there is a letter to Pintard from Cornelius Bogert, dated 4 January 1833, which
accompanied a "New Year Dutch Honey Cake," which his "Dutch Ancestors were in the usage of mak-
ing...for the Ministers, Physicians, and particular aged friends.")

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genteel, for whatever is extravagant must be fashionable & genteel" (January 4, 1833).104 By 1833, John Pintard, once the dynamic organizer of the New-York Historical Society, had been reduced to a state of decided unease and discontent.

Conclusion

Between 1804 and 1860, New York had metamorphosed from a relatively homogeneous society to a decidedly complex one. In 1860, New York possessed a population of over one million, comprising people from over the world. No longer was it a city of white, English speaking Protestants. New York possessed a complex economy, and was the center of communications and banking for the nation. The political climate of the City reflected these changes. The old elite could no longer dominate, as new social forces had brought to the fore contesting groups, who catered to the working man and the immigrant.

At its founding, the N-YHS represented the political and cultural leaders of the City. To the founders of the N-YHS, the preservation of the history of New York was yet another aspect of their role as civic leaders. It was part of their position to foster feelings of patriotism in the citizens of New York. They linked their history with the history of New York, seeing themselves as the proper custodians of that history. The initial response of the N-YHS to the changes New York was undergoing was to attempt to control these changes. However, they were unable to withstand the force and speed with which the City changed, which was reflected in the vicissitudes of its fortunes during the 1830s. The N-YHS had ceased to dominate the discourse around New York's history, just as its members had ceased to dominate the City politically and culturally. By 1860, the N-YHS

had metamorphosed from an organization of public men acting the public interest, to a private organization of private men.
Chapter 2

The Knickerbocker History: Narrative and Identity

Introduction

By the early national period, New York's Dutch past was a distant memory, hardly worth preserving and not much discussed. However, this was soon modified, as both the New-York Historical Society and the circle of writers and artists around Washington Irving rediscovered and rehabilitated New Amsterdam. The N-YHS sought to preserve the artifacts and documents of that time. The writers and artists increasingly used Dutch characters and locales to evoke ideas of place, of local character. This interest was part of the larger trend of rejecting a British identity and attempting to forge a uniquely American identity.

Although written as a satire of contemporary political and social mores, Irving's *A History of New York, From the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty* by Diedrich Knickerbocker\(^1\) uncovered and popularized the Dutch history of New York, becoming a major source of knowledge about this period. It was through this work and subsequent stories such as "Rip Van Winkle" that most people knew about New York's Dutch past. Ironically, while Irving sought to puncture the pretensions of would-be historians and self-appointed guardians of history such as the N-YHS, his version of events influenced "serious" histories and public imagery alike.

The importance of Irving's narrative was perhaps eclipsed by his characters and

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descriptions, which soon moved into the public consciousness. The popularity of the
History resulted in the development of a Knickerbocker type. The usage of the word
Knickerbocker, in its various meanings, reveals the conflation of past and present and the
dehistoricizing of "Dutch" in public usage. Through its currency, what was typically
"Dutch" was transformed into typically "New York," yet as the Knickerbocker type en-
tered common parlance, it took on a multiplicity of meanings. These meanings were
fraught with dualities and contradictions, of inclusion and exclusion, of past and present.
The Knickerbocker could mean an aristocrat or any New Yorker; it could invoke the past
now gone or be the name of an omnibus line. However contradictory, these meanings
shared in the local specificity of New York, reflecting the larger cultural dialogues about
ethnicity, class, and change.

This chapter will examine Washington Irving's Knickerbocker History, and the
impact it had on ideas of history and the past, "dutchness," and the New York character.

Washington Irving and Knickerbocker History

Washington Irving was not a Knickerbocker. He was born in 1783, the youngest
of nine children, to a Scottish merchant father and his English wife. His childhood in the
Hudson Valley exposed him to old Dutch customs and legends. Despite his real interests
in arts and literature, Irving was apprenticed to a lawyer in 1799. His pursuit of art out-
side of a profession appeared to be a family characteristic; his brothers Peter, a physician,
and William, a merchant and congressman, shared Irving's literary interests. It was in
Peter's newspaper, the Morning Chronicle (1802-1803), that Irving made his first appear-
ance as a published author. Under the name "Jonathan Oldstyle" he already exhibited a
nascent satiric style. In an effort to quell his bad health, Irving undertook a grand tour of Europe, which not only lent him at least a veneer of sophistication but also honed his observatory skills. Upon his return to New York in 1806, he practiced law with his brother John and became involved in family business, gaining contacts with the City's leading merchant families. With his brother William and friend James Kirke Paulding, he founded the *Salmagundi* (1807-1808). Strongly anti-Jeffersonian, this pseudonymously authored journal was inspired by the satiric, humorous, classic style of Addison and Steele, and mocked the pretenses and mores of fashionable life in New York.

At the time of the writing of the *Knickerbocker History*, Irving fell in love with Matilda Hoffman. Her father, Josiah Ogden Hoffman, believed his daughter was too young to marry, and induced Irving to wait, while taking him on as a law partner. Matilda died suddenly of tuberculosis in 1809. The stricken Irving, who had already begun his *Knickerbocker History* with his brother Peter, buried himself in his writing, finishing his history that year. Hating law, Irving further pursued literary matters, editing the *Analectic Magazine*, and left for Europe in 1815 to take care of family business. While he failed to save the family business, he became acquainted with Sir Walter Scott and the publisher John Murray. Publishing simultaneously in England and America, Irving concentrated on his literary career, producing works which included the *Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, which includes "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." As he grew older, his writing was less brutally satiric than earlier works. Also in this vein were *Bracebridge Hall* (1822) and the *Tales of a Traveller* (1824).

An 1826 trip to Madrid to translate the newly published collection of documents
relating to the voyages of Columbus resulted in a three year stay and a biography of Columbus, the *Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada* (1829), *The Alhambra* (1832) and *The Voyages of the Companions of Columbus* (1831). He joined the American legation in London as secretary through family acquaintance with Martin Van Buren. Irving proved more than adept at his job in diplomacy, and did not return to New York until 1832. On his return, he devoted himself to American subjects such as a "A Tour of the Prairies" (1835) and an account of John Jacob Astor's attempt to establish fur posts, *Astoria*. In 1836, with his five nieces, he settled at Sunnyside near Sleepy Hollow, where he spent many years renovating the house, which became a landmark and site of pilgrimage. He returned to diplomatic life, serving as minister to Spain in 1842-46. The monumental work of his later years was his five volume *Life of George Washington* (1855-59). Irving saw Washington as the perfect gentleman, the pure median between political extremes. Washington Irving is considered to be the first American to earn a living primarily via writing, despite his forays into diplomacy. In his later years he reconciled with those he may have angered with his earlier works, becoming part of the Knickerbocker elite of New York. The trajectory of his career moved from earlier, light satiric works which often mocked the historical impulse to the later, purely historical works, infused with romanticism.²

The impetus for writing the Knickerbocker *History* was, as stated in his "Author's Apology" of the 1848 edition, to parody Dr. Samuel Latham Mitchell's *The Picture of

New-York, Or, The Traveller's Guide Through The Commercial Metropolis Of The United States By A Gentleman Residing In This City (1807). Mitchell, born in 1764, was a noted chemist and physician, one of the founding members of the New-York Historical Society, the New York Literary and Philosophical Society, and the Lyceum of Natural History. The Picture of New-York was written as a guidebook with a substantial historical section, starting out with the geology and early peopling of the land. Mitchell was apparently not shy of displaying his wide-ranging knowledge and various theories on virtually everything. John Pintard alludes to the pomposity Irving responded to, referring to the doctor as "our Learned Mitchell" and describing him thusly: "our Doctor has his peculiarities and is an insufferable Egoist." Pintard hinted that while Mitchell was learned in natural history, he was not equal to DeWitt Clinton. Mitchell's ego and pretensions of savantism were precisely the characteristics that would attract the barbs of Irving.

The Knickerbocker project began as a collaboration between Washington and his brother Peter, who later dropped the project due to business commitments. Irving claimed that he later abandoned the Mitchell as the focus of the project, instead using the History as a means of parodying the national politics of the day and the pretensions of New York society. Reviews from the time show that this was recognized by contemporary readers. While the direct references to Mitchell's work may have been abandoned, Irving's mockery of self-styled historians and extravagant displays of learning reveal its

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original roots. The History would prove profitable for Irving for many years; it would run through eleven English language (American and English) editions, over fifty printings, and three European language editions (French, German, Swedish) before the Civil War. It was popular enough for a spurious Knickerbocker book to appear in 1824. The Manuscript of Diedrich Knickerbocker, Junior.\(^6\) Irving continued to tinker with the History, and each subsequent edition shifted the focus of the satire, or softened it, to reflect current conditions. By 1848, it was less of a satire than a humorous history, echoing Irving's more "serious" histories.

Michael L. Black has examined the work as a political satire, in particular discussing Thomas Jefferson in the character of Wilhelmu Kiez.\(^7\) While agreeing with Black, Mary Weatherspoon Bowden points to the localism of Irving's targets, seeing Irving as taking on the older generation of enlightenment leaders of New York, as symbolized by such members of the N-YHS as De Witt Clinton and Dr. Mitchill, and the ruling elite of New York itself, in the personage of its council and board of Aldermen. While she makes a compelling case, Bowden does not fully examine Irving's ambivalent attitude towards historical inquiry, focusing only at his barbs, not his later career. Irving not only wrote histories, but socialized with those he once mocked, even becoming a member of the N-YHS. Daniel R. Porter believes that by calling attention to New York's history and traditions, Irving and circle were instrumental in the preservation of historic sites in New York State by raising people's awareness of the past.\(^8\) While his explanation

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\(^6\) Anon., The Manuscript of Diedrich Knickerbocker, Junior (New York: E. Bliss and E. White, 1824).


of this process rests on a rather vague, associational argument, Porter does raise the
important point that works of fiction and art were often more successful in bringing history
to most people.

The *History* must be viewed not only as a work of 1809, but as a document that
changed with the times. Its author must be seen as a writer who used the *History* to ac-
complish many aims, from satire to promoting the history of the City of New York. Fi-
nally, the *History* functioned not only as an expression of Irving's attitudes, but also as a
successful and popular (as its publishing history shows) history of the City, which moved
from fiction to becoming a standard work on the subject over time. While many may not
have actually read the book itself, it had an influence that transcended even its status as
an historical work.

The publication of the *History* was preceded with notices in the New York papers,
advertising for the whereabouts of the fictional Diedrich Knickerbocker, who had disapp-
peared from his boarding house. The creation of these notices was noted by Irving in his
letter of October 23, 1809, to Henry Brevoort, "and get Jim [James Kirke Paulding] as
well as yourself to (?) prepare some squibs &c to attract attention to the work when it
comes out." 9 These were reprinted in several editions of the book. Irving starts with a
narrative by the supposed landlord (also the "author" of the advertisements), Seth Handa-
side, which give his impressions of Knickerbocker. The landlord describes how Knick-
erbocker came to New York, wrote the *History*, and then vanished. To compensate for
money owed to him, Handaside decides to publish the *History*. By first placing the ad-
vertisements, and then telling Handaside's "true" story of the publication of the *History.*

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Irving was participating in a tradition of literary hoaxes. These usually took the form of "discovered" lost works, made public and explained by their discoverer/author. Notable among these were the "rediscovered" works of the Celtic bard Ossianian, later revealed to be the work of James Macpherson, their "translator" and the works of Thomas Chatterton, who wrote the medieval poetry he purported to have found. This genre generally did not use the fake historical works as a means of satire. In this way, the History may also be seen as being in the tradition of the satiric almanacs, which used the almanac form to mock the politics of the day.

While commonly called Knickerbocker's History, the complete title is:

A HISTORY OF NEW YORK, FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD TO THE END OF THE DUTCH DYNASTY. CONTAINING: Among many Surprising and Curious Matters, the Unutterable Ponderings of Walter the Doubter, the Disastrous Projects of William the Testy, and the Chivalric Achievements of Peter the Headstrong, the three Dutch Governors of New Amsterdam; being the only Authentic History of the Times that ever hath been, or ever will be Published. BY DIEDRICH KNICKERBOCKER.

The self-aggrandizing habits of the local antiquarian are evident in the claim that this is "the only Authentic History of the Times that ever hath, been or ever will be Published." a claim which is repeated, innocently, in most subsequent histories of New York. By describing the events of New York's history as "surprising and curious matters," the antiquarian tone of most American histories is emphasized. In one line, Irving sums up the reigns of the three Dutch governors of New Amsterdam, creating images that would influence future interpretations, popular and serious.

Irving's inclusion of the N-YHS and its members as targets of his satire is made clear by the work's original dedication: "TO THE NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY -This Work is respectfully Dedicated, as a humble and unworthy Testimony of the
profound veneration and exalted esteem of the Society's Sincere Well wisher and Devoted Servant." Members of the N-YHS apparently perceived this dedication to be less than sincere, so that even as late as 1849, Irving would write to his publisher, George P. Putnam, "I think upon the whole I would omit the dedication to the Hist Society, as it might be taken by some of the members in a wrong sense" (July 12, 1849).\(^{10}\) By that time, Irving was mellower towards the N-YHS, whose meetings he attended on occasion.

Knickerbocker's Introduction is titled "TO THE PUBLIC."\(^{11}\) echoes the New-York Historical Society's memorandum published on its founding. Knickerbocker begins with an explanation of his purpose:" TO rescue from oblivion the memory of former incidents, and to render a just tribute of renown to the many great and wonderful transactions of our Dutch progenitors, Diedrich Knickerbocker, native of the city of New York, produces this historical essay."\(^{*}\) This passage is footnoted "Belce's Herodotus," and Knickerbocker explains that "Like the great Father of History whose words I have just quoted, I treat of times long past, over which the twilight of uncertainty had already thrown its shadows, and the night of forgetfulness was about to descend forever.\(^{12}\) He continues "with great solicitude had I long beheld the early history of this venerable and ancient city, gradually slipping from our grasp, trembling on the lips of narrative old age, and day by day dropping piece meal into the tomb." He worries that as "venerable dutch burghers, who serve as the tottering monuments of good old times," died, "their children engrossed by the empty pleasures or insignificant transactions of the present age. will neglect to treasure up the recollections of the past, and posterity shall search in vain. for


\(^{11}\) Irving, *History*, 1: xv.

memorials of the days of the Patriarchs."\textsuperscript{13} In these passages, Irving introduces several themes that will be repeated later in the History, and which burlesque the public and private statements of the N-YHS and other guardians of New York's past. New York's Dutch history is obscure and in danger of being lost. This danger is an urgent one, due to both the loss of representatives of the "good old times" and the lack of interest by their descendents. The old New York, in the body of the "venerable dutch burghers," is being replaced by a new New York. The use of "good old times" implies that the old New York is preferable. The exaggeration of the importance of Dutch New York and the aggrandizement of its historians are also presented. Although the City is less than 200 years old, it is described as "venerable and ancient."

Irving's reference to Herodotus launches his commentary on the classical pretensions of even the most local of historians. This is elaborated on later in the "Introduction," as Knickerbocker discusses those historians he wishes to emulate Xenophon, Sallust, Thucydities, Tacitus, Livy, and Herodotus. It is for Herodotus that Knickerbocker expresses his greatest admiration. Herodotus, of course, was (and still is by many) viewed as the most fanciful of classical historians, commonly seen as at least a romanticizer, perhaps a fabricator.\textsuperscript{14} This connection between history and fiction is alluded to frequently in the course of the book, as are Knickerbocker's protestations of truthfulness and accuracy. In the introduction, for example, he discusses his sources, lamenting their scarcity. "I industriously sat myself to work, to gather together all the fragments of our infant history which still existed, and like my revered prototype Herodotus, where no written records could be found, I have endeavoured to continue the chain

\textsuperscript{13} Irving, History, 1:xv.
\textsuperscript{14} Irving, History, 1:xvii-xviii.
of history by well authenticated traditions." His consultation of "learned authors" comes to naught; he finds the early history of New York "strangely" unexamined. Knickerbocker used the "many legends, letters and other documents have I likewise gleaned, in my researches among the family chests and lumber garrets of our respectable dutch citizens, and I have gathered a host of well authenticated traditions from divers excellent old ladies of my acquaintance, who requested that their names might not be mentioned. Nor must I neglect to acknowledge, how greatly I have been assisted by that admirable and praiseworthy institution, the New York Historical Society, to which I here publicly return my sincere acknowledgements." The legends gathered among the half-memories of elderly women and in attics are put on equal footing with those found in the N-YHS. His use of the "half-memories of elderly women" calls into question their veracity, associating them with gossip and senility. By this association, Irving casts the members of N-YHS into the role of "elderly women," and its institution into yet another "lumber garret."

Knickerbocker does not, however, make a clear distinction between confabulation and "well authenticated traditions." Despite this, he sees himself as a careful historian. "But the chief merit upon which I value myself, and found my hopes for future regard, is that faithful veracity with which I have compiled this invaluable little work; carefully winnowing away all the chaff of hypothesis, and discarding the tales of fable, which are too apt to spring up and choke the seeds of truth and wholesome knowledge--" If Knickerbocker had wanted to "captivate the superficial throng," or "commend my writings to the pampered palates of literary voluptuaries," he would have focused on the sensationalistic, "introduce a thousand pleasing fictions." Instead, he has "scrupulously discarded

15 Irving, History, 1: xv-xvi.
16 Irving, History, 1: xvii.
many a pithy tale and marvellous adventure...jealously maintaining that fidelity, gravity
and dignity, which should ever distinguish the historian."17 Here Irving mimics the pro-
estations of many historians of the day, including members of the N-YHS.18 This distinc-
tion was becoming important in an increasingly professionalized field, and even more
important to those who could only be described as amateurs.

At the same time, the use of folklore was well within the vanguard of continental
research on national culture, a movement led by the Germans. The influence of Herder
had sparked an interest in the systematic collection and preservation of folktales, fairy-
tales, and local traditions. These investigations became an important part of developing
nationalist ideologies, drawing on their specificity of culture and place. German romantic
historical thought became even more important as a number of Americans, such as
George Bancroft, complete graduate study abroad. The collected materials were often
incorporated into fiction; English-language examples of this phenomenon are the works
of Sir Walter Scott and their use of Scottish lore. Irving greatly admired the author, be-
coming acquainted with Scott during his time in England. In the United States, others in
Irving's circle, such as James Fenimore Cooper and James Kirke Paulding, shared his use
of folklore and local traditions. Irving, particularly within this context, calls into question
the prioritization of certain kinds of documents (political, official) over folklore. The re-
peated references to Herodotus also remind the reader that this was not new, but part of
the classical tradition.

Irving's own work plays on this uneasiness of categories of truth and fiction, con-
taining elements of each. The History is a fiction, its "author" a fictional character, but

17 Irving, History, 1: xviii-xix.
18 See, for example, Hugh Williamson's and Gouvenour Morris' addresses on history.
most of its other main characters were historical figures. Factual events are chronicled, but through the veil of humor. This confusion was compounded, as the History became a source work for later histories. The book still baffles catalogers, who put it in fiction (sometimes juvenile), humor, and history; the Library of Congress catalogs it under New York history.

The importance, or rather, the self-importance of the historian is another reoccurring theme. It is the historian, not his subject, that dominates history. Knickerbocker asks "for after all, gentle reader, cities of themselves, and in fact empires of themselves, are nothing without an historian." The ancient cities of Babylon, Nineveh, Palmyra, Persepolis, "have disappeared from the face of the earth--they have perished for want of an historian!" The historian also benefits.

Every thing in a manner is tributary to his renown--Like the great projector of inland lock navigation, who asserted that rivers, lakes and oceans were only formed to feed canals; so I affirm that cities, empires, plots, conspiracies, wars, havock and desolation, are ordained by providence only as food for the historian. They form but the pedestal on which he intrepidly mounts to the view of surrounding generations, and claims to himself, from ages as they rise, until the latest sigh of old time himself. the need of immortality--The world--the world, is nothing without the historian!

The canal comment probably refers to DeWitt Clinton, the main force behind the Erie Canal and a founding member of the N-YHS. The lust for fame--historical fame, not scholarship, seems to be the motivation behind most historical work. This evocation of a higher purpose, such as truth or patriotism, is only a mask for the historian's egotism.

Knickerbocker then touts his own importance, "Thrice happy therefore, is this our renowned city, in having incidents worthy of swelling the theme of history; and doubly

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19 Irving, History, 1: xix-xx.
20 Irving, History, 1: xxi.
thrice happy is it in having such an historian as myself, to relate them."¹ If he "had not
snatched it from obscurity, in the very nick of time, at the moment that those matters
herein recorded, were about entering into the wide-spread, insatiable maw of oblivion."
His "little work" would be the foundation "on which a host of worthies shall hereafter
raise a noble superstructure, swelling in process of time, until Knickerbocker's New York
shall be equally voluminous, with Gibbon's Rome, or Hume and Smollet's England!"
New York would become associated with Knickerbocker--becoming his possession--just
as Rome was known through Gibbons. He looks to the future, 200 or 300 years hence.
and sees himself as the "progenitor, prototype and precursor of them all. posted at the
head of this host of literary worthies, with my book under my arm, and New York on my
back, pressing forward like a gallant commander, to honour and immortality."²² His use
of the term "little work" and then discussion of the grand effects it will have only empha-
size Knickerbocker's false modesty and conceit.

The last paragraph of the Introduction in the 1809 edition continues in this same
vein, as Knickerbocker attacks his anticipated critics:

Here then I cut my bark adrift, and launch it forth to float upon the waters.
And oh! ye mighty Whales, ye Grampuses and Sharks of criticism, who
delight in shipwrecking unfortunate adventurers upon the sea of letters,
have mercy upon this my crazy vessel. Ye may toss it about in your sport;
or spout your dirty water upon it in showers; but do not, for the sake of the
unlucky mariner within--do not stave it with your tails and send it to the
bottom. And you, oh ye great little fish! ye tadpoles, ye sprats, ye min-
nows, ye chubbs, ye grubs, ye barnacles, and all you small fry of literature,
be cautious how you insult my new launched vessel, or swim within my
view; lest in a moment of mingled sportiveness and scorn, I sweep you up
in a scoop net, and roast half a hundred of you for my breakfast.²³

¹ Irving, History, 1:xix.
² Irving, History, 1:xxii.
²³ Irving, History, 1:xxii-xxiii.
The 1848 revised edition replaces this with far different comments:

Such are the vain-glorying imaginings that will now and then enter into the brain of the author—that irradiate, as with celestial light, his solitary chamber, cheering his weary spirits, and animating him to persevere in his labours. And I have freely given utterance to these rhapsodies, whenever they have occurred; not, I trust, from an unusual spirit of egotism, but merely that the reader may for once have an idea, how an author thinks and feels while his is writing—a kind of knowledge very rare and curious and much to be desired.  

This not only softens the original humor, but also reintroduces Irving's voice in the narrative. The last line, by referring to the process of writing, seems to be Irving's commentary on himself, writing about this work which occupied much of his life. He is not only teasing the 'historians' but gently mocking himself, and what he has become. Irving's voice, as author and historian, is far stronger in the revised edition, appearing in the new introduction.

The work is arranged in a series of books. Book One, "Containing Divers Ingenious Theories and Philosophic Speculations, Concerning the Creation and Populating of the World, as Connected with the History of New-York;" Book Two, "Creating of the First Settlement of the Province of Nieuw-Nederlandts;" Book Three, "In Which is recorded the Golden Reign of Wouter Van Twiller;" Book Four, "Containing the Chronicles of the Reign of William the Testy;" Book Five, "Containing the First Part of the Reign of Peter Stuyvesant, and His Troubles with the Amphytionic Council." Book Six, "Containing the Second Part of the Reign of Peter the Headstrong, and His Gallant Achievements on the Delaware;" and Book Seven, "Containing the Third part of the reign of Peter the Headstrong—the Troubles with the British Nation, and the decline and fall of

24 Washington Irving, A History Of New York, From The Beginning Of The World To The End Of The Dutch Dynasty, By Diedrich Knickerbocke. THE AUTHOR'S REVISED EDITION. 1 volume (New York: George P. Putnam, 1848), 21. Heretofore referred to as the "revised History."
the Dutch Dynasty."

Chapter One of Book One of the first edition began "Being, like all introductions to American histories, very learned, sagacious, and nothing at all to the purpose: containing divers profound theories and philosophic speculations, which the idle reader may totally overlook, and begin at the next book." This rather heavy-handed passage reflected the philosophizing that prefaced most historical works at the time, and would be dropped from later editions.

It is Book Three, "In Which is Recorded the Golden Reign of Wouter Van Twiller," that gives much of the information about what was later thought about New Amsterdam and its inhabitants. The title itself, in painting this as a "Golden Reign" or golden age, sets this period as the high point of the Dutch in New York. Later writers did tend to look at this period, before major conflict with other colonies and England, as a time of peace and prosperity, of quintessential Dutch colonial culture.

The original edition launched directly into the story of Van Twiller. "Walter the Doubter's" reign, but the 1848 revised edition starts with rather melodramatically melancholy reflection on the past. This passage had originally appeared in Chapter 4 of Book One of the 1809 edition, as a section entitled "In Which the Author is Very Unreasonably Afflicted About Nothing." By removing the heading, and moving the passages to the beginning of Book Three, Irving increases the awareness of Knickerbocker's attachment to the past, and his rejection of the present. Knickerbocker mourns the task of the "feeling historian who writes of his native land" who must feel bad if terrible things happen and who regrets the passing of the good times. He relates this to his task, "I candidly confess that I cannot look back on the happier days of our city, which I now describe, without a
sad dejection of spirits."25 He writes of this feeling arising when he visits his ancestral home and views the portraits of his forbears.

"Luckless Diedrich! born in a degenerate age—abandoned to the buffetings of fortune—a stranger and a weary pilgrim in thy native land; blest with no weeping wife, nor family of helpless children—but doomed to wander neglected through those crowded streets, and elbowed by foreign upstarts from those fair abodes, where once thine ancestors held sovereign empire. Alas! Alas! is then the dutch spirit forever extinct? The days of the patriarchs, have they fled forever? Return—return sweet days of simplicity and ease—dawn once more on the lovely island of Manna hata!—Bear with me my worthy readers, bear with the weakness of my nature—or rather let us sit down together, indulge the full flow of filial piety, and weep over the memories of our great great grand-fathers."26

Diedrich exemplifies the antiquarian, out of place and isolated in the modern world. He is a relic of past times, the last of a line. The themes of being a stranger in one's own native land, to be replaced by foreign "upstarts" once ruled by one's ancestors, particularly stand out. The use of the words "simplicity" and "ease" will be repeated in the book, as the Golden Age of Van Twiller is distinguished by what does not happen. Life in New Amsterdam, like life in 19th century New York, becomes increasingly complex and difficult as time progressed.

Chapter One describes Van Twiller himself, "exactly five feet six inches in height, and six feet five inches in circumference."27 The governor rules by inactivity, judges by smoking his pipe. Knickerbocker contrasts colonial governors with those of his day "in this enlightened republic" as "a set of unhappy victims of popularity, who are in fact the most dependent, hen-pecked beings in community." Dutch governors instead were "absolute despot in their little domains."28 Here, Irving points the inherent conser-
vatism of many historians, who preferred any practice of the past to that of the present, even if it meant despotism. However, it is also an ambiguous passage, as Irving is also criticizing the politics of his day, in which faction, the nascent party system, and popular politics were gaining fore.

Chapter Two, subtitled "Containing some account of the grand Council of New Amsterdam, as also divers especial good philosophical reasons why an Alderman should be fat—with other particulars touching the state of the Province..." furthers this picture of the government in its depiction of the council members as sleepy do-nothings.29 Lean men worry, and indulge in vexation. Whereas, "who ever hears of fat men heading a riot, or herding together in turbulent mobs?—no—no—it is your lean, hungry men, who are continually worrying society, and setting the whole community by the ears."30

More of Irving's voice comes to the forefront in his discussion of the "Schepen" or council. He likens those who sought this position to those who became the modern assistant aldermen, as those with a "huge relish for good feeding, and a humble ambition to be great men, in a small way—who thirst after a little brief authority, that shall render them the terror of the alms house, and the bridewell—that shall enable them to lord it over obsequious poverty, vagrant vice, outcast prostitution, and hunger driven dishonesty." Knickerbocker apologizes for this outbursts as "unbecoming of a grave historian—but I have a mortal antipathy to catchpoles, bum bailiffs, and little great men."31 Irving’s antipathy is greatest for the "little great men" who see public office as a way of increasing, at least in a small way, the pocketbooks and sense of power, and serve not from duty.

29 Irving, History, 1:128.
31 Irving, History, 1: 130.
Irving juxtaposes past and the present, a device that would become a feature of almost all future histories of New York. He uses this not only to emphasize change, but change for the worse, as "the bleating sheep and frolicksome calves sported about the verdant ridge, where now their legitimate successors, the Broadway loungers, take their morning's stroll." Images of bucolic innocence are countposed to modern corruption. Old New York was a "second Eden" while modern New York was clearly not. This another instance of Irving's ambiguity; he manages to mock both the backward looking antiquarians and the products of the modern age.

Knickerbocker describes a walk on the Battery, giving the year as 1804, the same year of the founding of the N-YHS. From the Battery "which is at once the pride and bulwark of this ancient and impregnable city of New York." Knickerbocker discusses the change in the landscape from "the classic days of our forefathers." The manmade structures of the growing City are contrasted with the natural beauty of the past. Only the bay remains the same.

For some time did I indulge in this pensive train of thought; contrasting in sober sadness, the present day, with the hallowed years behind the mountains; lamenting the melancholy progress of improvement, and praising the zeal, with which our worthy burghers endeavour to preserve the wrecks of venerable customs, prejudices and errors, from the overwhelming tide of modern innovation—when by degrees my ideas took a different turn. and I insensibly awakened to an enjoyment of the beauties around me.  

Knickerbocker comes to his senses, enjoying the beauties of the present instead of dwelling on the loss of the past.

What characterized the Golden Age of Twiller? "The province of the New Netherlands, destitute of wealth, possessed a sweet tranquillity that wealth could never pur-

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32 Irving, History. 1:136-137.
33 Irving, History. 1:159-162.
chase." The byproducts of wealth—"avarice, covetousness, theft, rapine, usury, banking, note-shaving, lottery-insuring, and the whole catalogue of crimes and grievances" were then foreign to New York. In this Golden Age, "there were neither public commotions, nor private quarrels; neither parties, nor sects, nor schisms; neither prosecutions, nor trials, nor punishments; nor were there counsellors, attornies, catch-poles or hangmen."

Everyone minded his or her own business; there were no beggars and no great ranges of wealth and poverty. This imagery would be picked up by later historians as a way of critiquing the money-mad New York of the nineteenth century.

The descriptions of the habits of the citizens of New Amsterdam would have a lasting impact on the popular conception of the Dutch in New York. Irving takes great pleasure in his discussions of domestic life, and in doing so, spotlights the "goed vrouw," who are largely absent from the main bulk of the narrative. The houses, built of "wood, excepting the gable end, which was of small black and yellow dutch bricks, and always faced on the street, as our ancestors, like their descendants, were very much given to outward shew, and were noted for putting the best leg foremost," are kept spotless by cleanliness obsessed Dutch housewives. This cleaning mania encompasses both the exterior and interior, with the most fervor reserved for the parlor. The parlor would be cleaned by the housewife and her maid weekly, only to be shut up again until the next session, never used.

The description of the "fashionable parties" of the Dutch contrasts them with the fashionable society of early nineteenth-century New York. The guests are demure and

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34 Irving, History, 1: 137-138
35 Irving, History, 1: 138-139.
36 Irving, History, 1: 144.
37 Irving, History, 1: 147.
well mannered, the young deferential to their elders. All eat out of one pot, sugar is the
great treat and vice, and parties break up early. What they ate--pork, pies, fruits, dough-
nuts (oly koeks) "scarce known in this city, excepting in genuine dutch families"--are de-
scribed in detail. The plain interiors with blue and white tiles and large fireplaces are
vividly portrayed.38 These passages often depict the Dutch as rude bumpkins; for exam-
ple, a vivid scene has the guests at a party nibbling from one sugar cube suspended from
the ceiling. Irving is on familiar ground here as one of his favorite subjects, from Salma-
gundi onward, was the false sophistication of New Yorkers.

The descriptions of the inhabitants of New Amsterdam juxtapose them with their
modern counterparts. In contrast to their "scantily dressed descendants of the present
day," Dutch ladies "waddled under more clothes even on a fair summer's day, than would
have clad the whole bevy of a modern ball room." They wore their hair covered in a cap,
wore many layers of knee-length petticoats, ornamented with big pockets full of the ac-
coutrements of housekeeping and "scissors and pincushions suspended from their girdles
by red ribbons...indubitable tokens of thrifty housewives and industrious spinsters."39

Unlike their modern counterparts, Dutch men did not drive tandems-- "gaudy ve-
ciles"-- nor were they brilliant conversationalists. Layabout troublemakers did not exist
"who promised to be the wonder, the talk and abomination of the town, had not their
stylish career been unfortunately cut short, by an affair of honour with a whipping
post."40 In public and private life, their main characteristic was their pipe smoking.

The rivalry with New England is the subject of Chapter Six, which tells the story

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38 Irving, History, 1: 148-150.
of the people of Connecticut and their incursions into New Netherlands. Connecticut is symbolic of the modern world, inhabited by lean, talkative, ambitious men, in contrast to the torpid, pipe-smoking Dutch.\textsuperscript{41} The New Englanders "having served a regular apprenticeship in the school of persecution, it behooved them to shew that they had become proficient in the art" and, having come to the New World to escape religious persecution, "every man should think as he pleased in matters of religion--provided he thought right; for otherwise it would be giving a latitude to damnable heresies."\textsuperscript{42} Here, the very basis of the myth of New England as the cradle of American democracy, so dominant through the efforts of that region's historians, is undermined. Rather than being the heart of American freethinking and independence, New England is rather the root of all that was opposite. In the Knickerbocker version of history, Connecticut--therefore New England--was the embodiment of all that was crafty, shifty, and mean; its people were squatters and seducers of women, never to be trusted.

Each edition of the book ends with a farewell from Knickerbocker. In the original edition, this was limited to three paragraphs.\textsuperscript{43} By the 1848 edition, this had been expanded to its own titled section, "The Author's Reflections Upon What Has Been Said," several pages in length.\textsuperscript{44} This ended with the paragraphs from the original edition, but with added commentary on what was to be learned by each administration. Knickerbocker proposed that the "most direful and melancholy of all possible occurrences" in history was the "decline and fall of your renowned and mighty empires."\textsuperscript{45} Dutch New

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\item[41] Irving, \textit{History}, 1: 166.
\item[42] Irving, \textit{History}, 1: 170.
\item[43] Irving, \textit{History}, 2: 257-258
\item[44] Irving, revised \textit{History}, 303-307.
\item[45] Irving, revised \textit{History}, 303.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Amsterdam was, apparently, one of those empires. The capture of Fort Casimir by the Swedes set off a chain of events, from the fall of New Amsterdam to the English, to the Revolutionary War, to the French Revolution, and culminating in the troubles on the Continent. "Thus have these great powers been successively punished for their ill-starred conquests--and thus, as I asserted, have all the present convulsions, revolutions, and disasters that overwhelm mankind, originated in the capture of the little Fort Casimir, as recorded in this eventful history." Knickerbocker returns to his role as the quintessential local historian, who sees his subject, his locality, as the center of the world and the main force behind all of mankind’s actions.

Irving seems to be answering all those, from the N-YHS downward, who were insulted by his History:

Should any reader find matter of offence in this history, I should heartily grieve, though I would on no account question his penetration by telling him he is mistaken--his good nature by telling him he is captious--or his pure conscience by telling him he is startled at a shadow.--Surely if he is so ingenious in finding offence where none is intended, it were a thousand pities he should not be suffered to enjoy the benefit of his discovery.

Irving's History provoked a variety of reactions; the most violent from those he targeted. Even as late as the 1848 revision, representatives of the old guard felt the sting of his humor. In this passage, Irving refuses to apologize, but gently chides them for their humorlessness. The intense reactions illustrate the effectiveness of Irving’s satire; his marks were able, to identify themselves with his characters to the point of being insulted. The fact that they were willing to do so, instead of ignoring the work, seems to be a sign of insecurity. This insecurity was based on the fear that Irving’s History could become the

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47 Irving, revised History, 308.
accepted historical record. Critical reaction at the time pointed to the growing importance of Irving's work as an influence on how people thought about New York's past.

"The suit was \[a\]n entirely imaginary incident, without any personal allusions. (I believe) though by a whimsical coincidence there was a Barent Bleecker of Albany who had been comptroller; and his family at first suspected an intention to asperse his official character. The suspicion however was but transient, and is forgotten; so that the picture will awaken no hostility."\(^{48}\) Barent Bleecker (b. June 9, 1760) was a prominent businessman and financier of Albany, not a comptroller. The suit was probably brought by Barent Bleecker's siblings, Rutger and Blandina.\(^{49}\) Clearly, the family thought that Barent's, and the family's character was being assailed by Irving. The case was dropped, but it shows that people were reading the History, and looking for themselves and their kin within it. One suspects that Irving is being somewhat ingenuous in his protestations of innocence. His satire was effective enough for him to suffer social censure at the time of its publication. He makes veiled reference to this in his notebooks in 1810, writing of the "persecution Diedrich suffered for writing his book. Old Dutchmen would not invite him to Dinner."\(^{50}\)

De Witt Clinton, in An Account of Abimelech Coody and Other Celebrated Writers of New York, wrote "The History of New-York by Knickerbocker, independently of its broad humour, is really intolerable. The heterogeneous and unnatural combination of fiction and history is perfectly disgusting to good taste."\(^{51}\) Clinton seems most repulsed

\(^{48}\) Irving, Letters, 1: 479.
\(^{49}\) Irving, Letters, 1: 479, footnote 7.
\(^{51}\) De Witt Clinton, An Account of Abimelech Coody and Other Celebrated Writers of New-York (New York: n.p., 1815), 7. Abimelech Coody was the pseudonym used by Clinton in his disputes with with Giulian Verplanck.
by the blurring of fiction and history. His hyperbolic reaction would seem to be disproportionate; clearly Irving hit a nerve. Clinton, aside from being an important political player and proponent of the Erie Canal, was a founding member of the N-YHS and scholar, who took pride in his intellectual accomplishments. It must be noted that Clinton was the subject of some comment in the History. For example, the character of Mynheer Ten Breeches, who wished to dig canals throughout the City, has been identified as Clinton.

In his Anniversary Discourse before the N-YHS on December 7, 1818, Guliân C. Verplanck includes a fairly long diatribe against Irving.

It is more 'in sorrow than in anger' that I feel myself compelled to add to these gross instances of national injustice, a recent work of a writer of own, who is justly considered one of the brightest ornaments of American literature. I allude to the burlesque history of New-York, in which it is painful to see a mind, as admirable for its exquisite perception of the beautiful, as it is for its quick sense of the ridiculous, wasting the riches of its fancy on an ungrateful theme and its exuberant humour in a coarse caricature. This writer has not yet fulfilled all the promise he has given to his country. It is his duty, because it is in his power, to brush away the pretenders who may at any time infest her society, her science, or her politics; or if he aspires, as I trust that he does, to strains of a higher mood, the deeds of his countrymen, and the undescribed beauties of his native land afford him many a rich subject, and he may deck the altar of his country's glory with the garlands of his taste and fancy. How dangerous a gift is the power of ridicule! It is most potent to unmask the pretender and to brand the hypocrite; yet how often has it dissipated those gay illusions which beguile the rough path of life--how often, at its dread presence, have the honest boasts of patriotism, the warm expression of piety, the generous purpose of beneficence faltered on the lips and died away in the heart. 52

Verplanck was born in 1786 to a wealthy New York family. Despite early conservative leanings, he eventually moved away from the Federalists to the Republican Party. Ver-

planck wrote his own satires, such as *A Fable for Statesmen and Politicians*. These put
him in opposition the DeWitt Clinton. Verplanck was a member of the New York as-
sembly, New York Senate, and the House of Representatives. Most notably, he was a
champion of the new copyright laws. Verplanck, like many of his fellows in the N-YHS,
was a philanthropist, member of the Board of Regents of University of the State of New
York, the American Academy of Fine Arts, and the New York State Library.\(^5^3\) In his
comments on the *History*, he virtually accuses Irving of being a traitor to his country.
Verplanck clearly believes that the task of the historian was to enhance the national char-
acter, to emphasize the good and the glorious. Satire had no place in national literature.

In response to Verplanck, Irving wrote to Henry Brevoort, on April 1, 1819."I
have been delighted with Verplanck's oration--It does him honour and shews of what he
is capable[.] I hope he will not put our old dutch burghers into the notion that they must
feel affronted with poor Diedrich Knickerbocker just as he is about creeping out in a new
edition [...] I could not help laughing at this burst of filial feeling (o)in (the) Verplanck. on
the jokes put upon his ancestors." Irving concludes "remember me heartily to him. and
tell him I mean to grow wiser and better and older every day and to lay the castigation he
has given me seriously to heart--"\(^5^4\) Irving, in his response to these comments, seems to
relish the discomfiture he has caused. The reaction to his literary nose tweaking only
confirmed his opinions of these guardians of history.

In the Introduction to Volume One of the Second Series of the *Collections* of the
N-YHS published in 1841, George Folsom writes "it is remarked by Grahame, in his re-

\(^5^3\) See Robert W. July, *The Essential New Yorker: Giulian Crommelin Verplanck* (Durham, NC: Duke Uni-
versity Press, 1951).

cent elaborate work upon the history of North America, that 'Founders of ancient colonies have sometimes been deified by their successors.' New-York is perhaps the only commonwealth whose founders have been covered with ridicule from the same quarter. ."

This is a direct response to Irving's History. The work is described as a "well-known travesty." Irving's patriotism is once again called into question, as "regret has often been expressed that a son of New York should have seen fit to make the fathers of the republic the subjects of a 'course caricature,' in which the inventive ingenuity of the author is only equalled by the grossness of his conceptions." Irving's portrayal was "well suited to the English notions of the Dutch character, too common, perhaps among ourselves, and thus easily acquired by an ill-deserved popularity." The last comments allude to Irving's years spent in England, calling into question his "Americaness." The History is not a mere satire, but an act of sabotage. It is dangerous in its popularity, as it threatened to become the dominant historical narrative.

Later in his life, Irving made amends with those he once mocked. He took part in the meetings and activities of the N-YHS. Verplanck was among his friends. In clubs and homes, he socialized with these people. Of course, by this time, most of the real old guard, those most offended by his work were dead. After Irving's death, William Cullen Bryant gave a memorial talk before the N-YHS, lauding his contributions to the intellectual life of the country.

Criticism of Irving's work from the time took little offense at his subject matter, and recognized the influence it had in reviving New York's history. An anonymous re-

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view in *the Monthly Anthology and Boston Review of February 1810*, observed "the meagre annals of this short-lived Dutch colony have afforded the ground work for this amusing book, which is certainly the Wittiest our press has ever produced. To examine it seriously in a historical point of view, would be ridiculous; thought the few important events of the period to which it relates are, we presume, recorded with accuracy as to their dates and consequences".... In *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* the reviewer declares that Irving "under the mask of an historian of his native city, he has embodied, very successfully, the results of his own early observation in regard to the formation and constitution of several regular divisions of American society; and in this point of view to his work will preserve its character of value. long after the lapse of time while have blunted the edge of these personal allusions which, no doubt, contributed most powerfully to its popularity over the water." Timothy Tickler, in writing on Irving's "Tales of a Traveller" in a letter to the *Edinburgh Magazine*, states that "nothing has, it seems, excited him profoundly since he was a stripling reaming about the wild woods of his province, and enjoying the queer fat goings-on of the Dutch-descended burghers of New York." William Cullen Bryant, an old friend, in his address before the New-York Historical Society on April 3, 1860, later printed in *The Living Age* wrote that "I have just read this *History of New York* over again. and I found myself no less delighted than when I first turned its pages in my early youth...Of all mock-heroic works. Knickerbocker's *History of New York* is the gayest, the airiest, the least tiresome." In 1833, George W.

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58 "Timothy Tickler, his letter to Christopher North," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 16, no. 107 (September 1824): 297.
Curtis, writing in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* emphasizes the historical influence of the work. "Irving follows the actual story closely, and the characters that he develops faithfully, although with smiling caricature, are historical. Indeed, the fidelity is so absolute that the fiction is welded with the fact. The days of Dutch ascendancy in New York are inextricably associated with this ludicrous narrative."

By the 1840s, the transformation of Irving from the saboteur of historical inquiry to the father of New York history had begun. Critics and authors alike began to write of his influence on historical inquiry, pointing to him as the source of most information about the Dutch and of interest in the City's past.

In a review of the revised 1848 edition, appearing in the *United States Democratic Review* of September 1848, the reviewer notes that

Forty years have elapsed since the first publication of this work, and it has become identified with the history of the city. It may be said to have conferred ancestry upon the metropolis; to have thrown around it those social endearments for bygone ages, very rarely to be encountered in our progressive country. To have descended in a genuine Knickerbocker race is a distinction not connected with aristocratic privileges, but a mark of social worth and republican respectability.  

"Recollections of Irving," a memorial by his publisher George Putnam published in *The Atlantic Monthly* of November 1860 describes the influence of the *History.*

"You are aware that in 'Knickerbocker,' especially, Mr. Irving made copious revisions and additions, when the new edition was published in 1848. The original edition (1809) was dedicated with mock gravity to the New York Historical Society; and the preface to the revision explains the origin and intent of the work. Probably some of the more literal-minded grandsons of Holland were somewhat unappreciative of the precise scope of the author's genius and the bent of his humor; but if this 'veritable history' really elicited any 'doubts' or any hostility, at the time, such misapprehension has doubtless been long since removed. It has often been remarked that Diedrich Knickerbocker had really unleashed more practical interest

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in the early annals of his native State than all other historians together. 
down to his time. But for him we might never have had an O'Callaghan or 
a Brodhead."62

The History, rather than the efforts of "literal-minded literal-minded grandsons of Hol-
land," brought New York's history to the forefront. Rather than being a literary traitor to 
through his satire, Irving "unleashed more practical interest in the early annals of his na-
tive State than all other historians." John Romeyn Brodhead and Edmund Bailey O'Call-
laghan, the collector and editor of the colonial documents of New York State published 
as The Documentary History Of The State Of New-York (1853-1887) and authors of their 
histories of New Amsterdam, were not the rivals of Irving but the progeny. Putnam im-
plies that without Irving, all other efforts to investigate New York's history would be un-
derfunded and unpopular.

On April 16, 1858, Washington Irving wrote to Benson J. Lossing:

I believe I am indebted to your kind attention for a copy of your bio-
 graphical notice of Grandfather Knickerbocker, which I received lately by 
the mail; if so, I thank you most heartily for a world of curious and amus-
ing information which it has afforded me. I thought I knew all that was 
known about the old gentleman, but I find that, in comparison with you I 
was quite an ignoramus.63

The editors of Irving's complete works believe this letter refers to Lossing's article "The 
Dutch in New Amsterdam," published in the National Magazine, in May 1858.64 Lossing 
uses the History as a major source, and quotes as if Knickerbocker were a real person "In 
1633 came into office the redoubtable Wouter Van Twiller, 'a model of majesty and 
lordly grandeur,' as the charitable Knickerbocker lovingly calls the successor of Minuit." 
Lossing then proceeds to quote the entire description of Van Twiller from the History.

Lossing is possibly the author of a similar article, "The Dutch on Manhattan," which appeared in the September 1854 edition of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine.* with profuse illustrations and maps. He repeats the section on Van Twiller, and makes similar reference to Knickerbocker as the author of the *History.* Irving's letter to Lossing highlights how Knickerbocker had gained a "life of his own" by this point. New Amsterdam had become a subject popular enough to be featured in widely read magazines, and Irving—or Knickerbocker—was cited as the authoritative source for its history.

By 1848, the year of the publication of the last revision of his *History of New York,* Irving's portrayal of the Dutch had become the reality of Dutch for most New Yorkers, more so than "serious histories." Knickerbocker had come from Irving's pen; New Yorkers then adopted and adapted him for many uses.

**The Knickerbocker**

*The Knickerbocker, or New-York Literary Magazine,* first appeared on January 1, 1833. Charles Fenno Hoffman was the first editor and it featured contributions by William Cullen Bryant, James Kirke Paulding, and James Fenimore Cooper. Subsequent editors were Timothy Flint and Samuel Daly Langtree, and Lewis Gaylord Clark. In their final issue of 1833, the editors of The Knickerbocker Magazine wrote proudly of the effects of their journal's success on the culture of the City:

> Again, what a reviviscence of old associations. The days of Diedrich's undoubted history seem to have return. We have Knickerbocker steeds, Knickerbocker stages, Knickerbocker yachts. If a witling endites a paragraph for the newspaper, he signs himself by our venerated and popular cognomen. We see the placid and cocked-hat-surmounted face of the renowned historian, swinging on the tavern past, and we hear of Knickerbocker at the fire-side, in the steamboat, on the road. The very name

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speaks proudly to old reminiscences, and while the memory of ancient
customs and of the times of the renowned Stuyvesant and Von Twiller shall
exist, our undertaking will not want a friend.\textsuperscript{66}

Fifteen years later, in his "Account of the Author," from the 1848 revision of the
Knickerbocker \textit{History}, Washington Irving acknowledges, almost amazed, how much the
figure of the Knickerbocker had entered the consciousness of the City.

...When I find its very name become a "household word," and used to give
the home stamp to everything recommended for popular acception, such as
Knickerbocker societies; Knickerbocker insurance companies;
Knickerbocker steamboats; Knickerbocker omnibuses; Knickerbocker bread
and Knickerbocker ice; and when I find New Yorkers of Dutch descent,
priding themselves upon being "Genuine Knickerbockers." I please myself
with the persuasion that I have stuck the right chord...\textsuperscript{67}

Irving took full credit for this rediscovery of New York's Dutch past. "Before the appearance
of my work the popular traditions of our city were unrecorded; the peculiar and racy
customs and usages derived from our Dutch progenitors were unnoticed, or regarded with
indifference, or adverted to with a sneer." He emphasizes how these common traditions, or
what had become common traditions through his work, united all New Yorkers, believing
that "they form a convivial currency... they link our whole community together in good
humor and good fellowship."\textsuperscript{68}His emphasis on the great revival of customs, of traditions,
rather than events accentuates what the public found compelling about the \textit{History}.

Both the editors of the \textit{Knickerbocker Magazine} and Irving made the assumption
that not only would certain customs provide a common language for New Yorkers, but that
New Yorkers needed or desired this sort of lingua franca because of their diversity. The
New York of 1833 was relatively homogenous, but by 1848, the population had become

\textsuperscript{66} "Our Last Article for 1833." \textit{Knickerbocker Magazine} (December 1833): 490.
\textsuperscript{67} Irving, revised \textit{History}, 4.
\textsuperscript{68} Irving, revised \textit{History}, 4-5.
increasingly diverse. Could the Dutch past have any deep meaning, let alone serve as a means of identification, for most New Yorkers? If this were true, by what process did this happen?

In these pieces, the word Knickerbocker is used in particular to signify the phenomenon of identification of dutchness and New York. Was the Knickerbocker name the province of the past, meaningful only to a specific group, or did it evoke feelings of belonging and recognition in most New Yorkers? During this period, the word Knickerbocker is seen in many contexts, from commercial to literary, and used in both very specific and very general ways. What is common is that Knickerbocker is clearly and always associated with New York. This can be seen in all contexts. "Knickerbocker" could be the nom de plume for someone supposing to write for all New Yorkers, or could be used to signify a character of Dutch descent.

Irving's comments in his "Account" show that, although Knickerbocker might have specifically Dutch implications, its entrance into the public vocabulary, through products and organizations, may have broadened its meaning. The word Knickerbocker would be effective in this sense only if it were familiar enough to immediately evoke certain ideas and associations. The localism of the term is the more obvious reason for its usefulness in promotion. However, even if the word were taken in its more exclusive sense, this would not preclude its effectiveness as an advertising tool. The appeal to the pretensions of the nouveau riche had early been an effective tool in advertising. The Knickerbocker name appears to have functioned as shorthand for quality, reliability, and steadiness, characteristics that would cloak a product or company that bore it. The
Knickerbocker Building Association projected themselves as stable and longstanding. By purchasing items with the name Knickerbocker, or joining Knickerbocker organizations the average New Yorker could be assured of quality, and, importantly, assume the qualities of the Knickerbocker. While not everyone could be born a Knickerbocker, almost everyone could partake of Knickerbocker ice.

Knickerbocker first meant Diedrich Knickerbocker, the little antiquarian "author" of Irving's History. Visual representations of Diedrich appeared in many contexts, and many New Yorkers may have only known him through this form. In a letter to the artist Charles R. Leslie dated October 19, 1849, Washington Irving complains about a "vile characature" published in America while he was abroad, which then appeared on the side of the Knickerbocker Omnibuses and Steam boats. Irving wished instead for a "genuine likeness" of his creation to replace it in the next, illustrated version of the book. It is interesting that even Irving treated his creation as if he were a real person. The portrayal which earned Irving's displeasure can be seen in Henry Boese's 1850 painting, The Stage Coach "Seventy-Six" of the Knickerbocker Line. Boese had done three known paintings with omnibus themes, part of the genre of depicting the growing, changing city and its improvements. Making their appearance first in the 1827, by 1834 the omnibus had become so common that the New-York Gazette and General Advertiser declared New York to be "The City of Omnibuses." The Knickerbocker Stage Company was founded in 1835, operating service to all of Manhattan and Brooklyn. The ubiquitous buses bore names such as "Lady Washington" and "George Washington." as well as "Knickerbocker" thus combining the

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70 Irving, Letters, 4:184.
71 New-York Gazette and General Advertiser, August 5, 1834.

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national with the local. However, the Washingtons must not be seen as strictly nationalistic, but as a reminder of New York's former position as the nation's capitol when Washington was president. Diedrich's visage also graced the side of the Knickerbocker Engine Company's engine. These portraits (for this is how they were treated) on the side of the omnibus or on the side of the fire engine, were commonly recognizable faces—the name did not necessarily have to be read. They were part of the shared experience of New Yorkers, understood even by the illiterate. Even those who did not ride the omnibuses would see them on the street. This had practical advantages; a recognizable face on the side of the omnibus would indicate which one it was.

Other depictions appeared in illustrated magazine articles (such as in the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, with or without his creator) and the *Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York*. Usually, Knickerbocker is portrayed as an elderly man, frequently with a pipe. The pipe is not in Irving's descriptions of the character, but seems to derive from the prominence pipe smoking takes in his depiction of the Dutch. In the 1851 edition of the *Manual*, he is seen hard at work at a desk, somewhat younger than he is usually drawn, and still wearing his coat and three-cornered hat. The caption reads, "Diederich Knickerbocker recording the gallant actions and achievements of the chivalric Peter Stuyvesant." The illustration is by G. Hayward, "drawn for D. T. Valentine's Manual."

Fact and fiction blur here, as if there really were a Diedrich Knickerbocker. The history in the *Manuals* was not Irving's work, but that of David T. Valentine and his assistant, William I (riving) Paulding, the son of James Kirke Paulding.

The works of Irving provided ample material for illustrators and painters, either

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book illustrations or as paintings or engravings inspired by these works. The so-called Knickerbocker circle included many artists, published a substantial amount of criticism of art. The use of literary themes in genre paintings was common at that time, obtaining subject matter from the great classics of literature, such as Shakespeare. Increasingly, contemporary literature was used as source material. Even members of the Hudson River school, such as Asher Durand and Thomas Cole, produced not only local landscapes but also such genre pictures. Asher Duran's "Rip Van Winkle Visiting the Haunted Glen in the Catskills" and "The Wrath of Peter Stuyvesant" and Thomas Cole's "Landscape. Sleepy Hollow" were taken directly from Irving's work. Felix O. C. Darley, a friend of Irving's, illustrated 1848 Putnam's edition of The Sketch-Book, as well as issues by American Art-Union of the Illustrations of Rip Van Winkle (1848) and Illustrations of the Legend of Sleepy Hollow (1849).73 Charles Loring Elliott painted scenes from Knickerbocker's History. John Quidor, a native of Tappan Zee New York, painted scenes inspired by the History and The Sketch-Book.

These visual representations of the past often were more compelling than written description. Instead of imagining what the Dutch looked like, the reader/viewer is shown old New Amsterdam in great detail. Interestingly, many of these illustrators mixed contemporary and historic dress in their scenes. The illustrations were reproduced, in various contexts, even more than the paintings. In a letter to Washington Allston from May 21, 1817, regarding his illustrations, Irving acknowledges the impact of the artist. He praises the characterizations and notes that "I dwell on these little sketches, because they give me quite a new train of ideas in respect to my work: and I only wish I had it

now to write, as I am sure I should conceive the scenes in a much purer style; having these pic[tures] before me as corrections of that grossiert[e] into which the sent[iment of?] a work of humour is apt to run."

While there continued to be an awareness of the character of Diedrich Knickerbocker, the term Knickerbocker soon became loosened from both its direct fictional and historical roots. Knickerbocker ceased to mean strictly Diedrich himself, transcending the specificity of the original character's gender and habits. An early occurrence of this kind of usage in insurance and fire companies two closely linked organizations. There were both Knickerbocker Life Insurance and Fire Insurance Companies. The name changes of the Knickerbocker Fire Insurance Company are quite telling. Founded in 1787, the United Insurance Company of the City of New York was the first fire insurance company in New York City. Its name reflected the ideals of the new United States. In 1806, it changed its name to the Mutual Assurance Company, again reflecting ideas of cooperation and interdependence. The definition of "mutual assurance" changed in 1846 from descriptive term to a legal one, one that did not apply to the structure of the company. The company changed its name to the Knickerbocker Fire Insurance Company, which it stayed until its dissolution in 1890. Each permutation of the company's name expressed the same ideals of reciprocity and affiliation in an increasingly abstract manner. "Knickerbocker" is an even more powerful name, carrying both ideas of solidity and reliability—clearly desirable for an insurance company. Knickerbocker, besides ideas of reliability, had by this time become

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74 Irving, Letters, 1:478.
associated with similar ideas of community and collective identity.

The early fire companies of New York bore names that embodied civic or community pride. They reinforced the solidarity of the company, just as the nicknames adopted by today's companies do, by expressing common bonds. Companies commonly had names associated with national patriotism, such as the American, Lafayette-Hamilton, Columbian, United States, Bunker Hill, Jefferson, and, of course, Washington and Lady Washington companies. At the same time, names with local associations proliferated, such as the New York, Chatham, Mohawk, Metropolitan, Manhattan, Fulton, and Hudson companies. Washington Irving was honored in 1849, by the naming of hose company 34th and 7th avenues; James Kirke Paulding was similarly celebrated in 1854.77 There were several Knickerbocker companies the first, the Engine Company, formed in the eighteenth century; and moved several times. It is not clear what the original name was, but it was referred to as Knickerbocker or "Old Nick" in the early nineteenth century. "Old Nick" refers both to a shortened form of Knickerbocker and to St. Nick or St. Nicholas. The company was renamed Tradesman in 1844, when reorganized by members of old company. The engine, Number 12, was painted green and yellow, and sported not only carved dolphins, but also a portrait of Diedrich Knickerbocker with his pipe.78 The familiarity of the image to New Yorkers would leave no doubt to the identity of the Fire Company when seen on the street. Tradesman disbanded in 1847 and was reformed as the Knickerbocker, Engine Company Number 12, in the same year, with the same engine, and located at Fiftieth

77 George W. Sheldon, The Story of the Volunteer Fire Department of the City of New York (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1882), 349-364. Other popular names had oceanic associations, such as the Undine and the Naiad, or with insurace companies, such as the Phenix and the Aetna.
Street near Lexington Avenue. The Knickerbocker Hook and Ladder Company was organized in 1853, and located at Franklin Street. It disbanded in 1855. Further solidarity was expressed through the social clubs formed around each company. These would march in the famous firemen's parades, which were a notably feature of city life at the time. Names such as Knickerbocker could have multiple associations, changing with time. While the early members of the Knickerbocker companies were of mixed Dutch and English background, later firemen were Irish and German. Initially, the name may have expressed the nativist sentiments of "true" New Yorkers, distinguishing them from the immigrants. Later, membership in fire companies, and the adoption of the quintessentially New York name, could provide a venue for acceptance as a New Yorker.

The Knickerbocker Base Ball Club, founded in 1845 by Alexander Cartwright, was named after the Knickerbocker Fire Company. While not the first baseball club, it set the first standard rules for the new game. Although quintessentially New York in its name, the Knickerbockers played in the Elysian Fields in Hoboken, a popular "resort" for New Yorkers. Playing largely within their own numbers, the purpose of the club appears to be less that of competition than healthy recreation and socializing. The Knickerbockers have commonly been portrayed as members of New York's middle-class and elite, with skilled, lower class hireling players rounding out the membership. Melvin L. Adelman's analysis of their membership reveals that the majority of the players were firmly middle class, white-collar workers, but not involved in finance or commerce. One-fourth of them were doctors.

79 Costello, Our Firemen, 691-692.
and lawyers, whereas one-sixth of the membership were clerks. Some more wealthy men
did belong, but even the founder, Alexander Cartwright, was a clerk.\textsuperscript{83} The Knickerbocker
name, instead of being an emblem of exclusion, takes on different implications in this
context. The use of the Knickerbocker name may have been a way for middle-class New
Yorkers, and more interestingly, men with aspirations of being middle-class, to identify
themselves with the elite. At the same time, by these New Yorkers taking possession of the
name, the definition of Knickerbocker was immediately expanded and broadened.

The discovery of gold in California led many New Yorkers westwards. These
New York migrants took the Knickerbocker name with them as they moved west. A
group of New York adventurers named their exploring company the "Knickerbocker
Exploring Company of the City of New York," which formed by New Yorkers in 1849.\textsuperscript{84}
One of the men involved, William Goulding, recorded their journey from Arkansas to
San Francisco. Provost Brown arrived in San Francisco in 1849, and soon opened a
restaurant called "The Knickerbocker," which became his nickname. When he obtained
the Tennessee Ranch in El Dorado Company as payment for a loan, he renamed the ranch
"Knickerbocker."\textsuperscript{85} Similarly, the Knickerbocker Ranch in Tom Green County Texas was
named after Diedrich Knickerbocker, by two settlers who were legendarily relatives of
Washington Irving.\textsuperscript{86} Naming practices, both of places and organizations, by settlers

\textsuperscript{83} Melvin L. Adelman, \textit{A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics}, 1820-70 (Chi-
\textsuperscript{84} Knickerbocker Exploring Company, \textit{Constitution of the Knickerbocker Exploring Company, of the City
of New York} (Fort Smith, AR: 1849); William R. Goulding, \textit{Overland Journey of the Knickerbocker Ex-
ploring Company of the City of New York from Fort Smith to California}, 1849-1865. Western Americana
Collection, Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
\textsuperscript{85} Letters of Provost Brown, Collection of the California Historical Society, cited on
\textsuperscript{86} "Knickerbocker, TX," \textit{The Handbook of Texas Online}, cited on:
often incorporated aspects of where they used to live and former associations. The original owner of the Tennessee Ranch, which became the Knickerbocker Ranch when it changed hands, was most likely from Tennessee. The use of Knickerbocker indicated origins, where the settlers had come from. They might not be true Knickerbockers in the sense of being descendents of the Dutch in the eyes of fellow New Yorkers, but to outsiders, Knickerbocker signified New Yorker.

This practice was particularly prevalent in the naming of fire companies outside New York. Fire companies were frequently named after the state or locality at least some of the founding members came from. Membership to these companies, like neighborhoods, was made up of people from the same areas of origin. In San Francisco, the Empire Engine Company dated its regular existence from June 4, 1850, the Knickerbocker Engine Company No. 5, from October 17, 1850, and the Manhattan Engine Company from January 1854. The engine from the Knickerbocker Engine Company was later purchased by the fledgling Petaluma fire department, its genealogy proudly recounted even today. The San Francisco company also gave its name to Knickerbocker Engine Company No. 5 in Sacramento, formed on July 21, 1854 and the Virginia City (Nev.) Fire Department, also called Knickerbocker Engine No.5.

The use of the word Knickerbocker in publishing as a way to sell products that may or not have anything to do specifically with "Knickerbockerness." This appealed to

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90 Virginia City (Nev.) Fire Department, Certificate of Membership in the Knickerbocker Engine Company No. 5 to H. C. McDougall, 1865 August 15. collection California State Library.
the prejudice of place, the desire to booster one's home locality. Clearly, there was some idea that at least some New Yorkers would find the word Knickerbocker appealing. In 1792, the barque Betsey left New York harbor for a trip to the South Seas. This voyage was recounted in two works, published the same year. One, by the captain, Edmund Fanning, is included in his memoirs Voyages Round the World. The other is called The Knickerbocker Barque, Or: Bestey's Voyage From New York Around The World: An Historical Fact.91 Fanning's account is part of his larger memoirs of his career, matter-of-fact, noting that he had decided that most of the crew would come from New England as they could not be gotten, in sufficient numbers or skill, from New York, a commercial city.92 Dated July 9, 1833, The Knickerbocker Barque is a reprint of a letter purportedly written by an elderly New Yorker, to the New York Gazette. after reading Fanning's book. He writes of being an eyewitness to the launching of that voyage in 1799. "so that the present generation may have a hint of the early enterprising spirit of the then citizens of Gotham, whether of Yankee or Knickerbocker origination, or as it may be in some, a mixture of both."93 Built on the streets of New York, the ship, whatever its crew was a "a real Knickerbocker barque."94 It is interesting the ship's origins, the symbol of commerce and technology, takes precedence over the human origins. This boosterism of New York is repeated with the exclamation that "Oh, beloved Gotham! renowned city! what will the splendour and affluence in weight and rank among the cities a century to come

92 Edmund Fanning, Voyages Round The World: With Selected Sketches Of Voyages To The South Seas, North And South Pacific Oceans, China, Etc., Performed Under The Command And Agency Of The Author... (New York: Collins & Hannay, 1833), 43.
93 Knickerbocker Barque, 3.
94 Knickerbocker Barque, 5.
supported by such sons of enterprise which are now, as it seems, but in their infancy.\textsuperscript{95}

The Knickerbocker name was attached to almanacs as well, invoking both a distinctness of place as well as folksiness. Examples are\textit{Strong's Illustrated Knickerbocker Almanac}\textsuperscript{96} and more extensively, David Young's almanacs, variously titled \textit{Knickerbocker Almanac}, or \textit{Knickerbocker's Almanac}, published by various houses, between 1826 and 1848.\textsuperscript{97} Young (1782-1852) was the founder of the Farmer's Almanac, as well as many now-forgotten titles. An examination of \textit{Hutchins' Revived Almanac} and the \textit{New-Jersey Farmer's Almanac}, other Young products, confirm the notation made the cataloger of the American Antiquarian Society copy, that The Knickerbocker Almanac of 1826 is identical in content and typesetting.\textsuperscript{98} This is also true of the 1837 editions of \textit{Hutching's Improved Almanac} and the \textit{Farmer's Almanac}.\textsuperscript{99} This indicates that names specific to various localities or interests (there were phrenological almanacs that have very little phrenological content) would help to sell the product. These almanacs appeared both as Knickerbocker and Knickerbocker's almanacs. Without the apostrophe (1826-27, 1836-1850), Knickerbocker becomes a place adjective. The buyer would perhaps feel that, correct or not, the \textit{Knickerbocker Almanac} would have more information specific to New York than the virtually identical \textit{New-Jersey Farmer's Almanac}. The use of the apostrophe (1828-1835, 1850) implies that this almanac was authored by Knickerbocker, making Diedrich a character much like Poor Richard or the

\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Knickerbocker Barque}, 10.
\textsuperscript{96} \textit{Strong's Illustrated Knickerbocker Almanac}: 1845 (New-York: T.W. Strong, publisher and engraver. [1844?]).
\textsuperscript{98} \textit{The Knickerbocker Almanac For The Year Of Our Lord 1826} (New York: Published by Caleb Bartlett. New-York, [1825?])
\textsuperscript{99} \textit{Knickerbocker Almanac For The Year Of Our Lord 1837} (New-York: Published by H. & S. Raynor. [1836?]}. 112

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"Farmer." The possessive could also signify that the almanac thus belonged to Knickerbockers. This form is more common in the earlier printings, while later, the more universal Knickerbocker is used.

The noted instrumentalist, composer, and dancemaster Allen Dodworth's 1846 *Dodworth's Knickerbocker Quadrilles* uses Irving's *History* as its inspiration. Dodworth was *the* society dance teacher, and local artistic celebrity, coming to fame first as a member of the National Brass Band, founded by his father, and as a member of the Philharmonic. His importance in New York grew with the rise of increasingly elaborate social rituals, mimicking the mannerisms of European aristocracy, by New York's elite. Important features of this social life were dances and balls. The *Knickerbocker Quadrilles* "composed and dedicated to the St. Nicholas Society," consists of five parts, each with dance steps: No. 1.: Pantalon: St. Nicholas, No.2: Ete: Ploffé; No.3: Poule: Wouter Van Twyller; No.4: Pastourelle: Van Corlier; No.5: Finale: Peter Stuyvesant. The cover of the sheet music is of an elderly man in colonial garb, presumably, Diedrich Knickerbocker. The quadrille appears to be a variation on the standard dance of the time; no attempt had been made to reference historical Dutch New York dances.

However, the subsequent publication of the piece, and its removal, both temporally and locally from its original inspiration, transcend the specificity of the Knickerbocker reference. Anyone could play and dance the *Knickerbocker Quadrille*, if they had the interest and the money to buy the sheet music. The piece was popular enough to be

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100 Allen Dodworth, *Dodworth's Knickerbocker Quadrilles: as Played by Dodworth's Quadrille Band* (New York: William Hall & Son, 1846).
republished as the *New Knickerbocker* in 1880.¹⁰² In addition to the quadrille, there was also a *Knickerbocker Waltz*, whose origins Dodworth explained in his instructional book *Dancing And Its Relations To Education And Social Life*: "The dance having begun its career among our young New-Yorkers, the name Knickerbocker was deemed appropriate."¹⁰³ Dodsworth composed similar pieces of music with accompanying dances in honor of other events, such as the *Jenny Lind Schottisch* of 1859, events that usually had a theme current in the minds of New Yorkers. Again, while created for a particular event, these pieces were published, and were a lucrative addition to his trade. This was the beginning of the sheet music industry, made possible by the introduction of lithography. There was no need for the upper-classes—the "true" Knickerbockers—to buy these works: Dodworth was already teaching them at his school. Dodworth appealed to those who aspired to be Knickerbockers.

By this time, Knickerbocker became largely divorced from any ideas of actual "dutchness." By entering into public vocabulary, the historical content of Knickerbocker was softened, if not obliterated. The terms resided in the present instead of the past, referring to contemporary products, groups, and customs. While dehistoricized, Knickerbocker remained extremely localized.

The "Knickerbocker" possessed multiple meanings concurrently. The same people, including people supposedly of the Knickerbocker class, could use the terms in multiple ways. For example, in his diaries, former Mayor Philip Hone writes of an 1832 dinner for Washington Irving at the City Hotel, with 300 in attendance, describing it as a

¹⁰³ Allen Dodworth *Dancing And Its Relations To Education And Social Life. With A New Method Of Instruction* (New York, London: Harper & Brothers, 1900), 71. This manual was originally published in 1885, and subsequently republished and enlarged in 1888, 1900, 1902, and 1905.
"a regular Knickerbocker affair. There were old New Yorkers and their descendants in
goodly numbers, who are seldom seen at such places."\textsuperscript{104} By the 1840s and 1850s, he was
using the term in a much more general way.\textsuperscript{105} He wrote of opening of the Croton Aqueduct in 1842 as "as a proud event for our city, and one which enables the Knickerbockers
to hold their heads high among the nations of the earth."\textsuperscript{106}

On February 14, 1835, Philip Hone attended a meeting at Washington Hall of a
number of New Yorkers, with a design to form a regular Knickerbocker society, as 'a sort
of set-off against St. Patrick's, St. George's, and more particularly the New England.
The meeting was large and exceedingly respectable; there were the Ivings, Moores,
McVicks, Renwicks, Rapelje, Stuyvesant, Laight, Fish, Wilkins, Schermerhorns,
Brinckerhoffs, Costers, Colden, etc., —a goodly show of good fellows who will not dis-
grace their ancestors.\textsuperscript{107}

This would become the St. Nicholas Society. Clearly, Hone was using the term
Knickerbocker in its most exclusive way, given the names of those who attended. How-
ever, by comparing it with the St. Patrick's or St. George's Societies, and, most signifi-
cantly, the New England Society, Hone imbues the term with a strong ethnic connotation.
In describing it as a "set-off" he projects a feeling that the Knickerbockers were on the
defensive. On December 6, 1836, he was to wrote that anniversary meeting and dinner of
the St. Nicholas Society was a "rather a forced concern." He doubted the society would
survive, comparing it with the other ethnic associations.

There is great difficulty in keeping up the other societies, even with the

\textsuperscript{104} Philip Hone, \textit{The Diary of Philip Hone, 1828-1851}, ed. and with introduction by Allen Nevins. 2 vols.
(New York: Dodd, Mead, 1936), 1:54-55.
\textsuperscript{105} Hone, \textit{Diaries}, 2:137-138.
\textsuperscript{106} Hone, \textit{Diaries}, 2:101.
\textsuperscript{107} Hone, \textit{Diaries}, 1: 132-133.
advantage they have in forming a rallying-point for their respective countrymen lately arrived, a sort of home abroad, affording strong claims upon national sensibility; but in our society there is no such bond of union, and the zeal with which some of its founders entered into the undertaking has visibly subsided.108

While there might have been an identification or use of the Knickerbocker term by these members of the old guard, Hone indicates that they did not have a truly ethnic bond based on that classification. They had no financial or social need at this time, beyond the more casual, to make the Knickerbocker their exclusive point of identification.

The St. Nicholas Society did survive, however, to be incorporated in 1841. Section Two of the Act of Incorporation states that "The objects of said Society are to afford pecuniary relief to indigent or reducent members and their widows and children; to collect and preserve information respecting the history, settlement, manners and such other matters as may relate thereto, of the City of New-York; and to promote social intercourse among its native citizens."109 Membership was limited to "any person of fuller age, in respectable standing in society, of good moral character, who was a native or resident of the City or State of New-York prior to the year 1785, or who is descendent of a member of the Society."110 Initiation was five dollars; the yearly fees were two dollars. For fifty dollars or more, a person could become a lifetime member.111 The St. Nicholas Society possessed a similar membership to N-YHS. The Knickerbocker Club, founded in 1871, despite its name, included members not strictly of Knickerbocker background, including William Astor and August Belmont.

While associations of men from all classes and with interests ranging from

108 Hone, Diaries, 1:237
110 St. Nicholas Society, Charter, 5.
111 St. Nicholas Society, Charter, 6.
sporting to related to their occupation adopted the Knickerbocker name, associations of women did not. While the use of the term Knickerbocker as a type of person would eventually be used to describe both men and women, it would seem that it had too masculine a connotation at this time for women's organizations. The naming practices of associations of upper-class women usually emphasized their femininity, with names such as the "Ladies New York City Anti-Slavery Society," or as "Ladies Auxiliaries" of male organizations. They very pointedly used the term "ladies" rather than "women" as a class indicator. Working class women also utilized the term "lady," as the Ladies Industrial Association, lending credibility, and respectability to their organizations.

In the 1840s, "Knickerbocker" began to be commonly used as sort of literary shorthand for a certain type of character, an elite, the Old New Yorker. The extent of its appearance in this sense implies that it was easily and commonly understood. A character could be described as a Knickerbocker, and immediately grasped—it would not need to be explained (beyond a certain point) that this character was of a certain stock, old money. The character would probably be of Dutch descent but dutchness itself was not the real issue; rather it was a signifier of class and background. The character of the Knickerbocker as the elite descendent of old New York appeared in the many books and articles which depicted life in the Metropolis. Apparent in these works is a growing obsession with wealth and aristocracy, critiques that meld disgust and fascination. The genre ranges from exploitation literature to lists of the wealthy of New York, and their holdings.

Critical to these works is a distinction between the old aristocrats, the

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112 According to Stuart M. Blumin in The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), middle-class women were largely absent from these types of associations, 211-218.
Knickerbockers, and the new money, the Codfish Aristocrats. The greatest crime of the Codfish Aristocrats was their adoption of aristocratic, specifically British attitudes, and their rejection of republican values. They are seen as the despisers and exploiters of the poor and the old Knickerbockers alike. This split between the two groups, the idea that the old elite did not associate with the new, is largely a piece of fiction. Edward Pessen, among others, in his analysis of the wealthy of New York, has shown how these groups, old and new money, intermarried.\textsuperscript{113} Why, and to whom then, was the distinction important?

While the Knickerbocker as a symbol of an older elite is an aristocrat of sorts, he/she is very much homegrown, a product of New York. The new prosperity led to the decidedly un-American affectations of aristocracy. This older aristocracy, with simple, more democratic manners, and yet superior breeding, could provide a better model. This was not a foreign aristocracy, but a local one. The Knickerbocker harkens back to an older time, an older elite; there is a sense that they are slipping away in the face of this new money.

In \textit{New York Naked}, George Foster describes a gentleman spotted on Broadway as "a legitimate descendent of the old Knickerbocker race . . . he himself fully partakes of the genial characteristics of those peoples and those times."\textsuperscript{114} Authors used Dutch names as immediate indicators for characters of this background. George Lippard's New York novels feature the Van Huyden family. John Vose's Broadway Dandy speaks of his cohorts as "young gents of the very first order--those who can boast of being honorable scions of the old distinguished line of descendants, the Stuyvesants, Van Zandts, Rutgers, Schermerhorns."

Van Renssellaers, Van Cortlandts, Brinkerhoff and others." The Dandy prides himself on being democratic, unlike the "fashionable people who would like to have their sons and daughters know nobody but fashionable people." Association with a Knickerbocker character could be a way to redemption for a member of fashionable society. The Dandy, although he himself is a descendent of old New York, spends much of the story living the fashionable life, in the manner of the nouveau riche. He finds true love and reforms his spendthrift ways (as well as gains a fortune) when he marries a poor but beautiful seamstress, earning the scorn of the fashionable world and his family. She turns out to be, of course, a descendent of an old Knickerbocker--"the real, pure Knickerbocker of the old school," from "those days of Rip Van Winkle." Her family was, of course, ruined by rich lawyers now living as uptown aristocrats. This old Knickerbocker, an uncle who makes her his heir, describes their family as describes their family as "belonging to the best blood of New York, almost the very blood of prophets, to that genuine, whole-souled Knickerbocker, Rip Van Winkle and Livingston stock." He is shocked that his parents have disinherited him for marrying a poor girl, preferring money to breeding and history. Interestingly, the family is not from New York City proper, but from upstate.

The critique of the "shopkeeping aristocracy" often rests on their preference for money and newness over breeding and tradition. They pretend to an aristocracy they do not actually possess, and it is this deceit that earns them contempt: "the wealthy and insolent few who insult the public by an exhibition of the trappings of a nobility and rank for which they

115 John D. Vose, Fresh Leaves From The Diary Of A Broadway Dandy (New York: Bunnell & Price, 1852), 52.
116 Vose, Broadway, 24.
117 Vose, Broadway, 113.
118 Vose, Broadway, 122. Vose's brother Reuben was equally fascinated with wealth and class; one of his other works is entitled The Wealth of the World Displayed (New York: Published by Reuben Vose, 1859).
have not even the excuse of ancestral name and blood." These new aristocrats lacked the
taste, restraint that marked the Knickerbocker. The essay "Our Best Society" from the
February 1853 edition of Putnam's Magazine, describes the behavior of "our best society" at
the ball given by the wife of the newly wealthy Potiphars: "There was too much of
everything. Too much light, and eating, and drinking, and dancing and flirting, and
dressing, and feigning, and smirking, and much to many people." 120

Mary Louise Hankins, the editor of Marie Louise Hankins' Family Newspaper,
sketches various types of New York women, including the woman of fashion and the
cosseted wife of a rich man in her Women of New York. 121 Hankins is explicit about the
ornamental nature of these women. "A fashionable lady is as helpless with her hands, as
a Chinese woman is with her feet . . . her education is superficial, and accomplishments,
even should she be talented, are merely dabble in, not learned." 122 She presents the
Knickerbocker lady in contrast: "Find a more perfect specimen of her sex than a virtuous
New York lady, descended perhaps, from the old Knickerbocker stock, handsome, grace-
ful, accomplished, and well read, fitted by habits and associations for companionship
with the greatest upon earth, and in every domestic relation a pattern to the present and to
future generations." 123 The Knickerbocker lady is, in Hankins' work, an exemplar of the
middle-class woman featured in her Family Newspaper. The Knickerbocker is reformed
in this middle-class image, becoming not an elite figure, or remnant of the past, but the
perfect modern woman, mistress of her sphere. By using the Knickerbocker as her pedi-
gree, Hankins lends stability, a lineage to the new idea of the middle-class woman. The

119 Foster, Naked, 24.
122 Hankins, Women, 19.

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Knickerbocker, and the values associated with the Knickerbocker, could be used by the rising middle-class as a both a model for their own behavior, but also as a way of critiquing the rich. The qualities of thriftiness and sobriety, cleanliness and steadiness first described by Washington Irving appealed to the middle-classes as an alternative to the new rich. The Knickerbocker was hardworking and not ostentatious, possessed of breeding, but not airs. Like many of the new middle-class inhabitants of New York, the Knickerbocker character or their family is said to have originated upstate, and were not from New York City itself.

The Knickerbocker was not entirely immune to reproach. Ned Buntline lumps the Knickerbocker aristocrats with every other evil aristocrat in his works. The villains of the Mysteries of New York124 and its sequel Three Years After125 include two profligate scions of old New Yorker families, one of whom is named Gus Livingston. However, Buntline abandons this in his later New York works. "Our Best Society" decries not only the behavior of the new money, but that of the "collective mass of children, grandchildren, nephews, nieces and descendents of some man who deserved well of his country, and whom his country honors," who ride on the coattails of their illustrious ancestors but do nothing of merit of their own.126 The author focuses on the behavior of a young Knickerbocker, who, although present at the ball given by a member of the nouveau riche, determines not to be introduced to his host. "Hal could come, eat Potiphar's supper, drink his wines, spoil his carpets, laugh at his fashionable struggles, and affect the

123 Hankins, Women, 15.
puppyism of a foreign Lord, because he disgraced the name of a man who done some
service somewhere, while Potiphar was only an honest man who made a fortune."127

Conclusion

The long term success of Washington Irving's Knickerbocker *History* was the result
of the real interest New Yorkers had in their history. The City's history was best told by a
novelist, not through the dry, dusty documents collected by the N-YHS. The Knickerbocker
*History* created the standard by which New Yorkers would learn their history, and would
influence the form and content of subsequent, more serious efforts. While the history pre-
sented by the N-YHS was increasingly exclusionary, the Knickerbocker *History*, and the
character of Knickerbocker, spoke to a broader audience. Moreover, the character of
Diedrich Knickerbocker would move outside the confines of the *History*s narrative, to be-
come the Knickerbocker, a New York type. The Knickerbocker, referring to all New York-
ers or only an elite few, tied New York's history to its present.

127 "Our Best Society," *Putnam*s: 175.
Chapter 3

Local Histories: the City and the State

Introduction

I have dwelt at considerable length on this first period, because it contains the germ of our institutions. The maturity of the nation is but a continuation of its youth. The spirit of the colonies demanded freedom from the beginning. It was in this period, that Virginia first asserted the doctrine of popular sovereignty; that the people of Maryland constituted their own government; that New Plymouth, Connecticut, New Haven, New Hampshire, Maine, rested their legislation on the popular will; that Massachusetts declared itself a perfect commonwealth.

George Bancroft's *History of the United States, From the Discovery of the Continent* was the first, synthetic treatment of the nation's history. Bancroft attempted to understand the history of the nation in its totality, tracing its rise to greatness from colonial times. He saw the evidence of this in the individual contributions of each state. In doing so, Bancroft also raised many issues about the importance of the states and their histories, in the context of national history. These issues were also particularly important to those states he failed to recognize.

Beginning in the 1830s, just as in the rest of the country, histories of New York City and State began to appear. These were inspired both by the efforts of the New-York Historical Society and the example of Washington Irving's Knickerbocker *History*. They shared a belief in the importance of the didactic role of civil history, and the didactic role of history with the N-YHS. From Irving, they gained their basic narrative and many of

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their characters. Through these histories, the relationship of City and state, City and na-
tion, and state and nation were explored.

The line between what was a history of New York State as a whole and what was
a history of the City was often indistinct. The histories of the state, and the collection of
documents relating to that history, were often started at the impetus of those whose main
concerns were in the City. The histories reflect this; although purportedly being about
the State of New York, much of the narrative centers on the metropolis. Histories of the
City shared characteristics with both the national histories, in terms of claims made for
New York's importance, and the local histories, in matters of local color.

Important to all these works was the attempt to establish New York's place in
both the United States and in a global perspective. Regardless of the focus of the work
(city, state, or county), claims were made for the importance of that particular history to
the nation's history. Particularly important was the competition between New York and
New England for preeminence in the nation. Perhaps because of its cosmopolitan nature
or its Dutch origins, New York historians seemed to have had a need to make their his-
tory American history. Local history was never purely local, never isolated, but always
considered within this national context.

**New York City History as Local History**

The New-York Historical Society confined itself to the collection and publication
of documents, in order to provide the material of historical study for future historians.
During the first forty years of its existence, its membership largely limited their historical
efforts to essays delivered before the N-YHS. These monographs examined particular
aspects of the City or state's history, but did not attempt a larger synthesis. No full-length works about the City's history were produced by its members.²

While the N-YHS languished in the 1830s, that decade saw the publication of a booklength study of the City's history. The *History of the New Netherlands Province of New York, and State of New York,*³ in two volumes, was produced not by a member of the N-YHS, but by one of Washington Irving's circle. William Dunlap was a writer, playwright, painter, theater manager, and confidant not only of Irving but many of the leading political and literary men of New York. Among his numerous plays and entertainments were several with historical or patriotic theme, such as *Andre: A Tragedy In Five Acts* and *The Glory Of Columbia Her Yeomanry!*

In the 1830s, Dunlap turned his attention to historical research, producing first a history of the New York stage (1832) and of the decorative arts in America (1834). Through his research for those projects, he became interested in the history of the City. This resulted in two works, his *History of the New Netherlands Province,* and in 1837, a history of New York for children, intended for the public school system. *A History Of New York. For Schools*⁴ took the form of a dialogue between four children and their great-uncle, Thomas Betterworth. It covers the time period between discovery and the Revolution. The four children, of varying ages, ask their learned uncle about events in New York's past. The uncle, a man of 71 (like Dunlap) states that he is out of date "a

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² The closest to a general history was Samuel Latham Mitchell, *The Picture Of New-York, Or, The Traveler's Guide Through The Commercial Metropolis Of The United States By A Gentleman Residing In This City* (New-York: I. Riley and Co., 1807). Mitchell's *Picture* is not really a history, but a sort of guidebook, which starts with a natural history and gives some account of the civil history of the City.

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thing of past tense— I am only fit to prepare the children for the future."5 It was important to Dunlap that New York's children, particularly the children of immigrants, learn the City's history at a young age. Knowledge of the past was important to inculcate feelings of citizenship and responsibility in those who would shape the future of the City.

The History of the New Netherlands Province of New York, and State of New York was published in 1839 and 1840. Dunlap was alive during many the events he describes; he was born in 1766 and remembered vividly slavery, the British occupation and evacuation, and Washington's inaugural. While the work consequently contains elements of the individual memoir, his main concern was the promotion of republican values. Each episode of New York's history was an illustration of these values. He used the past, particularly the joint Dutch and English heritage, to show how patriotism and tolerance were indigenous to New York. To this end, he contrasts the colonies of the Netherlands and of England with those of the French and Spanish, finding peace and prosperity in those Protestant colonies.6 To Dunlap, New York's position as the most prosperous city in the Western Hemisphere was further proof of its worth, and the means by which these values could be spread throughout the world.

History, above all to Dunlap, is instructive; and "no act or person, however poor or low in life the actor, is beneath the dignity of history, if the relation of it elucidates subsequent transactions or characters."7 The title of the work includes the history of the state of New York, but Dunlap really focuses on the City. The history of the City is thus the essence of the history of the state. In order to be instructive, historical events had

5 Dunlap, A History, 1:1.
6 Dunlap, History of the New Netherlands, 1:15-16.
7 Dunlap, History of the New Netherlands, 1:209.
meaning far greater than mere facts. To Dunlap, the story of New York is the story of the ongoing conflict between tyranny and freedom, and the forces of freedom, at least in New York, always win. Each episode illustrates the will of the people of New York to create free institutions. Dunlap even utilizes negative episodes, such as the Negro Plot of 1741, to depict the dangers of prejudice and hysteria. The villains, such as James II and Lord Cornbury, are all aristocrats and anti-democratic. The heroes, such as Jacob Leisler and George Washington, are defenders of the public will. Dunlap was particularly concerned to show how early and well New York resisted British rule, in the form of the Stamp Act congress, the activities of the Sons of Liberty, the New York "Tea Party" and the Prison Ships. The occupation of New York is recast as a tragedy, negating the common perception that New York was a bastion of Tories. New York's Federalism (Dunlap was first a Federalist and then a Whig) was yet another example of the City's importance in the creation of a unified nation.

Dunlap repeatedly stresses the importance of commerce on New York's development, not merely in material terms, but in the formation of the character of the City. Commerce and trade, the patrimony of the Dutch, were the promoters of peace "the root of that prosperity which has created navies, not to destroy but bless mankind." and a means by which republican values could spread to the rest of the world. Dunlap equates commerce with progress, as "it has covered the black rocks with pleasure-walks and groves, the whole island and its surrounding waters with fixed or floating palaces, and no longer confined to the Copsey-point, extends its influence to every region of the globe."^8 Commerce was the means by which New York's influence (and consequently, America's)

^8 Dunlap, History of the New Netherlands, 1:41.
would be spread.

Dunlap consistently writes of New York in terms of national greatness, equating New York with the nation. As a prelude to his discussion of New York's resistance to the British, he writes "had it been possible to arrest the progress of New York, in its growth, from a few trading huts for buying peltry from savages, to its present state--a great republican empire--to have cut short its existence." if the Revolution never happened, there would have been no need to write this history. New York, not the nation, is a "great republican empire," and the Revolution is a central event in New York's history. Dunlap's task is to explain the events which led to New York's "present greatness" in order to "show the advancement from the paltry province to a mighty sovereign state." In doing so, Dunlap performed a patriotic duty. He then uses Rome as an example, saying Rome's founding described in fables, legend.

How much more important to the Americans, is the true record, of the origin of this empire: and the steps by which the greatness was attained, which he now witnesses. With these views, I will here notice the state of the city of New York.9

Rome, of course, was both the name of the city and the empire. In this comparison, he reinforces the idea that New York City was the source of America's empire. The story of the origin of America's greatness could be found in the history of New York City.

In this work, Dunlap introduced many themes that would influence subsequent New York historians. Freedom and prosperity are linked, and New York, as the center of commerce, is the center of democracy. New York's actions, before and during the Revolution, prove that it was at the forefront of the defense of American rights. The primacy historians had given New England in the nation's history, as the exemplar of what

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9 Dunlap, History of the New Netherlands, 1:311-313.
was truly American, was a point to be constantly challenged. In Dunlap's *History*, the history of New York was the true history of America, transcending merely local interest. Dunlap created a canon of events that would reappear in later works. The legacy of the Netherlands; the conflict between the Dutch West Indies Company and the people; town meetings on Long Island; the people accepting English rule once their rights had been guaranteed; Leisler's Rebellion; the Zenger trial; the 1754 Albany conference; and New York's leadership against British incursions, before and during the Revolution are repeated, carrying the imprint of Dunlap's interpretation.

The rapid expansion of New York after the 1820s, in terms of economy, population, and size, brought new concerns to the City's historians. Some, such as the membership of the N-YHS, bemoaned the loss of the artifacts of the City's past and the disappearance of old traditions. Later writers chose instead to celebrate this change as evidence of progress. Ideas of progress, and the importance of progress in New York's history, became prominent themes in the histories of the City. New York's history was seen in these terms, and it was scoured for its evidence. If New England's history were that of tradition, New York's would be of a tradition of change. It was a history that would look forward, not backward. These later writers did not stop at a point in the past, such as the end of Dutch rule or the evacuation of the British. Instead, they continued to the "present time." By doing this, they stress the continuity of past and present. The present, and the future, were seen in the context of the City's past, as the logical outcome of its history. Current events were given as much space as historical, and were used as further evidence of New York's greatness. The inclusion of the contemporary material along side the historical reinforced the idea that New York's achievements were the natu-
nal outcome of its past. This inclusion also made the contemporary historical, serving to preserve this information for future generations.

In 1853, the City clerk David T. Valentine published his History of the City of New York, actually the work of his assistant, William I. Paulding. Paulding was the son of Knickerbocker writer James Kirke Paulding and the nephew of Washington Irving. Much of the narrative structure of Valentine's History is derived from the Knickerbocker History. In the Introduction, Valentine/Paulding writes that "the design of the author of this volume has been to trace the progress of the city of New York in such a manner as to illustrate to the reader of the present day, its gradual development, from a wilderness condition, through the maturing stages of a hamlet, a village and a city." He does so by tracing the gradual northward development of the City, its habitations and streets. The emphasis on the built geography of the City, New York's history is understood not in what was lost (nature), but in what was built. Valentine/Paulding details the names of who (particularly old Dutch) lived where, and who possessed what land. Ownership of land, and the development of that land, are civic acts. Five chapters are devoted to the development of municipal institutions and public affairs.11

Daniel Curry's New-York: Historical Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Met-

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11 David T. Valentine worked his way up the municipal ladder to become clerk of the Common Council in 1841, after having served as clerk for the marine court and deputy Clerk of the Council. He first published historical material about the City in the 1841 edition of the Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York. This, interestingly, was illustrated with engravings from an edition of the Knickerbocker History. The Manuals, published every year, were similar to today's Green Book, including material on the City government, lists of officials, the charter of the City, floor plans, maps, and charters of various departments. The historical materials included in the Manuals relate of the City, such as a "List of Speakers of the Assembly from 1777 to 1848" and a "Digest of City Ordinances, prior to the Revolution." By 1858, a section entitled "Historical" was included in each edition of the Manuals. The inclusion of the history of New York in these manuals indicates the institutionalization of history within a civic context.
ropolitan City of America" is the story of a City rising from ignorance and instability to greatness. Born in Peekskill, New York in 1809, Curry was a Liberal evangelical minister, prominent anti-slavery Methodist minister, and eventually the leader of the Anti-Slavery Society of New York. Besides his history of New York, he wrote extensively on theological and political issues. In his Introduction, Curry notes that "the growing magnitude and increased accessibility of the city of New-York" had made the City both the object of interest in the rest of the nation and had obscured its history for many of its newer inhabitants. His purpose then was to write a history with a popular appeal, one that would concentrate on the history of the City alone, as "distinguished from that of the state or nation." Curry assumed that New York, by virtue of its importance, was interesting to all Americans. Its position as the leading city of the nation set its history apart from the purely local. However, what had made the City great had also concealed its past from New Yorkers, new immigrants in particular, making the necessary harder to know.

The first half of the book covers the history of the City, from its discovery until the completion of the Croton Aqueduct in 1842. Curry uses the same incidents as Dunslop, portraying all events in the context of the City. For example, the transition between Dutch and English rule and Leislers Rebellion, are told only through events in the City. The second half the book covers the current conditions of New York, its commerce, its politics, institutions, education, population, and future.

Unlike other New York historians, Curry does not have much good to say about

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14 Curry, New-York, 214.
15 Curry, New-York, 5-6.
the early history of the City or its inhabitants, whether Dutch or English. They were rude, crude, and devoid of manners. The old City was a place without order. It was only through commerce that the City was able to progress and achieve its position as "a great emporium of trade." The consequent wealth from the increase in commerce and trade, "brought with it an improved style of building, and increase of public work, greater attention to personal appearance and manners, and at length more attention to education." 

The importance of New Yorkers to the nation is discussed within the context of the characters of the Puritan, the Cavalier, and the Knickerbocker. Curry notes that "writers on America and the Americans have especially distinguished two great classes of our population, the Puritans and the Cavalier." or the inhabitants of New England and Virginia. He derides the attempt to reduce all Americans to either one of these two types, believing instead that the Knickerbocker is more truly an American type. He compares the Knickerbocker with the Puritan and the Cavalier. The Puritan is close-minded and bigoted. "The tyranny of conventionalism has unquestionably operated unfavorably upon the New-England character, as compared with the breadth and freedom that distinguish that of the New-Yorker." This is the legacy of the type of settlement underwent by New England and the people who settled there. Groups founded New England, whereas individuals settled New York. In contrast to the Cavalier, who has inherited his position, the Knickerbocker has gained everything through hard work and independence.

Though favored by none of the accidents of life, he asserts his own manhood, and asks no other title to respectability, nor will he permit any man to become his patron. Respecting himself as a man, he cannot be mean, though he may be poor; and recognizing the same manhood in others, he cannot be arrogant, however far

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16 Curry, New-York, 167.
17 Curry, New-York, 110.
18 Curry, New-York, 316-318.
above them in merely external things. 19

The Cavalier, in Curry's mind, is aristocratic and less than manly. By these contrasts, Curry shows that the Knickerbocker or New Yorker is the true American. The New Yorker embodies the values of independence, liberality, and hard work that were fitting for the new nation. Already these values are tied to ideas of manliness and individuality. He links these qualities with commerce, as New Yorkers are "gifted with an almost unlimited spirit of enterprise, and endowed with the most exalted attributes of humanity."

Curry looks to the future, seeing that the character of the New Yorker would lead them to a "more glorious destiny than has yet been achieved among mankind." 20

One of the most notable changes during this period was the increase in the City's population due to immigration, from Europe and America. Unlike earlier historians, Curry directly addresses the influence of the influx of immigrants to the City. His opinion is not high, despite the contributions of their cheap labor to the City's economy. The newcomers were crude and unformed, but "there is reason to believe that the assimilating tendencies of our institutions will rapidly remedy these imported evils." 21 It is this "assimilating tendency" that Curry sees as being a unique characteristic of New York:

This native energy of the New-York character also displays itself in its power to assimilate other forms to itself. From whatever point the denizen of that city may have come, a residence in New-York surely and speedily makes him a NEW-YORKER. The eastern, the southern, the western man soon loses peculiarities, and becomes like his neighbors. The plastic Hibernian forgets that he is an exile; and even the implastic Teutons insensibly yield to the impalpable but irresistible influences that surround them. Thus are our immigrant population transformed, in character as well as in political rights, into genuine Americans, and New-York energy act as a solvent to fuse the motley masses that Europe is pouring upon our shores.

19 Curry, New-York, 319-320.
20 Curry, New-York, 328.
21 Curry, New-York, 213.
into a consistent body of valuable and happy freeman.\textsuperscript{22}

Only New York had the necessary energy and character to perform the transformation of immigrants to Americans. Only the "assimilating tendency" of New York, its energy and liberality, could cause the immigrant to shed his/her former self and adopt the character of New Yorker. By becoming a New Yorker, the new immigrant would become an American. This was true not only of the foreign immigrant, but the "eastern, the southern, the western man" could all become more American by assuming the identity of the New Yorker. To be a New Yorker was to lose all race, class, and all other identity. The New Yorker "becomes like his neighbors." Curry originally did not use his name on his history; its author was given as a "New Yorker."

Mary Booth also linked commerce and liberty together in a political ideology in her 1859 \textit{History of the City of New York. From its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time}.\textsuperscript{23} To Booth, New York's history was the story of how economic success was the result of a free society which accepted all, and liberality was the result of economic success. Booth dedicated her work to:

\begin{quote}
The Merchants of the City of New York, who, cheerfully sacrificing their interest to that of their country in the Revolution, Were the First to Propose a Non-Intercourse Act—the Last to Renounce it, and the Only Ones to Maintain It Inviolate; and who, by their energy and enterprise, have made their city at the present time the Commercial Metropolis of the Western World, this Work is Inscribed.
\end{quote}

This inscription introduces many of her themes: the marriage of commerce and patriotism in New York, the early involvement of New York in the fight against English tyranny, and the present and future position of New York as the leading city in the Western

\textsuperscript{22} Curry, \textit{New-York}, 328.
Booth was a space-rate reporter for the *New York Times*,\(^{24}\) translator of French books (including by Pascal and later, Count Agénor de Gasparin's *The Uprising of a Great People: The United States* in 1861), and eventually editor of *Harper's Bazar* (its spelling at the time). Her massive work of 846 pages covered the entire history of the City, and appeared in a revised edition in 1880. Unlike Curry, Booth was an unapologetic booster of the City. Booth's idea of progress was not that of a city rising from a humble start to an august present, but rather of New York following an unstoppable trajectory from great beginnings to a great future. Each incident recounted was yet another testament to the eminence of New York and the contributions of the City to the nation.

In her Introduction, Booth cites the need to collect the "the floating facts relative to the history and growth of our city" and make them accessible to the general reader. While other had collected historical materials relating to the City, there were "scattered" and therefore not useful to anyone but the historian. Booth's intended audience was not scholars, but regular New Yorkers. Her intended goal was to present the history of the City in order to "inspire them with a love for their native or adopted city." Knowledge of the City's past would inculcate the populace with patriotism for New York as well as the nation. Through understanding the City's contributions to the nation's past, patriotism for the nation would be increased. This was of particular importance in 1858, as the Civil War was approaching, and the City was filled with immigrants who must become New Yorkers/Americans.\(^{25}\)

Booth emphasizes the continuity of the pursuit of liberty in New York. The

\(^{24}\) Which no doubt influenced her lengthy discussion in her *History* on the rise of the penny press.

Revolution was of primary concern to Booth, the ultimate expression of New York's character and place in the nation. "Especial care has been taken to collect the incidents of the Revolution, in which the city bore so prominent a part, and which are fast growing dim in the minds of the citizens." Booth compared New York's forgetfulness with Boston's remembrance, matching each of their commemorated events (the Tea Party, the "Massacre") with those forgotten by New Yorkers—the New York tea part, the Battle of Golden Hill, and the Prison Ships. Booth returns repeatedly to the character of the New Yorker, seeing this as a dominant factor in the City's success, throughout its history.

While most outward remains of the Dutch had vanished from the city, their influence was still present, in the "the broad, cosmopolitan character, the liberal, tolerant spirit, and the genial, hospitable nature." The respect for deeds, not men, meant that "no city on the western continent in which men more naturally find their own level." This seems to be a dig at Boston, a City well noted for its Brahmins. The character of the Pioneer had emerged by the late 1850s as yet another embodiment of the true American type. Booth takes on the Pioneer, declaring it a "primitive type." Other cities, with a homogenous population, remained purely of the Pioneer type. In New York, however, the Pioneer was "blended with all the races of the earth; and if it be true, as one of our most eminent philosophers asserts, that a mixture of many materials makes the best mortar, there is no reason to regret it." New York's large foreign population made it suspect as perhaps not truly American in the eyes of the rest of the nation. Booth turns this around to make New York, in its diversity, the more perfect example of the American. Instead of weakening

26 Booth, History of the City of New York, xviii.
27 Booth, History of the City of New York, xvi-xvii.
28 Booth, History of the City of New York, xix.
the nation, this amalgam would strengthen it.

Booth concentrates on the number and rapidity of changes in the City. While these factors had caused New York to become the "Commercial Metropolis of the Western Hemisphere," they also meant that the remnants of the past were being ignored. The character of the New Yorker also contributed to this. She notes that "New Yorkers think less of men than they do of deeds, and, provided that a thing is done, pay little heed to the means that conduced to its accomplishment." This trait, while superior to an attitude of elitism, also contributed to the tendency to forget the past. New Yorkers lived in the present.

There is certainly too great an indifference prevailing in respect to the memories of our city. But few vestiges of the past remain to us, and even these few are unheeded. In the hurry of business, our citizens pass and re-pass the grave of Stuyvesant and the tomb of Montgomery, unconscious of their locality. The busy New Yorkers throng the Post-office, without bestowing a thought upon its eventful history; the Park, the cradle of the Revolution, is to them a park, and no more; the Bowling Green, where the Dutch lads and lasses erected their May-pole and danced around it, and where, at a later date, the patriotic citizens kindled bonfires in honor of liberty with stamp acts and royal effigies, is almost forgotten in the upward course of the tide of business; and the Battery, with Castle Garden, has fallen into the hands of the Commissioners of Emigration.30

To Booth, in these landmarks, the City's past was still present on its streets. New Yorkers only had to be instructed in their meanings to regain the memory of the City's past, and what that past meant. The City's lack of memory was the result of its current success; it did not have to live in its past (like Boston). Booth endeavored to link the present condition of the City with its history, and to show how past and future were not antithetical. Preservation and historical interest had to be transformed from an enemy of change into a servant of progress.

30 Booth, History of the City of New York. xix.
In her Conclusion, Booth looked to the future. Despite the number of chapters devoted to the wonders of modern New York, from the arts to the sciences to its public works, she states that it is almost futile to describe current conditions, as "all changing from hour to hour with such kaleidoscopic rapidity that the picture of to day would scarce be recognized to-morrow." She is satisfied to say that in all its "palatial splendor, in gorgeous in magnificence, in lavish display of inexhaustible wealth, New York may well be regarded as bearing off the palm from all the cities of the Union." However, if this were New York's only claim to eminence, her future would be in jeopardy. New York had contributed far more the nation than mere gold. Booth lists New York's place in the nation's history, always noting that New York was "first" in each case. New York was the first to institute religious freedom and freedom of the press, acting as a place of refuge from those forced from other colonies by bigotry (yet another reference to New England). In the fight for American liberties, New York was also first, in the protest against the Stamp Act and in the Revolution, the first to see the enemy and last to feel their departure. Subsequent historical events, the building of the Erie Canal, Central Park, and the Croton Reservoir were all examples of the City's devotion to progress. New York had more than its share of great men, from merchants to mechanics to artists, and numbered among its sons Hamilton, Jay, Livingston, Morris, Colden, Verplanck, Irving, and Cooper, all of who contributed to the nation's glory.

All of these served to bond New York's past with its present and future. Booth hoped her work would serve as both an inspiration to future historians, further stressing the importance of history to the future, and to "inspire her citizens with love and pride of

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31 Booth, History of the City of New York, 790.
32 Booth, History of the City of New York, 790-792.
their native or adopted city, and urge them to perpetuate the memory of a glorious past by a still more glorious future." New York, by virtue of its past, its present, and the character of its people had the opportunity to move beyond commerce and become the "Athens of America" and "the time is not far distant when she will be cordially acknowledged, both by friends and foes, as the EMPIRE CITY, not only of the UNION but also of the WORLD!"33

Among the sources Booth used in the preparation of her work were John Romeyn Brodhead, David Valentine, George Bancroft, Edward Bailey O'Callaghan, Washington Irving, William Smith, Jr., and William Dunlap. The influence of all these authors is quite evident, as certain episodes very closely mirror those found in these works. The most explicit use is made of Irving's work. The Knickerbocker History provides almost all the source for the Golden Age under the Dutch. In particular, the description of the domestic life of New Yorkers is almost exactly lifted from the Irving. For example, the extensive description of the Dutch ladies' petticoat, a source of great amusement to Irving, resulted in this description from Booth:

Their dress consisted of a jacket of cloth or silk, and a number of short petticoats of every conceivable hue and material, quilted in fanciful figures. If the pride of the Dutch matrons lay in their beds and linen, the pride of the Dutch maidens lay equally in their elaborately wrought petticoats, which were their own handiwork, and usually constituted their only dowry. The wardrobe of a fashionable lady usually contained from ten to twenty of these, of silk, camlet, cloth, drugget, India stuff and a variety of other materials, all closely quilted, and costing from five to thirty dollars each. They wore blue, red, and greenworsted stockings of their own knitting, with parti-colored clocks, together with high-heeled leather shoes.34

The Knickerbocker History had, by the 1850s, ceased to be a piece of fiction or amuse-

33 Booth, History of the City of New York, 792.
34 Booth, History of New York, 184-186.
ment, and had become a respected historical source. Irving's was still the standard work on the period, its author admired even by his detractors for his research. Irving's picture of the Dutch, via the History and his stories as well as their illustrations, was the one which was "naturally" evoked by the subject of the Dutch. Booth's use of Irving lent her work veracity not only because Irving was respected, but also because her readers "knew" that this is what the Dutch were like. An alternate view would be met with skepticism.

Through these histories, a master narrative emerged, created of the incidents which came to define the "nature" of New York. The repetition of specific events caused them to transcend their historical specificity and attain the level of myth. The transition from Dutch to English rule, Leisler's Rebellion, Zenger's trial, the story of the Prison Ship Martyrs, and New York as the nation's capital were not just events from New York's past or even examples of certain characteristics. Instead, they transmitted the meaning of New York, and with each retelling, this meaning was codified. It became possible to use any of these events, without long explanations, to signify the character of the City.

Critical to the development of this meaning was the use of the incidents relating to the Revolution. Sacvan Bercovitch has written of the somewhat uneasy role the Revolution played in the American psyche of the early nineteenth century. In that great age of revolutions, Americans were decidedly ambivalent to the idea of adopting "revolutionary" as a defining characteristic. This became particularly true as the Civil War approached, as the idea of the Revolution could be used to justify the splintering of the Union. The Revolution would have to be redefined as the logical outcome of the long-term pursuit of liberty, to be traced back to the nation's founding. This can be seen in

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works of literature and history, most notably that of George Bancroft, Francis Parkman, and Jared Sparks. The American Revolution, to the New Englanders who seemingly controlled the history of the nation, was the child of Puritanism, part of the struggle for self-determination which began with the settlement of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

New Yorkers, whether they were the founders of the N-YHS, journalists, or historians, were keenly aware of the New England hegemony and often openly declared their intention to correct the historical record. This was particularly evident in their treatment of the Revolution. New York had been occupied, and thus forever retained a taint of Toryism. The history of the Revolution had to be retold, recasting New York as the major player, replacing New England. New York, not New England, resisted the most and suffered the most. The Revolution was the child of New York's particular Dutch and English heritage, and earlier incidents in New York's history, such as Leisler's Rebellion and the Zenger trial, were the true roots of the Revolution. The response to the Stamp Act, the non-importation agreement by the merchants, the activities of the Sons of Liberty, and the occupation and the Prison Ships, were all part of the Revolutionary lore of New York. Each incident became yet another proof of New York's patriotism.

New York's Environs: Long Island, Queens, and Brooklyn

Just as works particularly and explicitly dealing with New York City began to emerge in the 1830s, histories of the environs of City appeared. Covering the history of Long Island, Queens, and Brooklyn, these works established a separate history from that of New York City. There was already talk at this time of the expanding metropolis and

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predictions of the absorption of the independent municipalities that made up modern Queens and Brooklyn. Long Island had long had a turbulent relationship with the City, reflecting Long Island's economic and social ties with New England, as many of its fishing communities were founded by Puritans settlers.

Historians of New York City had quite a different idea of the relationship between New York City and its neighbors. Daniel Curry describes the early relationship of Brooklyn and Manhattan "as a younger sister than a dangerous rival." He devoted an entire chapter in his History of New York to the "Environ of New-York. Suburbs of New-York--Brooklyn" "Nearly all great cities have large and important suburbs, and New-York forms no exception to this general rule." While these communities once had distinct identities, by the 1850s--at least in Curry's mind--"the overflowings of the city have reached to them, and caused them to disappear as independent bodies, and to become absorbed into the great metropolis."

In her History, Mary Booth generally discusses the histories of Brooklyn and Long Island entirely within the context of New York's. They never seem to possess a unique identity, unless they are exhibiting irksome behavior, contrary to the City's interests. This can be seen in the conflicts between the Dutch and the English, in which the English settlers of Long Island are in opposition to the Dutch. Brooklynnites are depicted as unreasonable and greedy, after the Montgomerie charter of 1740 prohibited private individuals from operating ferries across the East River. The Revolution temporarily arrested the controversy, but "upon the restoration of tranquillity, it was again revived, and has ever since furnished food for litigation, though the people have, as yet, been worsted

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37 Curry, New-York, 78.
38 Curry, New-York, 295.
in the contest." Independent behavior by Brooklyn was bad for the City and detrimental to the citizens of both New York and Brooklyn.

These histories of "New York's environs" were an attempt to firmly establish an independent identity, combating the idea that Long Island, Queens, and Brooklyn were mere colonies of New York City. These works were published by small, local houses in (for example) Jamaica, Long Island, or Flushing. These works were often written by members of the N-YHS; many were important local ministers, doctors, and lawyers. The topics covered in the queries of the N-YHS's address "To the Public" were those which concerned these authors, covering matters of earliest settlement, civic organization, and religious and social institutions. Many of these works offered information about the current conditions of their region, with titles following the same format: "The History of 'Blank', from its Founding or Settlement to the Present Time." They share with histories of the City the use of certain incidence, or types of incidents, to exemplify their contribution to the nation.

Benjamin Thompson's work, History of Long Island from its Discovery and Settlement to the Present Time was the first major work on the subject, written in 1839. It would go through three editions during Thompson's lifetime, and was often cited by others as the most significant work on Long Island. Irving deemed the work "quite a mine of local history."

Thompson was born in Setauket to an old Long Island family of Puritan derivation in 1784 and was extremely proud of this lineage. He practiced medicine before turning to law, eventually serving in the State Assembly and as the District Attor-

39 Booth, History of New York, 686.
41 Thompson, History of Long Island, xiv.
ney for Queens County. Politically, Thompson was an ardent opponent of state's rights, leaving the Democrat party over this issue. History was his passion, and he was a corresponding member of the N-YHS, the NJHS, the Connecticut Historical Society, and the New England Historic-Genealogical Society. Among his friends were Washington Irving, George Bancroft, Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan, and Chancellor James Kent.42

Volume I of Thompson's History concerns Long Island in general, containing information on its physical characteristics, its soil and climate, the discovery of Long Island, and its native population. Thompson devotes five chapters to the administrations and conflicts between the Dutch and the English for the area, emphasizing the dual heritage of Long Island. He then jumps to a discussion of Long Island during the Revolution, especially the occupation, attempting to deal with (just as historians of the City would) the taint of treason. The Battle of Brooklyn or Long Island and the Prison Ships each receive a chapter. To further his argument for Long Island's patriotism, he describes the region's involvement in the War of 1812. A discussion of transportation in the form of canals and the railroads point to Long Island's participation in the transportation network of the state and nation. A list of current officials rounds out the account. Volume II and III are detailed discussions of Suffolk, Queens, Nassau, and Kings Counties, and the various (25) towns, villages, and municipalities contained within. Volume III also includes the "Present Condition and Future Prospects of Long Island" and the birds of Long Island. Thompson ends his History with an extensive series of short biographies of the notable men and families of Long Island's past, including his own family, Captain Nathan Hale, and Egbert Benson.

42 Charles J. Werner, "Biography of Benjamin F. Thompson" in Thompson, History of Long Island, xxv-l.
All of these materials serve to highlight the importance and independence of Long Island. The unspoken element of comparison is the City. The historical account details Long Island's involvement in national events and its unique character, so different than that of the City. The extensive discussion of the communities of Long Island makes the region supremely knowable. No longer would it be that mysterious, rural area to the east. By discussing so many communities, Thompson not only displays their great variety, but also swells their importance. The cities of Queens and Kings County—Flushing, Jamaica, Brooklyn, Bushwick, Williamsburg, and Flatbush—belong to Long Island, not New York City. Long Island was a distinct region, not merely part of the greater Metropolitan area.

Thompson dedicated the second edition to the officers and members of the N-YHS, citing their "Efforts And Industry Have Been Long And Zealously Devoted To Collecting And Preserving The Materials Of American History." He signs himself "Their Obedient Servant, The Compiler." The third edition of 1849 is dedicated instead to "To The People Of Long Island, This improved edition of a work originally undertaken for their particular service, is very respectfully and affectionately inscribed by their fellow citizen and friend." The first dedication emphasizes Thompson part in the community of gentleman scholars. It links his project to theirs, making it part of the effort to preserve the nation's history (not just New York's). Long Island's history is consequently elevated from being merely local, to being a component of the greater whole. The second dedication reinforces Thompson's commitment to Long Island. His work is not aimed at only antiquarians and specialists, but part of a civic duty to all Long Islanders.

In the preface to first edition, Thompson refers to himself as "the compiler" just as he would in the dedication to the second edition. By this device, he portrays himself not
as an author or manipulator of history, but as only the means for collecting facts. He will present them in the most accurate manner. By never referring to himself in the first person, he reinforces the idea that the objective play of history is being presented. This is not fiction or entertainment. Thompson assures the reader that "the compiler has availed himself of every source of authentic information to render the work both useful and interesting." He emphasizes the effort and expense he has gone to in order to create this work, saying that if he had known how much "labor and responsibility" he would assume, he would have abandoned the project. His sole aim is to "present a correct and full account of Long Island, constituting a valuable repository of historical and statistical information." The significance of Long Island's history lies in the vast changes that had taken place in a short period of time; it is a "matter of very considerable importance" to record this history for posterity. He betrays this objective stance by describing himself as "A Long Islander by birth and descended from an ancestry coeval with its first settlement by Europeans, the compiler has been desirous of presenting to his fellow citizens a series of interesting facts and incidents of old time, of much intrinsic value and highly worthy of preservation." This lapse into subjectivity personalizes the work, and reinforces his commitment to providing such a history. By aiming this at his "fellow citizens," his project obtains the aspect of a civic duty. He then acknowledges the other works, including many manuscripts, and individuals he has consulted in his task. He admits he could go on researching for years, but that it was important to publish, however prematurely. He would continue his work, however. "History is progressive and new facts are constantly occurring, which can only be included in subsequent editions of a work like this."43

In the Preface to the second edition, Thompson stresses not the interest of such a

43 Thompson, History of Long Island, xiii-xiv.

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work, but its didactic usefulness. History not only teaches, but teaches through example. "It collects the evidences and perpetuates the recollection of events long past, which would otherwise be buried in oblivion." He does not qualify which kind of history can perform this role. His *History of Long Island*, just as much as a history of the United States, would serve in this larger, instructive capacity. He then discusses the role and nature of local histories, thus making the distinction between his project and national histories. "Local history must necessarily be more minute in its details than that which is more general, requiring equal patience and labor of inquiry, with a circumstantial delineation of facts, which would necessarily be passed over in works of larger grasp." It is different than a work of a national scope, but no less serious. It shares, ultimately, the goal. Thompson ends with a belief that he has "rendered a valuable service to his country" as well as one that residents of Long Island will appreciate, even after his death.

The Preface to the third edition\(^{44}\) acknowledges the pleasure he has received by the recognition of his work. He describes the success of the other editions, saying that had twice the number of copies been printed, they would have been sold. The work's popularity is not merely regional. Yet Thompson was not one to rest on his historical laurels. New materials had come to light through the efforts of John Romeyn Brodhead "a talented, learned, and enterprising gentlemen" who was the state's agent in Europe. Thompson writes that he made full use of the colonial records Brodhead had obtained, as well as "no inconsiderable amount of new matter of intrinsic value has been gathered by diligent research from various other sources, which, being incorporated with the former text, much contributes to its improvement."\(^{45}\)

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\(^{44}\) Thompson, *History of Long Island*, xxi-xxii.

\(^{45}\) Thompson, *History of Long Island*, xv- xvii.
Thompson work and, particularly, his various prefaces introduce several themes that will be repeated throughout these histories. The history of Long Island, including Queens and Kings counties, was distinct and special. Its history was not that of New York City. Its history had a place in the national history. Interest in such local history was not limited strictly to that region. Local histories, just as much as national histories, served the cause of patriotism and enhanced the nation's character.

Nathaniel Prime was a Presbyterian minister from Huntington on Long Island. His varied interests included history, electrical science, and classics.\textsuperscript{46} Prime's \textit{A History of Long Island, From its Settlement by Europeans, to the Year 1845, with Special Reference to its Ecclesiastical Concerns}\textsuperscript{47} follows Thompson's example on a smaller scale. He originally began his project as an ecclesiastical history, but soon came to believe that for readers to form a more complete picture of Long Island and its people, a complete view had to be taken. However, he would not address incidents of the American Revolution as they were "faithfully recorded in almost every history of the country." The work is divided into two parts. Part I, "The Physical Features and Civil Affairs," with special attention to the Puritan presence on Long Island in Section VII, including the histories of the towns first settled by New Englanders and the "attempt of the Dutch to subject the whole Island to their authority in 1673." Part II offers the particulars of Suffolk, Queens, and Kings counties, and statistics on the various denominations with congregations on Long Island.

In his Preface, Prime describes his project as "a history of Long Island, with spe-


\textsuperscript{47} Nathaniel S. Prime, \textit{A History of Long Island, From its Settlement by Europeans, to the Year 1845, with Special Reference to its Ecclesiastical Concerns} (New York: Robert Carter, 1845).

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cial reference to its intellectual, moral, and religious condition, from its first settlement to
the present time." The audience to which he addresses this work is as wide in its scope as
his ambition. Noting that the history of Long Island had been "terra incognita, to almost
the whole world," Prime makes the assumption that the whole world should, and would,
know this history. If successful, the work would not only be "deeply interesting and in-
structive" to the current Long Islanders, but also "their numerous kindred, scattered as
they are, in almost every part of this wide-spread land."

The tide of emigration, form this strand in the sea, has been much greater
than is generally imagined. You can scarcely go into any quarter of the
country, without finding those who were natives of this island, or who
proudly claim descent form those that were.

The presence of Long Islanders all over the nation tied America to this region. Long Is-
land's history, through the presence of its natives throughout the land, belonged to all
Americans.⁴⁸

Prime then addresses an important and very interesting aspect to his project. He
believes that Long Islanders had a reputation, in the greater world, for being small-
minded, ignorant, and naïve. He acknowledges that their views were somewhat limited,
and that "from their non-intercourse with the cunning and dishonest men of the world (for
be it known, that a consummate rogue is about as rare an animal as a wolf on Long Is-
land) they are an unsuspecting people, and are perhaps more easily over-reached than
those, who are more conversant with the ways of the world." But they do not lack intelli-
gence, and "general information, so far as it may be obtained from books and oral in-
struction, they are not inferior to the mass of population, in any equal portion of the
state." Here the subtext is the contrast with natives of Long Island with those citizens of

New York City, particularly as portrayed by New Yorkers. One of Prime's goals, then, was to correct these widespread negatives views of Long Islanders, "such a history as is here contemplated, is more important for non-residents, if they really wish correct information on the subject, than for the inhabitants of the island themselves." 49

The aforementioned Onderdonk family were descendants of early New York settlers and included many prominent Episcopalian ministers, including Bishop Henry U. Onderdonk. Henry Onderdonk, Jr. was an active member of the N-YHS, serving on many of their committees and contributing papers. His first historical work was the 1849 Revolutionary Incidents Of Suffolk And Kings Counties: With An Account Of The Battle Of Long Island, And The British Prisons And Prison-Ships At New-York. 50 This was a collection of excerpts from primary documents, including letters, with commentary from Onderdonk. In keeping with the pattern of the time, Onderdonk starts his Preface by stating the need for the work. "The history of the Island during this soul-stirring period has been hitherto clouded in gross darkness." This history was important not only to local interests, but the contents of these volumes show that Long Island is not barren in Revolutionary Incidents, unique in their character, and instructive to the student of our country's history. The Counties of Suffolk, Queens, and Kings, each played a different and yet appropriate part in the great drama of the Revolution.

The "Counties of Suffolk, Queens and Kings" were important players in the Revolution. Their history, in this case as it related to the Revolution, was all American's history. It was not only of local interest.

Onderdonk, like all New York historians, had to deal with the occupation of the region by the British, and the taint of Toryism long born by New Yorkers. He describes the early involvement and sympathy for Boston by the Puritans of Suffolk County. He acknowledges that the "peaceable Quaker, the passive Dutchman; and the Church-of-England-man" of Queens County and the Dutch of Kings County were loyal, but largely out of placidity. The people of Suffolk, on the other hand were "ever treacherous subjects of a King they had sworn to obey,"given to smuggling and acts of sabotage. Despite swearing oaths of loyalty to the British. Long Islanders were never truly loyal. After the evacuation,"they quietly slipped off their oath with their loyalty, and without the formality of abjuring their allegiance, took their place among the citizens of these free and Independent States."51

The book's subtitle "The British Prisons and Prison-ships at New-York" uses this most dramatic incident in the Revolution much the same way as historians of the City did. The horrible conditions of the prisons, and the resultant deaths were proof of New York's sacrifice to the Revolutionary cause. a coounterproof of any charges of cooperation. An entire chapter is devoted to the subject,52 comprising of first person accounts and official documents relating to the prisons and prisoners. By including it in this collection devoted to revolutionary incidents in Suffolk, Queens, and Kings counties, Onderdonk claims this incident for Long Islanders. The hardship and sacrifice belong justly to them.

In 1865, Onderdonk published Queens County in Olden Times: Being a Supple-

51 Onderdonk, Revolutionary Incidents, 5-6.
52 Onderdonk, Revolutionary Incidents, 207-250.
ment to the Several Histories Thereof. This is yet another collection of primary documents, arranged and annotated by the author. In the Preface to this volume, he describes the act of discovering these documents in Albany and in the archives in Town and County Clerk's Offices, Supervisor's Minutes, papers of the Surrogate and County Treasurer. He makes his efforts sound heroic, adventuresome, and hardly tedious. Onderdonk was very concerned about the state of this material, and urged that they be collected in one place. He promises the reader that he will publish a second series with Suffolk and Kings County, a bibliography of Long Island, and the annals of the Reformed Protestant Dutch church.

Onderdonk's methodology mirrored the publications of the N-YHS. Selections of primary documents, often with a common theme, sometimes annotated, were published in a collection. However similar the arrangement of materials might have been, the ambition of Onderdonk was quite different from that of the N-YHS. The editors of the Collections of the N-YHS repeatedly express the idea that they are only providing the raw materials for future historians. The editors claim no design or meaning in their selection and arrangement, beyond wishing to highlight certain topics (the Dutch settlement, for example). Onderdonk is supremely aware of the meaning inherent in his selection and arrangement of primary materials.

I have made liberal extracts from old and scarce newspapers, my design being to present the reader a picture of "olden times," and let Antiquity step on the stage and speak for itself while I stand behind the scenes and move the panorama of nearly two centuries, thereby exhibiting our ancestors as they thought, spoke and acted.54

53 Henry Onderdonk, Jr., Queens County in Olden Times: Being a Supplement to the Several Histories Thereof (Jamaica, NY: Charles Welling, 1865).
54 Onderdonk, Queens County, 1.
Onderdonk is not naïvely providing materials for historical inquiry, but creating a story. This technique, along with his narrative of discovering this material, lends verisimilitude and veracity to his work.

Greater Brooklyn occupied a difficult position between New York and Long Island. With an increase in ferry service, it was rapidly becoming a suburb of the City. Its docks handled shipping for the City and its cemeteries the City's dead. As early as the 1840s, proposals were made to absorb Brooklyn in a greater New York. However, as histories of Long Island show, many still considered Brooklyn as Kings County to be part of Long Island. Many Brooklynites rejected the incursions on their sovereignty, and worked to maintain a separate identity. In 1861, Walt Whitman published a series of 23 articles in the Brooklyn Standard, entitled "Brooklyniana." In these, he covered such topics as the settlement of Brooklyn, its population past and present, the native people, commerce, the Revolution—particularly the Prison Ships, natural history, the jail, important churches and buildings. His first article was called "Preserving Traditions." Whitman cited the general belief that most Americans were antagonistic to the past, especially in the "huge cities of our Atlantic seaboard like Brooklyn and New York" with their populations of new immigrants. The West shared this characteristic. "Still, there will come a time, here in Brooklyn, and all over America, when nothing will be of more interest than authentic reminiscences of the past...we think every portion of it will always meet a welcome from the large mass of American readers."\(^55\) Whitman expressed the need to trace the Dutch origin of Brooklyn, as

counts of the tribes found there; and yet here on this island are some points
of interest transcending either of those celebrated beginnings of European
colonization. 56

This is a familiar cry of historians of the City, and Whitman puts it in the context of
Brooklyn's history. Brooklyn's founding, not just New York's, was as important that of
New England and Virginia. In the course of his essays, Whitman seldom made any men-
tion of New York City.

These works on Long Island, Queens, and Brooklyn all indicate an attempt to
fight off the expansionist ambitions of the City. These histories contrast with those of the
complex, bustling metropolis. They were the history of small towns, an easily manage-
able and understood history. At the same time, their authors exhibited grander ambitions.
by deeming their histories just as important, in interest and scope, as that of the City.
They were written by "amateurs," but amateurs who had their past historical endeavors
mentioned on the title page. At the local level, historical inquiry could still be the hobby
of gentlemen and ministers. There is strong sense of the place of local history, and the
difference between that and national history. Despite this difference, they stress the im-
portance of local history in the national context, and see it has transcending mere local
interest.

State History

In her Introduction to her History of the City of New York, Mary Booth had noted
the many histories of the state of New York. The first, full-length history of New York
State was Francis Smith Eastman's A History of the State of New York, from the First

56 Whitman, New York. 23.
Discovery of the Country to the Present Time.\textsuperscript{57} This first appeared in 1828. The second edition of 1831 more than doubled his previous effort, largely through consulting a greater variety of sources, thus making his account more complete. Eastman states in his preface that his goal was to give a "brief outline of the natural, civil and statistical history of the state of New York." It would cover a period from the discovery to current times. No such history existed, a deficit "universally acknowledged," although he does not explain by whom. Eastman included a lengthy list of citations after the Introduction, including Smith’s History, the Journal of the General Assembly of New York, Irving’s History, and the Collections of the N-YHS. In the conclusion of his Preface, Eastman offers the work to "the citizens of New York," not some learned institution, such as the N-YHS.\textsuperscript{58} Through this dedication and through his use of the word "citizens" (not, for example, inhabitants), Eastman shows that he has a civic purpose to his work. His believed that there was a need for such a history, enough that he wrote an expanded second edition, and that it would benefit the people of New York. However, Eastman does not explain how such a work would be "useful" or what actual benefit it would serve.

Chapter Four is concerned, in part, with the aboriginal New Yorkers, notably the Iroquois and their confederacy. Eastman links them to the subsequent American constitution, yet another New York influence on the nation. In a similar vein, Eastman uses the 1754 Albany Congress to unite the colonies in as another early example of national unity, with New York at the lead. Only one chapter (Five) is devoted to the Dutch, but eight chapters cover the eighteenth century, with a special emphasis on politics upstate. These

\textsuperscript{57} Francis Smith Eastman, A History of the State of New York from the First Discovery to the Present Time: with a Geographical Account of the Country; and a View of its Original Inhabitants (New York: Augustus K. White, 1831).

\textsuperscript{58} Eastman, History, 5-6.
cover New York's role in the French and Indian War, particularly the battles, and the Revolution. Eastman emphasizes the early resistance of all New Yorkers to British tyranny. The events which occurred in New York City are barely mentioned, but the battles upstate, such as Ticonderoga and Saratoga, are described in detail. In doing so, he cleanses the rest of the state from the tarnish of disloyalty which colored the City.

Eastman concludes his historical discussion with "General Views" of the state at the time of the writing, examining the "Constitution and Laws. Political Divisions. Cities and Villages. Agriculture, Manufactures, Commerce, Canals, Banks, Militia, Education. Literary Institutions. Religion. Population. And Character." His focus is again on upstate New York. For example, the canals are described as an upstate phenomenon, not only physically, but also in terms of their economic benefit. New York City is acknowledged as the most important city in terms of its economy, but only one of five prominent cities in the state. The others were Albany, Troy, Hudson, and Schenectady. These cities are described in relation to their position in the nation's history. "New York is the metropolis of the state...It is the largest, and, in a commercial point of view, the most important city in the Union..."59 Albany "is the capital, and, next to New York, the largest and most important city in the state...It has the oldest charter of any city in the Union, and, next to Jamestown in Virginia, the oldest settlement..."60 Unspoken is the fact that Jamestown remained a small village, whereas Albany became the New York's capital.

In his section devoted to the character of the people of New York, Eastman describes New Yorkers as "consisting of emigrants, or the descendents of emigrants, from most of the European states, can hardly be said, at this period, to have established a na-

59 Eastman, History, 345.
60 Eastman, History, 349.
tional character." The primacy of the Dutch appearance "impacted a bias to the others, which is still perceptible, and probably will long continue." However, despite this lack of a "national character," or perhaps because of it, "New York has furnished her full proportion in the bright catalogue of American worthies, and has ever been distinguished for patriotism and attachment to freedom." New York could stand beside her rivals, New England and Virginia in her contribution to the nation. No other state had surpassed her in her progress in all aspects, from arts to commerce. Eastman shows this progress as ongoing, and directly connected to the "industry and enterprise." of the people of New York.  

Eastman ends the book with biographical sketches of some of those worthies from New York. These include George Clinton, De Witt Clinton, Thomas Addis Emmet, Robert Fulton, Alexander Hamilton, Henry Hudson, Francis Lewis, Philip Livingston, William Livingston, Brockholst Livingston, Richard Montgomery, Lewis Morris, Gouverneur Morris, Peter Schuyler, and Philip Schuyler. The subjects of his profiles range from explorers and inventors to soldiers and statesmen, and have in common their involvement in national affairs, not merely state or City. The majority of them represent New York's contribution to the Revolution and the creation of the new nation. In these men, it could be seen that New York's contribution to the nation was equal to, or greater than, other states and was not only in the past. The characteristics they embodied—patriotism and progress—made tangible the contributions of the state.

The gathering and publication of state documents is perhaps one of the most important projects the N-YHS undertook during this period. The N-YHS had engaged in

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61 Eastman, History, 367-368.
this endeavor on a small scale, but saw the need for a more complete collection to be made. In 1838, it urged the State Legislature to begin to collect the documents pertaining to the colonial history of New York, located in foreign lands, in order to preserve the documents etc. that "illustrate and explain many uncertainties in our colonial history...and that without them...no true and perfect history of this State can ever be written." The N-YHS did not have the funds to pursue this project itself, so the state assumed the project.

John Romeyn Brodhead was selected as the state's agent to go to Europe in search of these documents. Brodhead, although only twenty-six, had already been an attaché to the legation at The Hague. His experience in the Netherlands had given him a keen interest in the Dutch past of New York, and it is there that he started his quest. While his search was met with interest and encouragement in the Netherlands and France, Great Britain proved somewhat more frustrating, putting restrictions and barriers over what he could obtain and copy. Eventually, Brodhead's collections would be arranged in sixteen volumes of the Dutch transcriptions, seventeen volumes of the French, and forty-seven of the English.62

The state eventually published the entire set, beginning in 1853. Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan, who had translated the French and some of the Dutch documents, edited the collection. Like Brodhead, O'Callaghan was a collector and editor of historical documents. Born in Ireland in 1797, O'Callaghan studied medicine and later immigrated to

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Canada. His involvement in the National Patriot movement in Montreal caused his prosecution for treason and he was forced to flee to the United States. He settled in upstate New York and the anti-rent controversies of the time sparked his interest in colonial history, particularly the rights of the patroons. His research in the state archives (pre-Brodhead) resulted in his History of New Netherland of 1846. In 1848 O'Callaghan was made the keeper of historical manuscripts of New York State. He published many of these manuscripts, as well as writing his own history of New York. His numerous publications include the History of New Netherland (New York, 1846-9); Jesuit Relations (New York, 1847); Remonstrance Of New Netherland From Original Dutch MSS. (Albany, 1856); Names Of Persons For Whom Marriage Licenses Were Issued Previous To 1784 (Albany, 1860); Journal Of The Legislation Council Of The State Of New York, 1691-1775 (Albany, 1860); Calendar of the Land Papers (Albany, 1864); The Register of New Netherland 1626-74 (Albany, 1865); and the Calendar Of Dutch, English And Revolutionary MSS. In The Office Of The Secretary Of State (Albany, 1865-68). O'Callaghan's publications reveal his interest in the documents of government and state. Most were collections of these materials, with an introductory essay on the subject and the method in gathering by O'Callaghan. Indeed, the research and collection of the materials seems to have been as much the point of O'Callaghan's efforts as any sort of interpretation. Unlike Henry Onderdonk, Jr., O'Callaghan does not appear to be consciously telling a story with his collections. Rather, in the footsteps of the N-YHS, he provided the raw materials for future investigation.

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The exception to O'Callaghan's usual collections, aside from some essays and papers, was his two volumes *History of New Netherland: or New York Under the Dutch.* This work is divided into six books, and begins with the discovery of America by Columbus. The story of New Netherland—which is largely the story of New Amsterdam in O'Callaghan's version—reflects the sources O'Callaghan used. It is a civil and political history, drawn from official documents. The charter of the West India Company is compared with other such documents from other colonies. There is a great deal of material on the conflict with English, and O'Callaghan's sympathy is clearly with the Dutch. In keeping with his other interests, new material is offered on the patroons and on the Jesuits in New York.

In his Preface, O'Callaghan describes what led him to this project. "Circumstances of a public nature induced the writer of the following pages to enter, several years ago, into a somewhat extensive course of reading, with a view to determine, for his own satisfaction, the nature, as well as the extent of the constitutional rights enjoyed by the American Colonies, previous to the Revolution of 1776." Clearly, these circumstances were related to his departure from Canada. This concern for colonial rights, and the possible establishment of precedent for Canadians, or rather, French Canadians, determine O'Callaghan's focus. His *History of New Netherlands* is the history of the rights of the people, both granted and fought for. Each conflict, from the Dutch West India Company, between the people and the governors, between the English and Dutch, is yet another chapter in the struggle for political rights.

When O'Callaghan came to look at the documents of New York State in his re-

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search, he was dismayed at the quantity but not at the quality. He had been led to believe that New York under the Dutch was dull and uneventful, but he found otherwise. This led to the organization of the existing documents, and, after John Romeyn Brodhead sent back the sixteen volumes of documents from Holland, the editing and arrangement of those. Eventually, he was compelled to write the history of New Netherland from the materials that had been gathered. O'Callaghan points to his future work by including a lengthy appendix of primary materials. Echoing the N-YHS, he believed that "like blazed trees, they will, at least, point out to the future traveler the path of those pioneers who have preceded him in the forest, affording the benefit, at one and the same time, of their errors and their experience." He ends with a plea that any families which possess "ancient documents" lend them to him for future research.  

Just as the N-YHS included their own history and documents relating to their business in their Collections, John Romeyn Brodhead's introduction to the Documents Relating To The Colonial History Of The State Of New-York is a history of the project, including all the official reports. Throughout, he takes every opportunity to link the project to the N-YHS and laud their efforts at historical preservation. By this, the N-YHS became even more part of the official history of the state of New York. He begins his account with a brief narrative of the N-YHS's founding and how it came to sponsor the larger project. Brodhead reprints the memorial by the N-YHS to the State Assembly of April 10, 1838, citing the need for the Empire State to "have under its own control the materials for writing its history." The already apparent future position of the state further enhanced this need.  

Chapin's reply of February 19, 1839, assented, reiterating the need

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66 O'Callaghan, History of New Netherland, 5-10.
67 Documents Relating, 1:xi-xii.
of so great a state of New York to preserve these records, especially since the accomplishments of the state and its citizens were unsurpassed in the nation. Further, "your committee believe that no subject is calculated to inspire us with a stronger love of freedom and of country than the records of the times and chivalric deeds of our fathers."68

Brodhead does not use the first person in writing of his own actions. Instead, he refers to himself as "Mr. Brodhead" or "the Agent." This removes any sense of personal opinion in the account, rendering it more "historical" and more objective. He reprints, in full, his Report to the State Assembly. Once again, he attributes the origin of the project to a new "antiquarian interest" in the country resulting from the efforts of the N-YHS. He describes the great effort and difficulties he experienced in the course of executing his duty. While the Dutch and French cooperated, the English caused him no end of grief. However, all the effort was worthwhile. "...It must ever be a source of proud reflection that the state of New-York...has been among the foremost of the Confederation to vindicate her self-respect to the world, by rescuing from obscurity and long neglect the scattered memorials of her Colonial existence, to place them side by side the records of her independent progress."69 The materials he had gathered not only documented the great history of New York State, but the act of collecting them brought honor on the state.

The May 5, 1845, report of George Folsom to the Assembly regarding the documents offers the usual opinions on the necessity of historical preservation and the glory it would bring the state. Then, Folsom, librarian of the N-YHS, launched into a lengthy tirade against another type of history of New York:

It is the misfortune of the State that its early founders have been held up to the ridicule of the world by one of its most gifted sons, who has exhausted

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68 Documents Relating, 1:xiii-xvi.
69 Documents Relating, 1:xxii-xxxvi.

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the resource of his wit and satire in exposing imaginary traits in their character, while the most polished efforts of his graver style have been reserved to adorn the Corinthian columns of the more aristocratic institutions of foreign countries. A late excellent writer, the author of a valuable History of the United States, although a stranger to our country, has spoken in proper terms on this subject; he remarks as follows: 'Founders of ancient colonies have sometime been deified by their successors. New-York is perhaps the only commonwealth whose founders have been covered with ridicule from the same quarter. It is impossible to read the ingenious and diverting romance entitled Knickerbocker's History of New York, without wishing that the author had put a little more or a little less truth in it; and that his talent for humor and sarcasm had found another subject than the dangers, hardships and virtues of the ancestors of his national family. It must be unfavorable to patriotism to connect historical recollection with ludicrous associations.' To remove the reproach thus thoughtlessly to the annals of our State, it is only necessary to bring to light the true character of its early colonists, whose father-land ranked at that period among the foremost nations of Europe in point of commercial wealth and enterprise, and before all others in the freedom of its government; a freedom purchased by forty years' struggle against the bloodthirsty myrmidons of Spanish despotism. The traits ascribed by the mock historian to the first settlers of New-York can scarcely be supposed to have characterized such a people; on the other hand, the manly virtues they displayed amidst the toils and hardships of colonial life, removed at so great a distance from the scenes of their early associations, deserve very different commemoration at the hands of their descendants and successors."

This repeated and expanded on Folsom's the Introduction to volume I of the Second Series of the Collections of the New-York Historical Society. Instead of being printed by the N-YHS, reaching only a limited audience, his disapproval was now part of the public record. It was official: even as late as 1845. Washington Irving's version of New York's history threatened the very proper custodians of the N-YHS. Folsom repeats the old charges against Irving, especially concerning his patriotism. No record remains of Irving's reaction, if any, to this report.

Folsom's address also afforded him another chance to highlight what he thought were the important characteristics of the Dutch ancestors: a talent for commerce and a

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70 Documents Relating, I:xxxvi-xli.

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love of freedom. By linking the two together, he reinforced the idea that one was necessary to the other. New York's political freedom was crucial to its commercial success and vice versa. This was the true legacy of the Dutch and the great contribution of New York to the nation.

John Romeyn Brodhead was quick to utilize the documents he had collected. Unlike O'Callaghan, he largely limited his translation and commentary to materials published under the auspices of the N-YHS. Brodhead had been rewarded for his efforts on behalf of historical preservation with his election as a lifetime member of the N-YHS. He delivered numerous papers before the membership, and published translations of documents with commentary in the second series of the Collections. The exception to his N-YHS activities was his own history of the state based on the documents, begun soon after his return from Europe. The first volume of Brodhead's *History of the State of New York: First Period, 1609-1664*71 was published in 1853; the second volume appeared in 1871. The preface of volume one divides the history of New York State into four periods. "The first, opening with its discovery by the Dutch in 1609, and closing with its seizure by the English in 1664, comprises also the early history of New Jersey, Delaware, and Pennsylvania, and, to some extent, that of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut." The second begins with English rule and ends with the annexation of Canada. The third begins with the Treaty of Paris and ends with the inauguration of Washington. The fourth is everything after the creation of the Federal government. Brodhead's history covers only the first period. "In that period many of the political, religious, and social

elements of New York had their origin." New York under the Dutch, not the English, is the crucial period in the state's development. Brodhead, in his description of the first period, includes the history of most of the surrounding states. He reduces their history, including that of New England, to being but a part of New York's history. By their inclusion, he also removes New York's history from the realm of the merely local. New York's history is virtually national in its importance and scope.

Brodhead's experience at the hands of the English no doubt aggravated any anti-English feelings he may have harbored. The Dutch are the heroes of his history, and the English and their henchmen in New England, the villains. All that is good and freedom loving comes from the Dutch, while the English are the source of greed and bigotry. Consequently, he ends this first volume with a section on the influence of the Dutch founders of New York. This conclusion starts with the now formulaic statement that "New York possesses annals not surpassed by those of any other state in the American union in topics of varied character, romantic incident, and instructive lesson." He repeats that New York's history encompasses that of New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. He then moves on to the Dutch founders. Commerce "made Old Amsterdam the Tyre of the seventeenth century, early provoked the envy of the colonial neighbors of New Amsterdam, and, in the end, made her the emporium of the Western World." Barges and canals all had their origins with the Dutch. The remnants of the Dutch could still be seen in modern day New York, in the sturdy brick buildings and the celebration of holidays. Brodhead goes on to describe the Golden Age of Dutch rule, echoing (unintentionally no doubt) Washington Irving's account.

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72 Brodhead, History of the State, 1:i-ii.
73 Brodhead, History of the State, 1:745-750.
Even slaves were happy during this period, "scarcely knowing he was in bondage, danced merrily as the best." The cosmopolitan population of New York had its roots in Dutch practice, with its "happy intermixture of other races contributed to insure the prosperity of the state." Commerce, under the Dutch, was the "solvent of national antipathies." Liberality of spirit, love of freedom, and economic prosperity are the legacy of the Dutch, and are linked as being necessary to each other. This liberality was in complete contrast to the Puritans.

Brodhead believed that the germ of American institutions and characters was to be found not in New England, but in New Netherlands. He makes direct reference to those historians of America who "from habit or prejudice, have been inclined to magnify the influence and extol the merit of the Anglo-Saxon race" ignoring the contributions of all others. Brodhead negates this view, believing instead that is the Dutch who are to be looked to for the roots of America's greatness:

without undervaluing others, it may confidently be claimed that to no nation in the world is the Republic of the West more indebted than to the United Provinces, for the idea of the confederation of sovereign states; for noble principles of constitutional freedom; for magnanimous sentiments of religious toleration; for characteristic sympathy with the subjects of oppression; for liberal doctrines in trade and commerce; for illustrious patterns of private integrity and public virtue; and for generous and timely aid to the establishment of independence.74

Brodhead repeats several themes that can be found in both histories of the City and state of New York. New York's history is just as, or perhaps even more interesting than that of any state in the Union. New England is always present, either explicitly or implicitly, as a rival. The Dutch, rather being buffoons, are worthy ancestors, while the English are suspect. Most importantly, New York's history is important to the entire nation, for it is

74 Brodhead, History of the State, 1: 749-750.
New York which best embodies the American ideal. In its history is the source of America's accomplishments, in terms of freedom, liberty, and economic success. In contrast to many other histories, however, Brodhead does not favor New York City over New York State, or the reverse. Instead, the histories of City and state are integrated into a coherent whole.

**County Histories**

Just as histories of the nation engendered histories of the state, beginning in the 1840s histories of the counties of New York State began to appear. These county histories were at once very local and quite grand in scope. Small town chronicles and lists of the members of the local Oddfellows Lodge have their place next to investigations of the Border Wars and the battles of the Revolution. In common with historians of the state and of New York City, the county historians strove to prove the contribution their county made to the nation. The themes of commerce, patriotism, and progress appear in these works, illustrated with events from the counties' past. These events often parallel those of the City and state. Events from the past are placed in a national context, and much effort was taken to remove the aura of localism from them. The titles of some of these county histories reveal these themes. Jeptha Root Simms *History Of Schoharie County. And Border Wars Of New York: Containing Also A Sketch Of The Causes Which Led To The American Revolution: And Interesting Memoranda Of The Mohawk Valley* and Jay Gould *History Of Delaware County: And Border Wars Of New York. Containing A Sketch Of The Late Anti-Rent Difficulties In Delaware With Other Historical And Miscellaneous Matter Never Before Published* are just two of the many works which ap-
peared at this time.\textsuperscript{75}

Many of the authors list on the title page that they are members of, or corresponding members of the N-YHS and other historical associations. By including this information, these works gain the imprint of veracity and scholarship. The county historians are not just local antiquarians, but part of a community of scholarly gentlemen.

Joshua V. H. Clark, A.M. author of \textit{Onondaga or Reminiscences of Earlier and Later Times: Being a Series of Historical Sketches Relative to Onondaga; with Notes on the Several Towns in the County, and Oswego}\textsuperscript{76} was a "Corresponding Member of the New York Historical Society." Clark's work had its origins as a lecture at Maulius Lyceum, and with research, eventually grew. Originally, he thought his subject was "unfruitful in incident and barren of interest" but research proved him wrong. The course of Clark's research led him to the "Libraries of Cambridge University, Mass.: Brown University and the Athenaeum, of Providence, R. II.; and the New-York Historical Society, New-York Society Libraries of New-York and the State Library at Albany." In addition, he consulted Mrs. O'Blennis of Salina and Mrs. Wood, of Onondaga Hollow "both of who have resided in the county from its earliest settlement, and whose vigorous minds are stored with an almost unlimited stock of valuable information."\textsuperscript{77} Through his subject matter

\textsuperscript{75} Jeptha Root Simms, \textit{History Of Schoharie County, And Border Wars Of New York: Containing Also A Sketch Of The Causes Which Led To The American Revolution: And Interesting Memoranda Of The Mohawk Valley} (Albany, NY: Munsell & Tanner, printers, 1845); Levi Beardsley, \textit{Reminiscences; Personal And Other Incidents: Early Settlement Of Otsego County: Notices And Anecdotes Of Public Men; Judicial, Legal, And Legislative Matters; Field Sports; Dissertations And Discussions} (New York: C. Vinten, 1852); and Jay Gould, \textit{History Of Delaware County: And Border Wars Of New York, Containing A Sketch Of The Late Anti-Rent Difficulties In Delaware With Other Historical And Miscellaneous Matter Never Before Published} (Roxbury, NY: Keeny & Gould, 1856).

\textsuperscript{76} Joshua V. H. Clark, A.M., \textit{Onondaga or Reminiscens of Earlier and Later Times: Being a Series of Historical Sketches Relative to Onondaga; with Notes on the Several Towns in the County, and Oswego. Two vols.} (Syracuse, NY: Stoddard and Babcock, 1849).

\textsuperscript{77} Clarke, \textit{Onondaga}, 1: iii-iv.
and his research, Clark was the exemplary N-YHS man. By listing his sources and amount of research, he proves the worthiness of his subject.

Clark was particularly interested in the Indians of his county. This is very common in these upstate histories; the history of the native peoples made the history of county unique. "There is probably no portion of the United States whose Indigenal annals are of so much importance as those of Onondaga, and the region contiguous; and strange as it may appear, the history of this important country, which of all others is the most interesting, will only attract the attention it demands, in the remote periods of future ages." This was a history fast disappearing, and it was the historian's duty to preserve this history. "Indian tradition, with all its vivacity and interest, is fearfully becoming extinct. A few short years and nothing new can possibly be gleaned."78

Rivalry existed between counties for preeminence in the nation's history. Almost all the authors declare that their county is the most important or influential to the nation and the state. Very quickly, the works, especially their introductions, begin to follow a stereotypical form. Robert Bolton, the author of *A History of the County of Westchester, from its First Settlement to the Present Time*79 was also a member of the N-YHS. His Preface is a model of the type, beginning "Perhaps no part of the 'Empire State' has greater claims on the attention of the Topographer and the Historian, than the county of Westchester. The beauty of its scenery, and the interesting circumstances connected with its history, both civil and military, entitle it to peculiar notice." The lack of a written history of Westchester is "certainly a desideratum." He professes the hope that he has

78 Clark, *Onondaga*, 1:xiv-xv.
been successful in creating a proper and complete history. To that end, no amount of research was left undone, and he provides a long list of people who helped out, including Washington Irving. The usual list of lengthy sources follows.⁸⁰

Pioneer history also set these counties apart and the use of the "pioneer" as a separate type links the settlement of New York State with that of the West. Works such as Hermon Camp Goodwin Pioneer History: Or, Cortland County And The Border Wars Of New York. From The Earliest Period To The Present Time⁸¹ emphasize the rugged independent spirit of the pioneers, seeing them as the root of American individualism and devotion to liberty. O. Turner's extravagantly titled work History Of The Pioneer Settlement, Of Phelps And Gorham Purchase, And Morris' Reserve; Embracing The Counties Of Monroe, Ontario, Livingston, Yates, Steuben, Most Of Wayne And Allegheny, And Parts Of Orleans, Genesee And Wyoming. To Which Is Added, A Supplement, Or Extension Of The Pioneer History Of Monroe County. The Whole Preceded By Some Account Of French And English Dominion—Border Wars Of The Revolution—Indian Councils And Land Cessions—The Progress Of Settlement Westward From The Valley Of The Mohawk—Early Difficulties With The Indians—Our Immediate Predecessors The Senecas—With "A Glance At The Iroquois"⁸² was dedicated to "The Surviving Pioneers And The Descendants Of Pioneers Of Phelps And Gorham's Purchase, Morris' Reserve, This Work Is Respectfully Dedicated." Turner then proceeds to explain his

⁸⁰Bolton, Westchester, v-vi.
⁸²O. Turner, History Of The Pioneer Settlement, Of Phelps And Gorham Purchase, And Morris' Reserve: Embracing The Counties Of Monroe, Ontario, Livingston, Yates, Steuben, Most Of Wayne And Allegany, And Parts Of Orleans, Genesee And Wyoming. To Which Is Added, A Supplement, Or Extension Of The Pioneer History Of Monroe County. The Whole Preceded By Some Account Of French And English Dominion—Border Wars Of The Revolution—Indian Councils And Land Cessions—The Progress Of Settlement Westward From The Valley Of The Mohawk—Early Difficulties With The Indians—Our Immedi-
dedication, in a lengthy discourse on the contributions of the pioneers. Their sacrifice, their endurance, and their patriotism are all lauded, and portrayed as the special patrimony of these counties. The Pioneer, rather than the Puritan, Cavalier, or the Knickerbocker, is the embodiment of the true American. Turner discusses the progress that had been since the days of the pioneers, the transformation from wilderness to civilization, symbolized by railroads, telegraphs, and the canals "bearing upon its bosom the products of your own subdued, teeming soil, and continuous fleets, laden with the products of an Empire, that has sprung up around the borders of our Western Lakes." In doing so, Turner emphasizes the signs of modernity and progress in these counties, the importance of the region in the state's economy.

These counties were not bereft of their own "distinguished men." William Raymond Biographical Sketches of the Distinguished Men Of Columbia County, Including An Account Of The Most Important Offices They Have Filled, In The State And General Governments, And In The Army And Navy 83 states that "COLUMBIA COUNTY has produced more distinguished men, it is believed, than any other county of equal size and population in this State, or in any other State in the Union." These include Van Rensselaers, Livingstons, and Van Burens, men more likely to be associated with national, New York City, or Albany. Raymond reclaims them for Columbia County, and in doing so, emphasizes the contribution of the county to the nation.

IT will be perceived that many of the subjects of these sketches are national in their character, consequently this work not only be interesting to the citizens of Columbia county and the State of New York, but to those of every state in the Union. Her distinguished sons have filled the most im-

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important offices in the state and general governments, and their acts and labors constitute an important portion of the history not only of the State of New-York, but of the nation.\textsuperscript{84}

Columbia County did not just produce important men, but the most important men. This speaks to the strong element of competition between counties.

John W. Barber's \textit{Historical Collections of the State of New York: Being a General Collection of the Most Interesting Facts, Biographical Sketches, Varied Descriptions, \&c Relating to the Past and Present; with Geographical Descriptions of the Counties, Cities, and Principal Villages Throughout the State}\textsuperscript{85} of 1851 straddles the genres of state and county histories. Born in 1798, John W. Barber was a New Haven based copper and wood engraver and evangelical preacher. Beginning in 1827, he traveled throughout the East Coast, collecting stories, and materials he thought would be useful to a history of the nation.\textsuperscript{86} He published collections devoted to New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York, as well as \textit{Incidents in American History}.\textsuperscript{87} Illustrated with his own engravings. These compendiums of folklore, statistics, and local stories were really a type of gazetteer, with population and commercial information. Historical information became, just as population statistics, something that was necessary to understanding a place. History had ceased to be confined to the narrative or the document, but was useful, entertaining lore. Barber's \textit{Historical Collections} includes some historical

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{84} Raymond, \textit{Biographical Sketches}, xvii
\item \textsuperscript{85} John W. Barber, \textit{Historical Collections of the State of New York: Being a General Collection of the Most Interesting Facts, Biographical Sketches, Varied Descriptions, \&c Relating to the Past and Present; with Geographical Descriptions of the Counties, Cities, and Principal Villages Throughout the State} (New York: Clark, Austin & Co., 1851).
\item \textsuperscript{87} John W. Barber, \textit{Incidents In American History: Being A Selection Of The Most Important And Interesting Events Which Have Transpired Since The Discovery Of America, To The Present Time Compiled From The Most Approved Authorities By J.W. Barber} (New York: G.F. Cooledge & Bro., c1847).
\end{itemize}
documents along with narrative accounts of historical incidents. By calling the book "Historical Collections," Barber removed the historical document from the territory of historical societies, making the material available to a popular audience.

Barber begins the work with a general chronology of the history of the state. This, in both form and content, follows the story outline as presented by Eastman, O'Callaghan, and Brodhead, including a great deal on the border disputes with New England. He then proceeds to the information on each of the counties of New York. These appear alphabetically, without precedence in terms of size; however, they are of varying lengths depending on the amount of information given.

New York County is allotted sixty-one pages. Barber drew the historical information about New York from other sources, sometimes cited, often directly quoted. For example, life under the Dutch in New Amsterdam is quoted from Washington Irving's History of New York. Barber attributes the passage to Knickerbocker (not Irving), saying that Knickerbocker's account "although humorously exaggerated, is by no means devoid of historical truth." Other accounts, such as the discussion of the 1741 Negro Plot taken from Dunlap, are lifted from popular histories, but not attributed. All the events which appear in the histories of the City, from the Dutch surrender to New York's Revolutionary incidents, are recounted. From past to present, Barber gives as complete a picture of New York as possible.

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88 Barber, Historical Collections, 13-43.
89 Barber, Historical Collections, 154-215.
90 Barber, Historical Collections, 159-164.
Conclusion

Historians of New York, City and state used the past to negotiate its position in the nation and to challenge the preeminence of New England and Virginia in the writings on the nation's history. They had to prove that New York (City or state) had contributed to the nation, more than any other state or locality. They did this by defining what was unique about New York, in terms of commerce, patriotism, and great men.

Although New York City's peculiar position as a place of diversity and change complicated its relationships to the nation. New York's historians learned to embrace these qualities, creating a tradition of progress. Through their efforts to define what was a New Yorker and how that related to ideas about what was an American. New York's historians created a meaning for the City that would, in turn, define the nation. The nation was remade in New York's image.
Chapter 4

Death, Memory, and Development:

New York City and its Cemeteries

Cemeteries are far more than mere repositories of the dead. They are a symbolic space of the past, a locus of memory, personal and collective. While museums and archives are the storehouses of official history, the cemetery functions in the same way for the individual, the family, and the community. When New York's burial grounds came under attack in the early nineteenth century, all New Yorkers were affected by a dilemma that transcended class, ethnicity, religion, and race. This chapter will examine the history of graveyards and burial practices in New York in order to explore issues of conflict between public and private interests and preservation versus change in the expanding metropolis. The closing of older cemeteries, largely occurring between 1800 and 1860, the removal of their "inhabitants," and the creation of the new "rural" cemeteries were tied to New York's growth from a small city to a booming urban center. Such issues as the growth of municipal power and the relationship of the City to its history were played out in the battles surrounding burial rights in New York. Whatever the motives for the City's actions in changing burial policy, the rhetoric surrounding these expressions of power centered around the primacy of civic needs over private interests, and the requirements of the future over those of the past. Opposition to the exercise of this power, which cut across class, race, and ethnicity, reflected not only these issues, but also the importance of the cemetery as a repository of memory and history to people, as individuals, families,
and groups. This may have become even more meaningful in the face of rapid physical
and social change, when signs of one's existence could rapidly be erased.

These conflicts would influence the form the new cemeteries would take, the
growth of the funerary industry, and forms of burial and mourning, including the preser-
vation of the corpse. The evolution of rural, park-like cemeteries in the early nineteenth-
century has been the subject of much scholarship. In the case of New York City, the
creation of Greenwood and Woodlawn Cemeteries and, in particular, their popularity as
pleasure grounds, have been examined extensively.¹ These burial grounds, as well as the
State Rural Cemeteries Act of 1847, have been studied in terms of their place in the ro-
mantic landscape movement, as the precursors of public parks, the result of public health
crusades, and as evidence of negative attitudes towards the city. What is often over-
looked in this scholarship is that older and contemporary cemeteries continued to exist
within the confines of the City. Trinity Church Cemetery functioned as a sort of gallery
of New York’s history, with such notable New Yorkers as Alexander Hamilton residing
within. Urban cemeteries, such as the New York Marble Cemetery, were founded at the
same time as their more famous rural counterparts. In addition, many urban cemeteries,
although inactive or "replaced" (such as the paupers' cemetery which became Washing-
ton Square Park or the African Burial Ground near Foley Square), remained in the public
consciousness, as physical or psychic remnants of the past.

The cemetery, grave markers and tombs, and epitaphs were the museums for those

¹ See, for example, David Charles Sloan, The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History (Balti-
more: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995) and David Schuyler, "The Didactic Landscape: Rural
Cemeteries," in New Urban Landscape: the Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America
whose history was unwritten. The park cemetery would function as an inviolate archive of the past. Increasingly, Greenwood and Woodlawn would became more than just burial grounds, but places of public monuments, with gravesites of the famous emerging as tourist attractions. Public and private history was melded on their terrain.

The Dead in New York

Through the 1820s, New Yorkers followed a general pattern in the interment of their dead: church or temple affiliated burial for those who could afford it, private vaults attached to religious institutions for those who could really afford it, and public burial grounds, generally in one of the City's Public Cemeteries or Potter's Fields, for the working poor, the ordinary poor, and the destitute. Although family burial grounds on private property did not exist within the City's borders, in a similar spirit, individual families could own vaults, and families were usually responsible for the maintenance of their own dead. Unlike Europeans, Americans seldom removed their dead from burial grounds when those grounds became crowded. Graves were layered, often with fill on top; one result of which being churchyards often rising far above the street level.

The first reference to a burial ground in New Amsterdam dates from 1649 (in the Heer Straat, now part of Broadway). These graves were either removed or buried under landfill. The oldest extant ground is the remnant of the "New Burial Place Without the Gates of the City," the earliest reference to which occurs in the City documents in 1675.

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2 Sloane, Last Great Necessity, 13-25.
3 Sloane, Last Great Necessity, 28-29.
Trinity Church's burial records begin in 1681; however, its land contains the remains of
the "New Burial Ground." Each ethnic and religious group found a separate place for
burial. Sephardic Jews petitioned Peter Stuyvesant for the right for a burial ground in
1655; land was not purchased and burials not undertaken until 1682. The Old African or
Negro Burial Ground (both terms were used) dates from 1673; however, this and the New
African Burial Ground were not the only places which served this community. Predomi-
nantly black churches, such as St. Phillips Episcopal Church, the Asbury African Church,
and the Abyssinian Baptist Church, had vaults or burial grounds, while other, predomi-
nantly white churches allowed the segregated burial of blacks. Part of the Old African
Burial Ground also functioned as a Potter's Field (linked to the Almshouse) and public
burial ground from 1696. Later Potter's Fields included the future sites of Madison
Square Park, Union Square Park, Washington Square Park, and Bryant Park.5 By the
early nineteenth-century, most churches had some sort of burial ground attached to them,
or had made arrangements with other institutions to handle their dead. Sections of the
Potter's Fields were often granted to congregations which had simply run out of room for
their dead. These early cemeteries were very much part of the streetscape of the City,
seldom fenced in and often traversed by the daily foot-traffic.

Beginning in the 1790's, New York began the rapid expansion that would culmi-
nate in its position as the mercantile and financial leader of the Western Hemisphere.
Population growth, the northern movement of the City, with the concurrent rise in land
values, and the constant threat of epidemic disease all caused the people of New York to
seek an alternative to in-ground burial. The first of these alternatives was the vault, either

belonging to individual families (an early practice among the wealthy) or to larger numbers of unrelated people, usually belonging to the same church. Most churches built vaults underneath their church buildings, adjoining land, and adjacent streets; over 570 vaults existed in New York by 1823.\(^6\) However, subterranean vaults proved to be inadequate in the face of the aforementioned pressures, even figuring as the villain in several public dramas over land use and epidemics.\(^7\)

The first private secular cemeteries, the New York Marble Cemetery (1831), and its sister, the New York City Marble Cemetery (1832), contained only above ground vaults, very similar to those in New Orleans. The 442 (combined) marble vaults were identical; the first cemetery did not allow family ownership of vaults and individual monuments, while the second cemetery succumbed to more conventional tastes for such distinctions. Eventually, the vaults would be located underground as bodies were removed to other burial places, with plaques on the surrounding walls marking the deceased’s vital statistics. Monuments appeared, such as that marking the grave of Mayor Stephan Allen. Despite catering only to the elite of New York society, receiving the remains of many old New York families and former president James Monroe, the two Marble Cemeteries fell victim to the pressures of population growth, and eventually became mere way stations for those awaiting burial in one the City’s new rural cemeteries.\(^8\) Although located in nominally rural settings, these burial grounds retained the grid pattern of the City’s streets. These cemeteries still exist, in the interior of the blocks between

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\(^7\)See the debate before the Common Council of the City of New York over vaults and in-city interment, June 1825. This grew out of the yellow fever and cholera epidemics of the early 1820s. *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 1784-1831, 21 vols. (New York: City of New York, 1917), 14: 593-634.
\(^8\)Sloane, *Last Great Necessity*, 40-42.
Second and Third Streets, and the Bowery and First Avenue.

By the 1850s, both private and public interests sought to relocate burial grounds outside the City proper. By occupying sites still on Manhattan Island, even the most obscure uptown cemetery was rapidly assimilated within the cityscape. The last of the public cemeteries developed in Manhattan and located the area of present-day 6th Avenue and 42nd Street, had barely been planned, planted, and used, when its occupants were dug up and exiled to Randall’s Island, the land needed for real estate development. Streets. Bryant Park (the site of the 1853 Crystal Palace Exhibition), and the Reservoir took its place.

The rural cemetery was born in the outskirts of Boston in 1831: Mt. Auburn, combining the latest in English landscape influences and romantic sentiment, quickly influenced almost all new cemeteries. New York’s first self-consciously advertised rural cemetery, boosted by the 1823 ban on burials in lower Manhattan and successive legislation pushing the place of burial further out of the City, was located, fittingly, in Brooklyn, the city across the East River which also provided New Yorkers with beef from its meat yards and homes in its suburban developments. In 1838 real-estate developer Henry Pierrepont and engineer David B. Douglass established Greenwood as a joint stock company. However, not even an impressive board and interesting first interments (a mad poet and an Indian princess) could persuade New Yorkers (i.e. Manhattanites) to inter their dead in Greenwood until its mercantile nature had been masked by reorganization as an incorporated trust. Other cemeteries of this type soon followed: Trinity Church (1842), Calvary (1848), Salem Fields (1850), Cypress Hills (1851), and Woodlawn (1863). Greenwood, Calvary, Cypress Hills, and Salem Fields are all in Brooklyn, which raises the interesting question about the almost colonial relationship between the City of New York and the
City of Brooklyn. Brooklyn’s burial grounds were perhaps not so much intended to reproduce nature, but to provide a quickly consumed, easily accessible representation of it. It is important to remember that these, like their Manhattan predecessors, were quickly surrounded by development.

The following discussion reveals the conflict between private ownership and public needs, which often took the form of antagonism between the interests of the living, such as commerce and growth, and the traditional needs to take care of and honor the dead.

The City of the Living and the City of the Dead

A dual image of the cemetery began to emerge during the 1820s. Within the confines of the City, the cemetery was a place of corruption, a literal locus of death and disease. Once it had been removed to outside the city’s boundaries, the cemetery became a place of respite from the travails of life. These seemingly conflicting attitudes are quite understandable in the face of the high death rate, particularly due to the multiple terrifying epidemics experienced by New Yorkers in the early nineteenth century. Yellow fever and cholera cut a wide swath through the City’s population in these years. The growing concern over public health and attempts to control disease made death more visible, more commented upon. Death rates and disease were increasingly statistized, turned into historical records to be analyzed, and made comprehensible. The City government and newspapers alike published mortality statistics, broken down by cause.9 Reducing the

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9It seems no coincidence that one of the earliest calls for the keeping of vital statistics of the City came from John Pintard. Pintard, founding member of the New-York Historical Society and longtime advocate of public causes, began collecting death statistics in 1802. He was appointed the second City Inspector in
death rate, instead of accepting it, became a public goal.

The growth of the City had accelerated to the point where it was inevitable that population and building pressures would force changes in the New Yorker's burial practices. Severe epidemics, particularly those of yellow fever in the 1820s and cholera in the 1830s, further spurred the northward movement, as business and residences tried to remove themselves from the area of infection. These epidemics, coupled with the miasma theory regarding the spread of disease, also caused the public to question in-city burial. Beginning in 1798, a series of commissions with varying degrees of authority recommended that the City ban burials within its boundaries. In 1806 the State Legislature gave the City the legal ability to regulate the interment of bodies.

The economic and population boom (through increase and in-migration, both foreign and domestic) caused land taken up by burial grounds to become too valuable to be used in a "non-productive" manner. The 1811 Grid Plan projected the development of the City to the northern-most parts of the island. An immediate outcome of this plan was the need to expand, extend, widen, and lengthen existing streets, as well as develop new avenues. Directly in the path of this expansion were many burial grounds.

The strictures imposed on burial practices placed New York's churches in conflict with the City. The first conflict occurred May 1809 when the Presbyterian Brick Church and the First Presbyterian Church petitioned for the right to extend their vaults underneath

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the adjoining streets. These requests were granted, but in June, 1809, the Common
Council passed a resolution that no vaults were to be built and that all licenses, previously
granted for such construction, were to be revoked, except in those cases in which con-
struction had already begun.\(^{13}\) The Council felt justified in its actions as it had only the
public good in mind. Other legislation and recommendations followed, regulating not
only the place of burial, but guidelines for how remains should be buried, procedures for
removal and reinterment, and the reportage of deaths and burials. The most important of
these was the 1823 regulation which banned vault construction and burial below Canal
and Grand Streets.\(^{14}\)

Three related court cases were brought before the Supreme Court of the State of
New York; the churches claimed that by banning burials, the City violated their original
grants by the City. The Brick Presbyterian suit, for example, charged that the City vi-o-
lated its contract with the Church by enacting the 1809 ban on vaults.\(^{15}\) By prohibiting
burials, the City prevented the Church from using its property in the manner stipulated in
its lease. The City countered with several arguments. The lease gave the Church the
choice of using the property for either church buildings or burial grounds (no ban had
been placed on building churches). The City had acted in the public good by passing
legislation regulating burials, and it had the right to do so by a ruling by the State Legis-
lature. The Council claimed that the “Corporation have long been in the practice of tak-
ing the ground of Individuals, for the accommodation of the public…Such has been the

\(^{13}\)Minutes of the Common Council, 14: 532, 544, 558, 586, 595, 611-12.
\(^{14}\)Minutes of the Common Council, 12: 811-812.
\(^{15}\)Duffy, A History of Public Health, 220-222.
case in the erection of docks and Slips, Streets and Markets. Thus the Council established an explicit link between the public good and the tools of commerce. In all three cases, the court found in favor of the City, citing the ordinance as a routine and legitimate act of regulation based on the protection of the public good. In the conflict between sacred and secular power, secular forces clearly won.

On June 9, 1825, the Committee for Public Lands and Places presented before the Common Council a massive report on the practice of burials within the boundaries of New York. The original form of the 1823 ban included a clause allowing for burials to continue in family vaults, based on the right to property. Family vaults, of course, belonged to the wealthy. Many of the arguments for the ban emphasized the precedence of public good over private rights, and saw the proposed exemption to the ban on vaults for individual or family owners of vaults as elitist and undemocratic. Interestingly, this battle over burial grounds coincided with a rise in property values. The Minutes of the Common Council stated,

And is it not to be concealed either, that in making the desired discrimination the Common Council would perform the invidious and painful task of driving one class of citizens and church members from the use of a privilege that is as precious to them, as the same privilege is to their fellow citizens, and brethren as church members, and who are under the more favorable circumstances, of being vault owners.

All New Yorkers were equal in their responsibility to the public good.

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18 Minutes of the Common Council, 14: 576-634.
19 In 1823 there was a 5.90 decline in values, in 1824 a 3.66 rise, in 1825 a 12.31 rise, in 1826 a 10.92 rise, and in 1827 a 12.06 rise. Elizabeth Blackmar, Manhattan for Rent: 1785-1850 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), 273.
20 Minutes of the Common Council, 14: 599.
The reports given to the Common Council during the 1825 debates over interments reveal an almost gothic fastidiousness with regards to actual bodies, perhaps as a result of the association of decay with disease. One quotes a report by Dr. M. Picornel of New Orleans "after this remark...I can only think of with pain, may not an individual say, before he drinks a glass of water, 'I am about to feed upon a being like myself, to swallow particles from dead bodies, and perhaps those once dear to me, and whom I still regret."21 Vivid descriptions of the stench and decay when vaults were opened, especially in summer, abounded, as do the testimony of neighboring merchants and residents to the smell. The language of the reports emphasizes the corrupt, animal nature of the dead body. The Committee of the Board of Health described the remains buried in the City as a "vast mass of decaying animal matter" and "those animal remains."22 Similar language was used in an essay by Dr. L. E. W. Shecut quoted regarding the causes of infection: "animal putrefaction, or the decomposition of animal substances, whether in bodies of men, or of beasts, putrid flesh or fish."23

The reporters traced burial within churchyards to plebian superstition, and emphasized that the ancients had always buried their dead outside city walls, and that most of civilized Europe was returning to this practice. One report even attributes the decayed state of modern Rome to the practice of burial within the City and the resultant putrefaction,24 implying that a similar practice would lead to the similar decay of New York.

There is a strong strain of anti-Catholicism in much of this discussion. The report sees

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21 Minutes of the Common Council, 14:596.
22 Minutes of the Common Council, 14:619.
23 Minutes of the Common Council, 14:621.
24 Minutes of the Common Council, 14:607.
the superstition of churchyard burial as having arisen out of Catholic tradition, and thus all good Protestants should be immune to it. Just as Rome became corrupt when it became Catholic, so the possibility that New York, becoming increasingly Catholic (and catholic) with Irish and German immigration, would also founder in corruption. In contrast to ban the practice would both enable New York to attain the virtue of the ancients and achieve the level of civilization of a Paris or London.

The reputation of the infamous Five Points Slum, officially the Worst Slum in New York, may have been linked to negative feelings about cemeteries. While recent excavations and textual evidence indicate that Five Points had not been as bad as its reputation, it has come down to us as a forerunner to the late modern urban ghetto. To enter into the Five Points was to descend into a netherworld of crime, degradation, and poverty. There are many explanations for this portrayal. Five Points occupied low land: lower land tends to be occupied by the poorer members of the population, while high land by the affluent. It was swampy, due to the Collect Pond. The tanning industry was located there, and its population was a diverse, ambiguous group of immigrants, from Irish to African-Americans to Jews. It was therefore regarded as a place of pollution, both physical and moral. Significantly, several burial grounds also occupied this area—the burial grounds of outsider groups: the Chatham Square cemetery of Congregation Shearith Israel, the Old and New Negro burial grounds, and the Potter's Field of the City, which included areas reserved for the occupants of the Tombs prison and the Poor House. Even as these grounds fell into disuse, it is possible that the aura of death continued to surround the land. While the Chatham Square cemetery remained physically intact, the others did not, consumed by building. Their exact locations faded, while a general sense
of where they were located remained, and this sepulchral miasma may have extended over the general area.

Other churches, such as the Grant Street Association Presbyterian Church, St. Mark’s in the Bowery, St. Stephen’s Protestant Episcopal, and the Lutheran Trinity Church, lost part or all of their burial grounds to the expanded streets. Others lost land to such projects as new Fire Houses.25 These losses usually meant a removal of the interred dead, a process that sometimes had to be repeated over the years. Even the venerable Trinity Church, home parish to many of the elite of New York, was not immune to these incursions of public will. The most protracted battle between a church and the City occurred over the plan to extend Albany Street through part of Trinity’s ground, a debate which lasted from 1832 until 1859. These long-going battles produced numerous reports, open letters, sermons, and pamphlets detailing the arguments of both sides. Trinity’s advocates usually based its arguments on the right to its property, the sanctity of burial grounds, and the presence of the remains of American heroes in its yard. The Reverend S. H. Weston, in a sermon on the “Sanctity of the Grave” delivered on February 5, 1854, preached that not only did the grounds “guard the ashes of those who perished in guarding the liberation of your country,” but that in order to construct the proposed expansion of Albany Street, “you must dig through a mass of mouldering humanity, and the proposed road will run over and in on and be made of the dust of the dead.”26 In a hearing before the Committee on Streets of the Board of Councilmen, Anthony J. Bleecker stated that other “denominations and societies might have sold the ashes of their ancestry, but

Trinity Church never had." 27 Of course, only Trinity Church had the monetary resources and political clout to resist the incursions of the public will for so long. Trinity defended its sanctity not just as the burial place of private citizens, but of the dead that belonged to all New Yorkers, all Americans. To violate that sanctity would be to violate the nation's historical patrimony. Trinity's defense made its private interests public.

The countering arguments for the expansion centered on the role of commerce in the life of the City. A public letter to the Rector of Trinity, dated 1855, points out that the needs of many other churches (Old Reformed Dutch Church, four Presbyterian churches, Grace Church, etc.) "all embracing vaults and cemeteries, have, by the enlightened view of the societies controlling them, been voluntarily yielded to the necessitates of expanding commerce of the City;" 28 the writer continues, revealing that Trinity has resisted the expansion despite the fact that the churchyard had not been used for more than thirty years. He even brings into question the Revolutionary War remains interred there, implying that these are a mere ruse to prevent incursion. "Where did the agents of the Vestry get the bundle of relics of revolutionary soldiers exhibited?" 29 His use of the word "exhibited" shows distaste for the use of the dead as historical displays. He seems to be linking Trinity's "exhibition" to the Barnumesque, reducing remains to questionable sideshow curiosities. The "bundle of relics" may not, he implies, be authentic, truly historical. The Common Council of North of the 60th district concurred, emphasizing the commercial nature of the City, and the advantages of traversing two rivers in the "Metropolis of

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America.” The report also mentions the fact that interments had not occurred in thirty
years and that it was “well known that the bones and dust of vast numbers have been
commingled by frequent interments,” thus implying that arguments for the sanctity of
the grave were whitewash for Trinity’s true motive, to preserve its land and wealth in the
face of the incursion of the City.

The three cemeteries of Temple Shearith Israel illustrate the impact of the expans-
sions. Serving the City’s Sephardic Jews, the first cemetery was established in 1682 in
what is currently St. James’ Place. In 1789, Madison Street (which flanked the First
Cemetery in Chatham Square) was leveled, thus leaving the yard some twenty steps
above street level and exposing graves and remains. These graves had to be removed to
safer ground. In 1818, the Oliver Street extension threatened what remained of this
ground. The congregation understandably sought safer, more permanent quarters for
their dead. After repeated attempts, land was purchased on East Bank Street (currently
Thirteenth Street) in 1802, particularly for the burial of those dying of “pestilential disor-
ders.” The Congregation then purchased another plot of land on Milligan Street, now
Eleventh Street, in 1804. This was consecrated as the Beth Haim Shenee, or Second
Burial Ground. Beginning in 1827, the City threatened to expand Eleventh Street,
which would pass through the burial ground (among others). The City planned to con-
demn the entire plot in order to accomplish this plan, awarding the Congregation

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30 Anon., “The Extension of Albany Street: the Argument of the Common Council North in Favor of its Im-
provement, delivered to the Board of Councilmen on the 18th of December. 1854.” (n.p., n.d.) collections of
the New-York Historical Society, 7-8.
31 de Sola Pool, Portraits, 72-75.
32 de Sola Pool, Portraits, 107.
33 de Sola Pool, Portraits, 121-124.
$10,099.00 for the land. The congregation resisted strenuously enough that the City feared that the street expansion would be indeterminately delayed, so it was ruled that the Congregation could re-purchase the land not needed in the expansion in 1830, for $759.72.\(^4\) This left the Second Cemetery with a frontage of seventy-two feet seven inches.\(^5\) In the midst of this controversy, the Congregation bought land on Twenty-first Street, which became the Third Cemetery. Eventually, Congregation Shearith Israel followed other New Yorkers uptown and to Brooklyn, founding in 1851 their own “rural cemetery,” Cypress Hills on Long Island. Unlike most other congregations, Jewish and Christian, Shearith Israel maintained its in-city burial grounds (and their remains), to the present day, as an important representation of the Congregation's past.\(^6\)

Unlike Trinity, Congregation Shearith Israel could not afford, despite the wealth and connections of many of its members, to out-right resist the will of the public good. Instead, the Congregation performed a sort of delicate waltz of compromise with the City. Disputes were negotiated via petitions to the Common Council and stalling techniques, such as repeated applications for extensions on paying fees for street assessments.\(^7\) Interestingly, as many members of the Congregation had intermarried with gentiles, they may have occupied other burial grounds as well, including Trinity. When the number of Ashkenazik members grew to the point that they formed their own congregation in 1825, the two groups continued to share burial grounds.

Whereas Trinity Church was able to negotiate its situation with the City due to the

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\(^4\) Minutes of the Common Council, 19:70-71, 118, 150-151.
\(^5\) de Sola Pool, Portraits, 127-129.
\(^6\) de Sola Pool, Portraits, 133-141.

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social and political clout of its congregation and Congregation Temple Shearith Israel had by more subtle negotiations, the cemeteries of the City’s black inhabitants were far more vulnerable to incursions of the "public will." The African Burial Ground, then called the Negro or Negro’s Burial Ground, was active between 1712 and 1794 (although burials date on the land from the 17th century), occupying land adjacent to the City’s Almshouse and Bridewell during colonial times. Its borders became contested in the late 1790s, as the burial ground became the target of development, even while it was still a functioning cemetery.38 Those who petitioned the City were not the relatives of those buried in the African Burial Ground. For example, in 1796, John Crolius made a complaint that his property was being encroached upon. The City ruled in his favor and recommended that he bring legal action against such encroachments.39 The City, with an eye to the future, made no effort to preserve the burial ground. Instead, the future development of the area was treated as an inevitability. A June 27, 1796 report by Samuel Jones and John Campbell on a Memorial by Henry Kip and others finally settled the boundaries, using the history of the titles to the lands.40 The Proprietors were referred to as "the Claimants" and ordered to give up the land to the "Mayor Aldermen & commonalty of the City of New York and their Successors." The land would be "laid out as a Street to remain for the use of a public Street forever and the said Land on the southwest of the said Street to be laid to be and remain to the only proper use & behoof of the said Mayor Aldermen & Commonalty of the City of New York and their Successors forever." One’s final resting place may not have been permanent, but the streets were to be eternal. In exchange, the Pro-

38Minutes of the Common Council, 2:554, 598, 610, 663, 709, 710, 739, 767.
39Minutes of the Common Council, 2:134, 218, 221, 264, 615.
prietors "and their Heirs or to such Person or Persons and their heirs as the said Claimants shall direct" were given land in Augustus Street.\textsuperscript{41} This exchanged was finalized on May 12, 1800.\textsuperscript{42} Interments in the burial ground were still fairly recent, but the idea that this was a cemetery, let alone sacred ground to remain inviolate, was subsumed by the issues of property and development. The cavalier authority with which this burial ground was taken, as if new land were a fair exchange with no provisions made for the removal of the graves, cannot have been far from the minds of black New Yorkers.

Long after it disappeared, the African Burial Ground continued to be a geographic "marker." In the "Report of the Sixth Sanitary Inspection District," Dr. William F. Thoms remarks in relation to "Burying Grounds and Vacant Lots," "A Negro burying ground formerly existed between Duane and Worth Streets: it is now 40 feet below the level of the street." This notation is remarkable for two reasons: first, that burying grounds by 1866 are lumped with vacant lots, and second, that there is an awareness of the location of a long gone burial ground, even to the extent that its depth has been estimated. This suggests that it was a local landmark, a place featured in local topographies and legends.

During the 1790's, black communicants in the City's Episcopal, Methodist, and Baptist churches began to form their own congregations. The desire for more spiritual autonomy, conflicting positions over the slave trade and slavery, and the growth of the number of black congregants all affected the decision to found independent black churches.\textsuperscript{43} Most of these churches had their roots in the all-male New York African So-

\textsuperscript{41}Minutes of the Common Council, 2:252-258.
\textsuperscript{42}Minutes of the Common Council, 2:626.
\textsuperscript{43}Craig Steven Wilder, \textit{In the Company of Black Men: the African Influence on African American Culture}
ciety, founded in 1784 to promote spiritual values and community. The NYAS shared membership with the founders of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. This was the first church to form in 1796, and became commonly known as Mother Zion. It grew out of the Methodist John Street Church after its black membership was refused integrated communion, among other issues, and its founding was predated by at least six years of increasingly independent activity by its black members. That this church was a Methodist congregation is no coincidence. Evangelicalism's emotional appeal, egalitarian message, communitarian beliefs, and loose church structure held great appeal for black New Yorkers, both slave and free. The Methodist and Baptist sects gained many members from this community. The Asbury (Methodist) Church, founded in 1813, was an offshoot of Mother Zion, and named after the anti-slavery Methodist Episcopal bishop, Francis Asbury. Both were under the discipline of the (white dominated) Methodist Episcopal Church, which would lead to problems, as they became involved in the anti-slavery movement. The Abyssinian Baptist Church was founded in 1808, out of the First Baptist Church in Gold Street. It was located in Worth Street, then named Anthony Street. Legendarily, the name refers to a group of Ethiopian merchants who were among the founders. Another black congregation, St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church, was an offshoot of Trinity Church. Efforts to separate began in 1795 and, with aid and encouragement from Trinity Parish, a separate congregation was finally recog-

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44Wild, In the Company, 38, 47, 52, 73, 74.
45Wild, In the Company, 45-48, 52, 59, 84-85.
46Wild, In the Company, 49, 93.
47Wider, In the Company, 48-49.
nized in 1818. Its original location was on Chrystie and Stanton Streets.\textsuperscript{48} St. Philip's first pastor was Peter Williams, Jr. Williams' father was a former slave, member of the NYAS, and a founder of Mother Zion.\textsuperscript{49}

On October 27, 1794, the Common Council received a petition "from sundry Black (African) Men in this City praying the Aid of this Board in purchasing a Piece of Ground for the interment of their dead.\textsuperscript{50} It is not clear if they were amongst those who founded Mother Zion or St. Philip's, but they no doubt included members of the NYAS. On April 7, 1795, the Council agreed to their petition and later contributed 100 of the 450 pounds needed to purchase the land in the seventh ward, near the former location of James Delancey's home. However, there was a condition to the purchase: "the said lots be vested in the Mayor Alderman and Commonality of the City of New York in trust for a burying Ground for the Black People."\textsuperscript{51} The Petition was an attempt obtain control of a burial ground for the black community, but the creation of the Trust put the land in the power of the City, leaving open the possibility that the City could conceivably decide to develop this land.

On June 22, 1795, the Common Council heard a petition from Isaac Fortune, William Hutson, Abraham Dickenson, John Hall, James Parker, and Peter Francis. "Stiling themselves free people of colour" and members of the African Society, they stated their "intent to procure a place for the erection of a building for divine worship and

\textsuperscript{50}Minutes of the Common Council, 2: 112.
\textsuperscript{51}Minutes of the Common Council, 2: 137.
the interment of People of Colour."52 With aid from Trinity Church and the Common Council, this would become the basis for St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church. The Common Council agreed to their petition, and this land was (also) held in trust.53 In the 1820s, the church would attempt to gain full control of their lands. Dated August 15, 1825, this memorial of "the Rector, Wardens and Vestry of St. Phillips Church and of the remaining survivors of the African Society" stated that "the Members of the African Society with the aid of the Corporation of the City--of the Vestry of Trinity Church and by their own individual Contributions did in the year 1795 purchased Two Lots on First Street now Christie Street to be applied to Religious purposes of said Society who worship according to the forms of the Protestant Episcopal Church."54 Debate continued for several years, with the City arguing that they had received a deed from Samuel De La Plaine and his wife, and felt that it would take an act of the Legislature to turn over the deed legally.55 The members of St. Philips refused to give up, issuing another memorial on February 26, 1827, correcting the language of the Trust to make their property rights clear. Finally, on May 7, 1827, the Common Council agreed to turn over the Trust, stating that the "premises have always been used as a black burying ground, and will probably always be used and applied to their purpose."56

Other black churches requested land for burial plots from the City. The Asbury Church issued a petition on February 19, 1821. "praying the grant of a piece of ground.

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52 Minutes of the Common Council, 2:158-159
53 It is not clear if this is the same land discussed on April 7, 1795.
54 Minutes of the Common Council, 14:714-715.
55 Minutes of the Common Council, 14:787.
56 Minutes of the Common Council, 16:266-267.
near the Potter's Field for a burying place."\textsuperscript{57} On April 9, 1821, the Council agreed, giving them a piece in the South East corner of the Potter's Field.\textsuperscript{58} The language the church uses, "praying for a piece of ground" make clear how aware the church was of its weak position. It could not demand the land. The Asbury Church would later relocate their burial ground to two sites on Staten Island. On March 28, 1825, the Abyssianian Baptist Church petitioned for ground in the Potter's Field, although no record was made of the Council's decision.\textsuperscript{59}

The investigations of public health reveal the dependency of the black congregations of New York on the good will of the Common Council and their vulnerability in the face of their neighbors. During this period, white harassment of the City's black inhabitants was common. Churches bore much of this abuse, largely because of their anti-slavery activism.\textsuperscript{60} For example, during the 1834 anti-abolitionist riots, St. Philip's was attacked by a mob.\textsuperscript{61} Complaints about the conditions of black burial grounds may have been another form of anti-abolitionist, anti-black harassment. How these churches were treated in light of the changing regulations of burials also reveals their different relationship with the City.

The August 10, 1807, the City Inspector James Hardie reported that the Commissioner of Health, Doctor [John H.] Douglas had found that the vault of the "African Zion Methodist Episcopal Church" [sic] "emitted, frequently, a smell which was very offensive

\textsuperscript{57}Minutes of the Common Council, 11:506.
\textsuperscript{58}Minutes of the Common Council, 11:575.
\textsuperscript{59}Minutes of the Common Council, 14:401.
\textsuperscript{60}Wilder, \textit{In the Company}, 142-145.
to the neighbors." Presumably, the church's neighbors had made the initial complaints, claiming that "upon opening the door of this vault the smell is, at this season of the year peculiarly offensive; and I fear that unless an immediate stop be put to the practice of interment therein, it may be productive of terrible consequences to the neighbourhood." An ordinance was passed August 27, 1807, to prevent further interments in the vault. The church agreed to comply with the ordinance, "praying that a lot of ground may be granted to them for the purpose of a cemetery." Their negotiation was thus made in supplicatory terms, far in contrast with those taken by Trinity Church. The Superintendent of the Alms House was ordered to grant the Mother Zion church part of the Potters Field. At that time, the ordinance preventing further interments in the vault was renewed, and their right to inter their dead in the Potter's Field was reiterated. At the same time, the white congregants of the Presbyterian Brick Church and the First Presbyterian Church were allowed to extend their vaults. No such interdictions against interment were issued against them.

The land allotted to Mother Zion was eventually outgrown, and on May 10, 1824, the church petitioned for more land in the Potter's Field for burials. By the 1830s, the church had followed the trend of other churches in moving their burial grounds northward. This move also followed the movement of black New Yorkers. Land was purchased in 1825 from Epiphany Davis and Andrew Williams in the area that would

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63 Minutes of the Common Council, 4:525.
64 Minutes of the Common Council, 5:586.
65 Minutes of the Common Council, 5:532, 544.
become Seneca Village, which was mainly populated by black New Yorkers. On October 4, 1830, the church petitioned the City for the "opening of a way" in order to gain access to their burying ground on 86th Street between 7th and 8th Avenues.

Another black burial ground, St. Philip's, was also a target of public health investigations. On August 7, 1820, a number of inhabitants of Chrystie street complained that "the African Burial Ground in Chrystie Street is in a very offensive situation and dangerous to the Public Health." The Committee on Public Lands and Places interviewed the Sexton, Lewis Francis, and reported that Francis had been ill, and that his son had maintained the ground in a sloppy fashion. He promised to rectify the situation. The involvement of the Committee on Public Lands and Places confirms that St. Philip's land was still being held in trust by the City and was treated as quasi-public land, casting some doubt on the motives of the concerned neighbors on Chrystie Street. The Committee, however, was "of the opinion, that the Stench complained of, may frequently have arisen from the filthy state of the neighbouring Slaughter Houses." On September 2, 1822 "a Complaint from H. P. Robertson & A number of inhabitants of a Lot of Ground used by people of Colour as a burying ground as dangerous to the public Health & offensive to the Neighbourhood was read [&] directed to be laid before the Board of Health." Perhaps it was not only the burials that Robertson and company found dangerous and offensive.

Eventually, St. Philip's would also be prevented from making further interments on their

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68Minutes of the Common Council, 19: 264.
69Minutes of the Common Council, 11: 256.
70Minutes of the Common Council, 11: 286-287
71Minutes of the Common Council, 11: 517.
ground despite their attempts to convince the Council otherwise.\textsuperscript{72}

The situation of New York’s black burial grounds reinforced the subordinate position of black New Yorkers, even after emancipation. The City held their cemeteries in trust; fewer allowances were made to them under the new burial laws than for white churches; and they were forced to beg for small plots of land in the Potter’s Field, hardly a permanent place of eternal rest. The events surrounding the development of the African Burial Ground reveal just how transitory tenancy on City land could be. Care of ones dead and the security of their remains are an important symbol of a community’s history. The continuity of past and present are made tangible in a permanent burial place. If most New Yorkers felt insecure, events only compounded this in the black community. Despite the paucity of options available to them, New York City’s black churches, just as their white equivalents, attempted to negotiate a modicum of autonomous control over their burial grounds.

The City’s attempts to regulate burials and burial practices within its borders, and the controversies which resulted from these actions reflect the effort by the City in general to consolidate its power and to regulate the rapidly expanding city.\textsuperscript{73} While the living population of New York might not have been easily controlled, the City did manage to exercise some power over its dead. In the span of half a century, burials had gone from being almost entirely within the borders of New York to virtually ceasing by 1858.\textsuperscript{74} In the wake of the expansion of the streets facilitating travel and trade, many churchyards

\textsuperscript{72}Minutes of the Common Council, 14: 640.
\textsuperscript{73}See Duffy, “Control of the Physical Environment,” in History of Public Health, 195-231.
\textsuperscript{74}Sloane, Last Great Necessity, 67.
disappeared. Stores, dwellings, even banks took their place.\textsuperscript{75} These changes in turn altered practices of commemorating the dead. Congregations sold grounds, whole or in portions, as burials moved to outside the City. This occurred so frequently that New Yorkers in death had begun to match their mobility in life. Anxiety over one's final resting place became quite common. After a visit to Greenwood Cemetery, George Templeton Strong\textsuperscript{76} hoped "it won't turn out a bubble, for in this city of all cities some place is needed where a man may lay down to his last nap without the anticipation of being turned out of his bed for a street or a big store or something of the kind."\textsuperscript{77} The letters of John Pintard\textsuperscript{78} to his daughter express this anxiety. A member of the Eglise du St. Esprit congregation, it had been his position in his family to care for the Pintard vault. In 1796, the vault became so overcrowded that the most ancient remains had to be consolidated and placed under the floor of the vault. By 1820, Pintard had to rearrange the coffins, make various repairs, and improve access to the vault. He wrote his daughter of the preparations he had made for the future: "the spot that is to hold my remains and your dear mother's I have designated. She will lay on the coffin of her Mother, and mine is to rest on that of my dear and venerable uncles, for the floor is more than two feet deep of coffins..."\textsuperscript{79} Wealthy individuals like Pintard could take comfort in the knowledge that they would rest eternally with their families, that in death they would not be alone. Those who were to be buried with their religious families experienced much the same assurance. In

\textsuperscript{75}Stokes, Iconography, 6:337.
\textsuperscript{76}George Templeton Strong, 1820-1875, lawyer, diarist, amateur music critic. Strong was the son-in-law of Samuel B. Ruggles, the lawyer, public official, and real estate developer.
\textsuperscript{78}John Pintard, 1759-1844, merchant, editor, politician, and a founder of the New-York Historical Society.
performing the rites of the funeral, in caring for the remains of their ancestors (blood or religious), continuity and order were assured in the increasingly chaotic City. Immortality of a sort was assured in the fact that in some way, one would always be remembered. But the ban on burials and the closing of various churches and churchyards interrupted this continuity. When the Eglise du St. Esprit moved, Pintard was in charge not only of coordinating the removal of his family’s remains and aiding others in this duty, but also of “those who have no friend to protect them.” Many of the remains were too decayed to transport whole, and had to be jumbled together. Pintard writes, “My poor heart is almost gone...At 4 this afternoon the dear reliques of my departed friends are to be taken to St. Clements’ and when deposited in the new vault may they rest in peace...” To move further uptown, or to the suburban outskirts, seemed to be the only solution to the constant threat of removal.

Not only the privileged of the City expressed concern for the proper treatment of the dead. Despite their lowly social status and lack of political influence, those too poor to afford burial except in the City’s public grounds endeavored to make sure that the deceased’s body was properly laid out, that wakes were held, and that if their graves were to be unmarked, at least their passing would not be. Even Pintard, whose feelings towards the Irish were less than warm, remarked on the devotion given to deceased by these immigrants, both in physical terms, such as paying to transport the body in dignity by hearse instead of in the Corporation omnibus “stowed with eight coffins,” and spiritual, by making sure the correct rituals were performed to assure the eternal peace of the de-

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ceased's soul. A primary function of the various ethnic and trade associations that appeared at this time was to provide for the burial of its members. These arrangements ranged from providing the coffin and paying for the funeral of the deceased to buying sections of plots or tombs in the new cemeteries for their members. The upkeep of these graves would be assured, even if one's blood family disappeared. Grave markers soon reflected these associations, bearing the symbols of fraternal organizations such as the Masons, or ethnic identity, such as the Celtic cross.

The experience of the Religious Society of Friends illustrates the effect of the threat of removal in a particularly interesting way, as it seems to have not only caused a theological change, but aided in the New York Yearly Meeting's coping with a serious crisis. When the Society of Friends sold their Liberty Street meeting house and burial grounds in 1825, they removed the remains to a ground purchased in 1796 on Houston Street. These remains, and those from the Pearl Street meeting house, were deposited, en masse, in a brick vault. The records of exactly who was deposited, and later, who was removed to other burial grounds, are extremely spotty. This may seem unusual in contrast to the attention that other groups gave to their deceased, but at this time, the Friends' Discipline expressly forbade grave markers and excessive attention paid to the death of its members. In Quaker theology, the corporeal body was merely a vessel for the spirit; consequently, the body of the deceased was accorded no special attention beyond burial. The Discipline also stipulated that funerals and memorial services were to be sober affairs, that mourning not be worn or given, and that "all extravagant expenses about the inter-

ment of the dead" be avoided. The 1820s brought to head a long-brewing crises between two factions within the Society of Friends: the Hicksites (or liberals) and the Orthodox (or Evangelicals). The management of the Friend's burial ground in Brooklyn and the changes in burial practices provided a focal point which fostered cooperation, however difficult, between the two factions. When the separation between the factions occurred, the majority of the New York Friends were Hicksite. These members retained control of the Hester Street Meeting House, and eventually built a meetinghouse on Fifteenth Street. The Orthodox Friends built a house on Henry Street, and in 1840 removed to Twentieth Street. Families frequently included members of each faction. Although the Hicksite and Orthodox factions split and founded their own separate meetinghouses, the Quaker burial grounds technically remained in both parties' hands. Orthodox and Hicksite continued to be buried in the same ground. Importantly, families were not divided in death. The Hicksite faction held the title to the land in Brooklyn, which the Society of Friends purchased for a new burial ground in 1846, but sold a piece to the Orthodox; the two groups were separated only by a road. The two factions agreed to remain close in death while disagreeing with each other in life. The remains from the Houston Street vault were placed in the Prospect Park Cemetery (Brooklyn). When proposed street expansion

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*Discipline of the Yearly Meeting of Friends, 1810* (New York: Samuel Wood and Sons, 1826), 86-87.

*Essentially, the dispute centered on the interpretation and use of the Bible, the nature of Jesus, the nature of faith, and the role of missionary work. The followers of Josiah Hicks believed in a more heart-felt religion, relying more on personal experience, while the Orthodox were surprisingly close to the Methodists in many of their beliefs. The Great Separation, which occurred in 1828, turned violent in most of the Yearly Meetings, with rancor continuing to the present. The New York Yearly Meeting, however, experienced a fairly gentle separation, characterized by a great deal of cooperation and communication, which continued until an agreement was made in 1955 to somewhat reconcile the two sides. *Quaker Crosscurrents: Three Hundred Years of Friends in New York Yearly Meetings*, ed. by Hugh Barbour, Christopher Densmore, Elizabeth H. Moger, Nancy C. Sorel, Alison D. Van Wagner, and Arthur J. Worrall (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995). 100-133.

*The records are woefully incomplete as to where which remains went, or how the decision was made to their destination.*
threatened the Brooklyn Friends’ Cemetery, these Friends were invited to bury their dead with their Manhattan fellows in Brooklyn. Prospect Park, opened in 1871, surrounds the Quaker cemetery (known as Quaker Hill); after discussion, the Friends were awarded the southern two-fifths of the lot, with continued burial rights. Olmstead and Vaux apparently did not object to the burial ground, for, unlike the nearby Greenwood, the lack of ostentatious monuments did not interfere with their naturalistic design for the park. In a preliminary report to the Commissioners of Prospect Park on the design of the Park, the partners discuss “Friends Hill” as a feature in their ideal, sylvan landscape. The removal of New York City’s many burial grounds left its mark on the living by increasing anxiety over the future security and destiny of their own remains and those of their loves ones, as well as the desire that some record or monument survive so that one (or one’s family) would not be forgotten. “Rural cemeteries” provided the assurance, or at least the illusion of the assurance, that one’s burial place would be untouched for eternity and that one could rest forever with one’s actual or spiritual family.

The Rural Cemetery

The rural cemetery rationalized, sanitized, and controlled death, and consequently abstracted the dead. Yet, the era of the rural cemetery marked the huge growth in the belief in Spiritualism, and the celebrity of Andrew Jackson Davis and the Fox sisters.

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While not all New Yorkers believed in Spiritualism, the public fascination with the possibility of communing with the Shades of the dead indicates a pervasive need to maintain at least the memory of the deceased. Memorial jewelry, often made of the hair of the deceased, provided a powerful talisman for the survivors, who could carry a part of their loved with them forever. The sanctuary of the rural cemetery, a place removed from the bustle of city life, enabled even unbelievers in Spiritualism to enter safely into the Other Side. Contact with the dead could be maintained, even when their physical remains had been removed. Rural cemeteries became places of quiet contemplation, secure from the incursions of all that is life.

Functions once performed by family or community members, such as the washing and laying out of the body, were take over by the burgeoning funeral industry. This is a reflection of the change of relationship between the living with the dead body. Gary Laderman has written of the almost fetishistic attachment many felt towards the dead body of their loved ones. However, while the decay of the body was an object of fascination, its prevention ultimately became the object of the treatment of the corpse. Eventually, the body preserved became the ideal representation, not the rotting corpse of early modern Europe. New technologies were developed or utilized in response to these changing attitudes. The introduction of more sophisticated techniques of embalming during the nineteenth-century resulted in the practice becoming more common. Caskets made of bronze promised to prevent the rot of the grave, and photography made memorial

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91 Laderman, *Sacred Remains*, 75-85.
portraits commonplace. While the subject was dead, pains were taken to remove the signs of physical death from these pictures. The importance of the preservation of the body and of the image of the deceased grew, as it became more likely that their remains and their grave would disappear in the face of change. Just as antiquarians sought to preserve documents of the past, individuals and associations attempted to retain as many relics of a life as possible. Many of the burial agreements of rural cemeteries included clauses governing the "perpetual care" of the grave. This had been unnecessary when one was buried in a churchyard. With even churches unsafe from the aggressive encroachments of the modern City, contracts were needed to ensure eternal rest. Even if one's family or organizational line died out, one's grave would remain.

A crucial feature of this change in attitude was the widespread use of the epitaph. In the nineteenth-century, it became the biography of personal and domestic accomplishments of ordinary men and women, whereas in the seventeenth century, epitaphs were largely reserved for the patriarchs of the community, public men with public deeds. The number of epitaphs increased significantly during the nineteenth-century. The epitaph is a personal history. The deceased was identified as someone's wife, someone's child, and personal qualities such as devotion were extolled. The epitaph, especially in relation to the gravemarkers around it, defined and recorded the important relationships in the deceased's life. By the early nineteenth century, epitaphs also reflected the increased ab-

straction of death. Death's heads were replaced by sleeping cherubs and inscriptions of "Here lyes the Body" were replaced with "this monument is erected to the memory."\(^{96}\)

Located in the cemetery of Temple Shearith Israel in Chatham Square, the remarkable stone commemorating Walter Judah dating from 1798 reflects the deceased's relation to New York City. This gravestone is carved with a skyline of the City, an early representation of that view. In this way, the life of Walter Judah is joined with that of the City. The City skyline functions as an epitaph, showing that this person was a New Yorker. It represents not only Judah's life, but also the life of the Sephardim in the City. Judah died in the yellow fever epidemic of 1798, and that event is alluded to in the imagery on the stone, with the destruction of the tree of life and a sword-wielding angel of death.\(^{97}\) Judah's death and the death of all the New Yorkers who died in the epidemic are thus commemorated.

Concurrent with the development of its rural burial site in Brooklyn, a radical change happened in the Discipline of the Society of Friends concerning burial practices. The public commemoration of a life was antithetical to the plain life of the Friends; thus early Friends' practice banned headstones, let alone epitaphs. After 1852, headstones were no longer banned. A Joint Committee of Men and Women Friends met at the Yearly Meeting of May 24 to 27\(^{th}\), 1852, replacing the phrase "and they are not erect grave or tomb stones" with "and no grave stones are to be placed in our burial grounds that shall exceed 8 inches in height above the surface of the ground, 5 inches in thickness and 16 in width." The stone would have no inscription or decoration save the name of the

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\(^{97}\)de Sola Pool, Portraits, 162.
deceased, the name of their spouse or parents, if desired, and the dates of birth and
death. This may be seen as another way in which the Friends were entering the secular
world, by conforming, however slowly, to the burial practices of the larger society. This
change may also indicate a need to insure that the individual, or the group as a whole,
would not be lost in the midst of constant reburial. The lack of concern with record
keeping and grave markers had already shown to be inconvenient with the removal of re-
 mains to and from Houston Street (and to later, more genealogically minded Friends).
Grave markers, with even minimal information, precise record keeping, and a concern
with the upkeep of burial grounds illustrate the need of the Friends to preserve their group
and individual histories. The continued existence of the Society of Friends, so threatened
by the theological disagreements of the period, depended on the maintenance of a group
identity. The history of the Friends, once thought irrelevant just as the body now became
integral to the sect.

Collective histories were evident in many burial plots of this era. Secular rural
cemeteries, such as Greenwood and Woodlawn, had sections devoted to specific groups
or associations; just as families could buy a block of plots, so could the Oddfellows or a
labor union. These further illustrated the deceased's position in the family and commu-
nity. Position in the burial ground was also an indicator of class and status, with elabo-
rate mausoleums marking the remains of the rich. Burial monuments for the general
public had also become increasingly elaborate, as if to retain or attain distinction in death

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*See Discipline of the Yearly Meeting of Friends, held in New York for the State of New York, 1856 (New
York: Baker and Duyckink, 1856), 77. The Orthodox and Hickite factions of the New York Yearly Meet-
ing continued to use the same Discipline until the 1870’s. In 1887, the Orthodox changed the dimension of
their stones to 24 inches in height, 20 inches wide, and 5 inches thick.*

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that may have been denied in life. Monuments traded the death's heads of the past for neoclassical urns and willows, images of nature, cherubs, sleeping children, and excesses of Egyptomania. Pyramids became popular forms for mausoleums, as the rich fancied themselves as permanent as pharaohs in their tombs. Portraits of the deceased, in bas-reliefs, busts, or full sculptures, appeared at this time. Markers of one's group or ethnic affiliation, such as Mason's levels and Celtic crosses, proliferated. Care was taken in the material used for markers. Granite and cast metal were now frequently employed to ensure permanence, as it became evident that soft white marble was no match for the corrosive effects of the city pollution.\(^9\)

The rural cemetery thus acquired meaning and value in relation to the City which threatened to surround and devour it. Likewise, only with the creation of the rural cemetery, and later public parks, could the City truly become urban and unique from the countryside. Yet as the City cast its grid over Manhattan Island, turning undeveloped land into so much possible development, the City would incorporate rural tracts and beachfronts as part of the City. Undeveloped land could not be thought of except in the context of its future form. Indeed, a major selling point of Greenwood Cemetery was that it boasted the finest view of Manhattan.

While some sought refuge from urban life in the rural cemetery, others considered these places to be symbolic of the problems of the city. Cornelius Mathews wrote about Greenwood in his *A Pen-and-Ink Panorama of New-York*, along with sketches about

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Broadway, firemen, and other notable features of New York. Mathews decried the commercialization of death, the advertisement and sale of tickets to Greenwood in every shop window. While once death and burial had been a solemn event, now hostile systems contend for our living bodies, and we are buried by corporations. We live in mobs, and mob-like we throng to the cemetery: as if we feared to be alone. In daily proclamations, in circulars, and experimental trips, we are invited to the newly opened grounds, as to a ball or other festive entertainment. We take stock in graveyards as we do in banks and railway schemes. Graves are bought by the lot at a discount; so much off, if several are taken at a time. We are stimulated to secure the best places, the choice spots as if they were premium benches at a concert, or private boxes at the opera.¹⁰⁰

To Mathews, death had lost its sacred status, becoming just another occasion to make a profit, either of money or social status. Death and the deceased had been reduced to a commodity. The rituals of memorial reflected the life of the City instead of mourning the dead.

The rural cemetery as a forerunner of public parks was remarked upon by contemporaries as well as modern historians alike.¹⁰¹ The rural cemetery provided a release from crowded city life. These cemeteries were landscaped to afford pleasant views and romantic vistas. Interesting monuments and the graves of the famous provided yet another attraction for the visitor. The religious pilgrimage was replaced with that of the paying tourist, as visitors deliberately visited the graves of those they did not know. The success of Greenwood and its like had as much to do with its famous occupants and interesting monuments as its rural surroundings. Publications by these cemeteries included guides

and histories of the burial grounds, complete with a list of those buried there. Biographies of the famous and interesting were included in the guide and curious and interesting monuments noted. This further fostered a sense of community with complete strangers. Nehemiah Cleaveland's guide to Greenwood Cemetery, *Greenwood Illustrated*, featured engravings from drawings "taken on the spot" by James Smillie. A review of Cleaveland's *Greenwood: a Directory for Visitors* in the December 1849 issue of the *United States Democratic Review* concentrated on Greenwood's attractions to the tourist. The guide would show the location of any of the "several thousand human beings" to the "enquiring friend and inquisitive stranger" alike. The interest of the stranger in the graves of other strangers is not regarded as unusual, but seen as just as natural as that of the friend.

If the graves of great men inspired respect, it was the stories of women who die tragically young that inspired repeat visits from cemetery tourists. Such was the story of Charlotte Canda. The reviewer in the *United States Democratic Review* gushed "How it melts in sympathising sorrow at the momento of paternal love that surmounts the remains of a Miss Canda, whose touching story is given with thrilling effect in the little volume before us!" Charlotte Canda was the daughter of wealthy parents who was thrown to her death from her carriage on the night of her seventeenth birthday in 1847. Near her grave is her fiancé's, who committed suicide in her parent's home a year after her death. Char-

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lotte only became interesting in her death, and the story of her untimely demise appealed to the melodramatic sensibility of the time and the related popular notions of death, which explains its prominence in both the guidebook and the review. Had she lived to achieve respectable matronhood, her grave would probably passed unnoticed.  

Trinity Church possessed its own tragic Charlotte, whose grave became a popular tourist attraction. More than any hero of the Revolution or notable politician, the grave of Charlotte Temple attracted visitors. Charlotte Temple was not dead, for Charlotte Temple had never lived. She was the subject of Susannah Rowson's bestselling 1791 novel by that same name. Her story was an historical romance of a young English gentlewoman, seduced and abandoned in New York by her soldier lover during the Revolution. She dies alone and heartbroken. Rowson had let on that the story was based on the true story of a young woman buried in Trinity, Charlotte Stanley. Fans of the book left locks of hair and other sentimental mementos on the grave. People visited graves out of interest, not merely duty, and Charlotte Stanley became an object of fascination only through her transformation into Charlotte Temple. The continued appeal of Charlotte Temple, the book and the character, indicates the importance of story or fictionalized history to the popularity of her grave. Whether or not she (Charlotte Stanley) actually died of a broken heart was unimportant to her visitors. Yet existence of a real grave made the fictional story "history" to its readers. If Charlotte Temple took place in another city, it is doubtful that it would have retained its popularity for New Yorkers and tourists. Eventually, all

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106 Greenwood's other notables included Samuel F. B. Morse, the Sac Indian Princess Do-Hum-Me (who also died young), and McDonald Clarke, the "Mad Poet of Broadway."

traces of Charlotte Stanley would be erased, as her gravestone was replaced by one reading "Charlotte Temple" around 1845.\textsuperscript{108} 

The cemetery, especially the rural cemetery, enabled New Yorkers to preserve their personal, family, and broader collective histories. Epitaphs and narrative tombs illustrated the facts of one's life. Family and group identity was reinforced through the ritual visitation of graves, when one could reread the history of ones ancestors on their tombs. The public function of the rural cemetery, as a pleasure ground, opened these meanings to strangers. By visiting the graves of the notable or the interesting, by making note of the family or association plots, New Yorker's could read and share each other's history.\textsuperscript{109} At the burial grounds located outside the city, the body and memory became safe from the incursions of progress.

\textbf{Public Mourning and Memorials}

While the place of burial may have been removed from the City, the rituals surrounding death stayed. Public funerals remained an important act of memory. Public funerals had long been a popular civic ritual in New York; during the first half the nineteenth-century, they grew in pomp and importance. The deaths of all the major political figures, from Washington to Hamilton to Clinton to Clay, occasioned solemn celebration, with popular prints and ballads commemorating the event.\textsuperscript{110} In some of these
processions, the deceased was absent, represented not by a coffin, but by an urn carried by the funeral car. This was the case in the funeral parades honoring Lafayette and Washington. The two burials of President Monroe provide an interesting contrast which reflected the changing political climate of New York in response to broader national political debates. When Monroe died on July 4, 1831, the City’s papers reported that “no instance is remembered of the obsequies of any individual having been solemnized in this city by a larger concourse, or with rites of more serious and imposing character.” The usual conglomeration of public officials and civic leaders attended, business shut down, and huge crowds spectated, as the procession slowly moved up from the Battery to the Marble Cemetery. Such unanimous public affection for a southerner was still possible in New York City during the early 1830s, but by 1858, the political climate had shifted to the point where the New York Times was lamenting the fact that “in a cemetery in an obscure part of the City, without epitaph or tombstone, the remains of an ex-President are reposing, unhonored and almost forgotten.” Virginia demanded the return of Monroe’s remains, no doubt bemoaning the indignity of a native son’s eternal rest taking place in what would possibly be enemy territory. On July 2, 1858, at dawn in order to “prevent a crowd,” with only the City’s undertaker and his assistants in attendance, Monroe’s coffin was removed from its vault. After a brief display at the Church of the Annunciation, the coffin was placed in a larger, far grander coffin for transportation to Virginia, where the ex-President received the honor Virginians felt due their son. The Times remarked “the removal of the remains was conducted in the most private manner.”

111 New York Evening Post, July 8, 1831. Much press was also given to calculating the odds that Monroe, like Jefferson and Adams, had died on July 4.
112 New York Times, July 2, 1858.
The few remaining burial grounds inside the City, for example, became reliquaries of history (Trinity) and traditions (Shearith Israel burial grounds), sometimes admired, sometimes ignored. Just as the founding of the New-York Historical Society signified a growing interest in the history of the City, a new interest in burial grounds as historical sites emerged. Trinity used its position as the resting place for Alexander Hamilton and Revolutionary War Heroes as a justification for retaining its burial ground. St. Mark’s-in-the-Bowery contained the mortal remains of Peter Stuyvesant, St. Paul’s the Revolutionary War hero Richard Montgomery, and the Marble Cemetery (until 1858) President James Monroe. Meanwhile, in-city graveyards that did not contain occupants of interest became neglected, repositories only of broken monuments, trash, and debris.\textsuperscript{113}

Commemorations of national events and figures put them in the context of New York's past, while commemoration of local events and figures helped to develop a local identity. Proposals for monuments and statues of George Washington began as shortly after his death. New York City’s Committee of the Cincinnati Society sponsored an Equestrian Statue that was to be erected in Washington Square Park. This was approved by the Common Council on December 20, 1802.\textsuperscript{114} However, money matters halted the project. The sculptor of the piece, Signor Enrico Causici, a "Statuary & a Pupil of Canova" created model of the proposed statue in 1823, too late for the City’s first celebration of Washington’s Birthday on February 19, 1810.\textsuperscript{115} The plaster cast of Causici’s statue was displayed in City Hall Park, until it became too damaged by the elements.\textsuperscript{116}


\textsuperscript{114}Minutes of the Common Council, 3:139,163.

\textsuperscript{115}Minutes of the Common Council, 6:84.

\textsuperscript{116}Donald Martin Reynolds. Monuments and Masterpieces: Histories and Views of Public Sculpture in New
was not until the 1850s that other, more permanent statuary honoring the first President appeared in the City. In 1856, Henry Kirke Brown's equestrian statue of Washington on Evacuation Day took its place in Union Square. In 1858, a bronze replica of Jean-Antoine Houdon's statue, as copied by William J. Hubard, was displayed in City Hall.\footnote{Reynolds, Monuments and Masterpieces, 36, 114-116.} The statue in Union Square honors the City's role in the Revolution as much as it does Washington. These displays of nationalist sentiment corresponded to an upsurge in patriotism with the coming of the Civil War. Washington as a symbol of the unity of the nation was once again politically useful.

The memorialization of New York's most important Revolutionary, Alexander Hamilton, began almost immediately after his duel with Aaron Burr at Weehawken on July 11, 1804. Public business was suspended, and the tolling of bells prohibited.\footnote{Minutes of the Common Council, 3:568-569.} The Council commissioned Trumbull to paint a portrait of Hamilton, as well as the Chief Magistrates of the City since the Revolution.\footnote{Minutes of the Common Council, 3:636.} On October 16, 1806, the New York Gazette and General Advertiser noted that "the Corporation of Trinity Church has erected over the grave of Hamilton, in Trinity church yard, a beautiful Monument of White Marble, composed of a Pyramid resting on an elevated base or pedestal, surrounded with four elegant urns." It was inscribed "To the memory of Alexander Hamilton. The Corporation of Trinity Church has erected This Monument in testimony of their respect for the patriot of incorruptible integrity, The Soldier of approved valour, The Statesman of consummate wisdom; whose virtues and talents will be admired by Grateful Posterity Long after this
marble shall have mouldered into dust, He died July 12th 1804 aged 47." On December 2, 1806, the New York Gazetteer and General Advertiser reported the plan of the St. Andrew's Society of the State of New York to erect a white marble obelisk with a flaming urn at the site of the duel in Weehawken. Although located in New Jersey, the monument was clearly aimed at the citizens of New York, as "the scite of the Monument commands a view of the city of New-York...So that every inhabitant of the city, and every stranger who approaches our port, may see, at once, the Memorial which the Society has erected to the irreparable loss which America has sustained in the death of her most distinguished citizen." The inscription read "On this spot Fell, July 11, 1804, Major-General Alexander Hamilton. As an expression of their affectionate regard to his Memory. And of their deep regret for his loss, The St. Andrew's Society of the state of New-York have erected This Monument." The reverse bore the motto "Incorrupta Fides. undaque veritas. Quando ullam inverrient paren? Multis ille quidem flebilis occiet. Hor."

Both monuments to Hamilton were erected by private organizations. The prominent presence of the donors' names lent prestige to Trinity and the St. Andrew's Society. Both epitaphs extolled Hamilton's public qualities and his accomplishments in relation to the nation's history. More importantly, the monuments expressed how the Corporation of Trinity and the St. Andrew's Society felt about Hamilton. The neo-classical forms of the monuments, and the Latin inscription on the Weehawken monument link Hamilton, and thus the nation, with great Republics of Greece and Rome. By 1816, the monument in Weehawken was severely damaged by souvenir hunters, and by 1821, it was gone. supposedly its remains thrown into the Hudson. In 1831, The New York Gazetteer and General Advertiser reported that the reason for its removal was not that it was in disrepair but
that it was a bad influence, that might encourage others to emulate Hamilton and Burr.

"The fame of that great man requires no memorial of stone—...But if a monument is necessary, the Duelling Ground was the last spot, which should have been thought of for its erection. June 3, 1831." The monument in Trinity seemed a more fitting tribute and continued to exist.

The estimated eleven thousand Americans who died on the Jersey and other Prison Ships anchored in Wallabout Bay during the Revolution loomed large in New York's mythology around the Revolution. No matter what their origins, the prisoners became New Yorkers in the minds of the citizens of the City, and their story was told as proof of New York's patriotic suffering during its occupation by the British. The movement to memorialize these heroes was started by the Tammany Society in 1808. The organization proposed a plan to the Common Council on December 10, 1804, to build a vault with a monument over it.\textsuperscript{120} The Council moved slowly on this issue, and it was not until March 7, 1808, that the Committee assigned to consider the proposal reported,

while it brings to their recollection an event which must awaken the sensibility of every American citizen, still it seems to have been reserved for the Tammany Society alone to have rescued from oblivion and place on an imperishable basis the memory of a large portion of our unfortunate but much lamented fellow citizens who perished defending the precious rights of our liberty and Independence. Your Committee are therefore of the an opinion that the interment of the bones of our unfortunate countrymen in the manner as proposed will be the means of transmitting to posterity an event which will be deeply engraved on the hearis of every American.\textsuperscript{121}

The Council agreed to "cheerfully cooperate" in bringing this about.

This report also gave details of the plans made for the depositing the remains into

\textsuperscript{120} Minutes of the Common Council, 3:649.
\textsuperscript{121} Minutes of the Common Council, 5:70-71.
the vault. The bells of the City were to be rung and cannon salutes fired. The Council also recommended that "the citizens do observe the same day in as respectful a manner as may be, consistent with their avocations, and that, as far as may be convenient." That Americans and New Yorkers not forget the Martyrs was as important as what happened to those who died on the ships.

The elaborate funeral procession involved military and government officials, representatives from the major civic, labor, and social organizations, marching bands, and women dressed in white and black. It took twenty hogsheads to contain the bones that were placed in the vault in Brooklyn. Even business was suspended on this "day of devotion." This public display of honor, the creation of the monument, and the proclamations stressed the importance of not forgetting the Martyrs. The act of memory was far more meaningful than the event memorialized. The Prison Ship Martyrs figured in most histories of the City, and the coming of the Civil War renewed interest in the monument, which had fallen into disrepair. In his Martyrs to the Revolution in the British Prison-Ships in the Wallabout Bay George Taylor laments that these martyrs were forgotten while "Americans have reaped, in almost thoughtless joy, their harvests of gold, from a soul, the producing vigor of which is the ashes of those martyrs." Americans, by forgetting the Martyrs, were not only neglectful but also ungrateful. The Brooklyn-based Martyrs Monument Association was formed to create a new, more permanent monument. A circular from the MMA promoting the project was included. Despite the neglect of the

122 Minutes of the Common Council, 5:129-130.
123 Minutes of the Common Council, 5:137.
125 Taylor, Martyrs, iiv.
past, the "the undersigned hold the belief that there is a patriotic spirit in the land, to build monuments to commemorate such dead of fortitude, heroism and devotion of our sires as are without parallel and which constitute the best inheritance of the Republic."\textsuperscript{126} Whatever their origins, the Martyrs were New York's Martyrs, and their heroism exceeded all others. Ultimately, however, the memorial would not be for the Martyrs, but for the living.

But, oh, Americans, it is we who need a monument to their honor... We need a monument, that the widows and children of the dead, and the whole country, and the shades of the departed, and all future ages, may see and know that we honor patriotism, and virtue, and liberty, and truth; for, next to performing a great deed... is to honor such characteristics and deeds.\textsuperscript{127}

The act of honoring the dead was equivalent to the act remembered, and would itself be remembered. The original monument to the Martyrs, while once acceptable, would no longer do. The people of New York would have to renew their act of memory.

Many of the City's monuments, while approved of by the Common Council, were actually organized and funded by private citizens or groups. The great era of publicly funded monuments would not come until the Civil War. The City was somewhat better at less monumental memorials. The naming of streets provided an easy and low-cost way of accomplishing the commemoration of events and people of local and national importance. Street names could function to remind New Yorkers of their history. Each time an individual read the name of the street, or found her/himself walking down an avenue named for such a figure, they would be reminded, consciously or not, of the story behind the name. The Bowery was a link to the Dutch past. The public presence of those names,

\textsuperscript{126}Taylor, Martyrs, 57.
\textsuperscript{127}Taylor, Martyrs, 59-60.
which one did not have to know how to read to know, fostered community. Streets with names, as opposed to those with just numbers, enforced a sense of place. Many streets bore the names of their original inhabitant or developer, such as Abingdon Square, Ann Street (after the wife of Captain Thomas White), Beekman Street, Astor Place, and Leonard, Anthony, and Thomas Streets, named for the sons of Anthony Lispenard. Figures from New York's past, such as DeLancey, Depeyster, Fletcher, were also honored. Samuel Ruggles named Lexington Avenue in 1832 after the Battle of Lexington, Madison Avenue in 1836, and Irving Place after Washington Irving 1831. The nation's founders were honored by the City. Besides streets, a market, and a square, in 1825 the City named a former potter's field "Washington Military Parade Ground," later Washington Square Park after the nation's father. Thomas Jefferson, Nathaniel Greene, and Benjamin Franklin were similarly honored. Sugar Loaf Street became Franklin Street and St. George's Square became Franklin Square in 1817. The commemoration of the heroes of the War of 1812 caused the renaming of several streets. On March 24, 1817, the Council passed a resolution renaming First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Sixth Streets. First Street became Chrystie Street, in honor of Col. John Chrystie "a citizen of New York who died on the Niagara frontier during the late War while in the Service of the United States." Second Street became Forsythe Street in honor of Lt. Colonel Benjamin Forsythe who was killed in 1813. Forsythe was actually from North Carolina but died in New York State. Third Street became Eldridge after Lt. Joseph C. Eldridge, killed by "the Toma-

\begin{footnotes}
129 Minutes of the Common Council, 8:94, 393.
130 Minutes of the Common Council, 15:484.
\end{footnotes}
hawk of the Savages" in 1813 "but not without defending himself and Companions like a Brave Man." Fourth Street became Allen after William H. Allen in a battle with the British ship, the Pelican. "Captain Allen lost his life and his vessel, but he lost no reputation in the Conflict and his Name will not be forgotten as long as his Country lasts."

Sixth Street became Ludlow after Lt. Augustus C. Ludlow, age 21, a naval officer on USS Chesapeake who died in the battle against the British ship Shannon. Ludlow took command of the Chesapeake after the captain, James Lawrence, was killed. It was to Ludlow that Captain James Lawrence said, "Don't give up the ship." Ludlow's body had originally been buried in Halifax, but it was removed to New York shortly thereafter."

The interplay between national and local politics also influenced who was honored by the City. Residents of Orange Street petitioned in September 8, 1817, to change the name of their street to Jackson Street, after Andrew Jackson, "the hero of New Orleans," but the Council recommended that it be denied. Residents of Beaver Street asked the same on April 26, 1824. This was also denied. In 1827, the residents of Cheapside Street petitioned to have the name changed to Hamilton Street. When other residents proposed that Hamilton be replaced by Jackson, the Council denied their request. Walnut Street was eventually renamed Jackson Street after Jackson's death in 1845. The Council's preference for the arch-Federalist Hamilton over Jackson was indicative of both the Whig ascendancy in New York City politics in the 1820s and sectional loyalism. By 1845, the political climate had changed; Jackson's political heirs, the

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135 Minutes of the Common Council, 16:298-299.

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Democrats, had gained power and could honor the wishes of the residents of Walnut Street.

Over time, these street names lost their historical referents. New New Yorkers did not know the stories behind the street names, and therefore, the names lost the historical content they held for older residents. Streets that were not named for famous people, such as Broadway or Wall Street, became more important in the City's mythology. For example, the Bowery lost its connection to the Dutch street, gaining instead the association with rough, working class life. The names became important not as signifiers of the past, but of the existing character of specific localities in New York and their civic life.

The death of "Butcher" Bill Poole, Bowery B'hoi, a leader of the Know-Nothings, and Whig Party strong-arm, occasioned the most spectacular public display of grief during the tumultuous decade prior to the Civil War. Poole had been shot at the Stanwix Hall on February 25, 1855, by political enemies. The newspapers diligently reported on the details of his long decline and the search for his assassins, with varying degrees of editorial comment. When Poole finally died on March 9, his deathbed scene, surrounded by his tearful family and dying in the arms of his associate Shay, conformed to all the conventions of popular prints. His last, lengthy words were reported as "I think I am a goner. If I die, I die a true American; and what grieves me most is, thinking that I've been murdered by a set of Irish—by Morrissey in particular."\textsuperscript{136} His face in death was described as fine and handsome, his chosen burial garb in detail (head-to-toe black, his shirt white, complete with Bryon collar). The courage of Mrs. Poole and his handsome nine-year old son were commented on. Mrs. Poole even had a daguerreotype made; "he was

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{136} \textit{New York Times}, March 9, 1855.
taken as nearly as could be in the exact position he occupied when he died" complete
with his compatriot, Mr. Shay. The elaborate funeral procession, from Christopher Street
(where Poole lived) to the ferry to Greenwood, included the Poole Guard, the Poole As-
sociation, fire companies, the Rynders Grenadiers, and the Washington Guard. The
hearse bore a banner declaring "I died a true American." Huge crowds thronged the
streets in Manhattan and in Brooklyn.

The most remarkable aspect of the reportage of the event was the amount of space
devoted to it. While the deaths and funerals of Monroe and Clay merited only one or two
columns, day after day, front page space and multiple columns told the story of Poole's
death and funeral, the coroner's proceedings, and the City's (and Brooklyn's and Wil-
liamsburg's) reactions, his corpse portrayed in the terms of a Byronic hero or martyr, not
an actual dead body. Poole's death and burial was described in terms of the sentimental
narratives of the day and Poole's death as an actual event becomes secondary to his death
as a symbolic event. The public funeral, at least in this case, became a means not so
much of honoring the dead, but a way of expressing the existing political loyalties.

Political conditions within the City often dictated who would be honored with a
public memorial. The deceased was more than just an illustrious personage, but a repre-
sentation of a political ideology. Long past events and heroes, such as the Prison Ship
Martyrs, could be resurrected when politically expedient. Participation as marchers or
spectators in these acts of public commemoration enabled one to declare one's allegiance.
These public funeral parades provided an opportunity for various professional, craft, and
political groups to make their presence known.137 William Poole, in death, became a

137 Brooks McNamara, Day Of Jubilee: The Great Age Of Public Celebrations In New York, 1788-1909
symbol of nativism and working-class Whig politics, and his funeral a march of solidarity and a show of strength. The rituals of mourning the individual dead thus became inter-twined with the rituals of civic life.

**Conclusion**

In the changing New York of the early nineteenth century, the dead ceased to have the right to an undisturbed final rest in the City of the living. While the populace might have resisted such incursions of their individual rights, the right to exercise power by the municipal government superseded all private concerns. The City was a place for growth, for commerce, for the living, in which the dead, all too present in the numbers of those who died from disease and city life, had no rightful place, except as they took a place in a usable past for the living. As Thomas Jefferson wrote, “The dead have no rights. They are nothing...Our creator made the earth for the use of the living and not of the dead.”

The ephemeral, public rituals of memory replaced the cemetery within the City. The exile of the cemeteries to the outskirts of the City reinforced the separation between the past and present. At the same time, the rural cemeteries afforded New Yorkers control over their personal histories, safe from incursions by the City.

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(Quoted in Yi-Fu Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), 127. Unfortunately, the author does not give the source for this quote.)
Chapter 5

Conclusion: Past, Present, and Future

The dual nature of the attack on the World Trade Center, as both a very public and very private tragedy, has forced twenty-first century New Yorkers to confront the same issues as New Yorkers of the early nineteenth century. The conflict between remembrance and recovery has once again been thrown into high relief, for this was an attack both on all New Yorkers and particular friends, loved ones, and strangers. Ground Zero is at once a crime scene, an historical site, and a place of pilgrimage and reflection. What is to be done with the site is a matter of great debate. The City must recover financially, but the victims must be memorialized. Should the Towers be rebuilt, should smaller skyscrapers of a mere sixty stories take their place, or should a park—a place not "useful" economically but eerily echoing the status of many of the City's parks as former cemeteries—be built as a site of recreation or contemplation?¹

Such questions would have resonated with nineteenth-century New Yorkers. The evolution of New York City during that period from a provincial city to world metropolis produced a culture in which the only constant was change. If Boston clung to its past, New York embraced its future. Indeed, the nature of the City—diverse and ever growing—seemed to negate the very idea of the past. What could be the place of history and tradition in such a society? What meaning could the past have in the context of city life? The first half of the nineteenth century would appear to be the least fertile time for ideas of

history to appear, yet at the same time New Yorkers seemed to cast-off the past, historical discourse surrounding the City grew. This was not limited to New York; throughout Europe and the United States, museums and historical societies were founded, and history entered the university curriculum. The historical activity that surrounded New York in the early nineteenth century ranged from preservationism, acts of public memorial, and historical narratives. The existence of these disparate phenomena suggests that the relationship between progress and history is more than simply dichotomous. Historical concerns and discourses were not only a reaction against change, but also a product of change. When the older forms of transmitting tradition, from families, communities, and work, were disrupted, history was needed to perform this function. History as we know it could only arise out of a period of such disruption.

A common refrain of many at the time was that the past was disappearing in the face of progress. The immigrant population was rootless, without history and ignorant of the past. Many saw this as a danger to society. The founders of the New-York Historical Society sought to preserve the materials relating to the history of the City and nation for posterity. Their goal transcended preservation for preservation's sake; instead, the N-YHS sought to prevent the destruction of these materials in order to foster feelings of patriotism. This was in keeping with their belief that history, particularly civil history, had a didactic purpose. Increasingly, New York had a population ignorant of its history; this ignorance would endanger both the City's prospects and the structure of civil society. The linkage of patriotism and public service with preservation reflected the position the founders had in society. As the civic and financial leaders of the time, they saw it as their duty to perform this role, and their place to determine what would be saved. However,
their position and their definition of history as civil history limited their vision of what constituted the history of New York and whose history was being saved. They believed they could master the changes affecting the City, to preserve their position in society just as they preserved its history. They underestimated the power of change, and were eventually forced to modify their goals.

The N-YHS sought to inculcate knowledge of the City's history to the general public in order to foster a sense of patriotism. They had never been particularly clear how the history they saved would spread to the general public. At most, they urged that the materials they provided would serve as the basis of histories that would presumably reach a wider audience. The efforts of the N-YHS increasingly became known only to a small cadre of privileged men. The information the N-YHS gathered circulated largely within this small community, ignored by the outside world. While the founders were men at the forefront of the City's political life, the membership eventually consisted of men with increasingly private concerns. Those members in the public service served national and state interests. By not recognizing the plurality of the City, the N-YHS became marginalized, and ultimately lost any character of public service. However, the N-YHS did influence the larger historical discourse through their association of patriotism and history, particularly civic history. The founders recognized the importance of local history to the national, and their efforts to save the materials of local history enabled later historians to develop this connection in histories of New York City and State. While the N-YHS sought to preserve the remnants of the past, it did not completely reject the future. Their instructive idea of history attempted to reconcile past and present by connecting the City's past with its future. That future could be shaped by the lessons of the
past. This idea would be influential as well on the efforts of future historians to make sense of the relationship between change and history.

The limitations of the N-YHS in the face of rapid change raise the question of what kind of history would have popular appeal. What would cause New Yorkers to care about their own history? Or, in light of the newcomers, what would cause New Yorkers to see that history as their own? Something more than civic history and feelings of patriotism would be necessary to create these feelings. Washington Irving's hugely successful Knickerbocker History, critiqued the N-YHS and antiquarian concern with trivial details and the pomposity of certain local historians. At the same time, Irving drew on his extensive research to create a vivid picture of New York under the Dutch, revealing a love of this local history. Irving as a novelist was able to create a coherent picture of the Dutch in New York. Unlike the documents collected by the N-YHS, which at best provided only a fragmented portrait of that time. Irving's was a compelling narrative, as compelling as any of the novels or melodramas of the day, with heroes and villains. He introduced the domestic details, the day to day lives, to the history of New York. His characters provided a means through which New Yorkers could enter into the history of the City.

The most compelling of these characters was Diedrich Knickerbocker, the putative author of the work. As Irving's character of Knickerbocker came to be the embodiment of the Dutch. This was accomplished not only through Irving's work, but through his appearance in other forms, such as illustrations of the works, which were reproduced elsewhere (for example, in Valentine's Manuals of the Corporation of the City of New York). Knickerbocker was both a representative of and guide to New York's history, and took on shifting meanings depending on the form he took. This can be seen in the trans-
formation of the character of Diedrich Knickerbocker into the Knickerbocker type. With this transformation, Knickerbocker ceased to refer only to the Dutch past, but could used to refer to contemporary New Yorkers. Through advertisements, literature, and club names, Knickerbocker carried meanings of values, class, and ethnicity, that could refer to all New Yorkers or only some New Yorkers.

The writers of histories of New York City and State utilized aspects of the approaches of both the N-YHS and Irving. From the N-YHS, they adopted the idea that history was important not only as "curiosity" or entertainment, but had a civic purpose to encourage patriotism. Also from the N-YHS, they gained the idea that local history was important part of national history. The nation and other regions are always present within these histories. The roots of American freedom could be found in New York's history, not in New England or Virginia. In discovering the contributions New York had made to the national character, the character of the New Yorker was defined. Through this process, issues of diversity and the role of change were explored. The cosmopolitan character of the New Yorker could be a model for the new American, subsuming and transforming the identity of the immigrant. Critical to these explorations of New York's history and the New Yorker were the reconfiguration of progress as a tradition.

From Irving, authors such as William Dunlap and Mary Booth learned the importance of narrative. Through the repetition of the stories of New York's history, that history was codified and made familiar. These local stories transcended the merely local in meaning, becoming part of the national story as they illustrated New York's contribution to the nation. Events from the Revolution figured most heavily, in which the sacrifice of New York was the best evidence of its patriotism. The national experience was
made more meaningful by the inclusion of local events. Parallels were drawn between local stories and national events. The use of corresponding events not only underscored New York's importance, but also made the national local.

In searching the past for signs of New York's present, these works abandon the oppositional model of progress and history. Past, present, and future were considered together. Many of the historical works produced during this period, such as those by Mary Booth and Daniel Curry, mix past and present by combining current events and discussions of the future with historical stories. Estimations of future growth were almost always given; the City's past and present provided the means to calculate this growth and the evidence that it was inevitable. Other works, such as E. Porter Belden's New York: Past, Present, and Future: Comprising a History of New York, a Description of its Present Condition, and an Estimate of its Future Increase and John A. Dix's The City of New York: Its Growth, Destinies, and Duties. A Lecture at the Metropolitan Hall were published that were mainly concerned with the City's future. The story of Washington Irving's other enduring character, Rip Van Winkle, provided a model for another type of work from the time to examine these issues. For example, "1900." published in the United States Democratic Review in May 1847 and "January First. A.D. 3000." published in Harper's New Monthly Magazine in January 1856. featured New Yorkers who fall into mysterious slumbers, only to awaken in the future. Through these stories, the authors speculated what the City's future would be. Even in these fictional works, the

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basis or indicators of this future were seen in the past. Past, present, and future could not be considered separately.

Abstract ideas of preservation and change are more easily seen in written works and in the deliberate acts of preservation by historians. The N-YHS attempted to deal with these issues by collecting and publishing documents. Washington Irving wrote tales set in the past. Historians attempted to make sense of the past by creating coherent stories out of a morass of facts. What, if any, meaning did these issues have for the ordinary New Yorker? The impact of progress upon the lives of New Yorkers can be seen in the changes to their physical environment. As the City moved northward, the old signposts of the past were destroyed. The most evocative of these landmarks were the burial grounds. Cemeteries were a place where personal history and public memory converged, and the reaction to their removal from the City's limits reveals how a people create their own history. Attempts to block their removal, changes in funeral practices, and the evolution of the rural cemetery, can all be seen as attempts to resist change or arrest the wreckage it provoked. The elaboration of the rituals surrounding mourning and the obsession with memorials, from stone to photographic, are other forms of preservation. Visiting cemeteries, even for pleasure, was yet another act of memory.

The rituals of public memory also grew in importance during the first half of the nineteenth century. This took the form of publicfunerals for national and local figures and parades celebrating momentous events, past and contemporary. By honoring local heroes and events, from "Butcher" Bill Poole to the Erie Canal, feelings of New York were reinforced. Through funerals for national figures, even those without bodies such as for Washington and Lafayette, New Yorkers could take part in an act of national mourn-
ing, a rite of collective identity. The celebrations of Evacuation Day and the Fourth of July, representing the local and the national commemorations of the Revolution were celebrated with equal fervor during most of this period. These acts of memorial celebrated the idea of community, the collective action of memory, as much as the person or event they commemorated.

The popularity of works such as Knickerbocker's *History* indicates that alternate ways of looking at history and feelings about history were possible. The removal of cemeteries was ultimately a more immediate issue than the destruction of documents to New Yorkers of the period. These phenomena were ultimately more successful than the efforts of the historical societies in triggering feelings of community and identity because they are filled with a content beyond the strictly historical. One might say that for history to be effective, to have meaning, it must not only concern the past, but the present and the future. Today, for example, genealogy is often the primary way many Americans can understand their nation's history. Stories of the past must also lose some of their historical veracity in order to become usable. Roland Barthes described this process as a "conjuring trick" which "has turned reality inside out. It has emptied it of history and has filled it with nature." The mythology surrounding George Washington's life, starting with the works of Parson Weems, overshadows the facts of his life. Through them, Washington ceased to be only the Revolutionary War general and first President of the United States, but became a symbol of patriotism, rectitude, and honesty.

The complex status of history and memory in New York can be seen in the proposed monuments to those killed in the attack on September 11th. The memorials are not

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without controversy. The statue inspired by the photograph of three firefighters holding up a flag at the attack site has attracted the most argument. The planned statue transformed the three white firefighters from the photograph into one black, one white, and one Hispanic firefighter, in order to represent all those who perished. Many objected that this tampered with history, with truth, by not replicating the photograph. Others argued that the memorial would be a more powerful memorial by representing all firefighters, living and dead. The photograph and the statue possess additional emotional and memorial strength because they mimic the famous photograph and statue of the soldiers raising the flag at Iwo Jima. If they did not have this form, so familiar as a symbol of patriotism and courage in the face of adversity, it is doubtful that the firefighters' memorial would attract so many strong feelings. Another proposed memorial is the "Tower of Light," two beams of light shooting skyward from near the site, in echo of the towers of the World Trade Center. The primary objections to the piece are its impermanence and the fear that the beams may confuse approaching aircraft. The creators of the "Towers of Light" (also called "Tribute of Lights") describe it as a gift for New York, "a reclamation of New York City’s skyline and identity; a tribute to rescue workers and a mnemonic for all those who lost their lives." In this statement, the creators link the act of memory of the dead with the recovery of the City's identity. The City would be made whole again through a memorial. It would "neither interfere with nor detract from recovery efforts, debris removal and reconstruction." Commemoration need not negate recovery from the attack. The past would not intrude on the City's future. The temporary, ephemeral nature of these "Towers" seems particularly fitting for New York. The beams represent the towers of the World Trade Center, yet occupy no space; light signifies their absence. The me-

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5 There was no attempt to represent female firefighters.
memorial would be active and visible only at night, not interfering with the workday. The creators of this memorial see it as an "immediate and temporary civic action proposed to foster hope, unity, healing and comprehension of the mass devastation suffered on September 11th by New York City and the world at large."6 By deeming the "Towers" as a "civic action," and gaining support from many of the City's civic leaders (including the current mayor) and the Municipal Art Society, the creators imbue their work with a public status. It is not only a memorial to those who died, but to all New Yorkers, and to the City itself. The attack on New York was an attack on "the world at large," and thus transcended the purely local nature of the tragedy. The "Towers of Light" would serve the past, present and future of New York.

6 Creative Time, Inc. Towers of Light, cited on: http://www.creativetime.org/towers/main.html [accessed on 3/5/02]. Approval has been given for the "Towers of Light" to be lit on March 11, 2002. and remain lit for 32 days.
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