

Reflections in Writing, Reflections in Print:
Letters, Periodicals and Antebellum Vermonters

HST 296E: History of Rural Life in the United States
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Louise Denison of Kalamazoo, Michigan began her March 26, 1854 letter to her Aunt Jerusha Hubbard of Whiting, VT, with a sentiment shared by many letter writers: “I want to hear from you again and I suppose I shall not until I write, so I’ll try.” She reassured her aunt that the family’s health was good, and followed with:

“Mr. Denison sits by the table reading a newspaper. Willis has taken a walk and Spencer is on the carpet with an open map before him tracing the way to Vermont.”¹

The scene is one of domestic tranquility. We can see Mrs. Denison, pen in hand, watching over her domain of home and family. Mr. Denison enjoys both that tranquility and his connection to the outer world through the medium of the news. Willis is outdoors, not working, but walking, perhaps to visit friends, or perhaps to partake of the solitary and uplifting joys of nature. Spencer is not at the table, nor simply on the floor, but on a carpet, an article of consumption that identifies the middle-class household. He is looking at a map, exhibiting skills in geography that he has no doubt learned in school.²

That same year, Mary Dinesmore of Quechee, Vermont, was facing a decision that would change her life. After marrying Henry Dinesmore, a doctor, they had set up housekeeping. Her earlier letters to her sister describe adapting to life in the village in the somewhat more public role as doctor’s wife, along with the challenges of establishing a home while caring for their infant son. But in 1854 Mary had a new challenge. Henry had decided that, though they were doing well enough in Quechee, he wanted to move somewhere else where he could, as Mary quotes, “be Somebody.”

Though they did not know each other, the correspondence of Louise Denison, Mary Dinesmore and that of their families, are similar in content. Their letters are filled with news of family and friends, concerns about health, and discussions of faith and religion. Many of the letters are from family members who had left or were considering leaving Vermont, and as such, provide information and opinions about other areas of the country. Thus, like any letters, they reflect the concerns, interests and attitudes of these antebellum Vermonters. However, they do more. According to Ann C. Rose “the growing number of magazines,

novels, photographs, plays, and musical compositions did not provide a systematic intellectual viewpoint. Yet these works of culture served, perhaps more decisively, as a new lens on experience.”³ Vermont newspapers and national periodicals of the time provided the letter writers with such a lens. In their choice of topics and in the way those topics were presented, they provided language and imagery that could be adopted by letter writers.

“We would like to have children to assist us and hope that we might be a help to you”

Louise Denison’s son Spencer was “tracing the way back to Vermont” from their home in Kalamazoo, Michigan, to that of her aunt and uncle, the Hubbards, sheep farmers in Whiting, Vermont. Several years after her move to Michigan her mother, Marcia Jackson, joined her and added her own pages to Louise’s letters home. They mention two other Whiting families, the Ives and Moultons, some of whose letters to the Hubbards are also preserved. Meanwhile, Mary Ladd Dinesmore did indeed leave Quechee to live in New York City for several years before returning as a widow to settle near her family in Woodstock.

Mary’s sister Elizabeth faced a similar decision. After attending Kimball Union Academy in Meriden, New Hampshire, she had married Rueben Allen Savage in 1842. The brother of her friend and classmate Almira, Allen had also attended Kimball, but had been called home in 1837 to take over the family farm when his father became ill. By 1849, Almira was teaching in Virginia, and Allen, Elizabeth, and their three children, were living on the farm at Stowe. However, they were considering a move. Elizabeth’s parents encouraged them to look for a farm in the Woodstock area and offered them a temporary home while they looked. They did not take that offer, but moving away from Stowe continued to be a topic of discussion. In the mid 1850s Allen’s cousin, Joseph, was considering a move to Kansas and urged the Savages to move with him. Despite many discussions on the subject they chose to remain in Stowe.

The Savage family had been one of the first families of Stowe, establishing the Congregational Church there. Allen eventually became a leader in the church as well.⁴ His sister Almira Savage continued the peripatetic life of an unmarried teacher, leaving Virginia for Missouri and finally settling in Wisconsin. Thus, the families represent a cross section of middle-class Vermonters. The Denison’s settled in a large Midwest town. The Moultons continued to be farmers, albeit under the rather different conditions of the Midwest.⁵ The

Dinesmores left the rural life for the city, while the Savages stayed on the farm. Almira Savage experienced life in the South and the Midwest.

“I wish very much to read those papers”

In *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780-1835*, William J. Gilmore explores the impact of print and reading on “the material and cultural bases of daily rural existence” of the early nineteenth century in Vermont. He convincingly argues that not only was there a marked increase in literacy rates but that the increase led to, among other things, the secularization of reading matter, the metamorphosis of reading from a shared activity to a personal one, the acceptance of change as normal, and an increase in regional, national and international perspectives, or an “Americanization” of knowledge.⁶ Improved print technologies and changing educational expectations ensured that supply would address demand, while improvements in regional transportation assisted in making those materials available to rural people.

Richard Brodhead has suggested that improved print and distribution technologies could not alone, account for the rise in literary production. Rather, he finds that “the historical creation of a new social *place* or *need* for literary entertainment to fill” was situated in domesticity.⁷ The print materials reflected a middle-class defined by domesticity, while the association of that domesticity with literacy fueled both the amount of materials created and the increasing acceptance of the images described by those materials. The letters of Louise Denison, Mary Dinesmore, and other members of the Hubbard and Savage families were often framed in the visual and literary terms that they, as educated middle-class mid-nineteenth century women, would have experienced through this burgeoning number of print resources available to them. Though we cannot assume a specific cause and effect between any given printed source and any letter, we can see reflections between the print materials that provincial women were consuming and the letters they were writing.

What print materials were available to the women of Vermont? The number of book-length works was increasing and larger communities were establishing lending libraries. Henry Savage writing to his brother in December of 1854 was happy to announce that “we have recently organized a ‘Library Association’ and have let a choice collection of Books & Wednesday next we drew out Books for the first time” adding “I hope it will unite our young

people and give them a taste for reading.”⁸ However, the negative impact of the economic difficulties of the late 1830s combined with changes in postal regulations had paved the way for a dramatic rise in the number of a different form of reading material, periodicals. Indeed, the economic advantage of subscribing to a periodical was a selling point for Louis Godey. In an advertisement in the *Franklin County Herald in February of 1852* he concluded that “the postage is now so low upon the *Lady’s Book* that every subscriber can afford to have it sent direct from the Publication Office.”⁹ In his ground-breaking study of American magazines, Frank Luther Mott estimated that the number of periodicals, excluding newspapers, published in the United States rose from twelve in 1800 to over six hundred by 1850, and more than three thousand by 1885.¹⁰ Subsequent research has found even more, many edited by women.¹¹ It seems that Americans agreed with Margaret Fuller’s assertion that:

“the most important part of our literature, while the work of diffusion is still going on, lies in the journals, which monthly, weekly, daily, send their messages to every corner of this great land and form, at present, the only efficient instrument for the general education of the people.”

National literary magazines, especially those directed towards women, combined with local and regional newspapers, provided a rich variety of print materials for rural women.

Did Vermont women use letters as a place to discuss what they were reading? In the two letter collections studied, references to specific literary works are few. Harriet Beecher Stowe appears to be the most popular writer among both the Savage and Hubbard women. Mrs. Denison writes to her Aunt Jerusha: “Our last week’s paper says at the close of “Sunbeams in the Forest,” concluded, so I suppose we shall hear no more from Mrs. Stowe at present.”¹² Stowe continues to be a favorite. Two years later Mrs. Denison mentions *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Having made the move to New York City in 1856, Mary Dinesmore writes to her sister that she and her husband “are now reading Mrs. Stow’s new work ‘Dred’ find it quite interesting but do not think it quite meets our expectations.”¹³ Her assumption that her sister would have heard of the work is not surprising. On November 14th of that year, the northern Vermont *American Journal*, which would later become the *Swanton Journal*, ran a glowing advertisement for *Dred*, saying the “universal voice of literary men now place Mrs. Stowe among the FOREMOST AUTHORS OF THE AGE.”¹⁴

Though limited in number, the examples provide an interesting look at the multiple ways print materials were consumed and used. In a reversal of what is generally considered the usual path of print distribution, that is, that material flowed from the east to the west, Louise Denison in Michigan is actually sending the installments of the Stowe story to her aunt in Vermont, saying “How do you like it. I suppose you have read them. I’ll soon send the rest.”¹⁵ Patricia Okker points out that the pleasures and popularity of reading fiction in serialized form was familiar to nineteenth century editors and critics.¹⁶ Readers would go to great lengths to follow serial stories. Writing to her Hubbard cousin, Charlotte asks “I wish before you come you would ask Jerusha to ask Mr. Goodrich for some papers, the Ledger that he took last year, it has a story of the Gold Beater it commences in Oct. I wish very much to them and if it is more convenient you may get them and I will carry them home.” Later in the letter she returns to the topic “I wish very much to read those papers as I have seen some of the story.”¹⁷

In addition to sending literature to her aunt, Louise Denison also fulfilled her role as educating mother by introducing Stowe’s most well-known work to her son. “I have been so much interrupted by Spencer who has been sitting by my side reading ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’ and every few minutes asking some questions about it.”¹⁸ She also consumes literature in a group setting. When the ladies of her church sewing circle gather for their meetings, she reports that “the president usually reads some part of the time from some Book or paper that is interesting. At the last two meetings she read from Horace Mann on the Sphere and Duties of Woman.”¹⁹ Reading was not always a group activity. As Gilmore has shown, personal, intensive reading for self-improvement was considered a laudable practice.²⁰ Charlotte F., writing to her cousin Jerusha Hubbard, comments that she is reading “‘The Life of Dr. Johnson’ in volumes” which she finds interesting.²¹ Whether or not she actually found such a work of great interest, her statement shows her belief that literacy was considered a positive virtue, especially when it included such edifying material.

A lack of direct discussion of specific authors does not mean that letter writers were not consuming the print material around them. In her recent study on the treatment, in newspapers and magazines, of singer Jenny Lind’s successful tour of the U.S. in the 1850s, Sherry Linkon suggests that periodicals offered “writers and readers an opportunity for public discourse about gender, religion, business success, and public life.” More importantly,

she posits that American readers could “read in stories about Jenny Lind representations of American culture and of their own lives.” Referring to the work of Janice Radway on reader’s response to literature, she also suggests that “readers might have been especially drawn to texts that offered useful ways of reading their own experiences.”²² Thus, local newspapers, which were dependant for economic viability on their success at judging and catering to their subscribers’ interests, provide an indication of what reading material, and subjects, were most acceptable to those subscribers.

Certainly, based on the amount of such material to be found in local and national periodicals, antebellum Vermonters expressed an interest in poetry and fiction. Advertising sections were filled with announcements of new books from booksellers. They also carried descriptive advertisements for such popular national magazines as *Godey’s Ladies Book*, *Graham’s Magazine*, *Arthur’s Magazine*, *Sartain’s*, and *Peterson’s*. The newspapers were indebted to these magazines for more than their advertisements. A.B.F. Hildreth, editor of the *Vermont Family Gazette* of Bradford, was happy to advertise *Graham’s Magazine* on page 3 of the May 15, 1850 edition. He was even happier to present, on page one, the story “Playing at Cross Purposes” by Mrs. Joseph C. Neal, a story that had graced the pages of *Graham’s* but a short time before.²³ This practice of “scissors editing” was not unusual nor was it always seen as a negative one by other publishers. George Graham found it particularly useful for evidence to support his belief that Longfellow’s popularity was far greater than Lowell’s. Having looked at “a thousand exchange papers scattered all over the whole Union” he concludes that he “should be a dolt in business not to see who is most copied and praised by them.”²⁴

For those who wished to combine literature with agricultural and political news, antebellum Vermont provided a number of weekly newspapers aimed at, and celebrating, the literate family. The *American Protector* described itself as “A family newspaper: devoted to protection, mutual rights, agriculture, morality, literature, arts, sciences, and general intelligence.” Upon changing its name to the *Vermont Family Gazette* it added to its masthead the editorial statement: “The Happiness of the Family Circle is the Nearest Approach to the Bliss of Heaven” reflecting the increasing tendency to frame society in terms of domesticity.

Though newspapers might take a particular editorial stance, they found that providing a range of topics was their best approach to ensuring adequate circulation. H.N. Drury, publisher of the *American Journal*, promised his paper would be a “Chariot for the thoughts of the Free” where “temperance reform will ever find an advocate” but added that it would also include literature, politics, and agricultural news in its pages. In Middlebury, home of the “established and favorite seat of leaning,” Middlebury College, the *Topaz* did not limit itself to being a “literary newspaper.” Though “remote from the influences of the great commercial centres” its editor, Philip Battell, declared that his newspaper would be filled not only with literary articles but also national and international news, professional information, statistics of home industry, “education and morality, of objects of artificial improvement, of defense and public policy, and of religion also.” The 1842 prospectus continued by assuring readers that local history, biography, and travelogues would also form a part of its contents.²⁵ Burlington, as the rising city in the state, was home to several newspapers, including the *Burlington Courier*, a “Journal of politics, Literature, Agriculture & General Intelligence;” the *Weekly Tribune*, whose editor Z. K. Pangborn promised to “wage war, open and uncompromising” against the system of American slavery; and the daily *Burlington Free Press*, whose pages, initially, were overwhelmingly devoted to advertising.

Other types of periodicals were also available. Hildreth emulated his Philadelphia and New York colleagues by publishing a twenty-four page monthly literary magazine, the *Green Mountain Gem*, directed at “lovers of elegant and refined literature, and general intelligence, of both sexes and all classes, as a work admirably fitted for a place on the parlor centre table, or a companion of the worthy and industrious laborer, calculated to while away many an hour in an agreeable manner that might otherwise be spent far less profitably.”²⁶ Even the Ladies Sewing Circle of the Congregational Church of Woodstock joined the periodical publishing craze. Casting about for a way to augment their fund raising activities, they published *The Tea Party*. The first issue contained a collection of poetry and articles, and even a letter of recommendation for their efforts from New England son, President Franklin Pierce. Claiming that the only political party they recognized was the “tea party” the editors stated their intention to “make our columns interesting to all.”

Vermont newspapers provided a range of topics that clearly catered to both male and female readers. When comparing these topics to those found in the letters, several patterns

emerge. Anxieties related to outmigration are clear. Families that had already moved wrote of their new homes, but also encouraged their loved ones to follow their example and leave Vermont's "rocky hills." Newspapers contain many articles that suggest their ambivalence on the subject. They follow the news from the west and report favorably on its apparent agricultural superiority, yet they encourage Vermonters to stay by suggesting this is not as promising as it seems. They include negative stories about the west, as well, particularly those of lurid or disastrous events.

The letters contain both personal expressions of faith and describe their community practice of religion. Denominational differences figure largely in Vermonters letters during the early decades of the nineteenth century, becoming less marked by 1860. By contrast, newspapers and magazines, though imbued with Protestant sensibilities, are less likely to highlight doctrinal conflicts. Discussion of sickness and death are prominent in the letters, either reported in a straightforward manner or used as a way to way to express religious feeling. In newspapers, health related issues appear in the form of advertisements for products, often accompanied by quite lengthy descriptions of ills and cures, providing readers with a language for describing physical symptoms.

Eighteenth century newspapers had been vehicles for political news and such news continues to be an important, though smaller, part of nineteenth century newspapers. Local and national political topics were discussed, the most prominent being elections, slavery and temperance. However, these topics are largely absent from the letters. Slavery is mentioned only by Almira Savage during the time she lived in Virginia, and temperance is mentioned not at all. Even more surprising is the sparing treatment of fashion, romance or marriage, staples of the women's periodicals and familiar subjects in newspaper fiction.

"You talked of comeing west"

In his prospectus for the *Topaz*, Battell had promised articles on geographically distributed topics. True to his word, the first issue included an article on improvements in transportation to Wisconsin, a report from Maria Edgeworth on temperance progress in England and Ireland, and brief news items from such diverse locations as Lake Michigan, London, Afghanistan, Illinois, Russia, St. Domingo (an earthquake), Virginia (reporting on the poor farming land there), Charleston (Indian murders), and New Orleans. Battell assumed

that his readers would be interested in non-local material, and the abundance of such information found in his and other newspapers supports his assumption.

The Hubbard and Savage families had their own travelers. A young man who had lived with and worked for the Hubbards sent a letter some years later describing his long journey from Vermont, through New York City, across the country and then south to New Orleans. In June of 1854, Hart M. Walker wrote to his cousin Frank Hubbard that he had just returned from a five month trip across the country, spending one month at Pike's Peak and returning to his home in upstate New York by way of Illinois. Judging the far west a "harsh place to make money" he is, however, pleased to announce that his grandparents' "likenesses have been to Pike's Peak [where] he looked at them a good many times and thought of Old Vermont." Nor was the west the only destination of Vermonters. One set of letters even came from a relative then living in India.

Rural Vermonters' interest in the world beyond their borders was not simply that of travelers. When Spenser Denison lay on the carpet tracing the route back to his grandparents' house, he was following the road taken by many mid-century Vermonters who left their hill farms for the promised riches of the mid-west. Comments and questions about life in the west are a recurring theme for these Vermont families. Allen Savage was torn between the advice from his in-laws: "Tell Allen there is no necessity of his going west. There are good farms for sale in this region but I would not be selfish, perhaps he would do more good at the west" and the invitation from his Cousin Joseph who was facing the same choice. "I saw Harper S. since my return from Kansas and we were speaking of the possibility of your changing location some time and I could not well resist the temptation of giving you an invite to accompany us to the territory." Joseph continues that the climate is delightful, the soil rich, there is a railroad nearby, limestone, coal and lead, good roads, rolling country, and scenery "almost as varied and diversified as in our own state."²⁷

Transplanted Vermonters describe some of the difficulties they faced: weather is always a consideration. Louise Denison describes one Michigan winter as long and dreary, a surprising assessment given Vermont's record in that area. The following winter her mother is happy with the "good sleighing" as the "snow lays level. It has not drifted as it does in VT."²⁸ Several summers are plagued by drought, while spring might feature an abundance of torrential rains, in one instance washing "a new two story house with a long ell to it all to the

ground.”²⁹ Sadness at long separations from family members was a recurring theme, though mitigated somewhat by two factors. Family members did come for extended visits with their western relatives, as Louise Denison’s mother did. Also, people often followed those they knew: cousins, siblings, or residents of the same town would settle near each other.

Overall, the pictures painted by the western farmers are glowing. By 1850, Ephraim Moulton and his family were well settled in Pavillion, Kalamazoo County, Michigan. He writes that he misses his family in Whiting, but that:

“If Grand Father would come out here & stay one season he would never be contented to dig in VT . . . the reason why I think so is that land is much cheaper & yet more productive. Good farms can be bought here near the line of the railroad from 8 to 12 dollars per acre . . . There is one neighbor who has a farm of about 400 acres who has raised over 4000 bushels corn 1000 of wheat & over 1000 of oates & keeps 70 head of cattle & about 100 hogs.”³⁰

For a Vermonter, whose primary focus at this time would still have been sheep, and whose acreage would probably have averaged half that amount at best, such farm sizes and yields would have seemed immense.³¹ Even Marcia Jackson, Louise Denison’s mother, who does not usually write on the subject, cannot forego marveling that a friend who has just bought uncleared acres “took one yoke of oxen and plowed with as much ease as he could old ground.”³²

Men and farm families were not the only Vermonters leaving for the west. In her role as editor of *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, Sarah J. Hale used her influence to promote a definition of women’s’ work that included teaching.³³ The Savage’s daughter, Almira, chose to teach first in Virginia, then Missouri, finally settling in Baraboo, Wisconsin. Her first classes were small, but by the late 1850s she would occasionally have as many as “74 scholars, girls and boys, some with beards, some not.” Though she was pleased with her living situation, sharing a house that provided her “a carpet for my room which is 14 feet square, a large closet, and a small bedroom out of my room” she was eventually able to save enough to purchase land and have a house built.

Vermont newspapers regarded westward emigration with anxiety. The May 5, 1855 edition of the *American Journal* reported that the Midwest ‘granary of the Union’ was producing wheat at record rates and expected to continue to do so. Yet the editors felt compelled to leaven this enticing news with two articles more prominently featured. The first

article bemoaned seeing “our eastern villages deserted,” and warned readers to weigh carefully the disadvantages of emigration. “But of this . . . people are not aware . . . They seem to labor under a strange misconception that in ‘going west’ they are fleeing from labor and toil.” The editors attempted to dispel this notion, asserting that, despite its advantages, the west required hard work. “With industry and frugality . . . the cunning may rise to opulence. But this may be done in New York or New England.”³⁴ This advice had been tried earlier. In the early months of the gold rush the Burlington Courier carried several articles that encouraged Vermonters to stay put, suggesting that they could do “as well here as in California if you work hard.”

Rose has suggested that “advocates of regional cultures set out to record their areas’ unique traits and histories when they realized how much the national marketplace threatened local distinctiveness.”³⁵ A second article in the *American Journal* suggests that its editors saw this as a useful strategy. It began “there are probably but few portions of our earth . . . that are truly more picturesque than Vermont . . . in the number and variety of those objects which eminently constitute rural scenery, this portion of our country will be found second to none.” It continued by waxing lyrical on the woods, “beautiful rivers . . . vernal mountains . . . and one of the most delightful lakes on earth.” bolstering these claims by extensively quoting “an eminent English divine, as he describes his experience while passing through our beautiful Lake Champlain.”³⁶

This poetic description is similar to that expressed by a young man who had spent part of his childhood living with the Hubbards. In an 1844 letter to them he recalls fondly the

“scenes of my early childhood [which] are still vivid in my memory. How often I think of the big meadow, the Allen meadow, the Crick meadow, and the north meadow, and the north pasture and the west orchard, and the north orchard, the east orchard, and a thousand of other things rush involuntarily into my more mature mind. These things cease to afford you pleasure and delight; but to me, they are as rich as the golden produce.”³⁷

Though this is only a single example, the fact is that he did not return to Vermont but made his home in New Orleans. This suggests that the newspapers’ promotion of an imagined Vermont presented in romanticized scenic terms, while it may have later proved a useful strategy for attracting tourists to the state, was not an effective way to stem outmigration. However, it did provide additional examples for letter writers describing their Vermont

homes. J.M. Walker, young friend of Frank Hubbard, was not given to lyricism in his letters, yet he could express Frank's decision to stay in Vermont in these terms:

"It seems you have chosen to stay in old Vermont with her stately hills and bold rocks than to scale the western Prairies."³⁸

"It is a time of great religious interest here"

The turbulent years of the Second Great Awakening left their imprint on the women of the Hubbard and Savage families, particularly those of the older generation. While many letters address religious themes or employ religious language and imagery, as the 1850s progress there is a shift in the way these themes are addressed. For the older generation, revivalism, the importance of the conversion experience, and denominational conflict are prominent. Mary Dinesmore's mother, Susan Ladd, reports that:

"I wanted to tell you the good news as soon as it reached us . . . it is a very interesting time at M[iddlebury] both among professors and the impenitent, several have been convicted and they hope converted . . . What can we poor sinful mortals do without the influence of the Spirit to guide us into all truth."³⁹

In another letter to her daughter Elizabeth, her expressions of joy are abundant:

"Mary told me news while at home, fixing, that rejoiced my heart exceedingly, it was that you have had your hope in Christ revived and renewed. O bless the Lord for his unspeakable gifts to the lost, but when we feel the divine influence of His Holy Spirit in our own hearts or in our family we are led to exclaim O wonderful love! O kind compassion! How can we sinful worms of the dust ever praise Thee acceptably for such services . . . I hope dearest E. that you will strive to live near your Savior who has done and suffered so much to redeem your precious soul and never again give away his Holy Spirit but trust him as the most faithful friend with all your cares and your trials, your temptations, conflicts, and your victory."

Though periodical fiction also cast faith in terms of spiritual support they also advocate the expression of "faith through works," encouraging their readers to contribute to the church and the poor while also providing examples of moral purity. The few articles in newspapers that contain direct references to religion seem to focus more on the role and behavior of the clergy. Responding to the stereotype of fiery preacher, an 1850 edition of the

Burlington Courier features a description of Baptist minister Noel that emphasizes his gravity instead of his “restlessness, which some, for want of any other, consider the manifestation of genius.”

Though the letter writers express their faith in terms of personal decisions and practices, they also show how their communities faced challenges of a quite practical nature. Finding, maintaining, and keeping a minister in a rural area was no easy task. In the Fifth Annual Report of the Vermont Baptist Convention, in the early days of the Second Great Awakening, Willard Kimball describes the domestic missionary work to several small Vermont communities. It shows a church in disarray, religious community almost non-existent, and a people “starving for the bread of life, having had but one Sabbath’s preaching for a whole year.”⁴⁰ Twenty years later the effect of this missionary zeal could be seen in the increased numbers of Vermonters associated with churches. Yet, as Susan Ladd noted in April, 1851, “we have yet no Pastor to lead us in the right way but have good preaching every Sabbath.”⁴¹ In August she was still concerned that “we have yet no Minister to break unto us the bread of life, but remain as sheep without a shepherd, hope we may soon be directed to the right one . . . [who will] visit and interest himself in the welfare of the souls of his flock.”⁴²

Finding a pastor posed one difficulty. Navigating the denominational and doctrinal vicissitudes of antebellum Vermont communities posed another. The publishers of the *Tea Party* may have claimed that “we are at peace with all our neighbors . . . we cannot all think alike, and so we agree to differ” but the situation described by letter writers presents a different view. When the Savages were deciding whether or not to sell their farm and leave Stowe, Elizabeth’s father suggested that such a move might be difficult but that there “are other things to be brought into the account, in a moral point of view which certainly go far to justify you in this movement.” Several years later, in 1860, the *Christian Repository* reported that an Evening Social Circle had been formed in Stowe to help raise funds for the Sabbath School but also to “improve the social feeling.” Whether or not this attempt had anything to do with the Savages decision to stay in Stowe is unknown, but it does show that the community was aware of the dissension in their midst.

The perception of great differences between the denominations in Vermont is thrown into relief by the reactions of transplanted Vermonters.⁴³ In almost every letter to Jerusha

Hubbard, Marcia Jackson, who had moved to her daughter Louise's home in Michigan, commented on the "union and harmony among different denominations."⁴⁴ She found that there seemed to be "no jars nor discords, it is no uncommon thing for the Baptist Minister and the Congregational Minister to change some times. They and the Presbyterian Sabbath Schools meet together in concert . . . it seems like one family."⁴⁵

A letter from Ellen Emerson Morris of Racine, Wisconsin indicates why this form of "union and harmony" may have been important in determining how successful and satisfactory migration was for individuals, but it also underscores how the church was viewed by Vermont women. Writing to her sister Mary Ann in Rochester, Vermont she said:

"Yet there are objections to settling in Wisconsin – and one very prominent one is a want of society. That in many parts of our country is either very poor or none at all. In our settlement we have preaching once in two weeks."

Her conflation of preaching and society is not uncommon among the letter writers. As Hansen has argued, the church "created spiritual and moral communities that sustained its members by providing mutual aid and a vocabulary for struggling to understand social and economic change."⁴⁶

"On the first floor is a parlor and in it we have a nice carpet"

Ann Douglas in her *Feminization of American Culture* decried the increased consumerism of antebellum culture as a poor substitute for the religiosity that preceded it. Gordon and McArthur counter, however, that "for nineteenth-century women, raised amidst austere surroundings and unceasing work and threatened with eternal damnation by a judgmental God, domestic luxuries and a forgiving, if sentimental religion, came as a welcome change."⁴⁷ Consumerism for the betterment of the church appears to have been acceptable. According to Kelly, the "gradual change in theology and practice buttressed by the marriage of Protestantism and refinement had spread from Unitarians, Congregationalists, and Episcopalians to more conservative, evangelical denominations." Thus, among the changes was a perception that gentility should be cultivated and these newly refined sensibilities directed to the decoration and design of churches.⁴⁸ When Jane Denison reported to her Aunt that she had taken a "hard cold down to the Saloon trying to help sell ice cream" she was not engaging in personal mercantile activity but providing a service to "help the

Church.” The ladies had made enough “this season of all expenses in selling Ice cream which has paid for the carpet in the new Church. It is nerely completed & is to be dedicated the 5th of Sept. The seats are all cushioned alike with the red damask...”⁴⁹ The Ladies Sewing Society of the Congregational Church in Woodstock reported in the inaugural edition of *The Tea Party* that their fund raising efforts over the years had provided not only the carpet, lamps, and organ for the meeting house but was well on its way to acquiring sufficient funds to begin a renovation of the entire church. Not all sewing circles could aspire to such heights, but the ladies of Louise Denison’s circle could report with pride that they had already collected \$100 of the \$150 they had pledged six months before to help build a new church.

Increased access to manufactured textiles resulted in farm women putting away their spinning wheels but not their sewing baskets. Mrs. Ladd, in a letter to her daughter, responded to the fact that her responsibilities had changed as her grown children had left home, by retreating to the familiar occupation of her generation: “we are rather lonely with our small family, have brought down my little wheel for company.”⁵⁰ While they may have no longer needed their wheels, sewing, particularly that of shirts, small clothes and quilts, remained a responsibility of women. The sewing basket was a constant companion, never empty, a visible reminder of work not done. Several stories in *Godey’s Lady’s Book* by Alice B. Haven feature a sewing basket that looms large in the consciousness of both rural and town women. In at least two instances the act of attempting to empty the basket brings her characters to the point of depression and illness. Mary Dinesmore writes that in preparation of setting up housekeeping in 1852 she was “busy enough piecing and quilting bed quilts.”⁵¹ Once she has moved into her new home she still had “an abundance of sewing to do so I have not much time to be lonely.”⁵²

Making sewing a communal event eased the burden and provided an opportunity for social activity. Mrs. Ladd and her daughters had “with a little help quilted two bed quilts, pieced one of them, the other was the rose blocks that dear Susan pieced.” Despite the help, she continued on that same line in her letter “wish Allen could make arrangements to come live with us. work and care look like a mountain to your father and I have some of the same feelings.” The members of Mrs. Denison’s Kalamazoo sewing circle met every other Tuesday afternoon and evening. The “ladies sew the afternoon for the lady with whom they meet & so she gives them a tea.” Such was the importance of community sewing circles that

women were willing to go to great lengths to attend. While her husband was investigating a possible move to New York City, Mary Dinesmore and their son Willie had returned, temporarily, to her mother's house. They arranged for a meeting of the sewing society but the weather did not cooperate. This did not prevent a large attendance: "This week the sewing society met here. It was a stormy day and only 20 ladies came. Mr. Kent brought up 19 and engaged to go back and bring another load but the storm prevented."

Given the number of advertisements in newspapers for the latest bonnets, shawls, trimmings and household décor items as well as the number of stories in the magazines devoted to teaching women how to be competent consumers, it is surprising that fashion is so little represented in the letters, particularly those of the younger women of the Hubbard and Savage families. These topics do appear in several letters written by Eliza Fairbanks, a young farm wife in Georgia, Vermont, whose letters also make it clear that her family is struggling financially. Writing to her sister Mary Ann in 1853 she mentioned that she had learned to knit, had made a knitted bonnet, and had done some crochet work, and continued that "Anna is well and gets along without a girl. She has got her silk dress finished. The sleeves are cut larger at the top than at the bottom. It sets first rate."⁵³ The following year she had the opportunity to alter a gown from her sister, with its possible later use by her daughter:

"I have been thinking about your dress. I do not wish it for a cloak but I should think the skirt would be pretty with a bask if it was wide enough. It will make Emily a pretty dress by the by. If it is wide enough for a skirt I will bye it of you."⁵⁴

Elizabeth Savage never mentioned fashion or home furnishing, although letters from her mother indicate that her parents had bought a carpet for her. Mary Dinesmore does describe the layout and furnishings of her home in Quechee, mentioning a "parlor and in it we have a nice carpet, table, solar lamp, chairs, secretary, and crickets. a sitting room is next and here we have a new cooking stove table and chairs woodbox and the like" adding appreciatively that "the rooms have been newly painted and papered and every thing is new and clean." However, she also appears to have a decided opinion about the appropriate levels of consumption, the dangers of over consumption, and what a woman's priorities should be. When a former friend visits her in Quechee, she notes that

“Ellen Parker was there . . . She is no less vain than when a girl. One would judge to see the amount of jewelry worn to decorate her fair person and it would seem as if she had seen enough of trouble in following the remains of four loved ones to the grave within three years to lead her to care less for such things and feel that ‘all is vanity.’”⁵⁵

Upon relocating to New York, but only to satisfy the expressed curiosity of her young niece, she noted that “Helen wanted to know how the little girls here wore their hair and I suppose she will be very glad to hear that all I have seen to notice are beginning to braid them but perhaps I have not seen the most fashionable yet.”⁵⁶ She was not averse to looking at the many shop window displays the city had to offer, but did not mention making any purchases.

Awareness of fashion need not lead to discussion of fashion. *Godey’s Lady’s Book* may have been known for its fashion plates, articles on dress, and pages devoted to fashionable accessories, but its writers, while providing its avid readers with enticing details, also demonstrated the appropriate way to frame public discourse on the subject. Mrs. Flanders, a character in the 1852 story *The Wrong Passenger* provides an example.⁵⁷ Making her first extended visit to the south from Boston, she delights in purchasing the necessary items. Once aboard ship she meets two women, the voluble Mrs. Jessup and the quiet and reserved Miss Page. Mrs. Flanders is impressed by Mrs. Humbert, who seems most interested in proclaiming exalted social connections like the Howards, between her visits to the mirror to adjust her hair and dress. But Mrs. Flanders, sitting in the “dignity of her plaid *laine de Saxony* gown, made in the latest Boston fashion, stiff linen collar and cuffs, and a gold chain” is grateful to Miss Page, despite the latter’s lowly status as evidenced by her plain gown and small cameo broach, when the younger woman helps her during a bout of seasickness. Of course, Miss Page turns out to be none other than the famous Mrs. Howard whose simplicity of dress proclaims to the reader, if not to Mrs. Flanders, her true status. Mrs. Humbert turns out to be the social climber who has dropped the name but does not even recognize her, and Mrs. Flanders, after being graciously feted by Mrs. Howard goes home a chastened woman.

“Our joy was short-lived—we have lost him”

A substantial portion of correspondence and newspaper space was devoted to health related matters, although it took rather different forms in each. Letters reassured readers that

family members were in good health, described aspects of poor health, or reported on illnesses and deaths in the family or community. Such letters, particularly between those who relocated to distant areas, might have been the sole conduit for information regarding the deaths of friends. Thus, in a single letter Mrs. Ladd could supply information on Augustus D. who was very sick, Loren Thacker, who may have injured himself by “taking too much medicine” though he was now “better than he was last summer but not able to work any yet,” Cordelia, who was recovering but whose parents “fear to have her go back to the Factory lest she should be sick again,” sister Harriet in Boston who remained sick (“poor woman how much she suffers. What a Mystery!”), Mr. Caleb Atwood, who was “sick and probably near his end,” Mrs. Thomas who was getting better though Mr. T. was failing, and Henry Gibbs, who she recalls attended school with Elizabeth, who “died last week of typhus fever.”

A substantial portion of the advertisements in newspapers promised cures for these and other ailments. These advertisements extolled the efficacy of a variety of nostrums but also served to explain what diseases were, how they worked, and provided a quasi-medical, though often euphemistic, language that could be used to describe them. Suggestions for cures, though present, are less evident in the letters. In the middle of a letter to her son Allen, Mrs. Savage suggested that he try a remedy recommended to her by a friend: “She said Mr. Simmons used to have a turn of bleeding at the stomach and that he dissolved camphor gum in the Spirits of turpentine and took a few drops at a time, which was very strengthening & helped him. I wish you would try it.”⁵⁸ Such recipes are rarely found in the ladies magazines or the fictional stories published in newspapers.

The mid-century preoccupation with illness was not unwarranted. The increase in life expectancy experienced in the eighteenth century did not continue in the nineteenth. Although there were regional variations, the overall life expectancy for Americans declined in the decades before the Civil War. Geographic mobility and increasing urbanization fostered the spread of scarlet fever, typhoid, tuberculosis and periodic epidemics.⁵⁹ As nineteenth century Americans struggled with these changing conditions, Protestantism underwent a transition from a Calvinistic emphasis on predestination to one based on a conversion experience that allowed followers to commend their souls, by choice, to a caring God. Ministers exhorted their flocks to prepare for death by repenting of sins, finding faith in the saving power of Christ, and cultivating a spirit of devoted piety. Anyone could work to

ensure that the death of a parent, spouse, or friend would mean only temporary separation by encouraging that they, too, accept the promised grace.⁶⁰ As Mercy writes to her friend Almira “cast all your cares and burdens on Him who careth for you . . . and he will carry you safely through . . . and then take you to himself to join the loved ones who are only gone before.”⁶¹ The emphasis on individual choice in moral accountability was problematic in the case of a child, who would not have been considered capable of making such choices. Thus, such reassurances were doubly important for those who had lost children.

While ministers may have provided explanations for how Christians should prepare for and meet death, fiction suggested a language for describing and reacting to it. Antebellum literature has numerous examples, the most familiar of which is probably the death of little Eva in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Eva’s death shows an innocent child transformed into a holy one by impending death. Her physical strength wanes, but her spiritual strength gains. With it comes her power to assure salvation for herself and her family, and ensure that they will be reunited after death. This comfort was offered to many grieving parents by their friends and relatives. The Vilas family of Burlington lost their son George to illness in the spring of 1851. In the outpouring of letters of sympathy from friends and family came a letter from their sister, Elizabeth Hathaway who wrote:

“. . . I am prepared to anticipate the bitterness of that grief which consigns to the tomb a beloved friend—but none but those who have stood around the dying bed of a beloved child can tell a Mother’s sorrow as her darling child is removed by death . . . but he who invades the sanctuary of affliction—does it in wisdom—and your child is now associating with angels in the paradise of God—your family circle has been broken but may you in the future to which we all hasten form an unbroken circle around the throne of God.”⁶²

For parents who lost a child, this imagery and language could also be employed not only as a way to find solace, but also as a way to help ease the difficult task of informing family members of the sad event. Mary Dinesmore, who had expressed some reservations at removing to New York City, was pleased to find that “a few rods from us is a beautiful playground with a fountain in the center a resort for children. Willie is delighted to get out and he feels as good as the best.” The fountain may have been the source of the trouble that would cast Mary into despair. Through a letter to her sister Elizabeth she shares the ordeal of

his last hours. Despite her attempts to cast his death in comforting spiritual terms, her anguish, horror, and need to share the distressing details cannot be disguised:

““It is in the midst of deep affliction that I now take my pen to address you. We are left desolate and alone. Our little precious darling Willie is no more. All that remains of him was yesterday consigned to the silent grave and we are left heart broken in this cold world to wend our way along without that bright beam of sunshine that for two and a half years had shed so bright a light about our paths. Just one week ago Willie was taken sick with dysentery which was not very bad but still did not seem to yield to the remedies which were constantly and faithfully applied. Monday he seemed to be much weaker and quite sick kept winking and working his mouth which we did not quite understand. Tuesday still sick and we called in a Physician. He called him quite sick but thought those strange motions were the affect of opium. Wednesday morn he called him no worse only much weaker but in the afternoon he passed into a state of stupor which we first took to be Death but soon saw it was a change in the disease which lasted three hours. Of what hours of anxiety such intense anxiety as only parents under similar circumstances can feel and how many prayers arose in silence from our hearts in that time as we watched by that face those precious little features for a change and I trust each one was ended with ‘thy will not mine be done.’ The change came but alas it was throwing of the head and arms. He could not keep still one moment such was his suffering. There was no longer any doubt his brain was affected. There was no hope no hope. O those heart rending words to parents hearts. Two Physicians were in and did all that could be. Four of us spent the night with him. He had some quiet and a good deal of pain but he would brighten up occasionally and seemed so easy I found I was clinging to a good deal of hope. At six in the morning he began to change again. We saw Death was at the door and at nine o’clock he gently and quietly breathed his last. Then he was taken from my arms to be laid away and it seemed to me I had nothing to do but to weep. We were poor comforters for each other, the world looked worthless, and our little care was taken from us.”

Mary expressed her conviction that he was in heaven, assured that Willie, despite his youth, was somehow aware of this as “he had been quiet and speaking of heaven all summer.” They brought him to Woodstock to be buried, instead of consigning him to “that strange land among strangers” and, though their later two children would be born in New York, Mary returned to Woodstock soon after her husband’s death to raise her son and daughter and live out her life there.

“So much for politics”

Rose has argued that it became “increasingly difficult during the 1850s to avoid discussion of slavery and the prospects of the Union.”⁶³ This discussion is quite apparent in the antebellum northern newspapers. Whatever their opinions on other matters, Vermonters seem to have been in one accord regarding slavery. Nor was the expression of that belief limited to male writers. A column written for the *American Journal* in 1855, signed ‘Debbie,’ praises America’s history of freedom and sees it as a model for the rest of the world with one exception:

“(alas, that I an American girl should say it) she would shine with a brightness far beyond any nation on the globe but for that one black and inhuman stain upon her national character. . . this curse of slavery.”⁶⁴

Other articles followed events in the western territories as well as incidents closer to home. Readers of the *Vermont Family Gazette* in 1850 were reassured that, though some people had accosted him with the intent of sending him back to slavery, Frederick Douglass was indeed safe because he was able to produce “his bill of sale from his master.”⁶⁵ Reports and letters to the Editor castigated the policies and activities of slave states, politicians who seemed in favor of continuing slavery, and even political parties like the Know Nothing Party, that refused to take a public stand on the issue.

It is much less clear how discussion of political events was viewed by ladies magazines. Nina Baym has suggested that Godey and Hale’s decision to never mention politics in their magazine was itself a political stance. By choosing to exclude politics from the “women’s sphere” of the *Lady’s Book*, she asserts that Hale was instructing women that their “domestic sphere” should not include it either.⁶⁶ However, Sarah Hale’s promotion of a national Thanksgiving holiday, instead of regionally determined celebrations, was quite clearly framed as an attempt to reconcile northern and southern discord.⁶⁷ Godey himself was not immune from being drawn into the growing national debate. The *Burlington Courier* had published several short humorous articles by Grace Greenwood on a variety of topics, but in March of 1850 her name figured in another matter. Godey, ever ready to defend his magazine, had received complaints from southern newspapers when Greenwood, who had done occasional editorial work for the *Lady’s Book*, published articles in the abolitionist journal *The National Era*. Greenwood was fired and Godey hastened to assure his southern readers that neither he, nor his magazine, would condemn their “southern institutions.”

Learning of this, the *Courier* which had recently expressed support for Godey's magazine, withdrew that support, prompting rival newspaper, the *Burlington Free Press* to castigate the *Courier* for its change of heart. The *Courier* responded by printing a copy of both the letter to the *Free Press* editor that had denounced the *Courier's* actions and the letter from Godey to the South Carolina newspaper that had originally complained, adding that *Courier* readers should refuse to:

“patronize a journal whose proprietor *boasts* that he has carefully catered for the base prejudices of the south, to the exclusion of every noble sentiment of disapprobation against its cowardly tyranny.”⁶⁸

While Vermont women outside Burlington may not have been aware of this particular exchange, they were clearly not unaware of national events. Jane Hubbard, writing to her brother Frank in December of 1860 states that “there has been a report about here that Lincoln has been assassinated but we do not give it much heed. We shall very soon know however whether there is any truth in it.”⁶⁹ Nor were they hesitant to express their political opinions. Jane's older sister, Tulma, was quite forthright about her feelings for their new president. Writing in November of that year she says:

“If you have another Lincoln Envelope I wish you would bring me one. I am going to write to Oscar Moulton and send him a black ribbond badge. I told him if Lincoln was elected I would do so, and I would like one of those envelopes to send it in.”⁷⁰

In the many letters to her Aunt Jerusha, Louis Denison mentions politics only once. The early nineteenth century Vermont tradition of a spring militia gathering day, used, though it may have been, as an opportunity for drunken revels, had faltered in the face of the temperance movement. However, antebellum towns, both east and west, found that public celebrations around political themes and events provided a way to direct the excessive energy of young men towards more socially acceptable goals.⁷¹ Writing in 1856, Mrs. Denison said of her son Spencer “I suppose if he should say anything it would be in the way of political news for the boys catch the spirit of the older ones.” Apparently, Spencer was impressed by “the Republicans boys [who] meet every Saturday with banners, flags, drums & fifes dressed in uniform & parade the streets, some 100 or more.” She then reported on two mass meetings attended by some 20,000 people, at which “Breckenridge himself” spoke. “The Fremont men

to distinguish themselves from the others went to tying blue ribbons in their buttonholes and there were one third had blue ribbons in. So much for Politics.” However, Louise summed up her opinion about these displays with indignation: “The Baptist ladies got up refreshments at both the meetings and cleared \$175 besides \$11 of bad money that was put on to them by some patriot probably.”

It is tempting to assume that women, adopting the precepts of the ladies’ magazines, would eschew political speech in their letters, while men, with a long tradition of political speech, would not. Unfortunately, in this admittedly small sample of letters, that turns out not to be the case. The men of the Savage and Hubbard families are as silent on political topics as their sisters, wives, mothers, and aunts. There is little mention beyond Joseph Savage’s comment, in his letter trying to convince his cousin Allen to move with him to Kansas, that “we like the gov. well” and that “the Missourians have come in to vote by the hundreds.”

“I think you would like her. I do.”

Bertolini concludes that encouraging young men to marry was one way American society addressed the anxieties related to the fragmentation of society brought on by rapid urbanization, industrialization, and the expanding western frontier.⁷² This form of encouragement was certainly reflected in the *Lady’s Book*. After establishing the “Godey’s Arm-Chair” section of brief editorials there is hardly a month wherein he did not include praise of marriage, the encouragement of young men to marry, or complaints about those who do not. The marriage decision was an even more important one for women, who would be investing their entire future economic well-being in their choice. In magazines like Godey’s, and the newspapers that “clipped” from them, stories depicting navigations through the marriage choice, as well as those that convey what qualities are desirable in a life partner, are well represented. Articles in newspapers that referred to marriage followed a more proscriptive route, explaining how men and women should behave when married. In both cases, an ostensibly companionate marriage was recommended. A writer for the *American Protector* suggested that “There ought to be sympathy between a man and his wife in everything. . . Reciprocated love makes it easy.” Of course, man, who had “less acquaintance generally with the mechanism of the human heart” needed to be extra supportive of woman who looks to him for “protection, instruction and support.”⁷³

In remarkable contrast to the published works, the letter writers are almost completely silent on the topics of romance and marriage. Weddings are private affairs and women and men report on who has been married after the fact. Writers may report that one of their acquaintances has married, as Ephraim Moulton does when he as the Moulton's friend did when he mentions a friend who:

“went to Ohio and returned [married to] the Widow Lawrence formerly of Middlebury. He thinks now of removing to Wisconsin and going in to a drugstore in company with his wife's brother.”⁷⁴

Other announcements of marriage come from the participants themselves, but with as little fanfare. Almira Savage's sister Jane wrote to her from Wisconsin in 1855. Her letter is a heart-rending account of the death of her infant son. In the very last paragraph she adds, almost as an afterthought:

“You will see by my tale that we have married but have not got to housekeeping yet. William was going out to get the house in readiness this week and so I came with him and am boarding at a Mr. Ellis in the village.”⁷⁵

The letters show slight differences in the way the writers discuss courtship and marriage based on their age and gender. For the elder generation, writing in the early 1850s, the subject is rarely one of speculation. Even as late as 1880, writing to her sister Elisabeth with whom she has kept up a close correspondence for thirty years, Mary Dinesmore mentions only briefly, again after the fact, that her daughter Lillie has married.

For the younger generation, especially between siblings, the subject does arise more frequently. Asahel and Jerusha Hubbard's children, Tulma, Asahel Jr., Frank, Jane, and Asahel's wife Ann, shared a lively correspondence before and during the war. Though they, too, report on marriages after the fact, they also add some speculation. In December of 1860 Ann wrote to Frank “I have some news to tell you, Gaylord Hubbard has returned home with his wife. He came Tuesday, they were married Monday.” On the next sheet Jane added “he has got the start of you altogether, Frank.”⁷⁶ In that same month Asahel wrote “Anson Goodrich came to Whiting a few days ago and last week he and Libbie Walker were married. (Since then the weather has been much warmer.)”⁷⁷

There are also gender differences in the discussion of romance and marriage. Among this sample of letters, men are more likely to go beyond simple announcements when

speaking of marriage. As Asahel's letter suggests, men were more likely to make sexual references. Frank's friend J. M. Walker, who had moved to the Midwest a few years earlier, accepted that, despite encouragement, Frank would not be following suit. He commented that this was probably because Frank had "got into so bad a habit as roaming of Sunday nights but you did not tell me who you went to see over to Shoreham." He then announced his own marriage this way:

"Speaking of bad habits I have got one. Well it ain't so bad after all. It is just sleeping with a woman that is all or nearly all. I have been in that habit since the 24th of last November."

He added "my wife and I went down to Luther's yesterday. Lute's wife is very large at present."⁷⁸ Another friend of Frank's, Charles Seymour, had his own opinion about the charms of the Midwest. Writing to Frank from his uncle's house in Amboy, he described his journey then commented on the local scene by saying "I never enjoyed myself better than I have since I have been here . . . I tell you what Frank there are some Dutch girls here as slick as the goslins at gooshill."⁷⁹

"The young men have gone to put down the infernal rebellion"

Speculations about Frank Hubbard's marital prospects continued even after he left to become a bugler for the Grand Army of the Republic. His friend's sister, Sophie Needham, after mentioning that she had seen "your old flame she that was Marion Jones" remarked with amazement that "they say that you went to war on Marion's account. How is that I supposed that it was Helen that sent you off. Frank how is it? Did Marion really give you the mitten. I can't hardly believe that she did. If she did you must have been a goose to have gone off to war. You punished yourself more than you did her." It would seem that Marion was indeed the object of Frank's intentions. On the back of his letter from Seymour is what appears to be a draft of a letter to Marion expressing his love. Whether he ever copied it out and sent it to her is unknown.

The war brought changes to periodicals. Those with national circulation, like *Godey's Lady's Book* walked the fine line between their northern and southern subscribers by avoiding overt mention of the war. Others adopted a stance and spent the war excoriating the other side. Newspapers devoted less space to fiction and more to reporting on the dramatic

events on the battlefields. Soldiers wrote letters to their families about their experiences while families replied with news from back home. Whether in an attempt to raise flagging spirits or to reassure him that life continued much the same, Ann Hubbard wrote to Frank on the activities of his Vermont friends, especially the singing societies, parties, and the brass band that had consumed much of his spare time. She also continued to report on friends who had died until she and her family learned that he, too, had died at Andersonville. Of the Hubbards and Savages and their friends the Moultons, Needhams, and Walkers, some joined up, some continued on their farms, but all lost at least one family member to the war. For this brief period newspapers and letter writers would find the war to be the lens that they shared as they recounted their experiences.

Notes

¹ Letter excerpts are taken from the Hubbard Family Papers and Savage Family Papers at the Department of Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont, hereinafter HFP and SFP respectively. HFP: Louise Denison to Jerusha Hubbard, March 26, 1854.

² Several years later his grandmother would report that Spencer's teacher had praised his geography skills. HFP: Marcia Jackson to Jerusha Hubbard, June 3, 1860.

³ Rose, *Voices in the Marketplace*, p. xviii.

⁴ *History of Stowe, Vermont*

⁵ Like their Vermont relations, Midwest farmers of the mid-19th century needed to adapt their crops not only to changing market needs but also to climatic changes, cf. Demeritt, *Climate, Cropping and Society*.

⁶ Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity*, especially pages 1-2, 112-113, and 346.

⁷ Brodhead, *Veiled Ladies*, pp. 277-278.

⁸ SFP: Henry Savage to Allen Savage, December 3, 1854.

⁹ *Franklin County Herald*, February 18, 1852.

¹⁰ Mott, *History of American Magazines*, Vol. 1: pp. 120-21.

¹¹ In addition to the comprehensive work of Frank Luther Mott and John Tebbell on periodical publishing in America, more recent scholarship has explored specific aspects of the field, especially Kenneth M. Price and Susan Belasco Smith, *Periodical Literature in Nineteenth Century America*, for an overview of lesser known periodicals; Patricia Okker, *Our Sister Editors and Social Stories*, for information on Sarah J. Hale's editorship of *Godey's Ladies Book* and information on serial literature, respectively; Ellen Gruber Garvey, *The Adman in the Parlor*, for magazines, gender and consumerism; Aleta Feinsod Cane and Susan Alves, eds., *The Only Efficient Instrument*, for women writers uses of periodicals, and Michael Lund, *America's Continuing Story* for social aspects of reading fiction in serial form.

¹² HFP: Louise Denison to Jerusha Hubbard, March 26, 1854.

¹³ SFP: Mary Dinesmore to Elizabeth Savage, September 26, 1856.

¹⁴ The praise is diluted somewhat by the fact that the advertisement concludes with the statement: "any paper placing this ad conspicuously three times in their paper and sending in the paper can get a free copy of the book." *American Journal*, Nov 14, 1856: p. 4 col. 3.

¹⁵ HFP: Louise Denison to Jerusha Hubbard, March 26, 1854.

¹⁶ Okker, *Social Stories*, pp. 9-16.

- ¹⁷ HFP: Charlotte Flower to Jerusha Hubbard, July 17, 1857.
- ¹⁸ HFP: Louise Denison to Jerusha Hubbard,, February 3, 1856.
- ¹⁹ HFP: Louise Denison to Jerusha Hubbard, March 26, 1854.
- ²⁰ Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity*, pp.
- ²¹ HFP: Charlotte Flower to Jerusha Hubbard, August 7, 1854.
- ²² Linkon, *Reading Lind Mania*, pp. 94-96.
- ²³ While he is to be commended for his good taste in including this story, Mr. Hildreath's choice was more likely driven by the fact that the story's main character was named Bradford.
- ²⁴ Quoted by Charvat, *Literary Publishing in America*, p. 25.
- ²⁵ Prospectus of *The Topaz*, June 6, 1842.
- ²⁶ Announcement in *American Protector*, June 22, 1844, p. 4.
- ²⁷ SFP: Joseph Savage to Allen Savage, December 25, 1855.
- ²⁸ HFP: Marcia Jackson to Jerusha Hubbard, April 22, 1855 and HFP: Louise Denison to Jerusha Hubbard,, February 3, 1856.
- ²⁹ HFP: Marcia Jackson to Jerusha Hubbard, April 22, 1855.
- ³⁰ HFP: Ephraim Moulton to parents, December 9, 1850.
- ³¹ For average comparison see U.S. Census, 1850, Agricultural Products, sample towns of Whiting and Underhill. Farms over 300 acres, improved and unimproved, are rare. Those raising cattle are not generally also raising their own wheat.
- ³² HFP: Marcia Jackson to Jerusha Hubbard, June 3, 1860.
- ³³ Women as teachers, physicians, and missionaries are a common theme in Hale's editorials, see, for example, *Godey's Lady's Book*, March 1852, p. 228, or, May 1852, p. 405. In response to the argument that women did not need a profession because they would marry, Hale counters "How is woman's destiny any more connected with marriage than man's? . . . Woman wants something to do . . . which will harmonize with her condition as an accountable being . . ." and then proposes teacher, physician, and missionary as professions which will do just that. For a brief discussion on Hale's use of this strategy to both define and expand woman's roles, see Okker, pp. 70-77.
- ³⁴ *American Journal*, May 5, 1855, p. 2.
- ³⁵ Rose, *Voices of the Marketplace*, p. 164.
- ³⁶ *American Journal*, May 5, 1855, p. 2.
- ³⁷ HFP: Bisher to Jerusha Hubbard, February 18, 1844.
- ³⁸ HFP: J. M. Walker to Frank Hubbard, February 19, 1860.
- ³⁹ SFP: Susan Ladd to Elizabeth Savage, April 29, 1851.
- ⁴⁰ Kimball, *Fifth Annual Report*, p. 8.
- ⁴¹ SFP: Susan Ladd to Elizabeth Savage, April 29, 1851.
- ⁴² SFP: Susan Ladd to Elizabeth Savage, August 23, 1851.
- ⁴³ HFP: Marcia Jackson to Jerusha Hubbard, February 3, 1856.
- ⁴⁴ *ibid.*
- ⁴⁵ HFP: Marcia Jackson to Jerusha Hubbard, August 19, 1855.
- ⁴⁶ Hansen, *A Very Social Time.* p. 153.
- ⁴⁷ Cott, *Domestic Ideology*, p. 227.
- ⁴⁸ Bushman, *Refinement of America*, p. 330.
- ⁴⁹ HFP : Jane Denison to Jerusha Hubbard, August 20, 1855.
- ⁵⁰ SFP : Susan Ladd to Elizabeth Savage, March 29, 1852.
- ⁵¹ SFP: Mary Dinesmore to Elizabeth and Allen Savage, February 4, 1852.
- ⁵² SFP: Mary Dinesmore to Elizabeth and Allen Savage, February 4, 1852.
- ⁵³ VFP: Eliza B. Fairbanks to Mary Ann Vilas, November 15, 1853.
- ⁵⁴ VFP: Eliza B. Fairbanks to Mary Ann Vilas, October 22, 1854.
- ⁵⁵ SFP: Mary Dinesmore to Elizabeth Savage, September 1, 1854.
- ⁵⁶ SFP: Mary Dinesmore to Elizabeth Savage, April 1855.
- ⁵⁷ Anon., "The Wrong Passenger" *Godey's Lady's Book*, Vol. 44, March 1852, pp. 211-217.
- ⁵⁸ SFP: Susan Ladd to Elizabeth and Allen Savage, October 22, 1851.
- ⁵⁹ Isenberg, *Mortal Remains*, p. 1 and Marshall, *Mortal Remains*, p. 177

- ⁶⁰ For the evolution of American interpretations of death in the early nineteenth century, see Farrell, James, *Inventing the American Way of Death*, especially the section on the cosmological contexts of death in the evangelical era, pp. 35-43, and Marshall, Nicholas “‘In the Midst of Life We are in Death’: Affliction and Religion in Antebellum New York” in Isenberg, Nancy and Andrew Burstein, eds., *Mortal Remains: Death in Early America*, pp. 176-186.
- ⁶¹ HFP: Mercy to Almira Hubbard, September 7, 1855.
- ⁶² VFP: Philander and Elizabeth Hathaway to Mr. and Mrs. Vilas, June 8, 1851.
- ⁶³ Rose, *Voices of the Marketplace*, p. 164.
- ⁶⁴ *American Journal*, May 5, 1855, p. 2.
- ⁶⁵ *Vermont Family Gazette*, October 16, 1850, p. 2.
- ⁶⁶ Baym, *Feminism and American Literary History*, pp. 167-172.
- ⁶⁷ For examples of Hale’s editorials on the subject, see <http://www.uvm.edu/~hag/godey/shtable/shtable-thanks.html>
- ⁶⁸ *Burlington Courier*, March 7, 1850, p. 3.
- ⁶⁹ HFP: Jane and Ann Hubbard to Frank Hubbard, December 29, 1860.
- ⁷⁰ HFP: Tulma Hubbard to Jane Hubbard, November 15, 1860.
- ⁷¹ Lisa Tolbert, in her work *Constructing Townscapes* finds a similar use of parades and celebrations in antebellum Tennessee towns. Hal Barron, *Those Who Stayed Behind*, explores the post-War uses of these and other voluntary associations’ activities in promoting consensus among residents of Vermont towns.
- ⁷² Bertolini *Fireside Chastity*, p. 708.
- ⁷³ *American Protector*, June 22, 1844.
- ⁷⁴ HFP: Ephraim Moulton Jr. to Ephraim Mouton, Sr. December 9, 1850.
- ⁷⁵ SFP: Jane to Almira Savage, April 18, 1855.
- ⁷⁶ HFP: Jane and Ann Hubbard to Frank Hubbard, December 29, 1860.
- ⁷⁷ HFP: Asahel Hubbard, Jr. to Frank Hubbard, December 22, 1860.
- ⁷⁸ HFP: H. M. Walker to Frank Hubbard, February 19, 1860.
- ⁷⁹ HFP: C Seymour to Frank Hubbard, May 21, 1860.

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