

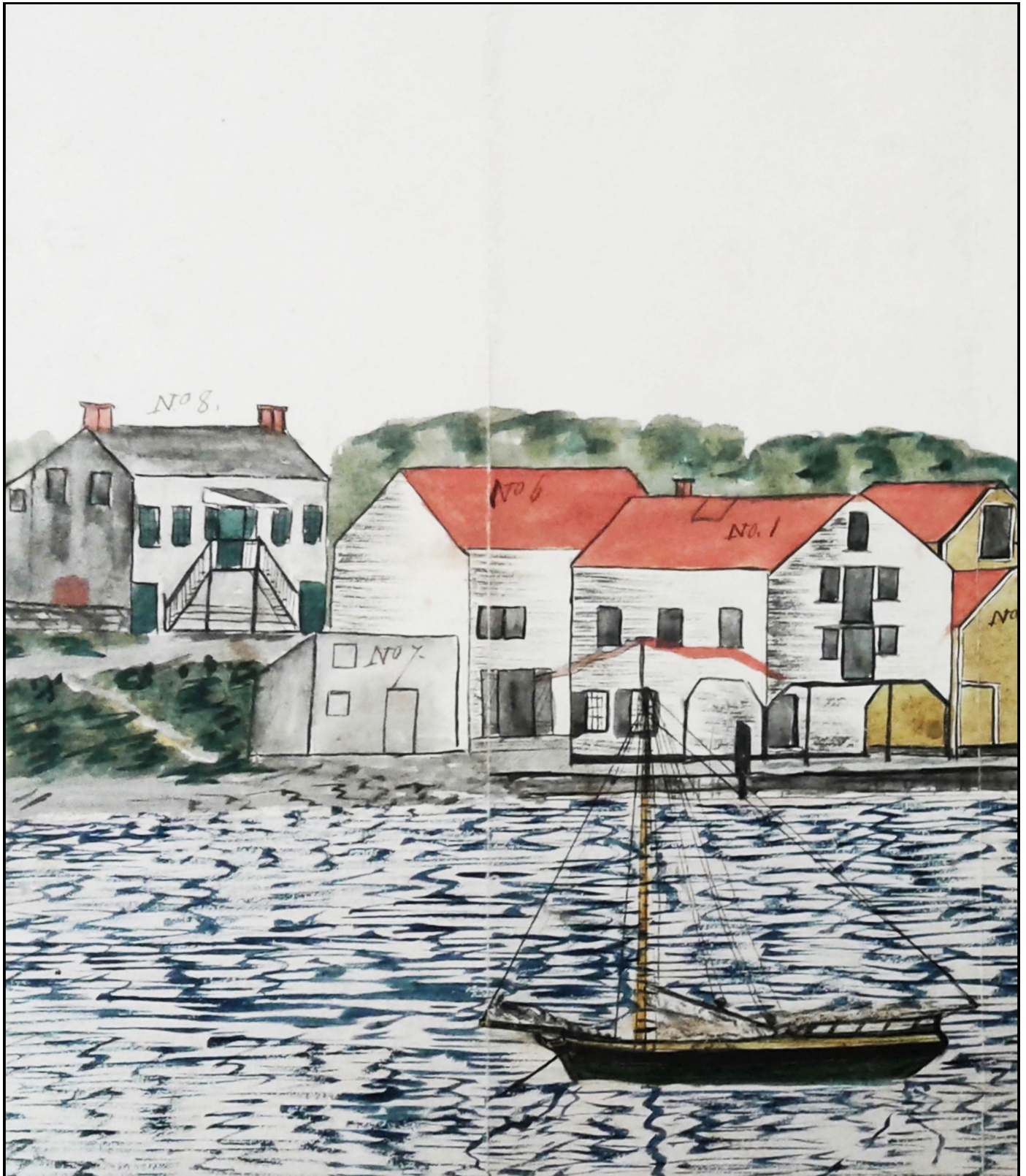
# GREENE COUNTY HISTORY

A Quarterly Journal of the Greene County Historical Society

90 County Route 42  
Coxsackie, NY 12051

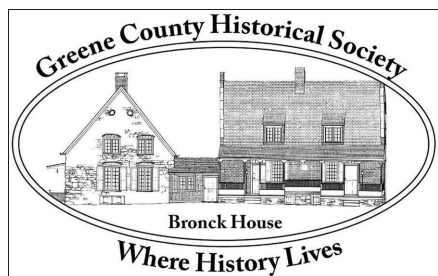
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## – ON THE COVER –

Pioneer New Baltimore shipbuilder Paul Sherman's probable late 1790s home, No. 8, plus a bit of his shipyard, dock, & trading center are shown in this detail from an undated early watercolor by his granddaughter Ann Frances Sherman. The numbered key to the eight structures is unknown, but among them are two that are three-story, open-fronted shipwright shops right on the dock, as in No. 1. (Edward Ely Sherman Memorial Collection/Vedder Research Library)



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THE EDITOR'S DESK:

Space is at a premium this issue, so the "jump" for the Wood article concludes here.

Mary Knight Wood, cont. from p.15

"The 14th of July was celebrated at Onteora by a musicale at the summer home of Mrs. Alfred Bishop Mason (Mary Knight Wood, the composer). Mrs. Edith Chapman Goold sang the "Marseillaises" [and] a group of French songs, with Miss Rybner at the piano, and a group of Miss Rybner's songs, the composer accompanying."

"With Mrs. Mason [Mary Knight Wood] at the piano, Mrs. Goold sang some English songs, a group of Mary Knight Wood's songs for children and three of the soldier songs which she [Mrs. Goold] has been singing at the camps. Miss Rybner gave a piano solo. Practically all of Onteora was present."

That same year *Musical America* magazine ran in each issue a feature called *Contemporary American Musicians*. The Aug. 31st issue was on Mary Knight Wood and offered a bit about her non-music aspects. After providing traditional biographical data, it notes she "has traveled extensively through Europe. For eight years lived in Mexico, where [her deceased first husband] Mr. Wood was treasurer of the Vera Cruz and Pacific Railroads." Since Mason was also an official with this rail line, it is probable that is where they first met. It notes she "Made a collection of Mexican curios, including one of the world's finest collections of Mexican pottery."

It was also during this year that J. Carroll Beckwith's diary notes that Mason purchased Wood's portrait from him for \$500, which had apparently remained at Onteora since the end of the Century Club show.

At sometime during the following decade, possibly around 1922, the Wood-Masons sold both "Witchwood" and their NYC home and relocated to 35 Via Pier Capponi, Florence, Italy. "Witchwood" has since been featured over the decades in several home decorating publications, including post-2000 articles in *Country Living* and *This Old House*.

The Wood-Masons remained in Tuscany for the remainder of their days. His passing is noted in the Jan. 26, 1933, edition of the *Oakland [CA] Tribune*, in a news brief titled, "American Writer Dies in Florence."

"Alfred Bishop Mason, 82, corporation lawyer, author, and son of former Mayor R. B. Mason of Chicago, died here today of influenza. Mason was attended at his bedside by his wife, the former Mary Knight Wood, of New York. He will be buried in Laurel Cemetery here. Mason lived here many years. He spent his declining years writing boys' books." These would be the final stories of the *Tom Strong* series that he originated back in 1911.

Mary Knight Wood survived him eleven years, passing on Dec. 20, 1944, aged 87, also at Florence, in Tuscany. Her gravesite stone, with Alfred's name also on it, is at Cimitero Accatolico [Cemetery Catholic], in Florence.

Like the beauty of her own words and the many poems she set to music, her and Alfred's gravestone is graced with a poetic and devout sentiment from the ages, reflecting her creative passion: "Birthless and Deathless and Changeless, the Spirit Remaineth Forever." A fitting tribute to a very creative spirit, one who brought music into the world, and who helped lead the way for women composers in America.

✘ ✘ ✘



# 1833: Colonization vs. Abolition in Catskill

## *Barbers Robert Jackson and Martin Cross Lead Black Voice Against Liberia*

In the first half of the 19th Century, one of the proposed “solutions” that arose to address slavery was to send the nation's African-American population back to Africa. Started in late 1816, the American Colonization Society was organized to convince free blacks and freed slaves that their future lay on the west coast of Africa, with the nation of Liberia, which, between 1820-1822, had been created by the Society to be their homeland.

In its very early days colonization was embraced unilaterally by white supporters, but soon the abolitionist faction, which wanted immediate emancipation, saw its error. Free black generations living in America were expressing their dissatisfaction with the idea, and had no desire to

relocate to the African continent. America was, in short, their home, and that's where they wanted to stay. A second problem was that Southern slave owners liked the colonization idea because if some of the slaves were freed and shipped there, it would reduce the black population and increase the “selling” value of the remaining slaves.

But the Colonization Society and its supporters none-the-less believed in the idea. There were those who desired to go, and though the Liberian settlement had its many difficulties over the years, as any new nation would, their struggles carved out a future for the infant country, and today Liberia remains a free nation in the world.

However, back in 1833 opposition against colonization was growing stronger, and the abolitionist American Anti-Slavery Society was created to speak out against the plan and promote emancipation, wielding its newspaper voices of *The Liberator*, in Boston, and *The Emancipator*, of New York City. That year, both of the opposing organizations sent their leading representatives out on speaking tours. The village of Catskill was one of the stops.

But Catskill's black history tale – the 1833 portion – perhaps begins on March 7, when the Catskill Lyceum, the community's philosophic and natural history society, hosted the first of two public meetings in which one of the announced topics for discussion was an answer for the question, “Ought the Colonization Society to be patronized?”

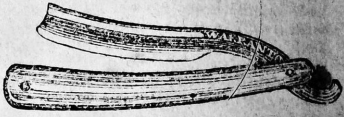

The two men scheduled to speak in support of the plan were Dutch Reformed Church Rev. Isaac Newton Wyckoff, a long-time pillar in the community, plus new-to-the bar, Albany-based attorney Theodore Romeyn, whose Catskill affiliations included marrying Catskill resident Anna Mills Woodruff the following year. Also, Romeyn's family name was an asset to his business and social position, as the Romeyn ancestral lineage was known and respected throughout the Capital District.

Scheduled to speak against the Society's colonization plan were Baptist Rev. John Dowling, new from England, only in Catskill for one year, and a devout abolitionist and anti-colonizationist. His co-speaker was Presbyterian licentiate – a non-degreed authorized practitioner – William Cushing Schuyler, whose family's name in the region probably actually carried even more weight than Romeyn's.

A second forum on the subject was held one week later, on March 14, with the same question announced, but this time the prospective speakers were “Rev. Mr. Dowling, Mr. Day, and several other gentlemen.” Day was Orrin Day, a village leader, weighty in business and society, and a colonization supporter.

Afterward, although both meetings had been advertised in the *Catskill Recorder* and the *Catskill Messenger*, neither editor ran any follow-up information on them. Typically, attendees at an important function would submit a “Communication,” but nothing further was published about either of these meetings. Given an occurrence at a meeting later on in November, this silence may actually have been a subtle effort to suppress Society criticism.

The next turn of the wheel is three months later, when a free Catskill black man is a delegate to an early summer all black convention in Philadelphia, as covered in the June 15 edition of *The Liberator*.

 <p><b>Superior Razors.</b>  <b>M</b>ARTIN CROSS, BARBER AND  <b>H</b>AIR DRESSER, has lately received a general assortment of RAZORS, together with a variety of shaving utensils,—wit.      Pomero's Strop and Paste,      Shaving Boxes and Brushes,      Shaving Soap, &amp;c.      FOR DRESSING HAIR,      Antieq Oil, Pomatum, &amp;c.      M. C. continues his business in the yellow</p>	<p><b>PERFUMERY.</b></p>  <p><b>R</b>OBERT JACKSON, Barber, would respectfully inform his friends and the public generally, that he has taken the shop, formerly occupied by Martin Cross, opposite the Catskill Bank, where he will at all times be found <i>at home</i>, and ready to attend to those who may favour him with their custom.</p>
<p>Catskill barbers Martin Cross and Robert Jackson, his successor, were well known in the community, with Cross often running large weekly newspaper ads since at least 1822, and Jackson since 1831, portions of which are shown here. (Catskill Recorder/Vedder Research Library)</p>	

"The Annual Convention of the People of Color assembled in Philadelphia on Monday of last week [June 3rd]. There were present 56 delegates from the following places." It then names the New York State communities – "City of N.Y., 5; Brooklyn, L.I., 2; Poughkeepsie, 2; Newburg, 2; Catskill, 1; Troy, 1; Newtown, L.I., 1."

Additionally, that same *Liberator* coverage extracted from a June 6 letter that discussed the purposes of the convention, noting that among the various resolutions was, that "A Committee, consisting of one delegate from each state" – New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland were in attendance – "was appointed to prepare a communication to the public, expressive of the sense of the people of color in relation to that 'old system of abomination, the Colonization Society'." This statement clearly shows how the organized perspective of black Americans in 1833 detested the Colonization Society and its Liberia plan. Significantly, a Catskill man was at that convention.

The man was probably Robert Jackson, Catskill's foremost barber and well known in the community. Jackson is confirmed a year later to have been Catskill's delegate to New York City's June 3, 1834, Convention of the Free People of Color, as reported in *The Liberator*, which lends credence to Jackson being the 1833 delegate in Philadelphia.

There is, however, a possibility that the 1833 Philadelphia delegate was fellow black Catskillian Martin Cross, Jackson's predecessor as the village's leading barber and also active in black rights that year and in future ones. But Cross had previously relocated to Hamilton, Canada, where that nation had one of its major and successful free black and escaped slave communities. He may not have yet returned by June, although he had by October.

[For the Liberator.]  
**ANOTHER PROTEST.**

**A respectable meeting of the colored inhabitants of the village of Catskill, N. Y. was held on Monday evening, 19th inst. in the colored school room, for the purpose of considering the subject of colonizing the people of color on the coast of Africa, and the means used by the American Colonization Society to accomplish that object, whereon Mr ROBERT JACKSON was called to the chair, and Mr MARTIN CROSS appointed Secretary.**

**The meeting was addressed by a number of persons in a very spirited manner; after which the following resolutions were unanimously adopted:**

**Resolved, That it is the sincere opinion of this meeting, that the scheme of the AMERICAN COLONIZATION SOCIETY is one of the wildest ever devised by human beings, or patronised by enlightened men;**

Black and abolitionist opposition to the American Colonization Society was strong in 1833. On Friday evening (not Monday), Oct. 18, 1833, a meeting of Catskill's black community was held to oppose it, with the minutes then sent to both Boston's "The Liberator" (shown here) and NYC's "The Emancipator," from which the "Catskill Recorder" printed them in its next issue. The first Resolution leaves no doubt how attendees felt. Another says the Society should be called the American Death-dealing Society. (fultonhistory.com)

As barbers, Martin Cross and Robert Jackson had ample public profiles in Catskill, both to blacks and whites. Martin Cross' large weekly illustrated advertisement for his services ran periodically in the *Catskill Recorder* as far back as Nov. 6, 1822, possibly earlier, and the Aug. 14, 1828, edition notes, "MARTIN CROSS, Barber, would respectfully inform his friends and the public generally, that he has taken possession of his new and pleasantly situated shop, opposite the Catskill Bank, where at all times he will be found *at home*, and ready to attend to those who may favor him with their custom."

The italics "*at home*" are such in the ad and signify he was always ready for business, and probably that he resided either in the rear or above the shop. His use of the word "new" indicates he had already been working his trade at a previous location in the village, probably on Main Street. He also ran ads in the *Catskill Messenger*.

Robert Jackson's first appearance in the *Recorder* came three years later, on Sept. 15, 1831, when – also in a large weekly illustrated advertisement – he announced that he had replaced Cross, with an ad beginning, "ROBERT JACKSON, Barber, would respectfully inform his friends and the public generally, that he has taken the shop, formerly occupied by Martin Cross, opposite the Catskill Bank."

Whether Martin Cross was a Catskill native is unclear, as his relocation to Upper Canada, as it was called at the time, suggests he might have had unwanted ties to the South, or simply desired the

additional freedoms and safety offered to black settlers by a 1793 act of the Upper Canada legislature.

Robert Jackson, however, has indication he was free born a Catskillian. Among the "Free Black" households named in an 1817 list of Catskill village families, as printed in the Nov. 11, 1904, *Coxsackie Union News*, and digitized on rootsweb.com, is that of Tom Jackson, with a household of four. Thus, Robert may have been a son. However, that remains unconfirmed. There are no Cross's listed on that 1817 census.

Back to the June 1833 black convention in Philadelphia, if it was, in fact, Jackson who attended it, he was back in Catskill by early July, as his regular advertisement in the *Catskill Recorder* featured new content for its July 4 edition. It begins, "ROBERT JACKSON having just returned from New-York, invites the Ladies and Gentlemen of Catskill and the Country to call and examine his stock of Artificial Hair Work, PERFUMERY, &c., which he confidently believes has never been equalled in this place." It is perhaps probable that the business stop in NYC was on the way back from Philadelphia.

The following month, in August, the abolitionist anti-colonization New England Anti-Slavery Society brought its



speaker to Catskill, and Jackson, plus Cross if he were in town, would have supported and attended it. The speaker was the president of the organization, Rhode Island Quaker Arnold Buffum, who had formed the group with *Liberator* publisher William Lloyd Garrison the year before.

Buffum had been at Troy and Albany earlier in the month and met with little success, and in a Sept. 24 letter later written from Catskill to his Boston-based Board of Managers, and published in the Oct. 5 edition of *The Liberator*, Buffum says that from the capital region he went to Hudson, where he was successful with a Methodist meeting-house that "was crowded to overflowing," after which he crossed the river.

"At Athens I had the gratuitous offer of the Episcopal and Presbyterian meeting-houses, but the arrangements having been made for the Friends' (Quaker) meeting-house, it was concluded to occupy that. The meeting was small and no collection was taken."

Then, because of bad weather, public attendance at Buffum's two scheduled Catskill meetings was equally limited. "On the evening of the 18th (Aug. 18, 1833), I addressed a small meeting in the Court House in Catskill, at the close of which Rev. John Dowling, a Baptist minister from England, addressed the audience in a strain of eloquence, expressive of the feeling with which Englishmen abhor slavery."

Dowling's presence in Catskill should be explained. Exactly one year earlier, in August of 1832, he, his wife, and two daughters, an infant and a toddler, had crossed to America to escape England's cholera epidemic, but when they got here found the disease had arrived ahead of them, with NYC locked in the death grip of its historic 1832 cholera plague.

<p><b>MARRIED</b>—In this city, Oct. 17, by Rev. Dr Sharp, Mr Jno. Brooks to Miss Delia Robinson, both of this city.</p> <p>In Catskill, N. Y. Oct. 17, by Rev. Henry Wyckoff, Mr Martin Cross late of Hamilton, U. C. to Miss Dorcas Graham of Catskill, N. Y.</p>
<p>Martin Cross relocated back to Catskill from the free black community at Canada's Hamilton, located in the western angle of Lake Ontario, and married Dorcas Graham the day before he was Secretary at Catskill's black protest meeting against the Colonization Society. The officiant, Rev. Henry Wyckoff, may have been a brother or nephew of Catskill's Rev. I. N. Wyckoff, who was on the opposing side to Cross. (Catskill Recorder/Vedder Research Library)</p>

Quickly leaving his family in an unaffected part of the City, Dowling went up the Hudson to secure a ministerial position, which would result in Catskill, but in September, before it was finalized, was suddenly notified that his wife and infant daughter had both been tragically killed by the disease.

Returning only for their funeral, he immediately fled the City with his surviving child, coming back to Catskill, where he obtained the Baptist ministry, and in the following Spring, March of 1833, when those two Lyceum meetings were occurring, remarried, his new wife being Maria Antoinette Sampson Perkins, a Mayflower descendant and

daughter of Catskill's Rufus Perkins. At least two years earlier she had been conducting a "Select School ... for young ladies from ten to sixteen years of age," as per a Dec. 20, 1831 advertisement in the January 5, 1832, edition of the *Catskill Messenger* at Vedder Research Library.

So at Buffum's August meeting, Dowling had been in Catskill just short of a year. In early October he would advertise to teach afternoon classes for ladies, plus evening classes for young gentlemen at his home, but his presence and speaking at Buffum's abolitionist meeting and opposition at the March Lyceum meetings may have ostracized him from the village's important citizens, many of whom were colonization supporters, so by late December he was in the process of relocating.

Buffum's report to his Board of Managers continues, "Notwithstanding the [Catskill Court House] meeting was very small, owing to wet weather, they contributed to the object of my mission \$5.25 [about \$174], including one gold ring." Rings were often donated to fundraising efforts back then.

"On the evening of the 20th [of Aug.], I had another appointment in Catskill, in the Reformed Dutch Church, and anticipated a full house. But just before the time for assembling, it commenced raining with great violence, in consequence of which but very few persons assembled." Buffum says he was asked to postpone his presentation because of the weather, but couldn't because of his schedule, so went ahead and spoke. "I presented to the few assembled some thoughts on the subject, who presented me a contribution of \$2.94 [\$97]."

Despite the low weather-induced numbers, Buffum expressed hope for Catskill's overall anti-slavery abolitionist quotient. "Here [in Catskill] are a considerable number of warm friends to our cause, and the subject will now be freely discussed, and truth will, of course, continually gain ground, until righteousness shall triumph." Robert Jackson was likely at one or both of those Catskill meetings. (See P. 10)

# Onteora Park's Mary Knight Wood: The Songmaker of "Witchwood"



"Mrs. Mary Knight Wood," as photographed by the NYC Fifth Avenue firm of Hollinger & Rockey, from the Century Magazine's March 1898 article "Women Composers" by music critic Rupert Hughes. (InternetArchive.com)

Onteora Park, the Town of Hunter summer colony created in 1887 by Candice Wheeler and her brother Frances Thurber, has always had a prominent standing in Greene County's cultural history. The roster of names associated with it, whether residents or visitors, is lengthy and impressive.

Literary greats such as Charles Dickens and Mark Twain were both honored guests, as well as famed Catskill Mountains nature writer-poet John Burroughs. Authoress Mary Mapes Dodge and stage actress Maude Adams each had cottages there and consistently drew the world's attention by their presence.

Other residents included General Custer's widow Mrs. Elizabeth Custer, portrait artist James Carroll Beckwith, and author Hamlin Garland – but examining the list of who was who at Onteora can take the reader on a seemingly never-ending journey through the 19th and early 20th century creative worlds of art, music, literature, philosophy, and crafts, and yet, because of Onteora, all still a part of Greene County's local history.

In the 21st Century, however, many of those names of Onteora residents and visitors are unheralded, lost to the time period of their height, and one of them is composer, pianist, and lyricist Mary Knight Wood, whose musical gift was well recognized in her day and brought her fame and success. Significantly, she was also one of the women who in the 1890s helped open up the previously male-dominated composing industry to women.

A New Englander by birth, Wood was born Mary Knight in Easthampton, Hampshire County, Mass., in 1857, to a prominent and financially secure family. Her father, Horatio Gates Knight, was a successful industrialist whose career encompassed several business enterprises. Also, during his daughter's youth and young adulthood he held several political offices, including state representative, senator, and four one-year terms as the Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts.

From Easthampton, Mary Knight's studies took her to Miss Porter's School, a private young women's high school in Farmington, CT, and which remains a select institution to this day. There, Wood studied under Karl Klauser, the school's resident, recognized music educator.

She continued her education at the Charlier Institute in NYC, another important school, and later relocated to Boston for more musical studies under the tutelage of Benjamin Johnson Lang, a noted Boston-based conductor and composer. Along the way, she met and in 1879 married Boston's Charles Greenleaf Wood, a dry goods merchant and treasurer of the John Hancock Life Insurance Company, thereby acquiring the name she would become known under – Mary Knight Wood.

Afterwards, in New York, she studied under then-famed Steinway Hall American composer Albert Ross Parsons, and the equally respected composer, instructor, and musicologist John Henry Cornell, as well as NYC-based American composer and pianist Henry Holden Huss. In short, her musical training was of the best, and her talents quickly showed themselves while performing for friends at the social functions of the high circles in which she moved. From these early performances she graduated to a solid and successful career as a composer and songwriter, and, in doing so, helped open up the then male-dominated industry.

An early step toward this was her membership in New York City's select Manuscript Society, which had been formed in August 1889 for the purpose of, as stated in the May 31, 1890, edition of the *Albany Evening Journal*, "the development of musical composition in America – and its meetings have been held for the purpose of producing, performing, and criticizing musical manuscripts by rising and ambitious composers, the criticisms being invariably characterized by a spirit of friendliness and good feeling." Note the phrase "by rising and ambitious composers." Wood was an early member and utilized Society performances throughout her early career.

The March 26, 1892, *New York Times* covered a Manuscript Society public concert of new compositions held at Chickering Hall, and among the works presented were three songs for soprano – Mary Knight Wood's "Ashes of

Roses," "Don't Cry," and "Autumn." Commenting on all the material performed, the reviewer noted, "These compositions all showed a considerable amount of care in preparation, and some showed the results of good schooling," adding, "Miss Wood's songs were clever in a popular style." That phrase meant they were, in essence, music for the masses as much as high society. Her works were embraced by both, seeing performances alike at chamber music gatherings and in the parlors of turn-of-the-century America.

The Woods were part of NYC's high society and the previous year, 1891, had seen the construction of their cottage "Witchwood" at Onteora Park. Mention of the new cottage is made the next year in the *Society Notes* of the Nov. 11, 1892, edition of

the *New York Evening Telegram*, which speaks of her return to the City at the end of the cottage season. "The chilly November weather has forced most of the dwellers at Onteora to come to town. [Among] the latest arrivals from this delightful settlement in the Catskills ... Mrs. Charles Greenleaf Wood, Jr., has also left her charming new snuggerly up there and has returned to her apartment at Washington Square."

"Witchwood" has had its name suggested by several origins. However, many cottages at Onteora bear botanically related names – those of shrubs, flowers, and trees – as a list of them in the June 4, 1893, edition of the *New York Times* shows. Out of 38 cottages named, 16 of them, almost half, all bore specific flower, herb, or tree names – Balsam, Caraway, Clematis, Columbine, Crowfoot, Golden Rod, Harebell, Larkspur, Mayflower, Pennyroyal, Quaker Lady, Stone Crop, Sumac, Tamarack, Wakerobin, and Yarrow – while another eight bore botany-related names, such as Clover Hill, Fernseed, and Lotus Land. Assigning a probable botany-related origin to the "Witchwood's" name, which is included in that 1893 list, is thus exceedingly appropriate. Witchwood is the folklore name for Mountain Ash, a small tree of the Catskills common on its higher elevations, and with which Wood would have been familiar, especially as it bears beautiful clusters of glowing red berries in the Autumn.

Old World tradition held that carrying a piece of European Mountain Ash – the rowan tree – would ward off evil spells by witches and protect the bearer in related matters. That folklore was transferred to the American Mountain Ash by the early New England settlers and it remained known in the 19th century, so that as a mid-century Massachusetts native, Wood would have had ready knowledge of it.

Wood decided not to remain in New York and instead went to Egypt for the winter of 1892-93 – she was fond of travelling – and, returning in the Spring, spent the summer of 1893 again at Witchwood, as noted in the July 1, 1893, issue of the weekly *Music Courier*, under its *Gotham Gossip* column. "Mrs. Mary Knight Wood, the composer, is summering at 'Witchwood,' Onteora, Catskill Mountains." Also, in the Sept. 2, 1893, edition of the NYC weekly arts newspaper *The Critic*, she is included in a communication to the editor.

"A FRIEND WRITES from Onteora in the Catskills. This place is full of people you know about – Mrs. Dodge, Mrs. Runkle, Will Carleton, Ripley Hitchcock, Wm. H. McElroy, Carroll Beckwith, Eastman Johnson, Dora Wheeler, Agnes Ethel Rondebush, [and] Mary Knight Wood – who has just set to music Bunner's 'Old Song' ('Open thy door to me') for Mrs. Beckwith. Laurence Hutton and Mrs. Custer are expected soon." The poem that Mary Knight Wood set to music at Onteora that summer is titled *An Old Song, (The Song of Solomon)*, by poet-journalist Henry Cuyler Bunner, editor of *Puck* magazine, and it became very popular.

That same year, 1893, two of her songs were performed at the three-day Women's Musical Congress held in the Woman's Building of Chicago's 1893 Columbian Exposition. Onteora's Candace Wheeler was in charge of (*See P. 13*)



"Witchwood," Mary Knight Wood's 1891 Onteora Park cottage, was photographed by Tannersville photographer Conrad Bickelmann in 1899 as part of a set of Onteora pictures. Witchwood is the folklore name for American Mountain Ash, the elder name having been brought by European pioneers, where they had applied it to the European Mountain Ash or Rowan Tree. The tradition was that it would fend off evil spells if carried or worn. Common on the Catskill high peaks, and at certain atypical lower locations, such as Stony Clove, Wood would have been well familiar with its decorative red berries and, as a native New Englander, the folklore tradition as well. The plate at right is by botanical artist John T. French, from Thomas Nuttall's mid-1840's two-volume set "The North American Sylva". (Photo: Library of Congress/loc.gov; Botanical Print: New York Public Library Digital Collections/nypl.org)



*The Spring-Summer 2021 issue's History Question asked of an early transportation corridor suggested by a picture of nesting storks. The picture means Stork's Nest Road in Round Top, the modern name of the eastern leg of the Cairo and Eastkill Turnpike, which state legislation authorized in 1812 to run from Cairo, up and over Dutcher Notch, into the Eastkill Valley, and then out to Goshen, today's hamlet of Jewett.*

## History's Forgotten Escarpment Road: *The Cairo and Eastkill Turnpike*

The Cairo and Eastkill Turnpike was signed into law by Governor Daniel D. Tompkins on June 15, 1812. Its purpose was to connect Goshen, today's Jewett hamlet, to the Susquehanna Turnpike at Cairo.

The legal description states it should run "from or near the [Susquehanna Turnpike's] eighth milestone ... to or near the forge [Roundtop], at Cairo." The route began with today's Mountain Avenue junction at Main Street in Cairo. The name Mountain Avenue may well be from those early days, when it actually did go up and over the mountain.

At Purling, the turnpike followed the fork which is now County Route 39 out to the Round Top crossroads and then straight ahead onto Maple Lawn Road. Then, up ahead at the stop sign, a brief left onto Floyd Hawver Road is followed by an immediate right onto Stork's Nest Road. A NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) hiker parking lot is just before the last several residences.

The old turnpike remains a hiking trail until the upper Eastkill Valley is reached, after climbing to Dutcher Notch and descending the other side, where the original route runs through today's Camp Harriman, so the hiking trail loops around and then picks up the old route again as Colgate Road (County Route 78), following that to East Jewett hamlet on County Route 23C.

Turning right onto Route 23C, it follows the Eastkill Valley eight miles downstream almost to Jewett hamlet. A mile before it Route 23C turns left and the turnpike route continues straight ahead as Carl Road. For the last few feet, it joins with County Route 14 up to County Route 17 at the historic Jewett Presbyterian Church, where it ends.

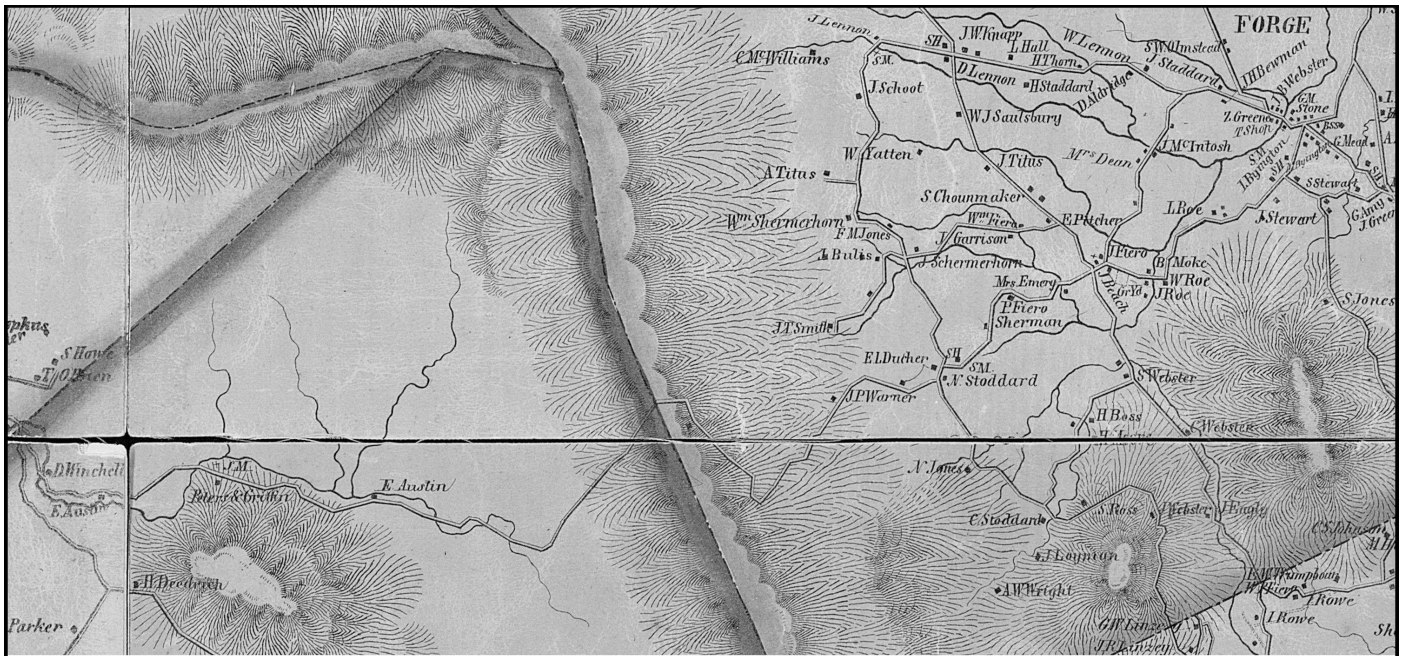
Turnpike corporations rarely, if ever, built entirely new roads. Instead, as businessmen, the promoters would pick an existing public or "common" highway that looked like a profitable enterprise, and usually because their own private commerce needed the route. As an unmaintained public route, the road would predictably need improvement and upkeep, so the backers would formally petition the state to incorporate them as a turnpike company, and in return they would promise to bring the road up to a state specified standard and keep it in good shape.

The state saw this as benefitting an area's growth and economy with good infrastructure policy, and the turnpike stockholders saw it as an income producer, since they were allowed to put up tollgates to defray the maintenance costs.

At its western end, one of the promoters and, after incorporation, one of its four Commissioners, was William Beach, a leading man in his community. He had been Windham's first town supervisor back in 1798, twice a State Assemblyman, once in 1801 and again in 1810, and an Assistant Justice for the county in 1806. The other man from the western end of the route was also well known and respected. It was Munson Buel, typically called Judge Buel, a judge for Greene County's Court of Common Pleas. He was also active in the community's Congregational Church and he and his brother, Isaac Buel, had by then already developed Buel's Mills, today's Mill Hollow.



The remains of the Cairo and Eastkill Turnpike route still run through Dutcher Notch, high atop the Catskill Escarpment. The view here is facing west, just before beginning the descent into the Eastkill Valley. (Photo/Jim Planck)



When this 1856 Map of Greene County was made by Samuel Geil, the route of the old Cairo and Eastkill Turnpike was still being used as a roadway over Dutcher Notch and through Spruce Woods in the Upper Eastkill Valley. But even at this date, the only structure along that section of incline on the right and wilderness on the left is the small black dot, a cabin, near the crest on the Cairo side. This wilderness section of the turnpike is what, back in 1812, gave the promoters both terrain and legal access problems. At far left, the narrowing intersection of roads is East Jewett hamlet, and the tight cluster of structures at upper right is the business and residential community of The Forge -- Round Top. (Map/Vedder Research Library)

At the eastern end of the turnpike, the two promoters were Cairo's Dr. James Gale and merchant Ashbel Stanley. It was the latter who suggested Cairo as the town's name back in 1808 when it was changing from Canton.

Following incorporation, Gale and Stanley actively promoted the sale of farmlands along the eastern portions of its route. Beginning on March 25, 1813, they ran a large advertisement in the *Catskill Recorder* offering "Great Bargains," described as "30 to 40 good FARMS, part of them lying in the town of Cairo ... from ten to twelve miles distant from Catskill." These sites were below the escarpment, in the Forge/Round Top area, of which they said "several of them [are] considerably improved, well proportioned for mowing, pasturing, plowing, and wood, well watered, and a good soil natural to clover and wheat, [if provided] with plaster [lime plaster]."

The ad also spoke of the Eastkill Valley lands. "The remainder of said Farms lie in the town of Windham," meaning Hunter, since the new Town of Greenland, afterward Hunter, had just been created, "[and are] from 12 to 18 miles from Catskill, [with] a turnpike road leading from [Goshen at] the westward directly thro' them to Catskill." The first set of lands, on the Round Top side, is from 10 to 12 miles away from Catskill, while the second set is from 12 to 18 miles away. Dutcher Notch, 12 miles from Catskill, was thus the unofficial dividing line.

Of the Eastkill Valley farmlands, the ad also says, "These farms are many of them under good improvement, on which may be cut from fifty to one hundred tons of hay annually; the soil is excellent and well calculated for grazing." Of sites both above and below the mountain it says, "They will be sold from five to ten dollars per acre, and in such number of acres as will best suit the purchaser; a good title will be given to the same."

The ad's final sentence offers a bait sure to catch any reader's attention. "Those who wish to make a fortune at once, are now invited to call on the subscribers, who will give such terms, both as to price and payment, as will suit a reasonable purchaser. -- James Gale, Ashbel Stanley, Cairo." It does not appear that anyone made a fortune at once, as almost two decades later the Cairo and Eastkill Turnpike remained substantially uncompleted and new backers were seeking renewal of the incorporation.

An 1831 NYS Assembly report says of the turnpike, "The work was commenced and prosecuted in 1813 and '14, and between 2 and \$3,000 [were] expended in constructing said road on the mountain, [which was] the most difficult part of said road, but in consequence of a large tract of land through which the road was to have been made belonging to persons not residing in this State, the road has been delayed until the time for completing the same has expired." It appears, however, the road through Dutcher Notch was never officially resurrected and a century later, once modern vehicles made it faster and safer to go up via State Route 23, it faded into history.



## Colonization vs. Abolition, cont. from p.5

Meanwhile, earlier in August, the Colonization Society had held a large meeting in NYC, as covered in the Aug. 8 edition of the pro-colonization *New-York American*. The Colonization Society's Corresponding Secretary, the Rev. Ralph R. Gurley, was the organization's travelling speaker, and he basically told those present at the NYC meeting that the Society was broke, that it could no longer provide its promised aid to Liberia, and that there was no money left to transport anyone else there.

The *New-York American* coverage stated, "The extraordinary expenditures of last year, occasioned by the transportation and settlement in Liberia of eleven hundred emigrants in about a year, had not only exhausted the treasury of the Society, but involved it in responsibilities beyond its present means," adding that, "Mr. G. [Gurley] assured the meeting that a crisis had arrived in the affairs of the Society" as to whether it would "be able to proceed" or "languish."

The meeting's outcome was a resolution to raise \$20,000 in New York City for the Society, leaving Gurley free to continue forward on his tour for Society funds, which three months later would bring him to Catskill.

However, by the Autumn, it was perhaps with awareness that Gurley's itinerary included Catskill, plus the growing press arguments between the colonizationists and the anti-slavery abolitionists, that led Catskill's black community to hold a meeting in mid-October, at which, in no uncertain terms, they publicly formalized their opposition to colonization and had it printed in both *The Liberator* and *The Emancipator*, and thereby essentially announcing their stance to the nation. Both Jackson and Cross were the leading figures in that meeting, so were at the forefront of the community's black voice.

The full text of its minutes, from the Nov. 2 edition of *The Liberator* follows. ("Monday" is that edition's typesetter error. *The Emancipator* correctly states "Friday," which, in 1833, is correct for October 18.)

Headlined as "ANOTHER PROTEST" – they were occurring sporadically elsewhere – it continues: "A respectable meeting of the colored inhabitants of the village of Catskill, N.Y., was held on Monday [Friday] evening, 18th inst., in the colored school room for the purpose of considering the subject of colonizing the people of color on the coast of Africa, and the means used by the American Colonization Society to accomplish that object, whereon Mr. ROBERT

JACKSON was called to the Chair, and Mr. MARTIN CROSS appointed Secretary."

"The meeting was addressed by a number of persons in a very spirited manner, after which the following resolutions were unanimously adopted:"

"Resolved, That it is the sincere opinion of this meeting, that the scheme of the AMERICAN COLONIZATION SOCIETY is one of the wildest ever devised by human beings, or patronized by enlightened men;"

"And, moreover, many of those who support it would be willing (if in their power) to drive us not only from our 'home, our native land,' but even from existence itself."

"Resolved, That we are determined not to forsake nor leave this, our home, the country of our birth, for beneath its soil our fathers are entombed."

"Resolved, That we will use all fair and honorable means in our power to oppose the 'American Colonization Society;' *alias* the AMERICAN DEATH-DEALING SOCIETY."

"Resolved, That we look upon all clergymen who may have filled the ears of their congregations with the idea of the necessity of removing us – the free colored Americans – from the United States to Liberia, as vain pretenders;"

"And we say to them, 'Ye are deficient, and follow not the golden rule of Him whose disciples ye pretend to be:' – 'Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.'"

"Resolved, That the proceedings of this meeting be signed by

**Catskill Lyceum.**

**A** MEETING of the Catskill Lyceum will be held this evening, in the Court House, at half past six o'clock; the exercises are—

1st. Lecture.—On certain physical changes which have occurred on the Earth's surface—By Rev. Thomas M. Smith.

2d. Discussion.—Ought the Colonization Society to be patronized?

Affirmative—Rev. I. N. Wyckoff and T Romeyn, Esq.

Negative—Rev. J. Dowling and Mr. Wm. C. Schuyler.

Ladies and Gentleman of this vicinity, who take an interest in the Society are respectfully invited to attend.

Per order of the Committee,  
CHA'S. STURTEVANT, Rec Sec'ry.

The first of two Catskill Lyceum public forums to hear whether the Colonization Society was a good idea or a bad one was held on March 7, 1833. Scheduled to speak in support of it were Dutch Reformed Church Rev. Isaac Newton Wyckoff and new Albany attorney Theodore Romeyn, the latter from a family of great religious standing. Against it would be Baptist Rev. John Dowling and Presbyterian Licentiate William Cushing Schuyler, also from a family of great note. The second forum was held a week later. (Catskill Recorder/Vedder Research Library)



the Chairman and Secretary, and published in the New-York *Emancipator* and the Boston *Liberator*, [so] that the world may know our sentiments, and the abhorrence and detestation with which we regard the above named Society of persecution. --- ROBERT JACKSON, *Chairman*, MARTIN CROSS, *Secretary*."

Note the emphatic condemnation of the colonization concept, and especially the direct statement to "all clergymen" that supporting colonization was basically an un-Christian act.

Only the day before that meeting, and newly returned from Canada, Martin Cross had, in fact, been married to a Catskill bride. Although the marriage was not announced in either of the Catskill papers, it ran in the Nov. 2 edition of *The Liberator*, the same edition that published the minutes of that protest meeting.

"MARRIED. - In Catskill N.Y. Oct. 17, by Rev. Henry Wyckoff, Mr. Martin Cross, late of Hamilton, U.C. [Upper Canada] to Miss Dorcas Graham of Catskill, N.Y."

The next month, November, Gurley's presentation for the Colonization Society was coming up, which may be why Catskill's William Cushing Schuyler, the Presbyterian Licentiate from the Lyceum meetings, ran what appears to be a spur-of-the-moment ad in the Nov. 7 *Catskill Messenger* for a pre-emptive "Anti-Slavery Meeting" of the "friends of abolition" at the Court House for that very night. It may not, however, have occurred, as no record of it can be found.

Gurley's Colonization meeting, however, did take place, about two weeks later, and apparently at the Presbyterian Church. It is reported on in the Nov. 28 *Catskill Recorder*, under the heading of "COMMUNICATIONS," stating that it was "a meeting of the citizens of this village, on Wednesday evening, 20th inst. [Nov. 20th], to hear the Rev. R. R. Gurley, Secretary of the American Colonization Society explain the objects and views of the Society."

"Mr. Gurley addressed the meeting at some length, after which Caleb Hopkins, Esq., was called to the chair, and Dr. C. C. Hoagland to be Secretary of the meeting." Hopkins, 56, and well off, had moved in retirement to the village three years earlier after earning his fortune in NYC's iron trade. Hoagland was a New Jersey native, Rutgers graduate, and nephew of the village's Reformed Dutch leader, the Rev. I. N. Wyckoff. Three years later, Hoagland would return to New Jersey.

After the meeting's officers were thus established, Rev. Wyckoff, prominent in the community, opened things up by offering a resolution in support of the Society's goals - "That in the judgment of this meeting the American Colonization Society is an institution founded upon principles of enlarged patriotism and benevolence, worthy of the liberal support of the whole American community" - the last part meaning that Catskill should donate to its cause.

Rev. Thomas Mather Smith, who was Catskill's Congregationalist minister, seconded the resolution, after which Wyckoff spoke in favor of its adoption.

The *Recorder's* "Communication" then adds that during his speech Wyckoff encapsulated his sense of the meeting as being supportive of the Colonization Society, by "having intimated in the course of his remarks that the meeting was probably unanimously in favor of the resolution."

He was, however, incorrect and undoubtedly knew it, since Dowling was present and he and Dowling had already spoken on opposing sides about this back at the first Lyceum meeting in March. "When he [Rev. Wyckoff] sat down, the Rev. Mr. Dowling rose and denied the intimation [that support for the resolution was unanimous]."

Dowling's opposition was not appreciated. The "Communication" notes, "He [Dowling] was interrupted by a motion to adjourn, which not prevailing" - it was apparently not seconded - "he proceeded to show why he was opposed to the resolution." This seeming effort to procedurally silence him is perhaps reminiscent of the newspaper silence after the two Lyceum meetings.

Gurley, as the Society's president and keynote speaker, then responded to Dowling and got the meeting back where he wanted it. "He [Dowling] was followed in answer by Rev. Mr. Gurley, when the resolution was [then] passed by acclamation, and with few dissenting voices." Acclamation is judging by ear whether the "ayes" or the "nays" in the room have the majority.

The phrase "with few dissenting voices" shows, however, that Dowling was not alone in his opposition to the Society, as certainly Schuyler, if possible, was there too, plus unknown others. In the Dec. 1833 issue of *The African Repository & Colonial Journal*, the Colonization Society's Washington-based official publication, and quoting from the Nov. 23rd *New York Observer*, the presence of dissent at that Catskill meeting is similarly noted, and again minimized, calling it "a very feeble opposition in Catskill."

It remains unclear whether free blacks of the community were allowed to attend Gurley's meeting or not. If so, both Jackson and Cross would certainly have been members of that opposition, but it is more probable that the meeting was restricted to whites only, as its sponsors already knew the sentiment of the black community against

colonization from their October meeting, and would not have wanted them present.

The *Catskill Recorder's* "Communication" also adds that after Gurley's response to Dowling, "The following resolutions were then offered in their order, and passed in like manner" – meaning acclamation again.

"That we will cheerfully cooperate with our fellow citizens of New-York in their effort to raise \$20,000 for the Colonization Society."

"That a committee of five – with power to add to their number – [be created] for the purpose of obtaining contributions, in aid of the object proposed by the citizens of New-York;"

"[A]nd also, should they think it expedient, to take measures for forming in this place [Catskill], an auxiliary Colonization Society" – in short, form their own chapter.

"That this committee be Rev. Dr. Porter, Rev. I. N. Wyckoff, Rev. T. M. Smith, Orrin Day, Esq., [and] Thomas B. Cooke, Esq." Like Orrin Day, Rev. David Porter and Cooke were both men of large standing in Catskill since its early days.

The "Communication" concludes, "After which, the meeting adjourned. – CALEB HOPKINS, Ch'n; C. C. HOAGLAND, Secretary.

Unlike the silence following the Lyceum meetings, coverage of this meeting was followed immediately by an editorial piece in the Dec. 5 *Catskill Recorder*, essentially in support of the Society. It said the abolitionist goal of immediate emancipation was misguided and would have destructive consequences, and that governmental processes would solve the slavery issue given time. It then characterizes the black race with disrespect and reminds all to keep the south's needs in mind when determining any solution.

That same Dec. 5 edition also has a letter from Dowling stating that while, at the time, it seemed the motion to adjourn the Colonization Society meeting had been an effort to silence his anti-colonization stance, he had since talked with the minister who offered it and now accepted that its intent was merely to forestall argument between Christian leaders in public. However, by the end of that month, December 1833, Dowling had confirmed a new position in Newport, R.I., and started there in April 1834. He went on to be a great figure of national, if not international, reknown and importance in the Baptist organization, and authored numerous wide-selling religious books and texts.

Exactly how much money was eventually raised from Gurley's Nov. 20 meeting is unknown, and colonization support in the village seems, perhaps, to have quietly disappeared in the months ahead. Not so, however, with black activism and its local support for abolition, as both Robert Jackson and Martin Cross continued to lobby and work for black freedom in Catskill, and at conventions, and in the press over the decades ahead prior to the Civil War and the adoption of the 13th Amendment, more of which at a future time.



PREVIOUS HISTORY QUESTION: The Autumn-Winter 2021 issue asked of a wintertime early vehicle that was used to move goods and supplies, and the name of which was a Europeanized adaptation of its Algonquian name.

The answer is the PUNG, a stiff-runnered, long, box-like unit. The term and the sled began fading from regional history not long after the start of the 1800s. It comes from the Mi'kmaq tongue, an Eastern Algonquian one and their territory included the Canadian Maritimes, the Gaspé Peninsula, and northeastern Maine. Their

*Sleigh.*

For sale by the subscriber, at Mr. Nichols, a single Sleigh or Pung, and Harness. The Sleigh is well ironed and handfomely painted.  
HENRY ASHLEY.  
Catskill Landing Dec. 22 1804.                      33

During the winter of 1804, early Catskill tanner Henry Ashley advertised this pung for sale in the weekly editions of the *Catskill Recorder*. "Well ironed" means that the runners were strong and in good shape. Isaac Nichols was Ashley's associate and a shoemaker. Note that Catskill village was still being called Catskill Landing to differentiate it from Leeds, the first Catskill. (Vedder Research Library)

Grand Council still exists. An article on winter sports by Frederick LeRoy Sargent, in the Feb. 20, 1923, edition of *The Christian Science Monitor*, notes the word is derived from "various picturesque corruptions of the aboriginal name such as tarboggin, tebobbin, chebobbin, tom pung, and pung."



This detail from New Haven, CT, artist George Henry Durrie's 1858 oil on canvas "Red School House (Country Scene)" shows an excellent example of a two-horse pung carrying supplies back from a store. The box-like shape, when lined with hay, would also see use conveying party groups out for a ride in the winter sunshine or to neighborhood evening holiday gatherings. Many of Durrie's works are familiar scenes, as they were often chosen by Currier & Ives for prints. (Metropolitan Museum of Art/The American Wing/Gallery 758)

## Mary Knight Wood, cont. from p.7

the interior decorating of the Woman's Building.

Wood's skills are noted in what is probably a syndicated paragraph in the Aug. 6, 1893, *Omaha Daily Bee*. "It is so rarely that a woman, however musical, composes a good song, that the success in that direction of Miss Mary Knight Wood is the more significant."

"Her best known work was inspired by Mr. Richard Watson Gilder's exquisite verses, "Thou," which she has set in the most moving of melodies. The composition is so arranged that there is opportunity for the 'cello, as well as for the piano-forte and voice."

Another good example of Wood establishing women as composers surfaces two years later, in 1895, when the Atlanta Exposition – officially the Cotton States and International Exposition – ran from September through December. During that summer newspapers carried numerous articles previewing its attractions. One such was a lengthy article entitled "They Write Music – New York Women Who Profit by Melody" that ran throughout the syndicated papers of the midwest, and which focused on the growing number of women composers. Its summation paragraph uses Wood as the example.

"The Atlanta Exposition's music room for women composers will show to all who care for music just how greatly she [generic use] has contributed. There Mrs. Mary Knight Wood will have a fitting display of her many compositions, which, as a rule, are beautiful, full of melody, and of a class to touch the hearts of those who hear them."

"Will the people recognize some familiar airs when her music is played? Undoubtedly, but they will be surprised when they learn that they were written by a woman, and, in rushing to see her picture in the music room, will find there the photographs of many more New York women who have made music that has been enjoyed by countless thousands."

Similarly, a Dec. 1, 1895, article in the *New York Sun* about NYC's Manuscript Society also speaks of the subject and, bearing the subhead, "Many Women in the Club for Musicians and Composers," states, "Mr. Addison Andrews, the Chairman of the House Committee, said that the most pleasant feature, to his mind, was the number of women composers that had been discovered and the rare quality of their work," adding that "Some of the best compositions are by the women composers." Among the nine he then names is that of Mary Knight Wood, adding they "have shown that they are not surpassed by any of the men in their particular line."


Society President Gerrit Smith agreed. "We are proud of our lady members, and always pause to do them honor. Scarcely a concert is given without the appearance of some women composers, and this fact speaks well for the development of musical composition in a direction hitherto not encouraged or suspected."

Wood continued to put her activities with the Manuscript Society to good use and by example promote women composers. A notice in the January, 1896, issue of the NYC-based monthly publication "The Vocalist," under "Events of the Month," states, "On Dec. 18, (1895), the Manuscript Society presented a program of the compositions of American women, conducted and rendered by women." Five composers were represented and nine compositions performed, with three of them by Wood – "Love Blows as the Wind Blows," "Afterward," and "Thy Name," the latter destined to be one of her most popular pieces.

Her role as a figure for women composers is also noted in a lengthy article called "Music in Society: Accomplished Amateurs who Sing and Play at New York Musicales," in the Sunday, Oct. 10, 1897, edition of the *New York Herald*. The article is presented as "complimenting" the amateurs of the social world who have, by their excellent talents, improved the writer's perception that social musicales offered only poor quality performances. However, after addressing the amateur level the writer notes, almost begrudgingly it seems, that there are two social musicians who are above that category, the first being Wood.

"A New York society woman who has composed songs which have had considerable vogue is Mrs. Charles Greenleaf Wood (Mary Knight Wood). Among her best known songs are "Ashes of Roses" and "Thy Name," which latter made considerable success last season."

Also, in a lengthy 12-page article entitled *Women Composers* by music critic Rupert Hughes in the March 1898



Mary Knight Wood's "Berceuse," as published in the August 1916 issue of "The Musician." A berceuse is essentially a lullaby, with noted ones by Franz Liszt and Frederic Chopin, but the best known is Brahms' "Wiegenlied," called in English, "Brahms' Lullaby." (hathitrust.com)





Mrs. Mary Knight Wood, the composer, is summering at "Witchwood," Onteora, Catskill Mountains.

As with the entertainment personalities of today, the media at the turn of the 20th century -- in this case, newspapers, music journals, and family magazines -- always kept the public informed of the person's doings, and Mary Knight Wood's movements were no exceptions to the rule. Already in the spotlight by 1893, this July 1 excerpt from "Gotham Gossip," the weekly "Music Courier" magazine's society column reports her exit from the City for the summer. (InternetArchive.org)

issue of *Century Magazine*, Hughes opened his article with statements noting the increase of women composers in the industry. "Only yesterday it was being said how strange it was that women could not write music. To-day, their compositions make up a surprisingly large portion of the total publication," adding, "The mistake of those who dogmatized upon woman's inability to compose was the old fallacy, 'What has not been done, can not be done.'"

Among the growing group, by then, of women composers of whom he speaks, Wood is, of course, one. Hughes introduces her by way of comparison to peer New England composer Margaret Ruthven Lang, of Boston. "Of somewhat similar refinement [to Lang's] are the fluent lyrics of Mrs. Mary Knight Wood of New York City. They show a bigness in little [accomplishes much subtly] and a fondness for unexpected harmonies that do not disturb the coherence of her songs."

"They possess also a marked spontaneity. An example of an unexpected note is the brave E flat in her "Serenade." Her popular "Ashes of Roses" also has a superb harmonic structure. Among other songs, one, with an effective obbligato for the violoncello, deserves special praise." That song is perhaps "Waiting," which features a cello obbligato, but several of hers do.

That same year, in the May 8, 1898, edition of the *Sunday New York Times' Illustrated Magazine*, in a photo article on pianist-composer Helen Hendricks, Wood is again noted. "Not alone in Europe, where [women there] have made the work of women composers of music noteworthy, but in America are women entering the field of musical composition." The writers says that "Mrs. Mary Knight Wood" and another contemporary, Mrs. H. H. A. Beach – Amy Marcy Beach – are "in the first rank of American composers."

Again, in 1904, publishers L. C. Page & Company released Boston music critic and author Arthur Elson's book, "Woman's Work in Music," a comprehensive work of overview and in-depth analysis throughout the known civilized world from ancient to then-modern times. In discussing those of Boston who have produced chamber music, Wood is one of the composers mentioned and called "another gifted member of the new generation. – She has already produced a piano trio, and her songs, such as "Ashes of Roses," "Hearts-ease," "Autumn," and so forth, are imbued with the most exquisite refinement."

Onteora's "Witchwood" and the social interaction with fellow cottagers was, of course, enjoyed throughout the years by the Woods. Going back even to 1890, a year before "Witchwood," there is a photograph of Mark Twain and a group of significant Onteora creative talents sitting and standing on a cottage front porch, and the person standing immediately beside Twain is, in fact Mary Knight Wood.

At the opposite end of the porch is portrait painter James Carroll Beckwith, who, with his wife Bertha, were good friends with the Woods. In his diaries at the Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Art, Beckwith speaks of daily life at Onteora, and the Woods are frequently mentioned. Whether by her usage or Beckwith's, in the diaries she is almost always referred to as Minna Wood.

In 1908 he painted a portrait of her, which he began on Aug. 3. "This afternoon I laid in a 40x50 canvas of Minna Wood. Her gray hair and fine line of her face have made me think of it a number of times. She is willing to pose and there is no reason why I should not do a good thing. My lay-in is rather thin, which is always my faulty way of starting. I do not know why I have not more grasp on my material." A number of diary dates then note its progress.

Beckwith also tells of Onteora musical events. That same year, on Aug. 30, 1908, he writes, "We all went to afternoon service. Bertha sung with Mrs. Snelling, Meyn, & Avril, a hymn composed by Minna Wood."

Sadly, Wood's husband Charles was apparently developing some form of dementia, as in Beckwith's entry for Sept. 21, 1908, he writes, "Poor Charley Wood is in a sad state. His mind seems vascillating. Minna and all of us are greatly concerned." The next day he writes, "A busy day. I took Charley Wood with me down to the springs this morning to divert him, but it seemed to have little effect on him." The following day he writes, "Charley Wood has been much on our minds. M. [Minna] had Dr. C. H. in to see him this morning."

Two days later, on the 25th, he writes, "Charley Wood went down [to the City] with Averill this morning. He is in a very pitiable condition. He is the only cloud we have for there are none in the sky." Another two days later, on Sunday, the 27th, he writes, "Minna dined with us and I took her home to her darkened house. She leaves in the morning."

The portrait had been finished prior to that, and the following year it was noted in the Dec. 11, 1909, edition of *American Art News* in an article called "Members' Display at Century," which opens with the statement, "The exhibition at the Century Club of paintings by members that closed on Wednesday was very interesting, containing as it did, works of varied interest."

"The place of honor was given to Carroll Beckwith's portrait of Mrs. Mary Knight Wood, a half-length, which is charming in its delicately painted white dress and soft pink and lilac draperies." Beckwith confirmed its good reception in his Dec. 4, 1909, diary entry. "Took Roberts over to the club, where Minna's portrait hangs to great favor [is well liked]."

Music was always an important aspect of Onteora summers, and an example is in the Aug. 10, 1912, edition of *Musical America* magazine, in a short item called "Music in the Catskills." It states, "Onteora Park, in the Catskills, is becoming one of the important Summer musical colonies in the East. Mrs. Mary Knight Wood, the composer, has a cottage there, and Heinrich Meyn and Perry Averill, the baritones, have been householders for several years. Mrs. Jennie Dutton Green, who retired from the concert stage all too soon, is a cottager of more recent standing. Mr. and Mrs. Francis Rogers spent July at the Bear and Fox Inn, where the organist, C. B. Searle, and his wife are passing the summer. Sunday morning, July 28, Mrs. Wood gave a musicale, at which Mrs. Green and the three baritones, Meyn, Averill, and Rogers sang, and Mrs. Rogers rendered several monologues." Such gatherings were not uncommon at Onteora, and Wood was typically the organizer of them.

Sadly, on March 2, 1913, Wood's husband Charles passed away at their home on West 59th Street. He was 61. She opted not to go to Witchwood that summer, and appears to have travelled.

The following year, in 1914, Wood married widower Alfred Bishop Mason, of NYC. "Who's Who Among North American Authors, Vol. IV, 1929-30" notes Mason was not only a successful lawyer, but an author as well, who wrote political economy and constitutional law books, plus a line of juvenile novels for boys in the *Tom Strong* series, which he created. Two of them, "Tom Strong, Washington's Scout" and "Tom Strong, Boy Captain," were already in print before their marriage.

A 1918 bio-piece on Wood in "Musical America" magazine also notes that Mason was "well known in public welfare work in New York City." It also says Mason had previously been a successful railroad industrialist, with roles as vice-president of the Jacksonville, Tampa, and Key West Railroad, president of the Vera Cruz and Pacific Railroad in Mexico, and an officer of the Cauca Railroad in Columbia, South America.

By the mid-1910s, women's suffrage in America was still laboring for its coming success, and Wood was a participant. In the American Commonwealth Company's 1914-15 edition of "Woman's Who's Who of America," editor-in-chief John William Leonard notes she "favors woman suffrage" and is a member of the Equal Franchise Society, in NYC, and that another membership is the Women's Cosmopolitan Club.

Wood's musical events at Onteora continued to get coverage. In the July 28, 1917, issue of *Musical America* it describes one in detail. "TANNERSVILLE, N.Y. – Mrs. Edith Chapman Goold, soprano; Heinrich Meyn, baritone; Dagmar Rybner, pianist, gave a highly successful musicale on Sunday morning, July 8, at the country house at Onteora of Mrs. Alfred Bishop Mason (Mary Knight Wood, the composer)."

"Mrs. Goold and Mr. Meyn sang three duets of Henschel, Woodford Finden, and Hildach. Mrs. Goold sang four French songs, a song of Miss Rybner, another of Prof. Cornelius Rybner, and five of Mary Knight Wood."

"Mr. Meyn sang three Italian songs and Huhn's "Invictus," Burleigh's "Deep River," and Mary Knight Wood's "Song of Joy." Miss Rybner played three Russian numbers."

Also in 1917, Wood's contribution as a woman composer is again stated. The Stratford Company, of Boston, published "The Sum of Feminine Achievement," a massive work by Dr. William Alexander Newman Dorland, which reflects its intended depth of inclusion by its subtitle, "A Critical and Analytical Study of Woman's Contribution to the Intellectual Progress of the World." In the chapter called "The Feminine Side of Art," under the section heading "Women in Music and as Musical Composers," Wood is again noted.

After speaking of contributors from the mid-and-late 1700s, Dorland writes, "These pioneers in musical composition have had worthy successors in various countries, including the following, who are favorably known." Worldwide, among the 20 women then named, is "Mrs. Mary Knight Wood" as one of two "distinguished American composers."

World War I was then ongoing, and the following year, the July 27, 1918, issue of *Musical America* noted another Onteora event by Wood, in a news brief datelined July 17. It was entitled, "Gives Concert to Celebrate Bastille Day in Onteora, N.Y." (See P. 2)

– *History Question* –

Folklore's origins are usually based on events, but with Rip Van Winkle, it was literature. When Washington Irving published his 1819 story, it captured the imagination of the world and introduced the Catskills to all. Locally, by 1830, Rip was a feature on every visitor's itinerary, and today his name lives on in many cultural and commercial uses.

But Rip had an Old World "uncle," of sorts, as biographers note that Irving, living in England when he wrote it, borrowed from "Peter Klaus," a German folklore tale of a mountain goatherd who met eldritch beings playing nine-pins and, after drinking their special brew, slept 20 years. Johann Karl Christoph Nachtigel wrote it in his 1800 book, "Volkssagen" (Volk Sagas; Folk Tales), 19 years earlier.

But there is a folklore character of the Old World that predates both Rip

and Peter by centuries, whose name is in Catskill's early history. Unheralded here, this 14th century being is a popular tourist attraction in two German towns, with museums, festival re-enactors, statuary, dolls, and more.

So this issue's History Question is – Who is this 14th century folklore character who crossed the Atlantic to become part of Catskill's history?

## GREENE COUNTY HISTORY

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