Fig. 6.4. The basic layout of Brockport was determined by the relation of stores, warehouses and the canal docks. Since the towpath ran along the canal’s northern bank, basins were cut in the southern berm bank. The need for easy access between the stores and their warehouses seems to have encouraged store owners to locate to the south of the canal (although wet ground provided an additional distraction to the north). This is based on a map made by the state when the canal was enlarged in 1834. The original map shows only those buildings potentially affected by the enlargement. I have added buildings that are referred to in the text.
stocks." Here also were the dry docks in which canal boats, particularly
the packets of Brockway's Red Bird Line, were refitted and repaired.1

On the other side of Main Street south of the canal the Green Store,
a wooden, barn-like structure built as a grocery in 1824, occupied what
was long considered the best commercial situation in the village.2
Running east behind this were the customs house, where canal tolls were
collected, and two basins with their attendant warehouses, the Seymour's
actually bridging the water, loading being accomplished through trap
doors in the floor.

South of the docks higher rent costs had excluded non-commercial
functions from several hundred yards of Main Street. Preexisting
structures like Anson Hammond's barn and Brockway's house were
converted to commercial uses, and a continuous line of storefronts, many
of them makeshift wooden structures, rapidly filled the intervening
spaces. The frequent movement of businesses suggests that much of this
was rental property. The proximity of clay beds on the lake plain in
Clarkson and limestone quarries on the escarpment in Sweden permitted
immediate construction of at least four brick blocks.3 Initially brick was
used for dry goods stores, and it probably represented a precaution
undertaken to protect their large, valuable inventories from unwanted

1) Priam B. Hill, Elisha Carpenter, in Smith and Husted, pp. 2&19; B.R. 25:31,
4/28/81. This was, in fact, a rather small boat building operation. In
1836 six yards in Rochester were producing around 100 boats a year.
By 1848, 13 yards were producing over 200. McKelvey, 1978, p. 1-24
2) B.R. 11:26, 3/28/67
3) Local stone for "fire places or any part of house building" was supplied
in 1832 by P. Fenton and brothers, from the farm, formerly owned by
Thomas Fenton, three and one half miles south of the village. B.F.F.
2:38, 6/20/32.
fire and burglary. Burning, which we will examine more closely in a moment, removed most of the wooden structures by the late 1830's, and their replacements were brick. Only a few of these buildings survived the compulsive ornamentation of the second half of the century, and no depictions exist, but it seems fair to guess that they were of two stories with pitched roofs, eves to the street, and simple lintels of local limestone. They were examples of a vernacular neo-classical style adapted from the versatile London row house, which entered the American architectural vocabulary in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.1

This is the arrangement described by Thomas Roby in the fall of 1823, when he wrote that the village had "four stores most of them brick". The store he had engaged was, he wrote, "in one end of a neat brick building well finished and I may say well filled- with a good chamber over it which we have not had the pleasure of occupying as it is newly plastered....the store house I spoke of in a former letter is situated about 20 Rods distant on the canal." 2 Three years later Roby and Gould built their own store. Constructed at a cost they found it painful to recall, it was "one of the best, if not the best in the County." Made of brick, it stood two stories tall, covered twenty-four feet of street front, and stretched sixty feet back onto its lot. The dry goods store of Seymour and Ganson, which was the first in the village to be built of brick, was of similar dimensions.3

2) Hastings, p. 41
3) Events, Ensign and Events, p. 158.
Fig. 6.5. The two smaller stores probably date from the 1830's and they may be taken as typical of early Main Street architecture. This sketch illustrates their present condition. Their large, ornate neighbors were built after the Civil War. The size of the later buildings is a testament to the relatively large amount of cash in circulation after the war, their ornament is the standardized product of centralized industries. Efforts to preserve the larger buildings often fail to recognize them as examples of redevelopment. In some cases it appears that the pitched roof of the earlier store was removed, addition stories were added, and the whole was topped with an ornamental Italianate cornice. Curiously, these additions are prized by preservationists.
Main Street was, of course, unpaved. Mixed and pulverized by
hooves and wagon wheels, it alternated from mud to dust, until it was
cobbled some time in the 1830's. The impermeable surface obliged
merchants to agree to gather the horse dung, but their ministrations were
lax and infrequent. Sidewalks, where they were laid, were of wood and
these were sheltered by wooden awnings.\(^1\)

The tedious job of reconstructing the location of businesses in
order to detect any incipient segregation of services has its difficulty
compounded by the absence of building numbers and the extreme
instability of business ventures. The difficulty can be surmounted but the
exercise is not particularly rewarding as, for reasons I will discuss
shortly, no pattern persisted for more than a season. Nevertheless, three
features do deserve mention. First of all, most shops, which is to say most
places where things were made, were excluded from the business district.
The exceptions were tailors, to whom we will return, and shoe and harness
makers. The wagon and sleigh shop of Silas Hardy stood at the end of Main
Street; beyond this stood the original iron furnace of Bachus and Ganson;
and beyond this stood Robert McCulloch's cabinet shop where "house
carvings [were] done on short notice."\(^2\) Animal rendering and tanning
were also excluded as they required paddocks and generated objectionable
stinks. Darius Evans ran a considerable business in animal products north
of the canal, slaughtering several thousand sheep at a time, buying skins

\(^1\) Unless otherwise indicated the description of Main Street, 1829 is
adapted from an account penned by Lorenzo Beach in B.R. 24:30,
desire that it should be removed are mentioned in B.R. 15:33, 5/11/71.
\(^2\) B.F.P., 1:12, 12/22/30.
and rendering lard into soap. Evans' successor, Thomas Comes, moved the operation to the abandoned cocoonery, a vestige of the silk worm mania, which stood east and downwind of town. Here it remained until 1870, when some sensitive neighbors burned it down "on account of its effluvium." 2

The other aspects of segregation are not horizontal, but rather vertical. As soon as they could afford a separate house the merchants abandoned their second story apartments to professional offices and tailor's shops, which, like the portrait studios and daguerrean rooms that would shortly join them, required strong light. Newspaper offices, lodge halls, and concert halls later made use of this elevated space. When they were rented, cellars housed groceries, oyster houses and saloons. This subterranean position was principally due to the low return from these easily undertaken and therefore intensely competitive ventures, but the low esteem in which their clients risked being held by public opinion may have been among the factors that drove them underground.

Partnerships were frequently dissolved, their stores passing into other hands or out of existence. The ephemerality of these ventures was due to excessive competition, which granted few stores a trade sufficient to support two partners. In many cases the trade was insufficient to support one. The traffic arriving in the village was considerable, but it was unequal to the number of candidates who presented themselves to receive that traffic. The transitory nature of village businesses has a

1) B.F.P., 1:2, 10/13/30; 1:38, 6/22/31. Takes Thomas Comes as a partner.
2) B.A. 14:48, 8/25/70
four part explanation. To be a merchant was, first of all, to be a village
worthy and to enjoy a social status equivalent to that of ministers,
lawyers and the most prosperous farmers.\textsuperscript{1} Undoubtedly, when compared
with the lot of most farmers, the work was less arduous, the environment
more congenial and the hours more agreeable. The attraction of this
apparent high road to success was, as a second factor, considerably
enhanced by the large mercantile houses of New York City, which sold
goods to aspiring merchants on terms that were difficult to decline, even
without their burnished promises of speedy prosperity. All across New
York this gulling mercantilism served to oversupply villages with stores,
and to overstock stores with goods.\textsuperscript{2} P. and J.W. Sweet operated one such
venture from a room in the Collins Block near the canal, where they sold
West India Goods and Groceries, "as low as can be purchased west of Utica,
Rochester not excepted."\textsuperscript{3} After two years of business a cash shortage
forced their landlord, who operated two adjacent stores under an
arrangement that were probably not dissimilar, to close.\textsuperscript{4} Thirdly, as a
further consequence of the desirability of a position as a village
merchant, and of aggressive mercantilism, and of the period's belief that
any man was equal to any task, there were briefly established behind the
counters of innumerable stores refinished farmers who were, in a word,
incompetent. They were, obviously, incapable of estimating their
\textsuperscript{1} Howe, p 55.
\textsuperscript{2} Carol, Halpert Schwartz, "Retail Trade Development in New York State in
the Nineteenth Century, with Special Reference to the Country
\textsuperscript{4} B.F.P., 1:5, 11/3/30; 1:22, 3/2/31; 1:35, 6/1/31. Cash shortage closed the
probable market share, and it seems unlikely that they exhibited greater prudence or circumspection when required to estimate the creditableness of farmers or the future receipts from which the loans extended by the mercantile houses would be paid.

The reckless credit policies of many merchants provided the fourth cause of commercial instability. The temptation to overextend credit was rooted in three facts. First, as we have said, competition was fierce and a liberal credit policy attracted customers. Second, the income of the debtors was seasonal. Unfortunately, as the after-harvest rush of dunning notices attests, settlement of debts was not. Finally, cash was scarce, and a local source was not available until the Bank of Brockport was founded in 1838. This necessitated an economy that was largely transacted through barter, and it meant that the only way a farmer could save one year's surplus was to have it registered as a line of credit in a merchant's ledger. When the price of a particular commodity was high merchants solicited it from the farmers with offers of cash. Some even ran "cash stores," which meant that they offered cash for produce, not that they demanded cash for their goods. Agricultural products were the common medium of exchange, and even a cabinet maker advertised himself as, "taking most kinds of lumber and produce in payment." 1

The most striking outcome of incompetence and the failure that ensued was arson. Fire insurance policies, which were available at an early date, seem in many cases to have served as a precaution against business failure. Once ignited fires were seldom extinguished. In 1832,

1) B.F.P., 1:1, 10/6/31.
After the hapless bucket brigade had failed to save the "yellow boarding house" on State Street, the Trustees spent 450 dollars, eighty per cent of that year's budget, on a fire engine and the first fire company, Water Witch Engine Co. No. 1, was formed. But this engine proved "very hard to pump." The excessively democratic company was frequently disconcerted by panic and countermanding orders, and "gradually the whole of Main Street was burned." One wonders at the coincidence of the largest of these fires, which destroyed most of the stores on the west side of Main Street in the spring of 1837, and the deepening financial panic. This was probably arson, but another contributing factor was the heedless grouping of inflammable and inflammatory uses. One blaze, extinguished by the fire company in 1833, began when the sparks from a blacksmith's forge settled on the sawdust and shavings of a joiner's shop located overhead.

Through the 1850's fires were fought with the accustomed incompetence and the accompanying lack of success. In living memory, Conqueror II, a "wheezy dilapidated apology of a thing called a fire engine," had not provided notable assistance in extinguishing a blaze, and the antiquated machine was regarded by many villagers as "an expensive machine kept almost exclusively for the gratification of the juveniles."

This is to say that it was periodically hauled to the canal dock for the sport.

1) James Roby, in Smith and Husted, p. 16; Hale, p. 14. The meeting to consider this matter was held at Wales Coffee House in December 1831. B.F.P., 1:12, 12/22/31.
2) James Roby, in Smith and Husted, p. 16.
3) Rochester Republican, 1/24/37; 1/5, 3/28/37.
of activating its feeble hand pump and provocatively dousing the passing boatmen. With heavy exertion the firemen could attain a range of only sixty feet, and this only briefly as the hoses were rotten and prone to rupture. Bursting hoses foiled efforts to save the Ostrom block, which burned in 1860, and yet a large majority continued to reject all proposals to furnish the fire company with new gear.

Described as "an old brick building in very poor condition and of little value," the Ostrom block, and the merchandise of the three street level stores, was generously insured. A similar precaution had not been taken by "several families living above the stores who were turned into the streets, and whose loss, comparatively speaking, may have been far greater." Meanwhile, the building's owner, J. Minot, set about replacing the ruin with "a good substantial building," and in five months he resumed business in "a plain, neat and substantial structure." Fire also proved convenient for Frederick Belden and A.L. Cady, who operated the stone flour mill at the corner of Market and Mechanic Streets. Built in 1858 at a cost of ten thousand dollars, the mill had proven "a very unfortunate enterprise," and by 1860 it was seven thousand dollars in debt. On the night before the fire insurance policy was to expire the mill was gutted by a devastating fire. Ironically, this fire also damaged the annexed fire pump factory of A.L. Pease. The village that could not put out a fire was also the home of Cary and Brainard, manufacturers of the steam rotary pump preferred by the New York City Fire Department, but these admirable devices were employed only when a neighboring conflagration imperiled the property of their manufacturer.
Most fires, like that which destroyed the stock of the lumber yard near the gas works in 1860, were recognized to be of "incendiary origin" but the accusation was rarely placed at the feet of the owners. In 1862 a huge fire, mysteriously kindled in the store rooms of John Smith's furniture factory, destroyed sixteen large buildings on Main Street. Smith took his insurance, sold his land, and rebuilt on a site with water power north of the canal. All his neighbors were pleased with their new, enlarged stores. Six years later "that old nuisance" Conqueror II had deteriorated to a state of completely ineffectuality and, conceding the futility of their efforts, the village fire company disbanded.¹

Residents were not concerned with the inefficiency of the fire engine. It drew water from the canal, and this limited the range of its operation to the docks and Main Street.² This was not a great concern since houses, wooden for the most part and full of stoves and lamps, seldom burned. Popular support for a fire engine did not emerge until

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¹) Criticism of the fire engine is frequently featured in the press. This discussion is drawn from passages in B.R. 3:30, 5/6/59; 4:32, 5/17/60; 5:8, 11/29/60; 5:11, 12/20/60. The rejection of proposals to purchase a new fire engine are recorded in B.R. 4:26, 4/5/60. The Ostrom Block fire is reported in the B.R. 5:8, 11/29/60. The three merchants were J. Minot, the building's owner; W.S. Arnold; and E.G. Wood. Minot's plans for a new building are recorded in the B.R. 5:9, 12/6/60; its completion in the B.R. 5:39, 7/4/61. The fire at the Belden and Cady Flour Mill is reported in the B.R. 4:21, 3/1/60. On the employment of Cary and Brainard's Rotary Pump see the B.R. 4:29, 4/26/60. On the lumber yard fires see, B.R. 5:11, 12/20/60. The fire engine is repaired rather than replaced, B.R. 5:32, 5/16/61. On the large fire of 1862, see B.R. 6:33, 5/22/62. On disbanding the fire company, see B.R. 11:42, 7/18/67; 11:43, 7/25/67.

²) The distance to the canal, and the lack of water in the vicinity, is given as the cause for the loss of a house on Erie Street. B.R. 3:15, 1/21/59; the absence of public water is suggested as the cause of public apathy toward fire engines in B.R. 15:48, 8/24/71.
public water and a regular system of hydrants was installed in the 1880's. But stores, brick for the most part, burned all the time, and the merchants never once protested. They didn't even fight the fires. Over one hundred men were enrolled in the fire company, but "as a class," the newspaper editor noted, they had "but little property of their own to protect."

In a mercantile economy based on unstable commodity prices and bound together by credit obligations that tended to grow onerous the class that did have property to protect understood that their best defense against ruin did not take the form of a fire engine.

Lax standards for credit approval served to maintain the traditionally high rate of business failure until mid-century. Of the viable concerns advertised in a surviving newspaper of 1851, only one, the pharmacy of T&A Frye, survived until 1860. Reporting on the dry goods trade in 1860, the newspaper stated that "within the past four years every firm has changed" due to improvident credit. With the institution of a cash-only policy this volatility was markedly reduced, and in 1861 it was possible to report that the village had not seen a business failure in three years. Although the newspaper editor, Horatio Beech, had campaigned most vigorously against credit, he was among the last to discontinue the practice in 1870.

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1) On the fire company, see B.R. 1:31, 4/15/57, 4/22/57.
most of today’s Main Street landscape came about with the elimination of credit in the 1860’s.

A considerable part of this embedded commentary has dealt with the irretrievability of the past and the varying degree of anonymity that pertain to different types of individuals and places. Absence is the rule, some deeply modified form of presence the exception. Because the earth’s surface is finite this is particularly true for landscapes. In present landscapes every presence entails the absence of that by which it was preceded: the act of creation is intrinsically an act of demolition. The manifest places of the present landscape have all replaced elements of a landscape that is largely or wholly absent. Every place is also a displacement.

In the Brockport of the early nineteenth century the process of displacement was working with considerable speed, much to my consternation and annoyance. What I wished to discover or create was a map or a drawing, a visual image that would make the place present. What I found and ultimately represented was a verbal image of the displacement that made the place absent. This written image has advantages of dynamism and explanatory power, recommendations which permitted me to guiltlessly abandon my search for a visual image, but its primary recommendation was that it was possible. The visual image was impossible because it would have made claims to a knowledge of details that I did not possess. The abstract verbal image was possible because it shifted responsibility for imagined details onto the reader. This presents the reader not with the place that has come to exist in my imagination, but with its displacement.
Cholera: Problems of Concentrated Development

Endemic diseases like malaria were no sooner brought under control than epidemic diseases appeared and spread with horrifying swiftness over the new transportation system. In 1832 the cholera epidemic, whose depredations in Europe readers had followed with macabre interest, suddenly bridged the Atlantic. It seems to have entered North America at Montreal, carried thence from Paris, and from Montreal it spread with alarming speed down the Champlain Valley.1 When confirmed cases were reported at Plattsburgh and Mechanicville the village convened in a panic, and appointed a committee "to adopt precautionary measures relative to the Cholera."

The actions of the committee were twofold. First they sought to "promote the cleanliness of the village" and the "removing of nuisances." Second, they "unanimously recommended that Friday of this week be set aside as a day of Fasting and Prayer," with an interdenominational service of supplication to be held at the Presbyterian Church.2 The first measure is of interest as the records of those charged with its enforcement allow a glimpse of the prevailing standards of sanitation. The second measure serves as a reminder of what some might consider pre-modern beliefs. This was a society, after all, in which soup made from a half grown chicken was regarded as "a simple remedy, which has never

yet been known to fail of complete success in the cure of cholera morbus."

As the Montreal death rate climbed to one in thirty in early July, it was noted with uneasy relief that no deaths had as of yet occurred in the United States. The fact that members of the Montreal Temperance Society had, by and large, escaped the affliction, was reported with satisfaction. There was, of course, no recognition of the fact that the class of citizen disposed to join a temperance society was not the class of citizen who drew their water from polluted communal wells. In Brockport, a few suspicious cases had appeared.

Issuing directives under the title of the Brockport Board of Health, the committee adopted the following regulations on July 3, 1832. 1) Cellars swamped with water or packed with putrid vegetables were to be drained and cleaned; 2) back houses and privies that secreted "noxious effluvia" were to receive a dousing of lime; 3) streets, lanes, alleys and gutters were to be "cleared from filth" and sprinkled with lime by their immediate neighbors; 4) carcasses, vegetables and rubbish were not to be dumped in streets, alleys, lanes, the tow path or the canal; 5) manure was to be carted to a safe distance and covered with lime and dirt. These regulations give some indication of prevailing squalor in the village, where a population whose experience was primarily rural had continued farmstead behavior in a semi-urban environment.

1) Lyons Republican 8/17/31.
2) B.F.P., 2:40, 7/4/32.
Additionally, John Palmer was appointed as Health Commissioner, and charged with enforcement of these regulations. His duties also included inspection of transients suspected of carrying Asiatick [sic] Cholera, and expulsion from the village of those found infected. He was to follow all cases reported among village residents, ensure care at public expense for poor residents, remove rubbish from and cleanse the buildings of negligent owners and see that these owners were charged for the expense. Finally, all doctors and citizens were charged with reporting to the Board of Health all cases of smallpox, cholera or any other malignant diseases. Reprinting from the original village charter (which is otherwise lost) the Brockport Free Press, reminded residents that to violate Health Board rules was to risk a maximum penalty of two years in jail and a one thousand dollar fine.¹

Although by August Rochester had fifty-two cases of cholera, and nineteen deaths, the health officer, D. Carpenter, having traveled to the city to observe the symptoms, returned with the assurance that, despite rumors, Brockport remained free of "malignant cholera." This dispensation came despite a general neglect of the board's regulations. George Allen, the village president, regretted that "many places remain as they were," which is to say that the village remained squalid and its residents remained slovenly.² The board reiterated that "all experience,

¹) B.F.P., 2:40, 7/4/32.
²) Note, Asa Perry, had advertised a bathing house, with separate rooms for ladies and gentlemen, with warm baths available on Wednesday, Saturday and Monday, and "refreshing showery baths" available daily in August of 1830, but advertisement did not continue, and it is possible that the venture failed. See B.F.P., 1:1, 10/6/30.
both in Europe and America, indicates the utility of general and personal cleanliness, of temperate and regular habits, both of body and mind.\(^1\)

Quoting from The Ithaca Journal the paper pronounced that "cholera is not contagious" but is "received from the atmosphere." Some felt that this theory was ratified by the subdued orange and red of the sunsets, and by a general darkness similar to that which might precede a "great eclipse."\(^2\)

Cholera came to Brockport in the person of Abraham Voorhees, a migrating carpenter en route from New York City to Batavia. After spending three weeks in Rochester, Voorhees arrived at the Canal Pavilion on August 2. Here he began to suffer from "diarrhoea," and by 1:30 A.M. on the fourth he was dead. All village physicians were charged to report to the Board of Health all cases of spasmodic or malignant cholera within three hours.\(^3\)

Brockport escaped the depredations of the epidemic. When the disease abated in the fall, Voorhees remained the sole fatality. This exemption was due, no doubt, to the absence of crowded neighborhoods like those hardest hit in Rochester and, perhaps, the second measure invoked by the village government, for the first was a distinct failure.

There was to be no immunity to a second sort of catastrophe, financial panic, which also originated in Europe and spread over the territory served by the new economic system.

\(^1\) B.F.P., 2:44, 8/1/32.
\(^2\) B.F.P., 2:45, 8/8/32.
\(^3\) B.F.P., 2:45, 8/8/32.
Brockport began as a boom town and, despite the handicaps of inadequate water power and an increasingly dominant neighbor, its promoters sought to make it a city. Through the first decade their efforts were rewarded with reasonable progress. If this was never comparable with that of Rochester, it was nevertheless sufficient to nourish continued expectations of growth and prosperity. The merchant Thomas Roby wrote of the village in 1826, "the business of the place is conducted in a different way from Back East—one has to exert oneself more and use more push. We are making money fast, but to do so means Goodbye Leisure!"

Writing in 1833 to his younger brother, who was barely coping on the family farm in Fairfax, Vermont, E. B. Holmes, a young lawyer who had arrived in the village two years earlier, advised his sibling to convert everything into liquid assets and get to the boom town with all possible haste. He admonished him to "get your trash into as good property as horses: good, fair horses," and to tell Levi, another scrapping Vermont farmer, that "he can make more in two years by taking a farm than he can on his in ten." "Sell his farm for half price if he can, if not have him let it go for what rent any man is willing to pay." With as little as three hundred dollars, he wrote, "there's no mistake about it, come." Holmes continued:

Why even if he [Levi] should be obliged to look through the broken light of a log house here, the idea

1) Hastings, p. 41.
The hazards of new fortunes

that the avails of the wheat which he would see peeping thro' the soil would build him a better one would be far more consoling than the prospect of arising from a good house and the rough idea of a stint farm in Vermont,... The longer he stays the poorer he'll grow, [and even] if he could not buy a farm [near Brockport] he could do altogether better right here in the village with a team than he can do in Vermont.\footnote{1}

The village did not fail to meet the expectations of the older Holmes. At the time of his death in 1866, his estate of over $300,000 "was the largest in the vicinity to be probated at that time."\footnote{2} For Joseph, on the other hand, the village yielded little more than a job as captain of one of his brother's packet boats.\footnote{3}

In October of 1830, under the heading "Hard Times," Heil Brockway announced that, because of the "scarcity of money and the many pressing demands against the subscriber," he was anxious to disposed of one hundred village lots, a number of houses, and "a new and very commodious tavernhouse situated in the center of the business part of the village, and near the canal."\footnote{4} Three months later the landowner wrote,

The subscriber hopes that the exertions which he has made toward having the college located here will induce some of his good friends, who are desirous of doubling their property, to purchase of him a quantity of village lots.\footnote{5}

\footnotesize
\begin{enumerate}
  \item E.B. Holmes to Joseph Holmes, July 14, 1833; Nov. 8, 1833, Holmes Papers (hereafter H.P), Rush Rees Library, University of Rochester, Rochester, New York.
  \item Will of E.B. Holmes, H.P; Obituary of E.B. Holmes, B. R., 7/31/66.
  \item Canal Collector's Office Account Book, Brockport, 1840-41, Rush Rees Library, University of Rochester, Rochester, New York.
  \item B.F.P., 1:11, 10/6/30.
  \item B.F.P., 1:17, 1/26/31.
\end{enumerate}
He added that he thought that "it would be of his interest to say to those indebted to him, 'Please hand over.'" One year later the solicitation grew more urgent.

For sale. All the property in the village of Brockport, belonging to Heil Brockway, consisting of about 400 acres of land, together with a number of buildings suitable for stores, groceries or dwellings.

Of this, he wrote, "a great part will be leased if not sold soon." Two weeks later the forwarding merchant, S.L. King, offered for sale the brick store opposite the post office, a house on the corner of Utica and King Streets, his own dwelling place on Main Street, a farm with a blacksmith's shop one mile south of the village and "a number of vacant lots on Mechanic, Utica and South Streets." Two weeks later George Allen, one of the first six merchants in the village, advertised a warehouse, a lot on the canal west of Main Street, and lots on Market and Main Streets.

At the end of January, Brockway's crisis became acute, as he advertised "all the packet boat stock belonging to the subscriber." This included three boats, forty horses and thirteen harnesses. In May, E.B. Holmes, who was now Brockway's son-in-law, offered a small dwelling house, twenty acres in a high and commanding position, several small lots, half of a joiners shop, and a slip in the Presbyterian Church. Dr. Carpenter, Brockway's second son-in-law, advertised two dwellings, one on Main Street, the other on Erie Street, and lots on Union and Market.

1) B.F.P & M.D., 3:12, 12/19/32.
2) B.F.P & M.D., 3:13, 12/26/32.
3) B.F.P & M.D., 3:15, 1/9/33.
Streets. In the same week Brockway announced that it was his intention to dispose of his remaining property within ten days. This included four dwelling houses; a large lot on Brockport Creek, with a "thirteen foot head and fall," near the canal; numerous lots with stone quarries, building lots in front of the College grounds; assorted wood lots; and the house he lived in. Brockway concluded this last announcement with the gritty declaration, "self preservation is the first law of nature."

By the spring of 1837, Brockport's banker, Joseph Roby, wrote with sad bewilderment: "what a terrible state the whole commercial community seems to be reduced to - it's horrible - when or where will it end?" His young brother-in-law, the store clerk, Sidney Breese, wrote to his mother, "if one should hear our people (whigs) talk... he would think the world was coming to an end very rapidly, for they exaggerate greatly, and scare the farmers almost to death, so much that they are willing to pay three per cent for specie." As a consequence of the panic, Sidney continued, "there is several of our merchants issuing $1.00, .50, .25 Bills [as] a substitute for specie." His employers had "not got to that pitch yet," but they were, he reported, "considerably cramped for the hard stuff," and as a consequence trying to curtail business as much as possible.

In 1838, Roby reported that winter sleighing had not brought its usual activity and bustle. "Everything seem to be at a stand. The only

2) Joseph Roby to Samuel Sidney Breese, May 19, 1837, B.S.R.P. Events. Ensign and Evers claim that the Bank was founded in 1838, but I suspect some financial institution existed earlier. Roby's bank was sold to John Nichols in 1841, who moved it to E.B. Holmes' building, 96 Main St.
3) Sidney Breese to Samuel Sidney Breese, May 24 (1837). B.S.R.P.
currency or nearly the only currency is that of unknown Banks or shinplasters of the citizens of whom five or six manufacture them and of which everyone is justly afraid. "When," he rhetorically queried, "shall we get back to the state of prosperity from which we have so wildly diverged? Or is the destroying angel yet hoping to hop over this fair portion of the world?" In the summer of that year, a band of counterfeiters was apprehended in the village. Equipped with dyes and presses, they were "making all sorts of silver coin of every appearance." Sidney wrote of the coinage, "there is a great deal of it afloat, and it is very difficult to detect it." So desperate had the cash shortage grown, however, that some villagers maintained that the forgers "ought not to be punished but were justified in the act of endeavoring to make specie more plenty [sic]."2

In 1840, Roby was still complaining that "the State of our country (I means hercabouts) is very deplorable. The want of a circulating medium has caused universal poverty, the very wealth of the country creates poverty - many who have fine farms are sadly troubled for much an interest or installment on a bond, with ample means on hand they could be converted into cash."3

This panic of 1836-1839 was transatlantic. It consternated investors from Chicago to Leipzig, and cramped the market for silk from Lyons, France just as it crippled the market for wheat from Lyons, New York. The principal cause of the crisis was manic speculation, particularly in

1) Joseph Roby to Samuel Sidney Breese, Feb. 5, 1838. B.S.R.P.
2) Sidney Breese to Helen Breese, Aug. 9, [1838]. B.S.R.P.
3) Joseph Roby to Samuel Sidney Breese, March 12, 1840. B.S.R.P.
the cotton lands of the American south, followed by a souring, revulsion, and loss of confidence, which prompted frantic divestment and a general rush for financial liquidity. The panic was widely felt because the interdependence of the Atlantic economy had increased, and the distress of a distant creditor was readily transmitted through an extensive and many-layered network of lenders and debtors. At the local level a scarcity of credit was called "Hard Times," a phrase which, in the words of an Ithaca editor, "means, in its true definition, nothing more nor less than pay-day." Now it is obvious that when the largest creditors in the world began to plead "Hard Times" and to call their debts due, a similar plea and a similar recall would be communicated down the entire financial hierarchy. A European banking house called due the debt of a New York City wholesaler; they in turn called due the debt of their distributors, among them a Brockport dry goods merchant; he in turn called due the debt of his customers with dunning notices in the newspaper.

Although these crises supply the most spectacular evidence of the pervasive importance of credit, they were not the sole source of hard times. Indeed, by their very sweep they tended to obscure the local idiosyncrasies and rhythms that ordinarily give credit a spatial complexion and a temporal variety. In the Brockport newspaper of the 1830's dunning notices multiplied in the fall, as merchants and professionals reminded their indebted clients that it was "after harvest."

Joseph Roby wrote that "one can not be in a community like this where

everything depends on the success of one crop without feeling a good deal of anxiety," because when the wheat crop was very light, as it was in 1838 and 1839, defaulting on loans for goods already purchased was common.1

Although the liquidity crisis was exacerbated by the financial panic, it began with shifts in the local economy. What I believe this rash of advertisements represents is an attempt to liquidate real property holdings in Brockport in the hope of more profitable reinvestment elsewhere. In the cases of Brockway and Holmes it was canal transportation that offered a more appealing opportunity than village real estate. For the others it is very likely that the superior investment was perceived to lie in the far west. In 1830 the Brockport Bookstore listed two maps in its inventory, one of New York and the other of Michigan. In the words of Lyman Spaulding, a Lockport Miller, "Business is very dull. No current money to be had. Michigan is all the circulation our needy do."

As E.B. Holmes had written to his brother in Vermont, when you are preparing to move you must be careful that you "don't put off cattle or cash property without realizing cash or something equivalent thereto." In other words, in anticipation of their move migrants hoarded liquid assets.

In 1836 Samuel Sidney Breese wrote to his son, an apprentice clerk in the dry goods store of Roby and Goold who seems to have grown restless clerking in a poky town. The elder Breese wrote from Buffalo, where he had just seen his elder son, Samuel, and his son-in-law, Joseph Roby.

1) Joseph Roby to Samuel Sidney Breese, July 31, 1839, B.S.R.P.
depart for Michigan. "All here would appear to be emigrating to or
visiting the distant regions of the west," he reported, "they appear to have
taken the Michigan fever." Apparently young Sidney displayed some
symptoms of the inflammation, as his father continued in a sterner vein:

It will answer well enough for young men who have
arrived at Maturity, and have a thorough knowledge
of their professions, to think and talk of going to the
far west—but young lads of your age who have a
profession to learn, and are busy about their
acquisition of such knowledge—ought not, and I trust
will not think much about the western country...
There will be time enough for you to think of western
speculation, when you have acquired a surplus capital
by your talents and industry as a merchant—to make
money—in western lands a young man must have
money to purchase them with.

Evidently there were plenty of young men who did have money to
purchase them. As Joseph Roby wrote from Chicago: "instead of being
surrounded by poor emigrants, almost all we can see count their hundreds
of thousands." In striking contrast to the impoverished conditions
prevailing through the early settlement of western New York, in Chicago
the church, though small, was well filled, and the ladies there were "so
richly dressed and all appeared genteel [sic]." In the forty years since
western New York had been the scene of speculation, the class of potential
speculators had grown. The "spaceless, placeless quest for wealth" that
had been the prerogative of Robert Morris and his ilk was open to a vastly
enlarged population. Samuel Breese Jr. and Joseph Roby had set out "into
the woods to examine the unsold lands so as to make a safe purchase of

1) Samuel Sidney Breese to Sidney G. Breese, May 18, 1836. B.S.R.P.
2) Joseph Roby to Samuel Sidney Breese, June 12, 1836. B.S.R.P.
any, but this circumspection was not the rule.1 "You would be astonished to see what a perfect rage there is here for village property." Samuel wrote to his father from Chicago, "along the whole line of the Illinois Canal there are villages laid out and lots are selling at high prices [$75- $125 a lot]. People appear to bid without any sort of knowledge or care whether the property is good for anything or not."2 Tillage, which had been an immediate necessity in western New York, was here postponed. "Yesterday we went out to see if we could find anything like improvement of the soil, but there was no such thing."3 The enthusiasm was, nevertheless, contagious. Joseph Roby reported that "I look on every dollar I invest here as good at interest of 100 per cent."4 Samuel wrote to his sister, "I should like to brag a little bit about my Chicago property and how much they have advanced in value, but I have not got to be enough of a western speculator to do it with sufficient grace, or rather brass, and I must forgo."5

Only Joseph, was from Brockport, and we have no way of gauging the number of persons or the amount of capital that went west. There are, however, general indications. Writing to assure his sister that Wisconsin was not a lonely place, Samuel Breese observed, "I every day in this place see so many old neighbors, so many that I have been acquainted with or known by reputation, or those who know those whom I know that I do not

1) Samuel Sidney Breese to Sidney Breese, May 28th 1836. B.S.R.P.
2) Samuel Breese to Samuel Sidney Breese, June 12, 1836. B.S.R.P.
3) Samuel Breese and Joseph Roby to Samuel Sidney Breese, June 12, 1836. B.S.R.P.
4) Joseph Roby to Samuel Sidney Breese, June 3, 1836. B.S.R.P.
5) Samuel Breese to Catherine Breese, May 14, 1837. B.S.R.P.
believe) that I am west of Lake Michigan. This place and its neighbors is
settled by New York men together with some from New England." It was a
curious life. Sidney wrote, "of loafing as they call it here. It is the hardest
work I ever undertook to be staying in taverns and to have no regular
employment. And of all the places for lazy scamps this beats all: there are
dozens of young men here without any business, living by their wits,
selling lots & claims etc." But already there was evidence of hard times.
The increased cost of provisions from the east had driven some of the lazy
scamps into farming, while a good number retreated east. Like Joseph
Roby, many returned home with their pockets emptied of cash and stuffed
with dubious titles.\footnote{Samuel Breeze to Catherine Breeze. Aug 10, 1837. B.S.R.P.}
objectionable voyeurism becomes biographical scholarship. Despite these social sanctions the guilt and pleasures of peeping are not entirely lost. The excitement of being an unintended audience is notably diminished in published correspondence, the act and the format of publication obscuring the intention of privacy that remains manifest in the original.

Reading historical letters is further altered by the fact that letters are assembled. This omits the irregular intervals of time that divided the original readings into several discrete events. Gathered in a folder the letters lose their individuality and become the longer manuscript of a correspondence. Once again the excitement of reading historical letters resides in their being read out of their original context. A life is collapsed into an afternoon's reading. Although the reminiscence achieves a similar collapse, it differs from the collected letters in that it records the resolution of a life. Each letter is, conversely, anxious, fearful and uncertain of the outcome. Reading collected letters combines the excitement of material conceived in anxiety with the promise of immediate resolution.

Although the words on the page are not altered when letters are transformed into historical documents the new institutional setting changes the manner in which they are read. This is in essence a change in the spatial and temporal character of the letter. The surface of the page has become public space (rules resemble those constraining visitors to national parks), and the reading has been collapsed into a single event. With privacy and periodicity removed one can read these artifacts as documents but, one can not read them as what we recognize as letters.
Chapter 7
The Quest for a Perfect Society
and some of its Impediments

The complaints of the 1830's were largely, the perennial ones. It is doubtful that society had grown more disagreeable, but, in spite of every advantage of enlightened government, human perversity displayed an undeniable durability. One querulous writer deplored the penchants of his fellow villagers for quarrelsomeness, slander, flattery, Sabbath breaking by both the inattentive and the nonattenders, sloth, bumptiousness, immodesty among young women, meddlesomeness, boorishness, cattiness and vanity.1 Another writer decried the village's propensity for "envy" and backbiting, and, invoking the great instrument of virtue, suggested that others "array public opinion against" this "infernal spirit."2

Crime was not outrageous, but it was persistent. With prosperity had come a proliferation of covetable, not to mention portable, objects. As these were concentrated in the stores and houses of the village, Brockport became a magnet for the nimble fingered and sly. A "gang" operating out of a house in the woods along the canal east of the village was implicated in a series of burglaries of stores and boats when missing goods and cash were discovered buried in pits and stuffed into hollow logs.3 No sooner were these miscreants apprehended than Seymour's store was robbed of eleven hundred dollars in a Sunday night break in.4 Richard O'Neal, an

1) B.F.P., 2:16, 1/18/32.
2) B.F.P., 2:46 8/15/32.
3) Rochester Daily Advertiser, 12/19/29.
4) Rochester Observer, 6/18/30.
Irishman idling at the bar of the Canal Pavilion, had the misfortune to be discovered with another man's watch in his pocket. Although his intention was merely to borrow, his imprudence earned him twenty days in the county jail.

In addition to the temptations raised by affluence, and the partiality of its distribution, the community confronted strains that derived from the increased number of transients in its midst. As we have seen, the habit of fleeing from obligations, debts and punishments was not new, but in the seeming throng of strangers that populated the villages and cities along the canal the opportunities to disappear were greatly enlarged, while the penalties for doing so were proportionately reduced. The grip of the master on his apprentice was weakened. We have seen how Sidney Breese grew restive, and was only restrained by stern parental authority. Others of a more impetuous stripe reneged on their contracts and defrauded their masters. The Brockport Recorder, for example, warned the printers of neighboring villages against the vicious and villainous apprentice Samuel Thomas. He is "a drunkard and a thief," it warned, who "wore a blue coat; low cloth pantalettes [sic]; he wore a black hat with a low crown, and generally walks with a cane." Apparently a new alias was more easily acquired than a new outfit.\footnote{\textit{B.F.P.}, 1:1, 10/6/30.}

Mobility enabled men to escape community pressure to fulfill the commitments that were assumed implicit in courship. The theme is evident in some of the work of Silena, an anonymous local poet, author and contributor to the newspaper, who seems particularly to have
r elished castigation of selfish men who would not wed, and scamp
scalawags who left a trail of broken hearts. This is treated with unspiring
bathos in "The Maniac," a story of the death by grief of the father, whose
daughter, dead of brokenheartedness, had been betrayed by "the
unfeeling heart of one base man." Silena did not approve of single men, if
only because she was by virtue of her anonymity obliged to endure the
"scoffs and sneers of every old Bachelor in the neighborhood" as they
passed judgment on her efforts."

It is, of course, impossible to establish rates of betrayal, but it does
seem to have come as a consequence of the greater freedom of men. In
1830 young men in the village outnumbered their female cohorts by more
than two to one; ten years later, when opportunities lay to the west or in
the cities, young women were present in a three to one majority. Neither
arrangement was conducive to success at the defined task of young
women, who had been "brought up in a fitness for their conjugal duties."

The society made some efforts to protect women from the economic
hardships of abandonment. In Buffalo, for example, a handful of women
trapped in metastalliances with "recusant" and "quondam" husbands were
legally "unmarried." But women, for whom the option of abandonment
mote and moving elsewhere barely existed, were not given the means to
initiate a dissolution of their marriage. For the relatively immobile
woman the traditional devices of community censure were still
impressive. A man choked to speechless grief, his inner torment
displayed on "a most forlorn and wo-begone countenance," arrived at the

1) "The Maniac" is printed in B.F.P.; 1:10, 12/8/30; B.F.P.; 2:23, 1/7/32.
newspaper office one day to enter a public announcement. "Whereas my wife has left my bed and board," he wrote "without any just cause of complaint I do therefore forbid all persons harboring or trusting her on my account." Rallying to the cause of male solidarity, and perhaps influenced by the justice of the man's grievance, the editor added his recommendation that "all persons let the recreant dame go without 'no bed and board' until she shall return to the 'bed and board' which she has so ungraciously left."1

Perhaps every place has at various times distinctive neuroses, particular anxieties, compulsions, obsessions and phobias that mark and mould it's citizens. Reconstructions of this psychological context are invariably imperfect, being limited for the most part to a description of responses. What can we say, for example, of William S. Gregory, a clerk in Collins' Store, who complained of "a sickness of the heart that medicine can not reach" and, having read a few passages of Byron's Childe Harold, shot himself through that elusive organ in a lonesome woods near Linden?2 As a community Brockporters seem seldom to have doubted that social sickness was remediable, although there was disagreement as to the appropriate antidote.

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1) The "task" of young women is taken from an essay by Mrs. Cary, who kept the Canal Pavilion. It appears in B.F.P., 2:8, 11/23/31. The Buffalo divorces are reported in B.F.P., 2:34, 5/23/32. Notice of the divorce appears in B.F.P., 2:36, 6/6/32. Perhaps it is this episode that is concluded with the announcement of the dissolution of the marriage of James and Lucy Hayward of Clarkson, announced in the B.F.P., 2:42, 7/11/32.

2) B.F.P., 2:34, 5/23/32.
Independence Day

Independence Day served as a feast day in the quasi-religion of nationalism, although in the 1830's the line that divided religion and politics was indistinct and readily transgressed. For many villagers, who eschewed Christmas and seem to have forgotten Thanksgiving, it was the only holiday. As was the case elsewhere in the state, it seems almost certain that it was the only holiday that was celebrated collectively. This image of a collective celebration elides the fact that, at least so far as the formal observances were concerned, the event was directed by the local elite. Thus, in 1824 when we find Dr. Baldwin raising his glass "in a bowery fitted up for the occasion" to toast revolutionary Greece, "the native country of genius, arts and science," we must not assume that every libation was preceded by the expression of sentiments that were equally high minded.

Seven years later in Brockport Independence Day was marked by a procession, a form of social self representation which Mary Ryan has called "the characteristic genre of nineteenth-century civic ceremony."

4) Rochester Telegraph, 7/20/24. This celebration took place in Clarkson.
Unlike the parades surveyed by Ryan, however, all of which occurred in large American cities, the Brockport parade was not an expression of cultural pluralism. It was, on the contrary, an affirmation of the assumptions and aspirations of evangelical Protestantism.

To begin with the procession of 1831, the marchers convened at Wales Coffee House, a temperance establishment, and marched to the Presbyterian Church, where the Declaration of Independence was read, and an address was delivered by the young lawyer, E.B. Holmes. In accord with prior agreement, the celebration observed the principles of temperance and, after the crowd of two hundred and fifty had "repaired to Wales for a sober meal, they returned to the Methodist Church to enjoy and address on "The Cold Water Celebration." Another group of one hundred, equally temperate, audited addresses at the Baptist Church and dined at Brown's.

At least for the respectable portion of local society, Independence Day 1832 was once again celebrated with diligence and sobriety. At 9:00 A.M. the children enrolled in the recently formed Sabbath schools of the several societies of the village assembled at the Presbyterian Church. They proved so numerous that some were compelled to resort to the Methodist Church. From these assembly points the schools, each bearing a banner "with an appropriate motto," were led in procession by John Palmer, the recently appointed health commissioner, to the Baptist Church, where they were comfortably accommodated. Here they were exhorted by the Reverend Manly Tooker on the "rare and happy talent" of

1) B.F.P., 1:40, 7/6/31.
7. The Quest for a Perfect Society and Some of its Impediments

blending "simplicity of style with sublimity of thought" and "grandeur of conception." Thus edified, the procession repaired to "the grove west of the coffee house" to await the afternoon lecture. At 3:00 P.M. they reassembled in the Baptist Church, which had grown distractingly hot, to hear the Reverend Charles E. Funnan of Clarkson speak on the need for manumission and colonization of slaves. His argument, presented with a force that some found remarkable, preceded a collection for the American Colonization Society.¹

No doubt this austere observance occurred in the midst of celebrations that were less organized and restrained, although the newspaper editor was barred by his prohibitionist prejudice from reporting on these. Whatever its partiality, however, this official display served to place a definite stamp on the holiday, it assembled a series of symbols that referred to the causes of temperance, abolitionism, education and religious societies, and it proposed these four causes as the proper instruments of the Revolution's perpetuation. Before turning to these causes, however, we must explore an obscure political sub-text.

The Failed Assault on Antimasonry

Recall that the fugitive apprentice, Samuel Thomas, was described as walking with a cane. A limp is not mentioned. This cane was, presumably, a symbol of the aristocracy that the ungovernable young man had affected, although he had retained his tow cloth pantaloons to check any suspicion that he regarded himself as better than others. The

¹) B.F.P., 2:41, 7/11/32.
7. The Quest for a Perfect Society and Some of Its Impediments

Garb and accessories of young Thomas serve as reminders of the period's somewhat ambivalent assault on privilege. Be it political, economic or social, which worked itself out as demands for equal rights of access, be it to political decision makers, economic markets, credit or walking sticks. If Thomas seems in these respects to embody certain Jacksonian attitudes, his decision to break his indenture and to set out on his own (with the security of a small defalcation) represents a breakdown in social order that was this period's central political anxiety. Farmers and mechanics, who looked upon themselves as the productive classes, demanded the right to walking sticks, bank loans and political champions; but they insisted that these amenities be procurable only through the legitimate means of productive labor. They were caught, in other words, between the ghost of a dead Federalist aristocracy and the specter of a rising class of merchant capitalists.1

Both national parties exploited this anxiety with a skillful combination of flattery for the common man and vilification for the shiftless gentleman. A typical animadversion in the Brockport newspaper described the life of the latter.

He gets up leisurely, breakfasts comfortly [sic], reads the paper regularly, dresses fashionably, lounges fastidiously, eats a tart gravely, talks insipidly, dines considerably, drinks superfluously, kills time indifferently, sups elegantly, goes to bed stupidly and lives uselessly.2

2) E.F.P., 2:4, 10/6/31.
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The rhetorical similitude of the two parties makes it difficult to discern ideological reasons for partisan loyalty. In western New York it is clear that political divisions did not result from general differences in ideology so much as they emerged from local historical developments.

Brockport never supported Andrew Jackson, a repudiation that is somewhat obscured by the fact that its newspaper at the time, the Brockport Free Press, was a virulent organ of the Democratic party. The editor of this newspaper, Thomas Hyatt, was evidently dispatched to the village by the Albany Regency in an effort to convert its citizens from their errant allegiance to the Anti-Masonic party and the National Republicans, and to secure the village in the presidential election of 1832. The Brockport Free Press is replete with examples of the vigorous and vivid language of what Meyers had called the Jacksonian persuasion, but it is not original, being largely derived from sources like the Albany Argus, and there is little to be learned from extensive extracts or abridgements. In general, Hyatt persevered on two standard themes: the absolute sovereignty of the people and, to use Meyers' terms, the virtue of those who worked in "the real world of solid goods honestly exchanged." Although his editorials combined zest, zeal, venom and all of the


appropriate symbols, Hyatt's mission failed. Explanation of the resistance of this electorate to Hyatt's appeal is difficult, since our only record of events is the appeal itself, but it is hardly incautious to suggest that it had three major parts: the legacy of the Morgan affair, a desire to see the state canal system completed, and an ingrained regard for both property and propriety.

The first part of our explanation of local resistance to Hyatt's Jacksonian advocacy is the Morgan affair, an outrage that has never been verified. The actual fate of Morgan does not in any case matter as much as the highly successful exploitation of this uncertainty, and the latent anxieties that it tapped, by Thurlow Weed. Thus, it makes sense to give Weed's version of the story.1

This excitement was initiated by the abduction and murder, in 1826, of William Morgan, a Mason driven by dissatisfaction to attempt publication of the secrets of the society. He had been initiated into the society in LeRoy, a nest of freemasonry, four years earlier, but as a result of quarrels with Masons in Batavia he repudiated the order and began secretly to compile a manuscript describing its rites and practices. When word of Morgan's projected exposé reached his former affiliates they immediately undertook suppression of the text: first by acquisition of the manuscript; this failing, by incineration of the shop of its appointed

printer; and this failing, by exile to the most remote quarter of western Canada of its author. Apparently the Masons of Upper Canada refused to convey Morgan from the frontier, where he was secretly imprisoned in the magazine of the disused fortress at Niagara, to the precincts of the Far West Fur Company, where he was to have been isolated and silenced. Fearing the rescue of Morgan and their own arrest, but the mention the promised revelations, whose popularity their intrigues had so soundly ensured, his captors conceived a dastardly solution. They rowed Morgan to the river's mouth, bound him with a stout cord affixed to two ponderous weights and, after pausing to bandage a thumb which the increasingly desperate Morgan managed to amputate with his teeth, dumped him overboard.

The expression of outrage was immediate. It was most pronounced among farmers in the towns immediately west of Rochester, farmers whose market villages - Stafford, LeRoy, Canandaigua, Rochester, Clarkson and Gaines- had provided the principal conspirators in Morgan's abduction. These villages formed the core of what came to be called the "infected district," an incorrigible knot of political Antimasonry.

Initially the farmers denounced the existence of exclusive laws, like those widely believed to have dictated Morgan's execution. Their opposition to Freemasonry was strengthened, however, by the equivocations and evasions of the Masonic witnesses who were called before the Morgan Committee. Although the abduction was the work of zealots, and most Masons deplored its tragic conclusion, the order was solidified by the increasingly hostile clamor. Two constituencies, one
largely composed of rural farmers and the other of village merchants, took definite form. This autochthonous polarization, triggered by an idiosyncratic event that seemed to embody the sense, formerly vague, of unequal prosperity, was quickly exploited by the political parties. The Antimasons followed their champions, the Morgan Committee, into the National Republican Camp. Masons, which is as much as to say merchants, rallied just as quickly to the cause of Jackson.

Several Brockport stove owners supported Jackson, and it was the fees received for their advertisements that supported the newspaper which has given us a disproportionate record of their views. An opposition newspaper, the Monroe Republican, operated briefly in 1832, however it folded for lack of revenue. Still, there was much for merchants in a canal village to mistrust in the Democratic party, particularly its very cautious attitude toward completion of the state canal system and enlargement of the Erie Canal. Thus, whatever their relation to the Masonic Order, those merchants directly involved in canal transport had reason to welcome the farmers as allies.

When Jackson supporters congregated to oppose the "speckled coalition" they were warned that they "must expect to bear the slights and tibial jests of those whose only weapons are vulgar abuse and low, contemptible scurrility." The identity of these hecklers is difficult to determine since they are only identified by derogatory nicknames; however.

2) For a list of Jacksonians see, B.F.P., 2:49, 9/5/32.
It does seem to conform to the proposed coalition of successful farmers and shippers. Thus "Squire S____" is Joseph Staples, Anti-masonic supervisor of the Town of Sweden, and "brother Robert" is Robert Staples. Elias B. Holmes, "a young sprig of the law," was also the owner of the Opposition Line, and he had named one of his boats the Siamese Twins, a term that was used to describe the coalition of Anti-masons and National Republicans. The coalition also contained representatives of the weakening elite, like "the sham-general," who I take to be Fredrick Wilkie, commanding officer of the Militia. (Although this may have been Robert Staples, Captain of the Light Infantry of Sweden, an independent company formed in 1830.) Finally, the coalition attracted professional men such as "Aesculapius... a renowned doctor... in this town," presumably Dr. Davis Carpenter.

Political power was, therefore, wielded by a local elite that was centered on the Brockway clan, since Holmes, Wilkie, and Carpenter were all sons-in-law of the proprietor. This tends to bear out Hyatt's claim that "in most villages of any considerable magnitude there is to be found a social aristocracy whose pretension "is the vice of weak minds intoxicated with good fortune or inflated by family distinction." This group manipulated issues to create local constituencies and to maintain local political power. Describing politics in the town, a "thorough going Clay 'man'" wrote "the Anti-masonic Junto is quite coquettish." "If I could see why Jackson and Clay politicians had anything [sic] to do with our Town"

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1) This is noted in the obituary notice of Robert Staples, B.R. 15:50, 9/7/71.
Meeting," he continued, "perhaps I should think differently," but, as it is this transposition of national issues to the local stage seems quite wrongheaded and contrived. Democratic politics generates a lot of print, particularly in overtly partisan newspapers. The effusions of editors do not, however, reflect the content or the magnitude of political thinking by ordinary citizens. Brockway's alignment is difficult to discover, but he may express the prevailing sentiment in the verse appended to an advertisement for his new cedar packet boats.

Jackson men we like
And also men of Clay,
Pioneers it's all the same
If we only get our pay.

Masons we won't refuse
To carry them up and down;
Tis hopes they'll soon revive
And wear their honored crown.

If Anti wish to ride,
We call it all our gain,
MONEY is what we want
By jing its all the same. 2

The Cheerless Sleigh Ride.

In addition to being a thief, Samuel Thomas was an alleged drunkard. In the light of the times it is hard to say whether the second vice was considered as supplemental or explanatory. A letter to the editor, possibly penned by Silena, the local bard of broken hearts, called

women to the this "last great crusade" with the assurance that "murders, robberies, larcenies -these are but another name for intemperance." Whatever we may think of the primacy of inebriation in this list, no dispute surrounds that fact that by the 1820's custom, an overproduction of unmarketable grain, a bland and unwholesome diet, and pervasive anxiety had combined to make America a desperately alcoholic republic. The stupefying rate of consumption, never since equaled, elicited a sudden and vigorous response, particularly in New England and western New York where custom permitted the community to attempt to save the individual from his own depravity.

The panacea of temperance arrived in Brockport in March of 1829 with the formation of the Young Men's Temperance Society, an abstentious association. The ten original members confronted a daunting task. "Old rye" was sold for eighteen cents a gallon, or one quarter of the daily wages of a common laborer, and vendors and buyers were everywhere. Both groups resisted efforts to suppress the custom, and "for a while" the Temperance Society "had to brave the opposition of its secret and avowed enemies." Initial growth was slow, but it rose with the religious revivals, and by 1832 the society claimed about four hundred members. This represented a peak, as enthusiasm waned, but never wholly died, after 1833.

1) B.F.P., 2:9, 1/30/31.
4) B.R. 20:46, 7/21/36.
The great achievement of the temperance movement was to create a new social boundary between the increasingly distinctive lifestyles of the middle class and the laborers. It also served to distinguish the emerging middle class from the traditional elites who, unlike the workers with their novel practice of bingeing, continued the traditional practice of steady tipping. Brockport's small elite apparently capitulated to middle-class censure and conformed, albeit reluctantly, to middle-class norms. Adoption of the new discipline was not necessarily easy, as Joseph Roby, the village banker, confided to his father in law: "I understand that you have fine sleighing, but sleighing is after all cold pleasure, and now when it is out of fashion to not only to take a gulp at the tavern to warm up and enliven the spirits, but when the cordial old habit of greeting and calling and cheering the spirits with a glass of Cherry [sic] are considered as if not sinful wholly improper, the matter of sleigh riding is rather cold, rather cheerless." Despite the sacrifice, Roby conformed. Two years later the banker, who had been a melancholy widower for nearly a decade, complained that he was "living without end or aim," and yet "we are drinking Congress Water... we think it very conducive to health." It is not clear what, if any, public places Roby haunted once he no longer stopped to "take a gulp at the tavern," but it seems doubtful that they contained the same cross-section of the community. Once such men of unimpeachable probity...
ceased to frequent taverns the places fell into disrepute. At least for the middle class temperance advocates, what had been until quite recently a valuable social amenity was transformed into a nefarious nostril of Hell.

Although the temperance society succeeded in changing the meaning of taverns, and the imputation of their patrons, they apparently failed to reduce the numbers of either. The society claimed that as a result of its witness “the use of ardent spirits has been diminished very perceptibly,” and that numerous village groceries no longer sold whiskey or used it to ply customers, but, they admitted, “we could wish to say better things for our village and town.” If one “respectable” grocery had been established in the village in that season “without being consecrated to Rum and the destruction of mankind,” it remained an abiding discouragement “that at no less than twenty places, poison is dealt out to the community.” The local distillery had been converted in that year to a manufactory of pot ash, and this boosted the hope that “it may be in our power to stay the impending deluge of Intemperance,” but defeat of this monster “that would destroy the dearest hopes of the patriot and the Christian” was hardly assured as grog-shops and taverns prospered, even under the direction of the purportedly pious.

At a meeting in the Baptist meeting house, opened with an anthem led by Mr. Caverno and a prayer by the Reverend Manly Tooker, the Reverend Mr. Meyers, after congratulating the assembled vigilantes for their perseverance and energy, expressed his astonished dismay with the fact that “twenty vendors [sic] of ardent spirits infest our community.”

As, in the Reverend's opinion, "no real Christian could be a real tippler," and as by resolution the Congregationalists had enjoined all members to "abstain from the traffic or use of distilled liquor," it was shocking to discover that some of these miscreant vendors professed to be "washed in the blood of Christ." Two congregationalists charged with vending ardent spirits had in fact refused to reform or repent, preferring to forego communion rather than to forego the lucrative liquor trade. Faced with this deplorable license, and aided by no legislation "to restrain the vendor or the drinker" it was consoling to drink's deriders to know that "we have a much stronger law that will ere long suppress it. That law is PUBLIC OPINION."  

Temperance advocates touched a nerve when they identified insobriety as an impediment to salvation. They rounded out their program of exploiting anxiety by identifying insobriety as an impediment to material gain.  

Even if one was so misguided as to see a divergence of interest between business and society, both were certain to prosper under a beneficent regimen of strict temperance. Enjoining merchants to "leave off selling" the crusaders made nine compelling points. The merchant would accomplish now what must be accomplished eventually; he would improve the appearance and atmosphere of his store so as to attract "better customers;" he would reduce the load of bad debts held against irresponsible reprobates; he would be relieved of the necessity to keep a late fire and a light for his dissolute patrons; he would encourage

1) B.F.P., 2:3, 10/19/31. Session Books of the First Congregational Society of Brockport.
personal industry, and expand personal consumption; he would save the young; he would "diminish writs, sales, poverty and pauperism, which would be hardly known if there was no rum;" he would lessen crime, seven eighths of which was said to be rum induced; and he would promote morality and peace. To the drinkers of the village the society explained that "the man who understood a useful trade, if blessed with health, need never want food or clothing or shelter" unless he is impoverished by the "useless, pernicious, wasting, destroying practice of drinking." Apparently neither group found these arguments overwhelming.

The failure of public censure or rational argument drove temperance forces to seek legal redress. Special efforts were made to enforce the excise law and to restrict the sale of licences. By law, only taverns could sell liquor by the drink. Since these were intended for travelers, applicants were supposed to provide beds, food, stables, and pasturage. Needless to say, these requirements were frequently overlooked. Groceries, which were restricted to the sale of liquor for home consumption, frequently obtained tavern keeper licences. Those who did not sell crackers and gave the liquor away, or allowed drinking outside the back door, or openly defied the law. In 1836 temperance advocates succeeded in introducing the requirement that every applicant for a tavern keeper's licence should produce a voucher notarized by twenty freeholders in the village which attested to his good moral character. The sudden need for freeholders stimulated the sale of grave

2) B.F.P., 3:29, 4/17/33.
sites in the village burying ground, since this fulfilled the property
requirement, and every application, whether on "formal-filled up
business forms" or of "unbusinesslike scrawls that appeared to have been
long carried on greasy heads," was granted.¹

Temperance remained a cause through the nineteenth century, but
it was for the most part limited to efforts to shield youngsters from evil
influences. In 1856 the newspaper editor was once again at the head of
the crusade. "Abstain" was the word, he wrote, "to be engraven on the
minds of youth;" and he advised instruction in sacred music as an antidote
to the boys' pernicious habit of loitering in the saloons.² Although
various temperance societies were formed their members were neither
reformed or prospective drunks. The societies were social clubs for
middle class youngsters for whom the prospects of a dissolute life were
remote. Thus the "Sons and Daughters of Temperance" evolved into a
literary and debating society, as did the Y.M.C.A., which was formed for
young men of the three evangelical protestant churches in 1859.³

One final crusade did, however, occur in 1874. Organized by
women, many of them the wives of manufacturers, the Women's
Temperance League was the first truly prohibitionist group in the village.
The league succeeded in persuading the Excise Board to grant no licences,
but were subsequently appalled to see the liquor trade continue unabated.

When they attempted to bring suit against the violators, the men in

²) B.R., 1:7, 1:28/56
³) On the Sons and Daughters of Temperance, see B.R. 3:29, 4/29/59. On the
Y.M.C.A., see B.R. 4:10, 12/15/59; 4:15, 1/19/60; 5:7, 11/22/60; 5:9,
12/6/60.
charge of the village government, who had until that point smiled at the women's draconian demands, intentionally bungled the paperwork. As a consequence, the newspaper reported, "the ladies have wholly discarded the gentlemen in the matter." The Brockport Liquor Suits, as these came to be known, attracted considerable attention, but they did not succeed. Only slightly more successful was the reading room, which was opened by the league on the third floor of the old bank in 1874. Fifteen to twenty boys frequented the place and, to the trepidation of the superintending lady, went "a little wild" without the aid of spirits. The oldest was reported to be eighteen years old. Meanwhile, one witness claims to have seen forty intoxicated men on Main Street prior to 8:00 A.M.¹

**Schools**

The formal education of village youth was originally carried out by means that were identical to those employed in the rural district schools. By the close of the first decade, however, village pedagogy had diversified. Several varieties of instruction were available, and selected scholars received an education suited to their projected place in society. At the same time, education was provided for students who were both older and younger than those typically in attendance at the rural district schools, and various institutions of adult education came into being. These developments in the basic cultural attitude of favoring education

represent a response to the more exacting standards for book learning that were placed on merchants and clerks, and to the higher social and economic ambitions which village parents held for their children. In addition, these developments represent an effort on behalf of social perfectionism. The changes being wrought by the new economy were perceived in their full equivocality, and its capacity to engender consequences that were both blessings and curses was manifest. Thus, one aspect of the enthusiasm for education was certainly a desire to introduce into the somewhat inscrutable workings of society a bias in favor of those consequences that might be counted, by those who endorsed the cause of education, as blessings.

The first school was situated in the path of the canal, and it was demolished. Temporary accommodations were found west of Main Street north of the canal, and later in the basement of a house on State Street, until an all purpose structure was constructed of brick on what would later serve as the site of the Baptist meeting house. Like the meeting house in Sweden Center, the land was donated by the proprietor, in this case Brockway, and like that structure this also housed the meetings of the various religious societies.

When the Baptists constructed their meeting house in 1829 it was said to be "connected with an academy."

The building was leased to private operators, the first on record being the partnership of J. Carpenter and J.M. Davis, a printer and book store owner, which continued

2) Rochester Daily Advertiser and Telegraph, 9/26/29.
until March of 1831, when Davis withdrew. In addition to offering a
denominational education, the academy also provided a village library,
whose collection was subject, like that of today's library, to shrinkage.
Although the Brockport Academy appears to have been vigorous,
publishing eight octavo pages of local literary efforts every other week
in "The Token and Student's Literary Repository," in the spring of 1831,
following announcement of the villager's success in securing the Baptist
college, the library books were recalled and the doors were closed.1

As a private academy, this institution would have provided both
college preparatory courses and a terminal education for those whose
needs exceeded the basic curriculum of the common school. Like the
academy, the first common school was located at the edge of the village, on
the corner of Erie and Perry Streets. There were limits to Brockway's
generosity. Similarly peripheral parcels were donated for the east and
north district schoolhouses when these were built in the 1830's. Like
their rural counterparts, these district schools combined the dual roles of
elementary education and juvenile supervision. In the west district
school, older students were seated on an elevated platform which
encircled the room. Their faces were turned toward the wall as their level
of study had supposedly advanced beyond that of the younger pupils,
seated on a lower platform facing the teacher, who stood beside the stove
at the center of the room. The elaborate engravings that are said to have

1) B.F.P., 1:24, 3/16/31. Davis requests the return of overdue library books
in the B.F.P., 1:16, 1/19/31. Carpenter and Davis probably hired the
building to run a private academy. See notices in B.F.P., 1:5, 11/3/30;
1:16, 1/19/31, and 1:24, 3/14/31. On the "Token" see 1:1, 10/6/30.
marked the higher desk suggest the degree of the older student's application, as does the studiousness of spit wads that are said to have decorated the ceiling. Indeed, one woman later recalled the instructors' heavy reliance on corporal inducements to learning. A particularly qualified teacher, Aaron Budlong, was "famous equally for physical strength and mathematical knowledge." Boys were routinely beaten, especially the winter, when the older boys attended. Others were made to "hold down a nail," which is to say hung from the wall by their collar, until they were sedated by the onset of asphyxiation.¹

The Baptist College opened in the Academy building in 1832. Brockport had outbid its rivals, Warsaw and LeRoy, with a large donation. Brockway himself contributed the six acres site and $3,000.² The villagers displayed some resilience in securing this institution, as it had been only a matter of months since they had been disappointed by the rejection of their bid for a Methodist Seminary, which elected the greater centrality of Lima, New York over Brockport's larger cash inducement.³ The six acres lay in the far southeastern corner of the village surrounded by empty building lots. Construction began on this site in 1834. The red

¹) This description is based on reminiscences of the west district school which appear in B.R. 25:34, 5/19/81; 26:39, 4/22/82.
sandstone walls had been raised to their full height of five stories and the
first classes were being conducted in the rooms on the lower floors when
the Baptist's finances were decimated by the worsening financial panic.
The Baptist Association of Western New York, the local Baptist Church and,
of course, their college, failed in 1836. After serving for some years as a
rather magnificent stable, a local stock company purchased the building
from the Association's creditors in 1841. This group of villagers completed
the interior, landscaped the grounds, carried away the accumulated
evidence of the building's interim occupants, and opened the private
Brockport Collegiate Institute in 1842.

This building burned in May of 1854. Explanations vary, although I
am drawn to that of the student concocting candy on the stove in his room
who neglected his flammable confection. Despite the chronic insolvency
of the institution, a new and enlarged stone edifice, costing over thirty
thousand dollars, was immediately raised on the site of the old. The
building stood with its back to a woods atop rising ground as what
remained of the village outskirts. The grounds were graded and "adorned
with numerous shade trees," the total effect being "retired and in every
respect attractive and beautiful." This tranquility was not compromised by
the adjacent track of the Rochester and Niagara Falls Railroad, which
formed the Institute's southern boundary; indeed it was a recommendation
that "the cars, as they whirl along, may be seen from every room in the
edifice."

It is unreasonably cynical to regard the collegiate institute as
nothing more than a gesture of crude commercialism. Like most
Fig. 7.1. The first building of the Brockton Collegiate Institute was a large square structure built of local red sandstone and topped with a large cupola. It was built in 1830 and it burned in 1854.
Fig. 7.2. When the second building of the Brockport Collegiate Institute opened in 1857 its setting was described as "retired and in every respect attractive and beautiful." This plan of the grounds, taken from Horace Thayer's map of 1861, shows the building secluded behind trees on a large lot. The bucolic landscaping signified withdrawal from the everyday world of practical business. This type of landscaping eventually spread to the village burying ground and residential lots. Although aesthetics dictated the design of a part of the grounds half of the campus was devoted to the practical business of growing food for the student's subsistence. It is noteworthy that this practical business was conducted behind a screen of trees.
collective projects, it was the result of complex impulses which the crucial actors may not have troubled themselves to analyze. The $25,000 which students were said annually to spend in the community was not inconsiderable when a renewed call for subscriptions obliged village merchants to assess the merits of continued funding, but the figure, as they were positioned to realize, was almost certainly inflated. We are reminded of the limited revenue of these scholars, and the limited opportunities for provisioning the college harder, by the fact that students could pay up to half of the cost of their board with produce from their parent's farms. They were credited at the market price. The college also appears to have raised its own vegetables. Yet, in the words of the newspaper, the interest of every citizen was believed "affected by the success of the institution." While this interest included commercial opportunities, it also exceeded commercial opportunities. No one, the editor continued, with "one atom of love for the wealth and prosperity of our village" could view the institute and fail to "behold there the munificent emblem of the intelligence, liberality and public spirit of our community."  

By drawing our attention to the emblematic quality of the college, this quote suggests a meaning for the word boosterism which has a richness that generations raised on Sinclair Lewis find difficult to appreciate. The college was simultaneously a sign of urban aspiration and a collective project which served to strengthen and unify the

community. Not everyone benefitted from the opportunities, and not everyone contributed to its maintenance or influenced its direction, but this seems in no way to have lessened the sense that the college was a public good. The closing recitation of the Collegiate Institute was an event of community amusement and edification, and the grounds of the institute became the setting for community events like the fourth of July oration. To understand the difference between this arrangement and that of the present day we have only to consider that the Collegiate Institute was of Brockport, while the present State University College is by its very name simply at Brockport.

A series of private, or select, schools came into existence in the village between the closing of the academy and the opening of the collegiate institute. Like both of these institutions, the select schools provided an alternative and a supplement to the common schools, and they served to give a distinctive polish to the children of the middle class. This splintering and specialization of education seems to have come as the result, at least in part, of entrepreneurial educators. In September of 1831, Sullivan Caverno, a graduate of Dartmouth College, opened a select school "in which will be taught all branches commonly taught in academies." Confident of success after a few trial weeks in the district school house, he leased a room over the store of D.&P. Belden. Another select school operated under the tutelage of Mrs. Washburn. Mr. Caverno extended his

3) B.F.P., 2:3, 10/19/31.
instruction to adults when he opened to the members of all denominations "a course of instruction in the rudiments of sacred Musick," to be held on Saturday evening "at early candle lighting." Since 1829, Mrs. Andrews announced that advanced students at her select school could receive lessons in painting and watercolor without charge, and instruction in French and the rudiments of Latin were available for a small additional fee. In 1832 J.J. Treat opened a select school, "for young ladies and gentlemen who wish to attend the various branches of literature," in a room above the Collins Block, and in the following year he expanded, engaging Miss Holmes to teach an impressive range of subjects in the female department. It was the common practice to require students to attend church, although the denomination was optional.

The select schools commodified traditional upper-class cultural knowledge and sold it to members of the rising middle class. Since Harriet Martineau it has been observed that the 'classless society' was avid for vestments of distinction. Pacing this commodification of culture were the numerous young men and women possessed of these acquirements, but driven by scanty means to transform them into acquisitions. The "good behavior" that the select schools promised to impart was both pursued and promulgated because the society was democratic, neither possessing nor supporting a leisure class.

Among the sure signs that this community placed considerable reliance on intellectual development as a means to social improvement.

2) B.F.P., 1:26, 3/30/31
were the extension of schooling to new age groups, and the use of pedagogic techniques in the inculcation of moral knowledge. Thus, in March of 1831 an "enlightened" committee convened to discuss establishment of an infant school, and in August of that same year this opened under the direction of Miss Prentice in rooms that had been fitted up over a Main Street store. This also explains the formation of the Sweden Sunday School Union in April of 1832.

Like the Temperance Society, the Brockport Lyceum was the creation of Thomas Hyatt. At weekly meetings a question framed at the previous meeting was debated by volunteers. After the debate, essays might be read and "facts, experiments, observations or conjectures voiced." In the inaugural debate the question "Are Literature and Science, upon the whole, beneficial to Mankind" was undertaken. Later issues were "The American Tariff?" and "Has intemperance been productive of more evil in the world than war?" This Pickwickian society first assembled at the Brockport Hotel on February 11, 1831. At this meeting twenty dollars was allocated to purchase periodicals so that discussants might be better informed.

2) B.F.P., 2:29, 4/18/32.
3) The lyceum was a mutual improvement association of local men which flourished in the 30's and 40's, and fell into decline after mid-century when the podium was surrendered to lecturers, many of them second rate, traversing a national circuit. Alexander C. Flick (ed.) History of the State of New York. 10 vol. (Port Washington, N.Y.: Ira J. Friedman, 1962), vol 9, pp. 78-84; Carle Bode, The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), p. 61.
Two conclusions are prompted by this record. First, education was sufficiently valued for an impressive range of opportunities to be provided by local initiative and funding. Education was seen as (and was) a positive, constructive response to the challenges and anxieties of the new commercial society. This sets it apart from negative responses like arson, Anti-masonic paranoia and alcoholism, while it at the same time integrates these features into a larger cultural transformation. The second conclusion is that, after 1830, this community contained a fairly large literate population. This change is well registered in the gradual improvement of the penmanship and grammar of the records of the town and the religious societies (although the former is in part attributable to superior pens and the latter was never poor). This produced the letter-writing, account-keeping businessman and the piano-playing, poetry-reading wife that have become stereotypes of the provincial bourgeoisie, no mean or contemptible achievement when we consider their parents cramped and constrained circumstances. It also produced a progressive and inventive population that managed to run, and improve, its own affairs without massive external encouragement or aid. Comparing the resources and the results of this system of education from our own vantage we must, I believe, concede that a sense of superiority is out of place.

To have the cause of Religion evil Spoken of

The temperance society presented its program of abstinence as a solution to two widespread anxieties. It promised those who abjured
alcohol a significant increase in their chances of material success and spiritual salvation. The first argument, which remains resonant to this day, is that inebriation is economically inefficient. It causes errors, accidents and absenteeism while it wastes resources on unproductive and ephemeral pleasures. By eliminating these luxuries an individual could overcome the economic mediocrity and frustration that had driven them to drink in the first place. We may find it far more difficult to sympathize with the second argument, since it exploited a latent apprehension of eternal torment to which many of us are insensitive, but this does not mean that the argument is in any sense surprising. Reforms must promise to resolve the anxieties of the day. Paul Johnson has shown that the religious anxiety that gripped Rochester in the 1830's was experienced most acutely by the owners of shops, men who, in pursuit of greater profits and domestic privacy, had relinquished control over their employees. They knew that they were responsible for destroying the traditional relation of craftsman and journeyman that had served as an instrument of social control, and consideration of the consequences filled them with guilt. It was the guilt of the men responsibility for the change, rather than the anomie of the workers affected by the change, which caused religious anxiety. Enthusiastic religion absolved these men of guilt by making goodness and evil matters of individual choice; it served as an ideology that erased the elite's sense of moral responsibility for the community they had created but could no longer control. The spread of enthusiastic religion to the working class was, in Johnson's argument,
largely a matter of workers conforming to the ideals and expectations of their masters.

Johnson's thesis cannot explain the entire phenomenon of religious anxiety or enthusiastic religion, since this preceded the Rochester revivals and it was often found in regions untouched by the factory system. When revivals came to Brockport in 1831 they were clearly inspired by the example of Rochester, but the absence of factories makes it doubtful that emulation was prompted by the same anxieties. Unlike Rochester, where the ideology of enthusiastic religion justified dissolution of the moral community, the Brockport revivals were intended to expand the moral community. The organizers were not animated by guilt at what they had done, but by guilt at what they had so far failed to do.

The experience of the First Congregational Church of Brockport with enthusiastic religion the early 1830's illustrates three significant issues. First, it serves to show that the meaning of revivalism was specific to the kind of place in which it was practiced. In Brockport it was not stimulated by industrialization and it was not, as it was elsewhere, enlivened by divergence of opinion on the Christian obligation to social reform. Second, it provides examples of the means employed to regulate social behavior in a small village. Finally, it provides one case from the

many that contributed to the decline of Congregationalism from first to forth in size among American denominations between 1780 and 1850.1

In 1828 the First Congregational Society of Sweden "resolved that a church of our faith and order be established in Brockport." The new society was immediately placed under the administrative supervision and financial nurture of the Rochester Presbytery, but its own government was strictly congregational. This arrangement was sanctioned by the Plan of Union that had been adopted by the Presbyterian General Assembly and the Congregational General Association of Connecticut in 1801 as an instrument for planting churches in the new settlements.2 By 1830 the plan had been ratified by the Congregational Associations of the remaining New England states, and in this year it was formally adopted by the Brockport church.

This cooperation appeared logical. Congregationalists and Presbyterians were theological kin, sharing the Westminster Confession and Catechism of 1642, and, since the Saybrook Programme of 1708, the difference between presbyterial and congregational forms of church government had narrowed.3 Under the provisions of the plan, settlers

2) A related plan was the Accommodation Plan of 1808, which allowed a Congregationalist association to be received as a constituent branch of a Presbyterian synod while its churches retained the Congregationalist name and practices.
3) This was most true for the churches of Connecticut, which the Saybrook Programme organized into associations. The Presbyterian church is organized by synodical and presbyterial principals of government. Each church is supervised by a consistory or session, the latter term being drawn from the Scottish "Kirk Session," a body comprised of the pastor and lay elders, as that time men who served for life. Three or more pastors with as many lay
from both denominations were allowed to join together and form a single
congregation. The members were then free to call a pastor of either
denomination, and, without regard to this man's ordination, to govern
themselves in the pattern customary to the majority. This flexibility was
reiterated in the Accommodation Plan of 1808, under which
Congregational Associations became constituent branches of a
Presbyterian synod while their churches retained the Congregationalist
name and practices.

From the name and the constitution of the Brockport church it is
clear that the majority of its members were Congregationalists and that
its government was congregational. Their motive for uniting with the
presbytery was financial expedience since they were funded through the
first two years of their existence by the General Assembly's Board of
Missions and in the third year by the American Home Missionary Society.
The second organization, created in 1826, was "the instrument through
which the Plan of Union largely functioned" as it "supported weak
churches in every section of the country." 2

elders are collected into a presbytery, and three or more presbyteries
form a synod. The General Assembly presides over all of the synods.
Congregationalists churches are in theory autonomous and self
governing. In government their kin are the Baptists, a denomination
with which cooperative missionary work might have been agreeable
were it not for their irregular ordination procedures.

1) In the event of disagreement between the congregation and the
minister, the matter was taken to the presbytery or the association.
Appeals were made to the presbytery if the minister was a
Presbyterian, and to the male members of the church if he was a
congregationalist. Sweet, p. 211.

2) Sweet, pp. 250-61.
The church acquired its first permanent pastor in February of 1831, when Joseph Meyers, who had served as moderator, assumed the position. In 1830 William Seymour donated a building site on State Street, and a "small brick church" measuring forty by fifty feet was erected in that year. Of its internal arrangement we can say very little with certainty. There was, apparently, a choir loft in the rear. The pews were contained in boxes, which could be bought and sold; and it is unlikely that they were divided by an aisle since weddings were not performed in the church and processions of any kind were anathemas in the strictly protestant ethos. Apparently the place of worship had a degree of sanctity, however, since the basement was finished and used for secular assembılès. Although the church was, in the form of its house and the form of its government, Congregational, the society of the canal village was in significant ways different from that in which the Congregationalist institution had arisen and flourished. Notably the architecture of the building was more appealing than that of its parent church in Sweden Center, which was indistinguishable from a barn.

The vigor with which this appeal should be pursued was a matter of considerable controversy. Reverent Meyers was, evidently, chary of enthusiastic religion; and although it was he who solicited the aid of Charles Grandison Finney, he seems to have looked upon the flood of

1) The first mention of a meeting house in the church records is dated January 19, 1832.
2) The choir loft is noted by Elisha Carpenter, B.R. 25:33, 5/12/81. The finished basement is noted in an announcement of the display of a painting by William Dunlap, B.F.P., 1:1, 10/6/30.
converts that issued from the revivals with skepticism. 1 Robert Love, the Sunday school superintendent, was, on the contrary, an avid revivalist and later a temperance advocate. 2 In 1829 Love began to pester Meyers, and on at least twenty subsequent occasions he presented the pastor with the demand that he not only enliven his sermons, but that the church assume sponsorship of visiting revivalists. Brother Love was counseled to restrain his zealotry; and, in 1830, he was ordered to desist importuning the pastor and agitating the congregation. He would not be so easily dissuaded.

In June of 1831 Love’s efforts were rewarded with a four day protracted meeting. Mr Finney and Mr Cheeseman preached morning, afternoon and night, and as a result of their labors seventeen souls were received into the church on profession of faith. Nevertheless, the Sunday school superintendent was unsatisfied. He was convinced that “Mr Finney and Mr Cheeseman would have stayed longer if Mr Meyers had been awake and had requested it.” 3 Flushed with righteous ire, Love convened a prayer meeting at his house on the corner of Erie and Main Streets, and there represented Meyers as “the Achan in this Church,” a slander that was later judged a “high offense.” 4 For this indiscretion Love was hauled before the Trustees and temporarily barred from communion.

2) He opened the first temperance house in the village in 1833, see B.F.P. & M.D. 3: 36, 6/5/33.
4) For the Biblical significance of this imputation, see Joshua 7:18.
June of the following year. As for Love, he left some time later for Wisconsin.¹

Meyers’ exit cleared the way for a series of revivals over the next three or four years. The largest of these, in 1834, gathered ninety-nine new souls, a harvest of repenters that nearly doubled church membership. By 1836 the membership roster ran to some 209 names, an increase of 156 per cent from the time the revivals began. In the same period the population of the village increased by only twenty-eight per cent. Whereas formerly one out of every ten villagers had been a communicant now two out of every ten were acknowledged members of the church. As Meyers had feared, the haste with which members were herded into the fold prohibited any preliminary extraction of the goats that were mingled with the sheep. For the new communicants, conversion had not included the prolonged vacillation and melancholy that was formerly thought indispensable to the conversion experience.² Rather than being a wicket gate, their route of access to the church was a wide and teeming boulevard.

Recidivism was instantly a problem. As Hotchkin wrote in a note on the Brockport Church, “the hasty admission of such numbers was attended with disastrous consequences.”³ This carefree return to worldly

¹ B.R. 24: 37. 6/12/79.
pleasures by its neophyte members was a source of acute embarrassment to a church that expected its members to comport themselves as visible saints. John M. Brown absconded, to the loss of his creditors. The Vangilder brothers forsook worship one Sunday morning in January to tipple at the tavern of Mr. Alvord in the village. Theopolis Byington, possibly a relation of the presiding pastor, had the indiscretion to drink brandy in Mr. Munn's grocery until he succumbed to an irresistible need to recline on a bench in the back room of the establishment. Although Byington disputed any connection between his unfortunate dizzy spell and the brandy, which he imbibed "as medicine," his infraction was indisputably asseverated by the fact that, on the Sabbath of a few weeks previous, the luckless farmer had been apprehended in his fields casting wheat and oats while visibly "disgusted with liquor."

It had been the practice among Congregationalists to follow the prescription of Matthew 18, and "labor" with such wayward souls, bringing them by strenuous prayer and exhortation to full and appalling knowledge of their sinfulness. The unregenerate were, of course, excommunicated; but this extreme solution was seldom necessary. In Brockport, however, backsliding became frequent, brazen and remorseless. The efficiency with which the revivals had packed the church with converts demanded an instrument of equal efficiency to police the libertines that now comprised a growing fringe of members. It was with such an end in mind that the Board of Elders, a Presbyterian instrument of discipline, was formed on October 8, 1834.
The Board of Elders presided over the Session, a body that adjudicated initial trials of discipline. As we have seen in the trial of Robert Love, appeal from their decision could be made to the Presbytery in Rochester, or to the church body. The session operated for six and one half years, chastening the intemperate and summarily excommunicating the few whose transgressions violated civil law. It was this body that attempted to punish the "sin of vending ardent spirits" by temporarily or permanently excommunicating offending merchants. Regular absence from worship, neglect of family prayers and Sabbath breaking frequently appear in the Session minutes. Quondam couples that had quietly separated were commanded to reunite. A boy with the frivolity to take dancing lessons was told that his conversion was evidently incredible. A young man, who "did play upon a musical instrument" for a dance held at the village hotel was sternly, if ineffectually, rebuked. Two members with Universalist leanings, and perhaps a sympathetic exposure to the Fox sisters, on separate occasions pronounced "spiritual rapping... superior or at least equal in authority to the scriptures" and were strongly censured.

If it remained the practice to labor with these backsliders, this slips from the record. The session was swayed by conspicuous contrition, but in those frequent cases where the individual was so irredeemably lost as to thumb their nose at the Elders, official excommunication was swift and summary. The Session seemed less concerned with the soul that teetered between salvation and damnation than it did with guarding the reputation of the church against the discreditable behavior of her affiliates.
This circumspection is made explicit in the trial of William Alvord, owner of the village’s first Hotel. In January of 1836 Alvord confessed to the session that he had been “inebriated for two weeks.” The erstwhile hosteler was temporarily barred from communion, but after much “plain dealing and hard labor,” he was readmitted to the fold. The Session was not, apparently, unmindful of Christian forgiveness. But, as the long-departed Reverend Meyers might have observed, repentance is no guaranty of regeneration.

Shortly after his reprieve, brother Alvord drove his buggy home from the nearby village of Albion inebriated “to that degree,” he was later informed, “that you could not walk straight forward.” Attention was drawn to this impairment by a minor collision with a second buggy that was parked near the canal docks on Water Street. The alerted onlookers scrutinized Alvord’s movements. His frame, they later testified, seemed to sway; and he demonstrably wobbled and braced himself at the head of the stairs that led down to Hopkins’ cellar grocery. Escaping into the seclusion of the subterranean shop, Alvord ordered a plate of oysters. To his chagrin the proprietor readily perceived that he was “the worse for liquor” and refused to serve him. Furthermore, Hopkins had the indiscretion to take his testimony before the session.

After interviewing numerous witnesses the Elders found that Alvord was not “so drunk as to be incapable of transacting business,” the ability to order a plate of oysters being a noteworthy competence; but he was beyond doubt “in a religious sense of the term, intoxicated.” In an interesting and uncharacteristic aside they specified their meaning.
Alvord "was so far under the influence of intoxicating liquor," they ruled, "as to make it apparent to those who saw his demeanor, and thereby to have the cause of religion evil spoken of."

The session was created by the conservative members of the church as an instrument to control new church members. Their job was to carry out the second part of the dictum of Matthew 18, to sever the hands, so to speak, that offended the church. After six years of struggling to control the members, the session was formally challenged. Moses Nash was called before the session in March of 1841 and charged with covenant breaking, or failing to partake of communion for two years. Nash denied the charge and, in a written rejoinder transcribed into the Session minutes, added that in setting themselves up as a Board of Elders the Session had effected a transition to a Presbyterian form of church government that was in no way sanctioned by the original Articles of Association. They had sought to "change the church relations of a member" by usurping the power of excommunication that should rest with the congregation. In so changing the church relations of a member, Nash continued, the Session had made "an attempt to control his conscience;" and as this "right of conscience is inalienable," Nash wrote, and as God will hold every individual personally responsible for its exercise, it would be improper for an individual to surrender it to the control of others or by covenant to subject it to such an exercise as might be imposed by the voice of others."

One could hardly ask for a better example of what Schaff called "Pelagian Utilitarianism," a liberal doctrine that had originated at the
Yale Divinity School. This led many strict Presbyterians to fear the influence of the "congregationalized" churches and, in 1837, these conservatives, organized as the Old School, excised all the churches established by the Ecumenical Home Missionary Society, contending that these "Presbygationalists" were lax in discipline, lacked presbyteral organization, and espoused heretical doctrines. An anxiety on which they remained silent was the growing abolitionist sentiments in these churches. The "excinded" synods were Utica, Geneva, Genesee and the Western Reserve, together representing somewhat less than half of the Presbyterians in the country. These synods formed the New School Presbyterian Church, which functioned as a separate denomination until 1870 when they severed their ties with the Congregationalists and reunited with the Presbyterian church of the north.

The Nash case split the church. Almost half of the members disappeared from the registers entirely, while the factions remained split and reformed in a series of obscure squabbles. Ultimately the conservatives triumphed; even to the point of repudiating the New School. The reconstituted Session wrote a letter of protest to the Rochester Presbytery pointing out its "alarming doctrinal errors," foremost among which was "perfectionism as taught at Oberlin and disseminated by the Oberlin Evangelist," that is to say Charles Grandison Finney. Membership


2) Sweet, pp. 259-61.

did not regain the level of 1840 until 1853, the year, significantly, that the new meeting house was completed. This growth came as a result of further revivals in 1848, 1849 and 1853, and it had a predictable issue. In 1857 the church once again broke with the Rochester Presbytery and became an "independent society." 1

What we have seen is an effort on the part of a relative minority to regulate community behavior by attempting to expand to a point where it was conterminous with the community. Partially effected, this expansion brought embarrassments of unseemly comportment which necessitated the session, an instrument of discipline which caused the society to splinter and shrink. The solution, further revivals, renewed the cycle.

Anxiety and the Dramatic Demise of Sam Patch

If places may be thought of as having characteristic neuroses, or dreads, those which we have seen in Brockport—secret societies, liquor, ignorance, religious antinomianism—were common to villages of the time, particularly in the North. Dread is, however, a counterpart of hope, since undesirable outcomes assume preference for another course. Through the 1820's and the 1830's Brockport and its precincts enjoyed unprecedented growth and prosperity, undeniable benefits of political, social and economic changes, but their residents had also discerned costs in this transformation. Progress was, as I have said, equivocal. For their ideal I think we can quote Charles Beard, who called this progress civilization.

1) B.R. 1:35; 6/12/57.
This idea of civilization, in a composite formulation, embraces a conception of history as a struggle of human beings in the world for individual and social perfection, for the good, the true, the beautiful—against ignorance, disease, the harshness of physical nature, the forces of barbarism in individuals and society.\footnote{1}

The reforms were an attempt to influence the outcome of this struggle. Complaisant confidence in the beneficence of progress was not, as Arthur Schlesinger Jr. has described it, common until the mid-nineteenth century, when prosperity seemed to raise optimism. People were acutely aware of the historical examples of failure.\footnote{2}

With this anxiety in mind it may be interesting to conclude with an account of an event, itself both trivial and tragic, which was taken as a divination of the undiminished probability of catastrophic failure. On November 19, 1829 the upper falls of the Genesee served as the site of the last leap of the daredevil showman Sam Patch, a stunt that McKelvey called "a climax to the sometimes reckless pageantry of the boom town."\footnote{3}

Prior to this fatal finale, Patch had achieved considerable notoriety for jumping from high places into water, leaping from the brink of Trenton Falls, Niagara Falls, and assorted masts, rocks and bridges in the northeast. In Rochester his stylized heroism took place at the waterfalls because the incompetent sedimentary rock of the region remains vertical and free of talus only where the forces of erosion have been recently active and


\footnote{2}{Schlesinger Jr., p. 17.}

\footnote{3}{McKelvey, 1945: p. 148. Elsewhere, McKelvey places the date as Friday, Nov. 15.}
because the plunge pool provided a depth of water unavailable in the otherwise shallow river.

As a staged spectacle for which Patch expected to be paid, the plunge required an audience with leisure, disposable income and an ability to congregate. Canal prosperity had created such an audience. In fact the assembled had traveled from as far away as Canada. Presumably, in addition to the spectacle needing the audience, the audience needed the spectacle. To attract an audience this exhibition of superfluous bravery must have satisfied some need. The thrill of watching fate taunted and denied its victim was a drama that must have seemed to say something important about the relation between individuals and a dangerous world. The need, I would guess, was to see luck wasted. It was the need to see something that was feared to be scarce consumed with extravagance. Such profligacy suggested that luck was not limited but abundant, and this no doubt gave heart to those whose undiminished optimism was crucial to the economic boom of Rochester.

Patch survived his early leaps because of his ability to control his plummeting body and strike the water at the proper angle. As commentators recognized, his success depended on technical proficiency rather than the dispensation of individual grace. Yet, for all his skill, and the aplomb of his famous thesis that "some things can be done as well as others," Patch evidently required sizeable doses of liquid courage before he could spring into the abyss. Whiskey gave Patch the illusion that his luck was limitless, and his harrowing plunge merely magnified and communicated this euphoria.
Before jumping the falls of the Genesee Patch fortified himself with a larger than accustomed dose. Climbing to the platform that was pent 120 feet over the river he wobbled perceptibly. From the moment he left the platform it was clear to all the assembled that the stunt was botched. Falling with his arms flailing, he hit the water on his side, probably snapped his spine, and sunk out of sight. His corpse was discovered downstream sometime later.

The community was sobered by this tragedy to a greater degree than it would have been elated had Patch surfaced triumphant. In the hands of clerical interpreters Patch and those who had encouraged him had concocted a disgraceful affront to God. It was not difficult for them to reinterpret the drama as signifying something elemental about the reasons for the city's worsening economic slump, and, in the opinion of one historian, it was civic guilt felt over the "foolhardy leap of Sam Patch which touched off the emotional powder keg" of revivalism.1

The misfortune of Sam Patch is one of those small things that Clifford Geertz might say speaks to larger issues. It is important to note that it was made to speak by groups with certain interests - individuals who wanted to believe that they were lucky, clerics who wanted individuals to believe that life was perilous - but it is perhaps more important to note that it was able to take on the significance that it did because of certain facts of the text and context. Patch did die, the economy was worsening. What lies at the heart of the interpretations, and what makes this an aspect of culture, is the fact that these events were made

1) Mc Kelvey, 1945, p. 188.
into divinations, or myths illustrating the nature of the relations between this people and their world. They were made into representations of something else.

Each episode described in this chapter is familiar. The various talents of evangelical Protestantism and social reform are prominent fixtures in every interpretation of the Jacksonian period. Given my reliance on the accounts of Thomas Hyatt, my interpretation of events in Brockport is in fact an interpretation of an interpretation. And the matter does not end here. Hyatt was interpreting events that were themselves interpretations. The Independence Day celebration interpreted the American Revolution in terms of Jacksonian reform. The Anti-Masonic hysteria interpreted the abduction of Morgan in terms of a paranoia of hidden obstacles to individual advancement. The temperance movement interpreted alcohol and its consequences in terms of anxieties about the practical competence and moral stability of society. Evangelical religion interpreted various forms of frivolity as visible contradictions of conversion.

The plunge of Sam Patch was also an interpretation, one possible reading of a topographical feature that is, without such interpretations, quite meaningless. It said that cliffs are to be fallen from. It then became an interpretation of falling, a text (potentially) on the means of surviving catastrophe, a metaphor (potentially) for the Fall of Man or a drop in the price of wheat. The mills that made use of the same feature were also interpretations. They said that nature (and with it human nature) is to be channeled, harnessed and put to work. The European travelers who gazed at the falls (deploring the mills and the folly of Patch) gave a third interpretation. They said nature is to be viewed.

When Sam Patch died interpreters did not regret the event of his death, they regretted the nature of his
My interpretation, which exists at several removes, could have turned the preceding interpretations in various directions. Had the reading been deconstructive, for example, I might have dwelt on the name Patch without any pretense of seriousness or truthfulness. I might observe that Shakespeare used the word patch to describe a fool. How curious, I might note, that a man called Patch should have served as a patch when confidence in luck began to wear thin. Digressions on patch as a generic toponym describing the site of a modest agricultural venture might proceed to a discussion of the cultivation and harvest of the discourse that was Sam Patch. I might as well have pulled apart his peculiar motto, “Some things (not all things) can be done (not should or must be done) as well as (in addition to, or to the same standards as?) others.” Within my academic context, however, this sort of indeterminate reading is unacceptable.

This is meant to illustrate the proposition that scholars are engaged in the interpretation of interpretations that are themselves interpretations. It is also meant to suggest the institutional setting that regulates these interpretations. The various social movements described in this chapter are not so much the brute facts of history as they are testimonies to the ability of a community of readers to control the interpretations of its members. Although the sections of the chapter are conventional there are points where the text may tempt the reader to move in unsanctioned directions. Why, for example, do I mention Morgan’s biting the thumb of one of his captors? Why do I describe the oddity of hanging young schoolboys from nails?

Why do I ask the reader to imagine the drunken Alvord quivering at the top of the stairs to Hopkin’s grocery? Each is meaningless enough. But, it seems to me that such idiosyncratic images furnish the reader’s imagination with points of potential departure from the course of my own interpretation. This is true not only because they can serve as the basis for amusing reflections, but also because they announce the fact that my interpretation does not exhaust the potential of the historical scene. To use the words of Jonathan Z. Smith, they are meant to underscore the fact that, for all its apparent color, this “map” of village life is a partial abstraction that should not be mistaken for the “territory” of the past.

Chapter 8

Orality, Literacy

and the Representation of Everyday Village Life

Like periods and places, projects are afflicted with characteristic anxieties. Since the Romantics first placed a premium on originality poets have been gripped by what Bloom calls the "anxiety of influence." Writers on historical subjects harbor different anxieties. Insofar as it is synonymous with being informed, or with an inductive methodology, influence is something to be demonstrated, even exaggerated. A few qualifiers and subtle discriminations suffice to avoid the label of derivativeness. This anxiety over the possibility of combining fidelity to the record (filial-pietism) and personal initiative is evident in the popularity of the word "fresh" as an adjective describing praiseworthy interpretive efforts. The word instantly dispels stale, musty, putrid, and other verbal cognates of things that are old. The purity of fresh water is called to mind. More important, however, is the suggestion of invigoration and resuscitation, since the fresh interpretation breathes life into an existing, if otherwise torpid, body.

For scholars writing on the past the anxiety of inaccuracy is far more persistent than the anxiety of influence. Its inculcation is a significant aspect of their training, and for many individuals this internalized discipline is one of the more enduring legacies of the institution in which they were socialized. Certain disciplines impart an anxiety of imprecision, which their disciples attempt to assuage with hair-splitting figures and mountainous tabulations; others impart an anxiety of ignorance, which their disciples attempt to assuage with heroic bouts of reading. Readers with anxieties of abridgement are welcome to complete this list.

For me the anxieties of numerical imprecision is chronic, although it is spaced by fairly wide intervals. When it struck I would tabulate figures from the census; when it passed my results struck me as either so predictable as to be without interest or so spurious as to be without merit. In the chapters that follow I have relied greatly on the village newspaper, a source no less liable to yield predictable or spurious results, but one which I felt far more able to monitor critically. This became a huge and unwieldy task because I succumbed to a more persistent anxiety, the fear of missing or failing to note a critical bit of information. The fruits and follies of this fanatical quote-grubbing provide the sometimes rugged highs and lows of the following pages. This chapter situates my material and suggests a general interpretive frame.

In 1977 Raymond Williams suggested the need for scholarly texts that would combine the traditions of ethnography and political economy. Such "combinatory texts" might, he argued, escape the imperfect and limited advantages of both participant observation and structuralism, and they might also yield some understanding of the interaction between private experience and public institutions. Williams's concept of the "structure of feeling" has stimulated some political economists to give greater regard to experience, and it has encouraged some anthropologists to situate their ethnographies in a system that is both wider and far less personal than the ethnographic locale. The ideal as exemplified in Paul

2) Marcus and Fischer, pp. 77-110.
Willis' *Learning to Labor* is to describe the creation of cultural forms as acts of "resistance and accommodation to capitalist institutions."¹

Information technology is one such structure; reading the information that is produced by this technology is one such experience. In the case at hand this permits me to propose a simple thesis. Electronic telegraphy and its child the press association gave large city newspapers a distinct advantage in the collection and dissemination of national and international news. In an effort to retain subscribers, newspapers of more modest circulation appropriated local events and transformed these into "copy." This not only converted local gossip into a saleable commodity; it also converted an important component of social information from an oral to a literary form.

**Newspapers and the Telegraph**

In 1862 the Englishman, Edward Dicey, wrote "the American might be defined as a newspaper reading animal," and he went on, with reservations, to pronounce the American press "a vast engine of national education."² The content of this education was various, and it grew more so through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Some of this was the product of editorial invention, but the newspaper's reputation for trustworthiness required that some portion of the news be honestly

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collected. The standard practice was plagiarism from other newspapers, with attribution included or omitted according to convenience and circumstance. Under this system newspapers in the coastal cities had the prerogative in cutting European newspapers but none of the inland newspapers enjoyed any particular advantage.

Technological solutions to the problem of transmitting information have a long history. Drums, smoke signals, runner and rider relays, carrier pigeons, and flag signals were all used, and sometimes by newspapers. Between 1794 and 1825, France was furnished lines of semaphoric posts bearing adjustable arms. Expertly operated, these devices could convey a brief message at about ten miles a minute. It is from these mechanisms that we derive the term telegraph, or writing from a distance.\(^1\) In 1837 Morse simply accomplished the same task electrically. When the electrical telegraph was first used to report news in 1844, the New York Tribune heralded the "miracle of the annihilation of space," although as we shall see the miracle of the distortion of space would have been closer to the truth.\(^2\)

When Rochester, New York was linked to the seaboard lines in 1846 it was the work of a newspaper editor, Henry O'Reilly. Now partaking of what the Baltimore Sun called the "mystic band" the city dailies began immediately to feature "by telegraph" columns.\(^3\) Although the O'Reilly

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2) Quoted in Desmond, p. 107.
line failed, it was replaced by a line financed by a consortium of Rochester capitalists and Morse's former engineer, Ezra Cornell. This was the nucleus of Western Union, formed in 1850.  

Press associations preceded the telegraph, the first having appeared in New York City in 1827. This association was formed to eliminate the expense of competing to be the first newspaper to secure the European mail bag, and it was natural that it should evolve into the New York Associated Press with the innovation of the telegraph. Through a special arrangement with Western Union, the seven members of the N.Y.A.P. maintained a "virtual monopoly of wire news," which they sold under contract to outside papers.  

As was the case in England, where Reuters was organized in 1851, the telegraph and the press association was a boon to provincial papers. However, the high cost of telegraph services, which was not reduced until the 1880's, and the high rates of the press association, limited the benefits of the new technology to the newspapers of inland cities, and served to set these apart from their impecunious country counterparts.

1) McKelvey, p. 64; Desmond, p. 106.  
5) Desmond, p. 123.
Responses of the Village Newspaper

In the first part of the 18th century, country newspapers were small-scale imitations of the big city newspapers. Their audience consisted of businessmen and their content was largely information of mercantile interest with a generous supplement of political propaganda. The promulgation of local news was left in the hands of its traditional vendors, the village gossips. The columns that began to appear under a hometown header at the close of the eighteenth century were little more than exercises in editorial expatriation, and through the first half of the nineteenth century none but the most spectacular of local events made it into print. Presumably it was necessary to dispel the misdirected suspicion that surrounded fires, robberies, bank failures and murders, and to provide an authoritative version of the event and its circumstances.

The newspaper in the village of Brockport enlarged its control over local news in 1857, when it expanded its former role of simply policing rumor and began to peddle local trivia in doing so it followed the lead of a city paper, the Syracuse Journal, which inaugurated the nation's first local news column in 1846, but the shift ultimately moved the Brockport paper farther from the model of the metropolitan newspaper, and began its evolution into the distinctive format and content of the "country

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1) Mott, p. 136.
2) Mott, pp. 51-2.
4) Salmon, p. 11.
In the editor's announcement, the newspaper would endeavor to supply its readers "with a supply of well washed and seasoned food from the home garden." In 1858 Beach began to place the local items in a separate column, where they were apparently perused with interest as they multiplied within a short time to fill an entire page. This was part of a national trend among weekly papers which, as Lewis Atherton put it, "dignified the lives of common people by assuming that their activities were important." It also recognized the profitability of gratifying the common person's vanity. As Sherwood Anderson described the village newspaper in *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919): it "had one policy. It strove to mention by name in each issue as many as possible of the inhabitants of the village."

**Consequences of Writing Local News**

I have so far suggested that printed local news was a cultural form created as an act of "resistance and accommodation to capitalist institutions." Admittedly, the village newspaper was itself a capitalist institution, and its survival in the face of metropolitan competition was a necessity for other capitalist institutions, the Main Street merchants who were just beginning to suffer losses to their own metropolitan competitors; but this admission does not mitigate the claim that this was an

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1) Salmon, pp. 485-6.
2) On the attention to local news, see B.R. 1:40, 7/17/57; 3:12 12/31/58.
act of "resistance and accommodation" on the part of local capitalist institutions that were faced with capitalist institutions that were vastly larger both in scale and financial resources. I believe that the practice of writing local news had a significant impact on the locality's experience of itself because it textualized what had been an oral discourse. The impact had three aspects: the aspect of literacy itself, which served to objectify the meaning of local social activity; the aspect of literary convention, which served to differentiate the meanings of local social activities; and the aspect of literary content, which served to script future social action.

While the newspaper restricted itself to authoritative versions of potentially controversial events, its impact on local social information was slight. It served principally to constrain those speech acts, or rumors, that the village elite considered irresponsible by objectifying the event in print and thus adding a large number of vicarious witnesses to the handful who actually saw the event. By expanding its purview to include the most trivial events the newspaper made its readers vicarious witnesses to an objectification of their own collective social life. The difference may be expressed in an example. If a party was given and described orally, the description would have been of a particular subject's experience of that party as this was best calculated to provoke the admiration or envy of a particular listener. If a party was given and described in the newspaper, however, the description would have been of an objective event rather than a subjective experience, and, being presented as common property, it would have lacked the custom tailoring characteristic of oral accounts. Thus, as Stock writes, the text was freed
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from "the orbit of mental intention," and from "the sphere of situational reference." I would add that this entailed a concomitant shift from subjective experience of local social life to a subject's experience of local social life as a series of objects.

The differentiation of social life seems to have occurred in the disparate use of literary conventions. Most local notices fall into one of two forms. The first consists of the straight notice of the business of the village government and the comings and goings of the respectable middle class. Over twenty years after its first use, Beach clarified the scoured vegetable metaphor with which he had introduced local news. "The people would be surprised," he wrote, "if they knew how much news is kept out of a well regulated newspaper." As the fictional editor in in William White's *In Our Town* put it "in our little newspaper office we are all reporters, and we know many intimate things about our people that we do not print." Excepting perpetrators of crimes, interested parties were free to request deletion of reports that might compromise the reputation of themselves or their families. That was if they had a reputation that could be compromised.

The second form of local notice was reserved for the actions of those whose reputation was already compromised. This was the humorous depreciation known as the faceitz. This last form began in the metropolitan papers. Its prototype was the factitious Bow Street Court

1) Stock, p. 130.
2) On the deletions to which local news is subject, see *B.R.* 24:57, 7/29/80.
4) Dicey, p. 30.
reports of the London *Morning Herald* which lampooned the "tragically of drunkenness, theft, assault and streetwalking." This technique was rapidly copied by the American penny press, particularly the reports of George Wisner in the *New York Sun*. From here the style of domestic tragicomedy apparently diffused to village newspapers. In the pages of the *Brockport Republic* all of the iniquities of Bow Street became rather suddenly visible. As David Lowenthal has pointed out, the same scenes of ruin and squalor that are objectionable in fact become, when transformed to print, picturesque and even romantic. Behind these literary techniques there lay, however, a powerful instrument of class awareness. As the editor opined, after relating a working class donnybrook: "We shall certainly not commend fighting as an amusement, but that there are many persons so constituted that they had rather fight than engage in what is deemed unexceptionable behavior, we believe."  

The final aspect of textualization has to do with explicit content, and it is here that the normative and hortatory messages received their clearest expression. Of particular interest to the geographer is the newspaper's concern with the appearance of the village. In Brockport the newspaper led the campaigns to terminate traditional folk practices such as grazing animals in the village streets. It loudly deplored the customary dilapidation of the burying ground, and it succeeded in changing it into a cemetery in both name and appearance. It ridiculed folk house types, and functional dooryards, and championed everything.

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1) Mott, pp. 215-224.
2) Lowenthal, 1985, p. 165.
from street lamps to sidewalks, that would enhance the modern appearance of the village.

Problems for the Reproduction of the Past

Local news is a cultural product conceived at a particular time in response to particular circumstances. As a written text it did not simply represent the local reality; it also transformed that reality both as a mental concept and as a physical presence. As a written text it also survived, so that local news has become a rich deposit of local history. But experiencing the past through a reading of this text is thin and incomplete as an exercise in historical geographical sensibility if we fail to register the historical geographical processes that brought the text into being or the historical geographical processes brought into being by the text.
Chapter 9
Market Town to Factory Town

From the panic of 1837-42 to the panic of 1857-60 the history of Brockport is obscure. Few of the numerous short-lived newspapers have survived, and the rare correspondence of village residents is increasingly limited to personal concerns.¹ The population doubled, from 1249 in 1840 to 2143 in 1855, but neither the scope nor the scale of business was proportionately enlarged. In 1842 there were seventeen stores and groceries, a furnace, a carding machine and a chair and cabinet factory, all powered by steam. In 1860 there were perhaps twenty stores, over half of them groceries.² Only the industrial capacity showed significant growth.

Over the next fifteen years the village grew steadily, adding another one thousand souls to its roll of residents by the time of the next national depression in 1873. There were signs of economic recovery by 1859, but merchants encountered periodic "hard sledding" until 1861, when prices once again rose, and "an increased number of teams in the streets and farmers in the stores" were taken as encouraging "indications.

¹ The Brockport newspapers prior to the establishment of the Brockport Republic in 1857 were the Recorder (1828-30), the Free Press (1831-32), the Western Star (1832), the Morning Chronicle and Brockport Advertiser (1833), The Atlas (1835), the Watchman (1844-5), the Brockport Weekly Journal (1852), and the Brockport Gazette, 1853 (lasting 3 months.). This list appears in the B.R. 3:15, 1/7/61. There is also reference to one issue of the Truth Teller from 1836.
of a reliable character. Business not only revived, it increased rapidly, particularly after the war was underway. By 1862 the newspaper editor, Horatio Beech, could rejoice that "money is plenty."

Retail space that had stood empty was occupied, and the demand for new stores was unsatisfied by steady building. "Above," which is to say south of the newspaper office, which stood on land that was considered a foolhardy commercial location in 1853 "because it was so far up town," two neat brick stores replaced buildings of "a dilapidated and distasteful appearance."

Brockport continued to serve as the place where its rural hinterland met the larger world. It continued to collect and export agricultural products and to import and distribute manufactured goods. This role was, however, increasingly circumscribed by railroads, which partitioned its hinterland and conveyed its former customers to Rochester. Village merchants tried to arrest this loosening of the bond that had tied residents of the surrounding districts to Main Street, but they were themselves, to an unprecedented if still small degree, increasingly detached from the ecology and economy of the countryside. This is evident in their increased reliance on fuel and building materials drawn from distant sources and on the growing importance of the village's industrial workers as a retail market.


This shift is usually referred to as industrialization, but the term is descriptive rather than explanatory, and it can only be understood with reference to changes in the geographical context of the village. Ecologically and spatially it was no longer on the frontier of the world economy. With eighty percent of the surrounding woodlands cleared, very little virgin soil was available and the local supply of fuel and building material was in danger of exhaustion. Taken alone, this would have been disastrous for the local economy, since a falling quantity of exports would have needed to pay for an enlarged bundle of imports. The village escaped the consequences of this ecological bind due to changes in its spatial relations. Railroads permitted the creation of a new frontier in regions of the west that did not border the continent's natural and artificial waterways, and it was this new frontier, rather than the eastern cities and Europe, which provided Brockport with its new market. At some point around 1870, the canal boats that went west from the village loaded with reapers destined for rural customers became more important than the canal boats that went east loaded with foodstuffs destined for urban customers. This was a clear sign of the fundamental change in the location of Brockport within the spatial context of the world economy.

The Market Town

Brockport remained an important market town for farmers in western Monroe County, eastern Orleans County and parts of northern Genesee County. Its merchants were attuned to rural customers, anticipating their "splurge" for the village on Saturdays or during spells
of bad weather. Conforming to the farmers' schedule, clerks opened the stores at 6:00 A.M. In the immediate vicinity, the newspaper accurately averred in 1857, there was "a population of over 20,000 whose natural business center is Brockport." Although this number began slowly to decline after 1860, their patronage remained an important part of the village economy and the newspaper never tired of describing their convergence in lumber wagons, gigs, buggies, democrat wagons and coaches, "until the streets were literally crammed with people and their various conveyances." After a good Saturday the merchants counted their receipts, calculated their profits and on the following morning "passed to church... with a 'pile' of worldly wealth in their left pocket." To round out this happy image Beach claimed that "the contribution box when passed around was found to be about as full as our streets were on Saturday." "So much," he concluded, "for a good day's business."1

This rustic image obscures some of the real antagonism that divided farmers and merchants.2 Although the village was ostensibly a market containing several vendors who were competing for the farmer's trade, collusion between merchants was easy. This is evident in the collapse of the Brockport Exchange Bank in 1861. When the wheat prices dropped in 1857 a number of merchants defaulted on their loans. Secretly apprised of the difficulty the remaining merchants withdrew their funds, but the bank continued to circulate notes, and the merchants continued to honor

1) The quotes are drawn from B.R. 1:1, 10/17/56; 1:6, 11/21/56. The notice on the stores opening hours is in B.R. 4:50, 9/20/60.

these notes until the insolvency of the institution was made public. "The losses, by the bank failure, will fall chiefly on the farmers," the newspaper reported, as "but a trifling sum, comparatively, of the deposits in the bank belonged to the village merchants." The farmers were reimbursed at ten cents on the dollar.

The Failure of Urban Outreach

Village merchants were able to get away with this sort of high-handed chicanery as long as they monopolized access to markets, and this prompted various projects designed to reinforce the importance of Brockport's strategic position on the canal. From 1823 to 1825 the position of the village at the canal terminus was extremely advantageous since this made it the sole canal market for the entire region west of the Genesee River. After completion of the locks at Lockport in 1825 this advantage was drastically diminished, but Brockport continued to command the trade of an extensive southern hinterland. Through the 1830's farmers and teamsters hauled wheat up the Lake Road from as far away as Wyoming County. One teamster who conveyed flour from LeRoy remembered "taverns every mile or two" for the convenience of parched drivers. In 1834 the heavy traffic obliged the town of Sweden to reclaim the shoulder of the road, which had been "encroached upon by fences."  

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In 1831 village merchants launched a more ambitious plan to capture the southern market. A meeting was convened at the house of Dr. Ralph Gillet to "consider the expediency of petitioning the Legislature to grant an act for constructing a Rail Road from the Erie Canal at the village of Brockport, running through Batavia and Attica to Olean." A concurrent meeting was held in Batavia, and the aid of the village of Byron was solicited. When the citizens of Albion gave notice of their intention to submit a similar application to the Legislature, the Brockport interests were stimulated to formalize their initiative, and a committee of five prominent business men was appointed to draft the petition. The route they proposed passed south from Brockport through Byron, Batavia, Alexander and Attica, this being specified to solicit the support of these communities.1

This project sought to emphasize the canal as a trunk line by constructing railroad tributaries that paralleled the existing overland route. With its terminal on the Allegheny River the Brockport to Olean railroad would have permitted village merchants to act as wholesale distributors to the Ohio valley. Unfortunately Rochester interests were simultaneously bent on bold plans to capture the western market. Their railroad, completed to Batavia in 1837, and to Buffalo in 1844, put an end to the ambitious mercantile aspirations of Brockport and Albion.2 "So it seems," Hyatt wrote, "that Rochester is disposed, with one 'fell swoop' to nullify the Canal...that majestic [sic] improvement which has given to

1) B.F.P. 2:3, 10/19/31; 2:4, 10/26/31.
2) McKelvey, 1945, p. 207.
Rochester all the 'pomp and circumstance' of which she boasts. Despite these protests against the profligacy of destroying "a costly improvement before any benefit commensurate with the expenditure has been realized" both Brockport and Albion made unsuccessful attempts to organize companies to run railroads to Tonawanda.¹

A less ambitious project was undertaken in 1848, when Brockport succumbed to the epidemic of "plank road fever," and built a wooden causeway twelve miles north to the lake shore. The northern sections proved unprofitable and were soon abandoned, but the segment linking Brockport to the Ridge Road at Clarkson continued to operate until the planks rotted and the company was dissolved in 1868.²

A more abstract plan to modify geography in order to secure trade was engineered by the newspaper editor, Horatio Beach, in 1859, when he set out to create a new county with Brockport as its seat. The geographical framework for this new county was set the year before by another institution, also originated by Beach, the Brockport Union Agricultural Society. Like the county courthouse, the Society's fair promised to draw large crowds to the village and to establish patterns of interaction that would increase patronage of the village stores, not to mention the village newspaper.

The original B.U.A.S. survived for ten years, and then collapsed in the apathy that followed the Civil War. During these years it maintained a sizeable fairground beyond the railroad tracks south of town. His

9: Market Town in Factory Town

existence is remembered by Fair Street, the lane that led to the grounds. A grandstand overlooked a half mile track designed for horse races and mule trials. Domestic arts were displayed in the Floral Hall, a large wooden building, which served as the temporary barracks of the Brockport Company before their final muster in 1861. Fences, paddocks and sheds, all constructed for about one thousand dollars by village merchants, covered the fifteen acre site. The first fair was a resounding success, as evidenced by the gate receipts and the till of the storekeepers, and no one among the fifteen thousand who reportedly attended left with anything to regret (unless it was the young man of intemperate habits whose crossing of the adjacent railroad tracks coincided with the passing of a train). The next summer "people from all the country around were on hand in their best bib and tucker." Two years later, in the midst of war, the directors hesitated, questioning the propriety of public amusements during a time of tragedy and gloom, but a plebiscite dispelled their scruples and the fair commenced, trimmed to a single day in anticipation of the lost receipts of the enlisted men.1

The first notice of a desire to secede from Monroe county came in January of 1857, just after the presidential election in which Rochester's Democratic majority had so shocked Sweden Republicans, and within a month universal support was reported for "a new county with Brockport

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for its shire." The proposed county matched the district of the Agricultural Society, which was almost certainly conceived as a complementary scheme. Had the plan been enacted certain advantages would have accrued to the village. It would have become home to county employees; and farmers, who were periodically compelled to visit the courthouse to register deeds and serve on juries, would take the opportunity to secure provisions. This plan took advantage of a rural reaction to urban growth, which had caused an alarming shift in political power. For political and economic reasons Beach, a Republican, emphasized the disagreeable evils of the city and "the many schemes on the part of Rochesterians to build up and maintain their city at the expense of the County." Related movements were afoot in the rural townships of eastern and southern Monroe County. Although the plans eventually died, discussion sputtered for several years.

The Crippling Effect of the Railroad

The fair and the new county movement were undertaken as efforts to keep farmers from shopping in Rochester, a disloyalty to which they were increasingly prone as the importance of personal credit decreased and after the railroad had connected Brockport to its metropolitan neighbor. Railroads reduced the advantage of Brockport's position at the intersection of the Lake Road and the canal as they cut across its hinterland to the north and south. Produce that had converged on Brockport was increasingly diverted through alternate shipping points.

1) For the earliest references to the new county movement, see B.R. 1:4, 11/7/56; 1:15, 1/23/57; 1:20, 2/27/57.
Fig. 9.1. When the Tonawanda Railroad was constructed between Rochester and Batavia in 1837 it began to capture traffic that had moved north over roads to canal ports like Brockport and Albion. After 1844, when this was joined with lines that linked Buffalo and Albany, passenger traffic on the canal was curtailed. This competition stimulated capitalists in the canal villages to extend the old Lockport and Niagara Falls Railroad east to Rochester. The last major challenge to the old mercantile geography that had caused goods to assemble along the trunk line of the canal came in 1875, when the Lake Ontario Shore Railroad was constructed. Capitalists in the canal villages attempted to divert the line south so that farmers would continue to travel to their stores, but their efforts were unavailing and a new string of competitive marketplaces emerged to the north of the canal.
like Hamlin and Bergen. The railroad altered the retail function of the village as well, since it permitted the centralization of higher order goods and services in Rochester, and began to push village retailing down to a lower level in the central place hierarchy. One final effect of the railroad was to draw the village away from the canal. Hotels and, later, factories moved the half mile south to what had been the village outskirts, and ostentatious domestic architecture was arrayed along Lake Road from the business district to the depot. With its attendant hotels and saloons, the depot was a stimulating public place, a second oasis to rival, if not outshine, the business district. Heavy, dirty articles like lumber and coal still arrived over the canal docks, now a sort of back door or traderman’s entrance to the village, while visitors, news and mail entered and departed through the depot, which was the new front door.1

The Rochester, Lockport and Niagara Falls Railroad was incorporated in 1850, and the first train passed through Brockport on June 30, 1852.2 West of Lockport a twenty-three mile branch line, the Lockport and Niagara Falls Railroad, had been in existence, at least on paper, since 1834. Apparently in operation by 1838, this provided connections to Upper Canada and, like the Mohawk and Hudson at the Canal’s eastern terminus, circumvented the delays of lockage. A similar branch line, the Tonawanda Railroad, was built from Rochester to Batavia and its productive environs in 1837. By 1844 this had been linked to railroads that reached west to Buffalo and east to Albany.

2) B.R. 26:41, 7/6/82.
It was, presumably, a desire to connect with this newly forged concatenation of lines which prompted the directors of the Lockport and Niagara Falls Railroad to propose construction of the fifty-four mile extension to Rochester in 1844. Inadequate financing delayed initiation of these plans for six years, however, and it was only after reorganization that construction of the road was begun in 1850. Of the nine member board at least four were from Brockport, and E.B. Holmes served as a director until its incorporation into the New York Central System. Most of these board members were also involved in the Lockport and Buffalo Railroad, a twenty-five mile line with connections to a terminus on Lake Erie.\footnote{Frank Walker Stevens, The Beginnings of the New York Central Railroad, (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1926), pp. 230-237. B.R. 8/31/66; 149. 11/18/69.}

This was, obviously, detrimental to certain aspects of village retailing, although it was not without precedent. From its inception the village had been served by two or more packet boats with daily service to Rochester. The Jenny Lind, namesake of the beloved songstress, was the last of these, running "to Rochester in the morning and back at night" until the cars came and it was sold to a line not yet vitiated by railroad service. Unusual goods and services were purchased from Rochester emporia, but the trip by canal took two and a half hours each way, and the interval between the 11:30 arrival and the 3:30 departure was too hurried for unnecessary errands. By train the trip was accomplished in an hour, and six or seven trains made the trip daily.
With this and other lines enlarging its market area, Rochester's business grew. In 1860 two Rochester newspapers carried their first full-page adds, but it was lower prices rather than larger advertisements which lured villagers to city stores. In that anonymous market credit had been withdrawn, and its attendant expenses eliminated, while Brockport merchants continued to log arrears in their leather bound ledgers. The Brockport depot was the busiest on the Niagara Falls line. By 1870 one hundred tickets to Rochester were sold every day. “That’s what’s the matter,” the newspaper editor wrote in response to the queries of anxious shopkeepers. In 1873 more tickets were slipped through the window of the Brockport ticket office than in any located in a village of equivalent size, in America.

In addition to changes in retailing, the railroad changed the village landscape. This was most striking in the case of lodging facilities; since, with the exception of a short-lived steam-powered excursion boat, passengers gladly forsook canal boats in the 1850's. North of the canal bridge on Main Street the Eastern Hotel and the former Canal Pavilion, both artifacts of the packet boat trade, fell into decay. Although the Eastern Hotel was enlarged in 1857, for several years the location north of the canal had “not been deemed an eligible one for a hotel,” and in 1861 the old hotel, “a large three-story frame building,” burned under none too
mysterious circumstances. A cooper's shop was raised on its site. The old Canal Pavilion, operated by Cary and Brainard, had closed in 1858, when it became a bowling saloon. South of the canal the American Hotel continued to operate by running a free omnibus to the railroad station in 1856 and by offering to "convey citizens or strangers to Clarkson or any part of the county with dispatch." It also diversified its services, opening its top floor the Concert Hall, venue of edifying lectures, diverting amusements, charitable oyster suppers and bellicose political rallies. The American Hotel continued to provide lodgings for another hundred years, but it was proximity to Main Street rather than the canal which ensured its survival.1

A new cluster of at least four hotels emerged in the vicinity of the railroad depot. These "drummers hotels" were built to accommodate traveling salesmen, and they served as the staging point for new, more aggressive techniques of wholesale marketing. In the 1830's Brockport retailers went to New York City, purchased their goods from wholesalers, and brought them back by boat. By the 1870's the representatives of wholesalers were coming to the village.

The capacity and speed of freight transport had been increased with the use of steamboats, which became a common sight after 1859. The

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After 1850 the area around the depot began to assume many of the functions, and some of the character, of the canal docks. In a sense the depot became the front door of the village, while the docks became the back door through which heavy, dirty commodities like wood and iron entered. Lodgings were the first facilities to move from the docks to the depot since the railroad almost immediately captured the passenger trade. After 1850 the more ostentatious dwellings were built along Main Street between the business district and the depot, a significant shift from their old concentration on State Street and Erie Street. Presumably this represents their owner's efforts to maximize the audience for their architectural display of wealth. The depot area seems to have been a symbolic threshold, not wholly in or of the village. Frequenting by strangers, and occasionally the site of strange activities, it was clearly perceived as a distinct and special place in the landscape.
Rochester boat yards turned out some enormous craft, which approached a hundred feet in length, but with their deep drafts they were prone to ground on the irregular canal bottom, and their modest speed of eight miles per hour paled beside the thirty miles per hour clip of the railroad. When steam tug boats were employed they cut only two days from the ten day trip that horse drawn craft had made from Buffalo to Troy. The newspaper ridiculed these attempts to revive an obsolete technology, and by 1860 it was able to report that "probably nearly as large amount of merchandise is received and shipped by railroad as by canal."

Nevertheless, the canal continued to carry freight in significant quantities until at least 1882, when the State removed the tolls. When the lower Mississippi was closed by the Confederacy, through traffic from the midwestern states surged, and levels remained high for the remainder of the economic boom. But traffic was increasingly limited to the weightier exports, such as apples and mechanical harvesters, and bulkier imports, such as lumber, iron and coal. By 1869, the bulk of the beans and grain were moved by rail.

The canal side was increasingly devoted to lumberyards, coal yards and the industrial consumers of iron. Some of the old wheat warehouses were moved while others succumbed to gravity and collapsed. The larger


warehouses that took their place, like the three-story structure put up by Thomas Connes in 1860, included facilities for wheat, but they were also prepared to store and ship apples, beans and wool. In displacements that symbolized the essential changes in the village, Seymour and Morgan tore down the "old landmark" of the Walker Warehouse to enlarge their harvester factory, and the "agricultural buildings" of S. Goff were converted into a set of tenement dwellings.  

The last major blow that railroads inflicted on the village came with the construction of the Lake Ontario Shore Railroad in 1875. The road, which began at Oswego and boasted connections to Boston, reached the Genesee River in 1870. Alarmed by the prospect of losing their northern hinterland, the canal villages between Rochester and Buffalo sought to raise subscriptions sufficient to draw the line south. Anxious to prevent "a diversion of the northern trade to Rochester," Brockport merchants encouraged one another to offer the road an inducement greater than that offered by the farmers of Hamlin, and they sanguinely surveyed a route which passed through the village only a few rods north of the canal. Euphoric predictions, that "in less than ten years a village should be built up solid" between Brockport and Clarkson, mixed with "gloomy forebodings concerning the future welfare of Brockport." Ultimately outbid by their former customers, the village merchants grimly watched...
as the railroad was built some eight miles to the north. It reached Hamlin in 1875, and the some of the pessimistic predictions were vindicated.¹

Agricultural Change

From 1823, when the canal opened, until 1855, when the weevil or midge made its first local appearance, wheat was the crop "to which the farmers were giving their almost exclusive attention." "Western fever" had, of course, followed the blight, and the rural districts suffered slight depopulation, but most farmers stayed put and diversified. Summer fallow was discontinued in favor of fallow crops, such as beans and heavily manured corn, and mixed farming, dairy farming and grazing began slowly to displace wheat. After prices had recovered from the panic of 1857, and the practice of manuring had caused wheat yields to partially recouped, merchants were relieved to hear the threat of "going west" lapse from the everyday parlance of farmers.²

Wheat never returned to its former dominance, although winter wheat remained the most widely grown crop in Sweden, and throughout Monroe County, in 1865, when the loss of labor to the war effort had boosted prices to three dollars a bushel. The price abruptly declined from this pinnacle, and by 1879 the flood of western wheat had depressed the price to ninety cents a bushel, its price at the Brockport market fifty

Commodity Prices at the Brockport Market 1857-1873

Fig. 9.3. Graph A represents the price of wheat, barley, and oats at the Brockport market from 1856 to 1875. These high prices encouraged farmers to cut down their woodlots and convert to coal; they also made it advisable—not to mention possible—for farmers to abandon hand harvesting and purchase mechanical reapers. The farmer's life became more luxurious through this period, and it was the life-style of this boom which popular images of 19th century rural life largely recall. The downturn of prices in the early 1870's stimulated farmers to form the Sweden Grange. Graph B explains the transition from wheat to beans after 1885. Wheat prices were depressed by the flood of western wheat, much of it harvested by machines such as those produced in Brockport.
The village, which had forwarded 451,000 bushels in 1835, was shipping less than a tenth that quantity in 1871. The reduction of its hinterland explains part of this drop, but it is principally due to soil exhaustion and blight, which halved yields to seventeen bushels an acre (still double the national average), and to western competition. 1

Despite twenty years' decline in wool production for the state as a whole, Brockport continued to handle a substantial volume of the commodity until 1860, when well over 100,000 pounds were shipped by village merchants. Flocks had been driven west from farms in Vermont and the Hudson River valley since the 1840's, when the swelling volume of western wool began to depress prices and enhance the relative profitability of devoting those pastures to dairy cattle. In the vicinity of Brockport, and throughout the Genesee Valley, sheep husbandry persisted as a complement to wheat. In fact, flocks were enlarged as the problem of soil exhaustion grew more acute, and the service of sheep in reducing stable and straw stacks to manure was additionally valued. Despite the temporary loss of southern fibers during the Civil War, wool production seems to have declined through the decade of the 1860's, although available figures do not allow responsible speculation as to the magnitude of this drop. 2

The war necessitated numerous other changes in local agriculture. With the loss of southern suppliers the price of subtropical commodities

1) The figure for 1835 is cited in Hale, p.8. The figure for 1871 is given in B.R. 15:49, 8/1/71; 15:50, 9/7/71; 16:4, 10/19/71.
Tobacco was widely sown, particularly in Clarkson where the lake delayed frosts. When the supply of preferred Virginia leaf was restored in 1867 it abruptly disappeared. Flax rose in price as the supply of cotton dwindled, and by 1863 local production was sufficient to warrant erection of a flax mill in Brockport (whether the product was oil or fiber we can not be sure). It too does not appear to have outlasted the war.1

Temporary changes were the result of the loss, itself temporary, of southern commodities; permanent changes were hastened by the loss, also temporary, of northern labor. By the spring of 1862 it was noted that "farm labor is a little scarce on account of the large number of persons drawn away by the war." When hops were harvested that September, deficiencies in the quantity of available young men were filled by female proxies. This shortage and the consequent high cost of harvest labor, dramatically boosted the sale of reapers, produced in Brockport since 1848. In the countryside it appears to have had an effect that is seldom recognized.2

Until 1861, wood was the common fuel. By that time much of it was supplied by farms that lay some seven or eight miles to the north, in Hamlin, near the lake, where settlement had been retarded by exceptionally heavy timber and a high incidence of malaria. Suddenly, in the summer of 1861, with their workers gone to war, these suppliers failed. In the village the steam engine of the sash and blind works, and

1) Tobacco production increased immediately, although it must have failed to meet the demand as the price continued to rise. See B.R. 5:48, 9/5/61; 7:22, 3/5/63; 8:41, 7/14/64; 12:3, 10/17/67. On the flax crop and the flax mill, see B.R. 7:20, 2/19/63; 7:24, 3/19/63.

that of the pump factory, were idled for want of fuel. With the greatest possible celerity their owners adapted the fireboxes to the combustion of coal. The newspaper editor predicted that "the prospective scarcity of burning wood will induce many persons to go to burning coal next winter." Apparently it did, since coal was by the following October reported as very expensive.

The high cost of fuel restored the profit margin to the employment of woodsmen, even at wartime wages, and firewood was once again available, but the price continued to rise. A face cord, which had cost fifty cents in 1829, and three dollars in 1860, cost five dollars in 1865 and six dollars in 1870. At this price the villagers found it economical to warm the village hall with fragments of the benches with which it had been furnished. Alarmed by the sudden increase in the price of firewood, the village trustees attempted to appoint an inspector of wood, with power to fix the price and control the quality of wood delivered to the village. They were swiftly admonished that interference in the market lay beyond the powers granted by the charter. In 1864, a Rochester company organized to supply poorer customers with peat, mined at Pine Hill in Orleans county, and possibly elsewhere. The business does not seem to have flourished, however, as it was in the "old peat house" near the harvester works on Clark street that Charles McKinley raped a girl, age eleven, in 1872.

Over the same period the price of coal also rose, from five to seven dollars a ton. Since the heat of a cord of wood (4'X4'X8') roughly equals that of a ton of coal (6.5 million kilogram calories), and the price of a face cord (2'X4'X8') matched that of a ton of coal, the cost of heating by wood was approximately double that of heating by coal. When the price of coal began to decline after 1870, its economy was further enhanced.

The railroad continued to burn wood cut in the Tonawanda Swamp until 1869, but farmers and villagers converted to coal. As a consequence woodlots became dispensable. In 1868 the newspaper reported that "many of the farmers believe that it is more profitable to clear all the timber off their land and cultivate it, and then buy coal for fuel, than it is to keep timber land for that purpose. The increased coal consumption by farmers is very great." With this last round of clearing the supply of saw logs to the village increased. Subjected to the incisions of lathes and carving machines now powered by coal, these became the cornices, gewgaws, and picket fences of the beautification movement. By 1871, the newspaper wryly noted, "many more loads of coal have this fall been carried out into the country than there have been loads of wood brought into the village. Surely times have changed." Perhaps as the consequence of clearing efforts gone awry, numerous local forest fires, coevals of those at Chicago and Peshtigo, deforested several hundred acres in the immediate vicinity.

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1) This calculation is based on figures in Hans Thirring, Energy for Man: Windmills to Nuclear Power. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958, p. 26. This was the conventional wisdom among New York farmers. See Van Wagenen, p. 160.
in the summer of 1871. An additional possible consequence of deforestation was the increase in the number of wells reported as going dry in late summer.1

Predictably, the introduction of coal, the high price of wheat, and later of beans, and the increased productivity of mechanized farmers, all combined to encourage destruction of the woodlots. The timing of the conversion was propitious, and the circumstances were happier than they might have been, since local consumption of firewood had, since 1850 or so, exceeded the sustainable yields of local woodlands. If it had not been for the import of coal, local energy supplies would have been exhausted well before the end of the century.2

Inexpensive coal made it possible to enlarge farm houses without sacrificing comfort. Rural depopulation, farm consolidation, an expansion onto the virgin soil of the removed woodlots and high commodity prices gave the most successful farmers the means to undertake these domestic improvements. Driving north from Brockport

2) By 1877, Brockport imported seven thousand tons of coal for domestic use alone. B.R. 21:27; 3/29/77. This probably includes coal eventually exported to the rural population in Clarkson and Sweden. This puts consumption at about one ton per capita. Assuming sustainable yields of one ton of wood per acre, which is typical for unmanaged woodlots, one and one half acres of woodland per capita (10,000 acres, or 25% of the land in these towns) would be necessary to maintain this level of energy consumption. The towns were 2,576 acres short in 1865, and the difference was met by wood cut in Hamlin, which had a low population, and generated a surplus. For the local area consumption of firewood exceeded replacement by something on the order of one hundred acres a year, without including industrial consumption.
in 1869, the newspaper editor approvingly noted, "new houses and barns have been erected in the modern style, and old ones have been remodeled and fitted up as good as new. Old fences have given way to new, and a liberal application of paint to buildings and fences have vastly changed and improved them." As a further benefit of this affluence, farmers were apparently buying more, as signs painted on farmyard fences had "become an established way of advertising business." In Brockport two "fence artists" made their living at this trade.1

As the farmers prospered, their lives grew easier. The newspaper editor wrote that "those whose experience in agriculture ceased twenty or twenty-five years ago, by going out among the farmers now while they are in the midst of their harvests, will be struck by the evidence of how much more they are able to accomplish now than then." "It is not necessary," he continued, "that farmers and their families should labor as hard as they did years ago, and as a rule they do not." It was a sign of changing times to see a farmer riding the harrow, rather than, as of old, sparing the horse and "footing it." The uncomfortable chore of bean pulling was relegated to German immigrants or temporary labor secured in Rochester until a machine was contrived in 1874. The tedious chore of bean sorting became a charity for the village poor.2 Work bees, in which recreation and productivity had mingled, grew less common, and an evening of unmitigated pleasure, with croquet and possibly supper on the

recently tidied lawn, became the "new social entertainment" among the people of Sweden. Indeed, croquet enjoyed instant eclat, as its frequent depiction in the commissioned farmstead portraits of county histories attests. It was "nearly as healthful an exercise," the newspaper somewhat sarcastically reported, "as sawing wood or mopping floors," and there was no question but that it was "much more fashionable." 1

It was this rural landscape, rid of reminders of destitution and squalor, which stood behind the images popularized by the county histories. It was this landscape that provided the visual metaphor for the farmer and his farm as a moral unit. 2 Unfortunately the price of crops began to slide in 1873, and by 1874 the farmers of Sweden were sufficiently nervous to form a Grange. Addressing this body three years later the owner of the town’s largest farm, F.P. Root, attributed their worsening condition to the weak European market and the expense of their greatly elaborated tools. With frequent quotes from Benjamin Franklin, Root urged a return to frugality. Farmers might "be obliged to return to old time economy," he said, "and dispense with their luxuries." 3

Factory Town

In the 1830's old Pat Draper was a common sight on the streets of the village. His occupation, wood sawyer, was announced by the buck saw on his shoulder and the permanent stoop of his back. This was so

1) On croquet, see B.R. 14:47., 8/18/70.
The text of Root's address appears in B.R. 21:19, 2/1/77.
pronounced that he could not raise his face when he answered the village boys, who, having been assigned the same task, inquired as to the mean of sawing with the greatest ease and efficiency. After explaining the
purpose of oil and file the old Pat would conclude, to the disappointment of his
audience, that "hard work is not easily done."¹

Thirty years later, standing in Luther Gordon's planing mill, a
large three story building east of the village, the newspaper editor
remarked "there are in this room several ingenious machines driven by
steam and all of them leaving apparently but little manual labor to be
done." That same year, John Smith began to build his furniture factory
north of the canal. This was to be powered by a water turbine turned by
canal overspill in the summer, and by a steam engine in the winter.
Looking at its jig saws, rip saws, buzz saws, circular saws, sanding
machines, planing machines, lathes, drills and jointing machines, the
newspaper editor remarked, "very much is accomplished by fewer
laborers, and generally the work is a little better done."²

Searching for the key to the American people's "tendency toward
progress, and their disinclination to routine," a Spanish visitor to western
New York marveled at the number of "very simple mechanisms" which
they had devised to save labor. The farmer, he concluded, did not work
stupidly, but "thinks and contrives" as he plows and cultivates.³

Brockport parrot in this pervasive penchant for mechanical

²) For the description of the planing mill, see B.R. 7:43, 7/3/63. On John
Smith's furniture factory, see B.R. 7:39, 7/2/63: 8/31, 5/3/64; 8:4; 7/14/64;
contraptions. From the fantast cobbler Burroughs, who for years
struggled with the problem of perpetual motion, to A.W. Cary, whose
award-winning rotary pump sluiced away hillsides in the mining districts
of Michigan and California, the village was populated with thinkers and
contrivers.1

The Harvester Works

Agricultural implement manufacturing came to dominate the
village economy between 1850 and 1882. The laborers gathered by these
factories, whose numbers rose from 113 in 1855 to 691 in 1875, constituted
a new clientele for village merchants. Although a "great many" of them
were foreign, and some portion was dissipated, they were welcomed for
the ten thousand dollar monthly payroll which was theirs to disburse to
village merchants. In an attempt to console those who looked on these
strangers with suspicion, the newspaper editor wrote, "every additional
manufactory, every additional shop that increases the industrial pursuit,
increases the business of merchants and must inevitably enhance the
value of landed property."2

Although this sort of growth is generally referred to as
industrialization, it was part of a larger trend toward specialization and
the enjoyment of economies of scale which effected a simultaneous
deindustrialization. In 1873, for example, an older resident noted that in

the village as a tavern keeper in 1832, also enjoyed notable success
2) B.R. 1:35, 6/12/57.
Fig 9.4. The Harvester Works of Seymour and Morgan occupied a part of the old canal docks east of Main Street. Although some merchants continued to ship on the canal, more turned to the railroad. The warehouse of A.B. Raymond and Sons can be seen behind the stores that front Main Street. The manufacturers imported iron, coal and wood on the canal, and they shipped their product in canal boats. Many of the unskilled workers lived in shacks and shanties across the canal from the Harvester Works. The larger Johnson Harvester Company lay just out of this picture to the lower right hand side.
1826, when the village had three hundred residents, or one tenth of its present population, there were three times as many journeymen, tailors, shoe makers, hat makers and other artisans. In 1855, fifty-three women and fourteen men, with respective monthly wages of ten and twenty-five dollars, sewed coats, vests and pantaloons for four merchant tailoring firms. Four boot and shoe manufacturers employed twenty-two men and five women. Their respective wages: thirty and six dollars a month. The local demand for hats and caps was satisfied by two workers, one man and one woman, who earned for their labors twenty-five and fourteen dollars respectively. If we add the carriage makers, tanners, sash and shingle makers, harness makers, blacksmiths, tinsmiths, and marble workers we find that the total employment in manufacturing outside of agricultural machinery was 102 men and 53 women. The combined figure of 155 exceeds the number at the agricultural implement factories. Their gross production, figured in dollars, was only slightly below that of the larger factories. Most of this disappeared over the course of the next three decades.1

The first "real" factory in Brockport, which is to say the first enterprise to hire laborers in significant numbers, was Silas Hardy's carriage shop, located on Main Street, and opened in 1822. In addition to supplying local farmers with the means to convey their produce to the village, this maintained the vehicles that carried the through traffic to

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1 The figures on laborers are taken from the State Census of 1855 and the B.R. 18:33, 10/11/74; 19:49, 9/2/75. They include only the employees of the three agricultural implement manufacturers. The estimated payroll is taken from the B.R. 17:36, 6/26/73. The notice of the decline in artisans appears in B.R. 17:47, 9/11/73.
Tonawanda Creek until the locks were completed at Lockport in 1825. The shops, located on the Lake Road some distance uptown from the business district, were purchased by John Smith in 1839, and converted into the furniture factory. 1

The second, and ultimately more significant, industry produced agricultural implements. First among these was the forge of Backus and Ganson, first located south of Hardy's carriage shop, but moved two years later to a site twenty-five rods north of the canal on Brockport Creek, which provided "water power for turning their machinery." The men were jobbers, turning wood and metal to order; blacksmiths, producing general hardware; and periodic manufacturers, turning out a handful of stationary threshing machines in the summer months. Having sold fifty machines in 1831, they had seventy machines on hand in 1832, which they proposed to sell for from twenty to fifty dollars apiece. 2 At least three threshing machine companies were coeval in the village, but the competitors to what was now called Balch, Webster and Co., were ephemeral operations. 3

The partnership that owned this oversized blacksmith shop, like those that owned the mercantile houses, passed through various permutations, with various partners buying and selling shares of the capital; and it would have maintained its unspectacular career had it not

1) Hastings, p. 42; Martin, 45-6.
2) B.F.P., 2:39, 6/21/32.
3) Cephas Bartlestone and E.H. Graves announced the dissolution of their threshing machine business in March 20, 1832. At about the same time, Cross and Steward advertised for ten good men to work in their threshing machine factory, 1 mile south of the village. B.F.P., 2:25, 3/21/32.
been for a singular event. In 1844 it contracted to build the reaper that Cyrus McCormick had patented ten years earlier. Unfortunately, the foundry was unequal to the fabrication, and unsatisfied customers returned most of the machines. In 1846 the village merchants, William Seymour and Thomas Roby, established the Globe Iron Works, which, in addition to manufacturing stoves, succeeded in producing one hundred of McCormick's machines. These were the first reapers to be mass produced in the United States.

With the death of McCormick's father in 1846, the inventor acquired the capital which he had until that point lacked, and with these funds in hand he was able to combine with Chicago capitalists and begin production in that city in 1850. He left his plans, which were far from perfected, with the Globe Iron Works with the understanding that for every machine they produced McCormick would receive a patent fee of thirty dollars, slightly less than half of the realized profit. Minor modifications, drafted by George Barnett, a former employee of McCormick who now served as superintendent of the Globe Iron Works, sought to evade the patent; but McCormick brought suit against the Brockport manufacturers in 1850, citing their derivation from the original design. The lower courts awarded damages to McCormick, but the decision was not upheld by the Supreme Court, which tried the case in 1853.1

The fine was hardly a deterrent since it reduced by only twenty per cent profits that were running to two hundred per cent of the capital investment. Although the older furnace, now owned by Ganson and Huntley, was larger, the inferiority of its reaper and its diversification into less profitable lines of production limited annual profits to just less than equal the capital investment. Manufacturers of ordinary objects, like Chappell, Whiteside and Barnett, which spun off from Seymour and Morgan in 1830 to make a variety of simple agricultural tools, or Isaac Barnes, the carriage maker who filled the vacancy left by Silas Hardy, operated with profits in the relatively modest range of twenty-five per cent.\footnote{New York State Census, 1855. The capital investment in these industries is, of course, an approximation. It is computed by adding the cost of the real estate to the cost of the equipment and the annual operating costs. This figure falls slightly short of the estimate that appears in the B. R. v:13, 1/9/57, but this may very well represent growth.}

The reaper manufactory of Seymour, Morgan and Allen was located on the canal to facilitate the direct off loading of coal, iron and lumber, and the convenient shipment of the finished machines to points as distant as California and South America. With a capital of just less than fifty thousand dollars, the works employed seventy workers, and produced six hundred reapers in 1856. The entire operation was rationalized, with a casting room, machine shop and wood department set in an orderly arrangement around the central engine room. Unlike the village, the factory had purchased one of Mr Cary's superior pumps and attached it to...
their sizeable steam engine. Two hundred feet of serviceable hose brought the output of this combination to any point in the factory.\textsuperscript{1}

Ganson and Huntly's mowing machine company was located in a two story stone building north of the canal on Brockport Creek. Seventy-five employees, retained for ten months of the year, produced annually five hundred reaping machines and three hundred mowing attachments for Aaron Palmer, whose patented reaper was also produced in Illinois and Canada. It was a point worthy of comment that all the departments were "systematically arranged;" this presaging of later organization of the automobile industry reinforced by the four acres of finished machines "on the circus lot."\textsuperscript{2}

With the improved economy of 1860, sales of Brockport machinery in western states rose, and the rate of payment improved. In 1861 production was reported as three times the level of three years previous. Both firms enjoyed substantially increased sales during the war due to the labor shortages in western states that resulted from mass enlistment. The news from the front was grim, but, the newspaper reported, "all our village manufacturing establishments are doing a brisk business." By 1863 output had risen to one thousand reapers annually, and the demand for labor was strong. In 1864, Seymour and Morgan manufactured fifteen hundred reapers, and to the west, the editor of the Lockport Bee "noticed the decks of several boats to be covered with the separated parts of  

\textsuperscript{1} B.R. 1:13, 12/15/57  
\textsuperscript{2} B.R. 1:30, 4/8/57
reaping machines... manufactured at Brockport.” For the first time the factories continued to produce through the summer months.1

Demand was not abated by the armistice. In 1866 the editor wrote, “the manufacturers are all busy, which makes money plenty with mechanics and laboring men generally.” The working day was lengthened to thirteen hours, and in 1875 a night shift was introduced. The scale of manufacturing was enlarged in 1868 when Samuel Johnson, formerly of Syracuse, purchased the plant of Ganson and Huntley, and relocated his business in Brockport “because it is an excellent spot to conduct their business under a moderate expense.” Johnson enlarged the old plant, and after 1876 an increasing portion of his output was sold in Europe. In 1872 one hundred machines were sent to the wheat frontier of Russia, with twelve of these machines, destined for the estate of the Czar, adapted to be drawn by camels. By 1877 the Johnson Harvester Company was producing four thousand machines annually, while the Morgan Harvester Company maintained its output at fifteen hundred machines a year.2

Class awareness

Between 1860 and 1870 the population of Brockport rose from about 2,000 to 2,829. This augmentation was almost entirely attributable to the expansion of manufacturing. Many laborers were drawn from the

adjacent farming district, where machines had made them dispensable. Others were drawn from Europe, most notably from Ireland and Germany. In 1867 Beach noted the “unusually large number of persons from abroad... seeking to establish homes here.” The village’s small population of blacks was augmented with new arrivals from the south. Ethnic diversity was new to the village and assimilation was slow. The newcomers were segregated into poor neighborhoods, and the Irish and Germans were insulat

ded in their own churches. Blacks suffered harassment from those with whom they were in competition for jobs. “It is alleged by some of our colored citizens,” the editor wrote in 1870, “that they can not walk the streets without being insulted because of their race and color.” Although he censured their antagonists he was some months later sadly obliged to record “a disturbance in the east part of the village north of the canal between black folks and white folks, in which blows were given and returned.”

At the same time that the ethnic complexion of the village was diversifying, the income of its residents was growing increasingly disparate. E.B. Holmes, Brockway’s son-in-law, who made his money in canal boats and real estate during the forties and fifties, died in 1866 leaving an estate of $325,000, the largest to be probated in the vicinity up to that time. In that same year the annual income of D.S. Morgan was

1) At least one Black family is said to have arrived from the South "in a dilapidated four wheeled conveyance drawn by an aged looking pony,” B.R. 21:51, 9/6/77.
3) Holmes obituary appeared in the B.R. 7/31/66. His will is in the Holmes papers.
$25,445, and in the succeeding year it was $34,436. Morgan was the wealthiest man in the village, but his partner, William Seymour, enjoyed an equally sudden prosperity, his income climbing from $9,096 in 1866 to $18,049 in 1867. George Allen, another industrialist, was the only other member of this rare stratum. Well below this sphere were the village lawyers, dry goods merchants and bankers, whose incomes of two or three thousand dollars a year were roughly equivalent to those of the most prosperous farmers.1

Needless to say, laborers did not enjoy equivalent benefits. In the 1830's they had earned between sixty-two and seventy-five cents a day. By the 1870's their wages ranged between one dollar and one dollar and fifty cents for an thirteen hour day. In other words, the earnings of a factory worker were just less than one percent of Morgan's annual income. The only objections that seem to have been raised came during the panic of 1873, when wages at the harvester works were reduced by twenty-five percent. Two employees, distressed by the cut, drew a pistol on their manager. Only the employees were fired.2

Some misgiving accompanied this increase in financial disparity. It was remembered, not altogether accurately, that in the past "society was open to all who conducted themselves with propriety; there was no class society, no aristocracy, for all were equally respected who were equally worthy." The newspaper editor found reason to ask whether prosperity had "erected barriers against the familiar social intercourse..."
which begot and maintained a spirit of kindness and friendship in all neighborhoods. In fact, envy, avarice and "a growing distaste for manual labor" were taken to explain why there were, "about five hundred per cent more professional men than there should be for the good of our country." And the temptation of speedy affluence explained why "quiet citizens must lock and bolt their doors at night to secure themselves and their property against the ravages of these men too lazy to work."  

The manuscript census lists eighty-four self described laborers in the village in 1865. Predictably, nearly two thirds of them were Irish, and all but a handful of the remaining Irish held menial jobs, but the remainder were a heterogeneous lot. Blumin has questioned whether villages like Brockport contained an emerging middle class, which followed the pattern of their urban counterparts, and grew in self-awareness by seeing workers as a different type of person, with peculiar inclinations. The question is difficult to answer, since the conspicuous preponderance of the Irish probably furnished prejudice with a ready-made category. Even this is difficult to discern in a newspaper which could not afford to offend its Irish readers. Differentiation does however appear in the treatment, in the absence of shock, for example, when a drunken Irishman drowns in the canal or is embroiled in a fight. It was also found necessary to place these characters, to enlarge upon their names with added information: their occupation, neighborhood or native land. This suggests a degree of anonymity, but it also served to explain

Fig. 9.5. By 1858 hotels had begun to cluster around the depot (a), and the hotels on the canal (b) were falling into decay. Hunley and Bowman's harvester factory (c) had initially located on Brockport Creek to take advantage of water power. The Globe Iron Works, which became Seymour and Morgan (d) was established after steam power was common, and it therefore located on the canal. Both firms employed laborers who lived in new neighborhoods at the edge of the village. A sizeable number of these houses were shacks valued at less than 300 dollars. Many of their occupants were Irish, and they were particularly concentrated in the area around North Street (e), Clark Street (f) and Liberty Street (g). Workers were also housed in developments like Carpenterville (h), Berry Street (i) and along the canal.
and contain the event. "We shall certainly not commend fighting as an amusement," the editor wrote, "but that there are many persons so constituted that they had rather fight than engage in what is deemed unexceptionable behavior, we believe." 1

The newspaper made a small trade out of noting amateur fights, and the shock of reading about them was apparently pleasurable enough to grow quite popular; but the newspaper was always careful to in some way disown the miscreants, to note that they were from Rochester, or canal men, or laborers. They in no way resembled its subscribers! Whatever effect the newspaper treatments may have had, they were paralleled in the landscape.

The first published map of Brockport appeared in 1852 as an inset to P.J. Browne’s "Map of Monroe County." 2 An enlarged and updated version again appeared as an inset when a new edition of the Browne map was released in 1858. 3 The first published map solely devoted to Brockport was the George Stevens map, published in 1861. 4 Each of these maps was clearly a part of the county landownership map vogue that flourished between 1850 and 1876. The Stevens map is in fact a landownership map executed at an unusually large scale. But, neither practical necessity, or the new lithograph technology, entirely explain the appearance of these maps. The plan of Brockport was, after all, hardly bewildering in its complexity, and for strangers who

3) P.J. Browne, "Map of Monroe County," (Philadelphia: Gillett[c], Stone, et. al., 1858).
wished to locate a particular residence, the village directories, available after 1864, were more comprehensive and accurate as a guide. Conzen begins to suggest a closer reading of such maps, and the county atlases by which they were followed, when he describes them as "mass marketed novelty items purveying personal symbols of pioneer pride in agrarian progress and individual achievement." But the symbolism of such maps can be further analyzed.

From the perspective of iconology, or the symbolic dimension of the act of sending or receiving a message, the maps were commemorative. They announced that, in the minds of at least some residents, the village had become the sort of place that deserved cartographic representation. At the same time that, traditionally anonymous individuals were laying claim to the right to crude portraits and standardized biographies, geographical collectives like counties, towns, and villages insisted on the fitness of their verbal and visual representation in printed histories, maps and birds-eye views. It is difficult to establish the identity of the residents whose subscriptions supported the symbolic act of representing the village on a map, but the case of Brockport provides one possible clue. The single surviving copy of the Stevens map, which hangs in the village museum, is on loan from a descendant of F.P. Root, the town's largest landowner at the time of the map's publication.

These maps represent, and they no doubt encouraged, a popularization of carto-literacy, a peculiar style of thinking about space, at the local or topographical scale. Earlier published maps were for the most part small-scale state maps, and they were evidently intended to depict the relative location of

2) Harley, p. 279.
3) Harley, p. 278.
places, or to serve as aids to route finding. Even here it seems that their use was not widespread, since scant mention of map consultation is found in the published journals of the literate travelers. Unfamiliar territory was more often comprehended through periodic verbal exchanges with natives. At the local scale the habit of thinking about space in cartographic terms seems to have been restricted to surveyors and speculators. In the Sweden Town Book the various landmarks were depicted, but the road network and the school districts were represented in verbal descriptions.

Harley argues that, despite the "cultural mythology" that they represent facts without favor, maps bear a hidden political message in their silences and omissions. Thus, the significance of their appearance may exceed their utility as a welcome scholarly aid. Although there are no unreasonable effacements on the Brockport maps, it is clear that their cartographic accuracy obscures a deeper distortion in their representation of the community. As maps, they represent adjacent spaces as connected places, and they depict boundaries as joints or seams in the fabric of the landscape. On the map, propinquity becomes a metaphor for neighborliness, while distance becomes a metaphor for difference. Distributions in physical space are represented as distributions in social space, whatever the actual situation on the ground.

It is possible, therefore, to read maps as distortions of the functioning units of society (whose members were, by 1870, only sometimes in propinquity), and as representations that obliterate the true geography of social distance. The coincidence of their

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9: Market Town to Factory Town

The greatest popularity and the period in which Bender has discovered a bifurcation of locality and community is, therefore, significant.1 Viewed obliquely through the representation of a map, places displayed an order and a unity that was increasingly belied by events on the ground. This depiction did not, however, arrest the social change. Indeed, in the argument of Sharpe and Wallock, such spatial (diagrammatic) images ultimately contributed to the overthrow of the organic concept of the community that I have claimed they were intended to perpetuate, since they changed the image of the village from that of a viable population to that of a field open to individual action.2

Housing for Workers

In 1856 a dozen dwellings were raised, but double the number, "of a class to rent from one hundred to one hundred and fifty dollars a year," were desired. In 1857 houses with annual rents of seventy five to one hundred and twenty five dollars were in "great demand," and by 1859, much to the benefit of those who took in boarders, the housing deficit had climbed to fifty houses. With the doubling of factory output in 1863, laborers multiplied, and "despite the building of new houses," Beach wrote, "every dwelling is occupied." The increase of manufacturing in this village has drawn here a great many persons, all of whom must of

1) Bender, p. 108.
necessity live somewhere. And, although many dwelling houses have been recently erected, the present supply is inadequate to the demand. ¹

Exercising his usual prejudice against folk forms, Beach pleaded "don't build another story and a half house...as we have in our village at the present time just enough of that style of dwellings." The house that would suit his taste was of two stories, set two rods back from, rather than directly on, the road, with a front yard and a porch. Various vernacular solutions to the housing shortage were attempted. Dislocated farm laborers sometimes brought their simple dwellings with them from the countryside. At least one destitute family inhabited a disused canal boat. The most innovative and amusing of these solutions may have been the "mud castle," a sort of rammed earth structure erected by George Brooks near the new gas works on the western fringe of the village. The walls of this house, made of earth bound with lime, were impressively impervious to drafts and noise. They proved less resistant to rain, however, and Brooks was not emulate.²

References to ordinary domestic arrangements are sparse, and conclusions must be to some extent inferential. Initially many of the factory workers were housed in shacks. Some of these were made of boards, some were framed. Their assessed value was between two and four

hundred dollars, and they were frequently inhabited by Irish families of five to eight members. Beach printed a rather cheery description of these industrial shanty towns in 1859.

It is a pleasure to chronicle the marks of sobriety, thrift and prosperity that characterize a majority of the adopted citizens resident in this village and immediate vicinity. Up beyond the railroad, down over the canal and on the outskirts of the corporation, many of them have purchased small plots of ground and erected theron commodious dwellings. Many of these dwellings are erected in good taste, and being surrounded by well cultivated gardens, present a cheerful and pleasant appearance. In many instances their little homes are entirely paid for, in many others nearly so. It illustrates how, by industry, sobriety and frugality, the weary sons of toil may surround themselves and families by the comforts if not the luxuries, of life. It should prove an incentive to others of the class named, who dishonor by their dissolute habits, and abject poverty both the countries of their birth and adoption.

For many workers these accommodations were temporary, and the thrift and perseverance of a significant number was demonstrated by the erection, in the 1870's and 1880's, of a series of plain, but markedly superior neighborhoods.

Luther Gordon arrived in Brockport from Rushford in Allegany County in 1858, and established a large lumber yard and planing mill on the side of the canal at the eastern edge of the village. He drew his supplies from Allegany County and property near Saginaw, Michigan. He moved the lumber from Allegany County down the Genesee Valley Canal, a feeder which joined the Erie in Rochester, and in order to facilitate this movement he revived the boat building trade in the village. In 1864 he

purchased a sizeable parcel of land adjacent to his lumber yard from Roswell Smith, another lumber merchant, who had begun development of Spring Street. Here he laid out Gordon Street, the first subdivision in the village.¹

¹ Horatio Beach, who established the village's first real estate agency, opened his own development in 1867. He pushed Eric Street beyond Perry Street and, like Gordon, opened a street which bore his own name. Not being a lumber merchant, he did not offer to undertake construction, but he did sell lots for two hundred dollars apiece. He claimed that this purchase reflected his confidence in the State Normal School, created out of the old Collegiate Institute in 1867. Similar expectations of profits from Normal School employees and student boarders prompted the opening of Union Avenue (now Kenyon Street) in 1869. In 1872 the newspaper editor sold a lot on Beach Street to Lucius T. Underhill, a lumberman with a yard and a sash and blind factory on the canal in the village's western section. Underhill opened Eric Street to its present terminus and undertook construction of several houses.²


In 1872, the manufacturer George Allen moved to Kansas. He sold his share of the old Globe Iron Works to his partner Dayton Morgan, and he sold his fine State Street mansion (later demolished) to his competitor Samuel Johnson. Unfortunately for Allen, his arrival in the west coincided with the onset of the panic of 1873, and he was obliged to return to Brockport with his resources somewhat diminished. As a part of this liquidation of his property, Allen sold building lots on Allen Street, just over the village's southern corporate line. Across the Lake Road, now being built up as South Main Street, Humphrey Palmer, who had leased the land to the B.U.A.S., was developing Fair Street and South Avenue. 1

Extensive use has been made of the reminiscences of Elisha Carpenter. It was his father, Cyril, who undertook development of more modest housing stock on land north of the canal beside the village cow pasture (see chapter 10). Describing this development, known as Carpenterville, the newspaper editor wrote, "the settlement is not aristocratic, its residents representing all nations and colors." Carpenterville has not survived, but a good example of the limited means of these residents north of the canal can be seen on Barry and Slaughter Streets, presented to the village in 1868. The open land between Carpenterville and Slaughter Street, long known as the Circus Lot, and long serving as the village cow pasture, was divided into building lots by its owner, Edgar Holmes, after he lost his fortune in the Chicago fire. Most

of the houses built in this vicinity were small, and the neighborhood was recognized as poor. By popular reputation its school was "the most ungovernable in Brockport," with 114 students who were "naturally wild, disorderly and uncontrollable." This concentration of the poorest workers persisted for some time. In the 1920's an old resident of the village remembered that, unlike the rest of the village, the election district north of the canal always went Democrat.1

This uncoordinated and somewhat haphazard development that grew up around Brockway's original street plan has left a legacy of chronic traffic problems in the village. The rate of village growth, and the level of capital investment, did not warrant the development of large tracts or the platting of orderly grids. Bombastic boosterism may have been written in the newspaper, but the timid projections of the residential developers has written a clearer message of doubt in the landscape.

Conclusion

The industrialization of Brockport brought subtle changes to the tempo and the tone of village life. The wrenching and sometimes violent changes common to larger cities were absent, but experience was being

nonetheless reordered as new patterns were stamped into the fabric of everyday life. The industrial village ordered its time differently. The annual cycle was increasingly detached from the agricultural calendar. During harvest time, the editor had reported, "our streets, at mid-day, wear a Sabbath appearance." When day labor was farm labor, winter was "that time of year when men who live by their daily labor, find but limited employment, and that at scant wages." Until the canal opened in mid April, winter was the season for charity. Indeed, Earle and Hoffman have suggested that this period of inactivity and low wages explains the early profitability of manufacturing in northern regions dominated by wheat.

The harvester works inverted this cycle in order to make use of this inexpensive idle labor. Work began in early winter and orders were filled before the winter wheat harvest began in mid-summer. As demand increased the production process invaded this time and removed the seasonal variations of working life. This penetration of the "frontier" of time is also seen in the introduction of night shifts, an extension of productive capacity permitted by the construction of the village gas works in 1859.

As time was being made more uniform, it was being divided with greater accuracy and precision. In 1831 Sullivan Calverno's lessons in sacred music began "at early candle lighting:" in 1839 the Episcopal Church changed its evening service to 6:00 P.M. "railroad time." The

morning services of all the churches, which had begun with bells being rung until the congregation assembled, were brought into conformity at a precise time, 10:30 A.M., by 1861. The transition was not sudden, for example the factory whistle of Seymour, Morgan and Allen, which served as the village alarm clock, was still synchronized with the sun in 1867, placing it twenty minutes before railroad time. But the villagers grew accustomed to this precision, and missed it when the factory closed in the summer. After enough trains had been missed solar time was abandoned.

It was the thrice daily arrival of the mail train, and not the evening return of the Rochester packet, that punctuated the day; and unlike those canal days, when a merchant could write of "the additional supplies which he will received till the close of navigation," goods, persons and information arrived in the village at an unregulated rate.

As old Pat Draper would have noted, life was more comfortable and easier, but just as the technology of the buck say had been inscribed in the stoop of his back the technology of the buzz saw was being inscribed on the bodies of his successors. The assault on flesh and bone by powered steel intensified after the war; death and dismemberment by buzz saw, threshing machine, mower and the deadly wheels of railroad cars made bloodshed as frequent in the five years following the war as they had been during the war, when the hazards were hostile cannon balls and...
Mechanized farming was nearly as dangerous as mechanized warfare, which was remarkable only because of the concentration of the carnage. Canal boatmen had drowned with astonishing frequency and ease, as swimming was a rare skill, but their dripping corpse had an integrity lacking in the mangled remains of unfortunate brakemen. The bridges that spanned the tracks between Brockport and Holley toppled two or three a year from their position atop the cars. They fell and were chopped into bits. In the span of a decade accidental amputations, gruesome maulings and even decapitations had become a part of ordinary news.

In this chapter I have attempted to illustrate several points but I have not wholly succeeded. The reason is that when I assembled this material I was fascinated by my subject. That is fascinated in the sense of beguiled. In fact I had lost sight of my opening passage from Polanyi on the nature of profoundly unique subjects and had developed a hearty interest in learning about the village for its own sake. I began to amass trivia with the enthusiasm (but not the structure) of a baseball fan. Without recognizing the metamorphosis, I grew into a buff.

Insofar as this led to a concern for surface appearance and a neglect of deeper realities (particularly demographics) it seems fair to describe the condition as infatuation. The experience is, of course, evanescent, but it is not altogether uninteresting. This sort of intellectual infatuation is after all a form of knowledge acquisition, and being a form it must have a structure. First we should note the unerring eye for cute and pathetic images like old Pat Draper or the mangled brakemen or S. Goff's agricultural

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1) For an account of one such accident, see B.R. 15:15 115/71
building's conversion into tenement housing. These images (and a host of others) are good enough in themselves, but the crux of the matter is that they are used here in a manner that exploits their intrinsic sentimentality.

The issue is not sentimentality itself, since this is, I suspect, simply a word for unfashionable emotions, but the verbal images that lend themselves to sentimental interpretations. This sort of image manages to be perfectly concrete, almost tangible, while remaining highly unspecific. Take, for example, my quote on the fight between blacks and whites in the village. Very little imagination is required to conjure up an image of the altercation. Meanwhile any number of associations come crowding in, unprompted, but more or less predicted by me. This is because they are the same associations that made me salvage the quote in the first place. The quote itself is banal, ambiguous, practically empty unless the reader has been educated in the proper responses.

This reliance on conditioned emotional responses explains the rapid aging of texts that employ sentimental imagery. The novels of Mary Jane Holmes, for example, which she wrote in Brockport through the second half of the 19th century, have weathered very poorly for this very reason. They strike me as empty because I am empty of the responses they require of me.

The structure of intellectual infatuation is then identical to the structure of romantic infatuation since it is based on a projection of the ideals of one's self (however socialized these may be) onto some other that seems for the moment to embody these ideals. However, as I find on each rereading, these images are promiscuous, receptive to numerous responses, and thus they do not invariably cohere.
Chapter 10
Cultural Changes 1850-1880

After mid-century it grows easier to sympathize with the villagers. Their expressions grow genial, their actions seem legible, their figures become familiar. Their appetites, pleasures and vices resemble our own.

If this past remains what L.P. Hartley has characterized as a foreign country, it is a neighboring country with just enough similarities to support our delusion of perfect comprehension. Our sense of affinity with these subjects is deceptive. The new local news that spread over the third page of the Brockport Republic after 1857 gives a sense of immediacy and intimacy, though its subjects are still distant and somewhat strange. This changes the record, the written image of the community, both for its inhabitants and for us. Gossip that was verbal, cliquish and ephemeral was suddenly printed, public, and permanent.

There is a danger of mistaking this change in the means of representation for a change in the represented reality.

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Lowenthal, 1985, p. xvi.
2) On Horatio Beach and his newspaper, see B.R., 23:43, 8/14/79.
reaction to nostalgia simply inverts the original perception by making the past something that we are grateful to have escaped from, rather than something we should be grateful to escape to.

I first thought of this chapter as mildly debunking and set out to write a set of realistic, sometimes slightly seamy stories about certain "events." Reading these stories I came to realize that even if I had possessed the material for a searching exposé I would have succumbed to nostalgia. Whatever their content, stories satisfy a nostalgic desire for an imaginary form. As Hayden White puts it, the urge to narrate "arises out of a desire to have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary." Each story is an imaginary mega-event, a sort of monster made from the sewn-together bits of real events. This is evident in the heading to the first chapter, with its two abstract nouns serving as imaginary characters.

Although I have called these events fabrications, we can equally well think of them as collective abridgements. Even in the present consciousness is possible because we can abridge sensations. The past is different only in the severity and the finality of its abridgement. The abridgement of village life began in the village itself with the editorial judgements of the editor. My initial notes were a further abridgement. This draft takes the reduction farther. The reader's note provides the ultimate abridgement.

In each case meaning is created by the destruction of meaning. The editor chose to leave the great majority of events to the dissolution of time and faulty memory. I passed over the bulk of that he chose to record, and I have made use of only a portion of my notes. Likewise, the reader will make sense of this chapter only by forgetting most of it.

The Military Spirit and its Abeyance

By all accounts routine boredom was the only enemy the militia could be trusted to deter. Annual "general training," which convened in a field north of the village near Brodget's mill, combined the attractions of camp meetings, circuses and Independence Day, but it did little to further the martial arts. At one such event, perhaps Brockport's, as the traveler reporting it was on the Ridge Road, it was said that the commands were posed as requests "for there is no commanding in this land of liberty."\(^1\)

Drums were pounded, uniforms - and hats with abundant plumage - were worn, drills were imperfectly executed. It was a chance for local politicians to be splendidly conspicuous; and for local farm folk to be splendidly entertained. "The screeching fifes, and rattling tenor and booming base drums," the drilling battalions, the mounted officers in their "cocked hats, epaulettes, buckskin gloves and red sashes," combined to form a splendid and heart-stirring display. As alternative occasions for political display and popular amusement became more common, however, the militia fell into decline. It lapsed entirely between 1841 and 1862.\(^2\)

Following the stirring celebration of the Fourth of July in 1857, an attempt was made to perpetuate the fervor of the awakened patriotism by forming a fully uniformed military company. It was gratifying, the

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\(^2\) On the local "general training" see Daniel Presten, in Smith and Husted, p. 15. See also the letter of Eliza Carpenter in *B R*: 25:32, 5/15/81. On the last muster of the militia in Brockport, see *B R*: 20:38, 6/15/76.
newspaper editor wrote, "to see Brockport up to the times in anything so desirable." Three years later, in the months preceding the presidential election, the martial note was once again sounded with the organization of a local "Wide Awake Battalion." About one hundred Republicans enrolled in this club, and every night of the week they assembled in full dress to drill under their commander, Dr. Davis Carpenter, the local congressman who was later described as "ultra partisan" in his views. As the election approached, the Battalion was deployed on the village streets in clamorous torchlight parades that impressed curb side spectators with their "military proficiency." The hasty formation of a Democrat equivalent, the Little Giants, attests to the popularity and efficacy of these processions, as does the mobilization of the village boys, as Rail Splitters and the Douglas Guard, on the eve of the election. This vivid pageantry was given a stunning aural compliment by a three thousand pound field piece, dubbed Garibaldi, which the political organizations of the village jointly purchased and alternately employed to rouse their constituents and enliven their assemblies. The Republican editor happily, and correctly, predicted that this discipline and spirit would outlive the election season as "a fine village military company."¹

¹) On the military company that was formed in 1857, see B.R. 1:41, 7/24/57. On the formation of the Wide Awake Battalion, see B.R. 4:45, 8/16/60; 4:46, 8/23/60; 4:47, 8/30/60. Dr. Davis Carpenter went to Congress in 1858, his views are described in B.R. 20:46 8/18/60. On their parades, see B.R. 4:48, 9/6/60; 4:49, 9/13/60; 5:1, 10/4/60. On the mobilization of the boys, see B.R. 5:4, 11/8/60. On the cannon, see B.R. 4:36, 6/14/60; 4:37, 6/21/60; 4:37, 6/21/60. For Beach's prediction and the notice of its fulfillment, see B.R. 4:50, 9/20/60; 5:28, 4/18/61.
As issues of political dispute, the future of slavery, and of free labor in the western states, were sufficiently divisive; but the dramatic means employed to rally and sway the citizens succeeded in upsetting a more general docility and in provoking a small rupture with free labor at home. On Sunday October 7th, following the Democratic Meeting in the Concert Hall of the Holmes House, Peter Duffy, a young Irish blacksmith possessing a notoriously quarrelsome disposition, and George Braman, a Republican of unrecorded pugnacity, argued and eventually boxed in the center of Main Street. Seeking a more discreet setting in which to conclude their contest, the combatants, accompanied by a small, inciting crowd, retired to the grocery of Hutchinson and Cornes on the canal dock east of Main Street. Drink, which had not been absent at the Democratic meeting, was again produced and the altercation resumed. Without warning Duffy scrambled through a window to the meat market that occupied the same cellar as the grocery, and which, like the grocery, opened onto the docks. He secured a formidable knife and, returning via the doors, slashed at Braman, slicing the other man's thumb. This sudden aggravation of the contest prompted Oscar Nobles, a twenty-three-year-old carpenter, to intervene. Braman escaped; Nobles was bludgeoned. The young carpenter wheeled, wandered absently up the stone steps to Main street, turned onto Water street and collapsed. He died that evening in the American Hotel. To avert what may have been perceived as the possibility of a dangerous inflammation of the rivalry between the Wide Awakes and
the largely Irish Little Giants, it was deemed politic to announce the
strong condemnation of the slaying by the Catholic priest. 1

The newspaper did not document the verbal exchange, but it is
doubtful that the points were remarkable. What it did describe, the
unleashing of lethal emotions, was. Political antagonism had been
elevated to a dangerous pitch. The enthusiasm for thrills with illusory
perils was elsewhere evident, as we can see in the funambulism craze of
1859. Shortly after the French tightrope walker, Blondin, made his
acclaimed traverse of the Niagara Gorge, the Brockport butcher, Thomas
Conners, suspended a rope over the canal between his meat market and the
Eastern Hotel. A crowd of several thousand gathered to watch him
scamper over the wire. Throughout western New York in the summer of
1859 these displays became a mania. It was reported that 'every boy was
"walking a rope where one is to be found," and in Rochester at least two
juvenile acrobats fractured their arms. The enthusiasm vanished as
quickly as it had arisen when the canal bridge in Albion collapsed under
the weight of a great assembly of spectators, and eighteen persons were
drowned. 2

These emotions were given an adequate vent on the night of April
20, 1859, a week after the outbreak of civil conflict at Fort Sumter. A mass
of people crowded into the Concert Hall, Main Street was thronged, flags

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1) On the issue of slavery vs. free labor, see B.R. 5:3, 11/1860. On the
murder of Oscar Nobles, see B.R. 3:1, 10/11/60. Duffy was charged
with second degree manslaughter, and he was sentenced to seven

On the ensuing mania, see B.R. 3:46, 8/25/59, 3:47, 9/1/59. On the
tragedy in Albion, see B.R. 3:51, 9/29/59.
were flying, and Garibaldi was crumbling in the street. The garbled jingoism of the numerous speeches and resolutions was tempered by a single remark of E.B. Holmes, who looked out over the sea of ardent faces and publicly worried, “these men know nothing about the use of fire arms: they do not feel self reliant.” Thirty-nine men expressed their disagreement by signing a petition endorsing the formation of a military company. Of these enthusiasts only seventeen elected to join, all of them, the editor noted, “men without property who have nothing but their persons to defend.” “This,” he rightly observed, “is wrong.” Still, the Glee Club was singing the Star Spangled Banner, and “the marching band, with its warlike music, stirred up the multitude to a great degree of excitement.” The list of volunteers was enlarged to forty-one.

The passionate assembly, steadily augmented by latecomers from the country, eventually exceeding the capacity of the Concert Hall and was adjourned to the Presbyterian Church, the largest auditorium in the village. “No church has worn a more martial aspect than this one,” the editor wrote. “Martial drums were beaten by the altar,” people were led in patriotic songs by the hastily assembled choir, “and upon the altar men were enrolled as volunteers to serve their country.” E.B. Holmes, uncharacteristically aroused, discarded his earlier apprehension and offered to color his hair and pass for less than forty-five if the younger men hadn’t the heart. He was, in fact, fifty-four. “I don’t believe he has any intention of going,” Mary Jane Holmes later confided in a letter, “but he works like a Trojan to stir people up” - he and Garibaldi, which was booming ferociously just beyond the church door.
Led by their Lieutenant, E. P. Fuller, who would later die from deprivations suffered at Andersonville prison, "the volunteers were marched back to the village hall, and the audience went to their homes." The later had subscribed somewhat over five thousand dollars to sustain the families of the former, now seventy-seven in number and "composed of men embracing nearly all the various occupations - a larger portion being men accustomed to hard labor."1

Initial enthusiasm was immense. "War is the great, prominent and all absorbing topic," the editor wrote, and the demand for flags exceeded the supply. The volunteers were comfortably billeted in the largest structure on the fairgrounds, Floral Hall, where they basked in public praise and admiration. Women gathered to sew uniforms and kits, which they presented to the volunteers in a jubilant and cheerful ceremony. The gaiety of the event was blemished only by the "profane and brutal language of the orderly sergeant." Through exuberance or incompetence, both of which were plentiful, the volunteers overloaded Garibaldi, and exploded the fieldpiece during morning drill.

In the village only half a dozen secessionists publicized their dissent. One, named Cook, who had the temerity to own such an opinion, was promptly "knocked down and beaten" until he escaped beneath a shower of malicious stones and eggs. Secessionists were expelled from stores and denied trade. One was beaten by an avid volunteer who was heard to say, as he peeled off his coat, "I enlisted today to lick just such

1) The first war meeting is described in B.R. 5:29, 4/25/61. See also the letter of M.J. Holmes, which is reproduced in Smith and Husted, p. 25.
fellows as you are, and I'm going to do it. "A person can hardly say what they think," Mary Jane Holmes confided in a letter. "I can easily understand how the people of Paris grew to be such monsters in the Revolution. We shall come to it yet." 

The passion infected boys, who donned the uniforms of the Rail Splitters and the Douglas Guard, and marched in the streets. To the editor this was a source of pride. "The military spirit on the part of the juveniles is very commendable," he wrote, "and should be encouraged. It was truly remarked at the patriotic meeting held in this village that the military spirit had been allowed to die out, and that the young men had not the self reliance that they should possess." After this decline it was gratifying to see that "the military spirit, like the rope walking mania, is catching on..."

Thus one northern village rallied for war. Infatuated by the prospect of an adventure, with eventualities unknown to persons of such pacific experience, its citizens began rounds of fanciful posturing and fabulous play acting. Scant reference was made to the actualities of camp life or combat. Crapshangers were violently silenced. The company was put at the center of a fantasy world where their needs became a community concern and their actions became a community fascination. Customary lines of deference were inverted, as young ladies and old men

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came to call at the the Floral Hall barracks with veneration in their voices and admiration in their eyes. Customary injunctions against immoderate behavior were relaxed, as the din of the drums and war chants became a source of pride rather than irritation.

The volunteers were shortly disabused.

In early May the company was transported to Camp Washington in Elmira. Despite the portentous administrative bungling that accompanied mobilization, riotous good spirits persisted. Lacking uniforms, the volunteers drilled wearing the capes in which they had, as Wide Awakes and Little Giants, paraded through the village streets in the days preceding the election of the previous fall. Their only earnest protest was raised against the rations; which were “not only unpalatable, but most unclean.” It was a shame, one wrote, that the patriots should be sustained on “worse than convict’s fare.”

Despite these discontents, in late April the Brockport volunteers were mustered into service as Company K in the 13th Regiment of New York Volunteers. They took up their first position on Arlington Heights, across the Potomac River from Georgetown, and one quarter of the men immediately succumbed to colds, measles and rheumatism. By the end of June, advanced to an exposed position at Ball’s Crossroad, those who had enlisted with their minds full of the romance of the march began to perceive that “the soldiers life is one of hardship and privation.”

As the prospect of hostile engagements drew closer, the New York regiments remained munitioned with the antiquated muskets issued at Elmira. One soldier of Brockport recommended adoption of a more appropriate State motto: "Excelsior should be blotted out," he wrote, "and Corruption substituted." Rifles shortly arrive for both companies "and a great many who, a week ago, talked loudly of going home at the expiration of the three months, are now willing to stay."

Crouched in a woods to the east of Bull Run, "the balls falling hot and thick around us," Captain Fuller described his men as "not showing the least sign of fear." Their smug assurance of rebel poverty and cowardice was corrected on the slopes of Henry Hill. After the battle, Lieutenant Fuller wrote, "God forbid that I should ever be compelled to see another scene like the one of Sunday last."

Indeed, as their three month enlistment approached its expiration in August, few saw reason that they should. By the first weeks of that month one correspondent from Company K reported that "Home sweet home" has been the sole topic of conversation for the past few days. These expectations were rudely dashed. The three month volunteers had their enlistment involuntarily extended to two years, an arrogation by the government in which editor Beach detected "a semblance of injustice." This wasn't like the old militia, where the commanders made requests. "The men took it hardly," and initially six of the ten companies in the
regiment resisted. Certain individuals rebelled, among them Charles Morgan, a canal boatman of Brockport, but when the Brockport company saw the recalcitrant troops exiled to the island of Tortugas, they resigned themselves to compliance.

So much for being volunteers! The second Brockport company, which organized only a week after the first, was, by its own constitution, an independent rifle company. Its members elected to remain "entirely independent of state and government authorities." The company reserved the right to "determine its own actions as to entering into the service of the government," and in this determination they resolved "to be governed by a will of the majority." The intentions of Company K are not recorded, but it seems probable that they made similar claims to autonomy. The involuntary extension of their enlistment had invalidated this claim, and demonstrated the indefeasibility of the federal government's claims on its citizens, whatever their preferences or inclinations.

Perhaps the soldiers took some consolation in the fact that they were, at least, among friends. This last vestige of the heady days when the men were sleeping at the Floral Hall and drilling before familiar eyes was erased in the Fall of 1861. Colonel Pickell, commander of the 13th regiment, provoked resentment when he replaced the regimental minister, a popular Calvinist (possibly of Brockport), with an Episcopalian. The objections of the Brockport companies seem to have been particularly strenuous as both were, by Pickell's orders, dissolved. The Brockport men were distributed among the remaining companies. The mutinous rumblings elicited by this action gave way to dejection.
From this moment until the war's end, local men fought, and in more than a few cases died, not as they had desired, as representatives of a community, but as they were commanded, as individuals in the Grand Army of the Republic, a great, blundering, but ultimately irrepressible, bureaucracy of death and destruction.¹

News of this army's ponderous inefficiencies was cold water on the jingoism at home, but the fierce determination revived when Fort Donaldson was captured in February: a bonfire of empty kerosene barrels and discarded crates was kindled on Main Street; church bells were rung; flags purchased the previous spring were returned to their poles. But the government was demanding more than moral support.²

Through the summer of 1862 frequent war meetings sought to stimulate dormant patriotism. As the newspaper editor wrote, "there is a great pressure upon every able bodied man to enlist who has no good excuse for remaining at home." Throughout western New York dozens of new companies were formed, but the numbers were not sufficient to forestall rumors of a draft. It was only postponed, some said, for want of sufficient arms. At the same time the militia was revived, with all men between eighteen and forty-five under compulsion to join. Commanded by Captain Hobbs, a man whose previous experience was limited to the fabrication of wooden water pipes, the local company numbered 180. When they convened at the fairground few bore the stipulated weapon. Indeed, as the editor described it, "few possessed any other arms than

¹ On the formation of Company I, see B.R. 5:30, 5/2/61. On the dissolution of companies I & K, see B.R. 6:5, 11/7/61.
² B.R. 6:20, 2/20/62.
those provided by nature." In the face of these unofficial pressures and these official compulsions some took advantage of imperfect nat al records and obtained refuge in premature senescence. In the town enrollment books the proportion of men over forty-five seemed to be growing.

Escorted by the Martial Band and the village firemen, two companies, half of their members drawn from the village, marched up Main Street to the railroad station in August of 1862. The dust had not settled when two new captains moved into the recruiting tent and began enlisting two more companies, one of cavalry the other infantry. They were aided by bounties offered to recruits at the time of their enlistment. Combining funds contributed by the federal, state and county governments, the total premium was 254 dollars: a sum that sufficed to lure Canadians into local companies formed that fall.

Villagers paid the national tax, imposed in 1863, without excessive complaint or widespread delinquency, but few were willing to accept the draft, which came in the summer of that year. At a series of town meetings held in August of 1863 it was resolved that funds raised by the town for the support of the families of drafted men would be used to secure substitutes, available in Buffalo for 200 dollars, and in Rochester for 250 to 300 dollars a head. As one town official later wrote "men of families and men of business shrank from the duties of a soldier and


sought for substitutes to represent them in the field." By 1864, when a
new round of the draft set Sweden's quota at ninety-four men, the cost of
Canadian substitutes had skyrocketed. Testing the depths of the
businessmen's pusillanimity, substitutes were asking, and receiving, up to
two thousand dollars. The local supervisors were relieved to find a jobber
who promised to fill the town's quota with Canadians for $1,200 a piece.
The supervisors hoped to fund this with the state bounty, now risen to six
hundred dollars, and the proceeds raised in a bond issue by the county
supervisors. In the same autumn local Copperheads, whose existence the
newspaper had routinely denied, organized as a McClellan Club with H.J.
Thomas, the erstwhile banker, as its president. Delays in the
disbursement of government funds made it necessary for some of
Sweden's more substantial citizens to secure personal loans, variously
reported as $36,000 and $20,000, with which to employ substitutes. This
bold maneuver, "by which some were terribly frightened," combined with
other war expenses to make taxes "enormously large."^1

Of course the war had another expense, death. One hundred and
sixty-eight citizens of the town of Sweden fought in the Civil War. Thirty-
five were killed, a mortality rate of two in ten, a fraction above the
national average. Almost half of these were returned for local burial.

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1) On the national tax, for which the village was assessed $14,000, see B.R.
7:16, 1/22/63. On the decision to employ substitutes at public
expense, see B.R. 7:45, 8/13/63; 7:46, 8/20/63; 8:48; 9/1/64; 8:51.
9/22/64. One of the more complete descriptions of this transaction
appears in the recollections of F.P. Root, B.R. 20:46 8/10/76. Partial
records of these transactions appear in the Town of Sweden Record
Book, vol. 3, 1837-1879. On the formation of a McClellan Club, see
B.R. 8:52 9/29/64.
Survivors returned with a new knowledge of horrors. George H Allen, a young man of thirty-four when he advanced on Richmond in June of 1864, wrote "I have seen human beings torn and mangled in every conceivable manner -sights that none but one who had become by degrees hardened could gaze upon."\(^1\)

Unfortunately the newspapers in which the war's end was reported have not survived, and it is impossible to recover the expressions of joy or relief with which the news was welcomed, but every indication suggests that the war left the villagers sick at heart. It temporarily dulled their appetite for collective enthusiasm, and it prepared them to turn to the pursuit of private pleasures.

**Private Leisure and the Pleasures of Nature.**

The village continued its support of the Republican party after the war, but the ardor of its residents' political sentiments had clearly abated. The cost of the war, in lives and taxes, had vastly exceeded the most dolorous predictions, and the people seemed chary of collective enthusiasm. Beyond these overt tolls, the war had placed a heavy excise on political naivety. The federal government had revealed its ability for overweening control of the fates and fortunes of its citizens, and the people seem to have recoiled from this presage of future arrogations into the private pursuit of pleasure. "Many of our citizens with becoming good judgement and good taste are devoting a portion of their time to recreation and amusement," the newspaper editor wrote in 1872.

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\(^1\) Allen's quote appears in *B.R.* 26:13, 12/22/81.
Picnicking, driving, hunting and fishing became pursuits of unprecedented popularity.1

The most striking change was the neglect of the fourth of July. Prior to the war the themes of religion and reform had yielded to bombastic nationalism, while an increasingly gaudy spectacle of parades, speeches and fireworks was enacted to draw potential customers into the village. There was flutter of banners and cannons, "a general drumming up," and the village streets were thronged. Where the processions of the 1850's had walked from the Presbyterian to the Baptist Church, the large, boisterous, and largely secular procession of the 1860's passed from the Concert Hall on Main Street via a circuitous route to the College grounds. Where the old procession had contained the Sunday schools of the several societies of the village, the new procession was headed by a band, the Committee of Arrangements, the orator, and the individual charged with reading the Declaration of Independence. Well back in the line, the village clergy marched just ahead of the fraternal organizations, the working class fire company - both "appropriately dressed in uniform and regalia" - and the mob of unaffiliated citizens. Their orator was a clergyman, the Presbyterian Reverend Kimball, but his nationalistic discourse, one hour of spellbinding "eloquence, logic and life-like and blood-stirring portraiture" of the forefather's battle for freedom, stands in contrast to the equivalent discourse of Rev. Manly Tooker, delivered thirty five years earlier, on the "rare and happy talents" of blending "simplicity of style" with "sublimity of thought and grandeur of

conception." Of these qualities only grandeur seems to have survived, particularly in the innovation of a cannon, providing "the full inspiration of its patriotic thunder," and the fireworks, for which hundreds "filled the streets, windows and houseclops." Needless to say, "merchants who sold 'eatables and drinkables' had a rush of customers all day."1

Despite these profits the succeeding celebrations were on a less lavish scale. The oration, delivered in the Methodist Church, titled "God and America," retained the militant theme, and informal observances followed the familiar pattern. About midnight, young men "built a huge bonfire on Main Street out of the empty barrels and boxes that have for some time encumbered Main Street," and, firing guns, entered the Presbyterian Church and set its bell to tolling. In 1860 the secular trend continued. Under lowering clouds the church bells were rung very early; guns were fired and reveille was played. The procession, headed by the Committee of Arrangements, Marshall Bowman astride a charger, and the standard worthies. Next came the orator, Joseph D. Hubbard, with a sheaf of "brilliant patriotic thoughts" in his breast pocket; special guests; the cannon, named that day "Garibaldi"; the fire department, with its recently refurbished engine; the musical association, assisted by the Bergen Band; and a long tail of miscellaneous citizens on foot. As this last segment was large, the procession extended from college street to the canal bridge. Main street was festooned with American Flags. While the sky brightened.

Rev. Kimball prayed. J.H. Thomas read the Declaration of Independence; the orator, J.D. Hubbard, expounded his "great truths and principles in a new and improved form;" and the musical association sang two national odes. At about 1:00, with the rain resuming, the procession reformed and marched to the American Hotel where "several hundred" were served. Their meal was described as "a scene of the utmost hilarity, tempered by refined and social amenities, and elevated by wit, sentiment and speech."

It was followed by toasts, thirteen regular, and several voluntary. Regrettably, a torrential downpour prevented ignition of the fireworks, and the day ended, as usual, with the lock-up full of the drunk and disorderly, who were detained until morning, but freed without charge. 1

Understandably, the celebration languished during the war. And it was not immediately revived. The Main Street bonfire was tolerated, and roisterers did not miss the opportunity for sanctioned revelry, but increasing numbers of the citizens left the village on the fourth, often to picnic at Troutburg on Lake Ontario. Although Albion and Rochester hosted celebrations, to the tangible enrichment of their merchants, Brockport closed down. Interest in an "old fashioned celebration" had clearly died. In 1870 the editor wrote: "Of late years the manner of observance has degenerated somewhat, and horse races, steamboat excursions and other like amusements have to a considerable extent been substituted for the original method of observing the day." The holiday

1) B.R. 3:39, 7/7/59; 4:39, 7/5/60; 4:40, 7/12/60; 4:40, 7/12/60.
remained, "except for the midnight demonstrations, very dull." In 1875
the constable even foiled the plans of the young pyromaniacs.1

During these apathetic years, some villagers took the train to
Albion or Rochester for the traditional rites and festivities, but a growing
number devoted the day to the pursuit of the private pleasures of their
families. Increasingly, the family took its ease out of doors. The picnic
was not under ordinary circumstances pursued in solitude. Religious
societies and Sunday schools seem to have taken unusual pleasure in
eating al fresco. Families preferred to swarm in designated spots, like the
grove of fruit trees that surrounded the Ontario House at Troutburg on the
shore of Lake Ontario. This may have been in part a matter of
convenience. A well had been dug, a house erected for those who chose
to cook, and sailing boats were available for hire. Prior to the war there
had even been an excursion boat, the steamer Maple Leaf. Impressed by
the federal government, she was torpedoed off of the Florida coast. Quite
beyond these utilities, however, the picnic grounds must have been a
place in which certain relaxed behavior was permitted and certain
informal social relationships facilitated. Whatever the exact appeal, it
must have been popular since the farmers of Hamilton cleared a second
picnic grounds at the mouth of Sandy Creek. They generously offered the
key to the house and the boat to anyone of respectable appearance.2

1) The holiday is reported neglected for the last four or five years in B.R.
11:36, 6/7/67. That same year it was reported that 2,000 individuals
went to Troutburg. See, B.R. 7/11/67. A year later 3,000 went. See,
B.R. 12:41, 7/9/68. The quotes on the degeneration of the holiday

2) Information on the Ontario House grounds is drawn from B.R. 3:34,
A second aspect of this turn toward the outdoors is apparent in the increased popularity of hunting among those who had no need to supplement their diet or to eradicate vermin. Utilitarian hunting is not always easily distinguished from sportsmanship, but evidence does point to an enlargement in the number of recreational hunters. The panther shot in the Tonawanda Swamp in 1859 was likely stalked in order to terminate its predation on domestic animals. The large eagle, shot on the lake shore in that same year was infamous among local shepherds. By 1871, however, the shooters and the quarry seem to have changed. That hunting had become, at least for some, a pursuit of leisure hours is made clear by its hebdomadal recurrence, synchronized with the weekly cycle of commerce. Violations of the state game law’s prohibition against hunting on the Sabbath were reported on the increase. Men and boys who could ignore public censure were even observed making their way to the village outskirts with a gun on their arm as the church bells were ringing.\(^1\)

The centennial fourth was observed with the usual midnight cacophony and mid-day parade. The latter was distinguished from those of former days by the prominence given to the police squad, which headed the procession; the carriage that conveyed the most ancient citizens of the village, perhaps a reminder of the day’s historical

significance; and the wagons bearing the manufactured products of village industries. The procession moved, as formerly, up Main Street to College, where it turned toward the Normal School grounds. Dispensing with a benediction, the speeches began, only to be interrupted by a downpour which necessitated adjournment to the Normal School chapel. Here, as the centerpiece of the observances, the wealthy farmer F.P. Root read a protracted local history to an audience that made a visible struggle to remain attentive.¹

If we compare the Independence Day celebrations of 1832, 1857 and 1876, we find three somewhat different holidays. The earliest celebration was exclusive, largely limited to religious reformers and the promotion of their causes. The celebration of 1857 was political, and distinctly militaristic. The last celebration was distinctive in the absence, or at least the subduing, of religious and political themes. Zelinsky has described the various observances of the Centennial fourth as "the last frantic effort" of communities "to revive a patriotic holiday that had outlived its usefulness," and this claim seems to be fully born out by the experience of Brockport.² After almost fourteen years of neglect the holiday had reemerged as a celebration of history and industry, retrospects and prospects with little about them of the overtly doctrinaire.

¹) The Centennial fourth is reported in B.R., 20:41, 7/7/76. Root's invaluable history was printed in nine installments, the precise references for which will be found elsewhere.
²) Zelinsky, 1988, p. 73.
Modern Churches

After mid-century the membership rosters of village churches grew. Converts continued to be won through revivals and camp meetings. Their contributions to church coffers funded new, more imposing buildings for the Baptists and Methodists. Despite their enlarged memberships and their more conspicuous edifices, however, the power of these churches was not necessarily in ascendance. Religious factionalism had broken the monopoly of the orthodox churches, with Free Will Baptists, Second Adventists and Free Methodists providing spiritual alternatives. Catholicism had arrived with the reaper industry and the railroad in 1848. Episcopalians, first organized in 1838, had struggled until the early 1850's, but by 1856 they had a church on Main Street, and they were a part of the religious community. At the same time the Protestant churches began to relinquish supervision of conduct and spiritual health to the more lenient and forgiving rule of personal conscience. Disciplinary actions diminished precipitously as the churches withdrew from adjudication of their member's secular and spiritual shortcomings. This religious faith remained sufficiently serious to yield comfort, consolation and a sense of personal direction; but it was no longer so serious as to provoke dark doubts and morbid obsessions.  

The time of worship was regularized in 1861, with all denominations but the Catholics conforming to a 10:30 start. In the same

year the Presbyterians and the Methodists discontinued their afternoon services, which formerly had served as a supplement to the morning's sermon. In 1876 F.P. Root recalled the church of the first Congregationalists in Sweden. "To sit in this church" he wrote, "and listen to two long sermons on a Sunday, and usually on theology, required a zeal and endurance not common in the present day." "Religiously," he continued, "men were more zealous, more emotional, more tenacious, more sectarian; but whether more Christ-like we will not attempt to say." Zeal was soon so short as to necessitate abbreviation of the morning message. Other sources of discomfort were removed. Those who joined the Baptist congregation were no longer obliged to suffer immersion, as had their predecessors, in the canal or Blodgett's mill pond, while the party assembled on the bank encouragingly sang "Oh how happy are Those who their Savior obey." The ritual ablution was performed in a reservoir constructed beneath the pulpit. Men no longer stood to allow ladies access to the warm inner seats of the boxes. In 1871 the Presbyterians installed a furnace in their church.¹

Religious services were more easily endured not only because of a heightened concern for brevity and physical comfort, but also because the message was less ominous. Doctor Maire, "a grand old Scotchman" who presided over the Presbyterians from 1845-1847, "used to pound the pulpit

¹) On the former irregularity of services, see B.R. 4:18, 8/11/59. For a schedule indicating their conformity, see B.R. 5:13, 1/3/61. The elimination of the last of the afternoon services is noted in B.R. 6:11, 12/19/61. The note from which I infer a reduced duration of sermons is in B.R. 6:36, 6/12/62. The Baptist's new baptismal font is described in B.R. 4:22, 3/8/60. The previous method is described in B.R. 25:33, 5/12/61.
when preaching the doctrine of election." By 1861 Joseph Kimball was compelled to resign the same post because he was "rather too 'old school' in his views to please the 'Congregational' portion of his society." Ministers were expected to be complimentary, amusing and, within reason, edifying. T.B. Fairchild, the Episcopalian pastor, was recommended by the fact that he, as the editor put it, 'excell in that too rare, yet exceedingly important faculty, of fitting the religion of the Bible to the everyday business of life.' Writing to secure a replacement for Fairchild in 1857, E.B. Holmes summarized the qualifications that would shortly become common:

"if your friend is a cross, cynical old bachelor, that never was afflicted with the 'lust of the eye' etc., you know the rest, I suppose, don't for the old Harry's sake let him come -but if, on the contrary, he is a proper nice sort of a man, one whom the old ladies and young maidens would think suitable, just tell him that Brockport is just the place for him."

A proper nice sort of man skilled in the ingratiating of old ladies and young maidens was a creature of a rather different stripe from the first Presbyterian, Joseph Meyers, who voiced his belief that his congregation was "actuated by the devil."¹

Not everyone welcomed this moderation of religious tone and temperament. Disagreement over the "mode of worship and perfection in the worldly life" induced B.T. Roberts, the former Methodist minister, to

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withdraw to the church of the Free Will Baptist in December of 1856. His followers, styled Nazarites, complained that members of the forsaken congregation had endeavored "to throw cold water upon their zeal," an unseemly and primitive enthusiasm through which the Nazarites sought return "to the purity, practices and modes of early Methodism." The sect contained "some of the oldest, most pious members of the church," and they disavowed the imputation of secessionists, preferring to style themselves exiles "driven out by the high handed powers invested in the other portion." 1

C.S. Baker, recently appointed to the Methodist pulpit by the Bishop, triggered this exodus with an unorthodox presentation of "the old and settled doctrines of the church." This was not, of course, the whole matter, as Aaron Palmer, the reaper manufacturer, labored to reveal. There was, he wrote, a Nazarite Union, a "secret society" of disaffected Methodists lead by twelve preachers, and bent on a "secret stratagem," all of which was revealed in a pamphlet printed by McCready and Kendall in Brockport. The village remained central to the Nazarite Union, its public manifesto being issued as the "Brockport Quarterly Conference Resolutions," and B.T. Roberts being formally charged with "unchristian and immoral conduct" by the Genesee Conference. 2

The Nazarites sought return to "the old 'backwoods' style of shouting Methodism," and they officially severed their ties with the

1) B.R. 1:10, 12/19/56; 1:11, 12/26/56; 1:12, 1/2/57
Methodists in December of 1858. In February the sect undertook a recruitment campaign through revivals, reported as heavily attended, in the Free Will Baptist Church. The following June they sought to further swell the ranks of religious fundamentalism with a one week meeting at the grounds of the Camp Ground Association, located just over the town line in Bergen. Over one hundred families spent the week camped in tents, and fifteen hundred, many of them admittedly spectators, gathered on Sunday.

The Methodists struck back with their own camp meeting in October. With their superior financial resources, they hired the professional evangelist J.H. Purdy, who furnished his own pavilion, a gigantic tent with a capacity for several thousand. This was raised in an encampment with several smaller tents in a field east of the Lake Road just north of the village. Eight thousand persons were drawn to the pavilion, and "a deep solemnity pervaded the entire mass of human beings." Coincident with this revival the annual session of the Genesee Conference convened in the enormous Genesee Conference Tabernacle, a temporary structure, with seating for three thousand, erected on a lot directly behind the Brockport Baptist Church. The business of the session was largely devoted to the condemnation and expulsion of the Nazarite.

ministers, many of whom managed to ventilate their opinions on the grounds of the revival just up the road. 1

Following the schism, the Nazarite sects formed the Free Methodist Church, first, in the following spring, at Albion just to the west. The Brockport congregation leased the Free Will Baptist Church on King Street. It was the renegade Brockport preacher, B.T. Roberts who founded the Free Methodist "holiness" Seminary, now Roberts Wesleyan College, in 1867. 2

The division of the Methodist body was the source of pain and lingering acrimony. The Free Methodist had lost the church building. Some had witnessed its construction in 1828, and many more had labored in succeeding decades to retire the nagging debt that this incurred. They had also purchased the Bergen Camp Meeting Grounds, "an area of twenty-five acres, all covered by heavy timber, principally beech." In the summer of 1861 they occupied the grounds, raising sixty-five tents in a circle around the rows of plank benches that centered on the preacher's stand. Cooking was done over campfires and, as one visitor reported, all "the regular attendants at the camp appeared to be enjoying the occasion very much." For those inclined toward less Spartan living "speculating farmers" in the vicinity offered lodgings and provisions. There were rumors that the Methodist, who held title to the land, would sell the

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campground to evict the schismatics, but this did not occur. Both shared custody of the property until 1870 when it seems to have been abandoned for more distant and populous outdoor convocations.

Churches grew in this period. But while the number of church members rose, the number of claims made on these members by their churches fell. Increasingly members insisted on their right to participate in a wider culture and to bring the fruits of their explorations back into the church. This is displayed in the career of Christmas, an observance which first appeared in the village in the 1840’s with the establishment of the Catholic and Episcopal churches.

Christmas entered the churches through the Sabbath schools, where the custom of Christmas trees hung “full of valuable presents for the Sunday School teachers and pupils” was found to markedly enlarge attendance. Despite these inroads, permitted for the sake of juvenile evangelism, the day was slow to gather religious significance, and in 1856 observance remained sufficiently anomalous to necessitate apology for the delayed appearance of the village newspaper, postponed, the editor explained, “as the printers keep Christmas.” Within two years, however, the editor was promoting the holiday in a lengthy article, thereafter annual, in which the gift selections offered by the principal stores were catalogued and appraised. Parents were also reminded that gratification of the material desires of their offspring could only strengthen natural affection and family allegiance. This was the argument that sold the

holiday, since Christmas shoppers appeared on Main Street some years before Christmas stories appeared in Protestant sermons.

The most conservative congregation, the Presbyterians, held out for some time. They first attempted to push the celebration of consumption on to New Year's Day with participation limited to children, but by 1874 Christmas had overcome resistance and entered the adult service. It is strange how we have come to deplore the commercialization of Christmas since, at least for Protestants, commerce was the harbinger. By the 1880s the newspaper reported "an immense throng of people in town making Christmas purchases."

Frivolous Entertainment

Although the "true blue" Presbyterian was satirized by early commentators as never straying beyond the Bible and The Seven Champions of Christendom, Thomas Cooper remarked that back country reading was a strange "intermixture of religion and novels." On the pioneer's shelves he found the Assembly Catechism and Watts' Psalms propped beside Matthew Gregory Lewis' Monk and August von Kotzebue's "stupid plays." The first diversion was one of the earliest Gothic novels, sensational tales devoid of didacticism and devoted to the irrational; the second, over a dozen of which were translated by Washington Irving's

1) B.R. 1:11, 12/26/56; 3:11, 12/24/58; BR 3:12, 12/31/58. The Presbyterians had Christmas Eve services for children by 1860, but the first clear indication of a morning adult service is in B.R. 18:15, 1/1/74. On the attitude of older Congregationalists toward Christmas, see Caroline Richards, p. 92. The concluding quote is drawn from B.R. 33:15, 12/27/88.

2) XYZ (Johnson Verplanck), p. 45; Thomas Cooper, 1809, in Maup. p. 171.
mentor, the New York theater manager William Dunlap, were melodramatic, sensational and sentimental. Both characterizations of this population's taste in amusements are probably correct when applied to distinctive groups. What we see over the course of the next sixty or seventy years is a progressive blurring of the line that divided those who did from those who did not patronize frivolous entertainments.

When Brockport was first established, the village trustees reserved to themselves the right to pass laws "to the prevention of theaters, billiard tables, or theatrical or other performances, and the exhibition of wax figures, wild animals, mountebanks, and all other shows exhibited by common showmen." 1 Apparently the prerogative was not exercised. As early as 1831 a rhinoceros, a tiger, a camel, a leopard, and assorted panthers, wolves and monkeys were displayed near Wales Coffee House, presumably in what is referred to elsewhere as the grove. 2 In August of 1833, another menagerie brought not only an elephant, polar bear, Bengal tiger and white camel, but also a band, a "Mechanical Organ and Grand Musical Machine," and, best of all, the "Grand Cosmorama." This last attraction brought together forty-eight paintings depicting "scenes which would cost hundreds of dollars to see by traveling." To give each painting not only the dimensions "but the same animating effect as if the objects represented were in full being before the eye" each scene was viewed through a fixed magnifying glass. There was, apparently,

1) Hale, p. 13.

2) B.F.P. 1843, 672/31. The circus was first held beside the canal in a lot beside Barnes' wagon shop.
considerable demand for this exotic entertainment, as a second zoological extravaganza visited the village two weeks later.\footnote{1)}

Significantly, these entertainments might be construed by the most generous interpretation as edifying, and this served to disarm conservative critics. Hedrick, for example, described the circus as an instrument of vernacular education.\footnote{2)} But the line dividing opportunities for personal improvement from superfluous fripperies was clear, as were this line's transgressors. Writing in her diary in 1857, Caroline Richards, a young girl of Canandaigua, confided that her grandmother might have let her attend the circus if she had not seen the handbills. "It was all right to look at the creatures God had made," her homilist grandmother said, "but she did not think that He ever intended that women should go only half dressed and stand up and ride on horses bare back, or jump through hoops in the air."\footnote{3)} Over the next thirty years Brockport would be inundated with stunt men, comics, prestidigitators and humbugs that deviated even more wildly from the mark of God's intentions.

Some entertainers retained the pretense and the titles of educators. Doctor E.P. Howland pitched his tent on the Collegiate Institute grounds in 1859 and delivered six lectures enlivened by "brilliant experiments." Being no less athletic than polymathic, the doctor and his nimble assistants concluded each discourse with a gymnastic exhibition. The

\footnote{1)} B.P.P. 3:45, 8/7/33; 3:48, 8/21/33. The Grand Cosmorama was entertainment in the vein of the moving panoramas like John Banvard's Mississippi River and the clockwork dioramas like "The Burning of Moscow", both of which visited Rochester. Sec. Rostier Johnson, 1928.

\footnote{2)} Hedrick, p. 211.

\footnote{3)} Caroline Richards, p. 88.
panoramas were also, broadly speaking, educational. Villagers and
farmers gathered in the Concert Hall of the American Hotel in 1860 to
watch the moving pageant of John Brown's Harpers Ferry raid spool
before their eyes on twenty thousand feet of crudely painted canvas.
Vicarious voyages to the arctic or down the Mississippi River were
simulated by the same cinematics. Employing a tactic revived by
Hollywood, one panorama sought to overcome the religious scruples of
potential viewers with an animated portrait of The Pilgrim's Progress.

But many entertainers, like one who presented a "laughing gas
entertainment" to "a large and delighted audience," dispensed with these
redeeming qualities. The professional masochist Matthew Tracy amazed
his audience with an inexplicable ability to "run a knife into any part of
his person within three inches of any particular spot specified by the
audience and drink two quarts of the highest proof brandy without
effect." ¹

The newspaper editor touted performances, but seemed to find them
more and more frequently silly and disappointing. In 1856 he had lead
the formation of the Young Men's Literary Association, a debating society
which sponsored lectures intended to assist the serious young man in
fitting himself "to become a useful member of society," and he had
endorsed the creation of a complimentary subscription library and
reading room. Unfortunately the lecture series was forced to compete

¹) Howland's show is described in B.R. 3:37, 6/23/59. The various
panoramas are mentioned in B.R. 4:6, 1/17/57; 4:25, 3/29/60; 5:3,
10/18/60; 8:35, 6/2/64. On the laughing gas entertainment see B.R.
7:18, 2/3/63. On the exploits of Matthew Tracy, see B.R. 1:13, 1/9/57.
with livelier amusements, suitable speakers proved difficult to engage, and the presentations of many who were seemed "admirably adapted to please an audience" but they "contained but little instruction" and "few if any practical lessons."

With the failure of the Literary Society's lecture series the credentials of visiting speakers grew more dubious. George Francis Train, the incoherent crusader for hire that William Lloyd Garrison called a "crack-brained harlequin and lunatic," came to the village in 1872 as the star of "a combined circus, panorama, gymnastics, temperance address, political oration, sermon and lesson in mathematics." Sadly, the newspaper editor reported that Train had pandered to the lowest instincts of his audience as he purveyed "unwholesome truths" which ridiculed religion, the political parties and society generally, and which suggested that wealth was attainable only through dishonesty.

There is no reason to suppose that villagers took such rantings seriously. Except for the Irish Fenian Society, who honored his opinions on Irish nationalism, it is doubtful that many sympathized with his views. What is important is that increased numbers felt little compunction at frittering away time at amusements that were admittedly vain. Although resistance remained, some were even prepared to patronize traveling theatrical troupes. As the editor wrote in 1869, "theatrical performances

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are something new for our citizens, and are viewed in various aspects from different standpoints." But he endorsed the increasingly liberal outlook on such matters since, as he tolerantly wrote, "all can not be condemned because part are bad."  

Sordid Behavior

The village newspaper provided, and provides, a commentary on local life that was, and is, quite obviously edited. Some events of limited significance are emphasized while others are ignored or suppressed. Much of what it contains represents an exercise in collective and individual flattery. Thus, it is a source that must be approached with circumspection. At the heart of this caution is the knowledge that changes in the newspaper are often changes in the standards of local representation rather than changes in the locality itself. This caution pertains particularly to the reports of illicit behavior, which grow more numerous and lurid after 1860. Whether such behavior was in fact more frequent, or whether the responsibility for relating these incidents had simply shifted from verbal gossip to written journalism is, of course, hard to establish.

Setting this question of trends aside, we must appreciate the newspaper's increased attention to the comedy of the life it described. We learn of a farmer who has patiently awaited his wife's annual visit to her mother, and who then makes face with the servant girl and gives a

barr. We learn of another farmer who had come undone after various reverses, and who leaves his plow standing in the field, walks into the woods, squeezes into the orifice of a hollow log and brings an end to his suffering. These are not funny events, they are, however, human events, events recognizable to anyone who has battled the urge to ravish a young girl or to crawl into a hole and die. It is easier to like these people with their foibles and crimes because they make fewer demands on our admiration. Curiously, this new attention to the seamy side of village society breaths some badly needed life into our image of village women, a group we have suspected of being somewhat more heterogeneous and fallible than their limited representation allows.

We hear for the first time of bibulous women. "A woman from the country was drunk on our streets last week," the editor wrote in 1870. "Is this the progress," he asked, "of 'women's rights'?" Beach had endorsed women's suffrage ten years earlier. Was this the other side of liberty? What was one to make of the Excelsor Saloon, opened on Main Street in 1858 with separate entrances for "ladies and gentlemen who wish to partake of the luxuries of the season." Given the mixed company, it was earnestly pledged "that good order and decorum shall be maintained at all times." I'm afraid that all village women were not sheltered by similar assurances.1

Women were beaten and women were raped. Thomas Wright, an Irish boatman dwelling in a "shanty" on the canal in the western part of

1) The quote on the woman from the country is from B.R. 14:50, 9/8/70. Beach's endorsement of the vote for women appears in B.R. 4:51, 9/27/60. The Excelsor is advertised in B.R. 3:1, 10/15/58.
the village, beat his wife Mariah, threw her out of the house, slammed the
door, and went to bed. Mariah, discovered by her Irish neighbors "ill
clad and... suffering from brutal treatment," died shortly after, a tragedy
for which Thomas, who was found snoring in his bed, spent two years at
Auburn Prison. A divorce was necessitated by a husband's brutality: "a
very unpleasant affair," the newspaper reported, "and the subject of
much talk." In general the penalty for beating one's wife was a fine of
five dollars, the same imposed for public intoxication or smoking in the
courtroom.¹

In 1872 the newspaper reported the rape of an eleven year old girl
in the old peat house on Clark Street. For this "revolting" crime which, it
said, "seems daily on the increase," the perpetrator received a six month
sentence in the work house. Mrs Connor, the victim in the infamous
Brockport Rape Case, was incarcerated for over a year as, "witness against
persons charged with an outrage on her person." A married woman, her
defilement had come at the hands of young Seeley, who initially escaped
and was later exonerated. His young accomplice, Michael McKeon, was
convicted of the lesser crime of assault and attempted rape. McKeon was
sooner behind bars than Nicholas Stock was brought to trial for the
seduction of Margaret Norton, and convicted by the young woman's
testimony of "the higher crime of rape." Jane Haggard, an English
woman traveling on the canal, charged the captain of the packet with

¹) The death of Mariah Wright is reported in B.R. 1:24, 3/27/57; 1:25,
4/8/37. The divorce is reported in B.R. 14:12, 12/16/69. On the fine
for wife beating, see B.R. 15:7, 11/10/70.
rape; but the charge was dismissed, Miss Haggard's character being "of
the most questionable kind."\(^1\)

The poorer a woman was the greater her chance of suffering
violent sexual assault. Sometimes these same women drank, cursed,
brawled in public and indulged in illicit intimacies, all of which were
taken to reduce the culpability of their assailants. They were suspected as
prostitutes. This last character, the "common prostitute," is also brought
into view by the newspaper of the late 1850's. Some of these, like Ellen
Fuller and Eliza Ann Harp, seem to have been villagers, since they
reappeared, boozing and brawling on the canal docks, when their three
month sentence had been served. Others, like Lavinia Mackintosh, are
acknowledged transients, drifters through a grim and brutal life on the

canal.\(^2\)

There are other stories— the amateur abortionist who killed his
wife, the old married gentleman whose bastard son was born to a terrified
young Irish girl in her father's shack beside the canal— but one grows
numb after too many intimations of the squalor and drab banality of
much that was ordinary in village life.\(^3\)

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1) The young girl's rape is reported in B.R. 16:20, 2/8/72; 16:21, 2/15/72.
The Brockport rape case is reported in B.R. 1:6, 11/21/56; 1:15,
1/23/57; 1:30, 4/6/57. Additional cases are reported in B.R. 1:19,
2/20/57; 1:41, 7/24/57.

2) Early reports of prostitution appear in B.R. 3:1, 10/15/58; 3:28, 4/22/59;
4:37, 6/21/60; 5:34, 5/30/61.

3) The unsuccessful abortion is reported in B.R. 6:17, 1/30/62. Frances
Several geographers have attempted to apply the terms and concepts of phenomenology to the idea of place, with writers such as Relph and Tuan tending to stand out because of the ready comprehensibility of their writing. Although the meaning of this literature is notoriously elusive, and one suspects some of the authors of using the phenomenology label as a subjectivistic hunting licence, a basic unity exists in the recognition of Heidegger's notion of the "existential state" of human "Being-in-the-world." This has been useful for criticism of the camera epistemology of positivism, but it has not yielded (and cannot, perhaps, yield) a vigorous methodological alternative.

Geographers writing in this vein are, in at least one sense, neo-Kantian. When used among geographers this label can signify either a concern with description and exceptionalism or an interest in "the structuring activity of the thinking subject," although the two strains are increasingly intertwined. This text embodies both strains. It is, to a significant degree if not entirely, descriptive, and it contains a running commentary on the structuring activity of its author. In this chapter the descriptive quality of the text is particularly pronounced because I felt that these stories might further what Entrikin described as "the narrative-like qualities that give structure to our attempts to capture the particular connections between people and places." There are, however, shortcomings in this venture which suggest problems with Entrikin's claim that the process of emplotment has some similarities in function to the concept of value

relevance in neo-Kantian arguments concerning idiographic concept formation.1 Places are not experienced as narratives, nor, as the phenomenologists maintain, are they experienced simply as the settings for narratives.

In Kant's words, "the classification of perceptions according to concepts is the logical classification, that according to time and space the physical classification.2 Each of these forms of classification can also be understood as a form of comprehension, as an act of grasping together things that are not necessarily seen together.3 According to Ricoeur, the physical comprehension of time assumes the structure of a plot. Plots convey the meaning of time, which otherwise resists direct description. Ricoeur quotes Augustine as saying of time, "I know well enough what is [time] is, provided that nobody asks me: but if I am asked what it is and try to explain, I am baffled."4 This bafflement is philosophical aporia, a sense of being at a loss as to where to begin or what to say. This aporia is overcome with a plot, which embodies the abstraction of time in concrete events, and which dictates the limits of inception and conclusion.

What then of space? Until we begin to fill the abstraction with concrete and, moreover, human content, attempts at description also provoke philosophical aporia.5 Even furnished with namable items, space presents a conundrum of description. The question is not how far back one must go in a succession of events, but rather where in a configuration, at which of the

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4) Ricoeur, p. xi.
A start can be made toward the imposition of order with identification of a center, a territory, and an outer boundary, but this diagrammatic concept would seem to require a relatively high degree of spatial abstraction derived from a knowledge of maps. In order to arrive at a description of the mode of comprehension which transforms space into a human place we might construct an analogue of Ricoeur's description of the relation of time and narrative. As Ricoeur puts it, "time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence." Space, we can tentatively propose, becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through the mode of place, and place attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of spatial existence.

As a condition of spatial existence the center of a place is the locus of public action. For a western family this can be a table, a hearth or a television. For an academic department it can be a coffee machine, a bank of mailboxes or a lunch table. For a settlement it can be a plaza, a square or a street. In Barthes' words, "the center is the gathering place," it is "the place of our meeting with the other." If the center is the gathering place, then the edge consists of places of retreat: bedrooms, offices, houses, or other sites of relative or absolute solitude. The internal movement of a place is not, as with an event, a progression from start to finish; it is a succession of advances into the public center and retreats into the multiple havens of the private fringe. Collectively these migrations form a pulse of...

2) Ricoeur, p. 51.
convergence and dispersal, a ceaseless shuttle driven by the rapidity with which most persons satiate their gregarious and hermitic appetites.

If, as Ricoeur (following Aristotle) claims, plot is the mimesis of an action, what form of writing provides a mimesis of this perpetual advance and retreat, of this endless convergence and dispersal? Lutwack suggests its essential difference from plot when he writes that "attitudes toward earth as the place of man's habitation are ambivalent and not progressive." Macior has described the inscription of this very ambivalence in the landscape itself. The landscape reformers of the second half of the nineteenth century sought to unite the symbolic innocence of a pristine landscape and the symbolic sophistication of an improved landscape into an ambivalent symbol of "urban pastoralism." This, he claims, constructed a "moral geography" which synthesized urbanity and rusticity into a stationary resolution of "the personal conflict between self fulfillment and group identification."

With its account of the initial enthusiasm for the Civil War, this chapter provides one image of a rush toward a public center and group identification. With its accounts of the privatization of leisure and moral responsibility, it provides images of retreat to a private fringe and self fulfillment. Thus it may be said in a purely formal sense to reflect what I take to be the essential structure of the experience of place. As an act of comprehension it is, however, a bundle of narratives which seem to embody time rather than space, duration rather than dimension. The reason that Brockport seems to have a plot is that these stories describe public (in other words publicized) events. In spatial terms they describe events that occurred at some sort

1) Lutwack, p. 18.
They do not capture the full dimensionality of the place, however, since a multitude of private, unpublicized events have been situated not on the margin, as they are in a place, but beyond the margin, as they are in a narrative. Once again, it is clear that Entrikin's "narrative-like qualities" of place emerge only after radical and systematic excision. A plot is a remnant that has survived prolonged forgetting.
Chapter 11
Village Beautification: 1869-1880

The landscape tastes of the late 19th century left an indelible mark on many of the villages of upstate New York. Indeed, for many individuals an image of the village of 1880 provides a benchmark from which to gauge the error of later deviations. This image is, obviously, highly selective, since it omits the objectionable features that have been removed, and, being now so firmly associated with tradition, it is seldom recognized as the product of a conscious effort to appear up-to-date. In Brockport during this period two of the three principal downtown churches were built; the facades of the commercial buildings received their ornamental encrustations; the great houses, executed in picturesque styles, were built, or rebuilt over older bases; working yards became ornamental lawns; and the streets were cleared of rubbish and cows. With the introduction of the novel idea of artistry to the older notions of dwelling, this change conforms to the transition between what J.B. Jackson termed "landscape one" and "landscape two." Three features of the transformation, all described by Jackson, are of particular importance.

The village was, increasingly, an object to be viewed, both for pleasure and as a text. Its visible form was a message signifying something about its inhabitants, both collectively and as individuals. In 1870, the newspaper editor commended his readers.

13: Village Beautification, 1860-1880

The recent excellent taste exhibited by many of our citizens in fitting up dwellings and stores so as to make them ornamental and attractive, shows that there is a growing spirit of improvement among the people - a desire to keep space with neighboring villages characterized by progress'.

But their efforts were not, in the editor's eye, entirely successful. One year later he wrote:

"This village, as concerns its public improvements, may properly be ranked about half way between the unchangeable customs prevalent half a century ago, and the vim and enterprise that characterize the new villages in the far West. We are not, as a people, very strongly wedded to the past; yet we have not that spirit of progress which induces us to accept well tried and judicious improvements. What we need is a breaking loose from habits and customs that should have become obsolete, and the anticipation of a better order of things. Progress, enterprise and public spirit should be the public's motto."

The village would be taken, after all, as "a business community a go-ahead community," where the employment of obsolete technology was derided as "old fogyish," and the retention of outdated practices was ridiculed as "old fogyism." 1

Secondly, the village began to be constructed with an eye toward permanence, or at least the appearance of permanence. "While Brockport is a beautiful village, and possesses a superior class of people, we do not think it is finished," the newspaper editor wrote. His emphasis no doubt intended to highlight the double meaning of the word. Public-

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1) The two extended quotes are drawn from B.R. 1:2, 1:6, 11/1/56, 1:2, 12/11/56. The characterization of Brockport as a "go-ahead community" is drawn from B.R. 1:5, 11/1/56.
improvements that emulated those found in Rochester were presented as proof of the continued economic vitality of the village, but these same improvements expressed a contradictory message of settling down. 1

One of the improvements which Beach insisted upon before the village could be considered as finished was adequate fire protection. I have argued that the absence of a reliable fire company was an aspect of the village in its unfinished phase, and thus, as one might have predicted, the formation of an efficient fire company, equipped with a steam powered pump, may be taken as a sign that Main Street was "finished." 2

This occurred in 1877, following the last of the old style fires. Early on the morning of January 12th a kerosene lamp exploded in the grocery of Isaac Davis, a three story frame building on the north side of Market Street. It spread to his house, immediately adjacent, before the grocer could give the alarm. The near incineration of his wife and daughter added weight to Davis' explanation of the fire's accidental origin. Driven by a wind out of the northwest the flames advanced eastward through a series of frame stores, their progress only slightly retarded by a heavy blanket of snow. Due to its reputation for unreliability the fire engine, Conqueror II, was tardily deployed. Although it proved unexpectedly efficacious, its performance was brief. The well from which water was being drawn ran dry and the machine's valves were irreparably clogged with a sudden induction of sludge. Its late appearance and short service permitted the destruction of several buildings, the old Methodist Church, now a millinery shop and stove store, among them. The brick walls of the

1) B.R. 3:23, 3/18/61
church, and the slow burning timbers of its heavy frame checked the
eastward progress of the blaze, but it leapt to the north side of Market
Street, consumed some small stores, and threatened the Getty House, a
hotel which stood on the corner.

Fire fighting was, in accord with past custom, chaotic. It fell to the
conscientious postmistress, Mrs Baker, to rescue the mail from the post
office, which occupied a store just west of that ignited by Davis' faulty
lamp. Finding her keys inoperative, Baker broke out a window, climbed
through the jagged aperture, badly cutting her face in passage, and
rescued the endangered mail. The town clerk was not as successful in his
efforts to retrieve the town records from his desk in the Richards store,
where he worked as a clerk. Clearing the office of the Temperance Times,
a prohibitionist paper run by some of the village women, rescuers
actuated by panic (or perhaps, since some were liquor vendors, malice)
dumped the trays of type into coal scuttles and pails. As usual, furniture
was saved from the fire only to smash on the street below the window
from which it was thrown. Looters exploited the confusion, and a number
of loafing drunks who gathered in the pale January morning light to
watch the excitement got into fights, the sites of their battles later marked
by bloodstains in the snow. "Owing to the lack of a 'boss' nearly enough
wind was expended, giving and countermanding orders," the newspaper
ditor admitted, to have blown the fire out.

The blaze was finally brought under control by a steam pumper
discharged, from Rochester by train. This arrived about three hours after
the explosion. Two months later a new Silsby Steamer was tested in the
village. This proved "successful in every particular," and, breaking with their long habit of parsimony, villagers voted by an overwhelming majority to purchase the machine. In an unprecedented display of public spirit merchants and manufacturers subsidized the formation of fire companies, bringing to a close a long era of negligence and ensuring the persistence of most of the commercial structures that had been built by the prosperity that followed the Civil War.¹

Finally, the landscape began to be divided into spaces that were devoted to special, well defined functions. This of course parallels similar changes in factory and house design, where the segmentation of tasks brought about a segmentation of spaces. But there is a difference. The novel definition of spaces within the village was not intended simply to expedite the flow of the productive processes that took place there. It was intended to cope with the social, cultural and environmental stresses that accompanied limited industrialization.

Much of this reorganization was voluntary, and some of it was unintentional, but a significant part was played by the village trustees. The actions of the early trustees are not known, the records prior to 1855 having been lost, it is widely believed, to fire.² Nevertheless, it is reasonable to presume that their powers to write and enforce ordinances...

¹) The report of the Market Street fire appears in B.R. 21:17 1/18/77. The purchase of the steam pumper, names the E.B. Huntley for its patron, the village manufacturer, see B.R. 21:19. 2/1/77: 21:24, 3/8/77. Numerous notices describe the formation of the new fire companies, of which there were soon three, a number that ensures that a spirit of competition would stimulate their exertions in fighting fires.

²) I believe that some of these records may be entombed in the cornerstone of the Baptist church.
and to raise revenue, were quite restricted. In 1852 the charter was revised, but this instrument did not grant the powers to tax and fine that the Republicans, who swept into power in 1859, deemed necessary to run the village. The Republicans succeeded in revising the charter in 1864, enlarging their power to raise taxes, and in adopting a new charter, outlined by the State Legislature in its General Act for the Incorporation of Villages (April 20, 1872), in 1872.

After the first elections under the new charter, the trustees executed their business with "a hitherto unknown degree of celerity." Some were heard to mutter that their actions were peremptory. They pressed forward with a program of "moral reforms," and attempted to close businesses on Sunday. One dissenting board member was led to compare his colleagues to the three tailors of Hooley Street who resolved they were the people of England. Effective restrictions were placed on public grazing; disposal in the streets of the contents of styes, privies, and hog pens; public bonfires (except on the fourth of July); "loud halloowing," horn blowing and other disturbances on Sunday and after dark, and daylight bathing in the canal.

1) Some information about the early village trustees is recorded in B.R. 19:20, 2/11/75. Chauncy White was the first Republican Town Supervisor, B.R. 3:21, 1/4/59. The sweep of the village charter elections by a Republican Ticket appears in B.R. 3:26, 4/8/59. Complaints (and some information) about the charter of April 9, 1852, appear in B.R. 8:20, 2/18/64. The revisions of 1864 are reported in B.R. 8:34, 5/26/64. The particulars of the charter of 1872 are reported in B.R. 16:32, 5/2/72, 16:36, 5/30/72.

2) The results of the first election under the new charter are reported in B.R. 17:33, 3/20/73. The note on the unnerving celerity of their actions appears in B.R. 17:43, 3/27/73. For notices on the "program of moral reform" see B.R. 16:32, 5/2/72, 16:35, 5/23/72, 16:38, 6/13/72, 17:13, 12/19/72.
By Their Streets Shall ye know them

"Twas said of men in olden times," the editor sententiously wrote in 1859, "by their works shall ye know them, and it can with equal propriety be said of towns, villages, and cities in modern days -by their streets shall ye know them." The slovenly carelessness of earlier years, tolerable in the hopeful light of extravagant expectations, grew unacceptably ugly with the dimming of this glow. "The public character, the same as the individual character, is judged correctly by the evidence of taste and improvement exhibited," the editor had written two years earlier, and the muddy ruts of the ungraded streets were a sign, not, as before, that the place was on its way, but that it had regretfully failed to arrive.

Horatio Beach undertook a campaign of street reform. His preferences were simple. Streets should be wide, straight, and regular, preferably lined with trees, but not with a density of crown sufficient to prevent the sun from drying the mud. These opinions were neatly summarized in his comments on the street pattern of Boston, which he visited in 1860. He was appalled by "a religious liberality" he found running "through all sects, be they orthodox, heterodox or infidel," but he reserved his strongest execrations for the street pattern.

"My first impressions of Boston are all summed up in the word disgust. My impressions were, of course, formed by a hasty and cursory view of the principal business streets in the heart of the city. They are pent up, curving, crooked, twisting, zig-zag: full of right angles, triangles,

oblongs and every other form of seven by nine
"courts," "squares" and "places."

The editor was no an admirer of the picturesque. Much more admirable
he found "the streets of Providence, [which] by their width and
straightness, exhibit a pleasing contrast with those of Boston."1

Back in his newspaper office in May of the following year, Beach
was poring over the village map, completed that spring by George
Stevens. The map, like the street numbers that had just appeared on the
Main Street stores, was a sign of advancement, he wrote, in "our almost
city village," but it revealed one striking fault. "The majority of the best
residences in the village are located on the wide streets," he wrote, and
thus it seemed

"remarkably strange that in the recent layout
of roadways, on the outskirts of the village,
lanes have generally preference over streets.
Two rod lanes are a nuisance to the value of
property; three rod streets are very pleasant,
and four rod streets are magnificent."

These "lanes" of course served the shanty towns of the burgeoning
population of laborers. These landscapes on the outskirts were temporary,
and their inhabitants use of the space was informal. It is doubtful that
they were squatters, but neither does it appear that they rented a well
defined plot. Clear property lines may not have been drawn until the
shanty's were cleared away to make room for middle class housing. One
aspect of this informal use of space was encroachment on the streets. In
some cases shacks were erected on the right of way, but it was more

1) B.R. 4:42, 7/26/60; 4:44, 8/3/60.
Fig. 11.1. Horace Thayer produced this map of Brockport in 1861.
Fig. 11.1. Horace Thayer produced this map of Brockport in 1861.
frequently the case that yards were extended, often as much as six feet, into the roadway. The boldness of the appropriation varied from person to person and, as a consequence, so did the width of the street.

These irregularities were for the most part eliminated in the 1870's.

The change conforms to what Jackson described as the transition from the informal use of space, characteristic of Europeans prior to the Renaissance, to the regularities and definitions prescribed by the aesthetics, and the politics, of that era.

Enough to Make a Dog Vomit

The streets provided the village with a "commons" and as such they served as the receptacle for ashes, clinkers, rubbish and trash. "People of good taste do not throw rubbish in the streets and let it lie there," chided the editor; but, he was forced to admit, "there are several evidences of bad taste in our village." Even the well-to-do residents of State Street emptied their ash cans into the street, greatly impairing its surface for sleighing. When hoop skirts went out of fashion their whale bone frames went into the streets, possibly with the excuse that they would fill in the soft spots.

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1) George Stevens' map was published by Thayer in 1861, and it was sold to village residents for $1.00. A copy of this map hangs in the Brockport Museum, and a photostat is available at the Rundel Library in Rochester. The notice of the map's availability appears in B.R. 5:28, 4/18/61. Beach's comments appear in B.R. 5:17, 1/31/61. George Com was ordered to remove his shop from Washington street, where it was built in the right of way. See B.R. 6:35, 6/2/64. Complaints about the extension of yards into the streets are frequent, see B.R. 12:33, 6/18/68; 16:47, 8/15/72.

2) References to the practice of throwing rubbish into the streets are frequent. The quote appears in B.R. 13:34, 5/20/69.
Poorer neighborhoods probably lacked hooped skirts to discard. For residents living over the Main Street stores there were, apparently, no sanitary facilities, and they used the streets, and more particularly the alleys, as receptacles for "filth and other noxious substances." The accumulated slop, which the village trustees sought without success to channel into the canal, stood three feet deep. Merchants were obliged to discontinue ventilation of their stores through the back door. The stink was "such that the street commissioner would not supervise performance of the work" of clearing away by wagon what turned out to be thirty-two loads of garbage and excrement. The police constable, who had reason to frequent the alley in pursuit of his duties, reported that the filth was deposited by women residing over the business blocks. The following June, the unlucky car man, Mr. Franklin, who the trustees had engaged to clear the swill and slops from behind the alley running south off of Water Street, opined that the stink was enough to make a dog vomit, and that, working in the vicinity, he himself found it difficult "to keep one meal down a day."

Eventually this and other less noteworthy accumulations were channeled into the canal, a midden that had lost none of its former convenience. The spring thaw would disclose numerous carcasses of exterminated dogs and cats tethered by cords to stones at the bottom of the canal. Thankfully, the subsequent inundation submerged these, while it

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1) The first notice of human waste in the alleys behind the Main Street stores appears in the Trustee's minutes printed in B.A. 11:37, 6/13/67. The problem was most acute behind the Cornes and Minot blocks, on the east side of Main street adjacent to the canal. See B.A. 16:35, 5/23/72, 6:38, 6/13/72, 6/39, 6/20/72, 17:33, 6/5/73.
also served to "drift away the dead horses that by their stench are becoming an intolerable nuisance in the west part of the village."

Throughout the boating season the canal conveyed a steady burden of "dead horses, hogs, cats and other brutes" discarded by the villages to the west. In one of these villages an unwanted infant was bound and similarly jettisoned. Certain heavy fish were said to exist in the cloacal depths of the canal, but they were "not sufficiently plenty to render fishing a pleasure, except to those having an immense amount of patience." 1

This did not, however, disqualify its frozen surface from serving as "a field for procuring ice, to those who can become oblivious to the existence of many an old horse that has given up the ghost, and has been deposited in the general receptacle for all filth." One became oblivious by pulling considerable stock in the supposed purification that accompanied freezing.

**Milkman and the Modern Village**

Livestock was, for the most part, free to forage on the margins of village streets and in the middens of village alleys. Public grazing was usual in the countryside and the practice, like that of casting garbage into the streets, was continued in the village. The laws restricting the liberty of livestock, particularly during rutting season, were apparently

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Villagers loosed their pigs into the street at dusk. One unruly boar charged a young woman bound for church and pierced her calf with his tusk. Although barred by state law from grazing the public roads in 1862, cows were freed to amble about the streets for at least another decade. The streets were also home to a few hundred dogs, most of them their own, and only, master.1

Villagers fenced their yards with pickets, available now from the steam powered planing mill, but the "half starved cows" contrived to "crawl through a tight board fence," and to "lift gates from their hinges." when the maneuver gave them access to an orchard or garden. In 1868 a cattle law was passed and the roadsides were closed. This provoked bitter resentment among folk accustomed to the privilege of public grazing. One resident of Sweden, who had advocated the law and urged vigorous prosecution of its violators, found his prized stallion dead, its carotid artery severed by the razor of an anonymous protestors. Two others found their barns in flames. A fourth supporter of the law, living just to the north in the town of Hamlin, received through the mail a single, ominous match. Undeterred, the trustees arranged a pound and

1) On nocturnal habits of domestic pigs, see the B.R. 6:28, 4/17/62; on grazing cows, B.R. 6:34, 5/29/62; on village dogs, which numbered 150 at the time of their mandatory licensing, see the B.R. 6:37, 6/19/62: 17:48, 5/1/73.
rounded up most of the stray cows. For good measure they poisoned the independent dogs.  

The impoundage of cattle was not wholly successful, and vagrant cows continued to lend a rustic note to the village scene for another five years until power of the trustees was enhanced by the revised charter of 1873. But their numbers were reduced. The village poor continued to unleash goats, sheep and, less frequently pigs, but these beasts were tolerated in a conscious act of charity. Others began to graze cows in the "village pasture" north of the canal. This had been known as the "village commons" or the "Circus Lot," and it had served in either capacity until its owner, Edgar Holmes, having lost all of his assets in the Chicago fire, returned to his native village. In an effort to recoup his incinerated fortune he fenced the pasture, and divided the frontage into building lots. It remained a "commons" in a small sense, however, since the cow dung engendered a mushroom crop which villagers were free to harvest.

An increasing number of villagers chose to dispense with a cow. They drove the animals from their yards and replaced them with flower


beds. This abandonment of backyard husbandry was made possible by the Rich family of Coolie's Basin, beside the canal just to the east of the village. In 1867 the Rich's began to deliver milk to village households, and by 1872 they had over four hundred clients. In the same year that the Rich family opened their dairy, forty farmers in West Sweden combined to form the West Sweden Cheese Association.¹

Although a few individuals flaunted the law, or attempted its circumvention by having their children lead the cow down the street, at an unhurried pace, at the end of a rope, the problem of cows in the streets was effectively resolved in 1873. In fact the margins of the roads were suddenly overgrown with rank grass and weeds. The restrictions against public grazing had one further consequence: with animals no longer free to roam the streets many of the fences that were erected to keep them out came down. In the same year that the Brockport restrictions were effectively enacted, editor Beach wrote a description of the nearby village of LeRoy:

"LeRoy has adopted a new fashion which we believe is not in vogue elsewhere. Many of the residences have no front fences, the yards and lawns being thrown open to the streets. The fashion is a radical innovation on old customs; but we are not sure that it will prove a pleasant and popular one."

However there is evidence that the innovation was copied in Brockport within the year.  

The eviction of the cows was linked to village beautification in three ways. First of all, streets which contained cows, or the unavoidable evidence of cows, were thought to bear poor testimony to the village's degree of advancement, a point on which residents were increasingly sensitive. Secondly, cows had appetites that were inimical to manicured lawns, which an enlarged portion of the population maintained as a sign of what the newspaper assured them was "good taste." Finally, because liquid milk was commercially available, the privilege of public grazing was no longer required by the middle class, who stood behind the beautification movement.

Signs of Public Spirit: Street Lamps, Sidewalks, and Trees

Street lamps and shade trees were planted beside the streets as a part of this effort to enhancing their appearance. Practical reasons could be produced, and when taxpayers quibbled they were; but the initial stimulus seems to have been a desire for streets of a more pleasing and modern appearance. The editor began one of his endorsements of street lights with the complaint that, due to their absence, one was needlessly obliged to "splash through mud holes, stumble over broken planks or run in collision with trees and outswinging gates;" but he ended with a comment that may have been more to the point. Lamps at street

1) For mention of the sudden appearance of long grass on the roadides, see B.R. 17:35, 6/19/73; 18:38, 6/11/74. Beach's comment on LeRoy appears in B.R. 17:45, 9/14/73.
Intersections would "give them a cheerful appearance and at the same time add the the reputable fame we are getting abroad for our enterprise and public spirit."

The first street lamps appeared in 1860, one year after gas began to be produced at the gas plant in the village. The cost of construction and fuel was at first met by private subscriptions. The first lamps were north of the canal, supplied by a line laid out to the house of Isaac Palmer, president of the gas works, in Clarkson. These illuminated Main Street where it passed the harvester works and the dubious neighborhoods of its employees, a fact that suggests a hidden motive of crime control in the street lighting program. More were desired for the "pecuniary and moral advantage" they offered to the village, and they began to appear in better parts of town by 1861.

Efforts to have the village undertake illumination of all of its streets, or to pay for the gas consumed by the privately erected lamps, failed at first, but within a year of the lamps first appearance the village board was spending three hundred dollars, over half of its contingency fund, for gas. This represented the beginning of a significant shift in the way the village was run. As Bellamy Partridge described the matter in Phelps, New York, the prevailing attitude had been that "the town had no

1) Street lamps were first proposed in 1856. See B.R. 1:2, 10/24/56. The quote appears in B.R. 4:16, 1/26/60.
2) The lamps north of the canal are reported in B.R. 4:18, 2/9/60.
3) The initial rejection of the proposal is noted in B.R. 4:26, 4/5/60. The fact that the village is funding street lighting appears in B.R. 5:52, 10/7/61, 8:20, 2/25/64.
more reason to light a man's way than it had to polish his boots or button his overcoat."

The same could be said for sidewalks. Along Main Street these were paved with local brick, but succeeding winters had left them "full of holes and of a very uneven surface." In the residential areas they were made of planks, rotten for the most part and rickety. This apparently bothered very few people, other than the newspaper editor, who fanatically pushed for the punishment and public humiliation of those landowners, a daunting majority, who failed to maintain or shovel their walks. The trustees' made ominous noises that seemed to have scared no one until eventually, in 1869, facing a lawsuit brought by a woman who twisted her ankle, they began reluctantly to repair the sidewalks at public expense.

In a move actuated by aesthetic motives the trustees used the enlarged regulatory powers of the 1864 charter to prohibit injury to all of the trees which lined the roadside. They took care to specify that this included the use of trees as hitching posts. Shade trees were planted along village streets, as they were, over the same period, planted along country roads. Elm was preferred for its promise of graceful lines, and, in company with the more readily germinated maple, it came to replace the "old, ill shapen," locust. These had sprung up since 1829, when a

1) Bellamy Partridge, Big Family. (New York: Whittlesey House, 1941), p. 277

2) Complaints and arguments over the condition of the sidewalks are very common. I give here citations only for those notices from which quotes or significant information is drawn. The first quote, on the condition of Main street sidewalks comes from B.R. 1:2, 10/24/56. The notice on the assumption of responsibility for sidewalk repair by the village trustees appears in B.R. 13:44, 7/29/69.
traveler on the canal had written that Brockport had "not a shade tree to be seen." "People only think of shade trees after they are gone," this same traveler continued, "and they are consequently compelled to go without for some twenty or thirty years." Evidently the villagers had attempted to abbreviate this wait with the fast growing locust, a tree whose gnarled and vaguely sinister shape their increasingly judicious eye found unsatisfactory. It may be, too, that the locust came under the odium that Stephen Daniels has discovered attached to other quick setting trees.\footnote{Stephen Daniels, "The Political Iconography of Woodland in later Georgian England," in The Iconography of Landscape. Edited by Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).}

This boscage set the village apart from "the heated walls and pavements of the city," and recommended it as the site for a State Normal School. Trees testified to the fact that the village was, in the words of F.P. Root, "pervaded by a healthy, moral atmosphere, and in a great measure exempt from the corrupting influences of a city." By 1871 residents of New York City were summering in Brockport. The qualities by which they were drawn, "bracing air and... the pleasant scenery of the surrounding country," were probably viewed with equivocation by village boosters, for whom a whiff of coal smoke was a boon sign; but it seems clear that they were coming to see that charm was an asset.\footnote{On the trees, see B.R. 8:30, 9/15/64; 12:33, 5/14/68; 15:35, 5/25/71; 15:18 1/26/71. Root's quote appears in B.R. 20:52 9/21/76. On the summer folk, see B.R. 15:41, 7/6/71; 15:44, 7/27/71.}

Street lights, sidewalks and shade trees were first undertaken as voluntary efforts on behalf of convenience and civic pride. The resulting improvements were irregular and subject to neglect. Responsibility for...
each endeavor passed to the village government because of the uniformity this would insure.

The Nuisance of Sports

Technologic, economic and legislative changes succeeded in clearing the streets of impending fences, unauthorized buildings, unsanitary slop and unmanageable cows by the middle of the 1870's. As a part of this effort to keep the streets clear, builders were no longer permitted to stack their materials in them. In addition to being a temporary storage space the streets were, in customary usage, a play space. This use was also removed to a new, specialized space.

A baseball game was played in Rochester in 1825, but the sport, which originated in the so called "New England game," may have been pursued at an earlier date. It may very well have been baseball to which F.P. Root referred when he recalled that the pioneers of Sweden, when they gathered to build a barn, "would work' with all speed to get the raising done, then to have a ball play or other sport." If this is correct, it seems unlikely that baseball was novel when it was identified as a nuisance after the war, although the intensity, duration and frequency of play may have been unprecedented.

In 1860 a meeting was held to consider formation of a "Cricket Club," although nothing follows to indicate the outcome of their deliberations. After the war the enthusiasm for baseball increased. The Eclipse Baseball Club of Brockport, which enjoyed its first victory with a

\[1\] Fischer, pp. 150-51.
73-54 win over the Amateur Baseball Club of Albion, played on the recently abandoned fairgrounds, but, much to the detriment of windows and horses’ nerves, other enthusiasts played in the streets. In April of 1871, the newspaper reported “the baseball nuisance is again rife here in our streets.” Despite an ordinance prohibiting ball playing within ten rods of a house or store, the nuisance continued. In 1874, village boys not enrolled in the Normal School were denied use of the field on the college grounds. The newspaper editor took the opportunity to revive his call, once again ignored, for a public park. Ultimately the boys rented their own field, a solution that apparently satisfied everyone but their neighbor, a gentlemen agitated by the players’ loud vulgarities, and driven by his indignation to chase them around the ball field with a pistol.1

The other sport commonly pursued on the village streets was horse racing, and this too seems to have become more frequent after the war, when prosperity allowed men to own fast horses and place wagers. This sport was unsuited to public thoroughfares, since it ran down pedestrians and spooked carriage horses, and this had caused the construction of

numerous driving parks throughout the region. One such track was
staked out on the farm of John Walch near the end of Clark Street.\(^1\)

**Rowdyism**

The functions of the streets were progressively reduced, and the
expunged functions were removed to specialized spaces in the landscape.
This was not undertaken to facilitate an increase in the volume or the
speed of traffic. The impetus for the project was primarily a concern for
orderly appearance. It was, in fact, an emulation of the spatial
segregation characteristic of cities, like Rochester, of whose prosperity
Brockporters were (with some reservations) envious. Cities were not,
however, without detractions. This was something that the editor noted in
a protest against county taxes. Rochester "can not with reason call on us
to defray the public expenses," he wrote, "which originate exclusively
within its borders, or which are greatly augmented by the evils
inseparable from city life."

Some of these expenses were, however, falling upon Brockport; and
although it was vigorously maintained that their origins were extraneous,
it remained indisputable that their impact was local. The "evils"
inextricable from city life were the concomitants of industrialization and
class formation. They were the crucial discrepancies between the
increasingly alien life of the working class and the sentimental
expectations of the provincial bourgeoisie. This conflict was worked out

\(^1\) I have not recorded reports of horse races. The driving park on Clark
Street is reported in *B.R.* 21:44, 7/19/77.
in public life and pursued in public places, which is to say the streets. Street life, which became increasingly hostile, provided evidence of diminished authority of traditional community leaders. An attitude of deference was replaced with an attitude of defiance, and the conspicuous primness of the street improvements were belied an audible degeneracy in street life.

Rowdies had been known "to roam around the streets late at night wantonly destroying property," but their numbers had been small and their depredations infrequent. A rash of vandalism and debauchery accompanied a canal break, when the immobilized boatmen came ashore, but these revelries were borne with the assurance that their perpetrators' presence was temporary. Deacon Stark, a Bethel missionary who worked the Brockport docks entreatin the "sinful boatmen" to accept a copy of the Bible, claimed in 1862 that their had been a marked improvement in their behavior. Brockporters congratulated themselves on their graduation from their old classification as a "hard town" of "bloody rows and brutal fights" where "battered heads and bloody noses are neither few or far between," but it seems their celebrations were premature. They were beset now by young men, flagrantly drinking and not infrequently menacing, who were fellow residents of the sedate and inoffensive couples that they scandalized. These bands revived the shivaree, but it was not, as in the original, a call from one's peers. It was a threat, no less so for its superficial jollity, posed by a band one did not pretend to know.1

1) For Beach's characterization of urban life, B.R. 13:38, 6/17/69. For the note of the pacification of Brockport, see B.R. 1:33, 4/29/57. For an early notice of rowdism, see B.R. 3:13, 1/7/59. For another report
Gathered beneath the wooden awning of Harrison, King and Elmore, the largest grain dealers in the village, on the corner of Main and Market Streets, with a vantage on the traffic and free shelter from the elements, the village "whittler's association" compiled their endless commentary on the village, the nation and the contents of various bank accounts. As an aid to their complaisant or melancholy thoughts the men clove long splinters from the awning poles and gouged the wooden sidewalk with their knives. They carved away the porch until its scored and attenuated timbers sagged; until Harrison, impatient with the destruction but mindful of rights obtained through long usage, presented them with a shed on the narrow strip of land adjacent to the store.1

Harrison's new porch had hardly weathered when it, and his store, and the stores of his neighbors, not to mention the whittler's hut, burned to the ground. It was May of 1862. The war was on; business was brisk, and the merchants, knowing the brevity of booms, were eager to resume trade. To guard their recent profits against inflation they invested in buildings, and all were back in business, more imposingly housed than before, by late fall. But the whittler's shed was not restored. The war that enlivened business was death to loafers, sometimes literally. The newspaper noted their rarity. Even those who were not enlisted in the army were out of sight. Unwilling to endure expressions of public

on rowdyism, in which the shivaree is mentioned, see B.R. 15:48, 8/24/73.

disapproval, they took refuge in obscure havens removed from the public eye.\(^1\)

When peace returned the loungers reappeared, but with a presence more intractable and obnoxious than before. There was cruelty, not to mention crudity, in their comments. Loud and unabashed oaths were more frequently heard. Young boys of indefinite parentage delighted in the vulgar abuse of respectable men. Crowds of young men gathered below the open windows of young ladies and debated in indiscreet detail the national scandal of Henry Ward Beecher. Young men loitered in front of the harvester works and on Main Street insulting the young ladies as they scurried, psalmody against their breasts, to church. It was a game to spot their retreating hemlines with tobacco juice. The grounds for this complaint, predictable in the wake of war, are of course unverifiable, but the perception that profanity was on the increase drove the trustees to consider measures to suppress the practice. Lewd behavior directed at young women probably stood behind the trustee's prohibition against bathing in the canal during daylight hours.\(^2\)

Young boys were also perceived as increasingly unruly. They had taken to ringing doorbells and clubbing doors for the satisfaction of perturbing occupants. They loitered around the churches, harassing the

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\(^2\) On the increase in public profanity, see B.R. 16:33, 7/25/72. On the young tobacco spitters, see B.R. 19:33, 5/13/75. On the trustees' consideration of measures to curb profanity, see B.R. 19:40, 7/1/75. On the prohibition against bathing in the canal, which set the fine at $1.00, see B.R. 17:13, 12/19/72; 20:28, 4/6/76.
Ilewattled assemb ling congregation, and disrupting the service. When the sexton was dispatched to disperse them he was pelted with stones. In the evening they engaged in exuberant games like "hunt the grey," damaging not only the silence, but also the gardens, hedges and fences through and over which the game took them. After dark their sports were silent. They became adept at "cooni ng" apples and watermelons, coon hunting being the purported reason for their nocturnal rambling. They crouched beside the sidewalk, in shadows deepened by smashing the street lamp, and awaited a victim with a trip wire suspended some inches above the pavement. "The parents of such unpru dential males," the newspaper editor suggested, "should see that they are properly chastened and put to bed at dark." Boys apprehended in the branches of an apple tree without a prior invitation were sent to the reformatory. The mandatory education law passed in 1874, did little to remove urchins from the street. In fact, as the wealthy farmer F.P. Root interpreted it, in the past parents owned and educated their own children, interesting themselves personally in their progress and discipline. Now, since children have become the property of the State, and the State assumes the right and authority to educate them, it may be that parental care and responsibility has been too much withdrawn, and that a little bit of the discipline handed down from our New England parents and enjoyed by the children of our earliest settlers would improve the manners and conduct of those of the present day.

1) On the boy's door knocking and bell ringing and gate stealing, see B.R. 17:6 10/31/72; 17:46, 4/17/73. For one account of their depredations of church property, see B.R. 17:15, 1/27/73. For censure of their rambunctious play, see B.R. 17:47, 4/24/73. The accounts of fruit stealing are innumerable, the term "cooning" is used in B.R. 17:42, 8/7/73. On the destruction of street lamps, see B.R. 14:52, 9/22/70. On the appearance of the trip wire, see B.R. 20:50, 9/7/76. One call
Picket fences were broken down, gates were unhinged and stolen. Flowering vines were torn from their trellises. In the fashion of the wild west combatants began to throw one another through the plate glass windows of stores. The vandals, like those who threw the contents of Thomas Cornes' meat market into the canal, were wanton. The violation of the recently ornamented lawns provoked a particularly intemperate outcry. The newspaper editor, reporting on the destruction of two sidewalk gates, broke out:

"every person finding his property being damaged should be a law unto himself and inflict personal chastisement on his depredators. Let one or two such miscreants be shot down while at their wanton work and no more private property will be destroyed."

Burglaries were also on the increase, presumably due to the increasingly valuable contents of houses. Once again the prescription was draconian.

"Against burglars there is one safe remedy. Shoot them. No person was ever punished for shooting a house burglar, and none ever will be. It is a remedy that cures the first time that it is administered."

And the newspaper editor was not slow to identify the culprits. As the burglary scare mounted to a mania, with one quarter of the residents believing that a violation of their property had been attempted in a single night, he wrote:

1) for the detention of fruit thieves is in B.R. 14:50, 9/8/70. The observation of F.P. Root is found in B.R. 20:41, 7/8/76.
3) B.R. 3:38, 6/30/59

4) B.R. 3:39, 7/7/59
"Every person in the village who has no visible means of support, is under suspicion, without regard to his previous character. One good result of the burglaries will be that this class of person will be obliged to go to work, or be under the constant surveillance of the public."

The trustees instructed the village constable to crack down on malefactors. He responded that it was impracticable, beyond his ability and, furthermore, if one took account of the number of potential detainees, inimical to his re-election. He requested, and was granted, a partner with whom he could share the daily labor of keeping the peace and the election time tally of grudges, but he continued to wink at the less bellicose drunks. "If he saw a man going toward home and he wagged a little he let him go on," one of the trustees complained as he asseverated the instructions to discontinue the practice of lenience, and to keep the lock up consistently populated with no less that five or six inebriates.1

Stages for Mourning: From Burying Ground to Cemetery

Like the streets, the burying ground was the property of the corporation, which sold plots to residents for ten dollars each. In accord with New England tradition no particular sanctity accrued to the site.2 As the nomenclature suggests, it was simply the place where corpses were interred. It was a field, infrequently mowed for the hay it yielded and studded with stones to which little attention was paid. This too was touched by the beautification movement, which transformed the burying ground

2) Stilgoe, p. 228.
into something, the editor wrote, which "may worthily be dignified with the name of 'Cemetery'."

All of the plots in the original burying ground were sold by 1859, and the trustees obtained an adjacent lot to the west. The newspaper editor took the opportunity to express his desire that "due attention will be paid to make the same more attractive to the living by making it conform somewhat to that of other public spirited villages." "It has suffered from long neglect," he lamented, but he assured his readers, the expense of clearing the weeds and grading the carriage ways and walks "would return its cost in the enhanced value of property." In the spring of the following year the trustees had shade trees planted around the perimeter of the ground, an improvement the editor recommended might "be improved upon by selling trees in the 'yard generally, which in time will give it a picturesque and pleasant appearance.'"

At the same time some individuals began to tend their plots. Were this to become the universal practice, the editor wrote, "the cemetery would become, as it should, the great place for public resort." The installation of a pump suggests the growing need for water to irrigate perennial plantings: The village board planted one hundred evergreens in 1864, and the burying ground, "gradually improved by the setting out

1) The price of a plot is given in B.R. 3:36, 6/9/64. In 1873 no one could be found to mow the burying ground in exchange for the hay, and it became necessary to hire a mower. B.R. 17:35, 6/19/73. The quote is taken from B.R. 3:45, 8/18/59.
of shade trees and the addition of ornamental gravestones and monuments," became "a pleasant place of resort in fine weather." ¹

Indeed, it may have become too pleasant. In the summer of 1875, Carrie Platt, "a rather good looking young lady, about seventeen years of age," came to the village hall claiming that she was raped in the cemetery. She had gone there with her husband and his brother-in-law. She testified, to decorate the grave of her husband's brother. Two men, William Kinsella and George Wright, followed them into the graveyard, now well secluded behind its wall of evergreen trees. Kinsella approached the party and made a lewd proposal. Perceiving that Kinsella was "much larger and stronger, while his partner was lingering about at a distance with a cudgel in his hand," Mrs. Platt's companions fled. She was subjected to an abrupt and violent violation. Kinsella denied nothing but the violence; Wright pleaded ignorance on account of intoxication. ²

When brought before the court of Oyer and Terminer in Rochester the jury was swayed by testimony of Mrs. Platt's ill repute, and allowed Kinsella to plead guilty to the lesser charge of assault. He was sentenced to one year in the penitentiary. (He returned to the village and garnered further infamy as a drunk and a bully.) This bizarre episode, and the scenarios, themselves more bizarre, which undergird any explanation of its conclusion, permit only tentative interpretations. However, in light of the complaint registered later in the same year that the cemetery was "sometimes put to bad use," it seems reasonable to infer that the burying

¹ B.R. 6:30, 5/1/62; 8:30, 4/28/64; 8:41, 7/14/64; 11:36, 6/6/67
² B.R. 19:35 5/27/75
ground occasionally served as the site of clandestine and illicit assignations.

In 1870, only eleven years after the last enlargement, the burying ground was once again full. The vacancies were filled at an accelerated rate as the pioneer generation came to the end of their allotted days. "Bad use" may have influenced the editor when he recommended a suburban site for future burials, but more prominent in his mind were considerations of good use. Cemeteries had begun to provide the stage for social rituals that were considerably more novel than that enacted by Mrs. Platt and Mr. Kinsella, and the beautification movement must be seen in light of these rituals.

The first of these was Decoration day, first observed in 1868. After some initial uncertainty as to the proper date, it was decided to conform to national practice and place flowers on the graves of Civil War soldiers on May 31. By 1871 the description of the solemn procession to the cemetery as "the finest scene witnessed on our streets for a long time," may be taken to suggest the degree, albeit small, to which Decoration Day had replaced the Fourth of July, a holiday whose popularity was in abeyance.

Participation in the event was limited, not only in size, but also in composition. It was a day for respectable Republicans to revive memories, not only of fallen soldiers, but also of the party that had preserved the Union. This political demonstration was given concrete expression in the

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2) Zelinsky, 1988, p.74.
11: Village Beautification, 1860-1880

Soldier's Monument, first proposed in 1872, and finally constructed in 1894.¹

Patterns of grieving were also changing. The grave side ceremony took on a religious tincture; mourning was an increasingly exclusive affair, limited to family members; and visits to what was sometimes called a memorial park became a standard obligation of spousal and filial piety. This change to private bereavement began in the large northern cities in the 1830's, and by the 1860's it had diffused to provincial settings like Brockport.² In the middle of that decade the custom of tolling the age of deceased citizens on the church bells was discontinued. When the family of E.B. Holmes erected a stone twenty-six feet high on his plot in the southeast corner it was praised as "the finest monument and best fitted up lot in the cemetery." Certainly it befitted the richest man in the village. This precedent, and the numerous improvements, did not, however, prove sufficiently attractive to Luther Gordon, the village lumberman and banker, when he was obliged to bury his wife in the following year. As a man of substance, Gordon preferred to lodge his wife's remains not with those who had been her neighbors, but with those who had shared her social class. She was interred in Rochester's picturesque Mount Hope Cemetery, beside a pill manufacturer named Herrick, whose monument


² Larkin, 104.
had cost six thousand dollars, a price that was greater, incidentally, than that of all but a handful of houses in the village of Brockport. 1

Ornamental and Tasty Houses

In 1871 the newspaper reported that "our citizens are exhibiting commendable enterprise and good taste in their work of remodeling, improving and painting their residences." This rash of ornamentation and landscaping began during the war, and it was financed in large part by the prosperity of the war years and the following decade. As the houses of the laborers grew more numerous, the houses of industrialists and professionals grew more splendid. Obviously, both developments were symptomatic of a growing productive facility, the reaper works, and a highly inequitarian system of rewards. Only slightly less obvious is the fact that prosperity heightened the role of the landscape as a medium through which messages of social identity and rank could be conveyed.

The communication function of the largest residences is made apparent by their placement along Main Street between the business district and the railroad station, a heavily traveled stretch of road which was graveled in 1863. No environmental amenity recommended the location, which had been a swamp known as Ostrom's Commons, a fact which obliged the owners of these large houses to raise their lawns. This was anchored at the north by the E.B. Holmes mansion, a Greek revival

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house built by Heil Brockway for his daughter, and sold four years after Holmes' death for eight thousand dollars. At the south stood the Ostrom mansion, a large Italianate cube which won wide approval as an ornament to the village when it was constructed in 1856 at a cost of over twelve thousand dollars. John C. Ostrom, a retired farmer, and "the wealthiest man in the town," died in 1860, leaving a house that temporarily exceeded the means of anyone in the village. By way of comparison the Roby house, west of the Presbyterian Church on Erie Street, which had sufficed to house the village banker in the 1850's, sold for only 2,600 dollars.¹

Proximity to the Ostrom house (later the Morgan-Manning house) house was evidently desired. Luther Gordon, the lumber merchant and banker, built an Italianate mansion on the corner across South Street in 1860, and shortly after erected a "very nearly a fac simile" for Dr. Thatcher on the corner of College and Main. Dr. Thatcher's housewarming party was rudely disrupted by the gloomy and garbled reports that were returning from the first battle of Bull Run, a coincidence that helps us to fix the time of this building. Edwin Brockway built on the adjacent corner. For obvious reasons Gordon chose to live in a house made of wood. Ten years later he raised "one of the most ornamental and tasty structures in this village," a Gothic carriage house

¹) B.R. 15:30 4/20/71. The Holmes mansion was first sold to a Mr. Griffin, and then to John Welch in 1871. B.R. 14:48 8/25/70; B.R. 15:34 5/18/71. Notice of the Ostrom mansion's erection appears in B.R. 1:3, 10/31/56. Other notices of Ostrom are in B.R. 4:21, 3/1/60; 4:33, 5/24/60. The graveling of South Main as far as the railroad bridge is reported in B.R. 7:50, 9/24/63. The sale of the Roby house is recorded in B.R. 3:24; 3/25/59.
Fig. 11.2. The village lumber merchant, Luther Gordon, built this Italianate house in 1860. The highly visible position on Main Street was apparently desirable since Gordon took the trouble to fill a swampy site (note the retaining wall). The Gothic carriage houses were built in 1870. The young trees represent one aspect of the village beautification movement in the 1860’s. This drawing is adapted from the illustration in Everts, Ensign and Everts, 1877.
with an interior of black walnut and butternut, and a tower surmounted
by filigrees and finials that advertised the remarkable plasticity of wood. 1

Every major eclectic style was patronized, although a decided
preference was shown for the Italianate. Despite this apparent
complexity there was, apparently, little variety in the meaning of this or
any other motif. Whether the style was Gothic, Italianate or second
empire, the newspaper editor described them as "tasty" and "ornamental,"
terms that were clearly synonymous. Across the street from the Ostrom
house, which had passed into the hands of the industrialist, Darius
Morgan, the meat merchant, J.A. Slester, was bedecking his residence
with "new piazzas, porticos and remodeling of the place internally." At
the west end of College Street the lumber merchant, L.T. Underhill, who
had made his bundle building simple houses for workers and clerks, built
for his own use a modestly sized but ornately embellished villa in the
second empire style. On State Street, George Ward, who had revealed a
decorative penchant when he refurbished the facade of his Main Street
store, modernized his residence with "a tasty cupalo [sic]." This same
impulse to modernize clipped the gables off of the old battlement style
houses, and replaced these with a mansard roof, as was the case in the
William Seymour house, or a heavy Italianate cornice, as was the case in

1) On Luther Gordon's housewarming see B.R. 4:16, 7/26/60. On the
Thatcher's obituary appears in B.R. 16:35 5/23/72. Notices of the
carriage house and further embellishments of the Gordon house
the house immediately west of Seymour's, the former residence of Ralph Goold, or the house of Davis Carpenter.  

Lawns were also taken as a sign of prosperity and progressive thinking. In the early 1870's it became common to instantly transform "barren wastes," the former domain of chickens and garbage heaps, into lawns by sodding. Concurrently, the rattling of lawn mowers became a familiar sound, and propulsion of the machine, which the newspaper described as "as healthful as gymnastic exercise," became an accepted concomitant of home ownership. In the place of wash tubs, lawns now sported decorative urns in which flowers were planted. 

Failure to adopt the modern style cast doubt on the slacker's character and public spirit since, as the newspaper said in regard to domestic improvements, "private enterprise becomes public enterprise, at least in its results." As with ornamental architecture, lawn care became common as a result of hierarchic diffusion. Praising the lawn of D.S. Morgan as the finest in the village, the newspaper editor recommended it as "an example for others of lesser "stamps" to emulate on a smaller scale." In fact, it had elsewhere suggested that residential improvements, whether the simple maintenance of the laborer, or the "great additions" of the wealthy, "are not always made for personal gain, but very many times through an interest in the growth and advancement of the place.


where they have cast their lot and generally intend to pass the remainder of life."

Of course this frenzy of ornamentation can be explained in terms of what Thorstein Veblen called conspicuous consumption. Each is a rather self-satisfied display of wealth. Industrialism, which generated this wealth, both directly and indirectly, was not yet producing a range of consumer goods, as it does today, on which this wealth could be expended. Today that portion of a person's disposable income that is allocated to display can be disbursed on automobiles, appliances or travel. With the exception of the last of these, which was enjoyed by the Morgans, or the novelist Mary Jane Holmes (who advertised her enviable peregrinations with regular letters to the newspaper), these were options were unavailable to Brockport's 19th century "nouveau riche." Unable to equip his basement with a big screen color television, the Brockport merchant equipped his roof with cupola. Beyond this, the editor's comments suggest that these improvements were taken as a sign that their executor cared about the future of the village, had confidence in this future, and planned to participate in it.

The Changing face of Main Street.

Main Street was substantially rebuilt between 1860 and 1880. A large fire, which destroyed sixteen business blocks in 1862, opened the way for much of this reconstruction. Each year during the war and through the succeeding boom, as the editor described it "some new

buildings are erected and old and antiquated ones transformed into structures of modern style and attractiveness. This was a sign of prosperity, but it was also a sign of anxiety. ¹

The seedy dilapidation and the unprepossessing utilitarianism of former years was abandoned. The new guise was urbanity, or at least its facsimile. "Let us brush up Main Street," the newspaper editor wrote in 1870, "and perhaps business will be livelier." Older stores were described as "on a lean or sagging in center or at corners," and most were "nearly ruined by leaky roofs." The new buildings were larger, more permanent, and more ornate. Descriptions of the improvements are never detailed, but after 1859 there are increasingly frequent reports of merchants tearing down their old store fronts and replacing them with facades of greater elegance. Merchants who adorned their stores were automatically praised. When the Frye brothers rebuilt in 1863, the new structure was acclaimed as "the nicest store in Western New York," largely because, the newspaper editor wrote, "it will be highly ornamental." The wooden Green Store, which had stood on the canal bank for nearly fifty years, was hauled away and replaced with the ornate Cornes block four years later. At the same time it was reported that "Mr. John Maul is putting a highly ornamental front on his hotel." Near the railroad the old Farmer's Home, a hotel dating from the 1820's, was largely dismantled so a large ornamental structure (eventually the Getty House) could be raised on its site. In order to support a cornice, the front eve of the old pitched roof...

was in many cases raised. When George Ward took down the front of his
store in 1871, he crowned the new stone wall with an "ornamental roof."
Not fully satisfied with the elegance of his facade, he shortly added "a
very tasty balcony." ¹

In an effort to better display a "very tasty front," like that applied
to Austin Hamond's store in 1870, many merchants decided to replace the
heavy wooden porches with roll away awnings of brightly striped cloth.
The newspaper editor was gratified by "the neat and tasty appearance
given to Main Street by the new cloth awnings which are fast taking the
place of the larger wooden structures that preceded them." The canopies
were "quite showy," and wherever one replaced a homely wooden porch it
was heralded as "a decided improvement." ²

This building is in part explained by the merchant's desire to invest
war profits in real estate. There was little confidence in the greenbacks
issued by the federal government, and the merchant's experience with
the notes of the Brockport Exchange Bank had done little to bolster their
faith in paper currency. The extravagant ornamentation is also explained
by steam powered tools. The village sash factory, for example, possessed a
steam driven carving machine "by which a great amount of ornamental

¹) For the editor on brushing up Main Street, see B.R. 14:34, 5/19/70. Old
Stores are described in B.R. 12:19, 11/28/67. The first such report
appears in B.R. 3:47, 9/1/59. The Frye brother's store is reported in
B.R. 3:4, 10/8/63. On the Cornes Block, see B.R. 11:16, 11/17/67; 11:26,
George Ward's improvements are reported in B.R. 15:51, 9/14/71;
16:40, 9/27/72.

²) Austin Hamond's improvements are reported in B.R. 14:18, 1/27/70. For
comments on the cloth awnings, see B.R. 14:43, 7/21/70; 15:33,
work is reduced to a price but a little above plain." But there is more to it than this. Merchants incurred the expense of ornamental embellishments in order to emulate their Rochester competitors.¹

As public champion of the village, the editor was invariably irritable when a Rochester paper referred to Brockport as "in the country." Responding to a passage of disparaging irony that appeared in the Rochester Democrat, Beach wrote that the introduction of street numbers "will be one step toward that city which the Democrat speaks of." It was for backward hamlets to talk of the Gardiner Place or the Collins Block. In "our almost city village," the editor wrote, street names and house numbers, with their suggestion of a scale that was so vast as to be otherwise incomprehensible, would add "much to the business like character and fine appearance of the village."²

Other signs of urbanity were found in unlikely places. In 1860 the editor wrote, "Who can longer say that Brockport is not a 'great town'? It now has a daily prayer meeting, a nightly theatrical entertainment, and many of the et ceteras of the larger and harder cities." The establishment of a fish market and the running of an ice wagon, he later observed, "must indicate our approach to metropolis greatness." Ten years later, when a visitor from Rochester expressed surprise at the sight of an insensible drunk being carried home down Main Street, Beach

¹ A description of the sash factory and its capabilities appears in B.R. 5:41, 7/18/61.
Main Street was symbolic for the community, but it was not deemed proper that it should contain the principal architectural symbol of the community, the village hall. The first village hall was not on Main Street. Purchased in 1849, this is said to have occupied a a refurbished house located on King Street. In 1855, however, E.B. Holmes sold the village a building on the corner of Main and King Streets, and this served as the public building until its demolition in 1873 after considerable objections had been raised over this allocation of retail space.

Only four years after it was purchased the newspaper was already complaining that the village had but "one public building - owned by the public- which in appearance would not impress a stranger with our public taste and enterprise." The second floor of the building contained a large room in which town and village caucuses convened, balloting took place, and the more penurious churches and social clubs met. This chamber the editor was content to retain. It was the ground floor to which he objected. "The under-porch is a perfect blank on a prominent corner of our chief thoroughfare," he wrote in 1859. and "as such a blank it is a deface of the otherwise unbroken line of stores on the west side of Main Street."

1) B.R. 4:29, 4/26; 436, 6/14; 15:6, 11/3/70
2) The village hall of 1849 is reported in Helen Dobson, Harold Dobson, and Thomas Dobson, "Old Sweden," edited by Mary E. Smith. Manuscript in the Seymour Library, Brockport. The purchase of the village hall in 1855, for a price of $489.36, is reported in a historical essay printed in B.R. 19:13 3/4/75.
"Can it not be improved," he questioned, "and put to some purpose in keeping with the spirit and business of the street?"

The under portion contained two bays with doors that opened onto Main Street, and a lock up at the rear with a door that opened onto King Street. One bay housed Conqueror II, the discredited fire engine; the other served as "a laden depository" of ladders and lumber, which were often borrowed and seldom returned. The lock up was simply a room "with strong walls and door, and a well barred window" for the detention of inebriates, amateur pugilists and tramps. At its back less congenial lodgings had been prepared for more malignant malefactors. One villager, who placed a value of $2,500 on the property, considered all of this "a very expensive concern considering the benefit received." In fact, the village hall was something of a fiasco. The door giving access to the upper chamber was forever jamming, necessitating the adjournment of meetings, to the inconvenience of some and the convenience of others. A fire bell installed atop the roof in 1862 could never rally the firemen, since unrestricted access to its rope made its clanging a meaningless message. The key to the lock up was regularly misplaced, which was not so great a problem as it might seem since duplicates seem to have been possessed by persons from all walks of life.

The first vote to sell the village hall was held in 1871. Although the editor emphasized that it was "not very ornamental or valuable," the

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1) B.R. 3:29, 4/29/59
2) The village hall is described in B.R. 3:30, 5/6/59; 4:16, 1/26/60. The lock up is described in 5:24, 3/21/61. The various mishaps appear in B.R. 15:28, 4/6/71; 8:14, 1/1/64.
Fig. 11.3. The "dingy and dilapidated old walls" (above) were thought to enliven a prominent corner of Main Street in the 1870's. In an effort to increase the apparent urbanity of the village, the building was replaced in 1875 with the First National Bank of Brookport, much the most ornamental building in the village, and greatly admired by all lovers of the beautiful and the grand. Both the shift from simplicity to ostentation, and the displacement of a community building by a business concern, are emblematic of the village beautification movement.
proposal was rejected by a wide majority. It clearly got under his skin, since one year later he was again railing against "that worse than blank prominent corner" which might "be occupied for business purposes." After a vigorous campaign in 1873 the taxpayers were swayed, and the hall was demolished. It was to be regretted that contingencies had siphoned away the building fund established for its replacement, but as the old building was pulled down, the editor wrote with pride, "right glad are we that its dingy and dilapidated old walls will for but a few days longer disgrace a prominent corner of our business street."

The First National Bank was raised on the site from which the village hall had been removed. As its walls were constructed the newspaper editor commended it as "much the most ornamental building in the village." Its interior was replete with polished marble, rich wood and etched glass. Its exterior, gaunt to my eye, was "greatly admired by all lovers of the beautiful and grand."2

Disputing events were underway at the other end of the block however. A large brick house with a well shaded garden to its side had for several decades occupied the corner. The former residence of Neil Brockway, it had passed into the hands of his son-in-law, E.B. Holmes. It was of a size sufficient to allow conversion into a hotel in 1861. Although its situation was coveted, the value of the old building, estimated at $3,000, had 'proved an obstacle to the sale of the corner... for a fine block.' This

obstacle was removed in 1870 when chemicals stored in the daguerrean studio that was situated in the southern wing of the house ignited.1

A man named Peck purchased the lot. His workmen felled the trees, carted away the rubble of the old house, and raised a three story building adapted for "hotel purposes" over the foundation of the old house on the site's northern half. Meanwhile the southern half remained vacant.2

The Methodists, who possessed the oldest and smallest church in the village, announced their intention to seek a site for a more commodious building in 1870. They sold the Market Street building, by then surrounded by stores, in 1875. With the belfry removed it was readily converted to retail space. The Methodists gave passing consideration to a plot on Holley Street; but with what I assume to have been due consideration of the inconspicuousness of this setting they purchased the Peck lot. This purchase was immediately denounced by the editor Beach, who argued rather hotly that "the lot should be used for business purposes." He argued that the church would be "a Chinese wall stopping the progress of business on that side of the street," and the business community seems to have agreed. "The church people should be induced to obtain a lot that would answer their purpose as well or better," he pleaded, "and then capitalist should unite and put up a business block such as good taste and the growing mercantile interest require."3

Whatever inducements may have been offered, the Methodist remained resolute in their desire to locate near the business district, as they pointed out at the cornerstone ceremony held on August 8, 1876. The new church was like Methodism itself, large and rather plain. Yet Methodism had changed, as we saw in the grievances of the Nazarites. They commanded an unprecedented prosperity. The total cost of just over seventeen thousand dollars was over five times that of the old church. In 1828, building the old church had been regarded as "a grand and noble enterprise, the consummation of which demanded personal sacrifices," and payment of the debt incurred in its construction was for long a source of embarrassment to the relatively penurious Methodists. The property was even briefly repossessed in 1845. The new church was easily funded by subscriptions, many of them made by the numerous converts harvested in the energetic revivals of 1872, barely a year after the desire for new facilities was first expressed. Although economy was observed, particularly in the scaffolding, which collapsed, precipitating two painters from the north tower to their deaths, the building and its location were, I believe, intended to communicate the fact that the Methodists were the economic equals of the other principal denominations. They had gained full social respectability, and thus brought to an end the twenty year shift which began by "throwing cold water" on the zeal of "the old 'backwoods' style of shouting Methodism."

6/24/75. On the search for sites, see B.R. 19:51 9/16/75. On the controversy surrounding the Main Street location, see B.R. 20:12 12/16/75; 20:13 12/23/75. On construction of the new church, see B.R. 20:46 8/10/76; 21:45 7/16/77.
No doubt the Free Methodists, whose twenty-six members managed to build "a plain, neat and comfortable church," on Perry Street in 1882, had opinions on what had been lost.\(^1\)

As it turned out, the Methodists had an opportunity to regret their choice of a site. In an effort to satisfy the villagers' growing appetite for lager beer, which was running to some sixty kegs a week by the mid 1870s, Mr. Peck built a beer garden in the narrow strip of land that lay between his hotel and the church in 1877. From behind its board fence enclosure the sound of the band was audible up and down Main Street, not to mention within the Methodist church. He was unmoved by the protests, and one can imagine the amplificatory competition between hymns and drinking songs during weeknight services.\(^2\)

A landscape can be graded in terms of its legibility, what Lynch described as "the ease with which its parts can be recognized and can be organized in a coherent pattern.\(^3\)

Although legibility is a useful term, the definition can be

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2) For the figure on village beer consumption, see B.R. 18:50 9/10/74. On the conflict with Peck's beer garden, see B.R. 21:46 8/27/77; 21:46 8/16/77.

criticized for its representation of reading the landscape as a passive occupation. In fact, Sharpe and Wallock have suggested that reading the landscape depends less on its legibility than on its accessibility and appropriateness of the reader's interpretive strategy. Cosgrove uses the term landscape to describe such an interpretive strategy when he defines it as "an historically specific way of experiencing the world, developed by, and meaningful to, certain social groups." In using the word landscape to signify a "way of experiencing the world" rather than the world that is experienced, Cosgrove is pushing to a greater extreme Meinig's statement that "any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes but what lies within our heads." Landscape is, therefore, an amalgam of percepts, concepts and linguistic categories, and its legibility would seem to be a function of the compatibility and coherence of these components.

Beach's reading of the village landscape, and his evaluation of the various aspects of its transformation, were to some extent prescriptive. His endorsements were hardly original, however, or unusual for a village editor. Given the need to please his subscribers, it is doubtful that these opinions were unpopular with a majority of his readers. In fact, Beach clarified and codified the landscape taste of the village elite: he goaded institutions and individuals to conform to these tastes, he scolded slackers, chided eccentrics, and rewarded compliance with public

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accolades, but he did not innovate. Indeed, although a direct connection cannot be demonstrated, every one of Beach's ideas reflected the program of village improvement presented by landscape reformers like B.G. Northrop, Donald Mitchell, Horace Bushnell and George Waring.\(^1\) They also paralleled concurrent movements for urban landscape reform, with their emphasis on increased open space, the preservation of middle-class domestic values, and functional segregation.\(^2\)

What Beach did was establish a "preferred reading" of changes in the village, and it was this reading which interpreted these changes as "beautifying improvements" or "uglifying regressions."\(^3\) Another way to put this is to say that Beach worked through his newspaper to organize and discipline what Fish has called an "interpretive community."\(^4\) To use Gramsci's terminology, Beach was using persuasion to realize cultural hegemony. There were, however, and as we might expect, alternate readings which contested this reading.\(^5\)

Other, poorly publicized interpretive communities obviously existed, and some villagers were no doubt inclined by their circumstances to read the landscape and the various aspects of its transformation quite differently. To the small community of criminals, for example, street lights were not an improvement; to the parsimonious, restrictions on street-side grazing were hardly a welcome change. Children and adolescents were clearly a community whose reading of the landscape was structured by

\(^3\) Peter Jackson, Maps of Meaning: An Introduction to Cultural Geography, (London: Unwin and Hyman, 1989), p. 3
\(^5\) Jackson, pp. 52-55.
unique and poorly defended interests. For example, in the business of play young boys had particular environmental preferences and territorial requirements. Because they lacked the adult means of satisfying those needs through purchase and modification, they frequently resorted to trespassing and theft of materials. In other words, their interests led them to read the landscape in terms other than those of private property. When Beach endorsed the idea of a park where children could play, he was not defending a child's interpretation (with its peculiar reading of the significance of boundaries), he was incorporating children into the framework of his own, dominant reading (where boundaries played such a conspicuous role).

This point could be elaborated, and several hypothetical interpretive communities could be suggested even for a relatively simple society such as that of Brockport. In conformity with Cosgrove's definition, this would mean that the village had not one, but rather many landscapes. Unfortunately, the dominant interpretation of middle-class adults monopolizes the historical record. Recognition of this plurality poses a more general problem, since it points up the fact that my reading has created yet another landscape and it prompts questions as to the interests that give this landscape a meaning for me. To use Fish's words, what "structure of assumptions, of practices understood to be relevant in relation to purposes and goals that are already in place" have I brought from my interpretive community? What "will do" as an interpretive argument?

I have also furnished a preferred reading of these changes. Each of my "stories" effects a transformation from a culture of contesting meanings to an authoritative text since certain historical meanings are obstructed by my standards of selection and the method of my presentation. Crapanzano argues that these standards and methods provide a transcending story.

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1) Fish, p. 318, 338-355.
which subverts the event that it interprets. Such stories are "sacrificed," he writes, "to their rhetorical function in a literary discourse that is far removed from the indigenous discourse of their occurrence." 1

Conclusion

Taken as a whole the village beautification movement represents a significant change in attitudes about the proper use of space and the proper appearance of the landscape. Sometimes it sought to change traditional forms and usages such as public grazing, at other times it sought to restrain what it saw as new evils, such as rowdyism. In either case there was opposition, and struggles with traditionalists and nonconformers were necessary in order to impose what was essentially a middle-class vision of a modern village. Sometimes changes had unintended consequences. Cemetery plantings were intended to provide a setting for private mourning, but certain individuals used them as a screen behind which illicit behavior could be practiced.

This was simply one example of a movement that was common in villages throughout the North as urban ideals were diffused to provincial populations through interpreters like Horatio Beach. Although these improvements were promoted as symbols of an up-to-date, forward-looking community, they were also meant to emphasize the distinct virtues of village life. Indeed, they were meant to make a virtue out of

smallness. With this in mind it is possible to see this movement as a people settling on the landscape. The aggressive environmental disruptions of the pioneers were from at least one point of view unsettling. The frenzied speculation of the early wheat trade, with its pitfalls of financial ruin and its frequent episodes of arson, was deeply unsettled. If the proponents of the village beautification movement was meant to express contentment with the place in which they were settled, they also meant to express confidence in its future. By imposing a sense of order and tidiness on the village landscape, I believe that they also meant to express control. This can be read as a visual metaphor of the self-control that was such an important element in middle-class life, but it can also be read as a sign of anxiety over a sense that the destinies of individuals and communities were increasingly self-determined.

By 1879 the principal shareholder and president of the Johnson Harvester works was an absentee owner, Foster Dewey, of New York City. On Sunday, June 21, 1882, forty barrels of varnish were placed in a storage shed filled with scrap lumber at the west end of the Johnson Harvester Company's complex of shops. Around midnight, with the wind blowing from the west, the contents of the shed ignited, and the flames were carried east to the adjacent buildings. The alarm was given, and craftsmen who were employed by the works raced to the site to rescue their tools. Two perished. Their powdery remains were identified by the numbered metal tags, issued by the factory for the purpose of clocking time, which they had carried in their pockets.1

One week later, Dewey arrived on a special train from the west, where he had been touring with a coterie of railroad capitalists. The workers were paid and dismissed, and Dewey announced as extremely improbable any restoration of the plant or any resumption of production in the village. For a few weeks the company appeared to deliberate. Bids from various villages in the vicinity were received and appraised, and in July it was announced that Batavia had secured the industry with over a hundred thousand dollars worth of grants, loans and property. Various explanations of the relocation were offered. The plant's distance from the railroad, and the steepness of the incline by which the canal bridge was approached, were evident liabilities. The water power that first recommended the site in 1830 was now immaterial, as was proximity to the canal. An additional cause was the inability of the small village police force to control the laborers in the strike that had immediately preceded the fire.¹

Some of the unemployed laborers were taken on by D.S. Morgan and Company, which was itself overcoming the handicap of a site on the canal with a large addition (still standing) on the railroad. This to some extent dispelled the gloom and despondency that had prevailed among merchants and mechanics since the suspicious fire. It was, however, a temporary reprieve, as the second harvester works was retired in 1894, four years after Morgan's death. In 1900 the village purchased the site on the canal, which was deteriorating into a public nuisance. In the same year the Rochester Wheel Works purchased the site on the railroad. Morgan's

¹) B.R. 26:42, 7/13/82; 27:12, 12/14/82; 26:43, 7/20/82.
capital, which had been distributed among his sons, moved west to Buffalo. Some was used to construct the D.S. Morgan Building, an office tower on Niagara and Pearl Streets in that city, and some went into the Taylor Signal Company. Eventually Dayton’s youngest son, Gifford, returned to Brockport, and began the Brockport Cold Storage Company in 1914.

The suspicious fire at the harvester works is the terminal event of this study. It is somewhat artificial, but it is at least less arbitrary than the turn of the century or some other accident of chronology. It is much easier to end a narrative than it is to begin one for the simple reason than inaction is easier than action. It also requires less justification since the reader is by this point tired and easily persuaded. Since nothing remains which can justify further claims on your time, I will simply stop.
Chapter 12
Putting Things in Place: A Conclusion

The village of 1880 is captured in a lithograph, drawn and published by H.H. Rowley & Co. of Hartford Ct, and reproduced in 1976 by the Seymour Library. An original hangs inside the library entrance. The village is depicted in panorama much as it might have appeared from a fifteen hundred foot vantage in the northeast. A balloon may have been used, or the elevated perspective may have been extrapolated. Although the shadows, like church bells, debate the hour, it is about ten in the morning, sometime between June and September. The foliage is full, the winds are from the east. Despite the time of day the streets are empty, the only depicted human figure being a gigantic mule driver who approaches the village on the towpath from the east. The only other sign of activity is a passenger train speeding through town from the west, its flattened smoke plume suggesting a velocity that will propel it past the Brockport depot without a stop.

The subject is buildings configured in organized space. The viewer's relation to the subject is that of a question: where in this unfamiliar pattern are the familiar points - one's dwelling, one's work place, the haunts of one's leisure. Barthes has written that such birds-eye views present "an immediate consumption of humanity made natural by the glance which transforms it into space." They give the viewer "the world to read," things organized into a detached structure. The image of the village appears filled with the reality of the village, the result
being a "concrete abstraction" in which "memory and sensation cooperate."\textsuperscript{1}

This text is similarly synoptic. Despite its length, it is a drastic adumbration, a glance which ignores most of its subject and generalizes those parts that it recognizes. It is a consumption of the past made natural by the glance which transforms it into narrative. It is also a consumption of the place, Brockport, made natural by the language of contemporary historical and cultural geography. Although it may appear to consume the past of Brockport in a natural manner, its actual devices are, as I have intermittently suggested, highly artificial. I leave open the question whether it was my purpose to illustrate Brockport through the medium of these devices, or to illustrate these devices through the medium of Brockport.

A concluding chapter often provides a similar vantage, an overview which puts the pieces in place and consumes the text as paraphrase by transforming it into structure. Impatient readers will skip to the conclusion, and for them it functions differently, but for those who came the hard way it is often meant to fix their memory of the text in the form approved by the author. "Whatever you may have thought to this point," it usually implies, "this is what this all means." However, even a text as unsophisticated and empirical as this one admits different readings depending on the reader's intentions. To the examination committee, for example, this text represents my mental and professional ability, and the account of Brockport is

simply a metaphor through which they can perceive and evaluate these faculties. To a resident of Brockport this text represents the history of their village, and my mental and professional ability is simply the instrument that has made this accessible. To me this text represents the last three years, and every footnote and sentence is a metaphor for particular subjective experiences of research and composition.

My reading of this dissertation is, as a consequence, distorted in a peculiar and idiosyncratic fashion, and any panorama I describe should be suspected. To conclude is, first of all, to draw things together. My conclusion after doing this project is, however, that a place is too heterogeneous and incoherent to permit this drawing together. To conclude is, in a second sense, to pass judgement. This is something I can do, since the problems of representing a historical place were central to this inquiry. A number of my judgements are scattered through the dissertation, and I will not recapitulate those points here, but I will add comments in three areas. First, I will comment on the means of used here to represent this particular place. Second, I will comment on the representation of places generally. Finally, I will comment on the use of the embedded ironic discourse. These judgements are, for the most part, negative. This should not be taken to suggest that this contains nothing with which I am satisfied or in which I take pride. It simply leaves the reader free to discover (or not to discover) merits on their own.

On Brockport

It is difficult to draw conclusions about Brockport itself since the localized processes that have constituted the place continue and are not themselves concluded. It is possible to generalize about this type of village, and to specify the particular individuals, institutions and events by which Brockport was individualized, but this description of variation within the confines of a type is itself a form of generalization. It explains
the conditions under which a place assumes a distinctive character, but it does not exactly plumb that character.

Insofar as Brockport has a character it can be perceived in two ways. First, it can be seen as a mass of minute facts. This is to say that individuality is derived from something like the rather superficial awareness that the buildings in the village are positioned in one particular way and not in another. Pursuit of this line of thinking usually leads to a loss of any sense of proportion, and to a preoccupation with details of attribution and dating. Examples exist throughout this text. This leads to the conclusion that ordinary places like Brockport are simply spatial and conceptual containers filled with little facts. By extension, accounts of these places become literary containers filled, like their subjects, with facts.

This manner of thinking has a literary consequence since, however obsessed he becomes, the author is unlikely to assume that such a catalogue of information will satisfy readers who have no reason to share his infatuation. Throughout this account I have tried to make the reader care what happened in and to Brockport, although I am not confident of success. Indeed, I was burdened with the sense that I must make the account interesting, and thus I sought, perhaps unfortunately, to make it amusing. This led me to attempt clever phrasing, humorous asides and dramatizations, while it discouraged tedious presentations of painstaking analysis. In more self-critical moments I am inclined to believe that the urge to entertain has frustrated the urge to explain and that this account is essentially superficial. To the extent that this is true it serves to illustrate a deeper issue of the relation of subject matter and style. In terms of style this account sometimes resembles that used by individuals when they narrate an episode from their own lives to an audience over whose attention they exercise imperfect command. It employs the same sorts of irony, forced hilarity and exaggerated excitement to artificially stimulate an interest that l
feared could not be assumed naturally to exist. Unfortunately, like the tales of anxious raconteurs, it may as a direct consequence have failed to present a truly compelling subject.

The second means of probing the character of Brockport is highly personal, and difficult to put into words, and thus it is unlikely to carry great weight in a scientific world that believes that every true experience is potentially common and communicable. On the other hand it may be the best reason to undertake a study such as this one. There came a point in my research when I was able to, so to speak, look through the hard surface of things. I was able to reduce the insistent presence of the present. This made synchronic reality less substantial, semi-transparent in fact, and it allowed various displaced landscapes to come into view. This was not an experience of the place in the past, which would have been nothing but another synchronic reality, but of the present superimposed on several past places. This, I believe, is as close as I am likely to come to a visual image of the diachronic, or to a sense of places as objects in time. I doubt that the experience can be simulated without packing your head full of all those little particular facts.

On Places

This study was undertaken with a particular place as its central organizing idea and, as I said in the opening chapter, it can be read as test of the coherence of the concept of place. Although prolonged study of the many facets of a place can be profoundly rewarding, they remain, at least in my mind, fairly miscellaneous. At first I put my impression of disorganization down to deficiencies in my own procedure for recording and indexing a large volume of information. Although I eventually developed some fairly rational techniques, I could not always compensate for my early errors. Even when I had regularized my procedure, I found that the problem of disorganization persisted. I was quite unprepared for the conceptual problem...
that I would not be able simply to write about things that happened in Brockport. Of course it seems that this should have been obvious, but then everyone is wiser with hindsight.

My solution is evident in the chapters and sections of this dissertation. These achieve a sort of localized organization within an overall structure that I at one point characterize as a loose federation of chapters. I feel that a number of these are interesting, but I suspect that they would be far more interesting if they were part of a comparative study which showed the variation from place to place of a phenomenon like provincial revivals or the village beautification movement. What I was able to do was organize particular events into what I have called mega-events, but integration beyond this point is rather weak. Although it is possible that this is a personal failing, I find it more likely that it has to do with the concept of place, or with my particular concept of place, which may be too similar to location. This concept of place-as-container is unavoidable as long as one uses the particular place as the major category of organization in a study, and this concept necessitates an inductive methodology that is theoretically dangerous and practically inefficient.1

On Irony

In the opening chapter I made reference to Feyerabend’s “epistemological anarchism,” and I used this, as it is frequently used, to excuse the idiosyncrasies of my text. Ignoring the paradox of an appeal to authority that is meant to justify a rejection of authority, I would simply note that the implicit “hyper-individualism” of this move should signify my sympathy with the humanistic geographers.2 Although they do not draw the connection to Feyerabend, some recent commentators on

1) Bird, pp. 68-69
geography have used his motto, "anything goes," to characterize what they perceive as a problem in cultural and human geography. As Dear puts it, "contemporary geography is an eclectic mish-mash of old and new, pertinent and irrelevant, the quirky and incomplete." Curiously, Dear recommends postmodernism, which he admits to be "profoundly destabilizing and potentially anarchic," as a remedy to this identity crisis. This is curious since, as Harvey puts it, the paradigmatic psychological state of postmodernism is schizophrenia.

Although Dear begins his manifesto with a strong endorsement of postmodernism he retreats by its conclusion to a cautious "limited relativism." He seems to agree with Harvey, who writes that postmodernism "takes matters too far:" it contains a denial of the possibility a coherent politics, it "avoids confronting the realities of political economy and...global power," and it conflates "truth, authority and rhetorical seductiveness."

Soja is able to adopt the term without reservation because he is only concerned with "simultaneities" and their apparent spatiality, a restriction of interest which permits him to ignore the question of authority. Each of these authors has (or should have) an objection to the postmodern position on authority. Harvey knows it, and he rejects the term. Dear suspects it, and he modifies the term. Soja ignores the problem.

In this text I have attempted in a limited way to incorporate a postmodern critique of the authority of my own narrative, the logical conclusion of the postmodern project that has caused these geographers to hesitate. In line with

2) Harvey, 1987, p. 53.
This critique is fractured, unsystematic, inconclusive and in places somewhat whimsical. In line with Hayden White the tone of this critique is ironical, what Marcus and Fischer describe as "the real or feigned disbelief on the part of the author toward the truth of his own statements." Various objections might be raised to this embedded discourse, although here I will anticipate only two.

Although I have claimed to surrender some of the powers of what Marcus and Fischer call "rhetorical totalitarianism," it is possible that the maneuver is a ploy. As Rosaldo puts it in her description of the anthropologist Evans-Prichard, "the detached ironic observer" presents himself "in the persona of a man without an axe to grind." This posture of ironic detachment intimates impartiality, a lack of commitment, an easy and commodious tolerance, and a general indifference to the course of events, but, since such detachment may be taken to imply objectivity, it is quite possible that the posture is deceptive. In his assessment of the irony of Edward Gibbon, for example, Gay observes that Gibbon's "splendid instrument for unmasking others, was at the same time an equally splendid screen for protecting his own privacy." Where Gibbon cynically relished exposure of the duplicities of Roman officials, I have relished exposure of various aspects of my own writing. This is, in part, preemptive, since it permits me to beat my critics to the punch. In other words, although I have relaxed my claims to authority within the text, I have simultaneously staked out claims in strategic critical positions that surround the text. This

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2) Marcus and Fischer, p. 2
anticipation of potential objections. It might be argued, simply achieves a new form of "rhetorical totalitarianism."

Objections might also be raised to the technique of the boxed script. The technique is not without precedence, at least in creative writing, where it ordinarily takes the form of a marginal gloss. In fact, I first thought of the idea while recollecting Malcolm Lowry's "Through the Panama. I am not, however, aware of examples of its employment in geographical scholarship. The boxed script is, for the most part, a commentary on the fabrication of my representation. Its segregation is perhaps best understood as what Shapin and Schaffer call a "literary technology" of "virtual witnessing," or the production in the reader's mind of such an image of an experimental scene as obviates the necessity for either direct witness or replication. Although they are describing the narrative structure of reports in experimental science, the notion of virtual witnessing is, I believe, significant here. In divulging the information that appears in the boxed script I have made the reader privy to selected epistemological doubts and rhetorical remedies. Interesting and innovative as these may be, this candor raises its own problem. Specifically, my direct confession of literary artifice makes the reader an accomplice in their own beguiling.

Taken together, these objections amount to a charge of skirting responsibility for the text (and its interpretations) without surrendering authority over the text (and its interpretations).


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