

NEW YORK HISTORY

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STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK—
COLLEGE AT ONEONTA

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We ask that authors submit articles electronically. Submissions as well as footnotes should be double-spaced. Provision and costs of images for articles are the responsibility of the author. *New York History* employs, with some modification, note forms suggested in the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Submissions can be sent directly to Fenimore Art Museum Publications Department publications@fenimoreart.org

The journal will process submissions as quickly as possible, but three to six months should be allowed for a thorough reading. *New York History* does not pay for author's articles.

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Editors' Introduction

Thomas D. Beal, D.L. Noorlander, and Susan Goodier

Over 260 years ago, William Smith, Jr. published the first history of New York, *The History of the Province of New-York from the First Discovery to 1732* (1757). Using a political framework, Smith offered readers a narrative history that reflected his professional interests in the law and his social position as part of the “better sort.” At the time, in both Great Britain and its North American colonies there was a growing interest in history, with many writers and readers convinced that understanding the past was necessary to understanding the present. According to historian Michael Kammen, Smith published at a moment when the “history of the recent past fascinated colonial Americans because so often it came to them literally as news.” Unlike historians of Smith’s generation, few historians write narrative histories today. But, even as they explore subjects beyond the world of politics, government and the law, they do share his belief that the past is an essential starting point for developing an understanding of the present. For nearly 100 years, historians, educators, independent scholars and those with a general interest in the state’s history have turned to and relied on *New York History: A Quarterly Journal* for interpretive essays for insight into our past, and therefore our present.¹

This double issue of *New York History* brings volume ninety-nine and our tenure as the journal’s editors to an end. For the past six years, we have edited the journal, contributing material to the process of interpreting the state’s history, which William Smith began so long ago. In “‘We are not objects of pity’: New York City Sailors and the Embargo of 1807” Philip G. Swan focuses on how economic hardships brought on by President Thomas Jefferson’s embargo shaped the political ideology of many sailors

1. William Smith, Jr., *The History of the Province of New-York from the First Discovery to [1732]. To which is annexed, A Description of the Country, with a short Account of the Inhabitants, their Trade, Religious and Political State, and the Constitution of the Courts of Justice in that Colony*, edited by Michael Kammen (London: Thomas Wilcox, 1757; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), xxviii-lxxiii.

who called New York City home. “Not a Model: First Lady Julia Gardiner Tyler and New York City’s Print Culture” offers a dramatic re-interpretation of “The Rose of Long Island,” an iconic broadside advertising the New York City dry good store of Bogert and Mecamly and slandering the image of Julia Gardiner. Thomas Wermuth contributes to the issue’s exploration of popular culture with “‘After the ceremony of the minister was over, the ceremony of the crowd’: The Evolution of the Skimelton, a Rural New York Wedding Tradition.” While few carry on the tradition of skimelton, surprise parties and gatherings staged only days after couples returned from their honeymoon, Wermuth uncovers the crucial role these events once played in rural communities around New York State.

In “*State v. Charles Conroy: New York City Photographers’ Battle for Free Speech in the Late Nineteenth Century*,” Amy Werbel examines a forgotten court case and its contributions to artistic freedom in the United States. Carol Sheriff then turns to a topic that is especially important during this, the bicentennial period of the construction of the Erie Canal. Sheriff explores how the canal has been commemorated over time and how commemorations in general draw on the past for present-day purposes. Linda Johnson writes about the New York socialite and activist Narcissa Cox Vanderlip in “Plum Blossom Fêtes and Japanese Lantern Balls” and her efforts for peace and improving relations with Japan in the 1920s. Finally, in “High Anxiety in St. Lawrence County,” Neil S. Forkey recounts a fairly recent controversy over U.S. military flights and the problems they caused in upstate New York. He shows how residents organized themselves in opposition to the disruptive flights and how the residents were, in the end, successful in stopping them. We include eight book reviews and a book review essay with this issue. Their topics range from sex and money to education and environmentalism. One review focuses on a book on the DePeyster family and its transition from being loyalists to US citizens and another looks at how immigrants influenced the early development of the US economy. Another reviewer looks at a book on the environment of Manhattan before the Civil War. We have reviews of books on lust, crime, and Anthony Comstock. Wealth is the topic of two reviewers, one looks at a book on wealthy suffragists, the other reviews a book about New York’s upper class and how it has changed over the centuries. We also offer a review of a book about a woman who taught the classics

at Vassar. Our book review essay addresses the environmental problems of the Hudson River and the Manhattan waterfront.

Producing *New York History* for the past six years has been both a challenge and a privilege. We could not have published an issue without the help of peer reviewers, colleagues, and friends. In addition, a large number of hard working and committed Research Assistants made valuable contributions to each issue. For them, the journal offered an opportunity to explore the world of academic publishing. Along with the editors, they read, critiqued, researched and discussed the contents of every issue; this process led many to pursue careers in academia, publishing, museum studies, library science and law. We thank them and celebrate their achievements, believing that, at least in part, their success was influenced by their work on the journal. We also thank our readers, who offered words of criticism and encouragement at historical conferences and through correspondence. Their comments helped us produce issues with timely and relevant content.