

Village Life in Otego, New York: Then and Now

by Michele Sacco and Dennis Banks

How many of your students have no idea of the history of their own community? That community may be a small village in upstate NY, central New Jersey or even Greenwich Village in Manhattan. K-12 students have little connection to the past. Many may not even truly understand the wealth of possibilities currently provided by their hometown. How many teachers have noticed the 'grass is greener' syndrome among their students? Michele Hughes is one of those teachers. She is a native of Otego, the village in which she currently teaches. Her students include some whose families can be traced back multiple generations in the community. Others are recent arrivals whose parents work in other towns. Otego is a blank slate for most of them. They see it as a small village with little to offer. Ms. Hughes developed the following materials to help her fourth graders get to know the scope of possibilities within the community and its vivid history. Though this unit was planned for a small village near the Catskills, the process would apply to any community in the state. The research process involved contacting various historical organizations and libraries in the region as well the internet. Making the community connection is a vital link for all schools. This unit is planned for seven consecutive lessons taking place in the fall after an introductory geography unit. Upon completion of this unit, the teacher makes ongoing connections within each subsequent unit throughout the year directly to events that took place in Otego.

Otego Village

Otego, New York, is located in Otsego County 9 miles southwest of Oneonta on Interstate 88 approximately half way between Albany and Binghamton. The population as of the 2000 census is 1052. In land area, the village covers 1.1 square miles. The median resident age is 37.6 years; median household income, \$40,000; and median house value, \$81,600. The demographic breakdown of the village is 46.5% male, 53.5% female; White non-Hispanic (94.7%), Black (2.1%), Hispanic (2.0%), two or more races (1.0%), American Indian (0.9%). Ancestries include German (17.4%), English (15.6%), Irish (12.6%), Italian (7.9%), Dutch (6.2%), and Polish (4.6%). Educational attainment of the population (over 25 years): High school or higher 86.3%; Bachelor's degree or higher 27.0%; Graduate or professional degree 12.8%. Unemployment in 2000 was 13.8%. These figures place the village of Otego above the state average unemployment rate and below the state averages for Black and Hispanic population. Part of a unified school district that encompasses several communities, Otego Elementary School has approximately 200 students in grades K-5. (Source: <http://www.city-data.com/city/Otego-New-York.html>)

Village History

According to the Otego Bicentennial Committee *Picture of Otego's Past*: "Originally part of the 'wilderness of the Province of New York,' the land on which the town and village of Otego is located was at

one time part of three land patents granted by the Crown. Following the Revolution and the subsequent opening of central New York State for settlement, a tide of immigration consisting of war veterans and their families plus Dutch, German, English and Scotch-Irish settlers began to enter the territory and establish homes. Mills and stores were located at great distances and it wasn't until 1800 that commercial establishments began to appear to meet local needs. One of the first of these was the Smith and Morey store on Main Street. Thaddeus Austin, who was to become one of Otego's leading merchants, bought this store in 1803 when he arrived in Otego from New England. Another early settler, Ransom Hunt, erected the first grist mill in town and in 1807 built one of Otego's oldest and most famous taverns, the old Hunt Hotel on Main Street. Called Hamburg until 1822, the village then became known as Huntsville after this date, and in 1830 the present boundary lines were established and the name Otego as officially decided upon."

According to Blakely's *History of Otego* (1907), Otego is an Iroquois name, probably from the Onondaga Tribe and is thought to mean "place of the butternut" or "place of the sugar maple." The *Otsego County Directory for 1872-73* lists in the town of Otego over 175 farmers with the number of acres each has under cultivation. From 1842 on, the village of Otego continued to grow rapidly (115 buildings were constructed between 1842 and 1889). The Albany and Susquehanna Railroad was opened in Otego on January 23, 1866. A listing of business enterprises in 1868

mentioned several ‘asheries,’ fulling mills, cloth dressing establishments, tanneries, distilleries, cooper and blacksmith shops, and saw mills.

Otego’s “hay day” was probably the period of time from 1890 until 1910 when travelers stopped there rather than merely passing through. All four hotels were thriving. Otego’s newspaper was published weekly and dances were held at the Opera House. Oil lamps lighted the village in 1892 and Main Street was a wide, tree-shaded dirt road (*Picture of Otego’s Past*, p. 1). Today, the village has paved streets and electric lights. The hotels are all closed, but there are still businesses thriving on Main Street. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Teaching Strategies

To help students get a grasp of the changes (and similarities) within their village over the last 200 plus years, students work with maps, primary and secondary documents, local histories and photographs. Michele Hughs, a fourth grade teacher at Otego Elementary School, has devised a thematic unit that serves as an introduction to the history of the village as well as extending the study of geography with which she starts

Touring Otego’s Past and Present

I. Goals: Students will develop an understanding that Otego looked different in the past. Students will see growth in Otego as time progressed. Students will improve in map reading. Students will become more familiar with their surroundings.

II. Objectives: Students will be able to: Locate and label a specific place on both historical and present day maps; identify and describe present day buildings in the village of Otego; work in a cooperative group.

III. NYS Social Studies Standards:

- 1.2 - Students will use maps to distinguish near and distant past.
- 1.4 - Students will use photographs and postcards of buildings to view historic events.
- 3.1 - Students will locate and label places on maps.
- 3.2 - Students will ask geographic questions about where places are located.

IV. Assessment Activities: Label sites of present day Otego on a map; Team Jeopardy game on the history of Otego; Reflective journal completed each evening; Treasure Hunt using the book *A Bicentennial History of Otego*; Walking Tour of Otego.

V. Followup: This unit is planned for seven consecutive lessons taking place in the fall after an introductory geography unit. Upon completion of this unit, the teacher makes ongoing connections within each subsequent unit throughout the year directly to events that took place in Otego.

Lessons

Lesson 1: Introduction to Otego I

Materials Needed: Completed student home location map; large present day maps of Otego (enough for students to work in small groups and one for the entire class to label); overhead of present day Otego map.

her school year. The unit is a comparative study of Otego in the past (1797-1868) and the present day. Through this unit, students are immersed in the historical concepts of Time, Continuity, and Change (NCSS Standard II) as well as addressing New York State Learning Standards 1 and 3 for United States History and Geography.

Throughout the unit, students work with primary sources, including historical and contemporary maps. Topographical maps are made available to study the landforms in the village and its surrounding areas. Students also study background information, interview their parents, and read publications that include previous students’ perceptions of Otego. The materials are reinforced through cooperative group activities, reflective journal writing, and classroom discussions. When possible, guest speakers are utilized to give a broader view of contemporary village life. Web sites, the local library, and historical association have proven invaluable assets. A walking tour of the Village is the culminating activity with students participating in discussions at each stop point.

Procedure: Review and record the students’ definition of history. Give students their completed student home location map. Look at overhead map of Otego with the class, noting the boundaries of Otego, neighboring towns, rivers, stream, railroad, etc. In small groups, students will locate and label the present day map of Otego, putting their name where their home is located. **Homework:** Ask parent/guardian about the history of their home, including the year it was built, previous owners or residents, etc. Reflective journal

Lesson 2: Introduction to Otego II

Materials Needed: Historical map (1868); Classroom map of present day Otego with all students’ names recorded (completed by teacher after Lesson 1); Chart paper, markers **Procedure:** Group discussion of students’ homes - record findings on chart paper. Ask the students if they

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know what was on the land in 1868 where their home is located today. Locate children's home sites on a historical map (1868) to see what the topography of the site was, previous land owner, etc. Compare the map of 1868 with present day map using a Venn Diagram on chart paper (roads, buildings, rivers, streams, farmland, railroad, boundaries, neighboring towns, etc.).

Closure: What differences do you see? What has changed?

Homework: Reflective journal

Lesson 3: History of Otego

Materials Needed: History packet (one for each student); Historical, present day, and topographical maps.

Procedure: Read history packet. Topics covered: Native Americans in the area; Early Settlers (including Ogdens, Hunts, Wellers); Old Otego formed February 5, 1796 (description of area, where were settlers from, why did settlers come here, what was the impact on Native Americans in the area, government in Old Otego); Otego means "to have fire there" (Native American origin). Discuss town/boundary changes between 1796 and 1830 (Huntsville-Hamburg-Otego) and Life in Early Otego (businesses, settlers, churches, etc.).

Closure: What do you think life was like for early settlers in Otego?

Homework: Reflective journal

Lesson 4: Businesses Then and Now

Materials Needed: *A Bicentennial History of Otego*; Treasure Hunt Sheet; Chart paper, markers.

Procedure: Discuss businesses we have in town today (list on chart paper). Discuss businesses we might have seen about 100 years ago in Otego (list on chart paper - think about transportation, resources, needs of community). Complete treasure hunt sheet with a partner finding historical businesses in Otego (Newspaper, Post Office, Fire Department, Libraries, Taverns, Hotels, Churches, etc.).

Closure: Discuss findings and record on chart paper

Homework: Reflective journal

Lesson 5: Schools and Government

Materials Needed: *A History and a Remembrance of the Village of Otego, In Celebration of Its Centennial*; *A Bicentennial History of Otego*; Schools & Government informational packet; Historical and present day maps of Otego.

Procedure: Schools. Look at a historical map dated 1868 (How many schools were there? How many schools are in Otego today? Why do you think there were more schools in 1868 than today? - population, distance, size of building, topography (rivers, creeks could not be crossed yet), etc.). Compare with present day maps of town of Otego and village of Otego. Discuss subjects taught in school in 1868 and in present day. Compare/ contrast one room schoolhouses and present day classrooms. Government. Teacher read passages from *A Bicentennial History of Otego*, explaining how government has changed from the founding to present day.

Closure: Review of Lessons 1-5

Homework: Reflective journal

Lesson 6: Mapping Out Otego

Materials Needed: Historical map of 1868; Topographical maps; Large present day map for labeling; Jeopardy questions and game board

Procedure: Teacher will divide students into two teams for Team Jeopardy. Questions will be asked regarding: History of Otego, Businesses of the past and present, Schools and Government of yesterday and today. After Jeopardy, students will label historical buildings and important sites still present in Otego on the present day map.

Closure: Facts about Otego will be discussed and we will discuss the route of our Walking Tour of Otego.

Homework: Reflective journal

Lesson 7: Walking Tour of Otego

Materials Needed: Labeled present day map of Otego; Historical Map of Otego (1868).

Procedure: Tour Otego. Teacher asks questions at each stop to informally assess students on unit. Rubbings will be made at the Old Cemetery.

Closure: Discuss the Walking Tour and Unit - What have we learned about Otego?

Homework: Final reflective journal - Favorite lesson, least favorite lesson, What did I learn?

Web site about Otego area:

<http://www.lrhs.com/mprw.html>:

Provides information on Donnell Sullivan who strived to build and perfect a railroad. Upon his death, the project was continued and the train was donated to the Leatherstocking Railway Historical Society.

<http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricalplaces.com>:

This site lists the Otsego Creek site as #80002746 on the National Register of Historic Places because it has prehistoric attributes and dates back to 1400-1000 AD.

<http://www.tri-town.net>: Contains historical information also found in the Bicentennial publication, as well as present day organizations that are active in Otego.

<http://www.usgennet.org>: This site contains population information for Otego from 1890-1920.

Books about Otego:

A history and a remembrance of the village of Otego: In celebration of its centennial (1992). Foreword and dedication by Helen Secor Groves. Beers, F.W. (1868). *Atlas of Otsego County*, NY: Beers, Ellis, & Soule. Blakely, S.B. (1907). *A history of Otego*. Cooperstown, New York: Crist, Scott, & Parshall. Hurd, D.H. (1878). *History of Otsego County: Some of its prominent men and pioneers*. Philadelphia PA: Everts & Fariss. Myers, H.N. (1976). *A bicentennial history of Otego*. Town Board.

Asenath Nicholson: A 19th Century Reformer

by Maureen Murphy

The 1830s and 1840s were a period of political and cultural turmoil in the United States. During this time period, Asenath Hatch Nicholson was the proprietor of a series of boarding houses in New York City that became centers for temperance, Christian evangelical and anti-slavery activity.

Asenath Hatch was born in Chelsea, a village on the New England frontier in the White River valley of eastern Vermont on February 24, 1792. Her parents gave her a prophetic Biblical name. In the old Testament, when Pharaoh gave Joseph the Egyptian name Zaphenath-Paneah (God speaks and lives), he provided him with an Egyptian wife named Asenath. When famine came to Egypt, Joseph prudently managed the grain supply to avert starvation. When famine came to Ireland in 1845-1849, Asenath Nicholson traveled across the country and devised a program to provide relief to the Irish poor.

A Young Teacher in Vermont

As a young woman, Asenath Hatch was a noted teacher. However, her dedication to her work combined with a poor diet, lack of rest and exercise and coffee drinking led to poor health. She suffered from digestion problems, nervousness, heart palpitations and high blood pressure. A physician advised a change, so Nicholson left rural Vermont for New York City where she married Norman Nicholson, a merchant and a widower with a large family.

Norman and Asenath Nicholson's household was listed in the Ninth Ward in the 1830 Federal Census. It was a household of seventeen people. It including a boy under age five, another boy and a girl under ten, one boy and three girls between the ages of ten and fifteen, two girls between the ages of fifteen and twenty, four young women between the ages of twenty and thirty, a man between thirty and forty, a woman between thirty and forty (Asenath), a man between forty and fifty (Norman) and a woman, possibly Norman's mother, between sixty and seventy. The *Longworth's New York City Directory* for 1832-1833 identified Asenath Nicholson as a schoolteacher married to merchant Norman Nicholson. They resided at Third Avenue and Sixth Street.

The year 1831 brought a remarkable change to the Nicholsons. William Goodell, a local temperance leader, invited the New England temperance crusader and dietary reformer Sylvester Graham to speak in New York City. Graham's true passion was health reform. He argued that temperance required more than abstinence from alcohol; it was a regime of dietary reform (vegetarianism), abstinence from tea, coffee and hot chocolate, early rising and bed times, daily washing with cold water, regular exercise and sexual

hygiene. Asenath Nicholson had been a strict temperance observer since childhood. Her personal demon was coffee, not alcohol. She decided to give up caffeine immediately after hearing Graham preach that it was unnatural and poisonous to the system.

Nicholson left teaching to devote herself to work as a Grahamite reformer and to operate a boarding house where like minded reformers could meet. On September 14, 1831 a notice appeared announcing that a boarding house would open at No. 3 6th Avenue based on Graham's Plan of Living. Gentlemen wishing to avail themselves of this opportunity were furnished with comfortable rooms and lodgings at two dollars per week. They soon moved to other quarters. In May, 1833, the Nicholson's were listed in *Longworth's New York City Directory* as the proprietors of a Graham Boarding House at 79 Cedar Street at the corner of Nassau Street.

Cholera Epidemic Sweeps through New York

In 1832, an Asian cholera pandemic which had started in India arrived in the city. Conflicting opinions were offered about how to protect oneself from the disease. Sylvester Graham offered a series of talks he called "Science of Human Life" that attracted audiences of as many as 2000 people. As believers in Graham's approach, the Nicholsons decided to stay in New York during the epidemic. In his diary, New York mayor Philip Hone reported the first case in New York on June 26, 1832 and the spread of cholera through the city in July. Many of those who could, fled the city until the end of August when the danger was declared over.

It was during the epidemic that William Goodell, Lewis and Arthur Tappan, C.W. Denison and other abolitionists and temperance reformers became

interested in the ideas of Sylvester Graham and began to gather at the Nicholson's boarding house. Arthur Tappan was the founder and President of the New York Anti-Slavery Society. C.W. Denison was the editor of the Society's paper, *The Emancipator*. Among the other boarders imbibing anti-slavery principles from their conversations was a bashful young man named Horace Greeley. A letter from William Tyler, a tutor at Amherst College, to his brother Edward written October 10, 1833, described the atmosphere in the Nicholsons' boarding house. He wrote, "The Boarders in this establishment are not only Grahamites but Garrisonites - not only reformers in diet, but radicalists in Politics. Such a knot of Abolitionists I never before fell in with. Slavery, colonization, constitute the unvarying monotonous theme of their conversation except that give place to an occasional comment on their peculiar style of living."

In 1834, the Nicholsons relocated their boarding house to the corner of Wall Street and Broadway. It may have been commercial pressure that forced another move in 1835 to 118 Williams Street where they remained until 1838. There is a surviving contemporary engraving of 120 Williams Street. It is a two story frame building with the shop at ground level and two windows above in the gable of the house facing the street. The engraving shows the doorway and the left side of the Nicholsons' house at 118. Like their Wall Street premises, the Williams Street boarding house was over a shop, possibly Lewis Cohen's Stationer's. The building had a central doorway flanked by display windows. Three granite steps with iron railings led up to a paneled doorway that led upstairs to the boarding house. The reformer Henry Clarke Wright lived at the Nicholsons' Temperance House at 118 Williams with other agents of the American Anti-Slavery Society, which was then located around the corner at 48 Beekman Street.

Abolitionist Movement

By 1835, there were strains between Tappan's cautious approach to abolitionism and William Lloyd Garrison's more aggressive campaign. When the British abolitionist George Thompson came to the United States in September, 1834, Arthur Tappan thought a public forum for Thompson would be

imprudent. Nicholson, however, was an admirer of the charismatic Thompson.

Nicholson's last year at 118 Williams Street was 1837. It was a time of personal and political crisis. Her mother, Martha Hatch, died at the age of ninety-one while the abolitionist movement was torn between Tappan's evangelical wing and the more militant Garrisonian wing. The tension was exacerbated by the introduction of women's rights to the abolitionist agenda. In 1838 and 1839, the Garrisonites supported by radical Quakers gained control of the American Anti-Slavery Society. Nicholson probably stood with the Tappans on the place of women in the anti-slavery movement. She believed that a woman's salvation depended on her faithful discharge of her Christian duties to her family and to her home.

During the abolitionists' crisis, the Nicholsons moved their boarding house one last time, from 118 Williams Street to 21 Beekman Street, which brought them closer to the heartland of the City's evangelical Christian life. In a single block north and south of the crossroads of Beekman and Nassau Streets were the American Bible Society, The City Temperance Union, Board of the Foreign Missions, the American Anti-Slavery Society, the American and Foreign Evangelical Society, the Female Moral Reform Society, the Home Missionary and the American Tract Society, and the Sunday School Union.

Helping the Poor in New York and Ireland

While Nicholson ran her boarding houses, she visited the poor of New York in the Five Points, the notorious slum in New York's Sixth Ward. During these years Nicholson met the poor Irish. "It was in the garrets and cellars of New York that I first became acquainted with the Irish peasantry and it was there I saw that they were a suffering people." Although Protestant missionaries were working in the district, Nicholson chose to work alone, as she later would during her time in Ireland.

In *Longworth's New York City Directory* for 1842, Asenath Nicholson was listed as the widow of Norman Nicholson and as living at 26 Beekman Street. She now talked of visiting Ireland and in 1844, no longer encumbered by family and business responsibilities, Asenath Hatch Nicholson left New York to follow a divine calling to work amongst the Irish.

Life on the Lower East Side of New York During the 1920s and 1930s

by Edward Yanowitz

Edward Yanowitz was a junior high school teacher in New Brunswick, NJ and a well-know performer in New Jersey “Little Theater” productions. His parents were Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe who worked in the fur and garment industries. The family was extremely poor and Ed and his siblings were often in either foster care or group homes. During his life, Ed was a furrier, a World War II veteran, an actor, a chicken farmer in Vineland, New Jersey, a leader of the local Farmers Union, and the operator of a soft ice cream stand, as well as being a teacher. He died on November 22, 2003 at the age of eighty-five. This story is edited from his memoirs.

I was born on October 24, 1918, on 21st St. between 1st and 2nd Aves. I don’t think it was in a hospital. My father was born in Romania and came to the United States when he was about eighteen. He came to the “Goldeneh Landt” (golden land) in 1905. My mother was born in Lithuania. My mother and father were married in 1915. My father was a fur “nailer” (stretcher) and a union activist. He boasted that during the struggles to establish the union, he had actually slept in the same bed as Ben Gold, the union’s heroic president. They battled against gangsters hired by the fur bosses to defeat the workers.

Abandoned and Impoverished

My father made a good living but left the family. Mom moved us down to the East Side between 2nd and 3rd Aves. We moved downward socially and economically as we moved further downtown. Eventually we lived at 60 E. 4th St. I was about thirteen when we moved there. The building was near the corner of 3rd Ave., where drunks curled up in door ways or lay in the gutters dead to the world. By this time I had graduated to my own bed, an army cot set up in the kitchen. At night the ceiling, the walls, the floor, the cot and I were covered with cockroaches. The light drove them away. I decided to keep it on when I went to sleep.

Poverty declared war on us and we fought back. We rimmed the baseboard of the kitchen and the cracks around the sink and bathtub with copper sulfate. We also spread it behind the coal stove and the ice box. We poured boiling water on the bedsprings to strike bedbugs dead that were bloated with our blood. They would hide in the thinnest crevices but Mom was indomitable. Eventually we stopped waking up and finding our sheets smeared with our blood. I attended a *chedar* (religious school) on 5th St. I learned to mumble prayers as fast as I could in words that I did not understand. I went to *shul* (temple) and tried to *dahven* (pray) but always needed the help of a *tahless-*

garbed (prayer shawl draped) elder. I loved the Bible stories and I loved and feared God and was eventually bar-mitzvahed.

Growing Up

My mother was a dressmaker and worked in a sweatshop on 28th St. and Sixth Ave. She walked to work and back home to save the trolley fare, five cents each way. I used to do a lot of the housework and the cooking. Mom would prepare the food and put it in the ice box. When I came home from school I would heat it up. I would *kosher* meat, a Jewish ritual, by sprinkling it with salt and rinsing it. This saved my mother a little work and made her happy. On Fridays, I’d scrub the kitchen floor on hands and knees using a bucket, brush, and rag. On other days, I used a washboard for scrubbing clothes in the bathtub.

Movies were a nickel and I loved them. I stole nickels from my mother’s pocketbook. She never made an issue of it. I started to “watch” cars outside the Loew’s Commodore on 6th St. and 2nd Ave. to make money. People with cars were afraid of what the “watcher” might do if they turned us down. They were generally nice and I would get a nickel or a dime. My favorite place in the whole world was Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx. I walked in swampland among skunk cabbage plants, found bird nests and had a chipmunk run between my legs. It was my wonderland.

My mother had tuberculosis, a chronic illness. She tried to go back to work when she returned from the hospital but the sputum cup at her bedside showed pink and the doctor told her she had to go to a sanatorium in the Catskill Mountains. The furniture was put in storage and the family parceled out. Hy, my older brother, was accepted at the Lavenburg Corner House, a youth home. One of my sisters was epileptic and was sent to a special camp. The rest of the kids went to the Hebrew Orphan Asylum.

I went to Seward Park High School and played a lot of hooky. I had plenty of opportunities with my

mother sick so often. Near the end of my sixteenth year, my mother's sputum showed blood and she went back to Beth Israel Hospital for an extended stay. While my mother was hospitalized, Irving, one of my younger brothers, became sick with meningitis. They took him to Gouverneur Hospital. When I visited him he was in a crib-like bed, with bottles and tubes hanging about him. His eyes were closed and he was very pale. I went out into the hall and found a nurse and asked her to come with me. She felt his pulse, pulled the sheet over his head and disconnected the various tubes. In June, 1936, I got a message to come to the hospital ward in the orphan asylum. My brother Abie had scraped his knee while running and playing and it had become infected. He died the next day and was buried in the same "Potter's Field" in Queens where Irving was buried.

Orphaned

Later, I was alone in the TB ward with my mother. She was a clawing, begging, tearful, whispering, promising, quivering wreck. It was killing her not to know what had happened to her children, so I dropped the bricks on her heart one at a time. They injected her with sedatives but she died that night. When I came to the hospital in the morning, I was led down and down and down to a large rectangular room. On one long side was a wall of metal files. In a business-like manner, a figure that remains shrouded in my memory led me to one of the files, took it by the draw handle, and drew my mother out. I looked at this familiar, yet strange creature dressed in a white cotton hospital gown. Her jaws were clenched shut. Her skin was ashen. Then the drawer was closed.

I went to Washington Irving High School at night in order to get my diploma, but I never made it. My brother Hy got a job as a fur "floor boy" because of our father's union connections and joined the Furriers Dramatic Group. The Furriers Union had been fighting for progressive reform since its founding and its program ran parallel to the Communist Party of the USA. Hy had always been more politically minded than I was and he subscribed to their radicalism. The director of the theater group supervised an acting class and I joined. We did a lot of improvisations where you literally devised your own role and learned to respond to your fellow actors.

For a long time after the death of my mother, I accepted the responsibility for the condition of my life. I did not blame public officials for the poverty of my family. It was God's will. However, as time passed, I realized that what I loved about America was the promise, not the reality. All people needed a chance to pursue happiness, not just the elite. I started to resent my poverty. I had been slammed around by it for all of my life. Believing what I did, and wanting to learn more, I became a member of the Young Communist League.

On the Bowery

When I was twenty, New York had no job for me. I was part of the one-third of a nation "ill-housed, ill-fed, and ill-clothed." I went to a place on the Bowery where free meals were given to hungry people. There were plenty of us. The long line stretching into the street from the second floor of the building was made up of all kinds of men. There were grizzled, wrinkled drunks, middle-aged men, blank-eyed zombies, and young men. We were bums. There was no smiling or cracking of jokes. We moved ahead pretty rapidly and I don't think I was in line for more than a half hour before I got two hot dogs, some sauerkraut, a ladle of mashed potatoes, a roll and a mug of coffee. I laid my tray on a shelf and wolfed the food standing up.

I slept that night in The Mills Hotel, a building that had been turned into sleeping quarters for homeless men. I enlisted in the Civilian Conservation Corps the next day. A lot of young fellows were escaping from their hunger and poverty by joining up. We filled out scads of forms. The CCC was run by the U.S. Army. Enlistees were sent to Fort Dix, New Jersey for orientation, medicals, blood tests and shots. After three days at Dix we traveled by Pullman (train) for four days and three nights to Priest River, Idaho.

When I returned to New York, my brother Hy and I took a room on 137th St. near City College. A girl friend of Hy's introduced us to a couple of girls who were going to CCNY at night. Their names were Mae and Ida. Mae insisted on preparing some meals for me and eventually I met her family. Mae's father had a retail coat and suit store and got one of his wholesalers to give me a job as a shipping clerk. We were married on Sunday, March 2, 1941 at Mae's parents' home in Mount Vernon, New York.

The World War II Homefront in Rockland County, New York

by William W. Goetz

I grew up in Haverstraw, New York, a village in Rockland County, New York cramped between the Palisades and the Hudson river at its widest point. Before World War II, it was a drowsy town with a friendly but poor population that had been ravaged by the Great Depression. We played with taped-up baseballs at a park located on the banks of the Hudson where there were also remnants of the old brick-making industry and a decaying dayliner, haunting reminders of the town's more affluent past. My Mom and Dad ran a newspaper store in the middle of town, a business that could be traced back to my maternal grandfather's shoeshine stand that he had opened in 1900 when he had brought his family to America from Italy.

December 7, 1941 started like most Sunday mornings for me. Up at about 6:00 a.m. to help my dad put the multi-layered Sunday editions together. Then it was off to Mass at St. Peter's, back home for dinner, and then off again to the *Broadway*, the local movie house on whose stage George M. Cohan had once performed. I don't recall the names of the two "feature films" that Sunday afternoon but I do recall that a ticket cost fourteen cents and Fox Movietone News that Sunday featured Japanese troops infiltrating French Indo-China. I distinctly remember thinking: "Everyone talks about the country going to war but it will never happen." I did not learn about the attack until about 4:30 in the afternoon.

The War Would Never Spread

Even as we had listened to reports of the Nazi invasion of Poland in September, 1939, on the radio, my father, a staunch "isolationist," assured me that "they" would never allow the war to spread. When the blitzkrieg devastated Western Europe six months later, he was very quiet. His business, a modest enterprise, was a big part of my education. At ten, I was part of the family operation, standing amidst swirling tobacco smoke selling newspapers, magazines, and cigarettes. Newspapers were lined on a bench across from the counter. *The Daily News* was the best seller, three hundred on Sunday, and it sold for three cents during the week and fifteen cents on Sunday.

When I entered the sixth grade in 1939, sports took over my life. If Navy, or my professional teams, the

New York Giants both the football team *and* baseball teams, had won, I would read and savor the sports page of every paper. At some point I realized there were other parts of the newspapers and I began to pick up tidbits of foreign news including a civil war in Spain where I rooted for "the loyalists" against "the nationalists." Who could be opposed to people who were "loyal?" I remember also the pungent criticisms of the president, Franklin D. Roosevelt and his busybody wife. His critics said he had failed to solve the employment problem despite putting the government into unprecedented debt and was now making dictatorial plans for an unprecedented third term. I must have picked this up from the Republican newspapers, for Haverstraw was a hotbed of Democratic politics. It was the home area of "Big Jim" Farley, the Postmaster General and Roosevelt's campaign manager in 1932 and 1936.

Interventionist-Isolationist Debate

I learned about the "interventionist-isolationist debate" not from textbooks but from the heated comments of my father's customers discussing the possibility of being "dragged" into another one of those damnable European wars. There was a special antipathy for activist interventionists who were accused of using the United States to save the British Empire. I never remember anyone defending the Nazis. A few Jewish kids drifted into my school who were refugees from Nazi controlled Europe but the European war was simply none of our business. We had gotten burned in World War I and would be burned again. The Japanese invasion of China got little play in these storefront debates even when the Japanese sank one of our gunboats on the Yangtze River.

As American involvement escalated, the debate intensified. First, Congress permitted England to "carry" away war material from our ports, previously outlawed by the Neutrality Acts, if they paid "cash" and used their own ships. President Roosevelt then stirred up a hornet's nest of protest when he gave without congressional approval, fifty World War I destroyers to England to assist in the "Battle of Britain." I vividly remember both of these controversial episodes. A draft law could garner a majority by just one vote in 1940 in the House of

Representatives and draftees were inducted for just a year. In my initial collection of “78’s,” I had a record cut by the Dick Robertson orchestra on a Decca label about the draft that tells a lot about public opinion, just months before the Pearl Harbor attack: “Goodbye dear, I’ll be back in a year cause I’m in the army now. They took a number out of a hat and there’s nothing a guy can do about that but when I get back, I’ll be all tanned and brown and we’ll buy that cottage just outside of town so goodbye dear, I’ll be back in a year.”

Patriotism

The Japanese attack changed all that. In a dramatic, universal, and immediate flip flop of public opinion with minimal finger-pointing, everyone rallied behind their controversial president. Haverstraw at this time was highly populated by second generation immigrants. Most of my mother’s friends from her parochial school days were Italian, and I remember them huddling in our living room and talking in hushed but fearful terms about a possible backlash against them because Mussolini had linked up with Hitler. But the backlash never happened. Draftees of all ethnic backgrounds marched willingly and proudly to the railroad station every month, accompanied by the high school band, for the ride to New York City and “induction.” Everyone was expected “to go” and *did* “go.” If you were called and didn’t “go,” you would hear about it. Nothing was lower in public esteem than a “draft-dodger.” Those classified 4-F as physically unfit did not fare much better. I was somewhat shaken when my mother warned me that she would be really embarrassed if I failed my physical when “my time” came.

Overall, it was also an exciting time as the homefront hummed with activity. Civil defense was the order of the day as Air Raid Wardens were organized to monitor the town during the simulated air raids known as “blackouts.” One of my buddies became a messenger with a white helmet to wear during the blackouts when he scooted about town. My mother, to my great surprise, became a “spotter” of airplanes, reporting from a tower constructed on top of the highest building (the five and dime store) the type and direction of every plane that flew within their range and reported by telephone to a special code, TARE 342. Down in one of the river basins, a Coast Guard Reserve Unit was organized that patrolled the Hudson from Haverstraw to the Bear Mountain Bridge.

Just below Bear Mountain, the U.S. Navy’s ammunition depot at Iona Island was operating full tilt and we would often see destroyers heading up the Hudson to pick up ammunition. Marines were stationed there and they would come to Haverstraw to hang out and date and sometimes marry Haverstraw girls.

The Home Guard

It was not easy being underage for the service. I was fully grown and shaving in the ninth grade so that people were always asking me why I wasn’t in the service. As soon as a “home guard” was formed I joined. We marched with wooden guns around a local gym and learned the manual of arms. Our uniforms consisted of either green or khaki trousers purchased for fifty cents from a local department store. We marched down to the center of town one time humming the Marine’s hymn and put on a demonstration of the manual of arms in the center of town. The onlookers applauded. Blackouts meant a special mission and on one occasion we were transported to the gym of the Spring Valley High School that was operating as a command post. Older men in the full uniform of the State home guard with real sidearms were running around the dimmed gym barking orders. It was very exciting and satisfying to be part of “the war effort.” Our mission that night was to guard the Spring Valley railroad station.

The school was still the focus of our lives and played a key role in the “war effort.” Homeroom teachers sold twenty-five stamps for “War Bonds” that were placed in booklets that filled up to the amount of \$18.75. You then went to the main office and a secretary would type up a bond. It would be worth \$25.00 ten years later. I collected sixteen of them or \$400 dollars worth, a lot of money in those days. Once a month the principal would proclaim a Victory Day and everyone in the school would wear their wooden red “Victory” pin shaped in a “V” that the students in wood shop had made. One Friday afternoon the principal made an announcement that the basketball game with Congers High School had been canceled because the school buses had no gas that was always in short supply and rationed carefully. He later rescinded it after learning it would cost only ten cents to go to Congers on the steam-driven West Shore Railroad. Practically the whole school bought tickets to and from Congers. Congers High School had no gym in those

days and the game was played on the stage of the auditorium roped off to prevent players from falling into their seats. Haverstraw beat Congers in the JV and varsity games that evening.

As the war progressed, wartime spending kicked in and stimulated the economy. My uncles had found work and my father's business began to pick up. Many people from Haverstraw had found defense work down in "Jersey" in the Pompton Lakes area. A former restaurant in town was made over into a small factory and local people were employed there making peacoats for the Navy. My mother purchased one for me and kids were wearing them all over town. Workers from Haverstraw also helped to construct an army camp in Orangeburg called "Camp Shanks." It processed soldiers before leaving for Europe and they took the railroad down to the Weehawken ferry and on to troop ships like the *Normandy*. We waved to them, dressed in combat garb and lugging an M-1, and formed the "V for victory" gesture popularized by Winston Churchill. They waved back; everyone was together.

It Was Also A Very Sad Time

On the day after D-Day, June 7th, 1944, I came home from school to find an unusual number of women sitting quietly in our kitchen. I looked surprised until one of the women blurted out: "My brother John is not coming home." He had been lost on the first day of the invasion. Another serviceman who had hung out in my dad's store had become a tailgunner on a B-24 and was reported missing in action around Italy. A few weeks later, a letter of mine came back stamped "DECEASED." My closest friend in the service, who had coached me like a Little League coach does today, fared better. He received his navigator's wings and was assigned to a B-17 in the Eighth Air Force. I was doing a chore for my mother at a local food market when suddenly the door opened and there he was with his entire crew from the pilots down to the gunners. They were on their way to Westover Air Field in Massachusetts and ultimately to England where he did his twenty-five missions over Germany and received the Distinguished Flying Medal. It was a great moment for a tenth grader caught up in the war.

During 1943 and 1944, the graduates were drafted immediately, sometimes even into the Navy and I think Marines as well, or enlisted immediately. If you turned eighteen and were still in high school, you could be drafted if the local draft board could not meet its quota

from older men. Some were sent to Syracuse University under a special program to earn credits for an engineering degree. When the Battle of the Bulge broke, they were yanked out and sent immediately to the European theater.

V-E day was especially memorable for me. It was May 8th 1945 and I was sitting in my chemistry class where Mr. Cosgrove who had a questionable background in chemistry, was struggling with a laboratory demonstration. I became somewhat rambunctious and Mr. Cosgrove asked me "to leave." I was in the boy's room of the third floor when I heard a hoop, a holler, and then a general uproar. The school had received word that Germany had surrendered and immediately dismissed school. Mr. Cosgrove and I later reconciled when he sent me to my father's store during class one day to purchase two packs of "Old Gold" cigarettes for him. Keeping our customers happy and avoiding a riot the day a limited supply of cigarettes were delivered to our store was always a challenge for my father.

After the Japanese surrender, there were buses waiting sometime in the spring of 1946 to take us down to see the fleet in New York harbor. The warships were still a dark battle gray but the world and I had changed during the past decade. The destroyer I visited did not excite me and the navy was no longer in my plans. An exciting and memorable part of my life was over. The economy, however, had been revived by wartime spending and there was some money to help me through college. It was becoming acceptable for working class and lower middle class kids to think about college. Most of the veterans who had never dreamed of college had already enrolled under the GI Bill. It was a long complicated war and too many young lives had been snuffed out but it also raised expectations and made new opportunities available. Everyone went to war regardless of social class or ethnicity and the GI Bill was a fitting reward that served the nation well.

I missed the war-generation by a year or so but I think I was fortunate to be alive and see a more democratic and prosperous nation evolve. Tom Brokaw has been criticized for calling the war-generation "the greatest." I am at least sure it was a great generation who somehow understood that freedom was at stake and made the necessary sacrifices without wincing or complaining. We were very fortunate they were around.

Continuity and Change in East Harlem

by Sema Brainin and Andrew Higginbotham

Vito Marcantonio, politician, statesman, and congressman from East Harlem in New York City was the most successful elected radical in U.S. history. Though he served in Congress, almost continuously from 1934 to 1950, he is virtually unknown to citizens, teachers and students of recent generations. On the 100th anniversary of Marcantonio's birth, the Museum of the City of New York sponsored a symposium that explored his life and contributions. Among the attendees were middle school teachers participating in a Teaching American History project and known as Museum American History Fellows. There emerged a strong interest in Marcantonio, his role in the community and in the U.S. Congress, and in a period of East Harlem's history that established important roots for the present. Andrew Higginbotham, a teacher of 7th grade U.S. history at The Young Women's Leadership School (TWYLS) used the story of Vito Marcantonio as part of a unit he developed exploring ethnic, racial, and political patterns in East Harlem from 1930 to the present.

Unit Historical Context and Rationale

Throughout American history immigrant groups have had to negotiate their place within the web of economic and racial/ethnic dynamics that exist in American society. Often new immigrant groups find themselves at the bottom of the social, political, and economic hierarchies. New immigrant groups are often the targets of racism, discrimination, and scapegoating. Throughout history new immigrant groups have been blamed for society's ills: crime, unemployment, a drain on public services, etc. Rarely is their labor acknowledged as an integral part of the economic growth in the U.S., or their culture celebrated as enriching the general culture of the U.S. (though, recently, multiculturalism has made great strides in the latter). As immigrant groups gain status in American society this often changes; cultures begin to be celebrated and contributions to society acknowledged.

One might think that as immigrant groups gain power and status in the U.S. they would struggle to help more recent immigrants acquire the same. But this does not seem to be the norm. A sad theme in American history is the regularity with which older immigrant groups participate in the oppression of newer immigrant groups. Sometimes this occurs as a result of a conscious strategy of the ruling elite to divide and conquer the working class (as in 17th century Virginia after Bacon's Rebellion when the colonial leaders feared cooperation between Black and White indentured servants or in early 20th century Hawaii to prevent Filipino and Japanese laborers from organizing strong unions). Other times this is a strategy by the older immigrant group to gain more status in society.

This theme of conflict between immigrant groups has been particularly pertinent to the history of East Harlem. It is reproduced again and again in the context of the ethnic turnover in East Harlem during the 20th century. At the turn of the century the Irish resisted the influx of Italians into the neighborhood and Irish gangs attacked Jewish immigrants on the streets of East Harlem in 1900. As the 20th century proceeded, the Italians, in turn, resented the influx of Puerto Ricans to the neighborhood. By the late 1940s, many of the Italian immigrants' sons were joining neighborhood street gangs determined to keep their community off-limits to outsiders.

Timeline of Demographic Change in East Harlem

1658 - Dutch, under Peter Stuyvesant, establish village of Nieuw Haarlem on lands inhabited by the Weckquesgek Indians. African-Americans among the first homesteaders.

1811 - Sparsely settled, used as playground for wealthy – fishing grounds, horse racing, yacht and rowing clubs, cricket matches, etc.

1837 - NY and Harlem Railroad construction, largely by Irish and German laborers

1890 - Jewish community begins to grow. Thousands from Eastern Europe. Italian immigration in large numbers. Each establish social clubs/regional associations

1930's - After Jones Act (automatic US citizenship) huge Puerto Rican immigration

1940-50 - Puerto Ricans largest ethnic group in East Harlem

1950's - African-Americans constitute 45% of population, similar to present.

Currently, Mexicans are the new immigrant group in East Harlem. At the school where I teach on 106th street and Lexington Ave., the Mexican students experience constant prejudice from the other Latino and African-American students. I hear Puerto Rican students accuse Mexican men of being perverted, Mexican women of being promiscuous and having too many children, of Mexicans in general being unintelligent and unattractive, and even of Mexican immigration driving up unemployment and driving down wages. My mentor teacher at the school always became furious when students voiced these prejudices. As a Puerto Rican, she bristled at hearing her Puerto Rican students accuse and insult Mexicans with many of the same epithets that had been used against Puerto Ricans fifty years earlier.



Barring new immigrants. Source: Joseph Keppler, Puck, 1893

While the cycle continues, the coalition led by Vito Marcantonio from 1930-50 offered an alternative. Can Marcantonio's work be used as a model for building unity in East Harlem today? Can it be realized in other communities of new and old immigrant groups? Or has capitalism and consumerism so crushed truly

democratic aspirations in this country that Marcantonio must be viewed as an aberration of the past?

The following is an outline of a group of lessons that attempts to explore the history of ethnic conflict and cooperation in East Harlem, with a particular focus on the career of Vito Marcantonio. It encourages an exploration of his example of forging multi-ethnic unity and a consideration of its applicability today. I have also included an activity sheet that is intended to spark conversation about the repetition of ethnic tension in East Harlem.

Lessons Calendar:

1. How do 8th graders treat the new 7th graders at TYWLS? Students reflect on their experiences as a new student at the school and the role the older students played in making them feel welcome or not.
2. Is there ethnic conflict in East Harlem today? Students discuss inter-ethnic conflict in East Harlem today including their own.
3. What is the ethnic history of East Harlem? Students examine a timeline of ethnic history of East Harlem since the late 1800s.
4. What factors influence immigration? Students read personal narratives of immigrants from groups lived in East Harlem.
5. Why was there prejudice against immigrants? Students compare responses to immigrant groups at different times in U.S. history.
6. How did Vito Marcantonio fight for the people of East Harlem? Students watch a video of Marcantonio speaking and read testimonials of East Harlem residents about Marcantonio and a sampling of Marcantonio's speeches.
7. How can we change life in East Harlem today? Students imagine how a 21st century reformer could help transform life in East Harlem.

Answers to Activity Sheet Lesson 5. Ethnic Tension in East Harlem

1. Italian 2. Sicilian 3. Italian 4. Puerto Ricans 5. Blacks 6. Irish 7. Italian 8. Irish 9. Italians 10. Italian 11. Irish 12. Irish 13. The Italians 14. Irish 15. Irish 16. Irish 17. Italians 18. Puerto Rican 19. Puerto Rican 20. Puerto Rico 21. Puerto Rico 22. Puerto Ricans 23. Puerto Ricans

Authors: A. Italian B. Puerto Rican C. Italian (Vito Marcantonio)

Activity Sheet: Ethnic Tension in East Harlem

Directions: Each of the following passages are about ethnic groups in East Harlem. The names of different ethnic groups have been replaced with blanks. Fill in each blank with the name of the ethnic group you think is being referred to. After reading each passage make a guess as to the ethnicity of the author.

Passage A: My parents settled in a cold-water tenement flat on East 112th St., near First Ave. The block was part of East Harlem's (1) _____ section. The neighborhood's (2) _____ elders would gather each day inside the storefront social clubs. At night, the men, most of the garment workers and many of the members of anarchist or social movements, would play dominoes outdoors while they debated the future of the union movement. Many of the (3) _____ immigrants' sons were joining neighborhood street gangs. The gang members, who were determined to keep their tidy ghetto off-limits to outsiders, would patrol the big city-owned Jefferson Pool and the string of bars along First and Second Ave. chasing off any (4) _____ and (5) _____ who wandered into the neighborhood.

Passage B: The older residents resented the intrusion and competition of the newer groups. (6) _____ gangs attacked (7) _____ immigrants on the streets of East Harlem. Conflict between the (8) _____ and the (9) _____ seems to have been particularly fierce. As the (10) _____ community grew it displaced the (11) _____ community in East Harlem. The new immigrants were not welcomed either by the (12) _____ political club on 116th street or by the Catholic churches of the area. (13) _____ resented what they perceived as the arrogance of their (14) _____ supervisors in the construction industries and envied the greater access the (15) _____ had to jobs; (16) _____ workers on the other hand accused the (17) _____ of being strikebreakers, which is how they were sometimes used.

Passage C: The newspapers and magazines of Nation-wide circulation have printed a great deal about the alleged problem of (18) _____ migration. Instead of giving you the facts you have been given a distorted picture. The truth has been concealed and a certain section of the responsible press has joined with the irresponsible press in a campaign of vilification. The stories on (19) _____ migration is some more evidence that the press of our nation is as free as its few owners permit it to be. Our much vaunted freedom of the press is in reality freedom for those who own the press to say what they please. . . The campaign of vilification against the people of (20) _____ has two purposes. 1. To conceal US responsibility for the conditions in (21) _____. 2. To cause discrimination against the three hundred thousand some odd (22) _____ in the City of New York, and thereby force them into a condition of second class citizenship, and force them into a cheap labor market. I have the proof. The articles in the press have caused me to receive a great number of letters from people throughout the country offering (23) _____ work. What is the kind of work they offer? Domestic servants represents 97% of the offers I have received.

The Great Railroad Strike of 1877

by Maryanne Malecki

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Summer, eighteen hundred seventy seven. The United States officially ended the twelve-year period spent “reconstructing” the nation after a divisive war. Republican Rutherford B. Hayes was four months into his hard-won presidency, having lost the popular vote to New York’s Governor Samuel Tilden but winning the office thanks to the partisan electoral college. Industrial growth, evident in the North prior to the war, was widespread, changing the economic foundation of the nation and the relationship of the individual to his work for the next century.

A Remarkably Lucrative War

As devastating as the War Between the States was for soldiers and civilians, it was remarkably lucrative for entrepreneurs and financiers. The economy boomed with necessary production of goods for both the battlefield and the home front; technological advancements bred further innovation. The steel industry had already benefited from a new manufacturing technique known as the Bessemer process, developed in the 1850s, that used less than one-seventh the amount of coal previously needed. Shipping speed and profits increased due to advancements in waterpower and steam engines.

New York City, a hub of national mercantilism and commerce, became a center for the buying and selling of money, housing the notable Stock Exchange of the City of New York. Businessmen such as Cornelius Vanderbilt and Daniel Drew became even more prosperous, but the future of the country belonged to a younger generation. The robber barons and captains of industry of the last quarter of the nineteenth century were all under forty in 1861: Jay Gould, Jim Fisk, J.P. Morgan, Philip Armour, Andrew Carnegie, James Hill and John Rockefeller were in their early twenties; Collis Huntington and Leland Stanford were over thirty, and Jay Cooke, not yet forty. Their business acumen, willingness to take risks, and downright arrogance resulted in exorbitant, some would say obscene, wealth, much of which was, at this point, plowed back into the businesses to create even more capital. Their power is evident in the panic of Black

Friday (September 24, 1869), caused by the efforts of Jim Fisk and Jay Gould to corner the gold market.

Railroads – The First Big Business

Money, technology, greed and a profound lack of government regulation gave rise to new forms of companies and corporations. The first businesses to become really big were the railroads, and regional lines frequently had monopolies over freight transportation and charges. In 1869, freight accounted for \$300 million in railroad earnings. By 1890, the amount more than doubled, to \$734 million. *The Albany Argus* published the train schedules in its daily newspaper. So tied to the vagaries of railroad charges were farmers in the mid-West that they took their concerns to the Supreme Court (*Munn v. Illinois*, 1876).

At the beginning of Ulysses Grant’s second term, several Eastern financial institutions ran out of funds as a result of bad loans. The subsequent Panic of 1873 ravaged the nation; banks closed, the stock market temporarily collapsed, and an economic depression affected Americans for approximately five years. Within the first year, 89 railroads (of the 364 then existing) went out of business; their failure left farmers with no means of transporting products, and they too became casualties. The new industrialized economy was so intertwined that a vicious downward cycle began: by 1875, more than 18,000 companies collapsed. With no money and no visible relief on the horizon, Americans took out their frustrations on the available targets: government, corporations, banks, immigrants. Businesses turned to workers.

The change from an agrarian to industrial economy transformed the value of labor. Workers became just another cog in the machinery of business. When profits declined beyond those acceptable to stockholders, it was the worker who received lower wages, or was dismissed. The steady movement of rural dwellers to urban industrial areas and ever-increasing numbers of immigrants provided business owners a constant source of cheap labor willing to work under the most deplorable of conditions. In the 1870s, workers had not yet organized; when they finally did, their unions were

not sanctioned or protected by the federal government until decades later, in the 1930s.

The Great Upheaval

The Railroad Strike began simply enough, in Martinsburg, West Virginia, on July 16. It became the first massive strike of American workers, and was viewed at the time as rebellion and insurrection. So great was the fear of corporate America that huge, stone armories were constructed around the country to protect the citizenry from a working people's revolt. They remain in many cities today as a reminder of a perceived war on capitalism and "the American way of life." Such is the legacy of The Great Strike of 1877, otherwise referred to as The Great Upheaval.

The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad cut wages for its workers by 10 per cent on Monday, July 16; it was the second such action in eight months. Confused and angry, the trainmen milled around the yard throughout the day. A crew abandoned work on a cattle train at day's end, and workers refused to replace them. Crowds gathered, uncoupled engines, and refused to continue operation until wages were reinstated. When the mayor arrived to quell the crowds and order the arrest of the leaders, he was jeered and ridiculed. Police were powerless to convince workers to operate the trains, and quickly withdrew.

B&O officials sought help from Governor Henry Matthews, who wired Col. Charles Faulkner, Jr., commander of the Berkeley Light Guard, to gather his troops in support of the rail officials. On Tuesday morning, Faulkner's militiamen, many of whom were railroad workers, arrived in Martinsburg. As the cattle train moved out of the station with the militia on board, a striker, William Vandergriff, pulled a switch to derail the train. He shot a soldier who tried to restart the train, and was then shot himself. The engineer and fireman left the train; volunteers refused to answer Faulkner's call to run the train. Faulkner wired the governor that he was unable to control the situation; the crowds and militia were full of strike sympathizers.

Spontaneous Combustion

What followed was spontaneous combustion. Firemen and rail workers stopped freight traffic along the entire line of the B&O; passenger and mail service went uninterrupted. Seventy engines and six hundred freight cars quickly piled up in the Martinsburg yard. Governor Matthews, determined to break the strike,

sent in Light Guards from Wheeling; they too sided with the strikers, and they were moved from the rail yard to the courthouse. The people of Martinsburg were resolute in their support of the workers. The strikers, it would seem, were successful; order was restored.

However, B&O officials wired Washington, D.C. to request the employment of the U.S. Army, even suggesting that the Secretary of War be apprised of the situation. Faulkner wired Governor Matthews that a "bloody conflict" incited by railroad workers would prove too much for his small militia; the governor in turn, backed by an appeal from B&O president, wired President Hayes for help.

As the strike spread along the web of rail lines, the pattern remained the same: workers react to the pay cuts with a work stoppage; officials attempt to run the trains with militia and volunteers; attempts are abandoned due to popular support of the rail workers.

Wage cuts began earlier, June first, on the Pennsylvania Railroad; the Brotherhood of Engineers, Conductors and Firemen did nothing to protect its members, and workers took matters into their own hands. But wages were not the only working conditions at issue on railroads. Workers disapproved of the "first crew in, first crew out" system, which left workers no rest or family time. The length of the workday was calculated by miles rather than hours, and that mileage more than doubled. Runs were irregular, thereby making wages and work schedules erratic. No overtime pay was granted; reduction in crews meant longer hours, harder work handling extra cars.

Railroad brotherhoods, organized to assist workers in reaching their goals, were ineffectual; delegates were intimidated by rail officials and frequently capitulated to owners' demands without consulting the rank-and-file. And unions were full of spies, spreading word of work stoppages to company officials, who would in turn fire potential strike committee members. This panic would lead committee leaders to deny reports of impending strikes or work actions, leaving locals devoid of union leadership and direction. The Great Upheaval was the result of independent initiatives up and down the rails.

Three hundred federal troops entered Martinsburg on July 19; the workers in Martinsburg were supplanted in their efforts by strikebreakers from Baltimore, who began running the trains under military control. Just when it appeared as though the strike was

indeed broken, railroad workers received support from wide-ranging sources: striking boatmen on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal; miners from Piedmont, West Virginia; boatmen, migrant workers, and young boys at Cumberland, Maryland. The president of the B&O, recognizing the possible extent of the strike, urged Maryland Governor John Carroll to call up the National Guard. Again, met by large numbers of labor sympathizers, the militia was driven back; Governor Carroll wired President Hayes for the U.S. Army.

During the same week, the Pennsylvania Railroad ordered a change in the operation of all freights running eastward from Pittsburgh, resulting in more work and increased danger of accidents and layoffs. Again, crewmembers independently refused to obey orders. Word of the strike spread quickly, and so did the arrival of militia.

Gunfire in Buffalo, New York

On Sunday, July 22, militia dispersed an angry crowd with threats of gunfire in Buffalo, New York; on Monday, the crowd returned armed, pushed aside the militia, and forced the closing of the Erie roundhouse. By that evening, all major railroads abandoned attempts at moving anything but local passenger trains out of Buffalo.

Strike actions took place in sympathy around the nation. Within a week after it began in Martinsburg, the railroad strike reached East St. Louis, where 500 members of the St. Louis Workingmen's Party joined 1,000 railroad workers and residents. Strikers in St. Louis continued operation of non-freight trains themselves, collecting fares; rail officials would have preferred to have all service extinguished, so that passengers would discredit the strikers and side with the companies.

For all of its fervor and support, the Great Railroad Strike of 1877 ended by August 1, unsuccessful, its workers no better off at the end than when it began. Workers did not receive pay raises; legislation strengthened anti-union attitudes, and state militias were increased. What went wrong? In many ways, the very spontaneity of the strike was its own undoing; the workers were, after all, unorganized. The strike evolved, or erupted, because of a collective dissatisfaction with workers' loss of control to company bosses, and an almost subliminal idea that their power lie in mutual support. The workers overthrew established authority and control, but were

unable to sustain the momentum or unity as the strike grew. After initially being ousted, forces of law and order regrouped in short order and were able to marshal their forces swiftly and confidently. In cities such as Chicago, Civil War veterans were organized ward by ward; civilians were sworn in as special police, freeing regular police for strike-related duty. The general public feared the violence of the workers; many editorials and pundits aligned their actions with those of the 1871 Paris Commune uprising. Whispers and headlines included the words "socialists," "anarchists," and "communists." Behind all local and state efforts to break the strike was the federal government, with its military and legislative muscle.

100,000 Workers In Fourteen States

Ultimately the strike involved more than 100,000 railroad workers in fourteen states; they walked off their jobs, smashed cars and pulled up tracks in Boston, Chicago, St. Louis, Toledo, Louisville, Buffalo, and San Francisco. Before service was restored, more than 100 were dead, hundreds injured, thousands jailed, \$5 million of property destroyed.

The Great Strike of 1877 is memorable for being the first of many to follow. Its dramatic display of cooperative power virtually ceased the movements of society and commerce. This lesson was not lost on business owners, many of whom thought twice about cutting wages in the near future. Some companies in the 1880s initiated labor reforms, providing death benefits, limited medical services, and pension plans for their workers. The Workingmen's Party gained a national presence. And, in 1878, the opponents of workers' revolts began constructing the protective armories.

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Picturing Rochester's History

by Sylvia Barker, Black Storytellers Alliance of Rochester, NY (www.blackstorytellers.com). Photo. Alan Singer



A monument in Rochester commemorates the friendship between Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony. The Susan B. Anthony House (bottom left) was the home of the legendary American civil rights leader during the most politically active period of her life and the site of her famous arrest for voting in 1872. The picture on the bottom right shows a bridge over the Genesee River in downtown Rochester. The lower level of the bridge was originally an aqueduct that carried the Erie Canal across the river on its trip from Albany to Buffalo.





Black History in Rochester

Top left. Statue of Frederick Douglass in Highland Park.

Top right. Bust of Austin Steward, successful merchant and one of the first Black settlers in the region.

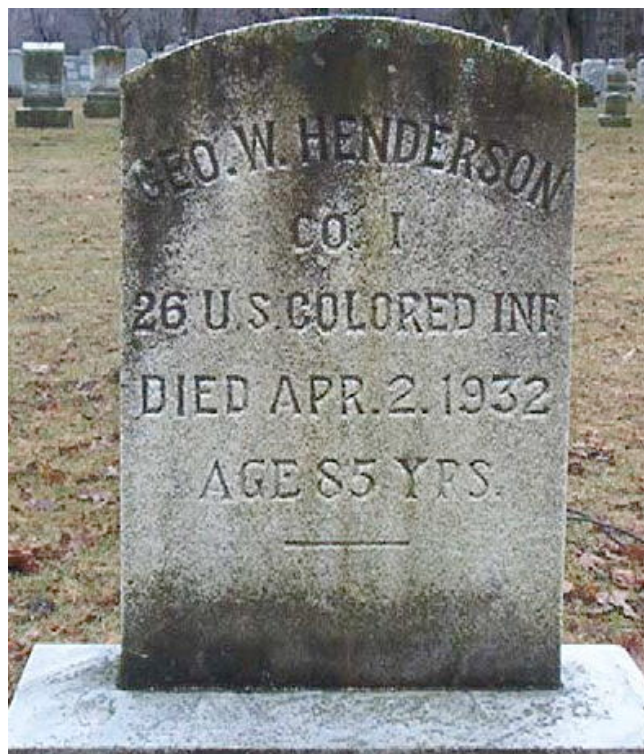
Bottom left. Building on Main Street in downtown Rochester where Douglass printed *The North Star*.

Bottom right. Original home of the Memorial A.M.E Church, founded in 1827 by the Rev. Thomas James.



Mount Hope Cemetery

History comes alive at Mount Hope Cemetery in Rochester. The cemetery, dedicated 1838, is now a public park. Summer tours are provided free of charge on Sundays and the gates are open to the public every day during daylight hours. Among the people from Rochester's past interred at the site include Civil War veterans; leading suffragists including Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906) and Sarah Dooley (1829-1909, the second woman to receive a medical degree in the United States; abolitionists including Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) and Amy (1803-1889) and Isaac Post (1800-1872), who were conductors on the Underground Railroad; local political and business leaders including Nathaniel Rochester (1752-1831), founder of the city, John Bausch (1830-1926) and Henry Lomb (1828-1908), co-founders of the Bausch and Lomb, an optical company; and Frank Gannett (1876-1957), who established the Gannett newspaper chain; and important local inventors including Hiram Everest (1830-1913) and George Selden (1846-1922) who developed motor oil for internal combustion engines and Frank Ritter (1841-1928) who invented the modern dentist chair. Sylvia Barker is shown visiting the Douglass gravesite.



High Falls on the Genesee River : Images from Past and Present



The drawing above is from the 1870s. The photograph below shows the High Falls on the Genesee River in Rochester today. Examine the two images. Based on these pictures, in what ways has Rochester changed? In what ways has it stayed the same?



New York State and the Struggle for Women's Rights

by Andrea S. Libresco

The course of study for grades seven and eight is listed in the state curriculum as the history of New York and the United States. It is difficult enough to fit all of U.S. History into seventh and eighth grade, let alone the history of New York; therefore, it is a real bonus for teachers when they find a unit that addresses both. The history of suffrage in New York State is, in many ways, the history of America. The themes of making America live up to its promise, of using classical American documents to push for rights, of searching for the most effective tactics to achieve one's goals, of linking past and present-day struggles, and of the connections and conflicts between race, class and gender are all present in this unit, as they are in United States history as a whole.

Many teachers use the Seneca Falls Declaration (<http://www.pinn.net/~sunshine/book-sum/seneca3.html>) as the primary document for studying the women's movement; however, there are a variety of accessible relevant documents illustrating that, like all movements, the late 19th/early 20th century women's suffrage movement was hardly a monolithic one. There existed a variety of views, personalities and tactics, some successful, some unsuccessful. Even best friends and leaders of the movement, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, disagreed on the most effective methods for pursuing women's rights at various points during the struggle, just as different factions of rights groups today disagree on the pace, goals and strategies of their movements.

The documents below include photographs and excerpts from speeches, letters, newspapers, declarations, protest signs, laws, and amendments. Some overtly concern suffrage; others do not. While it is assumed that teachers will select among the documents for those that will best work with their particular students, the documents chosen reflect the variety of perspectives and views expressed about the women's movement. It is possible to honor this diversity of opinion within the pressures of "coverage" in yearlong history courses by assigning different students to represent different people and positions at a "tea" where they must use the primary source documents to support the viewpoints of their characters. I have done this kind of activity with fourth graders, and I have done it with eleventh graders. At any grade level, this activity ensures that the history of women's rights will receive the rich treatment it deserves.

Essential Questions to Consider:

1. How did different women's rights activists prioritize the goals of the late 19th/early 20th century women's suffrage movement? How would you have prioritized the goals at the time? With 20/20 hindsight?
2. Should suffrage have been the highest priority of the women's rights movement? What other issues were worthy of attention?
3. How effective were the tactics chosen by the leaders of the women's suffrage movement? Which tactics would be effective today?
4. To what extent did the women's suffrage movement illustrate the phrase coined by the women's movement of the 1970s, "the personal is political?"
5. What lessons does the women's suffrage movement have for other rights movements of the time? For rights movements today?

Documents:

A. Motto of Frederick Douglass' newspaper The North Star (1847): "Right is of no sex; truth is of no color."

- In your opinion, were African Americans and women natural allies? Can you think of a time when their interests might diverge?

B. Seneca Falls Declaration (1848):

<http://www.pinn.net/~sunshine/book-sum/seneca3.html>

- What grievance was most important to the authors? How can you tell? What grievances still need to be addressed today? In your opinion, why did the authors model their document after the Declaration of Independence?

C. The Married Women's Property Act (1848, as amended in 1849). Before this law was passed, upon marriage a woman lost any right to control property that was hers prior to the marriage. Nor did she have rights to acquire any property during marriage. A married woman could not make contracts, keep or control her own wages or any rents, transfer property, sell property or bring any lawsuit. Before 1848, a few laws were passed in some states in the U.S. giving women some limited property rights, but the 1848 law was more comprehensive. It was amended to include even more rights in 1860; later, married women's rights to control property were extended still more.

“An act for the more effectual protection of the property of married women:

1. The real property of any female who may hereafter marry, and which she shall own at the time of marriage, and the rents, issues, and profits thereof, shall not be subject to the sole disposal of her husband, nor be liable for his debts, and shall continue her sole and separate property, as if she were a single female.
2. The real and personal property, and the rents, issues, and profits thereof, of any female now married, shall not be subject to the disposal of her husband; but shall be her sole and separate property, as if she were a single female, except so far as the same may be liable for the debts of her husband heretofore contracted.
3. Any married female may take by inheritance, or by gift, grant, devise, or bequest, from any person other than her husband, and hold to her sole and separate use, and convey and devise real and personal property, and any interest or estate therein, and the rents, issues, and profits thereof, in the same manner and with like effect as if she were unmarried, and the same shall not be subject to the disposal of her husband nor be liable for his debts.”

- What new rights did this act grant women? What rights still needed to be addressed after 1848? How important are these rights compared to suffrage?

D. Address to the Legislature of New York on Women's Rights by Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1854). Stanton and Anthony held a convention in Albany to demand a revision of the state's legal code, and Stanton addressed the NY legislature. As a result of this speech, Stanton's father threatened to disown her, though he ultimately helped her with the legal details.

“We the daughters of the revolutionary heroes of '76, demand at your hands the redress of our grievances – a revision of your State constitution – a new code of laws. Permit us to call your attention to the legal disabilities under which we labor:

We are persons; native, free-born citizens; property-holders, tax-payers; yet are we denied the exercise of our right to the elective franchise. We support ourselves, and, in part, your schools, colleges, churches, your poor-houses, jails, prisons, the army, the navy, the whole machinery of government, and yet we have no voice in your councils. We are in all respects quite equal to the proud white man himself, and yet by your laws we are classes with idiots, lunatics, and Negroes...

[Regarding] your laws relating to marriage, the wife who inherits no property holds about the same legal position that does the slave of the Southern plantation. She can own nothing, sell nothing. She has no right even to the wages she earns; her person, her time, her services are the property of another.

Look at the position of woman as widow. Behold the magnanimity of the law in allowing the widow to retain a life interest in one-third the landed estate, and one-half the personal property of her husband, and taking the lion's share to itself! Had she died first, the house and land would all have been the husband's still. How, I ask you, can that be called justice?”

- What legal disabilities does Stanton point out to the men of the NY legislature? Which disabilities do you find most important? Which do you think were remedied first? To what groups does she compare the women? What does this tell us about Stanton and the times in which she lived?



Anthony (left) and Stanton.
Source: University of Rochester

E. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. In the 1850s, as Stanton gave birth to and raised her seven children in Seneca Falls, she needed Anthony's help to be able to continue her work for women's rights. When her sixth child was born, Stanton, understandably, had mixed feelings. She wrote Anthony: "I am very happy...that the result is another daughter. But I feel disappointed and sad at the same time at this grievous interruption of my plans. I might have been born an orator before spring, you [Anthony] acting as a midwife. . . . My whole thought for the present must center on bread and babies." Stanton's husband noted how Anthony came from Rochester to supervise the children so that Stanton could write. "Susan stirred the puddings, Elizabeth stirred up Susan, and then Susan stirs up the world!"

- How did Stanton and Anthony work to overcome the domestic barriers to public activism? How do these passages illustrate the maxim, "the personal is political?"

In the 1880s, Stanton and Anthony focus on different goals in the women's rights movement. Stanton claimed that "Miss Anthony has one idea and she has no patience with anyone who has two. . . . I cannot sing suffrage evermore; I am deeply interested in all the questions of the day." Harriet Upton Taylor, one of Anthony's supporters replied: "Mrs. Stanton's greatest delight was to spring some quite radical statement upon the assemblage. . . confounding poor Susan and causing setbacks to the cause."

- Should the women have focused on suffrage first or on a variety of issues important to women simultaneously?

F. Sojourner Truth at the American Equal Rights Association (1867). "There is a great stir about colored men getting their rights, but not a word about the colored women; and if colored men get their rights, and not colored women theirs, you see the colored men will be master over the women, and it will be just as bad as it was before."

- If you were Truth, would you have supported the 15th Amendment to give African American men the right to vote? Why or why not?

G. Susan B. Anthony argued against an amendment that excluded women from the right to vote (1869). For 20 years, Stanton and Anthony had helped to guide the women's movement in conjunction with the movement for Black emancipation; then, just at the moment that the champions of the Black man's freedom achieved political influence, Stanton and Anthony found they could no longer count on their support for woman suffrage. "[This new amendment] put 2,000,000 colored men in the position of tyrants over 2,000,000 colored women. . . certain persons insist that woman must stand back and wait until another class should be enfranchised. In answer we say: If you will not give the whole loaf of justice to the entire people if you are determined to extend the suffrage piece by piece, then give it first to women, to the most intelligent and capable of them at least. . . . When [Frederick Douglass] tells us that the case of black men is so perilous, I tell him that even outraged as they are by the hateful prejudice against color, he himself would not today exchange his sex and color with Elizabeth Cady Stanton."

- Anthony and Stanton have been accused of racism during this time period. Is there anything in Anthony's comments that would support such a charge? Should women have supported the Fifteenth Amendment? Was one sort of prejudice worse than another? Explain your views.

H. Fanny Fern, columnist in the New York Ledger (1869). While Fanny Fern supported suffrage, she found financial independence a more important first step. "Woman, be she married or single, being able to earn her own living independent of marriage – that often harder and most non-paying and most thankless road to it – will no longer have to face the alternative of serfdom or starvation, but will marry, when she does marry, for love and companionship, and for cooperation in all high and noble aims and purposes, not for bread and meat and clothes."

- Why does Fanny Fern emphasize women being able to earn their own living? What are the dangers if women are not financially independent? Do these dangers still exist today? Which do you think was a more important goal at that time: financial independence or suffrage? What about today?

I. Banners at the May 21, 1910 suffrage parade in New York City as reported by Harriet Stanton Blatch (Cady Stanton's daughter) in her memoirs . Protesters were originally told by the New York State Suffrage Association and the National American Woman Suffrage Association that a parade would set suffrage back fifty years; however, the day was pronounced a success, even by conservative newspapers.

"We protest Against the Inaction of the New York State Legislature"
 "New York State Denies the Vote to Idiots, Lunatics, criminals, and Women"
 "Taxation Without Representation is Tyranny"
 "Men have the vote, Why not we?"
 "Forward out of error, Leave behind the night; Forward through the darkness, Forward into light."



(R) New York Suffragettes vote, c. 1917. Source: Library of Congress

- Which banners do you find most persuasive? Why? What banners would you add? Why do you think some suffrage organizations feared a parade? Are there any parallels with respect to protests today?

J. Equal Rights Amendment. Alice Paul was born in Moorsetown, New Jersey in 1885 and died there in 1977. In 1923, a constitutional amendment, written by Alice Paul, was presented in Congress, but it was never approved: "Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."

- In your opinion, why did Alice Paul believe such a constitutional amendment was needed? Why didn't the women's rights movement end with the suffrage amendment? What kinds of discriminatory laws exist today? How would passage of ERA remedy this situation?

K Harriet Stanton Blatch on post-suffrage women (from her memoirs, 1940: "Compared with the women who worked for the vote, modern women as a whole seem to be resting on their oars. They are not thinking things through. . . . If younger women could only realize how difficult it was to win what rights we have today, they would be no less indifferent to the back-to-the-home movement which is sweeping the world. . . . Women can save civilization only by the broadest possible cooperative action, by taking part in greater numbers in government, by daring to think, by daring to be themselves. The world is calling for women of vision and courage. May the women of the world hear the call and go forward!"

- What do you think Blatch means by "back-to-the-home movement?" What does her commentary on post-suffrage women tell us about when battles for rights are over? To what extent is her lament relevant today?

Activities Connecting the Documents:

1. Using the archival photographs and written documents of suffrage, develop a narrative to accompany the images.
2. Debate/Discussion at a Tea: What was more important for women, suffrage or financial independence? What would Susan B. Anthony say? Elizabeth Cady Stanton? Fanny Fern? In your opinion, what gain would they say is more important for women today?
3. List the grievances, tactics, and allies of the women's rights advocates found in the documents.
4. In your opinion, what would 19th and 20th century activists have anything to say to their 21st century sisters?

Suggested Internet Sites: Papers and documents of Stanton and Anthony (<http://ecssba.rutgers.edu/>); Ken Burns' film, *Not For Ourselves Alone* (<http://www.pbs.org/stantonanthony/resources/>); Anthony house (<http://www.susanbanthonyhouse.org/>); Stanton house (<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/pwwmh/ny10.htm>); National Women's Suffrage Association Collection (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/naw/nawshome.html>).

The New York City Draft Riot (1863)

This lesson is from the New York and Slavery Curriculum and Resistance Curriculum Guide. The entire guide is available at http://people.hofstra.edu/faculty/alan_j_singer. An edited version of the guide will be published in Social Science Docket, 5(2), Summer-Fall 2005. An earlier version was included in the New York State Great Irish Famine Curriculum. The entire Great Irish Famine Curriculum Guide is available on-line at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/nysssa/gif/curriculum.html>.

AIM: Why did Civil War draft resisters turn against New York City's African American population?

BACKGROUND: One of the most disturbing events in the history of the United States and New York State was the Civil War Draft Riot in New York City in 1863. The Draft Riot was the largest urban upheaval of the nineteenth century in the United States. For four days, White mobs, primarily Irish, roamed through Manhattan in defiance of the police and a small garrison of federal troops. More than one hundred people, mostly African Americans, were killed during the riot and an estimated twelve hundred people were injured. The Draft Riot was in response to an unpopular military conscription law passed by Congress and signed by President Abraham Lincoln in May, 1863. The new law allowed the affluent to avoid military service by providing substitutes or by paying \$300. Many of the first draftees in New York were slated to be Irish immigrants who were too poor to pay this tax.

New York City was ripe for an explosion when the draft lottery began on Saturday, July 11. Although they had lived side-by-side peacefully in some neighborhoods of the city, Blacks and White immigrant workers were often pitted against each other in competition for low paying jobs. In August 1862, 2,000-3,000 Irish workers threaten to burn the Watson and Lorillard tobacco factories because they had hired black women and children to replace white workers. In March, 1863, 1,000 strikers attacked Blacks hired by the Erie Railroad to move cotton bales housed at Pier 36 on Duane Street. After the outbreak of the Civil War, African Americans who had been freed were used to break strikes at the Staten Island ferry, the Customs House and dock strikes. "Copperhead" newspapers and politicians, including former Mayor Fernando Wood and Governor Horatio Seymour, contributed to the tension in the city by stirring up anti-war sentiment. The last straw was the release of the casualty lists from the Battle of Gettysburg that same weekend.

On Monday, July 13, a mass protest against the draft in New York City was transformed into a riot that attacked government building and the pro-war press, and eventually turned on the city's African American population. From newspaper accounts, it appears that the rioters, most of whom were probably Irish immigrants, turned on the City's Black population after police had opened fire on protesters killing and wounding many people. They destroyed the city's orphanage for Black children, attacked and lynched African Americans caught on the streets, and threatened employers who hired Black workers. Hundreds of African American refugees from the rioting escaped to Weeksville and other largely Black settlements in Brooklyn. On the fourth day of the riot, federal troops from the Union army at Gettysburg arrived in the city and finally restored peace.

Commentators make a mistake when they talk about the Draft Riots as a single 4-day action that was either directed from above or had a unified goal. At most, it represented a shifting coalition of different forces with different goals. Certainly there was an effort to provide direction from above by segments of the city's political and economic elite, but this was more an effort to manipulate popular unrest for political purposes than it was any actual control. An anti-draft demonstration began at 6 AM on Monday, but the riot did not begin until 4 PM in the afternoon. A series of crucial turning points transformed a political protest that enlisted the city's organized workers and artisans into mob violence by unleashing the pent up anger and anguish of New York City's largely Irish pre-industrial poor.

DO NOW: Examine Activity A: *The New York Times*, Headlines, 1863. Based on these headlines, what is happening in New York City?

MOTIVATION: Is protest legitimate during a time of war? Is rioting or violence justified if you feel your rights are being violated or you are under attack?

ACTIVITIES: Discuss the headlines from *The New York Times*. Based on what you have seen so far, were people justified in protesting against the draft in a time of war? In your opinion, how does a protest become a riot? Discuss, how do historians decide if newspaper reports from the past are reliable as evidence?

Working in teams, student complete ACTIVITY SHEET B: *The New York Times* Covers Civil War Draft Riots.

SUMMARY QUESTION: Why did protests turn into riots and why did rioters turn against New York's African American population?

HOMEWORK: Write an essay discussing the question, "If you were sitting on a jury trying rioters for murder and other crimes, would you find them guilty based on the evidence provided here? Why?" Be sure to refer directly to the article from *The New York Times*.

APPLICATION: Read and discuss "The House Top" by Herman Melville

"The House Top" by Herman Melville

In this poem, Herman Melville describes the 1863 New York City Draft Riot.

- Underline phrases that Herman Melville uses to describe the rioters.
- What is Melville's view of the rioters?
- What is Melville's view of what happened at the end of the riots?
- Do you agree with Melville? Explain.

No sleep. The sultriness pervades the air
And binds the brain -a dense oppression, such
As tawny tigers feel in matted shades,
Vexing their blood and making apt for ravage.
Beneath the stars the roofoo desert spreads
Vacant as Libya. All is hushed near by.
Yet fitfully from far breaks a mixed surf
Of muffled sound, the atheist roar of riot.
Yonder, where parching Sirius set in drought
Balefully glares red Arson -there -and there.
The town is taken by its rats -ship-rats
And rats of the wharves. All civil charms
And priestly spells which late held hearts in awe -
Fear-bound, subjected to a better sway

Than sway of self; these like a dream dissolve,
And man rebounds whole aeons back in nature.
Hail to the low dull rumble, dull and dead,
And ponderous drag that shakes the wall.
Wise Draco comes, deep in the midnight roll
Of black artillery; he comes, though late;
In code corroborating Calvin's creed
And cynic tyrannies of honest kings;
He comes, nor parleys; and the town, redeemed,
Gives thanks devout; nor, being thankful, heeds
The grimy slur on the Republic's faith implied,
Which holds that Man is naturally good,
And - more - is Nature's Roman, never to be scourged.

Crimes in North Country History

New York Correction History Society (<http://www.correctionhistory.org/>) presents information on crime in 19th Century Clinton County taken from contemporaneous records and newspaper articles. Includes documents on Public Executions, important cases such as *People v Peggy Facto* (1825) and *People v Chapleau* (1889) and the history of Clinton Prison.

A. THE NEW YORK TIMES, HEADLINES, 1863

THE CONSCRIPTION LAW. IMPORTANT PROCLAMATION BY THE PRESIDENT. May 9, 1863, p. 1

THE DRAFT BEGINS. July 11, 1863, p. 3

THE MOB IN NEW YORK. RESISTANCE TO THE DRAFT -- RIOTING AND BLOODSHED.
CONSCRIPTION OFFICES SACKED AND BURNED. PRIVATE DWELLINGS PILLAGED AND FIRED.
AN ARMORY AND A HOTEL DESTROYED. COLORED PEOPLE ASSAULTED -- AN UNOFFENDING
BLACK MAN HUNG. THE TRIBUNE OFFICE ATTACKED ---THE COLORED ORPHAN ASYLUM
RANSACKED AND BURNED --- OTHER OUTRAGES AND INCIDENTS.
A DAY OF INFAMY AND DISGRACE. July 14, 1863, p. 1

THE REIGN OF THE RABBLE. LARGE NUMBERS KILLED.
STREETS BARRICADED, BUILDINGS BURNED. July 15, 1863, p. 1

ANOTHER DAY OF RIOTING. MOBS ARMED WITH RIFLES.
NEGROES HUNG. July 16, 1863, p. 1

THE RIOTS SUBSIDING. TRIUMPH OF THE MILITARY. July 17, 1863, p. 1

QUIET RESTORED. CONTINUED PRECAUTIONS OF AUTHORITIES. July 18, 1863, p. 1

THE DRAFT HERE AND ELSEWHERE. THE LAWS AND THE MOB.
AID FOR THE INJURED. JUSTICE TO THE VICTIMS. July 18, 1863, p. 1

THE LAW OF THE DRAFT. THE QUESTION OF EXEMPTIONS. July 19, 1863

B. The New York Times Covers Civil War Draft Riots

Historians often use newspaper accounts from the past to understand events. However, newspaper accounts have to be read with a critical eye.

Historians continually ask themselves questions like:

Are these article based on eyewitness accounts?

Are the witnesses reliable? Are they telling the full story?

Do the editorials and news article reflect the biases of the newspaper?

Because these articles are over one hundred years old, language and spelling are sometimes different from today.

Team Instructions

1. Working in teams of historians, examine the excerpts from the articles and editorials from *The New York Times* and answer the questions that follow each passage. Your team can decide to have all members read each article or to divide the articles up among team members.
2. Use the newspaper articles to construct a time line of events.
3. Teams should discuss the accuracy and biases of the reports. Whose voice is included in these excerpts? Whose voice is missing? Is there anything that makes you question the accounts? Explain.
4. Teams should discuss why people would protest during a time of war. Why did protests turn into riots? What actions, if any, should be taken against people who participated in the riots?
5. If you were sitting on a jury trying rioters for murder and other crimes, would you find them guilty based on the evidence provided here? Be prepared to explain your views to the class.

Chronology of Events from The New York Times

1. *New York Times* Editorial, Friday, February 20, 1863. "The Conscription Act, which has just passed the Senate, is the greatest pledge yet given that our government means to prevail, and will prevail. It is really the first assertion of a purpose to command the means of its own preservation. . . We say (it) is the best of all guarantees of its final success."
2. *New York Times* Editorial, Friday, July 10, 1863. "The Administration is acting wisely in ordering the immediate enforcement of the draft . . . The conscription is necessary. Even after the late great victories, a new army of 800,000 men must get ready to move upon the Confederacy. Let the rebel States see that not only are they beaten now by the forces at present in the field, but that in the Fall they meet the same veteran armies 800,000 stronger."
3. The Draft -- Regulations, Saturday, July 11, 1863. "All able-bodied male citizens of the United States and persons of foreign birth who shall have declared on oath their intention to become citizens . . . between the ages of 20 and 45, with certain exceptions, to be subject to draft. . . . Any person drafted and notified to appear may, on or before the day fixed for his appearance, furnish an acceptable substitute to take his place in the draft, or he may pay to the Commissioner of Internal Revenue . . . the sum of \$300."
4. The Attack on the Armory in Second Avenue, July 14, 1863 (part 1). "At about 4 o'clock the crowd proceeded from . . . Lexington Avenue and Forty-fourth street to the armory situated on the corner of Second Avenue and Twenty-first street. The building was a large four story one, and was occupied for the manufacture of rifles for the Government. In the early part of the day the police authorities had placed in the building a large number of Policemen. Their instructions were to protect the building and the property inside, and to resist with force any attempt of the invaders to enter the premises. . . . At the time the first attempt was made to force the doors of the building, the mob amounted to from three to four thousand, the greater part of whom were boys. . . . The doors were burst open by means of heavy sledges, and the crowd made a rush to enter the building. Those in charge of the building, acting under instructions, fired upon those who were entering and four or five were wounded. One man was shot through the heart and died immediately."
5. The Attack on the Armory in Second Avenue, July 14, 1863 (part 2). "By this time the Fire Department of the District arrived on the ground, and were preparing to work on the fire, but were prevented from doing so by the mob, who threatened them with instant death if their orders were disobeyed. The cars were stopped from running and the horses in several instances were killed. . . . The rioters meanwhile danced with fiendish delight before the burning building, while small boys sent showers of stones against the office, smashing its doors and windows. . . . The military soon appeared, but was immediately routed, they fled to the side streets."
6. Burning of the Orphanage for Colored Children, July 14, 1863
"The Orphan Asylum for Colored Children was visited by the mob after 4 o'clock. . . . Hundreds, and perhaps thousands of the rioters, the majority of whom were women and children, entered the premises and in the most excited and violent manner they ransacked and plundered the building from cellar to garret. . . . It was a purely charitable institution. In it there are on an average 600 or 800 homeless colored orphans. . . . After an hour and a half of labor on the part of the mob, it was in flames in all parts."
7. Outrage Upon Colored Persons, July 14, 1863. "Among the most cowardly features of the riot was the causeless and inhuman treatment of the negroes of the City. It seemed to be an understood thing throughout the city that the negroes should be attacked wherever found. As soon as one of these unfortunate people was spied, he was immediately set upon by a crowd of men. . . . There were probably not less than a dozen negroes beaten to death in different parts of the city during the day."

8. Character of the Mob, July 14, 1863. "In the early part of the day yesterday, there were a number of respectable workmen and persons engaged in different occupations in the City, who were momentarily seduced from their labors and their work-shops, and went with the crowds in the street. But they at once saw the horrible character of the mob and the atrocious work they had on hand; they heard their threats and saw their shocking brutalities, and were only too glad to get out from among them. At last the mob or mobs were composed of only the vilest men in the City, and there was not a crime conceivable, from firing houses to hanging negroes, of which they were not capable. . . . Our reporter observed in one gang, several women armed with sticks . . . ; but it is only justice to say that the voluble tongues of these women gave vent to their thoughts with an accentuation which was never acquired on this side of the Atlantic ocean."

9. Eighteen Persons Reported Killed, July 15, 1863. "Between 12 and 1 o'clock yesterday, the rioters commenced their attack upon the Union Steam Works. . . . The rioters turned out in large force numbering from 4,000 to 5,000 people -- including children. . . . At 3 pm three hundred Policemen arrived upon the ground. . . . When the police made their appearance, the rioters attempted to escape by the rear windows, but too late. Finding themselves caught in a tight place, they made an attack on the Police. This assault the officers met by a volley from their revolvers and five of the mob were shot. . . . About twenty rioters remained in the building and there was but one way for them to make their exit. The mob made a deadly assault upon the police. They in turn used their weapons effectively, and fourteen of the mob were instantly killed."

10. Shall Ruffians Rule Us?, Editorial, July 15, 1863. "The mob yesterday was unquestionably started on the basis of resistance to the draft. But that was a very small part of the spirit which really prompted and kept it in motion. It was, probably, in point of character, the lowest and most ruffianly mob which ever disgraced our City. . . . There is but one way to deal with this course brutality. It is idle to reason with it, - worse than idle to tamper with it; it must be crushed. Nothing but force can deal with its open manifestation."

11. The Nationality of the Rioters, July 16, 1863. "The Tribune of yesterday morning had the following: 'It is a curious fact that of all the arrests made, every one is Irish.' However, this may be, it is a fact patent to everyone who has seen anything of the mob that it is composed exclusively of Irishmen and boys."

12. An Appeal to the Irish Catholics from Archbishop Hughes, July 16, 1863. "In the present disturbed condition of the City, I will appeal not only to them, but to all persons who love God and revere the holy Catholic religion . . . to return to their homes . . . and disconnect themselves from the seemingly deliberate intention to disturb the peace and social rights of the citizens of New York. "

13. The Spirit of the Mob and its Promoters, editorial, July 17, 1863. "What most amazes is not the existence of this mob, but its hideousness. . . . The rabble exhibit an abandonment of human feeling, that was hardly deemed possible in any portion of American society, even the foreign-born."

14. Speech of Archbishop Hughes, July 18, 1863. "Men of New York. They call you rioters, and I cannot see a riotous face among you. . . . I am a minister of God, and a minister of peace, who in your troubles in years past, . . . never deserted you. . . . I will not enter into the question which has provoked all this excitement. No doubt there are some real grievances. . . . If you are Irishmen, and the papers say the rioters are all Irishmen, then I also am an Irishmen, but not a rioter, for I am a man of peace."