Constructions of New England Identity and Place in American Music, 1885-1935

Jacob A. Cohen

The Graduate Center, City University of New York

Recommended Citation


This Dissertation is brought to you by CUNY Academic Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Dissertations, Theses, and Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of CUNY Academic Works. For more information, please contact deposit@gc.cuny.edu.
CONSTRUCTIONS OF NEW ENGLAND IDENTITY AND PLACE IN AMERICAN MUSIC,
1885–1935

by

JACOB A. COHEN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2017
Music in examples 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5, and figure 3.1 are published in

WASHINGTON’S BIRTHDAY
By Charles Ives
Copyright © 1937 (Renewed) by Associated Music Publishers, Inc. (BMI)
International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved.
Used by Permission.
Warning: Unauthorized reproduction of this publication is prohibited by Federal Law and is subject to criminal prosecution.
Constructions of New England Identity and Place in American Music, 1885–1935

by

Jacob A. Cohen

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Music in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

__________________________  __________________________
Date                       Date

Anne Stone                 Norman Carey
Chair of Examining Committee  Executive Officer

Supervisory Committee:

Chadwick O. Jenkins, Advisor

Philip Lambert, First Reader

Denise Von Glahn

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
ABSTRACT

Constructions of New England Identity and Place in American Music, 1885–1935

by

Jacob A. Cohen

Advisor: Chadwick O. Jenkins

This dissertation examines constructions of New England identity and changing perceptions of urban and rural by investigating the history and reception of four American composers between 1885 and 1935: George Chadwick, Charles Ives, Carl Ruggles, and Edward MacDowell. Using the concept of place as a critical lens, I examine how each composer engages, consciously or not, with regional identity myths and narratives, often present in other New England literature, poetry, art, and music.

In the Chadwick, Ives, and Ruggles chapters, I examine how one representative work both reflects and constructs the composer’s sense of place drawn from their experience of Boston, Massachusetts, Danbury, Connecticut, and Arlington, Vermont, respectively. In the MacDowell chapter, the focus is on the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire. For Chadwick, the reception of his Symphony no. 2 was homologous with changing demographics of late-nineteenth-century Boston, when previous class, ethnic, and cultural hegemonies, related to political power, were breaking down and re-arranging themselves along new geographic lines. For Ives, *Washington's Birthday* was a way to remember a forgotten and mythologized New England town by
idealizing the rural barn dance. By contrasting his imagined rural past with his realistic urban present, Ives grappled with his own grievances against what he perceived to be an emasculated and genteel cultivated music culture. For Ruggles, *Men and Mountains* became a way to articulate an image of a resurgent rural Vermont after years of perceived social decline. He embraced a Vermont identity that local author Dorothy Canfield Fisher created for him that made him into an icon of local artistic achievement and imbued his music with traits of a “typical” rural Vermonter. But those traits themselves were tied to regional myths about education, culture, and ethnicity. For MacDowell, the establishment of an artists’ colony modeled on his own experience of New Hampshire “wilderness” allowed him to glorify and perpetuate an image of rural New England solitude for future generations of artists. In doing so, he and especially his wife Marian helped Peterborough’s socioeconomic elite craft an identity for the town as a retreat for urban tourists that fit with their aesthetic tastes and beliefs about social reform. Each case study reveals how similar aspects of a place-based New England identity, and its associated myths and historical narratives, affected these disparate composers and locations. Often the choices made by these composers have ramifications, intended or not, that reveal certain ideological positions reflective of their experience of place.
Acknowledgments

This dissertation would not have been possible without the help and support of countless people. First, my advisor Chad Jenkins has been the most amazing ally and supporter of this work. His careful, close reading has shaped many of the ideas throughout this study and has made me a more careful and deliberate writer. I always left our long meetings with an abundance of fresh ideas and enthusiasm for the work that lay ahead. His stamp is present throughout this dissertation and I give him my sincerest thanks for all his encouragement, candor, and insight.

My first reader Philip Lambert was an early supporter of this project and his encouraging words have provided validation when I needed it most. Anne Stone has always known exactly the right question to ask to reveal a hole in my argument or to tease out a subtlety of a passage of writing, and her mentorship throughout my graduate studies has been beyond helpful. My path as an Americanist began with an Ives seminar that Denise Von Glahn led in 2005 when I was an employee at the Loeb Music Library at Harvard. For introducing me to this music and setting me on the course that has defined my scholarly work, she has my deepest thanks. I am honored that she is completing this circle as a reader on my dissertation.

Each of the chapters in this dissertation began as a seminar paper during my graduate coursework. I wish to thank the late Ora Frishberg Saloman, Stephen Blum, Larry Starr, and Ellie Hisama for their comments on the inchoate ideas that have taken a mature form in these chapters. My advisors and committee for my master’s thesis at the University of Washington were extremely helpful in advancing my thinking about place and American music: Larry Starr and Stephen Rumph in the School of Music, and Michael Brown in the Geography Department. To the many scholars
who have offered encouraging comments on conference papers drawn from this research, your enthusiasm for these topics has been a great boost.

Much of the research for this dissertation was done in archives and libraries throughout New England, and none of it would have been possible without the aid and generosity of many librarians and archivists. For their hospitality during extended stays and their patience with my questions and requests, I give my sincere thanks to Paul Carnahan and the staff of the Vermont Historical Society, and Malia Ebel and the staff of the New Hampshire Historical Society. Maryalice Perrin-Mohr at the library of the New England Conservatory was especially helpful and generous with her time and interest in my project, as well as her predecessor Jean Morrow and the rest of the NEC library staff. Charlotte Kolczynski, music librarian at the Boston Public Library, helped me track down a number of resources and navigate the tricky cataloguing of the Brown Collection, and other members of the BPL staff were especially accommodating during a summer of research when I had a back injury: Eve Griffin, Evelyn Lannon, Catherine Halpin. Since two of my subjects have their papers housed at the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library of Yale University, I cannot thank Richard Boursy, Emily Ferrigno, Mark Bailey, and Suzanne Eggleston Lovejoy enough. Stefanie Acevedo also helped find and send images from the Yale Archives.

I also wish to thank Jeanne Gamble and Abigail Cramer at Historic New England, Craig Hanson at the Harvard Musical Association, Bridget Carr at the Boston Symphony Orchestra archives, the staff of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Melissa Traub and the staff of the Connecticut Historical Society, Sharon Thayer and Prudence Doherty at the University of Vermont Bailey/Howe Library, Colette Lucas at the MacDowell Colony, Brian Hackert at the Peterborough Town Library, Catherine Rivers and the staff of the Music Division at the Library of Congress, and
William Budde, Curator of the Russell Vermontiana Collection, Martha Canfield Library, Arlington, VT. Edward Surato at the Whitney Library of the New Haven Museum, Barbara Cook at the Tolland (CT) Historical Society, Diane Hassan at the Danbury Museum & Historical Society, and Amita Kelly and Kathleen Flynn at the Lawrence History Center were all gracious in answering questions and providing research via email. Andrew McKeever of the Manchester Journal allowed me to rummage through crumbling old issues of the paper from the 1920s. The librarians and inter-library loan staff at the Mina Rees Library, Graduate Center, CUNY helped track down many needed sources. Bob Kosovsky at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts and the rest of the staff there have also helped greatly.

I have benefited tremendously from a number of grants awarded through the Graduate Center, CUNY. Research during the summer of 2014 was funded by the generous Advanced Research Collaborative Knickerbocker Award for Archival Research in American Studies, as well as a Doctoral Student Research Grant. A research trip to the Library of Congress was also funded by the Graduate Center’s Baisley Powell Elebash Fund Research Scholarship. I wish to thank the selection committees of these awards for their support of this project. Much of this dissertation was written in libraries and coffee shops throughout New York and New Jersey; thanks especially to the staff of Sit & Wonder and Lincoln Station in Brooklyn, Boxwood Coffee in Summit, and the staff of the Drew University Library for providing me with places to work.

To Emmy Williamson (and Pablo), Will Fulton, Drew Nobile, Brad Osborn, Jessica Holmes, Charles Carson, Ryan Bañagale, Kate Galloway, Michael Lupo, and Lindsey Eckenroth: I am honored to have you as friends and colleagues. My writing group of Tonia Passwater, Aya Hayashi, and David Pearson offered comments and suggestions that have made this dissertation better than I
could alone. To all my other colleagues and friends at the Graduate Center and elsewhere, I thank you for your support, advice, commiseration, and friendship.

Finally, none of this would have been possible were it not for the love and support of my family. To my mom and dad, thank you for supporting my career path into academia and for your love and (gentle) nudging to finish. All those trips to New Hampshire, Maine, and Nantucket helped me fall in love with the region that is the subject of this dissertation. Mom, I have no doubt that your love of regional history and tourism played no small part in my decision to pursue this topic. You also instilled in me a passion for music from an early age—sorry for demanding that you play Dion's “Runaround Sue” over and over again when I was three. To Quinn, good boy. Most of all, to my caring, patient, encouraging, hilarious, and loving New Englander wife Rose, I owe you everything. Your giving me space and time to work, your sacrifices on behalf of my writing and studies, and your compassion and understanding got me through this. I love you more than words can tell, and dedicate this dissertation to you as a small token of my eternal gratitude.
Table of Contents

List of Figures .......................................................................................................................... xiii

List of Musical Examples ........................................................................................................ xv

Chapter 1: Experiences of New England ...................................................................................... 1

New England, 1885–1935 ........................................................................................................... 5

Place and Implacement .............................................................................................................. 9

Literature Review .................................................................................................................... 13

Imagined New England ........................................................................................................... 21

Four Places in New England: Chapter Outlines ...................................................................... 28

Chapter 2: George Chadwick and the Changing Geography of Boston .................................... 36

Chadwick Before Boston ........................................................................................................ 41

Musical Culture and the Symphonic Genre in 1880s Boston .................................................... 44

Symphony No. 2 in B♭ and the Problem of Genre ................................................................. 54

Irish Music in Boston .............................................................................................................. 64

Immigration in Boston ............................................................................................................ 76

Chadwick’s Boston, 1886 ........................................................................................................ 81

The Shift to Huntington and the Dvořák Turn ........................................................................ 90

Chadwick’s Boston, 1915 ...................................................................................................... 107

Chapter 3: Dancing in the Barn with Charles Ives in Old Danbury ...................................... 111

Old Danbury .......................................................................................................................... 117

The New England Dance Tradition(s) .................................................................................. 121

Ives’s Barn Dance ................................................................................................................. 129
Ives’s Politics..................................................................................................................139
Barn Dances in the Early Twentieth Century.................................................................144
Genre Politics................................................................................................................150
“Music Has Always Been an Emasculated Art”.........................................................160
Reconciliation ................................................................................................................167
Chapter 4: “Real Vermonters”: Carl Ruggles, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, and the Men and Mountains of Vermont..................................................................................................................175
  Two New Englanders: Ruggles and Fisher .................................................................180
  Men and Mountains......................................................................................................186
  Vermont Land Abandonment and a “Crisis of Identity”...........................................189
  Fisher’s 1924 Men and Mountains Essay ..................................................................192
  Whitman, MacDowell, and Rural Masculinity............................................................206
  Ruggles as a Typical Vermonter ................................................................................219
  “New England Americans” .......................................................................................230
  Universal Appeal .........................................................................................................237
Chapter 5: The MacDowell Colony and the Myth of Rural Solitude..............................243
  “The Advantages of Solitude” ....................................................................................247
  New England Wilderness ...........................................................................................252
  MacDowell and the Colony .........................................................................................257
  Peterborough, New Hampshire: “A Good Town to Live In” ..................................263
  “A House of Dreams Untold” .....................................................................................271
  Abandoned Farms and Primeval Forest .....................................................................281
Peterborough—“Our Town” ........................................................................................................288

Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................295

Appendix A: William F. Apthorp’s review of George Chadwick’s Symphony No. 2 ..........300

Appendix B: Dorothy Canfield Fisher’s essay on Ruggles’s Men and Mountains ............302

Bibliography ..................................................................................................................................305
List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Cover of Yankee magazine, August 1939 .................................................................20

Figure 2.1: Lithograph, "Musical Boston" .................................................................................45

Figure 2.2: Caricature of Irish music during the 1872 World’s Peace Jubilee in Boston ..........68

Figure 2.3: Boston’s Back Bay in 1836 .......................................................................................83

Figure 2.4: Boston’s Back Bay in 1888 .......................................................................................84

Figure 2.5: Boston in 1855 .........................................................................................................88

Figure 2.6: Boston in 1880, showing land occupied by buildings ...........................................91

Figure 2.7: Mechanics Hall, circa early 1880s .........................................................................93

Figure 2.8: Symphony Hall post card, c. 1907 ........................................................................94

Figure 3.1: Charles E. Ives, Washington’s Birthday, ink score-sketch with pencil emendations ...113

Figure 3.2: Charles E. Ives, New Year’s Dance, unpublished manuscript ..................................120

Figure 3.3: The New England Musician, 1848 ........................................................................124

Figure 3.4: New Music Quarterly Recordings, vol. 1, no. 5-6 ................................................160

Figure 3.5: Program for “Ives: The New England Context” ....................................................170

Figure 3.6: Two photographs of a barn dance at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, 1937 ...............172

Figure 4.1: Portrait of Dorothy Canfield Fisher, mid-1920s .....................................................184

Figure 4.2: Ruggles’s School Street schoolhouse, ca. 1912 ....................................................185

Figure 4.3: Rockwell Kent’s cover for Ruggles’s Men and Angels, 1921 ...............................187

Figure 4.4: View of Mt. Equinox from Arlington, VT, circa 1915 .........................................188

Figure 4.5: Jerome B. Thompson, The Belated Party on Mount Mansfield, 1858 ..............203

Figure 4.6: Panorama photo from Ruggles’s Arlington property ...........................................206
Figure 4.7: Christmas card from Carl Ruggles to Rockwell Kent, 1924 ..........................211

Figure 4.8: Cover for Ruggles's *Men and Mountains* ......................................................218

Figure 4.9: Cartoons from the *Manchester Journal*, summer 1925 ..................................221

Figure 4.10: Norman Rockwell, back cover of *Vermont Life*, Summer 1947 ....................229

Figure 4.11: “Come to Vermont—The West of New England,” tourism brochure ..........236

Figure 5.1: MacDowell Colony, Peterborough, New Hampshire .......................................244

Figure 5.2: Thomas Cole, *Home in the Woods*, 1847 ......................................................254

Figure 5.3: MacDowell’s log cabin during the first decade of its existence .......................259

Figure 5.4: View of Hillcrest as a featured summer home, Board of Trade pamphlet .......270

Figure 5.5: Historical marker for the MacDowell Graves, Peterborough, NH .................277

Figure 5.6: Images in Colony Pageant program .................................................................278

Figure 5.7: Scene from the 1910 Pageant ...........................................................................286

Figure 5.8: Our Town Inn, bed and breakfast in downtown Peterborough, NH ..........294
List of Musical Examples

Example 2.1: George W. Chadwick, Symphony No. 2, mvt. I, mm. 1–5

Example 2.2: Chadwick, Symphony No. 2, mvt. II, mm. 4–8

Example 2.3: Chadwick, Symphony No. 2, mvt. IV, mm. 1–4, strings only

Example 2.4: Chadwick, Symphony No. 2, mvt. I, main theme of exposition (mm. 50–55)

Example 2.5: Chadwick, String Quartet no. 4, mvt. III, opening violin I melody; Chadwick,

Symphony no. 2, mvt. II, opening oboe melody

Example 2.6: Chadwick, String Quartet no. 4, mvt. III, mm. 17–18

Example 2.7: Chadwick, Tam O’Shanter, rehearsal K

Example 3.1: Charles Ives, Washington’s Birthday, opening

Example 3.2: Ives, Washington’s Birthday, mm. 61–68

Example 3.3: G.F. Robbins, “The Forest Quadrilles (First Sett)”

Example 3.4: Ives, Washington’s Birthday, barn dance opening, mm. 56–60

Example 3.5: Ives, Washington’s Birthday, mm. 141–143

Example 4.1: Carl Ruggles, “Men,” mvt. I of Men and Mountains, mm. 1–2

Example 4.2: Ruggles, “Lilacs,” mvt. II of Men and Mountains, mm 18–20

Example 4.3: Ruggles, opening of all three movements of Men and Mountains

Example 5.1: Two excerpts of piano music by Edward MacDowell

xv
FOR ROSE
Chapter 1

Experiences of New England

God loves New England, I am sure of it—
   I feel his love in all its loveliness,
   As though His hand has lingered to caress
The beauty He had fashioned, bit by bit.

For, oh, he made it slowly, I think, too,
   Not in a mood of epic tragedy,
   As when He carved the canyon’s majesty,
And flung the Rockies up to pierce the blue,

And not in awful anger, as when He
   The torrent of Niagara let loose—
   But for His creature, Man, and for his use,
He made New England’s sweet serenity.

And God must love the beauty man has made—
   I think he must feel pleasure when He sees
   Above old stone fences, apple trees
Bend down to give the weary travelers shade.

And He must love the villages so neat—
   White cottages, with hollyhocks about,
   And slender spires, where bells ring out
Above the elms that shade the quiet street.

And, oh, I think God listens when a bell
   From such a spire rings out upon the air
   To summon all the villagers to prayer—
Ah, yes, I think God loves New England well!

And that He made it in a tender mood,
   I, who am not New England born, still guess—
   I feel His love in all its loveliness . . .
God made New England and He found it good!
—Roselle Mercier Montgomery

---

A rich and long history, strong Protestant faith, the perfection of the Puritan village plan, and beauty in crumbling landscapes: these are some of the themes that pervade Roselle Mercier Montgomery’s poem “God Loves New England,” published in the *New York Times* in 1922. These common tropes about the people and landscapes of New England glorify the rural New England village and its accompanying traditions at a time when this image “formed an increasingly attractive antidote to the new industrial city.”

This poem’s quaint surface, however, offers a picture of New England that, in many ways, was part of a construction of place by the Yankee elite. The place that Montgomery describes is not like the working-class cities of Lowell, MA, Burlington, VT, Manchester, NH, or Bridgeport, CT, all of which had large immigrant populations. Nor is it like the towns throughout rural New England that turned to tourism in the late nineteenth century to attract new, mainly wealthy and urban residents. It is God’s chosen land, the New Zion of early Puritans that is superior to other American regions. It is a place that presents “an imagined ‘old New England’ of small towns, rural virtues, and ethnic purity” that, as historian Dona Brown notes, was imagined as increasingly more northern and more rural at the close of the nineteenth century.

Montgomery herself is emblematic of a complex construction of New England identity. She was a Georgia-born poet whose best known works, such as “Evening on a Village Street,” celebrate her life growing up in the South. She came to know New England by marrying a prominent New York lawyer and moving with him to Connecticut. Like many of the people who contributed to the

---


3 Ibid.
mythology of New England, Montgomery was part of an educated and wealthy urban social elite, someone who viewed rural New England towns and villages from an outsider’s perspective.

This poem serves as a useful entry point into this dissertation because Montgomery frames New England according to a variety of myths and narrative tropes that were common throughout the art, literature, and music of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These myths are part of a construction of place that American composers used to articulate an identity that reflects their experiences of place. However, that experience is already both shaped by, and contributes further to, these New England myths.

This dissertation examines constructions of New England identity and changing perceptions of urban and rural by investigating the history and reception of four American composers active between 1885 and 1935: George Chadwick, Charles Ives, Carl Ruggles, and Edward MacDowell. Each case study explores certain musical decisions and activities that reveal how these composers navigated the changing cultural and geographical landscapes of urban and rural New England. By “cultural landscape,” I mean the institutions, conventions, and activities of artists involved in musical creation and production, as they relate to place. This is roughly equivalent to John K. Wright’s call in 1925 for a “geography of thought” that mirrored the growing interest in intellectual history in the early-to-mid twentieth century. By “geographical landscape,” I mean the use of land, the demographics, and the movements of people in and out of various locations, what Wright termed “historical geography” based on historical records and data. Using the concept of place as a critical lens, I examine how each composer engages, consciously or not, with regional identity myths often present in earlier literature, poetry, art, and music.

While the specific methodological approaches for each case study differ (and will be detailed in the chapter outlines below), the general methodology remains similar. Letters, scores, diaries, memoirs, articles, and clippings from each composer show how these artists experienced their corner of New England, and how they internalized and deployed certain entrenched myths and narratives of place in their musical activities. For the Chadwick, Ives, and Ruggles chapters, I examine how one representative work from each reflects the composer’s sense of place drawn from their experience of Boston, Massachusetts, Danbury, Connecticut, and Arlington, Vermont, respectively. For the MacDowell chapter, the focus is not on any single musical work, but rather the creation and then maintenance of the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire, one of the oldest artists’ colonies in the country. Each chapter also features research on the places in question, examining the social history and contemporaneous experiences of others in these locations. To paint this picture of a place, I combine accounts in literature, memoirs, travelogues, artwork, brochures, and popular magazines (the cultural landscape) with maps, photographs, census data, and other primary sources (the geographical landscape).

Finally, each chapter is viewed through one or more theoretical lenses, including issues of genre, class, immigration, nostalgia, gender, and industrialization, focusing on the history, style, and reception of composers and their works. These frameworks provide connective threads throughout the dissertation that reveal how similar aspects of a place-based New England identity affected locations as disparate and physically separated as a large city like Boston, a midsize city like Danbury, or a small town like Arlington. Often the choices made by these composers have ramifications, intended or not, that reveal certain ideological positions reflective of their experience of place.
New England, 1885–1935

The time period under consideration was the era in which, as Dona Brown and Stephen Nissenbaum have written, “the modern United States took shape and when New England came to look like ‘New England.’” Indeed, following the Civil War the United States had to grapple with a myriad of new issues that would shape its identity moving into the twentieth century: the reconstruction of the Southern states (and its ultimate failure after the Compromise of 1877), the admission of former slaves into the citizenry, the reorientation of agrarian labor toward industrial labor, the migration of the population from rural to urban areas, among others. Accompanying this construction of a national identity was the carving out of a regional identity for New England that could be both distinctive enough to maintain its autonomy while also conforming to the new standards of postwar nationhood. It was a time period characterized by what historian Peter Conn calls “a profound internal dialectic, a conflict between tradition and innovation,” as New England attempted to reconcile its prewar Puritan and Colonial legacies with massive industrialization, urbanization, and immigration.

During the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, the geography of the United States changed as cities grew larger, many of them swelling due to newly arrived European immigrants. Meanwhile, technological advances led to better transportation and communication, while lifestyles and economies shifted from rural and agrarian to urban and commercial. In New

---


England, the distinctions between rural and urban became both more pronounced and blurred. Entire towns in rural New England, especially in the northern states of Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine, emptied out into the cities or migrated west, and the small regional centers of manufacturing and industry, which had sustained New England towns throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, closed down. Populations, economic activity, and agricultural production all decreased significantly in much of rural New England, making the difference between rural and urban places especially pronounced.

At the same time, railroads and, in the early twentieth century, automobiles connected the region and allowed for easier flow between urban and rural places. Wright noted in 1929 that “since the coming of the automobile [metropolitan] zones have expanded far beyond their former margins, and outside of them there is hardly a rural township in all New England not reached by the seasonal tide of vacationists.” He further observed how mass media, especially the newspaper and magazine, helped level the disparity between urban and rural, noting: “Contact with city folk and exposure to the rays of urban influence are changing the whole complexion of rural life.”

Just as the nation was negotiating and constructing its national identity, musicians were attempting to determine a national musical identity. Two distinct waves of musical nationalism are represented in the case studies that follow, although these are not the first such efforts by American composers. Both were concerned with similar issues of how to create a style and voice separate from Europe, how to establish regional identities within a larger national context, and how to be innovative while still adhering to public taste. The first included the so-called Second New England School, and involved a concerted nationalist effort led by Boston composers including Chadwick in

---

8 Ibid.
the 1880s and 90s. Two major musical events bookended this era. At the start was the World Peace Jubilee of 1869, a massive concert spectacle held in Boston, which heralded a shift away from the conflicts of the still-recent Civil War and toward a reunification effort based on a national unity, one that ultimately proved futile thanks in part to the failure of reconstruction in 1877. At the other end was the 1893 World’s Fair Columbian Exposition in Chicago, which sought to legitimize America on the cultural world stage and featured a variety of American music performances. As E. Douglas Bomberger writes, the decision to program a number of all-American concerts resulted in a disproportionate number of mediocre compositions performed by underenthusiastic conductors and orchestras, and was part of the reason that MacDowell strongly objected to being included on all-American programs. Ultimately, this exclusionist approach to American music may have hurt the cause more than aided it.

The other wave of musical nationalism from this era arrived in the late 1910s and saw its greatest expression in various aesthetic movements throughout the 1920s and 30s. The atrocities and legacy of World War I damaged much of Europe’s, and especially Germany’s, cultural hegemony in the United States, and with America poised to assert its political and economic dominance, composers sought a style of expression that radically diverged from European predecessors. Extreme experimentalism, or “ultra-modernism” as its proponents named it, was one path toward this goal (jazz was another, although somewhat outside the purview of this study). Ultra-modernism rejected nearly all American music that had come previously, including that of Chadwick and MacDowell. As Aaron Copland later noted, in their nationalistic “search for musical ancestors,” composers in the

---

1920s “became convinced that there were none.” Ruggles’s music, written in the new language of dissonant counterpoint and fiercely individualistic, was at the center of the ultra-modern movement in the mid-1920s. Looking for a musical father figure, the ultra-moderns found one in Ives, whose radical style and unique biographical elements were molded by other composers and early chroniclers into what Frank R. Rossiter later called the “Ives Legend.”

The years 1885 to 1935 are a somewhat arbitrary fifty year span, derived mainly from the specific works and issues considered. The earliest piece I discuss, Chadwick’s Symphony no. 2, premiered in 1886, while the latest piece, Ruggles’s Men and Mountains, dates from 1924. However, a number of important documents that address elements in the Ives, Ruggles, and MacDowell chapters date from the early 1930s. The mid-1930s also acts as a natural historical separator, as the Great Depression effected major changes in the landscape, geography, and artistic ideology of both New England in particular and America as a whole. For instance, a populist sentiment in American music effectively ended the vogue for ultra-modernism, although it did not disappear entirely. Using the Depression as one bookend of this study also points to the centrality of economic change as a factor in the construction of place. As such, the years at the beginning of this study were also a time of economic upheaval, as postwar industrialization and a variety of other factors led to a spike in population movements out of rural New England. Still, these years do not demarcate any specific compositional or historical era. As will become clear, aspects of place and music throughout the history of New England, from the seventeenth century to present, all have a bearing on this dissertation.

Place can be a difficult term to use, in part because, as geographer Tim Cresswell notes, it has a common sense usage as part of everyday speech. Yet place is more than a set of mapped coordinates or a product of the materials that fill empty space. Place is central to our experience of the world, and may be understood as a factor implanted into every musical composition, an element that is essentially tied up with the creation of every piece of music. This position follows lines of inquiry established by many in the social sciences, such as geographer Doreen Massey who posits that place is “fully implicated in both history and politics,” and extrapolates her conceptualization to include the arts and specifically music. Place then becomes entwined with the act of composition as a condition of the composer's experience. Philosopher Edward S. Casey echoes this sentiment, arguing that the geographic imperative is a part of everything, not merely those things which have associated place names.

In his comprehensive study of place founded on a grand survey of previous thinkers, from Aristotle, Augustine, and Archytas, to Newton, Bergson, and Heidegger, Casey introduced the term “implacement” into philosophical discourse. Casey writes that “to exist at all as a (material or mental) object or as (an experienced or observed) event is to have a place—to be implanted, however minimally or imperfectly or temporarily.” His passive voice verb construction suggests that place has agency and the ability to implace things, whether they be concrete or, like music, ephemeral. For Casey, “place . . . is at once the limit and the condition of all that exists”; he further elaborates that “place

---

15 Ibid., emphasis in original.
belongs to the very concept of existence.” Any kind of landscape, natural or manmade, is therefore a meaningful place. To know something is to know its place. Here I also draw on Heidegger’s assertion that our existence and our identities are tied to the places in which we dwell: “The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth . . . is dwelling.” Hence, to study music and culture/nature is to study the relationship between music and place.

In this dissertation, I refer to the ability of music to implace, to be one of the many factors that contribute to a sense of place. Music’s implacement affects listeners in that it can convey something of a sense of place; as a cultural product, it is part of a social construction of place. At the same time, a piece of music is implaced by the composer, that is, it is reflective of the composer’s sense of place. Both Heidegger and Casey believe that we come to know a place, and give meaning to that place, via our experience within it and via the way that our bodies move through and occupy a place. Therefore, these composers’ senses of place derives from their literal sense perceptions of a location, and their often subconscious navigation of social and cultural forces within that place. Casey argues that “the perceiver’s body is not a mere mechanism for registering sensations but an active participant in the scene of perception.” Place is the product of an embodied perception of space and time, constructed out of the lived experiences of an individual, not just an empty void of Newtonian space which is then filled with material objects. For Chadwick, the place of Boston is a

\[16\] Ibid., 15.
\[19\] Edward S. Casey, The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 213. Casey follows this train of thought from Immanuel Kant through Alfred North Whitehead, Edmund Husserl, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty to show that we have access to the world “primarily through our lived body” (229).
conglomeration of his implaced social relationships with members of the Boston elite, the different locations in which he worked and lived, and the ways that the demographics of the city changed while he lived there. For Ives, the place of Danbury is a mixture of his time spent growing up in the town, his adult memories of the town as it existed in his youth (however fuzzy or apocryphal), and a variety of activities such as camp meetings, parades, and barn dances. For Ruggles, the place of Arlington was filtered through his experience of the town while staying with artistic friends including Rockwell Kent and Dorothy Canfield Fisher, and later living in a converted schoolhouse as a “full-time” resident (despite spending his winters elsewhere). The artwork and writing of Kent and Fisher intermingle with Ruggles’s own perceptions of the town to create his sense of place. For MacDowell, the place of Peterborough derives from his time spent alone working in his cabin in the woods. His Peterborough is not only based on his perception of wilderness solitude, but also on larger political and social forces that sought to remake the town as a tourist haven and a rural escape for the urban middle class. These composers implace these experiences and perceptions into their music, creating what Steven Feld refers to as “acoustemologies”: a way of knowing the world through sound, an acoustic epistemology rooted in place and environment.  

Casey further notes that “implacement is as social as it is personal,” and therefore he is “driven to acknowledge the truth of two related but distinct propositions: just as every place is encultured, so every culture is implaced.” This suggests that place not only aids in the construction of personal identity and contributes to an individual’s sense of being in the world, but that place...
becomes part of the web of social forces that make up culture. Cultural theorists David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre further examine the interactions between place and social and cultural forces. They advocate that places are socially constructed by power relationships based on economics, class, and politics, and in order to fully understand the geography of a place, scholars must study its social and political history. Harvey insists “that we recognize . . . the role of human practices in” the construction of “space and time,” while Lefebvre’s Marxist approach is summarized by the aphorism “(social) space is a (social) product.” In each case study, but especially in the Chadwick and MacDowell chapters, the issue of how those with economic and cultural capital use music and musicians to shape the parameters of place comes to the forefront.

Although Lefebvre and Harvey are unconcerned with the distinction between “place” and “space” and use the terms somewhat interchangeably, their ideas on space dovetail with Casey’s thoughts on phenomenological place. For all these thinkers, despite the differences in their approaches and agendas, place is demarcated not merely by the landscapes and cityscapes that fill an infinite space, but by the people who live, work, and create in those places. As such, composers and the music they create have the power to effect, affect, and reflect place.

---


23 Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, 203; Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 26. Both authors approach place using Marxist theory, and are interested in how power and capital in post-Fordist societies affect space and place. As such, their books are more political than my own approach, and they might seem anachronistic to a study of the turn of the twentieth century. Despite this, their writings on how spaces are socially constructed is pertinent, regardless of their political or historical focus.
Literature Review

In the field of American music of the cultivated tradition, there have been two books in the past fifteen years dealing with place that serve as wellsprings for the current project.\(^\text{24}\) The first is Denise Von Glahn’s *The Sounds of Place: Music and the American Cultural Landscape* (2003). Von Glahn’s book is “premised upon the belief that places can inspire art, and that musical responses can, at some level, evoke those places.”\(^\text{25}\) Her book is concerned primarily with the search for American identity as it is reflected in instrumental music that uses American place names in the titles. As she notes, her book was the first “systematic exploration” of connections between the American cultivated tradition and the “idea of place.”\(^\text{26}\)

Von Glahn’s study surveys a panoply of American composers starting with the mid-nineteenth century, including William Henry Fry and George Frederick Bristow, moving through the Americanist era of the 1920s and 1930s with Aaron Copland, Edgard Varèse, and Roy Harris, and concluding with living composers Ellen Taaffe Zwilich and Steve Reich. Her geographical purview is an equally diverse snapshot of the country at large, spanning from New York City to the Grand Canyon.

In narrowing my focus to the New England states, I exclude much of the geography that Von Glahn examines while also highlighting identity myths and history on a regional, rather than national, scale. Additionally, my work’s theoretical and methodological approach differs slightly in


\(^{26}\) Ibid., 7.
that Von Glahn treats place pieces as memorializations of a specific location as evidenced by the place names used by composers, and examines the “compositional techniques . . . employ[ed] to capture the place.”

This dissertation does not focus on pieces that necessarily set out to depict a specific place, but instead on composers for whom place exerts an often silent force in shaping the representation of an experienced location. Von Glahn includes a lengthy and groundbreaking study of Charles Ives, addressing both his rural and urban representations in music, and her writing informs my own approach to Ives, as will be seen in chapter 3.

The second book is Beth E. Levy’s *Frontier Figures: American Music and the Mythology of the American West* (2012). Like Von Glahn, Levy is interested in American musical identity, although she specifically addresses composers’ uses of the American West to craft that identity. She considers how composers, cultural figures, and politicians used mythologies of the West to construct identity, specifically as those myths apply to changing conditions of American society. Her survey travels from late nineteenth-century celebrations of indigenous music as authentically American, through Depression-era imaginations of idyllic landscapes, and into the mid-twentieth-century narratives of American heroism that became part of Cold War propaganda.

Levy focuses on a narrower subject, the Western United States. Unlike Von Glahn, Levy does not limit herself to instrumental place pieces. Her methodology is similar to my own, as she examines the social history of a variety of composers, their music, and also musical institutions, understanding each moment in time and place as resulting from a confluence of a variety of political and cultural forces. Her emphasis lies in the “fertile ground” at “the intersection between American music, American history, and the mythology of the American West.”

---

27 Ibid., 13.
28 Beth E. Levy, *Frontier Figures: American Music and the Mythology of the American West* (Berkeley:
My thinking on place and music has also been shaped by the nascent field of ecomusicology. In a colloquy published in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Aaron S. Allen sums up the field’s potential contribution to musicological discourse: “Ecomusicological approaches have the possibility to offer new social critiques about the intersections of music, culture, and nature—and, in general, about the world around us.” Ecomusicology encompasses a variety of topics such as Romantic-era landscape music with nationalist agendas, site-specific interactive musical works that integrate the natural environment into the performance, and efforts directed at conserving the raw materials of Western instrument-building. This dissertation draws from many of these approaches, especially Grimley’s research on how Sibelius represents a Finnish sense of place, but ultimately I am inspired by the spirit of the ecomusicological approach rather than any specific methodology.

Approaches to studies of music and place vary; some are concerned mainly with program music and its representations of nature, and some are concerned with questions of identity through experiences and representations of place. Of course, musicians have been interested in music and place for centuries. In the wake of the cultural studies boom of the 1960s and 1970s, many

---

33 For an example of place studies directed toward older musical histories, see Suzannah Clark and Alexander Rehding, eds., *Music Theory and Natural Order From the Renaissance to the Early Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
ethnomusicologists produced seminal works on place and music. The most well-known of these are Steven Feld’s writings on the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea, where sound and singing are used to map place and spaces through memory and poetic folktale.\(^{34}\) Scholars have also subjected vernacular music to geographically oriented examination, including studies of regional folk music performances or popular music scenes.\(^{35}\)

This dissertation also engages with the field of human geography, which has had a much larger impact on disciplines outside of music where writers have turned their attention to New England. Human geography is concerned with how and why humans have created specific cartographic conditions. It is a way of thinking that, as geographer R. J. Johnston defines it, aims to understand the geography of the world via “the objects of our sense impressions.”\(^{36}\) Thus, scholars such as Johnston seek to understand the spatial organization of the world as a consequence of perception that is guided by an individual’s social and cultural conditions—in other words, how and why society and culture implace. Scholars of cultural theory, literature, and art history have taken a similar approach to their New England subjects as I do with music. Older constructions of New England identity reveal how writers conceptualized the region at various points throughout the twentieth century, such as Van Wyck Brooks’s influential book on New England literary culture in


the long nineteenth century, or Martin Green’s cultural history of Boston.37 Additionally, a variety of geographic secondary sources provide important background that examines matters ecological, historical, and cultural. William Cronon’s Changes in the Land provides a historical ecology of New England that shows how environmental changes have helped shape economies and society dating back to pre-Colombian times.38 Kent C. Ryden writes about the cultural history of New England and Dona Brown examines how tourism has helped to construct New England mythologies.39

Representations of New England urban and rural life in literature have a rich scholarly history, including Perry Westbrook’s The New England Town in Fact and Fiction, or Shaun O’Connell’s Imagining Boston.40 Art historians have equally focused on New England for studies of regionalism in art, and they provide a closer analog to music as a field devoted to non-written texts. Priscilla Paton’s Abandoned New England examines how the imagery of abandoned landscapes affected New England artwork during roughly the same years considered in this dissertation.41 Of particular relevance is the collection Picturing Old New England, which considers the mythologizing of the New England rural town in visual art during the years under examination in my project.42

Therefore, this dissertation adds a hitherto unexamined musical dimension to the human geography of urban and rural New England, and contributes to this existing scholarly discourse on regional identity myths in history, art history, and literature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Throughout this dissertation, the word “Yankee” appears as both an adjective and a noun, and so a quick parsing is required. As I use the term, Yankee generally refers to white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants who often trace their lineage to Puritan settlers in the New England colonies. However, the term also has a rich cultural history of interpretations. Although the word’s exact origins are disputed, Oscar Handlin writes in the *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* that “by 1765 it was a term of derision, and by 1775 a term of pride.” Handlin further notes that because the original Puritan settlers included an “unusually large number of learned men and gentry . . . for religious reasons,” Yankees often came to be associated with an educated and wealthy elite. Unlike other seventeenth-century Americans, New England Puritans’ shared religious heritage provided for them a “consciousness of group identity” far earlier than groups in other regions of the burgeoning Colonies. Puritan values such as discipline, thrift, the Calvinist work ethic, a belief in being divinely chosen, and an avoidance of ostentation persisted as elements of this group consciousness during the ensuing centuries. In August 1939, the cover of *Yankee* magazine, a new publication based out of Dublin, New Hampshire (one town over from Peterborough, which is the subject of chapter 5), displayed a grizzled old farmer on the cover, with the headline: “Definition of a Yankee: A MAN

---

43 Oscar Handlin, “Yankees,” in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, ed. Stephan Thernstrom (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1980), 1028. Handlin acknowledges that the word likely derived from the Dutch, and at various times may have been used by both English colonists in New England and Dutch colonists in New York as a derogatory term for the other group.
Regional historian Joseph Conforti notes that this was the magazine’s “preferred image of the real Yankee: an aged male from Vermont or Maine who subscribed to the politics of self-reliance summarized by the definition on the cover.”

Yankee can mean different things to different people. There is a Yankee saying, mostly unattributed and in various versions, that runs something like this:

To the European, a Yankee is an American.
To an American, a Yankee is a New Englander.
To a New Englander, a Yankee is a Vermonter.
To a Vermonter, a Yankee is someone who eats apple pie for breakfast.

I recall fondly, while living in Vermont researching chapter 4 of this dissertation, my wife declaring that she would be eating the previous night’s leftover homemade blueberry pie for breakfast, which seemed apropos to the fact that she was born in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont, and that her genealogy dates back to the Mayflower on her father’s side. Her heritage also highlights a less acknowledged aspect of New England demographics: her mother’s family were Slovenian and Irish immigrants from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Foreign-born populations have been consistently present in New England since well before the flood of Irish immigrants during the 1840s, but their role in narratives of New England has often been underplayed or distorted. Handlin also observes how after the Civil War a divide within the Yankee community deepened that placed the wealthiest and most educated urban Yankees in their own self-fashioned caste atop Boston society. Private schools, clubs, and summer resorts reinforced both the exclusion of immigrants as well as lower-class and agrarian Yankees. As will be explored later, the myth of an ethnically homogenous Yankee population in New England impacts each of these chapters in some way.

---

Figure 1.1: Cover of Yankee magazine (Dublin, NH), August 1939.
Courtesy Yankee Publishing, Inc.
Imagined New England

Musicologists and musicians have occasionally attempted to create groupings of New England composers, yet geographical and temporal affinities are often the only shared characteristics within these imposed frameworks. For example, during the time period under consideration in this dissertation, Nicolas Slonimsky surveyed late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century New England composers in a short article for the American music journal *Modern Music*. Slonimsky wrote that New England composers were mainly distinguished from New York composers by the former’s lack of interest in jazz, an observation that was not only specious, but highlighted some common tropes about Yankee ethnic purity in New England. Nicholas Tawa’s *From Psalm to Symphony* is a chronological account of cultivated music in New England, and attempts to show regionally-distinctive stylistic similarities among composers. Although Tawa references musical New Englandisms based on old hymn tunes and other Yankee traditions, these observations are mostly centered on identification of source materials. Tawa does not investigate the connections between social and historical conditions of New England and composers or their music. MacDonald Smith Moore’s *Yankee Blues* frames a number of New England composers from the turn of the twentieth century, including Ives and Ruggles but also Daniel Gregory Mason and Arthur Farwell, as part of a concerted effort to perpetuate Yankee identity and “to herald America’s glorious future by sublimating in music the spiritual heritage of New England.” Yet much of his work is speculative

---

and attempts to cast these composers as a unified group when, in fact, they all worked relatively
independent of each other.

My aim is not to theorize a place-based school of composition. None of the composers in the
present study worked together, nor do they necessarily share a musical style or extra-musical social
impulse. Rather, I consider each composer’s relationship to long-standing tropes and narratives about
New England identity, finding that these stylistically disparate composers share certain themes of a
common cultural expression.

The very concept of a New England regional identity is questioned and ultimately framed as
a myth by a variety of authors such as Stephen Nissenbaum and Joseph A. Conforti. Conforti
“stresses how the landscape of New England life has constantly changed over time, requiring periodic
historical and geographic redeployment of region as a country of the imagination.” In his book,
New England regional identity becomes “the cultural terrain where the imagined and the historic
New England ‘interpenetrate,’” echoing Levy’s understanding of regionalism as a product of
mythologizing. Each of the composers in the present study use these New England myths for a
variety of purposes, whether to construct a revisionist historical past, re-imagine an idealized present,
or juxtapose an imagined rural with an equally mythologized urban “other.” These myths include the
notion that New England was a deserted wilderness prior to Colonial settlement, the glorification of
the Puritan as a symbol of authentic American identity, the celebration of the Revolutionary New
England patriot as a symbol of American democracy, the belief that New England was more

---

48 Stephen Nissenbaum, “New England as Region and Nation,” in All Over the Map: Rethinking
American Regions, ed. Edward L. Ayers and Peter S. Onuf, 38–61 (Baltimore, MD: The Johns
Hopkins University Press, 1996); Conforti, Imagining New England.
49 Conforti, Imagining New England, 5.
50 Ibid., 6.
educated and cultured than the rest of the nation, the idealization of the “simple life” of a New England village in the face of urban industrialization and modernization, and the characterization of New England as an ethnically and religiously homogeneous community.

Geographer Martyn J. Bowden refers to many of these as “invented traditions and academic conventions” in geographical thinking about New England, pointing out that these myths were created by an elite urban literati that erased the pre-Revolutionary geographical realities and invented a more suitable past that would legitimize their own cultural hegemony.\footnote{Martyn J. Bowden, “Invented Tradition and Academic Convention in Geographical Thought About New England,” in “History of Geographical Thought,” special issue, \textit{GeoJournal} 26, no. 2 (February 1992): 187–94.} For instance, Bowden demonstrates that there were actually at least six sub-regions of New England in the eighteenth century, “all in some way antipathetic to Puritan Massachusetts Bay and deeply distrustful of its big city, Boston.”\footnote{Ibid., 189.} Yet by controlling the historical narrative, Boston elites persuaded Americans to believe in the “myth of Puritan antecedence” that placed the Revolution and its republican ideology as the “inevitable consequence of a series of Massachusetts antecedents.” This had the effect of erasing the distinctiveness of the various Colonial settlements, subsuming them into a generalized New England identity with the Puritan as a symbol of hard work, democracy, and faith.

In each of the case studies in this dissertation, the question of who is constructing a sense of place, why they are doing so, and how this reflects social power dynamics reveals how elite perceptions of place were formed by influential critics and tastemakers. Often, the way that these writers framed certain music supported Yankee cultural and musical hegemony or preserved a sense of Yankee identity. Additionally, narratives regarding rural New England were often shaped by those outside its purview, namely urban intellectuals. As William Coleman opined, the erasure of an

\footnote{Ibid., 189.}
imagined virgin American wilderness was accompanied by a sense of melancholy over the loss of rural “innocence” among academic and political elites.\(^{53}\)

In Boston, critics questioned Chadwick’s use of immigrant melodies because it threatened their conception of Boston as a city dominated by a Yankee elite. Ives, a member of that Yankee elite who nonetheless rejected Gilded Age excess, mythologized a rural “Old Danbury” that may have never existed as it did in his mind. Dorothy Canfield Fisher was a highly educated descendent of old Yankee families who exalted Ruggles’s music as a product of a “real Vermont” village. Both Ives’s and Ruggles’s imagined small New England towns were cast according to invented New England traditions. MacDowell, whose Scotch Irish Quaker ancestry did not admit him into the Boston elite, was nonetheless part of that world as the most celebrated American composer of cultivated music in his day. His vision of the Colony as a place for idyllic solitude was embraced by the socioeconomic elite of Peterborough who sought a future for the town as a rural retreat for beleaguered city residents. These wealthy and politically influential Peterborough residents, many of whom lived in cities for much of the year, fashioned a rural identity that conformed to their tastes.

These conceptions of place are all at least partially connected to the myth of ethnic purity within the small New England village. Even in Chadwick’s Boston, there was a longing among the elite critics not for an actual New England village (as was the case for Ives, Ruggles, and MacDowell), but for the ethnic purity and cloistered feeling of “old Boston.” The same kind of “old New England” values that mattered to Ives, Ruggles, and the MacDowell Colony’s supporters mattered to those in Chadwick’s day who wanted to preserve the status quo. Each chapter attempts to show how these experiences of place did not always reflect the various lived geographical realities of a place.

In this sense, the composers and writers examined in this dissertation help create an “imagined community” of New England.\textsuperscript{54} The term “imagined community” comes from Benedict Anderson’s study of nationalism, but his theory of how nations construct a sense of communal identity across a large geographical space helps illuminate the role that composers and writers played in imagining a New England identity. Mass media such as newspapers and popular magazines, controlled by the Yankee elite, created a regional discourse that helped to perpetuate an idealized, universal New England identity. Anderson’s Marxist approach recognizes that in creating an imagined community, the nation (or in this case, the region) flattens class distinctions into a unified identity. As was the case elsewhere, in New England class divides often corresponded to geographic divides between urban and rural. Music by Chadwick, Ives, Ruggles, and MacDowell, and particularly the reception of their music and histories of their lives, helped to construct an imagined, unified New England out of various disparate and sometimes overlapping identities: urban and rural, immigrant and Yankee, conservative and progressive, wealthy and impoverished, cultivated and vernacular.

A number of additional large themes therefore connect these four case studies and show how these composers implaced this unified, and at times contrived, New England identity into their music. One is the interest, born out of elite Yankee ethnocentrism, in using New Englandism as a metonym for Americanism. Lawrence Kramer criticizes Ives for delivering in his music “a narrow nationalism that identifies America with the history and culture of one [of] its regions . . . Ives’s America equals New England before the Civil War. It is rural; it is white; it is Protestant.”\textsuperscript{55} Yet this is


consistent with essentialist and exceptionalist traits of New England that stretch at least as far back as the turn of the nineteenth century, when geographer Jedidiah Morse and Yale president Timothy Dwight published volumes about New England rooted in what Conforti calls “regional chauvinism” and pride in an imagined New England cultural homogeneity.\footnote{Conforti, \textit{Imagining New England}, 84.}

This tendency is present in the Chadwick chapter in the idea that nineteenth-century Boston dictated cultural tastes for the entire country. Bostonians certainly believed this to be true in the mid-nineteenth century, but that was beginning to erode in the final decades of the century as the geographic exceptionalism of Yankee Boston crumbled. When New York celebrated Dvořák’s \textit{New World Symphony} but Boston criticized it for its embrace of African American and Native American melodies, it was a signal that Boston was perhaps no longer the sole standard bearer for the cultivated tradition of music in America. It was precisely in this moment that Chadwick’s ethnically-tinged music was able to find success that was not afforded to him when Boston was understood to speak for America as a whole.

This New England essentialism is also embedded within the music of Ives and Ruggles. Their vision of an American nationalistic musical style was tied to a transcendentalist exaltation of rural New England. It is also present in the philosophy of the MacDowell Colony, where rural New Hampshire is made to stand in for a generalized escape from the freneticism of urban life in an age of growing skyscrapers. In fact, Marian MacDowell wrote that Edward hoped a stay at the Colony would help American artists get to know their own country, implying that the “real” America lay somewhere in the Peterborough forest, waiting to be discovered by artists struggling to speak with a nationalist voice.\footnote{Marian MacDowell, “MacDowell’s ‘Peterborough Idea,’” \textit{Musical Quarterly} 18, no. 1 (1932): 38.}
As one of the cornerstones of a New England literary tradition and identity, Concord transcendentalism plays a recurring role in all these chapters. Critic John Sullivan Dwight, an acolyte of Emerson and a member of the Brook Farm commune, shaped in large part the aesthetics of Chadwick’s Boston along with other influential Harvard men under the spell of Emersonian ideology. Ives’s indebtedness to the transcendentalists has been well documented, and both his and Ruggles’s celebration of a spiritual rural nature has its roots in Emerson and Thoreau. Finally, the idealization of solitude that captivated MacDowell can be found in Thoreau, and the Concord writers who exalted Mount Monadnock formed part of the Peterborough elite’s framing of the town as a rural retreat.

Genre also emerges as a theme in the three chapters focused on symphonic works. Especially for both Chadwick and Ives, the question of what kinds of music should be allowed into a symphony reflect a variety of New England prejudices of elitism and regional xenophobia. Often the critical expectations of genre were part of the culturally-negotiated terms of elite New England implacement. In the case of Ruggles, the fact that *Men and Mountains* was presented as a “symphonic suite” carried with it the weight of elite distinction that emboldened a writer such as Dorothy Canfield Fisher to let it speak so emphatically for Vermont and rural New England.

Finally, all four composers engage with ideas about their region that are in some ways “old.” Old places might be thought of as obsolete or lost geographies, constructions of place with cartographic boundaries that no longer exist. In some of these cases, these lost geographies never

---


59 The term “obsolete geography” is taken from Robert Gunn, “The ‘Humor of the Old Southwest’ and National Regionality,” in *Mapping Region in Early American Writing*, ed. Edward Watts, Keri
existed in the first place, or their historical realities were quite different from the mappings that permeate into the twentieth century. Their geographic borders and physical attributes are always contested and full of exceptions to the rule. George Chadwick’s Boston of 1886, for example, was a cloistered Yankee town whose borders were set by the places where classical music was performed and where those who patronized classical music lived. Yet we know that in fact those who went to the symphony lived throughout Boston proper and the suburbs, and that citizens of non-Yankee ethnicity lived throughout the elite Back Bay neighborhood and the downtown area. As Martyn J. Bowden notes, it was often easy for Yankee elites to invent their own historical past, and by extension historical places, that could serve their agenda.

Four Places in New England: Chapter Outlines

Chapter 2 concerns George W. Chadwick (1854–1931) and the reception of his Symphony no. 2 in B♭ (1886). While critics generally approved of Chadwick’s Second Symphony, many reviewers noted that his work lacked “symphonic dignity.” This chapter develops from the hypothesis that the reviewers’ concerns about “dignity” were related to their perception of Chadwick’s use of immigrant melodies—specifically Irish, which represented a large segment of Boston’s immigrant community—in the revered genre of the symphony.

The reception of the Second Symphony, and Chadwick’s later music referencing immigrant cultures in Boston, is mapped onto the changing geography of Boston’s residential and cultural landscape. Notably, this includes the erecting of musical institutions such as Symphony Hall (1900)


60 This phrase, or closely related phrases, appears in many contemporary reviews of Chadwick’s Second Symphony. See, for example, [William Apthorp], Boston Evening Transcript, 13 December 1886, reprinted as Appendix A.
and the New England Conservatory (1902–04) far from the downtown nucleus of the city. By 1913, Boston had reluctantly acquired elements of an immigrant identity, and Chadwick was incorporating immigrant culture into his music more overtly, resulting in the bilingual, Italian American opera *The Padrone*. Chadwick and his music therefore provide a homology through which to understand how Boston expanded and assimilated its immigrant population. Here, the concepts of urban and rural are magnified to differentiate between the city proper and liminal spaces on the edges of the city.

Chadwick research is still in a relatively nascent stage. The first biography of the composer appeared in 1990 by Victor Fell Yellin, followed closely by bio-bibliographies of his symphonic works and then later his entire output by Bill F. Faucett. Both Faucett and Marianne Betz have completed recent biographies that draw on a thorough examination of Chadwick’s papers at the New England Conservatory and elsewhere. In addition, Betz has produced critical editions of a number of Chadwick’s works, including his fourth and fifth string quartets and a forthcoming project on *The Padrone*. One valuable source that engages with the political history of Chadwick’s career and his relationship to immigrant cultures is Charles Freeman’s writing on progressivism and *The Padrone*. Although Freeman covers the political sphere of Chadwick’s Boston extensively, he does not incorporate the city’s changing geography into his examination, nor does he consider Chadwick’s

---


previous use of melodies associated with immigrant groups. This chapter therefore provides a useful accompaniment to Freeman.

Chapter 3 explores Charles Ives’s (1874–1954) use of barn dance melodies and programmatic imagery in *Washington’s Birthday* (c. 1909–1913, rev. 1915–1917), the first movement of his *A Symphony: New England Holidays*, in order to elucidate his attitude toward the barn dance and what that attitude reveals about his geography, his politics, and his philosophical ideology. Ives implaced a mythologized rural “Old Danbury” into the barn dance, and this place served as the constructed past against which Ives imagined his urban present of the early twentieth century. The barn dance itself was an idealized event that helped Ives delineate the geographical parameters of his Old Danbury and reinforce his regional identity. As Ives incorporated pre-existing barn dance melodies into his compositions, he inherited the borrowed histories and social meanings of his sources, ones that connoted a folksy, communal New England rurality.

Yet by the start of the twentieth century, Gilded Age genteel society had co-opted and commodified the barn dance, transforming it into an object of superficial rurality for the benefit of urban consumers. By highlighting the folk history and raucous atmosphere of the barn dance, Ives reasserted its unrefined and rural qualities. He tied these elements to a regional and national identity infused with rural strength and virility, unsullied by what he perceived as the emasculating forces of decadent Gilded Age society. His insertion of the barn dance into an elite genre such as the symphony therefore subverted what he viewed as a commercialized and emasculated genteel American culture. Ives used the barn dance to construct a nostalgic rural place that could act as a strong bulwark against a perceived effeminate American musical culture. Thus, he was able to

---

65 See chapter 3, note 75 (p. 144), regarding the dating of this work.
reconcile his twentieth-century urban experience with his nostalgic construction of nineteenth-
century rural life.

Of the four composers in this project, Ives has occasioned the most scholarly writing. Recently, a number of Ives scholars have advocated for a closer consideration of the extra-musical associations of borrowed melodies and styles in order to fully understand Ives’s complex negotiation of his historical and cultural identity. These studies include Gayle Sherwood Magee’s consideration of the original social meanings of quoted hymn tunes in Ives compositions, J. Peter Burkholder’s treatment of Ives’s borrowed melodies as musical topics, Joseph Horowitz’s advocacy for an understanding of Ives as part of the gilded age social tradition that privileged music as an agent of moral uplift, and Von Glahn’s examination of Ives’s representations of both urban and rural scenes in depicting an American identity.66 My chapter continues along the lines of inquiry of these scholars who have combined socio-cultural history with musical analysis of Ives’s works.

Chapter 4 examines the role that Vermont author Dorothy Canfield Fisher played in helping Carl Ruggles (1876–1971) construct a Vermont identity. In an unpublished program note essay for Ruggles’s orchestral work Men and Mountains (the first major work he wrote after moving to Arlington, Vermont), Fisher created a narrative redolent with mythological images of nature and the frontier that implaced the history of Vermont settlement into Ruggles’s composition. This myth became one of the defining features of Ruggles’s public musical identity, despite the fact that he grew up in Massachusetts and lived for a number of years in Winona, Minnesota, as well as the New York

metropolitan area. Fisher’s essay touches on many of the common narrative tropes of rural New England’s history, from the conquering of wilderness in the eighteenth century, to the abandoned farms and social decline of the late nineteenth century, to finally the resurgence of population in the twentieth century. All of these historical themes contained some elements of fact and fiction.

Ruggles also embraced a Vermont identity because it distanced him from notions of feminized gentility in American musical culture while appealing to a transcendentalist tradition that linked rurality and nature to artistic genius. He used Walt Whitman’s poetry as inspiration for “Lilacs,” the middle movement of *Men and Mountains*, to represent a masculine frontier mentality and powerful American identity. Finally, by establishing for himself a strong Yankee identity, Ruggles staked a greater claim to American authenticity via association with a privileged, hegemonic ethnic and racial identity.

A rich body of secondary source material exists on Vermont landscape myths, but none of it mentions Ruggles. In fact, unlike Ives, Ruggles scholarship is still a rather small world. In his 2011 article, Drew Massey acknowledges the mythmaking that went into the reception of Ruggles by later composers and writers, framing Ruggles as a cosmic figure “with unique access to great eternal truths.” My approach offers a contrasting viewpoint: that Ruggles’s infinite qualities could also be tied to expressions of a local, rather than universal geography. Ruggles’s Vermont identity was certainly useful to him, but could be discarded or downplayed when the “infinite Ruggles” became a more powerful construction of identity and place. Only one other author, Deniz Ertan, centers her

---


study on *Men and Mountains*, drawing parallels between Ruggles and Whitman via their shared attitudes toward space, place, and time.⁶⁹ However, she does not consider the changing social contexts between the two artists nor Ruggles’s relationship to modernity, and she does not engage with the role that Fisher played in helping to shape Ruggles’s identity. This chapter will expand and supplement the niche of Ruggles scholarship that Ertan and Massey have carved.

Chapter 5 focuses not on a specific composition, but rather on the artists’ colony conceived by Edward MacDowell (1860–1908) and Marian MacDowell (1857–1956), and then carried out by Marian after her husband’s death. MacDowell cultivated an image of isolated rural solitude while working in his log cabin in the woods of Peterborough, New Hampshire, where he and Marian owned a summer home that had formerly been a farm. This image was implaced not only into his late piano works, especially the *New England Idyls*, but also into the MacDowell Colony, which began in 1907 and quickly became one of the most well known artists’ retreats in the country.

The MacDowell Colony is a representation of Edward’s sense of place for Peterborough, which was aligned with two related impulses in early twentieth-century thinking. The first is the American Arcadian myth, articulated by cultural historian Peter J. Schmitt, in which nature and wilderness were shaped and packaged to appeal to urban residents.⁷⁰ This ideal, presented in popular writing from the turn of the century, treated the rural countryside as an escape from the city and a playground for an educated middle or upper class. The second was a movement of regional rural reform promoted by the New England socioeconomic elite that sought to remake the image of rural New England. These well-educated and well-heeled Peterborough residents promoted tourism based

---


on art and nature, as well as a distorted view of the failures of earlier generations, to combat what they perceived as social decline.\footnote{Scott C. Roper, “The Role of Elite Perceptions in the Transformation of Landscape in Peterborough, NH, 1907–1933” (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1997).} Both these ways of thinking contributed to a construction of place that was contrived to reflect the idealized experience of Yankee elites, and that ultimately came to define the identity of Peterborough.

Despite being the most famous American composer of his era, MacDowell has not generated a particularly large body of musicological literature. The first comprehensive, scholarly biographical treatment of MacDowell was only recently published in 2013 by E. Douglas Bomberger, complementing an earlier dissertation by Margery Morgan Lowens that primarily examined MacDowell’s later years, as well as a general biography written by critic Lawrence Gilman the year the composer died.\footnote{E. Douglas Bomberger, \textit{MacDowell} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Margery Morgan Lowens, “The New York Years of Edward MacDowell” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1971); Lawrence Gilman, \textit{Edward MacDowell: A Study} (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969; orig. publ. 1908).} The topic that has generated the most scholarly interest in MacDowell is his use of Native American music and imagery.\footnote{See, for example, Tara Browner, “Breathing the Indian Spirit: Thoughts on Musical Borrowing and the ‘Indianist’ Movement in American Music,” \textit{American Music} 15, no. 3 (1997): 265–84; Kara Anne Gardner, “Edward MacDowell, Antimodernism, and ‘Playing Indian’ in the ‘Indian Suite,’” \textit{Musical Quarterly} 87, no. 3 (2004): 370–422.} A recent edited collection of essays that places MacDowell within a variety of historical and social contexts will undoubtedly be a major contribution to scholarship on the composer, yet was not published in time to be consulted for this dissertation.\footnote{E. Douglas Bomberger, ed., \textit{“Very Good for an American”: Essays on Edward MacDowell} (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2017).}

Histories of the MacDowell Colony typically take the form of colonist memoirs or collections of writings and artwork created at the Colony.\footnote{For instance, P. Andrew Spahr, ed., \textit{Community of Creativity: A Century of MacDowell Colony Artists} (Manchester, NH: Currier Gallery of Art, 1996); Carter Wiseman, ed., \textit{A Place for the Arts: The MacDowell Colony, 1907–2007} (Peterborough, NH: The MacDowell Colony, 2006).} Bridget Falconer-Salkeld has written a
history of the MacDowell Colony focusing on music, yet her text lacks a cohesive narrative and has a number of errors. Unfortunately, a comprehensive biography of Marian MacDowell has not yet been written. However, Robin Rausch at the Library of Congress has written a number of scholarly articles examining the history of the Colony and the work of Marian MacDowell.

Places are not static; they change over time because of human action and interaction that occurs within them. By treating the urban and the rural as a dynamic dialectic, we may better understand how music relates to the urban and rural, and to all the transitional places in between. The composers in this dissertation create their own acoustemologies, using music as a way of understanding their surroundings. In all these case studies, “place resounds as a fused human locus of space and time.”

---

76 In a review of Falconer-Salkeld’s monograph (Notes 62, no. 4 [June 2006]: 989–991), Robin Rausch calls the book an “unreliable resource” and writes: “As the first published full-length treatment of the MacDowell Colony, it disappoints” (989).


78 Feld, “Ethnomusicology to Echo-muse-ecology,” 5.
Chapter 2

George Chadwick and the Changing Geography of Boston

The Proper Bostonian did not just happen; he was planned. Since he was from the start, in that charming Boston phrase “well-connected,” he was planned to fit into a social world so small that he could not help being well-defined.
—Cleveland Amory, *The Proper Bostonians*¹

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Boston’s Symphony Hall in 2000, cellist and Boston native Yo-Yo Ma wrote that when the building opened in 1900, the location “was ‘The Wild, Wild West,’ the very fringe of Boston.”² Ma is no historian or geographer, but the fact that one of Boston’s most famous classical musicians imagined the city’s most iconic classical music institution in such a way speaks to a persistent Bostonian misconception about this neighborhood nestled between the Back Bay and South End.³ Before Symphony Hall, so Ma suggests, the corner of Huntington and Massachusetts Avenues was an uninhabited no-man’s land.

Yet while the area later called the “Cultural Mile” began to take its present form in the

---

² *Symphony Hall: The First 100 Years* ([Boston]: Boston Symphony Orchestra, 2000), 7.
³ A note about neighborhood names: In twenty-first-century Boston, the area where Symphony Hall stands is often referred to as part of the Back Bay. However, as will become clear in this chapter, the nineteenth-century social boundaries of the Back Bay tended to include only the five arterial avenues from Beacon to Boylston Streets, and the cross streets from the Public Gardens at Arlington Street westward to Massachusetts Avenue. The Symphony Hall site was also excluded from the social and cultural boundaries of the South End, which was mostly contained within Dover Street to the northeast and either Tremont Street or Columbus Avenue to the northwest. Indeed, the Symphony Hall neighborhood’s identity was only established after 1900 by the buildings that sprang up along Huntington Avenue, especially Symphony Hall but also the Museum of Fine Arts. Throughout the twentieth century, the neighborhood continued to be defined by new construction projects, such as Northeastern University in the 1930s and the Prudential Center in the 1960s.
decade following Symphony Hall’s construction, the neighborhood was certainly not empty prior to
1900.4 Mechanics Hall, an enormous triangular building that served as a venue, exhibition hall, and
meeting place, was built on Huntington Avenue in 1881 just a few blocks closer to Copley Square
from the future location of Symphony Hall.5 The Boston Children’s Hospital was built on the same
block as Symphony Hall’s future site and formally dedicated in 1882.6 By 1883 residential housing
existed a few blocks east of the future hall’s location and large lots of land surrounding the
intersection of Huntington and Massachusetts Avenues had been purchased, although most had not
yet been parceled into smaller lots appropriate for building.7 And by 1890, a full ten years before
Symphony Hall opened, residential buildings lined both sides of Massachusetts Avenue (then known
as West Chester Park) just south of Huntington.8

The relocation of Boston’s cultural institutions in the first decades of the twentieth century to
this only recently-settled area indicates that Boston was still in the process of an enormous expansion
outward from the old colonial town borders. Due to the lack of available, unsettled land, this
expansion included the filling in of various mud flats and other marshy areas along the waterfront, a
process begun in the early nineteenth century. The largest of these land reclamation projects, which
would most fundamentally change the city’s topographical and social identity, was the filling in of

4 “Cultural Mile” is a term describing Huntington Avenue from Copley Square through the modern-
day location of Northeastern University. While this name is used often in guide books and other
touristic literature about Boston, it also appears in some scholarly literature. See, for example, Joseph
5 Edwin M. Bacon, Bacon’s Dictionary of Boston (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co.,
1886), 89, 93.
6 Ibid.
7 Atlas of the City of Boston, City Proper (Philadelphia: Geo. W. & Walter S. Bromley, 1883), plate T.
8 In 1891 a bridge was built across the Charles River connecting West Chester Park in Boston to
Massachusetts Avenue in Cambridge. The Boston street’s name was changed in 1894 to match the
name on the Cambridge side of the bridge. See Walter Muir Whitehill and Lawrence W. Kennedy,
the Back Bay that began around 1860, an industrial basin of water along the southern shore of the Charles River just west of the Boston Common.

Upon completion in the early 1880s, the successful Back Bay project gave Boston’s elite upper class and growing bourgeoisie long, tree-lined boulevards on a grid, something of an anomaly in a city known for “narrow and crooked streets, turning and twisting hither and thither into a hopeless tangle.” Boston had its own renaissance of city design in the model of Second Empire Paris. Yet the cause of this expansion was not merely a deficit of desirable housing but the influx of tens of thousands of new residents in the hub, many of whom were recent European immigrants, most of whom were poverty-stricken Irish. There is, therefore, an ugly side to Ma’s misconception of which he was likely unaware: the area near Symphony Hall was not devoid of humanity, but rather, it was merely where the upper classes did not live, work, or play. The Back Bay, sequestered along its southern border by rail yards, was the sought-after neighborhood for the wealthy and elite, while lower classes and immigrants populated much of the housing on the other side of the tracks, including the eventual Cultural Mile and the South End. Ma’s characterization of this area as the “Wild, Wild West” also suggests a territory full of outlaws and unsavory individuals, devoid of civilized culture. As will become clear, many upper- and middle-class Bostonians at the time viewed the South End area in just such a way.

George Chadwick was born in 1854 into a New England that was already profoundly impacted by the presence of new immigrant populations. Lawrence, Massachusetts, the city in which he grew up, was a mill town whose workforce was largely made up of Irish immigrants working for

---

9 Bacon, Dictionary of Boston, 387. The correlation of Boston’s street plan with its self-image is so pervasive that author Annie Haven Thwing titled her valuable early twentieth-century history of the city The Crooked and Narrow Streets of the Town of Boston, 1630–1822 (Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1920).
low wages and living in slum conditions. Young George certainly was exposed to the dynamics of immigrant labor in New England from a young age.

Throughout his career as a composer, Chadwick occasionally wrote original melodies that reminded critics and listeners of so-called ethnic music, and especially Irish melodies that reflected large segments of the Boston immigrant population. One of his early significant works was the Symphony no. 2 in B♭, composed between 1884 and 1886 and premiered in December 1886 by the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO). Many Boston critics wrote favorably about the composition, and its second movement had the distinction of being the first piece ever encored by the BSO, yet some reviewers noted that Chadwick’s work lacked what they termed “symphonic dignity.” This phrase was used by more than one author, a curious trend among the Boston press that suggests an underlying agenda and shared code.

This chapter explores the hypothesis that the reviewers’ anxiety about “dignity” in the Second Symphony was partially related to their perception of Chadwick’s use of immigrant melodies, specifically Irish melodies. The issue became one of genre in that critics questioned Chadwick’s suggestion of these melodies in a symphony. Although circumstances had improved for Irish immigrants in Boston by the 1880s, they were still near the bottom of Boston’s economic and social strata. In the decades that followed, critics became more accepting of Chadwick’s Irish tinge as geographical and social relationships shifted dramatically, and the Irish became a more accepted segment of Boston’s demography. This allowed Chadwick to assimilate Boston’s immigrant identity into his music more overtly, as seen in his opera The Padrone (1913) or the tone poem Tam O’Shanter (1915). Furthermore these later works did not warrant the same pressures and expectations of genre as the classical symphony.
Starting with the Second Symphony, the reception of Chadwick’s music, as well as his relationship to immigrant cultures in Boston via his opera and other works, maps onto the changing geography of Boston’s residential and cultural landscape. Notably this includes the erection of musical institutions far from the downtown nucleus of the city such as Symphony Hall (1900), the New England Conservatory (1902), Jordan Hall (1904), and the Boston Opera House (1909). Here, the concepts of urban and rural are refocused to differentiate between the city proper and liminal spaces on the edges of the city. Thus, we may understand the relationship between Chadwick and his music and the expansion and assimilation of Boston’s immigrant population as a kind of homology. Chadwick’s inclusion of immigrant musical expression into the higher genres, such as symphony and string quartet, and its eventual positive critical reception can be seen as homologous to Boston’s expansion of its urban space to increasingly include the immigrant Other, as well as the rupture of the city’s elite cloistered geography. Chadwick’s music and the opinions of Boston’s critics did not develop as a mere result of social forces in a kind of reductive structuralism. Rather, we might conceive of these changes in music and reception as reflecting and resonating with synchronous changes in attitudes toward immigrants, demographic numbers, geographies, and debates over musical nationalism. These associative forces acted on and reinforced each other to create a place that Richard Middleton might describe as “a product of historically informed social learning, cultural activity and conscious manipulation.”

What emerges through the example of Chadwick’s career is a microcosm of New England’s relationship to immigrant populations, touching on both the xenophobic as well as the progressive, and the waning influence of the oligarchic Boston Brahmin class that dominated politics and culture.

---

in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.\footnote{The term “Boston Brahmin” comes from a serialized story by Boston author Oliver Wendell Holmes, “The Professor’s Story,” \textit{The Atlantic Monthly} 5, no. 27 (January 1860): 88–100. The story became his novel \textit{Elsie Venner}, published in 1861. Chapter 1 of “The Professor’s Story” is titled “The Brahmin Caste of New England,” where Holmes calls the caste a “harmless, inoffensive, untitled aristocracy” (93). The term became popular in the nineteenth century and persisted through to the twentieth century, referring to the wealthy old Yankee families of Boston who were almost exclusively Anglo-Saxon (often descended from seventeenth-century Puritan settlers), Harvard educated, and fiercely exclusive.} Found in the opposition to Chadwick’s symphony are entrenched attitudes against foreigners that characterized Bostonian and New England sentiment for many years, and that reflect Yankee New Englanders’ perception of a historically self-contained ethnic makeup. These ideas are echoed by Boston composers’ comments in response to Antonín Dvořák’s 1893 statements on Americanism in music. However, an implicit acceptance of the assimilation of Irish immigrants into Bostonian identity can be seen in the positive reaction to perceived Irish qualities in Chadwick’s Fourth String Quartet and actual Irish melodic quotations in Amy Beach’s \textit{Gaelic Symphony}, both from 1896. Meanwhile, Chadwick’s eventual embrace of immigrant themes and melodies in \textit{The Padrone}, \textit{Tam O’Shanter}, and other works during the first two decades of the twentieth century indicate the wave of progressive politics that infiltrated a portion of the city at that time. Chadwick was especially proud of his identity as a Bostonian, and his musical activities over the thirty years from 1885–1915 reflect the dynamism of the city that served as his home, his livelihood, and his musical milieu, providing a new space in which to investigate questions of race, class, and ethnicity in New England.

\textbf{Chadwick Before Boston}

George Whitefield Chadwick was born in Lowell, Massachusetts, on November 13, 1854, to parents Alonzo Calvin Chadwick and Hannah Fitts. Both parents traced their heritage in New
England as far back as the 1630s and 40s. Situated north of Boston on the Merrimack River, Lowell was one of a number of recently established mill towns founded as an outlet for rural girls who were increasingly abandoning the hardscrabble farms of Northern New England. Yet with the massive influx of Irish immigrants fleeing famine and poverty in their homeland during the 1840s, housing in Lowell quickly degenerated into overcrowded, filthy tenements, as mill owners realized they could lower wages thanks to the surplus of immigrant workers.

Chadwick’s mother died within a week of his birth and he was sent off to relatives in New Hampshire. By age three he returned to his father’s household, now relocated downriver in Lawrence, Massachusetts, where his father ran an insurance firm. Lawrence’s founding in 1845 by a textile conglomerate coincided with the onset of the Irish potato famine; as such its population grew exponentially to almost 22,000 by 1865 and the town’s character was entirely transformed largely by Irish immigration. Chadwick therefore grew up observing firsthand the perils of immigrant life in nineteenth-century New England, while simultaneously living in a sheltered world by virtue of his ethnicity and class.

Biographer Bill F. Faucett surmises that growing up in Lawrence, Chadwick “must have absorbed some aspects of [Irish] culture,” no doubt including music. Music was one way for Irish immigrants to maintain their cultural bonds, and it formed an important part of the many Irish institutions that helped preserve their culture in Massachusetts. During Chadwick’s early childhood growing up in Lawrence a volatile relationship existed between the Irish and the Yankee populations

---


and therefore Irish music would have remained within the insular bounds of the Irish community. By the 1860s and 70s, however, when Chadwick was entering adolescence, Irish immigrants had made a number of local political gains and their cultural activities may have been less ghettoized, as many of the Irish civic institutions were more comfortable with public events. Had an eleven-year-old Chadwick been present at the Lawrence Fourth of July parade in 1865, he would have heard music accompanying the Fenian Irish who marched alongside the rest of the city. Greater opportunities did exist in those decades for Yankee/Irish cultural exchange; for example, a number of Yankee locals were reported to have attended the 1872 fair of St. Mary’s Orphan Asylum, where the Lawrence Cornet Band played Irish music.

Chadwick was also quite familiar with the New England psalmody tradition, as his father had organized a singing school in Concord, New Hampshire, years before his birth. Both Chadwick’s father and his brother, Fitts Henry (who was fourteen years George’s senior), were members of amateur choruses and sang in the massive 1869 Boston Peace Jubilee, a spectacle that the teenaged Chadwick likely attended. For the 1872 World’s Peace Jubilee, Chadwick joined his father and brother in the event and helped to prepare the entire Lawrence choir.

---

14 Many thanks to Kathy Flynn, Head Researcher at the Lawrence History Center, for providing this information.
15 Cole, Immigrant City, 45.
16 William J. Mahon, Thomas Griffin (1829–96) of Corca Dhuibhne and the Irish Community of Lawrence, Massachusetts (Aberystwyth, Wales: Department of Welsh, Aberystwyth University, 2007), 76.
17 Faucett, Pride of New England, 14.
18 Yellin states that “it is probable” that Chadwick attended the Jubilee and believes that this event, more than anything else, may have been the reason Chadwick decided to abandon a potential business career for one in music. However, as Faucett has shown, young George had been invested in music prior to the first Jubilee. Victor Fell Yellin, Chadwick, Yankee Composer (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990), 16; Faucett, Pride of New England, 22–23.
19 Faucett, Pride of New England, 27.
Chadwick began taking lessons at the New England Conservatory (NEC) in piano, organ, and harmony in 1872, while also soaking in the city's robust concert life. By 1877, he had acquired enough musical prowess to travel to Germany, where he enrolled at the Leipzig Conservatory and later at the Hochschule für Musik in Munich, studying with Salomon Jadassohn and Carl Reinecke at the former and with Joseph Rheinberger at the latter. After his conservatory works such as the *Rip Van Winkle* Overture and Second String Quartet garnered considerable praise in Germany, Chadwick journeyed back to Boston in 1880 to begin his career as a composer.

**Musical Culture and the Symphonic Genre in 1880s Boston**

In the first two years following his return from Europe, Chadwick worked hard to establish himself in Boston’s musical community. He gave music lessons in Boston while initially living with his brother in the suburb of Malden, and then moved to Boston proper in 1882 upon securing the position of organist at the Park Street Church.\(^\text{20}\) Despite having no familial legacy to propel him socially or a prestigious musical job to advance him professionally, Chadwick was included in a special supplement of *Music and Drama* on “Musical Boston” written by Louis C. Elson in 1882. In print and in a centerfold lithograph, Chadwick appeared alongside many of Boston’s musical elite including Carl Zerrahn (the longtime conductor of the Harvard Musical Association [HMA] Orchestra and other ensembles in Boston dating back to at least 1855), Georg Henschel (the first conductor of the BSO), B. J. Lang (founder of the Apollo and Cecilia Clubs), and Chadwick’s former piano teacher Carlyle Petersilea (fig. 2.1).

\(^{20}\) Yellin, *Yankee Composer*, 43.
As evidenced by Elson’s accompanying article, Chadwick’s ordination into this pantheon of Musical Boston was a result of the success of his Symphony no. 1 in C major, op. 5, premiered on February 23, 1882, in a performance at the Boston Museum by the HMA Orchestra.\footnote{Faucett, \textit{Pride of New England}, 88.} Elson wrote that “it is safe to say that never before has an American of twenty-eight years of age composed a work
comparable to the Symphony in C.”

The piece stays true to the conventions and expectations of a mid-nineteenth-century symphony in the mold of Beethoven, Schumann, or Mendelssohn. It followed closely on the heels of John Knowles Paine’s Second Symphony (“Spring”), widely lauded as the greatest symphonic effort by an American and similarly conservative in style. Notably, Chadwick’s melodies contain no pentatonicism, a melodic profile that he had already used in some of his earlier works and that would emerge strongly in his Second Symphony.

Although Chadwick had garnered critical praise for his earliest large-scale works such as the *Rip Van Winkle* Overture (1880) and the orchestral cantata *The Viking’s Last Voyage* (1881), neither of these carried as much prestige in Boston as did the symphony. The reasons for this privileging of the symphonic genre are complex and define much of the musical atmosphere of Boston in the late nineteenth century.

In the 1880s, Bostonians could hear regular performances of orchestral works by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, and Mendelssohn (and increasingly yet sparingly Liszt, Berlioz, Wagner, and Brahms) by at least three major Boston orchestras. Since the BSO was only founded in 1881, it did not yet dominate orchestral programming in the city as it would in the ensuing decades. Additionally, the orchestras of the prestigious vocal music clubs in the city, such as the Apollo Club or the Cecilia Society, occasionally performed symphonic and other instrumental works. Chadwick inserted himself into this professional climate, becoming an officer of the Boston Philharmonic Society in 1882 (later called the Boston Philharmonic Club, which Chadwick would conduct after 1887), and joining the St. Botolph Club, which Richard Herndon called “distinctively the leading professional club of the city . . . in its membership, more generally than that of any

---

other, is represented the best in art, literature, the law, music, journalism, and the other professions. It has a rich artistic and literary flavor.”

Through these connections, Chadwick had opportunities to be in the same social and professional circles as the venerated musical directors Carl Zerrahn and B. J. Lang, who both held sway over Bostonian taste for many years.

However, it was John Sullivan Dwight (1813–93) who wielded paramount influence on Boston’s musical aesthetics in nineteenth-century Boston. As founder and editor of *Dwight’s Journal of Music*, as well as founder and president of the HMA Orchestra—the city’s longest-lasting regular orchestra prior to the BSO—he influenced Boston’s musical scene as well as cities around the country that looked to Boston as a musical exemplar. He formed his philosophical views and aesthetics in the late 1830s and early 40s in part while living at the transcendentalist commune Brook Farm; his ideology was shaped both by Emersonian transcendentalism and the German Romantic tradition of Friedrich Schiller, E. T. A. Hoffmann, and A. B. Marx. Dwight prized the symphonic tradition and especially Beethoven, espousing the idea that listening intently to instrumental music without recourse to a program or extramusical associations offered listeners “a higher, ideal realm of the Infinite,” standing apart from texted works “as a special world beyond the linguistic realm.”

He believed that symphonies were morally uplifting, and could instill bonds among all humanity. Dwight insisted that audiences should listen intently to abstract instrumental

---


26 Ibid., 157.
forms and that concerts should be free of vocal music—both challenging new ideas in 1840s America.

After cultivating his aesthetic position in the 1840s and disseminating it through publications in the transcendentalist *Dial* or the associationist *Harbinger*, Dwight exerted his most profound influence through his eponymous *Journal of Music*. Founded in 1852, *Dwight's Journal of Music* continued to promote the dogma of “musical idealism” until its demise in 1881, and helped dictate the discourse of classical music criticism in Boston at the outset of Chadwick’s career. Elson observed how Bostonian taste morphed over the course of the publication’s life, noting that “without change of principle, Mr. Dwight was, in the early part of his career, regarded as too radical, and in the latter as too conservative.” Even in the 1880s Dwight’s bullish adherence to his midcentury idealism influenced the leading critics despite these aesthetic shifts in the audience.

Dwight also exerted his influence over Boston’s classical music culture by controlling the programming for the Harvard Musical Association Orchestra, founded by Dwight and other members of the HMA in 1865. Although three different groups regularly performed orchestral music in Boston during the 1840s and 50s, there had been no permanent ensemble of professional musicians devoted entirely to orchestral music since the dissolution of the Germania Musical Society.

---

27 Associationism was an economic, social, and political system based on the ideas of the French writer Charles Fourier that fueled many of the ideals of utopian social reform at Brook Farm. The *Harbinger* was a journal published by Brook Farm “devoted to social and political progress.” See Sterling F. Delano, *Brook Farm: The Dark Side of Utopia* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004).


in 1854.\textsuperscript{30} The new HMA Orchestra filled this perceived need and become the premier orchestral
group in Boston until the founding of the BSO in 1881. Consequently, Dwight effectively dictated
much of the repertoire that Boston audiences heard. Following the ideals established in his Brook
Farm days and furthered through his \textit{Journal}, Dwight envisioned an group that would play only
music of the “highest order” that would “raise the level of cultural taste.”\textsuperscript{31} His initial goals for the
orchestra included “pure programmes” free of novelties and popular fare, focusing on instrumental
genres using the classical forms while avoiding vocal music and programmatic works.\textsuperscript{32}

Although Dwight privately admitted in later seasons that programs should take on more
variety, present newer works, and perhaps even include popular pieces, his actual programming
remained stubbornly steadfast to his initial goals. Right up through the final season in 1882, the
HMA Orchestra seldom strayed far from the core repertoire of overtures, symphonies, and concertos
by Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, and Mendelssohn.\textsuperscript{33} Davidson
notes that although Boston audiences were curious about the New German School with its more

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31} Ibid., report on annual meeting of the Harvard Musical Association, 30 April 1865, quoted in Davidson, “John Sullivan Dwight,” 251.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 254. Dwight was a seminal figure in American musical thought and even more so in Boston, yet his viewpoint was not unique. Although it is outside the purview of this study, Dwight’s idealist opinion was part of a larger aesthetic debate in both Europe and the United States on the relative values of abstract versus representational—or absolute versus program—music, dating back to midcentury. In Europe the dialogue took root in the opposition between the music and writing of Liszt and Wagner and critic Eduard Hanslick’s \textit{Vom Musickalisch-Schönen} of 1854; in the United States, the polemics of William Henry Fry and Richard Storrs Willis in the pages of New York City newspapers from 1853–54 stoked this aesthetic fire. See Douglas W. Shadle, “How Santa Claus Became a Slave Driver: The Work of Print Culture in a Nineteenth-Century Musical Controversy,” \textit{Journal of the Society for American Music} 8, no. 4 (2014): 501–37, for an analysis of the transatlantic nature of this debate and its manifestations on various fronts.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Davidson, “John Sullivan Dwight,” 258.
\end{itemize}
chromatic and programmatic music, Dwight did not program it, finding it “distasteful and antithetical to his principles.” His HMA Orchestra concerts also coincided with the rise of Boston’s music criticism. At first, one or two papers sent reviewers to Dwight’s concerts, yet by the 1870s as many as ten local papers ran regular reviews of the orchestra, a tradition that continued into the 1880s and beyond with the BSO.

Dwight’s writings contributed to the ascendancy of instrumental music over vocal music as the highest aesthetic art form in the nineteenth century, in part because of the perceived moral idealism inherent in the former. There was also a potential for lasciviousness in vocal or dramatic music, especially opera. Karen Ahlquist writes that the symphony “without words or stories . . . could not be considered crude or immoral, so its appropriateness for a polite audience was not questioned.” Joseph Horowitz notes that Dwight “instinctively mistrusted opera as a variant of the theater,” and indeed this entrenched attitude meant that opera never achieved a strong foothold in Boston’s high society as it did in New York. An 1885 attempt to establish a permanent Boston opéra comique failed, with the Boston Evening Traveller noting that “our pious city repudiated the endeavor.”

Puritan piety may have played a role in the suppression of the opera, but by the last decades

---

34 Ibid., 264.
of the century, Bostonians did not need any moral reason for the elevated position of the symphony. The social practice of attending the BSO had become a habitual part of the Brahmin lifestyle, thanks in part to Dwight’s efforts. In 1893, The Musical and Dramatic World remarked that “it is now regarded as the correct thing to go to the Symphony Concerts, just as in New York it is deemed eminently proper to go to the opera.”39 For Bostonians, preferring symphonic music to opera was also a way to express their perceived moral, intellectual, and cultural superiority over the more financially motivated New York City.

Examining the programming of the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s first few seasons reveals how Dwight’s dogmatic approach to classical music manifested itself even after the demise of his orchestra and Journal. Georg Henschel, the symphony’s first conductor who served for three seasons, attempted a more catholic selection of works and styles as typified by the first concert of the first season: a Beethoven overture, Gluck aria, and Haydn symphony before intermission, followed by lighter fare such as Schubert’s ballet music from Rosamunde, some selections from Bruch’s secular oratorio Odysseus, and Weber’s Festival Overture to close the celebratory inaugural concert. Significantly, Henschel included both vocal music, a soloist, lighter works, and music written after 1870, all usually absent from Dwight’s HMA programs.

The public enjoyed Henschel, but the critics betrayed their loyalty to Dwight’s idealistic mentality. Writers in the Gazette, Advertiser, and Transcript all criticized Henschel’s breaks with tradition, such as his non-traditional tempos for familiar canonic works. His inclusion of newer composers and works with more chromatic harmony was also viewed with suspicion by some critics: the Boston correspondent of the New York-based Music wrote in February 1882 that “there are more

39 The Musical and Dramatic World, 15 November 1893, BSO Archives.
dissonances in Music Hall now in a week than there used to be in a year. The medicine administered to Boston at present may be thus analyzed: Extract of Brahms . . . 3 parts. Essence of Berlioz . . . 2 parts. Spirit of Henschel . . . 1 part. Shake well before taking.”

Henschel’s last minute choice to present a nearly all-Wagner concert just days after the composer’s death was met with derision by critics. In another instance, upon being told by “an eminent musician” that Brahms’s “idiosyncrasies” would be celebrated in thirty years time, one writer remarked “let us not run so unwelcome a wish. Let us die in peace.”

The choice of Wilhelm Gericke to succeed Henschel beginning in the 1884–85 season of the BSO represented a return to the classicism of Dwight’s ideal. Gericke was a perfect foil to the ostentatious conducting style of the thirty-two-year-old Henschel, and the critics seemed to prefer his more restrained and traditional style: “his manner at the conductor’s desk is admirable: dignified, self-contained, free from all overdramatic demonstrativeness.” Here the characterization of “dignified” suggests a classicism and conservatism in line with Dwight’s musical idealism of the previous decades, but also toward a seriousness that the more capricious Henschel seemed to lack. Gericke even omitted a performance for a soloist from his sixth concert program, breaking the tradition of every previous BSO concert.

Dwight’s opinion that German musical culture was the pinnacle of Western music also had long-lasting effects in Boston. In the 1880s alone (roughly the tenures of Henschel and Gericke), the BSO’s programming relied heavily on the German tradition: the slot for the symphony, the

---

41 Ibid., 49.
42 Ibid., 68. According to critics, audiences enjoyed both Henschel and Gericke, but there is no evidence that they preferred one to the other.
centerpiece of each concert, went to Beethoven an overwhelming sixty-two times, Schumann seventeen times, Schubert and Mozart fifteen times each, Haydn fourteen times, and Mendelssohn nine times. Henschel programmed a symphony by Brahms, who was his close personal friend, only five times during his tenure, while Gericke allowed for nine performances, perhaps indicating that Boston was beginning to warm to Brahms by the late 1880s. By contrast, in the same decade a concert featuring a symphony by Dvořák occurred only six times, Berlioz five times, Bruckner once, Liszt once, Gade (who was popular at the time) three times. Symphonies by Tchaikovsky or Saint-Saëns were never heard during this time, all reflecting Boston’s preference for not only German but older works.

Some critics did protest the attendant conservatism that accompanied this Germanophilic view, lamenting that the works of the Viennese classicists, Mendelssohn, and Schumann left little room for either modern composers or those of French or Slavic provenance. The unsigned critic of the Boston Courier, possibly Louis C. Elson, complained that to present three Mendelssohn symphonies in the 1884–85 season “while Berlioz, Bizet, Duorak [sic], Svendsen and other moderns are denied a hearing for lack of room, is to treat Boston rather like a provincial town than a musical centre.” The Courier also decried the lack of works by American composers, affirming that “we must lift our voice in vehement assertion that the first duty of an American orchestra would be to present what is good among native orchestral works.”

Dwight’s bias against the New German School and Wagner was a difficult inheritance for younger Boston critics, who appreciated more progressive music yet internalized Dwight’s unmitigated conservatism. William Foster Apthorp, one of the most prominent Boston critics of the

43 Statistics on performances are listed in Appendix B of Ibid., 183–229.
44 Boston Courier, review of performance on 20 December 1884, MB-Mu.
1880s and the program note annotator of the BSO in the 1890s, exhibited this duality well. In the same breath, Apthorp declared the fugue and sonata form “worthy of undying admiration” while also admitting that they are becoming obsolete.\textsuperscript{45} He channeled Dwight when he wrote that the desire to make music representational cannot distract the composer from aspiring to the “true essence of music, musical coherency, organic development, or plastic beauty,” yet also included Berlioz and Wagner amongst his most respected and beloved musical heroes, even writing a book about Berlioz in 1879.\textsuperscript{46} Still, Apthorp’s criticisms are typical of Boston’s traditional taste and Germanic bent. For example, he valued formal symmetry and beautiful melodies in Grieg’s Piano Concerto, but these qualities could not make up for a lack of “true development” and “organic, thematic working-out.”\textsuperscript{47} Apthorp’s aesthetic outlook is therefore especially relevant because it neatly encompasses half a century of critical bias and because he wrote at length about Chadwick’s Second Symphony.

**Symphony no. 2 in B♭ and the Problem of Genre**

Chadwick’s Second Symphony was already familiar to Apthorp’s and other critics’ ears at the December 11, 1886, premiere by the BSO. Although it was the first time the entire piece was performed, individual movements had been played by both the BSO and the Apollo Club in the previous two years. The “Allegro Scherzando” second movement, originally titled Scherzo in F, was premiered March 7, 1884, with Henschel conducting the BSO. Chadwick recalled that “it was probably the first piece in which I struck my real gait [emphasis original],” and that it was the first

\textsuperscript{45} William Foster Apthorp, *By the Way*, vol. 1 (Boston: Copeland and Day, 1898), 13.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{47} [William Foster Apthorp], *Boston Evening Transcript*, 31 October 1881.
piece played by the BSO that was ever repeated by demand of the audience.\footnote{Collection 1.2: George W. Chadwick, Series 7: Memoirs, 1880–93 (hereafter “Memoirs”), New England Conservatory Archives, Boston, MA. Future references to Collection 1.2 will be abbreviated “CC-NEC” with specific series numbers.}

Chadwick was so thrilled with the enthusiastic response to his Scherzo that he immediately set about composing an Allegro movement with the intention of creating an entire symphony. The first movement originally appeared as the \textit{Introduction and Allegro, from Symphony no. 2 in B-flat} at an all-American concert of the Apollo Club on April 29, 1885, with Chadwick conducting.\footnote{Bill F. Faucett, \textit{George Whitefield Chadwick: A Bio-Bibliography} (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998).} During his honeymoon in the summer of 1885, Chadwick first heard the main theme of the finale in his head while walking in the mountains surrounding the Tyrolean lake Achensee. He would later recount the connection between the symphony's finale and his marriage and deep love for Ida May.\footnote{Memoirs 1880–93, CC-NEC.} Upon returning to the states he composed the remainder of the finale as well as a slow third movement.

Apthorp’s review of the full symphony appeared on the front page of the December 13, 1886, issue of the \textit{Boston Evening Transcript}.\footnote{All quotes and excerpts from Apthorp’s review are from the \textit{Boston Evening Transcript}, 13 December 1886. The entire section of this review that discusses Chadwick’s symphony appears as Appendix A.} He offered some gracious compliments, noting that Chadwick “has real charm and brilliancy; what he writes is alive, and sounds spontaneous.” Then Apthorp disclosed his doubts about this work, and they were mostly concerned with his trepidation to call this piece a symphony:

\begin{quote}
And yet there is that in the general character and animus of the symphony which baffles all attempts at comparing it with any known models of any school. We, for one, cannot remember any music of this character being written in the symphonic form. One feels like saying, with Friar Lawrence, “Art thou a symphony? Thy form cries out, thou art.” The general lack of true seriousness in the music; the light, almost
operatic character of the thematic material; the constant changes of rhythm; the frequent solo passages—not merely incidental phrases for this or that instrument, but often full-fledged solos of considerable length—all contribute to make the work fall short of what may be called symphonic dignity. . . . As we have said, the composition shows genuine talent, but it seems as if the composer had not yet sufficiently drilled his power to cope with so severe a task as a symphony [emphasis mine].

It is clear from the italicized words that Apthorp questioned whether the essential character of the music suits the genre of symphony, and other critics echoed this sentiment. Richard Hurd, in the \textit{Boston Post}, made the point about genres explicit when he wrote: \textquote{\textit{We wish that we had not to criticise the work as a symphony, because from any other standpoint it would be possible to say better things about it.}}\textsuperscript{52} Writing in the \textit{Boston Traveller}, George H. Wilson noted that Chadwick's progressive form and orchestration were \textquote{less in place, and because of this more detrimental, when one has a symphony in hand.}\textsuperscript{53}

Although most reviewers, including Apthorp, wrote some positive comments about the symphony, many followed a similar path of criticism using nearly identical language. Hurd alluded to a lack of seriousness in the work by stating that \textquote{Mr. Chadwick has always something interesting to say, even if it is not very deep,} and later wrote that \textquote{the first movement has neither the breadth nor the dignity that are demanded of such a piece of music.}\textsuperscript{54} Louis C. Elson, writing in the \textit{Boston Courier}, noted how \textquote{the bright, tuneful episodes of the first movement are scarcely dignified enough for this high style of composition,} and in the national periodical \textit{Musical Courier}, Elson wrote \textquote{some of the melodic touches were not altogether of symphonic dignity.}\textsuperscript{55}

Comparing the reviews of the full symphony to the earlier premiere of the second movement,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[52] \textit{Boston Post}, 13 December 1886, CC-NEC, Series 10: Scrapbooks.
\item[53] \textit{Boston Traveller}, 12 December 1886, MB-Mu.
\item[54] \textit{Boston Post}, 13 December 1886, CC-NEC, Series 10: Scrapbooks.
\item[55] Louis C. Elson, \textquote{Music in Boston,} \textit{New York Musical Courier}, undated clipping, MB-Mu.
\end{footnotes}
the Scherzo in F from 1884, reinforces the centrality of genre to the critics. After the 1884 performance, Apthorp declared the single movement work “a gem,” describing it in detail: “the themes on which it is built up are both original and taking . . . the working up of the movement sounds clear and coherent, even at a first hearing.”\(^{56}\) Whereas Apthorp praised the originality of the themes and the coherence of the movement in its presentation as a scherzo, he criticized the thematic material in the symphonic version because it made “the work fall short of what may be called symphonic dignity.”

Chadwick’s choice of title was no mere semantic point because genres reflexively communicate a set of culturally mediated codes. Here I adapt the thinking of Mikhail Bakhtin for musical rather than speech or literary genres.\(^{57}\) In particular, Bakhtin’s understanding of genre as having a dialogic quality between the composer and the listener resonates in the case of Chadwick, where the cultural response to genre is as important as the intent of the genre user. The symphony is directed to the listener; it is not merely an autonomous set of formal musical gestures but as a genre it has an author, an expressivity, and an addressee.\(^{58}\) The composer implicitly agrees to adhere to some of the conventions and expectations of the genre. In turn, the listener, or in this case the critic, has agency over the parameters of the genre as well, allowing for a certain amount of elasticity regarding the boundaries of what is permissible within the genre.

By calling his piece a symphony, Chadwick entered into a “generic contract” with his audience, situated within a larger discourse of what a symphony meant at that time and in that

\(^{56}\) William Foster Apthorp, *Boston Evening Transcript*, 10 March 1884.
\(^{57}\) In the following discussion, I generally substitute musical ideas for Bakhtin’s terminology of “utterance,” “language,” and “speech.” See M. M. Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, 60–102 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).
\(^{58}\) Ibid., 95.
place.\textsuperscript{59} For Apthorp and other Bostonians, the symphonic ideal was found in Beethoven as preached by Dwight and based on years of conditioning through what was heard in concert halls and written in the papers. The generic contract “implies that the piece was planned to be heard in the tradition of previous works in that genre,” which in this case certainly included not only symphonies generally but American symphonies specifically, such as Chadwick’s First Symphony and Paine’s “Spring” Symphony.\textsuperscript{60} When Apthorp began his review of the piece with the statement, “Mr. Chadwick’s is a work so unexpected in character that one hardly knows exactly how to take it nor what to say of it,” he illustrates how the work does not fit into the culturally negotiated qualifications of the symphonic genre. He feels literally unable to comment on the work as a symphony. Hurd also called attention to the genre of symphony rather than the quality of the music when he suggested that “the symphony, to a certain extent, usurps its title.”\textsuperscript{61}

Perhaps the entire episode influenced Chadwick’s later compositional decisions, since following his Symphony no. 3 of 1894, he wrote three more symphonic pieces in the standard four movements but titled none of them a symphony: the \textit{Symphonic Sketches} completed in 1904, the \textit{Sinfonietta} later in 1904, and the \textit{Suite Symphonique} in 1909. Faucett goes so far as to write that the “\textit{Sinfonietta} is in effect Chadwick’s Fifth Symphony.”\textsuperscript{62} Chadwick himself called the \textit{Suite Symphonique} a symphony in his diaries, yet Faucett dismisses the difference in title, believing that “Chadwick did not worry too much about the nomenclature used for this composition.”\textsuperscript{63}

However, in light of earlier criticisms of the Second Symphony and his decision to forego the

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Boston Post}, 13 December 1886, CC-NEC, Series 10: Scrapbooks.
\textsuperscript{62} Faucett, \textit{Pride of New England}, 216.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 247.
genre title in his last three symphonic works, it seems that Chadwick did care about the name used for this piece. From his experience with the critical reaction to the Second Symphony, Chadwick understood that using the title “symphony” carried a host of expectations that would be brought to bear on criticism of his work. Even in 1909, secure in his professional life at NEC and with many compositional successes, Chadwick perhaps recalled Hurd’s quip from over twenty years earlier that he wished he did not have to assess the Second Symphony “as a symphony” and therefore titled his new piece *Suite Symphonique*. Genre meant something to Chadwick, in part because it meant something to the critics and, possibly to a lesser degree, to his audience.

The generic contract meant that listeners expected certain musical parameters in the symphony, and clearly some critics believed that certain aspects of Chadwick’s Second Symphony did not meet those genre requirements. Apthorp noted the “light, almost operatic” quality of the melody and the music’s “capricious, frivolous” nature, both of which lack the gravitas required for the symphonic genre. Given Boston’s lack of support for a permanent opera company at the time, it is no wonder that critics were suspicious of operatic character in the symphony. Solo melodies of a *cantabile* nature were frequently seen as a mark of French or Italianate vocal style and therefore inappropriate in the Germanic symphony—this is likely why Apthorp took umbrage to “the frequent solo passages.” This sentiment had long-standing roots in American critical discourse. For instance, critic Charles Burkhardt responded pejoratively to a symphony by the American composer William Henry Fry in 1853, writing that “its style and formation are not of the high school of art; they are of a modern Italian or French pattern” and he disparagingly called certain solo passages “Donizettish.”

---

Apthorp’s distaste for Chadwick’s “capricious” and “frivolous” treatment of melody also seems tied to the word “dignity” or “dignified,” terms that appeared in multiple authors’ reviews. Examining other instances in which the Boston musical press used the term “dignity,” it seems that many treated the word as a cognate for seriousness, especially in the classical genres of symphony, sonata, and string quartet. In a review of Mendelssohn’s Symphony no. 3 (“Scottish”) performed December 20, 1884, the Boston Gazette critic wrote that “the adagio was turned into an andante con moto, and lost proportionately in dignity, largeness, and appropriate expressiveness.” The critic implied that if the slow movement had indeed been a “proper” adagio, the Romantic seriousness of a slower tempo would have lent more “dignity” to the movement.

Certain genres or styles, typically novelties or programmatic pieces with a strong representational element, were also said to lack dignity; one Boston Globe reviewer called Gounod’s Funeral March of a Marionette “beneath the dignity of such an organization as the Boston Symphony Orchestra.” Here again the critics seem to be channeling the voice of J. S. Dwight in their opposition to program music, demonstrating his strong influence on contemporary critics even after his Journal folded. In other reviews, “dignity” seems to mean reverence to classical forms and style, as in the Gazette review of the October 25, 1884, performance of Cherubini’s Overture to Anacreon. This connotation is apposite to comments made by G. H. Wilson regarding Chadwick’s “nonchalant manner not compatible with absolute conservatism” in his treatment of form in the outer movements of the Second Symphony, which Wilson describes as having “more a rhapsodical than

---

65 Unsigned review, Boston Gazette, 21 December 1884, MB-Mu.
67 “Cherubini’s noble and ever-new Anacreon overture was read by [Gericke] with fine breadth of style and beauty of effect, and with delightful clearness and dignity.” Boston Gazette, 26 October 1884, MB-Mu.
symphonic character” even though they adhere to sonata-allegro form.\textsuperscript{68} “Dignity” took on similar meanings in music outside of Bostonian discourse. In an annual review from 1883 which was reprinted in the \textit{Boston Evening Transcript}, a \textit{London Times} writer noted that following the death of Beethoven, “it was not till some years later that Mendelssohn reasserted the dignity of serious art.”\textsuperscript{69}

Many of the same critics seemed to believe that evidence of workmanship could elevate light symphonic movements to a more serious and dignified position. Again following the precepts of Dwight, Boston’s musical elite placed a high premium on academic rigor, which they felt was required to write music in abstract forms such as a symphony. This very argument was used to validate other symphonies that bear a similar melodic style to Chadwick’s. Mendelssohn’s Symphony no. 4 (“Italian”), performed by the BSO on October 25, 1884, and again on October 16, 1886, contains light, capricious melodies in the first movement and a rhythmically playful finale movement influenced by the \textit{saltarello} dance. The middle movements are of a similarly light character, and were in fact played at the BSO’s Pops Concerts in May 1886.\textsuperscript{70} Apthorp recognized these qualities but did not protest their inclusion in the symphony as he later would with Chadwick, writing that “although the thematic material of this symphony is of somewhat lighter and less serious character than that of its more favorite ‘Scotch’ predecessor, the treatment of the themes is in general far more elaborate and complex.”\textsuperscript{71}

Here it is Mendelssohn’s “treatment of the themes” which seems to excuse their frivolous

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\footnotesize
\item \textsuperscript{68} G. H. Wilson, \textit{Boston Traveller}, 13 December 1886, CC-NEC, Series 10: Scrapbooks.
\item \textsuperscript{69} “A Year’s Music, Summary of Musical Events in 1883,” \textit{Boston Evening Transcript}, 23 January 1884. The article was pasted into G. H. Wilson, \textit{The Boston Musical Year Book}, vol. 1, 1883–84 season (Boston: Geo. H. Ellis, 1884), MB-Mu.
\item \textsuperscript{70} Furthering the relevancy of this comparison, Chadwick’s Scherzo in F was also performed at the Neuendorff Popular Concerts at Music Hall in 1886. Wilson, \textit{Year Book}, 1885–86 season, p. 86, MB-Mu.
\item \textsuperscript{71} William Apthorp, \textit{Boston Evening Transcript}, 27 October 1884, MB-Mu.
\end{thebibliography}
nature, displaying the Bostonian predilection for Germanic *thematische Arbeit* in the vein of Beethoven and later Brahms. The *Traveller* critic, who was disappointed with the overall lack of seriousness in the October 25, 1884, concert wrote that “Mendelssohn’s Italian symphony . . . represents a maturity yet youthful learning which, while it witnesses strict forms of expression, has a confident originality.”

Critics did in fact note that Chadwick’s technique exhibited a scholarly style and demonstrated his German academic pedigree. The *Boston Morning Journal* wrote that the symphony “shows hard study and earnest work on the part of the composer,” and in the *Saturday Evening Gazette* Benjamin E. Woolf remarked upon the symphony’s “large and masterly style, its fluent scholarly treatment.” Woolf’s comment is even more enlightening when one considers that he received a “rather conservative training” in music and that he was an opponent of Wagner with little sympathy for modern trends in music.

Even Apthorp commented on Chadwick’s technique, stating that “Mr. Chadwick has already amply shown that he has genuine talent of no common order, and this symphony gives proof of it quite as well as any of his previous works.” Apthorp praised Chadwick’s “decided melodic invention” and called him “a good harmonist,” even conceding that “the work is brilliant, often very fascinating.” Four years earlier, while reviewing Chadwick’s more conservative Symphony no. 1, Apthorp noted how Chadwick treated his themes with “genuine symphonic respect.”

Placed within this discourse, the remarks about lack of symphonic dignity from the Boston

---

72 *Boston Traveller*, 27 October 1884, MB-Mu.
73 *Boston Morning Journal*, 13 December 1886.
74 [Benjamin Edward Woolf], *Saturday Evening Gazette*, 11 December 1886.
critics seem even more curious, since most apparently did not question Chadwick’s compositional abilities. Even Apthorp goes so far as to initially praise Chadwick’s “genuine talent . . . and this symphony gives proof of it quite as well as any of his previous works,” but then later opines that “it seems as if the composer had not yet sufficiently drilled his power to cope with so severe a task as a symphony.” There is, therefore, a seeming disconnect between recognition of Chadwick’s abilities as a symphonist and criticism of the symphony’s dignified character.

One possible reason for the disparity lies in some casual remarks regarding ethnicity made in reviews of the symphony and its constituent movements. After the 1884 premiere of Chadwick’s Scherzo in F, Apthorp wrote “the themes on which it is built up are both original and taking—the first theme, with its quasi-Irish humorousness (it positively winks at you), is peculiarly happy.” Of the same concert, Elson reported in *The Musical Visitor* that the work “is full of sprightliness, bright and quaint in its themes (one of them has an Irish flavor).” In the lighter fare of a popular scherzo, these “Irish” melodies indeed came off as “piquant charm” in Apthorp’s words. However, those same Irish qualities may have offended the dignity of the symphonic genre for these critics. While this exact sentiment was never stated outright, Apthorp was not the only writer to note the ethnic character of the scherzo. In their reviews of the complete symphony performance, Elson applauded the “excellent catching of the spirit of a Folk melody in the Scherzando,” and Hurd noted its “pleasing Scotch flavor.”

Chadwick never admitted to any intentional evocation of foreign melodies—Irish, Scottish, or otherwise—in the Second Symphony, although later writers have spilled much ink attempting to

---

do so. Given his upbringing in heavily Irish Lawrence, Gaelic influences may have crept into his music nonetheless, and Yellin and Faucett imply as much. Yet the fact that Boston’s critics heard Chadwick’s melodies as Irish is far more revealing than any actual indebtedness to Irish melodies. While such characterization meant that Chadwick’s music was linked to lower class immigrant cultures, Irish music carried with it a variety of other associations in late nineteenth-century Boston.

Irish Music in Boston

The Irish and their music were present in American culture since the seventeenth century and many of the earliest American sheet music collections contained Irish songs. However, the music became especially pervasive after the first volume of Thomas Moore’s *Irish Melodies* initially appeared in 1808. Charles Hamm writes that the volume “quickly entered the mainstream of music in America and stayed there throughout the nineteenth century,” comparing its popularity in America to the songs of Stephen Foster. Moore was an Irish poet who wrote English text for Gaelic melodies, most of which he encountered either in published anthologies by early Irish folklife chroniclers, or as part of the oral tradition in Ireland. Along with collaborator Sir John Stevenson, who wrote the keyboard accompaniments, Moore adapted the melodies and harmonies of the Irish airs to suit the popular song style of the early nineteenth century. This helped account for their tremendous success in England and America.

In Boston, publisher J. T. Buckingham brought out *The Boston Musical Miscellany* in 1811 which contained twelve songs compiled from the first few volumes of Moore’s *Melodies.* The music

---

79 To cite but one example: in 1908, W. L. Hubbard suggested that Chadwick had made excellent use of Negro and minstrel melodies in the Second Symphony. W. L. Hubbard, ed., *History of American Music* (Toledo, OH: Irving Square, 1908), 59.
was immensely popular with the native-born American population, who found in the Irish airs an exoticism that was still somewhat familiar because of shared British heritage. Antebellum orchestral concerts in Boston freely mixed symphonic fare with arrangements of lighter popular songs; for example, a concert by the Boston Philharmonic Society in 1847 featured a Thomas Moore song and an aria from Irish composer Michael Balfe's The Bohemian Girl inserted between movements of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, although most critics of Chadwick's era would not have been old enough to attend.\footnote{Weber, “Orchestral Programs in Boston,” 385.} Irish dance halls existed in Boston as early as the 1850s, with traditional dances played by a large ensemble.\footnote{Susan Gedutis, See You at the Hall: Boston’s Golden Era of Irish Music and Dance (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 5.}

Boston's symphony-goers also heard music played as incidental accompaniment to Irish theater or plays on Irish and immigrant themes, which were very well attended in the postwar decades. This music was also in the style of Moore's songs and resembled the sentimental ballads (themselves of Irish influence) that were popular in postwar America both through the minstrel show and through sheet music sales. Edward Harrigan was an Irish immigrant and former minstrel star who, along with his partner Anthony Hart, developed a series of immensely popular vaudeville plays depicting Irish and immigrant life in 1870s America featuring Irish songs.\footnote{Robert C. Toll, Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 177.} Other plays, such as the huge box office successes The Exiles of Erin and The Irishman's Shanty, were melodramas featuring Irish music whose caricatures of immigrants bordered on minstrelsy.\footnote{Dennis P. Ryan, Beyond the Ballot Box: A Social History of the Boston Irish, 1845–1917 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983), 118.}

Many of the musical elements common to Moore's songs indicate what nineteenth century
audiences would have considered “Irish” in the music. Most melodies used a gapped or pentatonic scale, and many featured a leap upward into a higher octave in the first phrase followed by a pause on the dominant.\textsuperscript{85} Fast triple meters suggested the jigs and reels that were typical dances. While Scottish music was not nearly as popular in America as Irish music, there were a number of Scottish tunes that had incredible success, such as “The Blue Bell of Scotland” published in 1800. It became the fourth most popular selling song of the first quarter of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{86} Like the Irish melodies, many Scottish melodies featured pentatonic melodies and octave leaps, as well as the signature rhythmic figure of the Scotch snap, a sixteenth note followed by a dotted eighth note. American audiences and critics seemed to often conflate these two musics into one non-English, exotic British folk sound.

By 1872, the Irish were an important enough segment of Boston’s population that Patrick Gilmore, the impresario of the Boston World’s Peace Jubilee and himself an Irish immigrant, programmed an “Irish Day” at the Jubilee alongside days devoted to other major European cultures, such as German, French, and English. Yet the program reflects the rather limited exposure of Boston’s refined Yankee population to Irish music, consisting of mostly standard Classical and Romantic fare in addition to three of Moore’s Irish songs performed by the Jubilee chorus. The Irish National Band of Dublin, the main attraction of Irish Day, began with the overture to French composer Daniel Auber’s \textit{Les diamants de la couronne}, perhaps in an attempt to fit in with the highbrow orchestral performances of the event.\textsuperscript{87} Bridging the gap between refined Yankee taste and

\textsuperscript{85} Hamm, \textit{Yesterdays}, 55–56.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 60.
Irish traditionalism, the band played selections from *The Lily of Killarney*, a popular opera by the German Jewish composer Julius Benedict that imitates Irish musical styles, and concluded with “a potpourri of Irish melodies,” consisting mostly of tunes made popular by Moore and other nineteenth-century songsters arranged by English and German composers.\footnote{“Gilmore’s Benefit,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 1 July 1872.}

While commonplace throughout Boston in the nineteenth century, Irish music was nonetheless filtered and, in a sense, sanitized by American, German, and English musicians in a manner deemed appropriate for public consumption. Most Yankee Bostonians were only familiar with Irish music through its manifestation in popular culture, such as Moore’s *Irish Melodies* or Irish theater music, and likely never heard the more traditional folk and dance music that was played for social gatherings within the Irish community. One exception was the appearance of Irish bands in parades and other civic ceremonies that catered to the general population.\footnote{Ryan, *Beyond the Ballot Box*, 113.}

Irish music was also subject to parody that emphasized its lower station in the hierarchy of Bostonian musical culture and caricatured the music for the Yankee public. In minstrel shows, which were as wildly popular in Boston as they were throughout the country, the drunken Irishman—invariably named Pat, Paddy, or Teague, speaking with a heavy brogue, wearing shabby clothing, and replete with catchy banjo tunes—was a stock character nearly as beloved as the Southern black man.\footnote{Ibid., 118.} Some companies even substituted a “stage Irishman” for the common “end men” of Tambo and Bones, who would interrupt the interlocutor with unruly behavior and dancing. Prior to the postwar development of ethnic types on the minstrel stage, performers used blackface to represent the Irish as well as blacks, allowing for a variety of Irish musical traits to seep into the minstrel show.
Even the music heard during the World Peace Jubilee’s Irish Day was not immune to stereotyping and caricature. A satirical publication titled *Jubilee Days* portrayed a man with a cane and a peasant hat dancing a raucous jig with the caption “Startling effect on one of our fellow-

---

citizens of the ‘Sprig of Shillalah,’ as played by the Irish band” (fig. 2.2). Sprig of Shillalah” was a well-known Irish ballad published on broadsides in Boston as early as the 1830s, and which appeared frequently in midcentury minstrel shows in depictions of the Irish immigrant. The man’s inappropriate dancing and scruffy appearance, along with reference to a popular minstrel tune, clearly reinforce the stage Irishman stereotype of the drunken peasant found in the minstrel show. Regardless, what Americans considered “Irish music” was still so widespread in the 1890s that Adrienne Fried Block called it “a dominant musical vein in this country.”

Apthorp and other critics characterized certain elements of Chadwick’s music as somehow recalling Irish music, yet they seldom identified specific passages they thought sounded Irish. Nor is it clear whether they were reminded of any specific Irish music they knew. However, the sound they heard to open Chadwick’s Symphony no. 2 was a longing pentatonic horn solo evocative of the Irish sentimental ballad (ex. 2.1). Apthorp did cite the main theme of the Scherzo movement, with its fast dance-like rhythm, ornamental trills, and gapped melody suggesting pentatonicism, as an example of “quasi-Irish humorousness” in his 1884 review of the Scherzo (ex. 2.2).

93 According to one reviewer of the Irish Day program, “Sprig of Shillalah” was not played during the “Fantasia on Irish Airs.” This means the cartoon used a generic Irish minstrel melody as a representation of all Irish melodies. “The World’s Peace Jubilee, the Day of the Emerald Isle,” Boston Evening Journal, 2 July 1872.
Example 2.1: George W. Chadwick, Symphony No. 2, mvt. I, mm. 1–5. The opening horn melody exclusively uses the notes of a D minor pentatonic scale (D–F–G–A–C) and recalls the Irish sentimental ballad.\(^{95}\)

Example 2.2: Chadwick, Symphony No. 2, mvt. II, mm. 4–8. Opening oboe melody of the Scherzo movement.

Chadwick later noted that he “took a good deal of pains to keep [his] material in a general way in the same style as the Scherzo,” which may account for the presence of music tinged with pentatonicism and dance-like rhythms throughout.\(^{96}\) For instance, the main theme of the fourth movement emphasizes the B♭ pentatonic scale and features a fast, lively triplet rhythmic figure that recalls a jig-like folk dance (ex. 2.3). Although the music of this movement is largely diatonic, the opening with its gapped melodies coupled with dance rhythms and recollections of the first movement were likely enough to suggest pentatonicism to critics.


\(^{96}\)Memoirs, 1880–93, CC-NEC.
Perhaps more important than actual fidelity to Irish music in Chadwick’s symphony is what Sarah Gerk refers to as “Irishness.” This can be “real or imagined,” but it is the “quality of being Irish” in the music, often used as a “strategic social construct serving various purposes.” Following this logic, in some cases critics may have simply called a certain passage “Irish” as an indicator of musical elements they felt did not belong in a symphony, based on their notions of seriousness and dignity in the symphonic genre. These likely included characteristics that permeate Chadwick’s style, including those enumerated by Yellin: “modal-pentatonic tunes, the lilt of Celtic song, the rhythms of prosodically derived syncopation and Afro-Caribbean dance, a tilt toward subdominant harmonies, and the sonorities of the organ and brass band.” Significantly, these were all typically absent from the traditional stylistic language of German symphonic music, or occurred only sporadically as novelties. “Irish” may have merely been a convenient code word that signified “Other” so that Boston critics could separate Chadwick’s symphonic efforts from those of Mozart, Beethoven, and Schumann, or an imitator of that style such as Paine.

---

98 Yellin, Yankee Composer, 72–73.
Example 2.3: Chadwick, Symphony no. 2, mvt. IV, mm. 1–4, strings only. Although A (scale degree 7) appears in the violin I melody, it is almost always a passing tone or falls on a weak beat, giving the theme an overall pentatonic sound despite not being strictly pentatonic. E₉ (scale degree 4) only appears as part of a subdominant harmonic support.

This notion is supported by the fact that many American commentators of the nineteenth century wrote about Irish airs “as novel, wild, irregular, even barbaric.”⁹⁹ Indeed, many professional musicians considered the Irish melodies that appeared in anthologies untranslatable into commonplace Western musical idioms. If critics heard a melody that did not adhere to the standards of German symphonic practice, and it bore certain characteristics such as pentatonism or lively dotted rhythms, they might have considered it “Irish.” The first theme of the exposition in the first movement of Chadwick’s Second Symphony, with its boisterous dotted rhythms, fast 3/4 time, and abrupt lack of periodicity, may have struck a critic like Apthorp in just such a manner (ex. 2.4).

⁹⁹ Hamm, *Yesterdays*, 50.
Example 2.4: Chadwick, Symphony no. 2, mvt. I, main theme of exposition (mm. 50–55), orchestral reduction. The loud, boisterous theme is cut off after three and a half measures, creating an abrupt change of affect and dynamics.

Furthermore, Yellin notes that many of the elements critics heard as Irish were in fact common to “typically American tunes from the same mold as William Billings or Stephen Foster.”

For instance, Yellin suggests that what Apthorp characterized as Irish in Chadwick’s String Quartet no. 4 is actually based on Chadwick’s own upbringing within the tradition of New England singing schools: “[Chadwick] wrote the way he sang . . . and the way all the other Fittses and Chadwicks had sung for generations.”

What Yellin does not mention is that Stephen Foster’s music, which he calls “typically

---

100 Yellin, Yankee Composer, 105.
101 Ibid., 108.
American,” was part of the minstrel tradition, itself modeled not only on African American and slave songs, but also heavily on Irish music and stage traditions, especially in its first incarnations. Many of the earliest composers and performers of minstrelsy—including Dan Emmett and George Christy among others—were themselves Irish Americans, and Gerk argues convincingly that the blackface stock character is based on the stereotyped stage Irishman that was popular in British traditions. Indeed, much of what is today considered popular music of the nineteenth century, from minstrelsy to Foster to sentimental songs to early Tin Pan Alley, can be traced back to Irish origins. As such, an additional layer of genre dissonance may have been present in the Boston critics’ writings, where “Irish” connoted “popular,” further contributing to the music’s inappropriateness as a symphony.

However, critics did not object to the invocation of Scottish or Irish melodies in symphonic music as a rule. Mendelssohn’s “Scottish” Symphony intentionally references folk styles common to both Ireland and Scotland, featuring a lively dance-like tune resembling Scottish music in the scherzo movement. Apthorp, who took issue with the similar character of Chadwick’s scherzo movement when it stood within the symphonic framework, wrote of the “the quaint bonhommie [sic]” of the rhythm in Mendelssohn’s scherzo movement. The Traveller critic affirmed that, just as was the case with the light character of themes in the “Italian” Symphony, Mendelssohn’s adherence to formal integrity and his artistic genius excused any possible genre transgressions: “Mendelssohn never departed from tradition; he followed models like many a humbler man, but always with so much individuality and glow of genius that he is almost alone in his epoch, contemporary with himself.” Although critics excused Mendelssohn for using ethnic or light melodies in a symphony,

---

103 Boston Evening Transcript, review of performance on 20 December 1884, MB-Mu.
104 Boston Traveller, review of performance on 20 December 1884, MB-Mu.
they did not do so with Chadwick. Part of the reason for this might be attributed to time and nationality; as a dead German whose compositions had been played in Boston for nearly fifty years, Mendelssohn’s canonic position was unassailable by the late nineteenth century.

Part of this double standard may result from the perception of what including Scottish or Irish music in a symphony meant to Chadwick as opposed to Mendelssohn. As a German composer whose travels to Scotland were well known through not only his symphony, but other works such as the popular *Hebrides* Overture, Mendelssohn’s Scottish endeavors could be subsumed under the rhetoric of nineteenth-century exoticism, a framing of Scottish melody, folklore, and landscape as a romanticized Other. His was an example of what Richard Taruskin refers to as “tourist nationalism,” maintaining Germanic musical hegemony while being valued for its representation of the Other.105

As a Bostonian, Chadwick was referencing a population and culture that was too much a part of his own identity. This is not to say that Chadwick himself was Irish; in fact, he traced his lineage on both sides of the family to Anglo-Saxons that emigrated in the seventeenth century. However, Chadwick was not a Boston Brahmin himself; he had to earn his place among Boston’s social elite by virtue of his abilities even though he was from the same Yankee stock as those titans of culture.106 Unlike Mendelssohn, Chadwick lacked both the cultural distance required to exoticize Irish folk identity as well as the hegemonic position that might have rendered his exploration of immigrant music free from censure. To reference the Irish in Boston was to invoke a people that were

---

106 Steven Ledbetter, “Higginson and Chadwick: Non-Brahmins in Boston,” *American Music* 19, no. 1 (2001): 51–63. Cleveland Amory observes that the Brahmins “cheerfully exclude another several hundred thousand or so of persons whose backgrounds are as undeniably Anglo-Saxon as its First Families’ own and yet, because of imperfectly established connections with a First Family, can never hope to become Proper Bostonians.” Amory, *The Proper Bostonians*, 13.
becoming increasingly assimilated into the urban fabric and were not part of a foreign Other; in other words, his music implanted Irish immigrants into the identity of Boston. Chadwick demonstrated his willingness to include the Irish in Bostonian high culture by seriously considering a collaboration on an Irish fairy tale opera with the influential immigrant poet and newspaper editor John Boyle O’Reilly in 1887.\textsuperscript{107} The Boston critics may have felt that Chadwick’s efforts exploring these cultural waters were part of his own expression of Bostonian identity. Lacking the exotic patina of Mendelssohn’s Scotch, Chadwick’s Irish held a more immediate and recognizable class-based association in Boston, a class whose low status meant that inclusion under the symphonic umbrella was “undignified.”

**Immigration in Boston**

More than mere xenophobia or ethnocentrism, the reaction of these Yankee arbiters of taste was reflective of immigration conditions in Boston over the course of the nineteenth century. As Oscar Handlin has chronicled in his thorough examination of Boston’s immigrant history, there was no significant poor immigrant population in Boston prior to the great influx of Irish that began in the mid-1840s.\textsuperscript{108} This situation was a result of a great confluence of economic, geographic, and social circumstances.

Boston did not have any significant industrial economy, since the industrial bosses of Boston preferred their factories and mills on the fast-moving Merrimack or Upper Charles Rivers, located


outside the city’s borders. Thus the towns of Lowell and Lawrence, where Chadwick was born and raised respectively, saw some of the greatest effects from the industrial revolution in eastern Massachusetts. Boston’s main economic activity was in finance and banking, led by merchant barons who benefited from maritime trade, and capital investors whose money funded the emerging factories of nearby industrial towns such as Lowell, Fall River, and Waltham. The city also had a large workforce of artisans and craftsmen, including a respectable shipbuilding industry which depended upon skilled workers rather than cheap labor.

In short, there was little to attract poor, unskilled laborer immigrants to Boston. The city was a common port of entry for immigrants but most simply passed through on their way to points westward. Prior to 1840, most European immigrants who did settle in Boston were relatively well-off, and “the reasons for their coming derived from personal contingencies rather than from great social causes for mass emigration.” Many were political refugees, fleeing the social upheavals that rocked the continent in the early part of the nineteenth century.

Irish immigrants had been in Boston since the seventeenth century, but many of these were Presbyterian Scotch Irish from Northern Ireland, “displaced artisans and fairly well-to-do farmers” who assimilated more easily into Boston’s Protestant society than Catholics. When larger numbers of Irish Catholics began to arrive in the 1820s and 30s, most Bostonians regarded them with suspicion because of their religion, and not because of poverty or any perceived blight on the character of the city. Handlin notes two prerequisites that were needed for a large immigrant group

109 Ibid., 11.
110 Ibid., 9.
111 Ibid., 26.
112 Ibid., 51.
to settle in Boston: the conditions in Europe would have to be so grim that the poor would prefer an uncertain future in America, and the immigrants would have to possess so little capital after the transatlantic voyage that they could not afford nor desire to go elsewhere. In the mid-1840s, these circumstances came to fruition, precipitating the arrival of 160,000 Irish in the two decades leading up to the Civil War.

It is difficult to imagine just how quickly and fundamentally Boston’s population changed during the 1840s. Previously characterized by cultural homogeneity and insularity, Boston’s Yankees were “thunderstruck” to be faced suddenly with the acute poverty of a large Irish population.\textsuperscript{114} Prior to mass immigration, Boston had hardly any beggars in the streets, and a variety of municipal or religious charitable organizations cared for the small destitute population.\textsuperscript{115} But the Famine Irish were unskilled, infirm, weak, and destitute. The city’s total expenditures for poor relief remained relatively stable at approximately $40,000 annually from 1827 until 1846. That amount increased dramatically over the following five years, with the city spending nearly three times as much in 1851 ($119,534) as it did in 1846 ($43,700).\textsuperscript{116}

Immigration continued to flood the city with new faces and customs in the years following the Civil War as Massachusetts transformed into a viable industrialized economy. Boston historian Thomas O’Connor describes how the continual postwar inundation of Irish into Boston heightened the already present xenophobia of the native Yankee population, creating “fear and anxiety” among those Bostonians whose “staunch Puritan background made them ill-equipped to deal with

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 150, 152.
\textsuperscript{115} Handlin, \textit{Boston’s Immigrants}, 19.
\textsuperscript{116} These figures are derived from the Auditor’s Reports, 1815–1867, Boston Committee of Finance, reprinted as Table III in Ibid., 240.
outsiders.”

Unaccustomed to tremendous numbers of extremely poor ethnic immigrants, Bostonians took some reactionary measures to fight the perceived threat to their way of life. In the 1854 elections, Boston voted in a Know Nothing mayor while Massachusetts filled most of the legislature and the governor's seat with Know Nothing candidates, the short-lived political party based on anti-Catholic nativism. By the 1880s, although Irish immigrants had been steadily arriving for nearly thirty years and had achieved a number of political gains, many in Boston still felt the presence of this population to be entirely alien to the identity of their city. Alexander Keyssar notes that the gulf between the middle and working classes, which correlated to tensions between Yankees and immigrants respectively, widened during the Gilded Age and was perhaps greater at the end of the nineteenth century than any time before. In fact, a resurgence of anti-Catholicism began around 1887 (the year after Chadwick's Second Symphony debuted), resulting in Irish political losses and increased anti-Catholic propaganda.

Journalistic discourses on immigrants and labor may also account for the frequent recurrence of the word “dignity” in the reviews of Chadwick's Second Symphony. “Dignity” often appeared in

---

118 The anti-immigrant Know Nothing Party was popular throughout the North but was particularly powerful in Massachusetts. Some radical members of the party believed that Irish immigrants were part of a Papist conspiracy to infiltrate and take over Protestant America, as Catholics would be more loyal to the church than to the United States. Know Nothings lost most of their political power by the end of the 1850s. See Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
119 Alexander Keyssar, “Social Change in Massachusetts in the Gilded Age,” in *Massachusetts in the Gilded Age: Selected Essays*, ed. Jack Tager and John W. Ifkovic (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985), 137. Keyssar notes that “class boundaries in Massachusetts were becoming increasingly congruent with ethnic boundaries” (138).
newspapers of this era linked to immigrant rights and working conditions. In a criticism of day laborers, an 1889 opinion piece in the *Boston Globe* caricatured lazy workers, many of whom were likely immigrants, as those who “believe the dignity of labor consists in not working too hard.” In 1887, Massachusetts became the first state to make Labor Day a holiday, and a column about the holiday from 1891 noted how the “honest dignity of toil” was threatened by corporate agglomerations and mechanization. This meaning of dignity with regards to labor resonates with the ideas about workmanship and scholasticism in composition.

Therefore, if dignity was equated with compositional labor then perhaps critics took Chadwick’s use of Irish effects as proof he was not working hard enough at the noble labor of symphonic writing, relying instead on coloristic novelties. G. H. Wilson suggests this in his *Traveller* review when he writes “there is a tendency . . . to seek original effects in a sort of nonchalant manner.” The reviewer from the *Boston Home Journal* felt that some of Chadwick’s learned compositional techniques, such as counterpoint, were “caricatured to do duty for such elements of dignity, grandeur and property of style as should be demanded for any genuine symphonic creation.”

Seen in this light, the critical response to Chadwick’s Second Symphony is consistent with the socio-political atmosphere of 1886 Boston. The eminent music critics, who all identified with Boston’s cultural elite (Yankee) and/or musical elite (Germanic) might well have felt uneasy with the growing assimilation of the Irish into Bostonian culture.

---

123 *Boston Traveller*, 12 December 1886, MB-Mu.
Chadwick’s Boston, 1886

Yankee Boston’s insularity and wary attitude toward immigrants was apparent in its reaction to the original arrival of the Irish and, as I have argued, in the critical prejudices that developed against Irish music in the upper strata of musical culture. The geographies that govern the production and consumption of cultural capital can also reflect social structures, producing a dialogic relationship where place is intertwined with social conditions.¹²⁵ In other words, geographic relationships delineate cultural borders, while cultural sequestration reinforces geographic segregation. In 1886 Boston, no genre of music carried more elite cultural capital than the symphony, and this music was heard almost exclusively within certain neighborhoods (the Theater District around the Boston Common and Tremont Street) and patronized by many who lived in specific neighborhoods (the Back Bay and Beacon Hill). Homologies for the Yankee–immigrant relationship may be found in both residential geographies and also the geographic concentration of cultivated musical production in late nineteenth-century Boston. These two places, where Boston Brahmins lived and where they heard the orchestra, tell us much about the entrenched attitudes around the time Chadwick’s Symphony no. 2 premiered. But as residential and artistic geographies later shifted around the turn of the century, previously held prejudices against immigrant music eroded. Understanding how Boston’s geography changed during the years after 1886 requires a brief survey of its development up to that point.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Boston’s continued growth as a major commercial center meant that some residential areas were converted to commercial and industrial purposes, while others became overcrowded. With the burgeoning middle class turning to neighboring suburbs, such as Roxbury and Dorchester (both of which Boston annexed in the late 1860s), Boston’s civic leaders recognized the need for new residential neighborhoods. The problem was that there was no land on which to build.

At the same time, city officials recognized both the visually unappealing and unsanitary conditions that had developed in the Back Bay, which was polluted by two major railroad crossings, sewage runout, and served as a dumping ground.\textsuperscript{126} The damming of the Bay in 1821, done in the interest of powering mills, created stagnant mud flats and basins that offended both the eyes and the nose (fig. 2.3). Meanwhile, city architects had become obsessed with Second Empire Paris, with its wide boulevards and logical, gridded city planning.\textsuperscript{127} The new French paradigm of city design was likely attractive to Bostonians because it was a novel way to organize and modernize the city that simultaneously reinforced social structures of wealth, class, and privilege. The Back Bay neighborhood would be an attractive place to live that would not feel overcrowded and that would be beautified by parks, fountains, and statues, and thus free of the unsightly elements that characterized densely packed neighborhoods. The result was a mammoth civil engineering project that filled in the Back Bay.\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{126} Whitehill and Kennedy, \textit{Topographical History}, 150.
Figure 2.3: Boston’s Back Bay in 1836, compiled by Fuller & Whitney. The Boston & Worcester and Boston & Providence railroads are visible cutting diagonally through the basin, while the Mill Dam (later Beacon Street) runs horizontally across the top connecting Beacon Hill and Boston proper on the right to Brookline on the left and cutting off the Bay from the Charles River. Along the bottom is the Neck, formerly the only land bridge between Boston and the mainland, widened to accommodate four avenues with many cross streets. The Neck would eventually become the heart of the South End. In Whitehill and Kennedy, *Topographical History*, 99.

Filling commenced in 1858 and settlement followed a few years later, with new buildings rising as soon as the land was created. Many fashionable Bostonians flocked to the Back Bay’s stylish new residences and public spaces complete with fountains and sculptures. By 1882 the Back Bay basin had been completely filled in (see fig. 2.4), and a few years later one author noted that while
some prominent Boston families still lived in the old Brahmin enclave of Beacon Hill, “for several years there has been a marked exodus toward the Back Bay.”

Figure 2.4: Boston’s Back Bay in 1888, as surveyed by William H. Whitney. The entire mill basin is now filled in and developed, while the area to the left with its winding parkland was being turned into the “Emerald Necklace” park system by Frederick Law Olmstead. The Back Bay’s axial street grid in the upper-right quadrant of the map is clearly distinct from the rest of the city. Beacon Street (formerly the mill dam) runs across the top of the Back Bay, while the tree-lined boulevard of Commonwealth Avenue bisects the neighborhood horizontally and Boylston Street borders the bottom. The large blank space just below Boylston is a rail yard. The nine vertical streets of the Back Bay are also clearly visible; the leftmost in the center of the map is West Chester Park, seen jutting upward into the Charles River to indicate the soon-to-be-completed bridge to Cambridge, at which point the street’s name would be changed to Massachusetts Avenue. From Whitehill and Kennedy, *Topographical History*, 181.

---

Even before the filling of the Back Bay, Boston had begun crafting a more cosmopolitan identity, establishing a number of artistic, theatrical, and musical institutions outside of the venerated halls of Harvard, which had previously held a monopoly on Boston-area high culture. Between 1846 and 1854, the Boston Museum (which was actually a theater but took the name “museum” to appease Puritan sensibilities), Boston Athenaeum, Boston Music Hall, and Boston Theatre all opened, providing space for theater, sculpture and art galleries, symphonic music, and grand opera productions. These institutions and venues were generally located near Tremont Street, a major road that abutted Boston Common, the oldest public space in the city, and not far from Beacon Hill. When the BSO was founded in 1881, Boston Music Hall became its permanent home, with its main entrance just off the Common at Park and Tremont Streets. Thus, the artistic and musical production of Boston was mainly located in some of the oldest downtown neighborhoods surrounding the Common, while the consumers of said cultural products lived in nearby Beacon Hill or the new Back Bay, just west of the Common. An 1888 guide book noted the connections between wealthy aesthetics and the Back Bay, calling the neighborhood the “most beautiful part of the city. Here are its finest boulevards, its stateliest buildings, its most magnificent architecture.”

Although he did not yet have the money to afford the Back Bay, Chadwick lived just across from the entrance to the Boston Music Hall when he took his Park Street Church organist job in 1882, which included a small apartment on the premises. Tremont Street was the musical center of Boston; one contemporary guide book noted that Tremont was “set to music,” as its ground floor showrooms housed most of the city’s piano manufacturers and stores (including Chickering & Sons and Mason & Hamlin), while “many of the artists who have made Boston famous as a musical

---

centre” kept studios in the rooms above, resulting in what Chadwick called “a bedlam of thumps and shrieks all day.”

After marrying Ida May Brooks in 1885 and subsequently honeymooning through Germany, the Chadwicks lived in a few rented flats on Boylston Street, further from the hubbub of Tremont Street and just outside the Back Bay proper. Looking for a place of their own, the couple purchased a house in Brookline in 1888 in an area of hills and fields that felt almost like the countryside. Yet Chadwick confirmed his preference for the Back Bay when the family moved back to an apartment on Boylston Street in 1892, this time comfortably within the bounds of the neighborhood proper between Gloucester and Hereford Streets. Following his ascent to director of the New England Conservatory, he purchased the Back Bay house at 360 Marlborough Street in 1902, an address that confirmed his status and position in Bostonian society, and that he would call home for the remainder of his life.  

While the Back Bay became the most sought after neighborhood for Boston's elite, a mirroring decline occurred for the South End, a neighborhood that was originally intended to become as desirable as the Back Bay ultimately did. Boston was initially founded on a peninsula jutting into the harbor and connected to the mainland by a narrow isthmus known as the Neck.

---

131 Ibid., 40; Faucett, *Pride of New England*, 75.  
132 Although not as coveted as a Commonwealth Avenue or Beacon Street address, Marlborough Street did maintain some levels of Back Bay social exclusivity. Charles Bahne notes that residents of certain streets in Boston barred the construction of overhead electric trolley wires, which helped them maintain their residential condition and excluded the social groups that would patronize busy commercial streets. Marlborough was one such street. Charles Bahne, “The Social Significance of Boston's Subway,” in *Tremont Street Subway: A Century of Public Service*, ed. Bradley H. Clarke and O.R. Cummings, 30–31 (Boston: Boston Street Railway Association, Inc, 1997).  
133 The term South End has been applied to various areas around Boston from the start of white settlement in the seventeenth century. For the most part in this chapter, I follow historian Walter Muir Whitehill’s example by referring to the new lands south of Dover Street (modern day East Berkeley Street) as the South End. Whitehill and Kennedy, *Topographical History*, 121.
1855, the Neck had been widened considerably to create the neighborhood then called the South End, and city planners hoped it would become an ideal neighborhood in which wealthy or upwardly mobile families might settle (fig. 2.5).

Yet by the 1860s the South End began to lose its vogue to the Back Bay. The two neighborhoods developed independently, owing in part to political squabbling that left the Back Bay in the hands of the state, while the city controlled South End development. Further exacerbating this gulf, the land between the Back Bay and the South End was the last to be filled in, and even then the two major railroad lines and their attendant rail yards still separated the neighborhoods.

With wealthy Bostonians abandoning the South End, working-class families and immigrants moved in to settle. William Dean Howells’s 1884 novel *The Rise of Silas Lapham* tells of the ambitious protagonist who, starting out in business in 1863, purchased a South End house “very cheap of a terrified gentleman of good extraction who had discovered too late that the South End was not the thing, and who in the eagerness of his flight to the Back Bay threw in his carpets and shades for almost nothing.” Twelve years later, and after accumulating significant riches in the paint business, Howells has Lapham building a mansion in the Back Bay on Beacon Street more befitting his socioeconomic status.

---

134 Ibid., 127.
Figure 2.5: Boston in 1855. Colton, J. H., “Map of Boston and adjacent cities,” (New York: J. H. Colton & Co., 1855), Norman B. Leventhal Map Center, https://collections.leventhalmap.org/search/commonwealth:3f463276h. The South End connects the Boston peninsula to Roxbury in the lower left quadrant. The future Back Bay is the grey area just above and to the left of the South End, with only the two major rail lines cut through it as an “X” visible at this time. Map reproduction courtesy of the Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library.
In *The Late George Apley*, John P. Marquand’s fictional memoir of late nineteenth-century Boston, Apley remembered how his father “had been drawn, like so many others, to build one of those bow-front houses around one of the shady squares in the South End” and that “nearly everyone was under the impression that this district would be one of the most solid residential sections of Boston.” Yet the sight of “a man in his shirt sleeves” on the steps of a nearby brownstone, indicating someone who did not subscribe to the same social rules (and perhaps not the same ethnicity), “had told [his father] that the days of the South End were numbered.”

Historian Albert B. Wolfe believed the neighborhood’s decline was exacerbated by the economic panic of 1873, leading to foreclosures on South End homes which were often turned into cheap rental properties. In Wolfe’s opinion, it was the rental properties that begat social degeneracy. Two diet kitchens, which gave out food to the needy via dispensary physicians, existed in Boston in 1888: one in the North End, which was widely recognized as the neighborhood with the most slums in the city, and one in the South End. The South End also housed a number of institutions for impoverished residents, including the Home for Destitute Catholic Children and the Boston Industrial Temporary Home.

Poverty in the South End became especially synonymous with immigrants. A devastating 1872 fire destroyed the Fort Hill area, which had previously been the most densely packed slum neighborhood for poor Irish immigrants. Displaced from Fort Hill, many poor Irish subsequently flooded into the South End, enabling greedy landlords to erect decrepit shacks and shanties on

---

almost all available land and in every alley (according to the 1880 census, Massachusetts had the third highest ratio of people per dwelling in the country at 6.34).\textsuperscript{139} Boston's Cathedral of the Holy Cross was relocated to an immense new building in the heart of the South End at the corner of Washington and Waltham Streets, indicating the strong Irish presence in that neighborhood. Recalling her youth in the late 1890s, author and Polish Jewish immigrant Mary Antin wrote of the South End slums close to the main thoroughfares of Washington and Dover Streets: “Every one of those streets is a rubbish heap of damaged humanity.”\textsuperscript{140}

Antin’s engaging immigrant narrative also touches on the role that music played in demarcating class and neighborhood differences. She self-consciously marked herself as immigrant and lower class through her lack of knowledge of certain kinds of music, ones that her rich Back Bay classmates at the Girls’ Latin School knew.\textsuperscript{141} Emphasizing the cultural chasm between the Back Bay and South End, Antin commented that “I should have been the first to perceive the incongruity of Commonwealth Ave. entwining arms with Dover St.”\textsuperscript{142}

The Shift to Huntington and the Dvořák Turn

Already by the time of Chadwick’s Second Symphony, Henry Lee Higginson, the founder of the BSO, was interested in building a new permanent home designed especially for the group. His gaze settled on a stretch of Huntington Avenue, a street that ran parallel to one of the two main train lines that cut through the Back Bay south of Boylston Street. Historian Walter Muir Whitehill called

\textsuperscript{139} Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census (1880), 669. Accessible online at https://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html.

\textsuperscript{140} Mary Antin, The Promised Land, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969 [1912]), 287.

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 295.

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.
the location “a dreary kind of no man’s land that was unconducive to handsome treatment” because of the way the railroad lines cut the area off from both the Back Bay and the South End (see fig. 2.6). Including West Chester Park (later Massachusetts Avenue), only three of the nine north-south streets that crossed the Back Bay eventually extended across the rail tracks to the South End. However, in the late 1880s influential Brahmins looked toward Huntington Avenue as a tabula rasa on which to build new temples to the muses.

Figure 2.6: Boston in 1880, showing land occupied by buildings. Dark areas indicate higher density of buildings. The large arrow points to the future location of Symphony Hall at the intersection of Huntington Avenue (horizontal street) and Massachusetts Avenue (vertical street with angle just above arrow point). There are no buildings in this region. The large white area to the right of the intersection is the land between the Back Bay (above-right) and the South End (below); the dotted lines are the railroads. From Report on the Social Statistics of Cities, compiled by George E. Waring Jr. (Washington, DC: Bureau of the Census, 1886).

143 Whitehill and Kennedy, Topographical History, 158.
Although this area was the last Back Bay region to be filled in, it contained an important route from its inception. Roughly parallel to the already crowded South End thoroughfares of Washington, Columbus, Tremont, and Harrison, Huntington Avenue provided a direct link from Copley Square to Roxbury, and was in fact the only one of these main streets to lead directly into the Back Bay. The Metropolitan Railroad Company, Boston’s largest public transportation company, obtained a permit to create a double-tracked, horse-powered streetcar line from Copley Square down Huntington Avenue in 1881, terminating at West Chester Park at the exact future location of Symphony Hall.¹⁴⁴ Mechanics Hall (fig. 2.7), also erected in 1881, provided enough traffic to validate this streetcar construction, but Metropolitan likely realized the potential for future growth on the empty lands along Huntington, as well as the prospect of linking up with their pre-existing suburban connection to Brookline farther down the avenue. When the new location for Symphony Hall was announced to the public in the fall of 1893, the tracks down Huntington had already been connected to the Brookline route and converted to accommodate electric trolleys.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.
Because the area around Huntington was south of Boylston Street, the unofficial border of the elite Back Bay neighborhood, the land was not particularly expensive, and Higginson made an official inquiry to the landowner of an empty lot at the corner of West Chester Park and Huntington Avenue in 1887. The Hall’s historian, Richard Poate Stebbins, noted that at the time it was a “still sparsely populated neighborhood,” and letters from the previous landowner to Higginson speculated that the lot would soon be “on a main thoroughfare” once the West Chester Park bridge to
Cambridge was completed (which occurred in 1891). Higginson officially purchased the land in 1892, and contracted the New York architectural firm of McKim, Mead, and White, who had recently designed the magnificent new Boston Public Library at Copley Square, to design the hall. Groundbreaking occurred in June of 1899, and Symphony Hall was completed by the end of the summer of 1900, in time for opening night on October 15th of that year (fig. 2.8).

![Symphony Hall](image)

Figure 2.8: Symphony Hall at the intersection of Huntington and Massachusetts Avenues, post card by Raphael Tuck & Sons (no. 5831), first printed in 1907. The pillared entrance is on Huntington Avenue. Collection of the author.

During the course of construction, a number of articles questioned the suitability of such an area for a new Music Hall. Critic Philip Hale joked in 1894 that “the neighborhood is a sensitive one. There is no bar near the proposed site. There are dwellers in flats, there are little shops, there is

---

unoccupied land.”147 Of particular note are his comments about dwellers in flats, who were likely lower class or immigrant (or both), recalling Wolfe’s assertion that lodging houses were the root of the South End’s evils.148 The same week the secretary of the Boston Society of Architects, H. Langdon Warren, wrote “it will be a pity also if a building of such importance is placed in so inappropriate and remote a site as the one on Huntington avenue.”149 Here it is not only the distance from the main part of the city that is problematic for Warren, but also the inappropriateness of the neighborhood, a comment that suggests a possible nefarious undertone. The American Art Journal similarly lamented “so long as City Hall, Statehouse, Courthouse, Public Library, Common, theatres, public garden, newspaper offices, business hotels, piano houses are in the old centre of the city, so long ought our great concert hall to be in that centre.”150

Even on opening night in 1900, the unfamiliarity with the area encouraged some detractors. The Herald observed that “it didn’t seem natural to see the string of electric cars going in an opposite direction at the theatre hour,” proof of how rare it was for a rush of people to be traveling to this area, or for there to be anything worth traveling to, even in late 1900.151 Writing for the Philadelphia Press, Mary Moss observed that “the Symphony Hall is rather far out of town,” and continued, “the neighborhood is not very ripe-looking at present.”152 An editorial in the Boston Globe the following weekend called the area “the Back Bay wastes.”153

147 Philip Hale, Boston Journal, 14 January 1894, BSO Archives.
148 Frederick A. Bushée further noted how many of the formerly private houses of the South End became lodging houses, and that most of these were no better than tenements, with extreme overcrowding. Frederick A. Bushée, “Population,” in The City Wilderness, ed. Robert A. Woods (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, & Company, 1898), 35.
149 Boston Evening Transcript, 15 January 1894, BSO Archives.
150 American Art Journal, 20 January 1894, BSO Archives.
151 Boston Herald, 17 October 1900, BSO Archives.
152 Mary Moss, The Philadelphia Press, 20 October 1900, BSO Archives.
153 Boston Globe, 20 October 1900, BSO Archives.
Although all these comments specifically note the distance from downtown Boston, or the more nebulous concept of appropriateness, what goes unsaid is that this area was not considered part of the same social sphere as the Back Bay north of Boylston. With its simpler buildings, lands devoted to railroad industry, and higher concentration of lodging houses and cheap rents, the Symphony Hall area bore a closer physical appearance and social character to the South End. One commentator notes that most elite Bostonians had little reason to venture into the area where Symphony Hall now stands, which was populated with many immigrants. The same writer describes the colorful scene: “Trolleymen, speaking in a mellow Irish accent, were especially instructed to proclaim ‘Symphony Hall!’ when nearing the end of their journey.” Keyssar recognizes this geographic segregation that emerged in the 1890s, writing that Boston’s neighborhoods came to constitute “more sharply differentiated social spaces” than the old homogeneous city. The Back Bay’s geographic independence from the rest of the city preserved a “social homogeneity” for its largely wealthy, Yankee demographic.

During this geographical shift, in which the elite Yankee social world re-centered its consumption of symphonic music from the old downtown to a culturally uncharted location, Bostonian musical attitudes toward ethnic melodies began to expand as well. Following an 1891 performance of Chadwick’s Second Symphony by the BSO, Philip Hale wrote of the “smell of American soil” in the scherzo movement, but then lamented that there was no national style of American music. He went on to suggest that the songs written for Edward Harrigan’s vaudeville Irish plays were “the most serious contribution as yet to American music.”

---

155 Keyssar, “Social Change in Massachusetts,” 141.
156 Whitehill and Kennedy, *Topographical History*, 159.
regarding the equating of Irishness with Americanness were beginning to erode. Compared to Apthorp, Hale was of a younger generation and therefore less burdened by the legacy of Dwight. Hale’s willingness to accept popular Irish songs as reflective of American identity preceded a landmark moment in the discourse on ethnic melodies and American nationalism. This was the debate surrounding Antonín Dvořák’s statement, made to the *New York Herald* in the Spring of 1893, that “the future music of this country must be founded upon what are called negro melodies.”

Adrienne Fried Block has chronicled the response of Boston composers to Dvořák a week later in the *Boston Herald*, which could be described as cold at best and hostile at worst, both toward Dvořák and the ethnic groups whose music he advocated.

Boston’s reaction to the “New World” Symphony was nearly opposite to New York’s, and Joseph Horowitz has argued that this was partly a Bostonian critique of New York immigrant culture. New York embraced Dvořák’s symphony because of the city’s integration of immigrant cultures into the fabric of everyday life, while Boston viewed the work with uncertainty because it clung to a cloistered Yankee identity. Boston had only recently begun to come to terms with the idea that it was an immigrant town, reflected in its immediate and visceral reaction to the arrival of the Irish merely forty years earlier. Its tastemakers did not believe that the music of anyone other than New England Yankees should represent its identity.

However, despite the initial reaction to Dvořák’s statements, Boston’s critics, composers, and especially audiences could not deny the strength and appeal of the “New World” Symphony. Critic Philip Hale reviewed the Boston premiere of the work in December 1893 and declared that it would “undoubtedly be popular, and deservedly popular,” an attitude that Horowitz described as a

---

158 Block, “Dvořák, Beach, and American Music,” 257.  
“grudging enthusiasm for the work.” Chadwick’s personal thoughts, clouded with twenty-five years of hindsight, reveal him to be generous and sympathetic to the work. While he did not have much to add regarding the use of American themes (which he admitted “resembled negro spirituals and Indian dance tunes”), he praised the symphony, saying that it was “all so melodious and rithmic [sic.], full of ’good sound,’ that it speedily became, as it remains, the most popular of Dvořák’s works for orchestra.”

Dvořák’s declaration of Americanism, and more importantly his realization of that vision in the “New World” Symphony, had at least one immediate effect in Boston’s musical culture. Although many composers were dismissive of the Czech composer’s statements, Amy Beach directly addressed Dvořák both in her written and musical responses. In her *Boston Herald* comments, Beach noted that African American melodies are not fully typical of our country. The African population of the United States is far too small for its songs to be considered “American.” It represents only one factor in the composition of our nation . . . We of the North should be far more likely to be influenced by the old English, Scotch, or Irish songs, inherited with our literature from our ancestors.

Here she articulated the idea that musical Americanism should not be a monolithic representation of the country, and rather that regional differences in ethnic character should be taken into consideration. New England, she believed, was best represented by melodies of the British isles, and not by African American melodies. Boston demographics at the time support Beach: there were only

---

160 Ibid., 7. The Hale quote is taken from an undated clipping of the *Boston Journal*, BSO Archives.
161 Memoirs 1880–93, CC-NEC.
162 Beach’s compositions were published under the name “Mrs. H.H.A. Beach.” However, I follow the example of many modern scholars and call her Amy Beach or simply Beach when referring to her compositions. See, for example, Adrienne Fried Block, *Amy Beach, Passionate Victorian: The Life and Work of an American Composer, 1867–1944* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
8,125 blacks living in Boston in 1890 (less than two percent of the total population of 448,477) compared to 160,733 with mothers born in Ireland (nearly thirty-six percent of the total city population).  

Beach’s position, which allowed certain kinds of ethnic melodies to enter into an American national style, was a significant departure from some of her Boston colleagues. Regardless, there was nothing but acceptance and accolades for her musical reply to Dvořák. Block notes that “Dvořák’s statement clearly marked a turning point” in Beach’s use of vernacular sources and that she began to incorporate Scottish and Irish melodies into her work, first as coloristic effects but later as the basis for symphonic themes. The culmination of the latter approach was her Symphony (Gaelic) in E minor, op. 32, notably in the same key as Dvořák’s “New World” Symphony.

Unlike Chadwick, whose original melodies up to this time bore a stylistic resemblance to Scottish or Irish music yet use no direct folk borrowings, Beach utilized four Irish folk melodies in the Gaelic Symphony. She did not disclose these at the premiere, instead stating that some of her themes had a “Gaelic folk-song character” in her program notes. Most of the critics did not cite the specifically Irish qualities of Beach’s melodies, nor did any of them comment on her use of Irish melody as indicative of American musical identity. Block believes that much of this might have been because the entirely male critics were focused on Beach’s gender, but even so, all Boston reviewers “failed to place the work within the ongoing controversy about a national style in music.”

Still, some critics continued to echo their prior opinions that sturdy construction and

165 Block, “Dvořák, Beach, and American Music,” 262.
166 Ibid., 263.
167 Ibid., 275.
treatment of themes could elevate the dignity of folk and other vernacular musical elements. Philip Hale wrote that Beach's themes were “in themselves of inconsiderable value,” but that her “treatment of themes . . . stimulated the imagination of the hearer.”¹⁶⁸ From the surrounding context, it is clear that he is praising her compositional craft and work ethic in this comment. Yet this reaction contrasts sharply with the critical response to Chadwick’s symphony ten years prior. Chadwick’s scholarly mastery of form and thematic development in Symphony no. 2 could not, in 1886, adequately elevate the vulgarities of Irish melody and rhythm.

Certainly there are complex factors that precipitated the change of attitude toward melodies associated with immigrant groups in the ten years that separate Beach’s and Chadwick’s symphonies, including the former’s gender. But Dvořák’s public endorsement and successful example of using folk materials to create an American national idiom legitimized the practice. As a European composer schooled in the Germanic symphonic style, Dvořák had the pedigree to sway the Boston critics. This moment was important not only for Beach, but for Chadwick’s subsequent works.

Chadwick composed his fourth string quartet in 1896—either by coincidence or intention in the same E minor key as the “New World” Symphony—and it was regarded as having an American quality on account of the many similarities to Dvořák’s symphony as well as Dvořák’s String Quartet no. 12 in F major (“American”). In his review of Chadwick’s Quartet no. 4, Apthorp noted that the piece has Chadwick’s “genially humorous” sound, recalling his comment a decade earlier that the Second Symphony scherzo theme has a “quasi-Irish humorousness.” However, Apthorp explicitly contrasts the quartet to earlier “humorous” works with Irish flavor:

Chadwick’s] sense of humor is refined, idealized, and held within due artistic bounds. The characteristic brogue still remains . . . but the Irish turn of this or that phrase has nothing of vulgarity in it, neither does it impress one as indicating a with-malice-prepense dive into the Volkslied; it all sounds wholly instinctive and natural.  

Apthorp’s comments reveal much about his aesthetic stance toward Chadwick and Irish music. First, he believes that the Irish accent or “brogue” is characteristic of Chadwick’s music. Echoing the earlier comments about dignity and workmanship, Apthorp notes that a sense of humor must be “refined, idealized, and held within due artistic bounds.” His observation that Chadwick’s Irish-tinged melodies have “nothing of vulgarity” in them assumes that such melodies would normally have a propensity to sound vulgar. Only through Chadwick’s assimilation into the elite musical idiom of the String Quartet are these melodies “instinctive and natural.” Apthorp also perhaps implies prior Irish “vulgarity” in Chadwick’s music, resonating with the interpretation of the Second Symphony’s reception presented above.

Especially telling is Apthorp’s comment about a “with-malice-prepense dive into the Volkslied.” In his estimation, a composer using folk song as nationalism (according to the Dvořákian missive) should be reproached, recalling criticisms from a decade earlier that using ethnic melodies was evidence of poor workmanship. Apthorp suggests that inserting folk song into a composition as a mere Americanism is nothing more than a parlor trick with no substance. But notably here Chadwick does not do that, and it is because his musical Irishness is “instinctive and natural”; that is,

170 “The composer Templeton Strong privately used this exact word to refer to Chadwick’s Second Symphony, writing to Edward MacDowell that “portions of [Chadwick’s] sinfonie” are “touched with vulgarity.” Letter from Templeton Strong to Edward MacDowell, 31 December 1888; quoted in E. Douglas Bomberger, MacDowell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 192–93.
the Irishness now represents some kind of authentic representation of Chadwick’s world.

While there are certainly many differences between the Fourth String Quartet and the Second Symphony, the gulf between the two is not so extreme as to warrant an entirely different aesthetic framework from Apthorp. Both pieces utilize a variety of Chadwick’s most characteristic musical elements, such as pentatonic melodies, frequent changes of rhythm, syncopation and hemiola, and folk dance styles for the scherzo movements, those very aspects that Yellin would later identify as “American” in Chadwick. For example, Apthorp likely considered that the openings of the fast dance movements, the scherzo in the symphony and the Giocoso (third movement) in the quartet, sounded “Irish.” As seen in example 2.5, both use a pentatonic scale and a lively 2/4 rhythm based on the figure of an eighth note with two staccato sixteenth notes, often descending. In the symphony movement, the eighth note is typically trilled, while Chadwick adds trills in the second violin to accompany the first violin’s eighth note in m. 17 of the quartet movement (ex. 2.6). Other similarities include the solo pentatonic melodies in middle range instruments that open each work (the horn in the symphony, the viola in the quartet). Side by side, there seems to be little reason why Apthorp would judge the quartet to be “instinctive and natural” while the symphony had a “general lack of true seriousness.”

\[171\] Yellin, Yankee Composer, 105–6.

Example 2.6: Chadwick, String Quartet no. 4, mvt. III, mm. 17–18. The trill in the second violin on each beat of the 2/4 measure creates a similar sound to the oboe melody pictured in example 2.5. This example is based on the following edition: *George Whitefield Chadwick: String Quartets No. 4–5,* edited by Marianne Betz. Recent Researches in American Music, vol. 60. Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, Inc., 2007. Used with permission. www.areditions.com
Of course it is possible that Apthorp simply liked Chadwick’s writing in this quartet more than in his symphony, but it is also important to note that the quartet, premiered on December 21, 1896, followed the successful reception of Dvořák’s “New World” Symphony, his “American” Quartet, and Beach’s Gaelic Symphony. By this date, critical ears had been trained to hear pentatonicism, lively syncopation, and dance rhythms as permissible and natural elements of the American musical language.

Other societal changes occurred alongside the shift in critical attitudes toward Irish melodies. In the 1870s and 80s, Boston’s Yankee establishment began to realize that they could not stem the influence of immigrants in their city, and began to show greater acceptance and respect for the Irish Catholic population, even if it was only in an attempt to preserve some of the status quo. Boston Brahmins allied with Irish Catholic immigrants who were rising up through the city’s political system, in an attempt to bridge the gap between native and foreign-born citizens. At the same time, the Irish knew that in order to have any political power, they would have to work with the upper class Yankee establishment, not against them. This resulted in the first Irish-born Catholic mayor of Boston, Hugh O’Brien, elected in 1884. Still, as evidenced by anti-Catholic sentiments of the late 1880s, politics could only provide a modicum of Irish American social uplift.

In the 1890s there was also a growing awareness on the part of elite Bostonians that a significant immigrant population lived in squalor, and that it was the civic responsibility of Boston’s well-off citizens to address this social issue. Harold K. Estabrook published a pamphlet in 1898 called “Some Slums in Boston” in which he detailed the overcrowded, unsafe, and unsanitary living conditions throughout the North, West, and South Ends. Estabrook noted that because Boston’s slums were not as bad as other major American or European cities, “very few persons in Boston have
felt the need of improving the houses of the poor.” He called on his fellow citizens to express outrage over the unlivable conditions in these slums: “It is hoped that this pamphlet will make clear to many persons who seldom or never go into the poorest districts of the city, that conditions there are so bad that they should be at once improved.” This was one indication of Boston’s turn to progressive politics in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Furthermore, by the 1890s the Irish no longer seemed so foreign to Bostonians, who were then confronted with new populations of Eastern and Southern European immigrants coming into the city in large numbers. Despite their obvious religious and language differences, the Irish were perceived to be more “easily assimilable” into American culture because of their shared British heritage and adaptability to the political and social system that roughly reflected conditions in Ireland (which was still under the dominion of the British crown). In contrast, the majority of those arriving in the late 1880s and 1890s, Southern Italians and Eastern European Jews, had customs, appearances (including darker skin tones), and languages that were even more foreign than the Irish Catholics of a generation before.

In sum, there were a number of concurrent changing geographies in Boston in the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century. Yankee Brahmins concentrated their residences in the Back Bay above Boylston Street, while immigrants of many ethnicities populated the South End. The institution most directly aligned with the cultural milieu of the Back Bay, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, left its home in the oldest part of the city and established itself in an area whose cultural associations were still being negotiated within Boston society. Huntington Avenue was outside the

---

173 Ibid., 23.
174 O’Connor, Boston Past and Present, 167.
Back Bay and close to the South End, and there were plenty of immigrants living nearby. But in the
1890s some of the prestige of Back Bay living leaked out from Copley Square, where Huntington
Avenue intersected with Boylston Street. The first apartment building in Boston was built in 1857,
but the concept truly took hold in the 1890s with a number of trendy apartment buildings going up
along Huntington. Prior to this, Bostonian residences were either single family homes or crowded
tenements and lodging houses.

Although Boston’s geography was constantly in flux throughout the nineteenth century as
the city expanded and the suburbs became integrated into a larger conceptual metropolitan Boston
area, the late 1890s in particular represent the simultaneous growth and rupture of the city’s geo-
cultural elite, with Symphony Hall itself lending legitimacy to the new geographic expansion of the
city. In the years following Symphony Hall’s construction, many more of Boston’s cultural
institutions established themselves along Huntington Avenue, where land was ample and cheap.
Horticultural Hall, directly across Massachusetts Avenue from Symphony Hall, was built in 1901,
NEC moved to a new building across Huntington from Symphony Hall in 1902, and NEC’s own
performance space, Jordan Hall, was erected in 1904. Isabella Stewart Gardner opened her opulent
Fenway home in 1903, intending it to become a museum after her death. The Christian Science
Mother Church expanded in 1906, while both the Boston Opera House and the Museum of Fine
Arts opened in 1909. In fifteen years, Huntington Avenue had gone from “Back Bay wastes” to the
beginnings of the “cultural mile.”

In the context of all this relocation, it is significant that Symphony Hall led the charge into
the area, because of what the BSO, and the genre of symphony, meant to Bostonian culture in the
nineteenth century. Symphony Hall marked the incursion of a practice and performance of cultural
elitism and exceptionalism into a part of town only recently deemed appropriate for the bourgeoisie. Thinking of Symphony Hall as an “imaginary museum” reflective of the changing tastes of Yankee Bostonian culture allows the building to function as a metaphorical repository of cultural artifacts deemed acceptable for the city’s taste and aesthetics.\textsuperscript{175} The Hall’s location emplaces those cultural meanings in specific geographical spaces. The fact that pieces such as Beach’s \textit{Gaelic Symphony} or Dvořák’s “New World” Symphony, using folk-like melodic materials not belonging to the Brahmin class, were already successful at the BSO before the organization moved locations suggests that Boston’s elite culture could no longer resist the city’s new, polyglot identity.

\textbf{Chadwick’s Boston, 1915}

Chadwick’s later compositions reflect the geographic and demographic changes that were occurring around the turn of the century, furthering the connection between music and the place in which it was written.\textsuperscript{176} Although Symphony no. 2 and String Quartet no. 4 have no acknowledged Irish influence, some later works do, even though Chadwick usually avoided direct quotation of folk melodies.\textsuperscript{177} In 1910, Chadwick completed \textit{Aghadoe}, a song with orchestral accompaniment that he termed an “Irish Ballad.” The subject is similar to a fairy tale set in a pastoral Irish village. Chadwick


\textsuperscript{176} Ledbetter (2001, 61) notes that Chadwick may have felt more free to use ethnic melodies especially after his professional success was secured as president of NEC in 1897. However, the Second Symphony and Fourth String Quartet were both written before this time. Still, it is true that Chadwick’s output of explicitly ethnic music was higher in the twentieth than the nineteenth century.

\textsuperscript{177} There are a few exceptions to this in Chadwick’s song output, which number about 150 pieces, very few of which have received any scholarly attention. For instance, Chadwick composed a set of \textit{Songs from Brittany} which were “arranged and harmonized from traditional Breton melodies.” See Betz, \textit{American Composer Revealed}, 121.
also wrote a number of what he called “Irish ditties,” some of which were published together in 1910 as *Four Irish Songs*, which Marianne Betz describes as original melodies with “an Irish twang.”

One of Chadwick’s largest orchestral pieces, the symphonic ballad *Tam O’Shanter* composed in 1915, was a hugely successful programmatic work based on Scottish poet Robert Burns’s epic poem. For this piece Chadwick clearly had no qualms about making overt references to ethnic folk music, especially because the genre of the tone poem demanded fidelity to a textual source. Like Burns’s text, Chadwick’s music has a heavy Scottish dialect, which audiences easily conflated with musical Irishness. Among numerous markers of Scottish or Irish music, including pentatonicism and dance-like syncopations, Chadwick quotes the Scottish hymn tune “Martyrs” to represent the Kirk Alloway church, and writes a hornpipe “strongly seasoned with Gaelic” for the orgiastic dance of witches in Burns’s poem. As shown in example 2.7, this *ruvido* hornpipe tune is characterized by a wild fiddling style with its double stops and figures that recall Scotch snaps, and is played by the viola to give a more exotic, weighty sound.

While *Tam O’Shanter* is not a symphony, the reception of the piece indicates that by 1915 the symphonic genre was no longer so strictly aligned with Boston’s nineteenth-century symphonic ideal. In his review of the BSO premiere of *Tam O’Shanter* in 1916, Louis Elson seemed to place the work in the same generic category as program symphonies such as Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique*:

---

178 Faucett, *Pride of New England*, 289; Betz, *American Composer Revealed*, 122. Adrienne Fried Block (1990, 262) believes that the suggestions of Irish melody in Chadwick’s songs were a reflection of Chadwick’s catering to a Boston public that desired accessible vocal music for amateur recitals. However, this pragmatic and perhaps market-driven choice is still reflective of the Boston population, and does not apply to Chadwick’s larger instrumental works.

“Tam O’Shanter is undoubtedly one of the very best of American works and can hold its own with the best European symphonic works.” The boundaries of the symphonic genre in Boston had softened enough that not only was ethnic folk material included, but so were program symphonies that would have been considered radical in Chadwick’s earliest days. In the Chicago Tribune, critic Eric De Lemarter wrote “it stands on its own as absolute music,” likening the work to orchestral genres like the symphony. Musicologist Hon-Lun Yang goes so far as to suggest that the character of Tam O’Shanter is “to an extent ‘American’ in spirit,” a protagonist that was needed to represent a broader cultural identity of “American” at that time.

Example 2.7: Chadwick, Tam O’Shanter, rehearsal K, solo viola melody for the hornpipe dance. George Whitefield Chadwick, Tam O’Shanter: A Symphonic Ballad (Munich: MPH, Musikproduktion Höflich, 2006).

Chadwick also composed a verismo opera in 1912 called The Padrone about Italian American immigrants in Boston’s North End. His choice to write a realist opera about an immigrant culture reflects the wave of progressive politics that swept the country in the 1910s, while Bill Faucett believes that it represents the “drastic changes to Chadwick’s sheltered Back Bay surroundings.”

---

181 Ibid., 82.
Although *The Padrone* is localized within the immigrant ghetto of the North End, Chadwick’s engagement with this otherwise foreign part of the city is representative of how Bostonians began to accept immigrant neighborhoods as part of their city’s identity. *The Padrone* was also a bilingual opera featuring both English and Italian passages, suggesting that the story of Boston’s immigrants needed to be told in a language outside of its dominant Yankee culture. Charles Freeman notes that even though the work itself is not expressly political, it is essentially American, and “only make[s] sense as [an] American story, clearly identifiable with a specific time and place.”

Chadwick believed that his music expressed his experience of the places he knew. In a letter to a former student around 1913, Chadwick responded to a question about using folk source material by saying “after all, one can only write himself down.” He then continued: “No imitation of the Indian melodies or negro rhythms will save any music from being un-American if it is not sincere.” For Chadwick, the Irish-tinged music of his earlier years and the overt Irish, Scottish, and Italian immigrant references of his later music were all sincere expressions of himself and his Boston. The reception history of Chadwick’s music over the years illuminates how New England’s largest city came to understand its expanding geographical, ideological, and cultural borders. Victor Yellin calls Chadwick’s mature style “populist realism,” a term that implies the ability to “evoke universal emotions and visual imagery as well as the ethnic wellsprings of Anglo-Celtic American music . . . in an age of mass immigration.” His term also suggests that “realism” in late nineteenth-century Boston meant an amalgamation of Yankee and Irish music; indeed, that is what made it American.

---

184 Freeman, “Progressive Ideals,” 137.
185 Chadwick to Harry B. Keeler, undated letter, CC-NEC, Series 1: Professional Correspondence.
186 Yellin, *Yankee Composer*, 60.
Chapter 3

Dancing in the Barn With Charles Ives in Old Danbury

Modern country dancing has been responsible for a friendship of town and country, young and old, beginner and veteran, “high” and “low”—your husband dances with the maid, your daughter with a Polish mill hand and you may be teamed up with the oldest inhabitant, and all of you may be in the same set together. It’s a workable democracy, a rare find in these democratic days.
—Beth Tolman and Ralph Page, *The Country Dance Book*

On the ink score-sketch of Charles Ives’s *Washington’s Birthday*, a piece that would eventually become the first movement of *A Symphony: New England Holidays*, the composer wrote “started Feb 22–1909 at 70 W. 11” (fig. 3.1). In the program to the movement, which was published as a postface to the first edition in 1936, Ives describes the memory that inspired his composition: as a winter snow storm rages outside, the young folks of a small New England town venture to a barn dance. The date on which Ives says he began this movement is significant: February 22 is Washington’s Birthday.3 Decades of hagiographic writing about Ives, in which he is cast as the echt

---

2 MSS 14, The Charles Ives Papers in the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library of Yale University, Box 3, folder 1b (hereafter MSS 14, Box#/Folder#). Throughout this chapter, I will refer to *A Symphony: New England Holidays* as the *Holidays Symphony*, a short title that Ives and other scholars have used.
3 Washington’s Birthday was officially established as a federal holiday by an act of Congress in 1879. However, the holiday was widely celebrated throughout the country dating back to Washington’s lifetime. In 1971, Washington’s Birthday was moved to the third Monday of February, which ironically never falls on February 22. Although the holiday is still federally recognized as Washington’s Birthday, some states renamed the holiday Presidents’ Day, and advertisers in the 1980s brought national awareness to this name. As such, today many Americans incorrectly refer to the federal holiday as Presidents’ Day. See C. L. Arbelbide, “By George, IT IS Washington’s Birthday!,” *Prologue*, 36, no. 4 Winter 2004, https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2004/winter/gw-birthday-1.html.
nostalgic rural composer of Americana, might encourage us to imagine a romanticized and idyllic genesis for this work, even if the start date may be apocryphal. We might picture Ives sitting in his Greenwich Village home—perhaps with a snow storm blowing outside and perhaps, because of the holiday, with the day off from work—thinking nostalgically of the Washington’s Birthday celebrations of his youth in Danbury, Connecticut. Inspired by this remembrance, he grabs some music paper and begins sketching.

In reality, on February 22, 1909, Ives was in New York City during a relatively warm winter when the temperature that day was in the mid 40s. His musical reconstruction of the same holiday from his youth, in which the main celebratory event is a raucous barn dance, is telling for Ives’s geographic self-image. Although he produced a work that illustrated nineteenth-century events in rural places, he composed it during the twentieth century in his Manhattan home. His backwards glance in a work such as Washington’s Birthday is not only temporal but geographical. Nostalgia is at the core of many Ives compositions, and this aspect of his music has been well documented in the extensive literature on Ives. However, for Ives the past and the present are inherently bound up with

---


6 Among the many studies to focus on the nostalgic aspects of Ives’s music are Stuart Feder, Charles Ives: “My Father’s Song”: A Psychoanalytic Biography (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992);
geographic concepts of rural and urban. Edward S. Casey has argued for an essentially place-based understanding of nostalgia, writing that “nostalgia, contrary to what we usually imagine, is not merely a matter of regret for lost times; it is also a pining for lost places, for places we have once been in yet can no longer reenter.” The Danbury that Ives attempted to reclaim and re-assert into his own experience and music was unrecoverable, assuming it ever existed as anything beyond a myth in the adult Ives’s mind.

Figure 3.1: Charles E. Ives, *Washington's Birthday*, first system of ink score-sketch with pencil emendations. In the upper-right corner, Ives added in pencil “started Feb 22 – 1909 at 70 W. 11.” The preface to the 1974 published edition of *Washington's Birthday* by John Kirkpatrick misread this date as “Oct 22,” but comparisons to Ives’s handwriting at the time reveal that it is indeed February 22, the date of George Washington's birthday. MSS 14, 3/1b. Used with permission by Associated Music Publishers, Inc.


Beginning around 1880 when Ives was five years old, Danbury’s hat-making industry expanded exponentially following nearly a century of steady growth. Consequently, the town population grew from 11,666 in 1880 to 19,473 in 1890, prompting local historian J. M. Bailey to described Danbury’s growth as “so rapid as to be almost phenomenal.” Nearly one thousand buildings were erected between 1880 and 1886, while stately homes on Main Street were razed to make way for commercial buildings. The house where Ives was born and raised was one of the last Colonial-era residences on Main Street, stubbornly remaining until 1924 when it was moved to accommodate an expansion of the Danbury National Bank.

Ives’s nostalgic yearning was due, in part, to the fact that he spent his upbringing watching the nature of his hometown fundamentally change, and in his mind, fall apart and fade away. He later claimed that as an adult he could not visit the industrialized city his town had become. His geographic identity remained forever stuck in a place that no longer existed, what Robert Gunn might term an “obsolete geography.” Gunn observes that this kind of regional particularity exists as a coherent imagined place partly because of its temporal designation. In other words, “Old Danbury” is a meaningful geographic location precisely because it is old. And as Lawrence Kramer notes, Ives’s othering of the urban “could be imagined only in retrospect and precisely only from the vantage point of urban modernity.” Ives needed his urban present in order to fully idealize and implace his rural past. This urban-rural divide in both his musical and personal life is central to

---

understanding not only how Ives thought of himself, but how his music might be heard as a commentary on the changing nature of city and country in the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century.

One of the memories that Ives used to implace Danbury into his music was the barn dance. In all the memories Ives frequently associated with his youth—the camp meeting, the memorial march, the patriotic holiday—music was a central element. In the case of the barn dance, music was inextricable. And just as he did with hymn tunes and the camp meeting, or Civil War marches and patriotic celebrations, Ives incorporated quotations of country fiddle tunes, popular songs, and other dance musics into his barn dance in order to depict the remembered event. A closer consideration of the extra-musical associations of these borrowed melodies and styles helps us fully understand Ives’s complex negotiation of his historical and cultural identity. Although Ives’s quotations evoke a musical picture of the barn dance, Christopher Ballantine argues that the purpose of Ives’s borrowed melodies is also “the communication of an attitude toward that original occasion.” Ives’s compositions are therefore not only memories brought to life through music, but reflections of his thinking about seminal cultural and social events of his youth.

This chapter examines Ives’s use of barn dance melodies and programmatic imagery to elucidate his attitude toward the barn dance and what that attitude reveals about his geography, his

---

12 Ives’s use of quotation has provided one of the richest sources of study for scholars of his music. The most comprehensive and well known of these works is J. Peter Burkholder, All Made of Tunes: Charles Ives and the Uses of Musical Borrowing (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). Burkholder’s monograph focuses on creating a taxonomy of borrowing practices, rather than examining the possible cultural meanings of Ives’s particular borrowings.

13 Recently, some Ives scholars have advocated for precisely this approach. See, for example, Magee, Charles Ives Reconsidered; Joseph Horowitz, Moral Fire: Musical Portraits From America’s Fin-de-Siècle (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

politics, and his philosophical ideology. Although the barn dance was invoked in many different kinds of pieces throughout Ives's career, I focus on *Washington’s Birthday* because it foregrounds the barn dance as a programmatic element. More than just a nostalgic element of his youth, the barn dance represented a concept of rurality that was particular to New England and that served as the idealized past against which Ives imagined his urban present of the early twentieth century. Furthermore, the fact that he returned repeatedly to this particular musical style and memory merits a deeper exploration of the topic.

My examination begins by situating the Old Danbury of Ives’s youth somewhere between historical fact and myth. After tracing the development of the New England dance tradition during the course of the nineteenth century, I discuss what exactly Ives meant by “barn dance.” As will become clear, the barn dance was not a genre of dance or music itself but rather an idealized event that helped Ives delineate the geographical parameters of his Old Danbury and reinforce his regional identity. It was as much about a particular cultural practice and attitude of dancing as it was about specific melodies or rhythms, or even whether it took place in a barn.

Old Danbury was central to Ives’s geographic identity not just because of its nostalgic longing for an agrarian idyll but because this imagined place reflected his social and political views. The barn dance therefore not only confirms but strengthens the link between Ives’s music and his ideologies. By the dawn of the twentieth century, Gilded Age society had co-opted the barn dance. Ives’s use of the barn dance in genres like the symphony was therefore a deliberate attempt to subvert what he viewed as a commercialized and emasculated genteel American culture. Analysis of his use of barn dance melodies in these pieces reinforces this interpretation, and ultimately illustrates how Ives
reconciled contemporaneous twentieth-century attitudes towards this social dance with his own nostalgic construction of nineteenth-century life.

**Old Danbury**

In Ives’s autobiographical *Memos*, the Danbury that resounds in his music and programmatic imagery is an idyllic small New England town populated by farmers and middle class Yankees. It is predominantly white and Christian, with events such as patriotic parades, Fourth of July fireworks, baseball games, camp meetings, and barn dances serving as signposts within this web of nostalgic geography. Ives perfectly encapsulated his remembered Danbury in an informal program jotted on a manuscript page of his First Piano Sonata:

what is it all about—Dan S asks.
Mostly about the outdoor life in Conn. villages in 80s & 90s.
Impressions, Remembrances, & Reflections, of Country Farmers in Conn. Farmland.
Fred’s Daddy got so excited that he shouted
when Fred hit a Home Run & the school won the baseball game
but Aunt Sarah was always humming—Where is my wandering Boy—after Fred an’ John left for a job in Bridgeport
—there was usually a sadness
—but not at the Barn Dances with its jigs foot jumping & reels mostly on Winter nights
In the Summer times, the Hymns were sung outdoors, Folks sang—as ole Black “JOE”—& the Bethel Band—Quick-step Street Marches, & the people like[d to] do things as they wanted to say and to do things as they wanted to in their own way— and many old times . . . there were feelings, and of spiritual Fervency!¹⁵

In this program we find many of the touchstones of Ives’s Old Danbury: a baseball game, hymn singing, marches, barn dances, and the general description of “outdoor life.” The village is not

only rural but agrarian, and Aunt Sarah’s sadness over Fred and John leaving for city work brings the urban-rural divide into acute focus.

However, this program and some of Ives’s other recollections of growing up in Danbury mythologize and exaggerate Danbury’s rurality. The town was already more like a small city when Ives was born on October 20, 1874, even though it did not technically become a city until 1889. Population grew by one-third during the 1870s, from 8,753 to 11,666, and the rapid growth of the hat-making industry exacerbated the wealth gap. In conjunction with this growth, the Yankee ethnic homogeneity began to break down as many new immigrants worked low-wage jobs in the hatting factories. By 1890, nearly half of the white population of Danbury was either foreign born or had at least one foreign-born parent. Ives biographer Jan Swafford describes Danbury at this time as “relatively pluralistic,” with Irish, French Canadians, blacks, Italians, Germans, Swedes, Polish Jews, and native-born Yankees co-existing with few ethnic tensions. Frank R. Rossiter offers a slightly bleaker assessment, noting that when compared to other industrialized New England towns, hostility among Danbury’s ethnic groups was “perhaps somewhat less than the average.”

Ives mythologized the “country farmer in Connecticut farmland,” yet no one in his family made their livelihood through farming (many in the family did maintain small produce gardens throughout their lives, including Charles). Rather, the Ives family was part of the Yankee elite that generally ran things in Danbury, both economically and socially. While Ives’s father George served as the town’s musical jack-of-all-trades, most of the male Iveses were involved in either banking or the

---

17 Ibid., 6–7.
hatting industries, or they were business owners. Ives’s brother later became a prominent lawyer in the city.

Ives was not alone in his fetishizing of Danbury’s pre-industrial identity. It was a sentiment shared by J. M. Bailey, the town historian and Danbury Evening News editor known as the “Danbury News Man,” who more than most people had the ability to shape public opinion from his influential post. Rossiter notes that Bailey’s history of the town, published posthumously in 1896, is shot through with nostalgia, and aims to preserve the village identity of Danbury’s earlier eras.19 Ives’s anxiety about the urbanization of American culture around the turn of the century was similar to that of many other Americans of his era, concerned with the loss of an American rural ideal that seemed unrecoverable. The historical era to which Ives’s nostalgic reconstruction of Old Danbury points is closer to pre-industrial, antebellum Danbury, and not the town he lived in from 1874 until 1893.

Throughout Bailey’s History of Danbury, music most often appears in connection with military exercises and celebrations of Civil War soldiers, perhaps reflecting Bailey’s memories more than actual musical life. Before the Civil War, most music in Danbury was provided by groups assembled as the occasion dictated, for a dance or a parade or church. None were at a professional level.20 However, fiddle players remained a constant presence in Danbury life, and Bailey’s history is peppered with such characters. He writes of “Judge” Homer Peters, who during the second and third decades of the nineteenth century was known as the town fiddler and “furnished dancing music for all festivities . . . in his hands one violin held the music and force of a dozen.”21

---

19 Rossiter, Charles Ives and His America, 8.
20 Swafford, A Life With Music, 16.
21 Bailey, History of Danbury, 151.
recollections, Bailey describes how every tavern in small Connecticut towns had a fiddler’s box, holding the instruments “from whose strings deft fingers drew forth merry music for the dancers of over a century ago.”

Danbury’s first historical chronicler, a preacher and schoolmaster named Thomas Robbins, described the prevalence of dancing in a diary entry from 1800, noting that “the greater part of my school children dance. It being customary here, I cannot prevent it.”

The importance of fiddle tunes and dance music in Ives’s youth is evident in one of his first experiments with composition as a twelve-year-old boy, a *New Year’s Dance* featuring an original fiddle tune melody on piano (fig. 3.2). Additionally, John Kirkpatrick notes that one of Ives’s boyhood heroes was John Starr, a well known country fiddler from the nearby rural village of Brookfield.

---

Figure 3.2: Charles E. Ives, *New Year’s Dance*, unpublished manuscript. MSS 14, 14/1a. Reproduced by permission of The American Academy of Arts and Letters, copyright owner.

Ives often chose to depict those elements of Old Danbury musical life that suggested a more rural existence. Camp meetings, typically held in the neighboring small villages and farmland, were a

---

22 Ibid., 525.
23 Ibid., 21.
frequent subject. His imagined nineteenth century was free from the technological and industrial woes of the twentieth century, belying the significant progress Danbury had already made towards urbanization in the 1870s and 80s, and he severely criticized technological progress that altered the landscape of Old Danbury. For instance, he composed the song “The New River” in the 1910s after visiting the Housatonic River near Danbury, where equipment had been installed in advance of a dam being built; he angrily wrote on the manuscript score “Gas machine kills Housatonic!” Ives’s self-penned text for this song laments the “sound of man” coming down the river and declares “the River Gods are gone.” An instrumental version of the song is titled The Ruined River. Even in his musical depictions of the town itself, Ives gravitated to small-town scenes emphasizing village communality. As David Metzer notes, in Ives’s text for “The Things Our Fathers Loved,” he describes “Aunt Sara humming Gospels,” the “village cornet band,” and “Red, White, and Blue” pageantry. As we shall see, barn dances were another essential element in constructing his rural Old Danbury.

The New England Dance Tradition(s)

Analyzing Ives’s use of the term barn dance proves challenging because unlike event names such as “cotillion” or “ball,” “barn dance” did not specify a particular genre of dance or music during the late nineteenth century. Throughout the course of Ives’s lifetime, use of the term varied greatly based on geography and historical era. For example, Connecticut newspapers from the late nineteenth century chronicled events called “barn dances” that took place in both urban and rural

---

25 Sinclair, Descriptive Catalogue, §308.
26 The full text of the song is: “Down the river comes a noise! It is not the voice of rolling waters. It’s only the sound of man, phonographs and gasoline, dancing halls and tambourine; Killed is the blare of the hunting horn, the River Gods are gone.” From Charles Ives, 114 Songs (New York: Associated Music Publishers, 1975; orig. self-published, 1922), 13.
locations, many of which were invite-only. Some dancing guides intended for urban audiences used the term to refer to a specific set of dance figures, as was the case in an instructional manual published in Philadelphia in 1899. A 1922 dance manual published in New York described the barn dance as an event defined by old-time rural costumes and decorations, but with the same sequence of dances as any other social dance. And from the mid-1920s onward, “barn dance” appeared in popular culture as the name for vaudeville-style radio shows that played fiddle tunes and other dance music of the rural Southeast and Midwest, such as the National Barn Dance or the Grand Ole Opry. At the same time, while dances held in barns had been documented throughout farming communities in nineteenth-century New England, seldom did the rural participants themselves refer to these as a “barn dance.”

A brief investigation of the history of American dance can help shed light on Ives’s usage of the term. Just as Ives chose to highlight elements of nineteenth-century Danbury life that emphasized rurality, such as small New England village life, landscapes untouched by modern technology, and camp meetings, so too did he implace his dances in rural settings. The types of dances referenced, in particular, can reveal much about the geographical nature of his Washington's Birthday dance. There were many kinds of social dances that existed throughout America’s history, varying greatly based on location, formality, and ethnicity. Early American dance trends were transatlantic in nature and followed developments mainly in England and France. The first dance to become widely popular in the American colonies was the English country dance during the

---

28 Marguerite Wilson, Dancing: A Complete Guide to all Dances, with a Full List of Calls, the Music for each Figure, Etiquette of the Dances, and One Hundred Figures for the German (Philadelphia: Penn Publishing Company, 1899; 1905), 121.
seventeenth century, particularly those in longways formations (performed in two long lines). In France, a vogue for the longways country dance led to the name being adopted into the French language: contredanse.\textsuperscript{30} This dance predominated in New England until the late eighteenth century, after which square formation dances reigned, followed by the waltz craze in the mid-nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{31} In particular, a square dance called the quadrille became popular around 1810 in the United States. At some point in the nineteenth century, “country dance” became known as “contra dance.”\textsuperscript{32}

Contra dancing gradually fell out of style in other parts of the country as patterns of immigration and regional variants affected local traditions. According to long-time contra dancer, historian, and modern revivalist Ralph Page, the War of 1812 exacerbated the isolation of New England dance practice from the rest of the country.\textsuperscript{33} Page believes that anti-British sentiment led Americans to shun contra dance because of its English derivation, yet this fervor was not as strong in New England as in other regions. Indeed, the war was so unpopular in New England that it fomented talk of secession. Thus, many New Englanders defiantly held on to their contra traditions.

\textsuperscript{31} Kate Van Winkle Keller and Charles Cyril Hendrickson, George Washington: A Biography in Social Dance (Sandy Hook, CT: The Hendrickson Group, 1998), 22.
\textsuperscript{32} The exact etymology of the term “contra dance” is uncertain. Some believe the term derived from the longways formation where men are lined up across from women in contrary lines, while others believe it is just a re-Anglicized version of the French “contredanse.” New Englanders offer the explanation that local accents turned “country” into “contry” and eventually “contra,” giving them a stronger claim to a regionalist ownership of the term and the dance practice. See Tolman and Page, The Country Dance Book, 83.
Despite this bifurcation, an evening of social dance in late nineteenth-century New England typically involved many different kinds of dancing with multiple different formations and figures. As Beth Tolman and Ralph Page recall in their Yankee ode to New England folk dancing, *The Country Dance Book*, these events included not only contras, but also quadrilles, other square dances such as the lancer, and round dances such as the waltz or polka, all in the same evening played by the same group of musicians.34 A good example of this mixture of genres and styles can be found in a popular source book called *The New England Musician*, published in 1848 in Lowell, Massachusetts (fig. 3.3). The volume’s long subtitle indicates not only the dance genres typical at a midcentury New England

---

dance, but also the usual performance forces in a quadrille band, an offshoot of the brass band that was increasingly used for larger dances in the late nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{35}

In her documentation of regional dance practices in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century New England, Jennifer C. Post identifies three kinds of dances that generally took place in rural towns, each with their own social function, performance practice, and importantly, relationship to local geography.\textsuperscript{36} The most local was the “kitchen dance,” or “junket,” a highly informal event hosted in someone’s home where furniture would be moved out of rooms and neighbors would come to dance. Although they sometimes did take place in the kitchen, Post uses the term as a catch-all for any kind of informal dance held in a home that “collected together a very specific social group tied to neighborhoods and other local communities,” and which was geographically limited to neighbors who shared a specific landscape and social relationships.\textsuperscript{37} Kitchen dances rotated to different homes within the community as part of a shared responsibility for entertaining and socializing, and musicians were usually members of the community as well. Often a single fiddler was the only music needed, accompanied by a piano or organ if the home had one.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, kitchen dances gave way to town gatherings in common buildings, what Post calls “public dances.” This change reflects broader social and economic forces at play that shifted the geographical focus from the local farm network to the village or town.

\textsuperscript{35} Later twentieth-century dance revivalists overplayed the predominance of contra dance in nineteenth-century New England, and so today many New England dances exclusively perform contras, believing it to be a more authentic representation of regional historical practice. However, as Jennifer C. Post observes, primary sources “reveal that other dance forms and dance tunes were popular as well, especially in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries” (Jennifer C. Post, \textit{Music in Rural New England Family and Community Life, 1870–1940} [Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2004], 77).

\textsuperscript{36} Post, \textit{Music in Rural New England}, 79–86.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 78.
Compared to kitchen dances, public dances were larger in both size and attendance, drew from wider geographical and social circles (meaning not all attendees knew each other), and often used larger and professional musical groups, such as quadrille bands, that were sometimes hired from other towns.

A third kind of dance, the formal ball, was much more common in urban areas but still took place in smaller, more rural towns. Yet these events were rather far removed from the typical routines of most New England farming families. Formal dances held a more important social function for the growing middle class. Because America lacked the kind of aristocracy that dictated cultural norms in Europe, anyone who could successfully amass enough wealth and rise upwards through the ranks of society could become, in effect, a new kind of aristocracy. Formal social dances were a place where attendees could navigate upward mobility in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century society. Especially during the 1830s, when President Andrew Jackson's anti-elitism created a vogue for impoliteness known as “Jacksonian rudeness,” dancing became a way to distinguish oneself from those without proper manners or etiquette.

Each of these dance types had specific geographic associations, and as Post notes, the dances themselves delineated geographic parameters based on the shared landscape of the participants and the distances they had to travel to attend. Understanding these dances' various social meanings and geographies is therefore important for understanding the implacement of Ives's barn dance. Most significantly, the formal ball and the dancing manuals that describe them “circumscribed cultural and social practices in the urban-based traditions,” while both public dances and kitchen

---

38 Ibid., 86.
dances were associated with rural landscapes. Even when formal dances took place in smaller, rural towns, their social function was aligned with more urban concerns: genteel socializing, proper display of aristocratic manners and etiquette, and cosmopolitan formality.

Despite these differences, all three dance events drew upon the same core repertoire of fiddle music, although not always played by a solo fiddler. Post demonstrates that the songs played for dancing make up an identifiable New England corpus that uniquely combined Anglo-Celtic and French Canadian traditions, along with American popular tunes drawn from the minstrel stage, broadsides, and sheet music. Originally, nearly every melody had a specific set of dance figures. “Fisher’s Hornpipe,” for example, appears in at least thirty-three different American dance manuals and manuscripts from 1782–1810, but the figures for most listings derive from the same basic set of contra dance figures. As the nineteenth century progressed, dancers began to disregard or adapt the customary figures for a particular tune, especially at more informal dances. Since most fiddle tunes were at a similar tempo and in duple meter (or, in the case of jigs and some quadrille music, compound meter), dances could be performed to practically any music as long as it fit the general character. Often dancers chose whatever tune the musicians knew, or whatever tune the dancers liked. Tunes that initially accompanied contra dancing were thus used for square or circle dances.

Contra formations became less prevalent than squares or circles in formal dances, even though the musical repertoire remained the same, in part because contra dancing gradually took on certain negative connotations during the course of the nineteenth century. Some of this was perhaps because of its associations with rural and therefore unrefined dancing, but it was also traceable to

40 Post, Music in Rural New England, 89.
41 Ibid., 108.
changing perceptions about the music and dance figures themselves. In his 1888 guide *Dancing and Its Relation to Education and Social Life*, dancing master Allen Dodworth wrote that a dance musician of a hundred years earlier (in the 1780s, when contra dance reigned) was simply a fiddler, “but today musicians have compositions to deal with of high order, containing all that science and genius can produce, and requiring for their proper interpretation performers of decided ability.”

His statement reflects the more complex formal organization of a quadrille, which was typically made up of five “sets,” each with its own AABB form. Dodworth’s language is redolent of the Romantic notion of teleological progress, implying that the music had evolved from the baseness of the old fiddle tunes to the refinement of quadrille music. Elsewhere some dance manuals from the 1880s and 90s refer to contras as nothing more than beginner dances that lack complexity and go on forever. Unlike quadrilles, which had different dance figures for every new thirty-two bar set, the music and dance figures for contras were simply repeated until every couple had the chance to act as the lead couple. As there was no limit to the number of couples in a contra formation, this could mean twenty or more iterations without variation.

Surveying the dance traditions, it is clear that although there was much diversity and variation among different kinds of dances, some generalizations can be made. First, contra dancing was associated mainly with New England, and within that region even more so with the most rural events such as kitchen dances. Post notes that in rural areas, the popular square and circle dances were far more likely to be performed at a public dance than a kitchen dance, while Ralph Page recalls that “country people preferred the simpler contras that lasted longer.”

---

between informality and rurality. The loosest and most convivial dances were the rural ones held in private homes for a close-knit neighborhood, while the most formal dances were either urban balls or those modeled after urban events. Taking these two observations together, one may surmise that contras were more likely to be danced at informal, rural gatherings. Finally, these designations were fluid and constantly being negotiated by their participants as geography and social needs changed. Therefore the nature of the dancing at Ives's barn dance, namely square dancing or contra dancing, can reinforce the geographic character of his imagined Old Danbury.

**Ives’s Barn Dance**

Ives admits that his representation of the barn dance comes from a combination of his own remembrances “of these dances as a boy, and also from father’s description of some of the old dancing and fiddle playing.”

From this statement, it follows that rather than memorializing a specific night, Ives’s barn dance likely signifies an idealized event, one that he mythologized and constructed from a combination of anecdotes from his father, childhood memories, and fabrications based on his conception of Old Danbury.

Of all Ives’s works that reference a barn dance or use fiddle tunes, the piece that most clearly depicts this tradition in both programmatic description and music is *Washington’s Birthday*. The work’s published program, Ives’s marginalia on the manuscript pages, his commentary on the piece in *Memos*, and the music itself all provide ample information to situate his imagined barn dance within existing traditions of dance in New England. On the full score manuscript of *Washington’s Birthday* from about 1913, Ives wrote “Washington’s Birthday (in the 70’s)” on the title page, placing

---

the dance during his earliest years.\textsuperscript{46} Ives’s \textit{Memos} also reveals that the imagined \textit{Washington’s Birthday} barn dance took place in the tiny village of New Fairfield, just one town over from Danbury, which had a population of 791 in 1880 compared to Danbury’s 11,666.\textsuperscript{47} Ives set it in this village rather than the much larger town of Danbury to accentuate the rurality of his memory, lending both his music and himself a more rural identity. In \textit{Memos}, he notes that each movement of the \textit{Holidays Symphony} is “based on something of the memory that a man has of his boy holidays, rather than any present day program of such,” and it is clear that he himself is the person in this statement.\textsuperscript{48} New Fairfield was only a few miles from Danbury’s Main Street and therefore a part of Ives’s regional conception of home. Most importantly, for Ives, New Fairfield represented Old Danbury better than even the actual Danbury of the 1870s.

Ives structures \textit{Washington’s Birthday} using a tripartite form that corresponds to the program printed at the back of his score and summarized in \textit{Memos}. In the opening, Ives describes the wintry landscape and journey to the celebration, depicting the “bleakness, without stir but penetrating, in a New England midwinter.”\textsuperscript{49} The middle section is the barn dance, and the third section returns to the outdoor winter scene, but now with the sound of sentimental songs playing the dancers out into the night.

The opening section features modernist techniques that frequently appear in Ives’s mature works. It begins by setting diatonic melodic fragments against a dissonant, harmonically static, thinly

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{46} MSS 14, 3/1c.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Population figures taken from the 1880 U.S. Census. Many thanks to Melissa Traub from the Connecticut Historical Society for conveniently providing these figures.
\item \textsuperscript{48} Ives, \textit{Memos}, 95.
\item \textsuperscript{49} All references to the program are taken from the postface printed in James Sinclair’s 1991 critical edition of \textit{Washington’s Birthday, for Chamber Orchestra}, Charles Ives Society Critical Edition (Milwaukee: Associated Music Publishers, 1991), p. 31. All musical examples from \textit{Washington’s Birthday} and measure numbers come from this score, as well.
\end{itemize}
textured, and intensely quiet soundscape that aptly depicts the program’s description of the winter landscape, “without stir but penetrating,” with its “quiet but restless monotony.” Ives opens up a musical space where sequential development and teleology are no longer the organizing principles of the music, what Robert Morgan refers to as “spatial form.”

As many Ives scholars have noted, these elements have the effect of dislocating the listener, suggesting a memory or nostalgia. The opening section of Washington’s Birthday invites the listener into Ives’s nostalgic longing, evoking two of the most well known sentimental songs of the nineteenth century: Henry Rowley Bishop’s “Home Sweet Home” in the first measure and Stephen Foster’s “Old Folks at Home” beginning at measure 8 and repeated again at measure 15 (see ex. 3.1). Yet their diatonic quality is undermined by dissonant accompaniments, denying these melodies any tonal grounding and further accentuating a kind of placeless unmooring.

Example 3.1: Charles Ives, Washington’s Birthday. Left: mm. 1–2, with an evocation of “Home Sweet Home” in the violin I over dissonant accompaniment. Right: mm. 8–9, with a quotation of “Old Folks at Home” in the horn over dissonant accompaniment. Used with permission by Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

---

At measure 56 the barn dance suddenly begins, and it is markedly separate from the preceding music. What had previously been a mostly dissonant soundscape with varying rhythms yields to a D major tonality with a regular metrical pulse in 2/4 time. Ives presents a melody starting at measure 61 that is an eight-bar fiddle tune in the violins, with a regular alternating “oom-pa” bass in the cellos on the beat with viola upbeat dyads completing the triadic accompaniment (ex. 3.2). Despite sounding like many known fiddle tunes, Ives’s melody appears to be original. The rhythm follows the same general pattern of an eighth note with two sixteenths found in many quadrille melodies and fiddle tunes, and the lively D major melody contains a number of gapped leaps and avoids the leading tone. Ives also trots out a number of fiddle tune quotations throughout this section, eventually increasing the rhythmic complexity and harmonic dissonance as unaligned melodies are combined in a collage-like fashion. The dance section ends with typical Ivesian textural density and extremely loud chaos, not unlike the climaxes of Central Park in the Dark or the second movement of the Fourth Symphony.

![Example 3.2: Ives, Washington's Birthday, mm. 61–68. Original fiddle tune melody. Used with permission by Associated Music Publishers, Inc.](image)

At measure 163, following the triple forte chord that ends the barn dance (which one commentator in the 1950s likened to the “resounding discord” that ends “a traditional evening of
square dances”), Ives returns to the empty texture of the opening, suggesting again the wintry outdoors. Yet unlike the opening, the closing section begins in more diatonic-sounding realm, with a G major violin melody and alternating tonic/dominant harmony in the bass. Still, Ives maintains a nostalgic haziness with a single violin playing the fiddle tune “Pig Town Fling” quadruple piano in A♭ major, a reminiscence of the just-ended barn dance. Like the opening of the barn dance section, Ives composed an original tune that parodies a popular style, in this case a nineteenth-century sentimental song rather than a fiddle tune. The remainder of the piece is closer in style and sound to the opening sonority of the work, with a single diatonic melody—in this case “Goodnight Ladies” in the flute and violins—against a tableau of piano strings playing highly dissonant chords.

Many of the tunes used by Ives in the Washington's Birthday barn dance are listed in Post’s core New England repertoire, including “College Hornpipe,” “Fisher’s Hornpipe,” “Irish Washerwoman,” “Money Musk,” “St. Patrick’s Day,” “Turkey in the Straw,” and “White Cockade.” These melodies impart a recognizable New England identity, especially “White Cockade” which was purportedly the tune the Revolutionary militias played as they marched down to confront the British troops at Concord, Massachusetts, in 1775. Additionally, some of these fiddle tunes were among the most popular “old fashioned” or “old time” dances in America. Originally these melodies were associated with contra dances, since they all first appeared in the late eighteenth century when contras still predominated. Although dancers could perform squares to these melodies, Tolman and

---

51 Marian Tyler Chase, Program notes for Danbury Orchestral Society concert, 3 December 1952, Danbury High School Auditorium. In MSS 14, 51/1.
Page recall that more often square dances were done to “standard quadrille music” such as “Sailor’s Return” or “Harvest Moon.”

Hence, the question remains as to whether Ives’s imagined event was a town dance that featured square dancing, or a more rural kitchen dance centered on contra dancing. The tempo indication for the barn dance section beginning at measure 56 is “Allegro (In Quadrille and Lancer time),” referencing two different square dances. Ralph Page writes that the “golden age” of square dancing was “unquestionably the 1870s, 1880s, and well into the 1890s,” and notes that “square dancing swept the larger cities of New England,” citing Keene, New Hampshire (with a population nearly half that of Danbury) as an example. Ives makes it explicit that square dancing was a prominent component of his event in the program, where he writes that “the young folks ‘salute their partners and balance corners’ till midnight.” “Balance corners” is a dance figure common in square dances but rarely, if ever, used in contra dancing.

Moreover, the main melody in the first half of the dance section is Ives’s invented fiddle tune (see ex. 3.2), which bears many similarities to published quadrille melodies, such as the first “Forest Quadrille” found in New England Musician from 1848 (ex. 3.3). As a general rule, quadrille melodies as well as older fiddle tunes are nearly always diatonic, yet feature gaps that outline arpeggios or give a pentatonic feel. Ives also introduces his melody with a fanfare-like passage typical of many quadrilles (ex. 3.4), which was often used to allow members of a square to balance corners and salute partners as preparatory choreography. He may have even adapted this introductory flair from his own New Year’s Dance (fig. 3.2), the 1886 piano piece that is clearly modeled on a country dance from that time period.

---


Example 3.4: Ives, *Washington's Birthday*, opening of the barn dance section, mm. 56–60. Used with permission by Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Despite the fact that most of the melodies quoted in *Washington's Birthday* originally related to contra dancing, square dancing clearly played a significant role. This suggests that Ives’s barn dance was what Post calls a public dance, rather than a kitchen dance, since popular square dances
were more common at a public dance than at the smaller and more rural gatherings. Other programmatic elements reinforce this interpretation: in the postface Ives describes the journey “down through ‘Swamp Hollow’ and over the hill road . . . to the barn dance at the Centre.” The fact that the barn dance takes place “at the Centre” in New Fairfield indicates that it was probably held in a community building or a town hall located in the village, rather than on someone’s farm property removed from the town center. Unlike a kitchen dance, which would have been mainly attended by whole families from the immediate environs, Ives’s barn dance is geared towards “the younger generation,” and they travel from the neighboring town.

However, if we read the activities and attitudes of the dancers as indicative of the barn dance’s cultural function, then Ives’s event seems to be imbued with elements of the kitchen dance. Ives did in fact advocate understanding his music in this way, writing that the *Hawthorne* movement from the *Concord* Sonata has more to do with “the way something happens” rather than any literal interpretation. For Ives, the meaning of the barn dance was apposite to what Christopher Small calls “musicking” rather than music. Small defines the verb “to music” as “to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing.” An

---

56 Here I invoke Clifford Geertz’s definition of culture as a man-made “web of significance” and that the goal of analysis must be “an interpretive one in search of meaning” (Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 3–30 [New York: Basic Books, 1973], 5).
57 Charles Ives, *Essays Before a Sonata, The Majority, and Other Writings*, ed. Howard Boatwright (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1961), 42. Here Ives, with his idiomatically eccentric grammar and sentence construction, lists potential meanings of the *Hawthorne* movement, which includes “not something that happens, but the way something happens.”
interpretation sensitive to musicking would consider not only the tunes and the program, but the social function of the dance and the behavior of its participants.

For one thing, Ives’s stated goal with the barn dance section recalls the attitude of a kitchen dance: to reflect the “backwoods fun and comedy and conviviality” that was “gradually being forgotten.”\(^{59}\) One way to accomplish this is the suggestion of musical amateurism using rhythmic irregularities, melodic interruptions, or dissonant “mistakes” by certain instruments. The rhythmic dislocations found throughout the barn dance section are the one element Ives claims to “remember distinctly” from his boyhood attendance at these events. He recalls the tendency of the musicians at the barn dance to play with a loose interpretation of tempo and downbeat, a “kind of music that was natural and interesting.”\(^{60}\) His desire to emulate amateur musicians often results in modernist effects such as polytonality, chromatic “wrong notes,” and rhythmic displacements or interruptions. In just one of many instances in *Washington’s Birthday*, during the four-bar introductory fanfare Ives seems poised to arrive on a downbeat at measure 59 (see ex. 3.4). Yet the strings hold their final note over the barline, and then attempt to rectify their mistake with the exclamatory downbeat falling on either the second quarter note of the measure (basses), or, after “accidentally” accenting the sixteenth note just prior to the second quarter note, the final eighth note of the measure. To make up for this rhythmic gaffe, Ives then inserts a measure of 3/8 before returning to the duple 2/4 for his original fiddle tune melody. Ives attributes these “mixed rhythms” to a fiddler who might be fatigued from playing for many hours straight, or to “another player who had been seated too near the hard cider barrel,” again speaking to the dance’s jovial informality.\(^{61}\) Ives also represents the looseness of the barn

\(^{59}\) Ives, *Memos*, 97.
\(^{60}\) Ibid.
\(^{61}\) Ibid.
dance by remembering how different dances would be played in separate parts of the room at the same time by different musicians. This explains why, despite the violins mostly maintaining a single tune for both the first and second half of the dance section, there are frequent interjections and overlappings by the flute and horn with quotations of other fiddle and popular tunes.\footnote{Burkholder argues that here Ives is not trying to realistically capture the effect of several bands playing at once; “rather, the accumulation of tunes represents the telescoping of an entire evening’s music or a lifetime’s recollection into a three-minute swirl.” While I agree that the end of the barn dance perhaps resembles this effect, where individual melodies are barely recognizable in the chaos, I believe that at earlier points in the section Ives is literally depicting how, as he puts it, “often the piccolo or cornet would throw in ‘asides.’” \textit{Burkholder, All Made of Tunes}, 385; Ives, \textit{Memos}, 97.}

In deciding to call his event a barn dance, it is a moot point whether it was held in an actual barn or not. Dances in barns most commonly took place in rural towns that were primarily agricultural. The gatherings were often linked to communal farm labor such as corn husking, apple paring, or barn raising, and as such the dances might take place in the barn immediately following the work. In calling his party a barn dance, Ives invites his listeners to imagine the type of landscape and community that would hold a dance in a barn.

As an agent of place-making, a public dance constructs a geography that is bigger than a rural agricultural village. In other words, it appropriately fits Danbury’s midcentury demographics as a small regional town. Yet the term “barn dance” foregrounds the social function and landscape of a hyper-local community and neighborhood geography. The image and attitude Ives projects is one of communal merrymaking characteristic of the kitchen dance, fitting his description of the \textit{Holidays Symphony} as “common events in the lives of common people (that is, of fine people), mostly of the rural communities.”\footnote{Ives, \textit{Memos}, 97.} Ives clearly preferred to portray his imagined Old Danbury in this manner, calling \textit{Washington’s Birthday} and two other movements of the \textit{Holidays Symphony} “pictures of a boy’s
holidays in a country town. Thus, the conception of rurality portrayed in the barn dance is more exaggerated than the actual, lived rurality of Danbury in the 1870s.

Playing up this heightened rurality had its advantages. For one thing, a more rural Old Danbury gave Ives a stronger claim to rural authenticity and provided a greater contrast with the city and his lived experience in the 1910s. By further bolstering the rural qualities of Danbury, Ives allowed his music to align more closely with his personal philosophy and politics that were themselves based on a pre-industrial, antebellum conception of rural New England life.

Ives’s Politics

“Progressive” and “populist” are two ideological labels that some scholars and commentators applied to Ives during the middle of the twentieth century and especially during the 1970s, when the fortuitous dovetailing of Ives’s hundredth birthday, the American bicentennial, and greater recognition of Ives’s music led to an explosion of interest in and writing on the composer. Many writers, especially those who contributed to what Rossiter terms the “Ives Legend,” based their progressive or populist assessment on Ives’s left-of-center politics—especially his political essay “The Majority” and his criticism of wealth accumulation—and his outlook on American democracy rooted in Emersonian transcendentalism. Indeed, there are many aspects of Ives’s business and personal life that lend credence to this characterization. He was opposed to monopolies and the consolidation of wealth despite being a very wealthy businessman himself; he was philanthropically

---

64 Ibid., 96.
65 Rossiter, Charles Ives and His America, 248–50. David C. Paul provides a thorough synopsis of the efforts of scholars, especially those from the fields of history and American studies, who perpetuated the myth of the “progressive Ives” in Charles Ives in the Mirror, chap. 4. Paul notes that Rossiter was one of the first scholars to challenge this myth.
generous especially with regard to modern music; he was opposed to elitist social and cultural hierarchies; he celebrated the idea of the common American working man; his wife, Harmony, was personally involved in Progressive Era reform institutions when she worked as a settlement house nurse; he was personally crushed by the election of Warren G. Harding in 1920 and the failure of the United States to join the League of Nations; and he campaigned in vain for a Constitutional amendment of his own design that would establish direct democracy as the primary governing mechanism. Moreover, his music made it tempting for writers to see a reflection of his compositional progressivism in his personal life.

Yet there is a paradox at the core of Ives's musical and personal being. Despite the fact that much of his music seems decades ahead of its time, he seems uncomfortable in an urbanized, socially progressive twentieth century. Put another way, his music was at times radical while his personal views, especially those regarding gender and sexuality, at times bordered on reactionary. Even the correlation between his avant-garde music and forward-thinking politics becomes more tenuous when one considers how much of his music is rooted in nineteenth-century aesthetics, genres, and forms.66

Ives bears only a superficial resemblance to the historical political movements of Populism and Progressivism. His rejection of the urban and embrace of the rural Old Danbury supports Richard Hofstadter's classic assessment of progressive thinking: “the American tradition of democracy was formed on the farm and in small villages, and its central ideas were founded in rural

66 There have been entire studies devoted to linking Ives with nineteenth-century musical traditions, in part to counter his perceived amateurism as a composer. See, for example, Geoffrey Block and J. Peter Burkholder, eds., Charles Ives and the Classical Tradition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).
sentiments and on rural metaphors.” Progressivism and populism, Hofstadter concludes, were born out of the conflict resulting from “this rapid decline of rural America” in the face of increased industrialization. Many of Ives’s central ideas are certainly founded in rural sentiments and on rural metaphors, namely the loss of Old Danbury. However, the political manifestation of populism, the People’s Party, saw the plight of rural America as an issue of class wrought by industrialization, and focused its political energy on southern and midwestern farmers fighting against speculation and big business. Ives’s New England rural is not the rural America of historical Populism.

Ives did lament the ills caused by industrialization, but it was not class divisions that upset him. Although Ives’s rhetoric sometimes suggested socialist thought, such as his celebration of “the Masses” in the song “The Majority,” he was generally silent on questions of class. Ives’s main concern with industrialization was that it inherently changed the rural landscape, most notably manifested as the growth and urbanization of Danbury. This also comes out in the text to “The New River,” with its environmentalist critique. Although Ives’s political thought is concerned with a loss of the rural, it is a rural based in personal remembrance of small town New England life—that is, Old Danbury—not the agricultural rural of the South and Midwest that was fighting for farmer’s rights over land and labor.

Broyles argues instead that Ives’s personal and political philosophy is based on two backwards-looking ideological trends of the late nineteenth century, namely Colonial revival and republicanism. Colonial revival began as an architectural style but was pervasive throughout the

---

69 Ibid., 123. Ives’s democratic “masses” are not the proletariat “masses” of Marxist socialism.
literature and arts of early twentieth-century culture, even in Ives’s New York. It promoted the romanticized small village as the essential symbol of New England, and by extension American, greatness. The town common, the Congregationalist white church steeple, and town meeting government all embody this tradition. Republicanism, especially the patriotic brand born out of Enlightenment thought that fueled the American revolution, operated on the premise that men would put the interests of society above their individual desires. In the face of poor factory work conditions and captains of industry consolidating power, progress-weary Americans such as Ives turned back to the myth of Federal-era republicanism as a solution for the growing social ills of modern life. It was a regressive kind of thinking in that it offered no immediate solution for the present day, only nostalgia for how things used to be. In Ives’s thought, republicanism manifested as an idealistic belief that a transcendental brotherhood of middle-class (white, Christian) men would support each other morally, civically, and financially. The same idealism that drove his insurance business informed his personal and political philosophy.

Ives’s barn dance was a musical manifestation of colonial revival aesthetics and ideology. The rurality of Old Danbury as depicted in Washington’s Birthday provided a connection to pre-industrial New England life that countered the rapid progress of society in the early twentieth century. Ives’s music was also emblematic of trends in art and literature of the early twentieth century as the locus of New England regional identity began to shift to the rural north. Although Danbury is in almost the southwest corner of New England, the rural Old Danbury feels closer to the images of northern

70 Ibid.
New England that were popular especially in the 1920s and 30s. The cold, wintry scene at the opening section of *Washington's Birthday* only helps to reinforce this northerly geographic shift.

The barn dance was also representative of the myth of eighteenth-century New England republicanism in that it represented ideas about inclusive community within a homogeneous small-town society. In particular, there is a democratic egalitarianism that is inherent in contra dance choreography. Most contra dances are progressive, meaning that couples move down the line of dancers which gives each couple a chance to lead, an arrangement that Kate van Winkle Keller calls “democratic rather than hierarchical.” Contra dances are often arranged for “as many couples as will,” a phrase that indicates the dance is not only open to anyone, but that it is for any number of couples, from just two or three to as many as space can accommodate. The notion of inclusion, acceptance, and flexibility without strict limitations is therefore built into the informal New England dance tradition. Ives may have found this particular freedom in the types of dancing that occurred at his barn dance appealing.

If, as Broyles argues, the pre-industrial New England village was the most important source of Ives’s personal, political, and artistic philosophy, it was also the imagined geographic place to which all other places in Ives’s contemporary life compared. The agenda of a piece like *Washington’s Birthday* is not only to resurrect and remember that place, but to bring all other geographies into its orbit. In this sense, Ives’s goal is not as much reconciliation of urban and rural, city and country, New York and New England, but rather subsuming the urban into the rural. He sought to bring his present New York reality into the imagined, nostalgic New England past. Accomplishing this goal took a number of forms. It was clear in Ives’s proposal for a twentieth amendment to the U.S.

---

73 Ibid., 20.
Constitution based on direct democracy, which would essentially project the local New England town meeting onto the national stage, a proposal that Broyles calls “so sweeping, vague, and unrealistic as to defy practicality.” For Ives, all geography could, and should, be reduced back to an imagined Old Danbury.

**Barn Dances in the Early Twentieth Century**

Ives was clearly interested in representing and resurrecting a moment frozen in the past, but he was also influenced by society’s perceptions of the barn dance in his present. Ives composed and compiled *Washington’s Birthday* in the first two decades of the twentieth century, starting in 1909 and finishing around 1913. During this era, the term “barn dance” actually appears most often in print materials intended for urban consumers, and events called “barn dances” were closer in style to formal balls meant to evoke agrarian country simplicity. In this way, barn dances were co-opted by Gilded Age society and commodified.

Articles from the 1890s onward frequently use the adjective “old-fashioned” to describe barn dances, suggesting that these events were considered relics of a past time rather than part of contemporary society. Short articles in the society sections of Connecticut newspapers describe evenings closer in social function to the formal dances of urban bourgeois culture, rather than the

---

74 Broyles, “Charles Ives and the American Democratic Tradition,” 125.
76 For example, the New Haven Register reported on a “good old-fashioned country dance” on 16 April 1897, while the Hartford Courant described an “old-fashioned barn dance” in a 10 November 1902 article.
“backwoods fun” and raucous, drunken tempos of Ives’s “common events in the lives of common people.” By the turn of the century, the look and feel of a rural dance had been assimilated into mainstream genteel society as an event that could be used to create the effect of rurality for an increasingly urban audience.

For instance, in October 1897 the New Haven Register reported on C. J. Upson’s “real old-fashioned husking bee in the barn with a splendid barn dance to wind up the evening.” Upson did own farm land in East Haven, but he was relatively affluent and enjoyed a high social standing as an officer of the East Haven Subordinate Grange, a local chapter of an agricultural fraternal organization. He cast his barn dance as a romanticized imagining of the past, rather than an event typical of the present time. The article notes that invitations for the dance “are printed in the quaint fashion of the last century,” and continues: “Mr. Upson has asked his guests to come either in colonial or revolutionary dress, if possible.” Like the costumes Upson asked his guests to don, the barn dance itself allowed this Gilded Age crowd to bring back the activities of a bygone era. Both the invitations and the costuming suggest that for a man such as Upson, the barn dance did not represent the nineteenth century, as it did for Ives, but the eighteenth century. In part, this is because of the geographic disparity: for urban areas like New Haven (still the largest city in Connecticut at that time), the barn dance had receded further into the past than in smaller towns like Danbury or the village of New Fairfield. Although corn husking preceded the dance, lending the evening some agrarian legitimacy, a follow-up article in the “Social News” section of the Register notes that the barn

77 New Haven Register, 19 October 1897.
was elaborately decorated, while supper was “served in the flower bedecked dining room of the house.” Upson’s guests were still treated to the comforts of the Gilded Age elite.

The barn dance became so embedded in elite society that a social register called *Beautiful Homes and Social Customs of America*, published in Chicago in 1902, devoted an entire page to describing a party at a “big, red barn on a fine old farm that is easily reached by city friends” where they hold “a genuine ‘barn dance.’” The description of a “genuine” barn dance, and the placing of barn dance in scare quotes, suggests that the author realizes the imagined and potentially disingenuous authenticity of such an event. The author describes how the music is “furnished by an old darkey fiddler, not violinist,” and that he plays “Money Musk” and “Fisher’s Hornpipe.” Importantly, the hostess’ friends call her barn dance “the big event of the year.”

Barn dances were also used to cater to summer tourists from the cities who, like the guests at the Upson dance, desired an exoticized rural or old-fashioned authenticity. In 1897 the *New Haven Register* reported that a number of summer tourists “enjoyed a strawride to Blackstonsville last evening, when they were entertained by Mr. and Mrs. John Daly at an old-fashioned country dance in the barn.” These summer visitors were more likely to be upper or middle class, rather than the humble local farmers of Ives’s barn dance. In another instance, the *New York Tribune* reported on a “large ‘barn dance’” as part of the celebration for the June 1895 Burden-Sloane wedding, a union of

79 *New Haven Register*, 22 October 1897.
81 While racial issues are outside the direct focus of this chapter, they do figure into Ives’s construction of the barn dance (especially in other works). Black musicians, sometimes accompanying dancing in a barn, were a frequent trope in genre painting of the mid-nineteenth century, such as the famous works of William Sidney Mount.
two extremely affluent families, in the Berkshire Mountains town of Lenox, Massachusetts. The
Tribune noted that the drawing-room cars (typically the most expensive mode of train travel) of
Berkshire express trains would be filled with wealthy New Yorkers and Brooklynites opening their
summer cottages in preparation for the wedding, and that Cornelius Vanderbilt had already arrived
to ensure that his home would be ready.\footnote{“Cottagers Arriving in the Berkshires,” New York Tribune, 26 May 1895.} This use of the barn dance especially marks the difference
between urban formality and rural informality: the urban summer visitors go to the barn dance in
order to experience a supposed rural authenticity.

There is, therefore, a disconnect between the down home, folksy celebration of Ives’s
idealized barn dance, and the elaborate and expensive affairs that were often called by the same name
during the Gilded Age. Further complicating matters is the fact that Ives was part of that privileged
class by virtue of his heritage, his education, and eventually his wealth. Yet he wanted to distance
himself from the aspect of elite society that were linked to the excesses of the era and was he
perceived as the commodification of American culture. Ives set himself apart from many of his
former Yale classmates and what he viewed as their superficial, money-obsessed lifestyle; on an
advertisement he received to join the Yale club in New York City that depicted a room full of smiling
men in tuxedos, he angrily scrawled: “Just one of the subsidiary processes of \textit{emasculating}
America!”\footnote{MSS 14, 37/3.} His musical recreation of the barn dance was an attempt to depict rural life as he
imagined it, not to appropriate country living for his own self-serving entertainment.

Despite the prevalence of barn dance parties thrown by elite urbanites, events similar to the
Washington’s Birthday dance still occurred. To cite but one example, a teacher named Lottie Eagles
who lived in Canterbury (a tiny town in Eastern Connecticut with a population comparable to New
Fairfield) described kitchen dances in her 1899 diary. Unlike Ives’s *Washington’s Birthday* event, Eagles attended dances at a friend’s house, suggesting that it was a kitchen dance rather than a public dance. While she did not elaborate on the music played, Eagles did note that a single fiddle player was all that was required for a dance. Like Ives’s barn dance, music from a fiddler and dancing with friends was one of the only forms of entertainment available in a town so small as Canterbury (and like Ives, she even went to a dance during a massive mid-February snowstorm). In rural areas, the barn dance as Ives remembered it was still an active part of early twentieth-century life.

While genteel society attended barn dances as a relic of quaint customs that could be described as a kind of class-based, geographic cultural appropriation, elements of the music industry sought to commercialize the barn dance. Similar to the hosts of Gilded Age parties, music publishers sought to adapt an old-fashioned and rural cultural practice for those outside rural communities. An unknown 1908 piece of sheet music was accompanied by “Instructions for Dancing the Barn Dance,” which included two very simple variations on contra style dancing. Significantly, an entire style of dancing and type of event had been reduced to a single dance that the publishers called “the Barn Dance.” In the popular urban image of barn dance, the entire tradition had been commodified into a single set of steps, a novelty that, like the cakewalk for example, belonged to a group on the periphery of mainstream white, urban consumer society.

A comedy routine called *Si Perkins’ Barn Dance*, originally recorded in 1909 and preserved on wax cylinder, offers another glimpse into how urban audiences regarded the barn dance. It features a

---

recurring quadrille melody complete with called dance figures, affected rural New England accents, and simple patter between the protagonists, voiced by vaudeville performers Ada Jones and Len Spencer. The young folks are encouraged to get up and dance, with the dance leader joking “don’t have to act like donkeys if ye do be at a barn dance!”  

Jacob Smith, a scholar of early phonograph recordings, argues that Si Perkins’ Barn Dance offers two potential ways that modern, urban audiences of early phonographs might have imagined the barn dance around 1909. The first is as a relic of a lost time and place in American rural life, as the dialogue creates a “nostalgic depiction of a romanticized country life lost to modernity.” The second is as a form of entertainment enjoyed by those of a lower class and social standing, an interpretation that considers not only the content of the dialogue but the medium and context of the recording itself. Audiences treated the recording as “a caricature of comic rubes as performed by two urban, sophisticated modern media stars,” affording them the ability to mock from a distance. The audience for this recording likely included the same type of audience that surrounded Ives in New York City: young, urban consumers with enough disposable income to purchase the latest modern entertainment technology. We might surmise, then, that Ives was familiar with, or at the very least realized the potential for, these stereotypes of the barn dance to be present in urban American popular culture in the 1900s and 1910s.

In sum, the barn dance had been commodified, whether for sale by mass media or transformed into an object of superficial rurality for the benefit of urban cultural consumers.

---


Washington’s Birthday is a reaction to this exact social circumstance, since, as Lawrence Kramer has argued, “the old America [Ives] celebrated, as opposed to the new America he resisted, was to be imagined as a culture that above all could not be commodified.”\(^{89}\) For Kramer, Ives’s modernist recasting of old, borrowed melodies was his way to counter that commodification, and further removed Ives’s music from its contemporary symphonic milieu. In other words, Ives’s music specifically distances the barn dance from its contemporary meaning.

**Genre Politics**

One of the main ways that Ives tried to subvert this Gilded Age value system that not only privileged the cultivated tradition but also represented much of what Ives found distasteful in modern American culture was to engage in the politics of classical music genres. Here I refer to the entrenched ideas and biases about the symphony explored in chapter 2 with regard to Chadwick. These ideas are political because they inform the power dynamics of classical music gatekeepers—such as critics, music directors, and patrons, to name a few—who made decisions about music in part due to questions about class and geography. Ives’s upbringing in the late nineteenth-century New England musical culture that revered the symphony, his attendance at symphony concerts in Boston, New Haven, New York, and at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893, and especially his education under Horatio Parker (who was Chadwick’s pupil) ensured that he was well aware of prejudices pertaining to the symphony in particular and the cultivated classical music tradition at large. In *Memos*, Ives offers a pithy summary of his feelings on genre, writing that “labels in art are

\(^{89}\) Kramer, “Music and the Politics of Memory,” 465.
popular, easy to make, equally confusing, and usually wrong somewhere.” He expresses frustration with genre labeling yet also proves to be adept at participating in these genre politics.

For one thing, Ives makes no attempt to conceal his disdain for the institution of the symphony in America. He understood that the symphony, as both a genre and as an American enterprise, dictated taste and cultural norms, but that it also fostered a culture of commercialism. In such an environment, patrons, directors, and artists were all complicit in perpetuating a status quo that elevated nineteenth-century European music and, in Ives's words, “creat[ed] a kind of American Music inferiority complex.”

From early in his compositional life, Ives encountered the prejudices of the symphony qua genre. In recalling his First Symphony in D minor, written as the culmination of his studies at Yale, Ives noted that Parker required him to rewrite his harmonically adventurous first movement in order to adhere to certain rules and conventions of the genre. Although Parker eventually allowed Ives to keep his original movement, he admonished him with a smile: “You must promise to end in D minor.” Ives also acquiesced to Parker's request to replace a G♭ movement with “a nice formal” F major slow movement. He clarifies that Parker felt the original slow movement, which eventually found a home in the Second Symphony, was “not dignified [enough] for a real symphony.” This recollection echoes the same language used to discount the genre appropriateness of Chadwick's Second Symphony due to his use of supposedly ethnic melodies (see chapter 2). Ives's lack of

---

90 Ives, Memos, 78.
91 Ibid., 41. Recent research has corroborated Ives's observation; as Douglas Shadle has shown, influential figures in the enterprise of American symphony orchestras, such as Theodore Thomas, willfully underperformed American music in favor of popular European standard fare (Douglas W. Shadle, Orchestrating the Nation: The Nineteenth-Century American Symphonic Enterprise [New York: Oxford University Press, 2016], 270–76).
92 Ives, Memos, 51.
93 Ibid., 52.
symphonic dignity was because he used popular songs (such as those by Stephen Foster) and populist gospel hymns, prompting Ives to ask rhetorically “can’t you get something better than that in a symphony?,” on behalf of an imagined high society audience.\textsuperscript{94} As it was for Chadwick, the implication is that the symphony demands certain kinds of melodies that do not include ethnic, or in this case, popular tunes.\textsuperscript{95} Ives goes on to observe the double standard that allowed an established European composer like Dvořák to use the same kinds of melodies, about which the same hypothetical audience would say “How delightful!” This observation encapsulated Ives’s thinking about how highbrow culture regarded the incursion of vernacular musics into its genres.

Ives uses the barn dance to reconcile his nineteenth-century idealized memories with his twentieth-century reality, but also to contrast these two time periods. These eras are inextricably connected to place, since as Casey argues, “there is no (grasping of) time without place.”\textsuperscript{96} Ives’s nineteenth-century nostalgia is aligned with the rural while his twentieth-century present, and the excesses of the Gilded Age, are represented by the urban. Genres like the symphony were not only part of the elite cultural practice of the Gilded Age, but they belonged to the city, where the institutions, musicians, and cultural capital existed to support symphonic performances. Even with all its growth, the Danbury of Ives’s youth was still too culturally provincial to support a symphony performance.

Whereas the symphony represented an educated, musically literate, urban elite—in other words, Ives’s Manhattan world—the barn dance was an open, rural event that required no special

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{95} As noted in chapter 2, many of the popular tunes of this era were heavily influenced by Irish or African American music, resulting in a potential conflation of the ethnic and popular.
\item \textsuperscript{96} Casey, \textit{Getting Back Into Place}, 21. Emphasis in original. See also Casey’s discussion of place, time, and nostalgia on pp. 37–39.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
skills. Symphonies and other genres like the sonata reinforced hierarchical ideas about what type of person or what types of music should be involved in musical culture, but Ives did not subscribe to these strictures. On multiple occasions, Ives suggested that the symphony reflected everyman ideals and rural life. In the “Postface” to 114 Songs, Ives writes of the “progressive interest of every man in art” that will lead to the day when “every man while digging his potatoes will breathe his own epics, his own symphonies.”97 Here Ives invokes the New England myth of the educated and cultivated farmer, an idea that appealed equally to Carl Ruggles, as we shall see in the next chapter. Ives also declared in his Essays Before a Sonata that “Thoreau was a great musician” because “he did not have to go to Boston to hear ‘the Symphony.’”98 Ives also invokes agricultural work as a counterbalance to a formal, European-styled music education. On Debussy, Ives criticizes his “vitality” by writing that his “content would have been worthier his manner if he had hoed corn”; on the recent establishment of a music fellowship at the American Academy in Rome, he laments: “It may be possible that a day in a ‘Kansas wheat field’ will do more for [an American composer] than three years in Rome.”99 In all these quotes, it is clear that Ives wanted to erase the distinction between agrarian life and cosmopolitan symphonies, suggesting that the sublime power of the symphony could be part of a transcendentalist communion with nature. Or at the very least, he implies that a rural American life and work ethic is just as important, if not more so, than the urban, European conservatory education. As an icon of rural farm life, the barn dance had a similar democratizing effect within the symphonic genre.

Ives is therefore making a political statement about the genre of the symphony by including a

98 Ives, Essays Before a Sonata, 51.
99 Ibid., 82, 93.
barn dance in the first movement of his *Holidays Symphony*. The use of fiddle tunes flew in the face of symphony elites who would not allow Foster songs, Irish-tinged melodies, or gospel hymns into the genre.\(^{100}\) The appearance of a Jew’s harp halfway through the *Washington’s Birthday* barn dance was another way for Ives to thumb his nose at the genteel culture that revered and glorified the symphony. Ives states that he inserted the Jew’s harp because he remembered how “in the old barn dances, about all the men would carry Jew’s harps in their vest pockets or in the calf of their boots.”\(^{101}\) Aside from this programmatic rationale, the Jew’s harp was an instrument that elite society historically regarded as a crude, unrefined noisemaker. Frederick Crane notes that as early as the sixteenth century in Europe, “some highbrows were expressing a low opinion of the Jew’s harp,” while the seventeenth-century French scholar Marin Mersenne “declared it to be an instrument of lackeys and people of the lower classes” in his 1636 treatise *Harmonie Universelle*, sentiments which persisted to Ives’s time.\(^{102}\)

Because Ives’s *Washington’s Birthday* barn dance brought its rural informality into the urban and formal space of the symphony, Ives uses the Jew’s harp much as it would have been in the folksy and informal setting of the barn dance. He notates a melody for the instrument but, reflecting the casual approach many amateur players took, comments that “its ability to play a diatonic tune is more apparent than real.”\(^{103}\) While it is possible to play precise melodies on the Jew’s harp

---

\(^{100}\) Gayle Sherwood Magee notes that Horatio Parker was especially critical of camp meeting hymns, such as those by Moody and Sankey (e.g., “In the Sweet By and By”), as well as quartet choir anthems in the style of Dudley Buck, both of whom Ives championed and emulated. See Magee, *Charles Ives Reconsidered*, 49–55.

\(^{101}\) Ives, *Memos*, 96.


\(^{103}\) Ives, *Memos*, 96.
(Beethoven’s teacher Johann Georg Albrechtsberger even wrote a number of Jew’s harp concertos), Ives instead has the Jew’s harp paired with a fiddle tune that appears in either the flute, horn, or violin parts. The Jew’s Harp typically plays a simplified version of the fiddle tune melody or emphasizes rhythmically important notes in the fiddle tune using pitches from the instrument’s easily played overtone series. For example, at measure 141 the horn is playing the 6/8 Irish fiddle tune “Garryowen” in D major but the Jew’s harp just plays a G accenting the first note of each triplet grouping (ex. 3.5). This style reflects Ives’s comment that the Jew’s harp would be played at the barn dance “more as a drum than as an instrument of tones.”

Example 3.5: Ives, *Washington’s Birthday*, mm. 141–143. The horn plays the Irish fiddle tune “Garryowen” in D major, while the Jew’s harp drones on G, accenting the first note of each triplet group in the horn’s melody. Used with permission by Associated Music Publishers, Inc.

Matters of performance practice also figure into Ives’s genre politics. Ives wanted to ensure that his violinists sounded like fiddlers, using short, choppy bow movements and a harsher tone rather than the mellifluous Romantic ideal typically found in symphonies, violin sonatas, or virtuosic recitals. In preparing for the premiere of *Washington’s Birthday* in 1931, Ives advised the conductor,

---

104 Ibid.
Nicolas Slonimsky, to “let em ‘git it going’—no pretty tones and long bowing,” during the barn dance section.\(^{105}\) For a recording of the barn dance in 1934, Ives told Wallingford Riegger, who oversaw the session, “it’s a rough dance and the strings should fiddle it and not ‘play it too nice’ on the accents—they kind of dig into—down bow and not glide into ‘pretty’—you know what I mean.”\(^{106}\)

Aside from the musical elements that undermined symphonic genre restrictions, there were certain informal codes associated with the barn dance that contrasted greatly with rules of formal dances. For Ives, the rules that restricted certain elements from the symphony were part of the same genteel social forces that governed dancing in turn-of-the-century America. Thus, we may find a homology between the use of the barn dance in the symphony and the contrast between informal and formal dances.

Country dances like Ives’s barn dance were a more egalitarian and democratic social event since anyone, regardless of class, ethnicity, or family status, could participate due to the learning-through-performance nature of the dancing. Notebooks with directions for country dances are found throughout the ephemera of many Connecticut families, indicating not only their ubiquity but the diversity of their participants.\(^{107}\) As mentioned earlier, even the choreography encouraged inclusion and participation. On the other hand, dance historian Barbara Stratyner argues that formal dances “functioned in the context of the participant’s fear of outsiders being inadvertently assimilated into

---

\(^{105}\) Ives to Nicolas Slonimsky, 18? August 1931, MSS 14, 32/2.

\(^{106}\) Ives to Wallingford Riegger, 13 May 1934, in MSS 14, 31/13.

\(^{107}\) For instance, there is a notebook of country dance instructions from no earlier than 1880, including “Money Musk” and “Fisher’s Hornpipe,” that belonged to Edward Fuller of Tolland, CT. Fuller served in the state senate and was relatively wealthy for a town such as Tolland. The possession of this notebook demonstrates that these contra dances would have been popular outside of rural farm communities. Edward Fuller, “Directions for square and country dances, after 1880,” ms 70987, The Connecticut Historical Society.
the culture.” Formal dances required prior knowledge of dance steps, and because access to this knowledge was restricted by class and ethnicity, dancing became a way for young upper-class or aspiring middle-class Yankees to participate in the politics of cultural identity and to prevent the assimilation of those who might upset cultural homogeneity.

Indeed, an 1850 advertisement for dancing lessons in Hartford from a Mr. James Quinn boasts that students will learn dance, “that requisite accomplishment, so necessary for all young Ladies and Gentlemen who possess a good education.” This kind of dance “literacy” is similar to what Judith Tick has identified as the legitimizing role of the piano for young nineteenth-century women looking to demonstrate their good social standing. Lack of dance knowledge might contribute to social exclusion among genteel society, as exhibited in nineteenth-century literature such as novels by Henry James. Characters risked committing a faux pas by not knowing certain dances, suggesting an outsider status. For example, in William Dean Howells’s parodic depiction of Boston socialites, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, the titular character’s daughters did not take the same private dancing classes as their other wealthy peers. This impeded their social standing, since as Howells notes, “a great gulf divided them from those who did” take the private classes. Ives’s invocation of the barn dance carries these associations of a welcoming, inclusive attitude into the insular world of the symphony.

---

The barn dance also suggested a degree of freedom in contrast to the tight-lipped formality of Gilded Age balls and dances. The most popular formal dance of Ives's boyhood era was a square formation dance called the German Cotillion, known simply as “The German.” The German was an especially regimented and ordered set of figures. Dance instructor Harris B. Dick noted in his 1895 manual devoted to the German that the dance leader who calls the figures “is for the time an autocrat,” and that the “[German] Cotillion is often all predetermined, with a very set order of figures and dances to ensure that there is no confusion or mixing up of the dancers.” The passage continues:

all interference should be avoided; for, unless the music, figures, and other details are determined by a single individual, the result will be hopeless confusion. It is scarcely necessary to add that these several points should be strictly observed, and that any departure from them displays . . . an entire lack of good breeding.\(^{113}\)

Compare this to Ives’s barn dance where hopeless confusion is the goal. Furthermore, the barn dance undermines the authoritarian order of a formal dance such as the German. Ives is not interested in this elitist concept of social grooming or following strict musical and dance rules. Chelsey Lynne Hamm notes that Ives associated dissonance with “democracy” while “oppressive regulation” was equated to consonance and “conventional compositional procedures,” by which she generally means compositional styles in line with the hegemonic German practices of the late Romantic era, including symphonies.\(^{114}\) Ives’s rhythmically and harmonically dissonant barn dance represented this notion of democracy as opposed to the rules of the symphonic genre.

Many of these issues of genre might seem merely terminological were it not for the fact that

\(^{113}\) Harris B. Dick, \textit{How to Lead the German} (New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, 1895), 6, 8, 10.

Ives was so adamant about ensuring that *Washington’s Birthday*, and specifically the barn dance, be designated as part of a symphony when they were finally published, first as a recording and then as a printed score in the mid-1930s. Despite wrestling with the work’s genre designation during its genesis, he seemed to go out of his way to attach the piece’s public identity to the symphony. When *New Music Quarterly Recordings* released a 78 rpm disc in 1934 featuring only the barn dance section of *Washington’s Birthday*, the disc label read “‘BARN DANCE’ from a movement of a Symphony by CHARLES IVES” (fig. 3.4).\(^{115}\) It did not read “Holidays” anywhere, meaning there was no programmatic context that might clarify why the barn dance was in the symphony. Similarly, when the score was first published in 1936 as part of the *New Music* Orchestra Series, Ives wrote to the publisher, Gerald Strang, to specify that the outside cover read “‘First movement from a Symphony — Holidays’ with no mention of Washington’s Birthday.”\(^{116}\) The fact that this was a movement from a symphony was of greater importance to Ives than the title of *Washington’s Birthday*.

\(^{115}\) Charles Ives, “Barn Dance” and “In the Night,” Pan American Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Nicolas Slonimsky, *New Music Quarterly Recordings*, vol. 1, no. 5, 1934, 78rpm disc. MSS 26, The Carl Ruggles Papers in the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library of Yale University, Historical Sound Recordings Collection. Thanks to Mark Bailey, head of Historical Sound Recordings at the Gilmore Music Library, for providing the image of the disc.

\(^{116}\) Harmony Ives to Gerald Strang, 26 December 1936, MSS 14 35/6. Strang took over the duties of running *New Music* while Cowell was in prison on a morals charge from 1936–1940.
“Music Has Always Been an Emasculated Art”

Part of the reason Ives is able to traverse the space between his twentieth-century urban present and his nineteenth-century rural past is the nature of his nostalgic glance. Ives is a composer who traffics heavily in nostalgia and it has formed the basis of much analysis of his music and biography. What is germane to an examination of the barn dance is the degree to which Ives hangs his nostalgia on a variety of intersectional issues such as emasculation, domesticity, and landscape, and how these issues all relate to geographic associations with concepts of urbanity and rurality.

Anxiety about effeminacy and a loss of virility persisted throughout the arts and Gilded Age culture. But Ives's fear of emasculation is also a rhetorical stick to wave at the institutions and agents
who influenced musical culture in America. In particular he singles out critics, whose perceived bowing to commercial interests spurred Ives to compose Memos in the first place. His oft-quoted comment that “music has always been an emasculated art—at least too much—say 88 2/3%,” comes from an early section of Memos where Ives criticizes the New York Sun critic W. J. Henderson and Boston Herald critic Philip Hale by name.\textsuperscript{117} In Ives’s ideology, emasculation is an analogue for complacency with the status quo and musical conservatism.\textsuperscript{118} It is a symptom of being told what to think and how to appreciate music (closely allied with academicism, which Ives also takes to task). Ives digs his heels in even further in suggesting that “nice and dear old ladies,” as he calls some critics (“nice” was Ives’s favorite patronizing adjective), were complicit in turning music into a bourgeois capitalistic enterprise, where critics are paid to perpetuate the safe, canonic, profitable works of the nineteenth-century German masters, never giving a chance to the more financially risky modern American composers.\textsuperscript{119} He disparagingly calls attention to the fact that critics “take money” on multiple occasions throughout his writings, lamenting that commercialism is “perhaps the most obvious” cause of America “going soft.”\textsuperscript{120}

In part, Ives’s attraction to the rural in general and the barn dance specifically is that rurality represented strength, and strong music was perhaps more immune to emasculation. Ives’s nostalgia for the rural nineteenth century is, in part, a longing for this masculine strength, and counters his twentieth-century geographic reality that he felt was emasculated and weak. In his rants against emasculation, one of the offending groups is the “play-itPRETTY boys,” musicians who were overly

\textsuperscript{117} Ives, Memos, 30.
\textsuperscript{118} “This does not dismiss or justify the underlying sexism and misogyny that also accompanied Ives’s accusations of emasculation or his gendered insults lobbed at critics.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 28.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 133.
concerned with tone and technique. Ives’s desire for the violinists in *Washington’s Birthday* to play the fiddle tunes in a country style, and his directive to Riegger that the musicians should not “play it too nice” or “pretty,” was not only part of the genre politics within the symphony, but countered what he saw as effeminate weakness in performance. Bringing the sound of nineteenth-century rural New England into the symphony directly countered those “play-it-pretties.”

As Chelsey Lynne Hamm notes, Ives often associated tonality and consonance with weakness and emasculation, as evidenced in numerous harangues against certain kinds of music as well as listeners in *Memos.*121 Conversely, he equated dissonance with strength. Ives therefore may have felt compelled to defend his own use of tonality, and one method of bolstering the strength of a purely tonal passage, such as the start of the barn dance section in *Washington’s Birthday* (mm. 61–64), was to utilize a playing style like country fiddling that could counter perceptions of consonant weakness and effeminacy. In lieu of harmonic dissonance, Ives opts for what might be termed a dissonance of performance practice. Elsewhere in the movement, the harmonic and rhythmic dissonance that results from the suggestion of amateurism and also the layering of multiple fiddle tune melodies at the end of the barn dance further contributes to the strength of the barn dance. Ives may have figured that if he was going to write a “nice” fiddle tune in 2/4, or a “nice” sentimental tune during the final section of *Washington’s Birthday,* they should be accompanied by melodies playing in another key entirely.

Rurality not only offered Ives a way to access representations of strength, but also gave his music a connection to Colonial-era New England as part of his Colonial revival ideology. Linking his music to a much earlier geography, such as seventeenth- and eighteenth-century New England,

---

recalls an era of pioneering and rigid Puritan social orders, associations that work against the
tameness of genteel culture or the perceived emasculation of music. In Ives’s discussion of the *Prelude
and Postlude for a Thanksgiving Service*, an early piece that was later revised as the *Thanksgiving and
Forefathers’ Day* movement of the *Holidays Symphony*, he relates how “Dr. Griggs said it had
something of the Puritan character, a stern but outdoors strength, and something of the pioneering
feeling.” Ives later reiterates the same idea, noting that the sonority of a major and minor chord
separated by a whole tone “was to represent the sternness and strength and austerity of the Puritan
character.”122 Others echoed this sentiment, such as Henry Bellamann who wrote in program notes
for the first two movements of the Fourth Symphony that the music “is of New England—the New
England of granitic Puritanism.”123 Just as Ives did for his *Thanksgiving* movement, Bellamann
suggests that the severity of the dissonant and difficult music was rooted in the hardness of New
England Puritanism. “Outdoors strength” seems to be, for Ives, a purer expression of brawn, and it is
significant therefore that most of Ives’s memories commemorated in music, including three
movements of the *Holidays Symphony*, incorporate outdoor scenes. Ives also mentions that Parker had
poked fun at the piece’s polytonal harmony, further emphasizing his association of weakness with his
teacher’s pedantic, German rules of composition, and strength with his own “free” style.

In imagining the location of his barn dance in pre-industrial Old Danbury, Ives’s nostalgia is
also a yearning for antebellum New England domesticity. This imagination of regional home life
lacked the commodifying forces that led to emasculation, but also reinforced traditional gender roles.
On matters of gender, Ives was perhaps at his most conservative. Village life after the Civil War
coded feminine to many veterans who had returned home, and the rise of fraternal organizations, as

well as brass bands, in the following years helped men escape from what Swafford calls “the feminized world of family, church, temperance, and sissified Culture.”

Ives reinforces the domesticity of Old Danbury in his program for *Washington's Birthday* by quoting four lines from *Snow-Bound* by John Greenleaf Whittier: “The older folks sit ‘. . . the clean winged hearth about, / Shut in from all the world without, / Content to let the north wind roar / In baffled rage at pane and door.’” When Whittier published *Snow-Bound* in 1866 it was already a nostalgic work, not only because it expressed longing for simpler antebellum times as part of its content, but because as a genre in that time the domestic pastoral was somewhat “played out.” Just as Whittier’s portrayal of domestic nineteenth-century home life was an anachronism in post-Civil War America, Ives’s portrayal of New England rural life at a barn dance was anachronistic in the early twentieth century. Both artists sought to claim something of the past as a way to reconcile schisms in their present. For Whittier, the view of domestic life in *Snow-Bound* might help the country find a sense of order following a gruesome five years of tumult. For Ives, the merriment of the barn dance could remind people of a time before urbanization and booming technology upended the stability of rural America as represented by Old Danbury. Like *Washington's Birthday*, *Snow-Bound* is what James E. Rocks calls a “poem of reconciliation with the past and the future.”

As Rocks argues, part of *Snow-Bound’s* appeal for men was that, despite offering a sentimental view of domestic home life, it also offered an avenue for assertions of masculinity within that domesticity. The home was a symbol of femininity, “defined and controlled by women as a place of refuge from the active world of material gain and political turmoil,” while “the anxiety of

---

126 Ibid., 343.
manhood was overcome in the world outside the home.”¹²⁷ In the context of Ives’s “Postface” to Washington’s Birthday, striking out into the cold during a blizzard for an evening of socializing is part of the composer’s desire to overcome the anxiety of manhood. It is the “older folks” of his father’s generation who stay home “content to let the north wind roar,” comfortable in the nurturing, feminine warmth of the hearth. Ives’s own anxiety of emasculation through domestic music-making, and its analogue in formal dancing, could be soothed by leaving the house and its piano tradition, and going to the barn dance with its informal, raucous dancing and fiddle playing.

As a response to the Romantic-era focus on universalism in music, Ives commented that he saw no reason why a composer had to avoid representations of the local in order to be universal and cosmic.¹²⁸ For Ives, universality and the infinite were attainable in the local as long as the content of the music or landscape aspired to a higher spiritual plane or power. Although the barn dance was an expression of hyper-locality in that it was not only American, not only New Englander, but rural Western Connecticuter, Ives also used it as part of an everyman appeal that transcended geographic specificity. Broyles observes how Ives’s politics move directly from the village to the global, and his proposed reforms “sought to enervate if not demolish the nation as a political entity.”¹²⁹ In the same way, his geography goes from local to universal, with very little of the national. Certainly, Ives is interested in the American national imagination, in that he uses a variety of American melodies that are not specific to New England. Yet his Americanisms are always viewed first through the lens of New England. Washington’s Birthday contains no patriotic melodies, only dance melodies with a

¹²⁷ Ibid., 342.
¹²⁸ In Memos, Ives writes “Some say ‘Why choose local authors for a reason for music?—people will say you are provincial. Why the local (which is national, and not universal and cosmic)?’ I say ‘Oh Hell’ to this label monger!” (77).

Part of the tragic nature of nostalgia is that the past, so passionately longed for, can never be recreated. Just as Ives cannot return to Old Danbury, he cannot return to a lifestyle of rural domesticity. He certainly tried to do so in establishing his country home at West Redding, Connecticut, a small village near Danbury with a rural character closer to his imagined Old Danbury. James Hepokoski argues convincingly that in places where Ives nostalgically resurrects a nineteenth-century melody of his childhood, often accompanied by dissonance, a feeble *diminuendo*, or a tonal melody that lingers unresolved, the implied meaning is one of loss “and the irretrievability of a cherished past.”

Ives presents exactly this sort of quotation twice in *Washington's Birthday*, reflecting this unattainability. The melody of “Home, Sweet Home!” at the opening of the work is barely graspable, played softly on a muted violin, the D major melody clashing against a chromatically saturated triple *piano* chord in the muted strings underneath (see ex. 3.1). On the other side of the piece, at the very end Ives writes a dissonant A#/A dyad between the violin and flute at measure 178 rather than the expected G of the previous tonal melody, while the lower strings play a G major chord and the flute quotes the sentimental song “Goodnight Ladies” in F major. That quotation of “Goodnight Ladies” ends unresolved, lingering on scale degree 2 before dissolving into the background soundscape. Hepokoski suggests that Ives’s sense of loss is for the innocence of his childhood home and its socio-cultural (white, middle-class, Yankee) homogeneity. The example of the barn dance adds a geographic layer: Ives’s sense of loss was also for the rural, New England

---

130 Hepokoski, “Temps Perdu. Revolutionary or Reactionary?,” 750.
landscape of his youth. Certainly, the barn dance, and the Old Danbury it signifies, implied exactly that Yankee socio-cultural identity that Hepokoski describes.

Reconciliation

By pointing to the cultural relevance and meaning of informal country dances in nineteenth-century rural New England life while working within the musical prejudices and genre expectations of the twentieth century, Ives could effectively navigate between these two worlds. In doing so he began to articulate his own complex relationship to his various geographies. Ives did not categorically shun the city, even though Washington's Birthday, and many other pieces, long for the obsolete rural geography of Old Danbury. In addition to music inspired by a rural camp meeting or small town parades, Ives depicted the sounds of a college town ritual, a scene from a crowded Manhattan trolley station, or the busy street below his Manhattan apartment window. At the core of most of his compositions was a desire to reflect his lived experience, which was neither strictly urban nor rural, city nor country. In addition to his agrarian West Redding property, Ives kept a home in Manhattan right up until his death, even though he had stopped working in the New York insurance business over twenty years earlier.

Ives returned often to the barn dance in his works, most notably in his Violin Sonata no. 2, the other piece which uses the barn dance specifically as a programmatic device during the middle movement, titled “In the Barn.” He also famously used what he called “barn-dance fiddles” in the Second Symphony, which includes a number of fiddle tunes alongside patriotic, popular, and hymn tunes in its final movement as “a kind of general overture” portraying the Danbury of Ives’s youth.131

131 Ives, Memos, 52.
Here the sounds of both Ives’s imagined Old Danbury and the reality of his lived 1870s and 80s Danbury commingle. Throughout his career, Ives equated fiddle tunes with the general attitude and affect of a scherzo movement, since both the scherzo as a genre and the barn dance convey a sense of jocular fun. For example, the scherzo movement of his Trio for Piano, Violin and Cello (subtitled “TSIAJ,” or “This Scherzo Is A Joke”), uses many of the same barn dance melodies that appear in Washington’s Birthday, both the traditional old-time fiddle tunes and the mid-nineteenth-century popular tunes such as “Camptown Races,” “Turkey in the Straw,” or “Massa’s in de Cold Ground.”

Although many of the quotations that Ives used throughout his career came from the vernacular tradition, none as a category had a more ruralizing effect on his music than the barn dance melodies. This became an important part of his legacy, since being a rural composer contributed to the idea of artistic isolation that was crucial to the “Ives Legend.” Gayle Sherwood Magee notes that in the first significant biography of Ives, by Henry and Sidney Cowell, “Ives underwent a startling transformation from a nervous, hermetically creative New York businessman into a deep-rooted Connecticut Yankee who preserved long-lost regional music in his compositions.”132 As an example of this conversion, in a scene from the 1976 biopic A Good Dissonance Like a Man, an actor portrays a wizened Ives wandering through the wooded countryside, singing to himself and cursing loudly at the technological intrusion of an overhead airplane.133 Ives’s rurality as implied by the barn dance also gave him a stronger claim to New England identity. From the 1930s onward, representations of New England in art and literature were increasingly located in the rural, small-town villages of the region, a vestige of both Colonial revival aesthetics from the turn

132 Magee, Charles Ives Reconsidered, 155.
of the century as well as populist Depression-era art such as the illustrations of Norman Rockwell or Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*. The barn dance helped to cement Ives's music as belonging to rural New England (fig. 3.5).

Largely because of practical circumstance, in 1934 the barn dance from *Washington's Birthday* became the first recorded Ives composition. Early recording technology would only permit slightly more than four minutes per side of a 78 rpm disc, and because the barn dance lasted only about two minutes, it was combined with another short Ives composition, “In the Night” from the *Set for Theatre or Chamber Orchestra*. Given the relative paucity of performances of Ives's work by the mid-1930s and their confinement to larger cities, the barn dance was likely many listeners' introduction to his music. In one sense, the record serves as a microcosm of the complicated urban-rural dialectic of Ives's own reality and identity. Presented on an album of other ultra-modern music—in this case Carl Ruggles's song “Toys,” his “Lilacs” from *Men and Mountains*, and Ives's “In the Night”—the barn dance stands out as having a markedly more folk-like sound due to its subject matter, dance rhythms, and many popular quotations.

At the same time, the fact that this music appeared on a recording issued by *New Music* categorized the piece as a work of contemporary art music. Ives's barn dance was not the kind of music listeners heard from their radios on popular barn dance programs such as the National Barn Dance or the Grand Ole Opry, nor would any listeners mistake it for such with its harmonic and rhythmic dissonance. It was part of a different genre, and by association a different geographical provenance, since classical music suggested not only the city, but Northern cities such as New York and Boston. In this way, the recording serves as another reminder of the difficulty of pigeonholing Ives's music into one kind of geography or another.
Figure 3.5: Program for “Ives: The New England Context,” concert featuring The Dessoff Choirs, Michael Hammond, music director; Lucy Shelton, soprano; Arthur Burrows, baritone; Raymond Beegle, piano and organ. 30 March 1974, Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center, New York City. In Ives clippings file, Music Division, NYPL-PA.
One irony of this recording is that as an event, the barn dance was meant to be experienced live. So much of what Ives wanted to convey in the barn dance is presented as a particular attitude in approaching the playing of this music. Capturing a single performance on shellac strips away some of the spontaneity of the barn dance. Additionally, the barn dance seems most meaningful when placed within the context of the opening and closing sections, a vivid and colorful remembrance surrounded by music that is meant to evoke the murky act of remembering. The recording converts this active, personal participation into a passive, impersonal listening experience, turning the barn dance into the very commodified object Ives hoped to avoid. The necessary decision to excise the opening and closing sections further objectified the barn dance and separated it from its web of meaning. This was a potentially unintended but apt metaphor for Ives’s own conception of the barn dance and how its meaning changed for him over the years. No longer attending the event himself—something he might not have done since his earliest memories of dances from the 1870s and 80s—Ives’s encounter with the barn dance metamorphosed from an active enjoyment to a memory frozen nostalgically in time.

During the 1930s, the barn dance experienced something of a revival, spurred on by the same impulses that led to a resurgence of interest in folk song, populist art, and nationalistic tendencies common throughout the Depression era. Renewed interest in old traditions among rural New Englanders was part of this revival impulse. However, Newt Tolman claims that a driving force behind the square and contra dance revival in rural New England during the 1930s was urban residents searching for authentic country customs.\textsuperscript{134} Many of these were either families that had

permanently relocated to the country after the stock market crash of 1929, or weekend skiers who were increasingly showing up in larger numbers to New England mountain communities in the winter.

In this sense, the barn dance still functioned much as it had for the Gilded Age crowd, allowing financially successful urban residents to appropriate the event as a commodified object of entertainment removed from all the associations it originally held for Ives. Two photographs from March 1937, published in *Vogue*, show a barn dance thrown at the Waldorf-Astoria hotel in Manhattan, attended by some of New York’s wealthiest socialites, including Millicent Hearst, wife of newspaper tycoon William Randolph Hearst. On the left, attendees are dressed in outrageous costumes, clearly meant to mock country living, while the photograph on the right shows a jazz big band, including saxophones and piano, providing music for the event (fig. 3.6). If there were fiddlers in the band, they were not in these photographs.

![Figure 3.6: Two photographs by Remie Lohse of a barn dance hosted by Elsa Maxwell at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York, NY, 1937. Published in *Vogue*, March 1937. Images courtesy of Artstor Digital Library. *Left*: attendees dressed in exaggerated and elaborate farmer costumes, including a scarecrow. *Right*: attendees enjoying music from a jazz big band, including Millicent Hearst (seated at right), wife of newspaper tycoon William Randolph Hearst.](image-url)
To urban consumers, the barn dance retained many of its associations with lower social standing, closely aligned with prejudices about rural Americans and their education. In a widely circulated pamphlet titled “The Barn Dance Returns!,” which was reprinted in the magazine Recreation in November 1937, the authors preemptively defend the barn dance against those who might look down upon it, writing that “once young people . . . have been to a real old-time barn dance, they see that their easy contempt of ‘country dances’ is ill-founded and come to demand this type of entertainment.”

Their description of how to throw a barn dance is riddled with appropriated country dialects which mark the barn dance as othered, rural, and belonging to a less educated/cultured society. For example, the pamphlet suggests the following text for an invitation:

“We’uns is going to have a Barn Warmin’ and You’uns is invited. We’uns is going to wear gingham aprons. You’uns do the same and tell your man to wear overalls.” Costuming is presented as a big part of the fun, especially for city dwellers. The pamphlet does, however, recommend obtaining “an old-time fiddler” for the dance, demonstrating how persistent the image of a sole fiddler was for the barn dance, perhaps boosted by the popularity of the national radio shows featuring old-time fiddle music.

Ives was still interested in using the barn dance as a political statement during the 1930s, as demonstrated by his genre specifications for the score and recording of Washington's Birthday. However, by that time his situation had changed dramatically from the era in which he composed this piece. His reputation was finally becoming more widespread, one that revolved around authentic Americanisms and experimentalism via his use of indigenous New England folk melodies of all kinds. Indeed, it was during this time that Ives dictated Memos, providing many of the quotes that

inform this study about New England identity and memories. Ives’s role as documentarian or ethnographer of American music, rather than as someone expressing his own, more narrow regionalist identity, became the dominant narrative in Ives’s growing public identity. The barn dance was subsumed into this larger mix of Americanisms, losing some of its regionalist coloring. Yet it was still a crucial aspect of Ives’s sound, becoming part of the litany of identifying marks listed by Slonimsky in his review of the the Concord Sonata: “Ives’s melodies are unmistakably American, church-hymn American, or ballad-like American, or barn-dance American. Perhaps in this combination of homely reminiscence and complex rhythm and harmony, lies the secret of the uniqueness of Ives.”

---


Chapter 4

“Real Vermonters”: Carl Ruggles, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, and the Men and Mountains of Vermont

Life in the city doesn’t feel like life to me.
—Dorothy Canfield Fisher

The man to whom the world of music owes a great debt is Carl Ruggles—but it may not be fully paid ’til he and an old friend from Redding and “uncle Deac” are walking up that New England mountain in the next world.
—Charles Ives

In a 1951 article for the magazine Vermont Life, Carl Ruggles claimed that “he ran away to the mountains because he is afraid of cities.” His statement fits nicely in a magazine published by the state development commission designed to promote tourism, selling a packaged image of Vermont as a bucolic escape from urban commotion, a rural ideal “shielded from the artificiality of commerce and city life.” Yet there is more myth than truth in Ruggles’s claim.

He and his wife, Charlotte, did indeed start living for part of the year in Arlington, Vermont, in 1921, yet they often returned to New York City, living there for a number of winters in the 1920s. In fact, because the Ruggleses could not afford to adequately insulate and heat their drafty Vermont

2 Harmony Ives, on behalf of Charles Ives, to Carl Ruggles, 6 January 1941, in Tom C. Owens, ed., Selected Correspondence of Charles Ives (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 285. When Ives’s handwriting was especially indecipherable because of health issues, Ives’s wife Harmony or his daughter Edith would take over letter writing duties, writing on behalf of Charles in his voice.
home, they spent most winters from 1924 until 1957 living outside Vermont. Extended stays in
Florida, New York, Jamaica, and New Mexico in the late 1920s were followed by twelve consecutive
winters in South Florida beginning in 1936.5 Thanks to the generosity of wealthy friends, beginning
in the fall of 1948 the Ruggleses spent nine consecutive winters living at the Chelsea Hotel in
Manhattan.6 Ironically, when Ruggles’s comment appeared in Vermont Life in 1951, he was living
about half of the year in Manhattan. As it turns out, he was not afraid of the city at all.

To say that Ruggles was more of the country than the city, or to essentialize him as a rural
composer, would be to deny a central dualism in his life. He loved Vermont; as he was preparing to
leave one winter, he wrote to his friend Charles Ives, “no, we don’t want to leave it all. It’s our
Home.”7 However, he knew that to be a successful modern composer and attain the recognition he
eagerly sought, he had to participate in New York’s cultural life. Twice in the late 1920s when rich
friends offered his family a free extended stay in warm climates, Ruggles hesitated until the last
minute because he did not want to be so far from New York City.8

Still, as is clear from the Vermont Life article, Ruggles understood that part of the rural
Vermont mythos meant positioning its lifestyle as superior to the overworked, hectic pace of the city.
Whether this sentiment is implicitly suggested or overtly stated, it is a brand of regional pride that
Ruggles probably learned quite early in his time living in Vermont, shaped in part by local writers

5 Most of these winters were spent in Coral Gables, Florida, where Ruggles taught a semi-regular
music seminar at the University of Miami.
6 Marilyn J. Zifferin, Carl Ruggles: Composer, Painter, and Storyteller (Urbana: University of Illinois
Own Words,” Perspectives of New Music 6, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 1968): 163.
7 Carl Ruggles to Charles Ives, 10 November 1950, in Zifferin, Carl Ruggles, 201.
8 Ruggles’s friend Henry Schnakenberg described his ambivalence to be away from New York in the
winter: “if any plan [to spend the 1928 winter in Jamaica] is ever broached to Carl he immediately
starts crabbing about it.” Henry Schnakenberg to his mother, 27 October 1928, cited in ibid., 118.
such as Dorothy Canfield Fisher. Ruggles met Fisher soon after moving to the state in 1921, and her friendship was important to him throughout his life. It is likely that her powerful opinions about Vermont character and identity influenced Ruggles’s own sense of what it meant to be a rural Vermonter.

Fisher’s love of Ruggles’s music and their companionship led her to compose a lengthy essay for his first completed orchestral piece, which was also his first piece written entirely in Vermont: the three-movement symphonic suite Men and Mountains, premiered at Aeolian Hall in New York City on December 7, 1924. Although Ruggles was part of the New York ultra-modern music scene as an early member of the International Composers’ Guild (ICG), only a few of his chamber pieces had been performed in the city: Angels for six muted trumpets in 1922, the art song “Toys” in 1923, and the set of songs Vox Clamans in Deserto for chamber orchestra and voice in 1924.9 Men and Mountains was thus an important benchmark in his compositional career: it was his first completed work for orchestra (or any large ensemble), it was his first symphonic piece, thereby aspiring to the highest echelon of cultivated music, and in 1927 it was published in the first issue of Henry Cowell’s New Music Quarterly, a serial publication of scores funded largely by Charles Ives that helped create a canon of modern American music through the 1950s.10 Moreover, this Guild concert was the first

---


held in Aeolian Hall, whose size and prestige demanded both attention and respect from critics and the greater New York musical culture.11

In the reviews of the Men and Mountains premiere, a variety of writers linked the piece and its composer with New England identity and the rural landscape of Southern Vermont. Much of this association was because of Fisher’s essay, a portion of which the ICG excerpted for the program notes distributed at the premiere. Among those who glorified this imagery were the influential critics Lawrence Gilman and Paul Rosenfeld, and in later years, Nicolas Slonimsky, all of whom took their direction from Fisher on the kinds of descriptive metaphors to use in their reviews. Ruggles’s mythologized identity, incorporating images of New England topography and language of the wild, rugged, manly frontier, accompanied nearly every performance of Men and Mountains over the following forty years, as well as many performances of his other works. His biography and personal history, as told through program notes, articles, and by the composer himself, would reflect this image through the rest of his life, and would survive even his death.

This chapter examines the reception of Men and Mountains in relation to Fisher’s programmatic framing. Fisher was a major figure in the regionalist construction of Vermont identity, which was itself a localized version of rural New England identity. However, her broader reach has been overlooked in the scholarship on Ruggles’s music and the shaping of his public identity. Although only her description of the second movement, “Lilacs,” appeared in the Men and Mountains program note, a careful parsing of her full, unpublished essay reveals elements that reframe her other writings on the composer. Fisher used Ruggles to promote a kind of Vermont exceptionalism that highlighted the state’s rurality and perpetuated a number of established myths

11 Lott, “New Music for New Ears,” 277. Lott notes that the Guild was well-known and significant enough by its fourth season that it was the subject of a parody by The Grand Street Follies.
about Vermonters, all at a time when she was involved in the state’s campaign to repopulate its abandoned farmland. Ruggles became a part of Fisher’s “stateist” agenda, and *Men and Mountains* became an important signifier thereof, reinforcing entrenched themes of Vermont identity and character.

Among these themes was the long history of land abandonment and later reclamation—as well as an association with a rugged, masculinized frontier identity—that was part of Vermont’s public character from the end of the Civil War through World War II. Deserted farms and abandoned landscapes were in fact prevalent throughout northern New England, connecting this particular marker of Vermont identity to a wider regional New England identity. Ruggles therefore is part of a larger discourse within contemporary art that used themes of abandonment and rugged wilderness to represent New England landscapes; for example, in the paintings of Edward Hopper and Winslow Homer, in the poetry of Robert Frost, and in the writings of other Vermont authors such as Wallace Nutting. In her later writings about Ruggles, Fisher turned the composer into an archetype of rural Vermont typicality. This framing reflects trends in the state’s approach to tourism of the time, and finds correlations in other touristic writing by Fisher.

At the same time, Ruggles embraced Fisher’s implacement of Vermont identity and landscape into his music because it distanced him from notions of feminized gentility in American musical culture and an Arcadian myth that romanticized nature. Constructing this rural identity gave Ruggles a greater claim to American authenticity, set him apart from his cosmopolitan predecessors, and helped to reinforce many of the transcendentalist and universal ideals that he and his contemporaries attributed to his music. This Vermont implacement also implied a white, Protestant,
Yankee ethnicity that reinforced Ruggles’s bigoted prejudices about who should be able to claim American identity and speak musically for the nation.

While Fisher’s essay certainly framed the reception of *Men and Mountains*, there was also an extra-musical influence on the piece; Ruggles titled the second movement “Lilacs” after Walt Whitman’s elegy “When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom’d.”12 Deniz Ertan has examined how both Ruggles and Whitman “yearned to push beyond the boundaries of identity and locality.”13 Indeed, both artists’ works are often understood as expressions of the sublime, the mystical, and the universal. Yet, as I will argue, Ruggles was tied to certain expressions of locality, and his reading of Whitman accentuated aspects of rural masculinity that were particular to his Vermont identity and the complex tapestry of music and place in both “Lilacs” and *Men and Mountains*.

**Two New Englanders: Ruggles and Fisher**

Although his career was eventually tied to Vermont, Charles Sprague Ruggles was born on March 11, 1876, in East Marion, Massachusetts, a seaside village nestled between Cape Cod and New Bedford. When Ruggles was fourteen the family left East Marion and moved to the Boston suburbs, eventually settling in Watertown, where Ruggles took advantage of its metropolitan environs. He frequently attended concerts of the Boston Symphony Orchestra at the urging of composer and Harvard professor John Knowles Paine, with whom Ruggles took private composition lessons. In 1907, Ruggles moved halfway across the country with his future wife, Charlotte Snell, to

---

12 Ziffrin, *Carl Ruggles*, 93.
Winona, Minnesota. Together they intended to pursue careers as music teachers and ensemble directors.

Ruggles soon devoted himself entirely to composition, and with the goal of writing an opera titled *The Sunken Bell* (which he never finished), he moved to New York City in the fall of 1917. He had friends in the city who could support him artistically and financially, and he believed that he might have a chance to influence the directors of the Metropolitan Opera.\(^\text{14}\) However, Ruggles also felt that New York was the best place for a composer of modern music. By 1917, his use of dissonance and interest in a more contrapuntal, rather than chordal, style of writing had increased dramatically over the course of five years working on *The Sunken Bell*. Manhattan would soon become a locus for radical, modernist composition as opposed to the more conservative Boston, where composers had an academic tendency that, as chapter 2 elaborates, catered to its citizenry’s more staid, Victorian aesthetics.

In 1918, Charlotte and their young son, Micah, joined Ruggles back east and the family settled into a small house in Grantwood, New Jersey, just across the Hudson from Manhattan. By the summer of 1919, the artist Rockwell Kent had begun to implore the Ruggleses to come visit him in Southern Vermont, where he had just purchased some property. Kent met Ruggles in 1913 when they both lived in Winona, and the two became fast friends, supporting each other in their artistic endeavors throughout the teens and twenties.\(^\text{15}\)

Ruggles eventually succumbed to Kent’s repeated entreaties. Since money was tight for


Ruggles his entire life and he frequently depended on the generosity of wealthy friends, the entire family came to live at Kent’s renovated farmhouse estate just north of Arlington in the fall of 1921. Ruggles immediately took to life in this rural town, and in turn the local residents immediately took to Ruggles. With his lively, bawdy, and sometimes irascible personality, he fit the archetypal Yankee character. At the same time, his intense, dissonant, and passionate music was particularly attractive to some of the town’s cultural figures, including one of Kent’s good friends, author Dorothy Canfield Fisher.

Dorothea Francis Canfield was born on February 17, 1879, making her almost three years Ruggles’s junior. She grew up in a variety of midwestern college towns yet spent most summers at her family’s ancestral home in Arlington, Vermont, in a brick farmhouse near the center of town known simply as the “Brick House.” Fisher begins her quirky, homespun history of the state by quoting her father, writing “I have lived in Vermont ever since 1763.”16 Stories and traditions of old Vermont inherited by each subsequent generation of her family made the past seem as real as if she had lived it herself. Many of her ideas about what it meant to be a Vermonter seem to come from an amalgam of her parents’ personalities and the ancient family tales passed down through them.

Both her parents’ families had roots in Vermont; her father’s side was from Arlington, while her mother’s was from Rutland. Her father set out west to work on the railroads after college, embodying the strong, independent, pioneering Vermont spirit. In his later career as a university administrator he was a strong advocate for social justice and campaigned for free trade in the 1880s and 90s. Fisher’s mother, Flavia Camp, was a free spirited artist who, to Dorothy, represented the

rebellious side of Vermont independence, famously immortalized in the Arlington stories of Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys.

Dorothy Canfield therefore grew up with both a sense of fierce independence but also New England conservatism and humility. For her, these seemingly conflicting traits coalesced into Vermont identity. She maintained a strong sense of how Vermont’s history impacted its character, and throughout her life, her fiction and non-fiction were shot through with traces of this personality.\textsuperscript{17} She married John Fisher, a fellow Columbia University graduate, in May 1907, and the new couple moved back to Arlington where her career as a writer began in earnest.

Fisher met Ruggles sometime in 1921 when he was living with Rockwell Kent. She had been one of Kent’s first contacts when he purchased an estate two years earlier, and because Kent had been a Columbia classmate of John Fisher, the Fishers lent him one thousand dollars and housed his family in the Brick House that first summer of 1919.\textsuperscript{18}

Ruggles and Fisher quickly developed a robust friendship (see fig. 4.1). She had become close enough to the Ruggleses by the end of their year living with Kent that she offered them a vacant apartment at the Brick House for the summer of 1922. To thank Fisher for her hospitality, Charlotte composed a poem expressing their gratitude, including the lines “I am happy here / The memories are so fond and true.”\textsuperscript{19} Fisher responded saying that she would forever keep the poem, and joked

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{18} Ziffrin, \textit{Carl Ruggles}, 62. As a woman with a Ph.D. from Columbia University, Fisher was well-positioned for success in the literary world. By 1919, she had already published what would become her best-selling novel, \textit{Understood Betsy}. Her financial stability allowed her to be able to lend Kent, and later Ruggles, money to buy their homes.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 77.
that she would commemorate their stay with a bronze plaque. Already at this early stage in their relationship, Fisher was prone to monumentalizing Ruggles. She corresponded with him during the following season while he lived in New York, and followed his compositional career closely, reading reviews and writing about how she wished she could be in New York to hear the December 1922 premiere of *Angels*.

![Figure 4.1: Portrait of Dorothy Canfield Fisher, mid-1920s. Inscription to Ruggles reads “For dear Charlotte and Carl, with love from Dorothy.” In MSS 26, Box 16/44.](image)

---

20 Dorothy Canfield Fisher to Carl Ruggles, 21 September 1922. In MSS 26, The Carl Ruggles Papers in the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library of Yale University, box 2, folder 34 (hereafter MSS 26, Box#/Folder#)
Fisher again offered Ruggles the Brick House for the summer of 1923, and it was then, Ruggles's biographer Marilyn Ziffrin claims, that the family realized they wanted to settle permanently in Arlington, having made themselves part of the town's social fabric over the previous two summers.21 Showing a loving concern for their happiness and stability, it was Fisher who was instrumental in pointing them to the old schoolhouse on School Street, just off Main Street, which was for sale that year. Just as she had done for Kent, Fisher extended her financial generosity to the Ruggleses so that they could purchase an Arlington home (see fig. 4.2).

Figure 4.2: Ruggles’s School Street schoolhouse, ca. 1912. Classes ended there after 1922, and the Ruggleses purchased and moved into the house in 1924. Courtesy of the Russell Vermontiana Collection, Martha Canfield Library, Arlington, VT.

---

Men and Mountains

As his family was planning to move into the schoolhouse in 1924, Ruggles worked on what would become his first completed orchestral piece, *Men and Mountains*. His first attempt to write for orchestra was *Men and Angels*, a precursor to *Men and Mountains* begun in 1920. Both works contain three movements and bear the genre designation “symphonic suite.” Yet only the middle movement of *Men and Angels* was ever completed; it premiered as the standalone chamber work *Angels* scored for six muted trumpets at an ICG concert in 1922. Some time after that, Ruggles abandoned the first movement of *Men and Angels* but decided to recast the music of its third movement as the first movement of a new piece, *Men and Mountains*. Rockwell Kent suggested the new title and had in fact used it for an earlier painting; the name comes from an epigram by William Blake: “Great things are done when Men & Mountains meet / This is not Done by Jostling in the Street.”

During the long compositional gestation of *Men and Mountains*, Ruggles gradually incorporated a programmatic link to both the landscape and the history of Vermont. The tie between the Vermont landscape and Ruggles’s music began as a visual accompaniment to the earlier *Men and Angels*. By 1921 Kent had created an illustration for *Men and Angels*, sowing the seed of this mountainous association (see fig. 4.3). Perhaps Kent’s idea to name the piece *Men and Mountains* was because of this prior visual connection, suggesting that both Kent and Ruggles desired to project the imagery of the earlier piece onto the present work.

---

Figure 4.3: Rockwell Kent’s cover for Ruggles’s *Men and Angels*, created in 1921. The imagery evokes the mountains around Arlington, Vermont. In MSS 26, Box 19. Used by permission of the Rockwell Kent Estate/Plattsburgh State Art Museum.
Importantly, the imagery of Kent’s drawing seems to specifically depict Arlington’s mountain views. Arlington lies in the so-called Valley of Vermont, a narrow strip of towns along the Battenkill River between the Taconic Range to the west and the Green Mountains to the east. The hills on either side of the village rise dramatically from the valley floor and the ridgeline runs in a rather even north-south orientation, creating a topography unlike most other parts of Vermont. Because of deforestation in the nineteenth century, these vistas were especially pronounced as there were fewer trees to obstruct long views, as shown in fig. 4.4.

Figure 4.4: View of Mt. Equinox in the distance (part of the Taconic Range) looking north from Arlington, VT, circa 1915. Ruggles’s house, which was still used as a school at this time, is on the far left with its belfry visible. The Green Mountains, not included in this photograph, make up the eastern edge of the valley and would be to the right from this viewpoint, nearly mirroring the Taconics. Courtesy of the Russell Vermontiana Collection, Martha Canfield Library, Arlington, VT.
Vermont Land Abandonment and a “Crisis of Identity”

Ruggles described the second movement of *Men and Mountains*, “Lilacs,” in a 1924 letter to his friend Eugene Schoen: “‘Lilacs’ is the symbol for desolation, abandoned farms, cellar holes etc.”

With this association to abandoned landscapes, Ruggles, wittingly or not, invoked an image that was central to the state’s cultural history and human geography. Like many rural areas in the northeast, Vermont fell victim to a steady out-migration in the years following the Civil War. Eighty-one percent of Vermont towns saw a drop in population from 1880 to 1890, suggesting an emptying of the most rural areas as large segments of the state were abandoned for, quite literally, the greener pastures of the Midwest. Overall, the state saw its population rise in disproportionately low numbers to the national growth rate in every census from 1850 through 1890; for example, in the 1870s and 1880s Vermont population grew less than 1% in each decade, compared to the national population which grew over 25% in each decade.

Yet the pattern of land abandonment in Vermont was not a sudden postwar event. Its roots lay in the antebellum history of the state, as nearly one hundred years of opportunism and shortsightedness eventually caught up with the populace. One major cause was declining agricultural fertility: a recent study estimated that nearly eighty percent of Vermont’s soil is “unsuitable for agriculture,” since heavy glacial deposits in the hills make farming at moderate to high elevations extremely difficult. Despite this limitation, settlers established thousands of hill farms during the

---

25 Ibid., 482.
peak years of Vermont’s settlement in the last half of the eighteenth century. Hill farms initially
performed well and even produced demanding crops such as wheat because they were established on
cleared forest land full of nutrients from millennia of leaf humus buildup.\textsuperscript{28}

However, the initial generation of farming exhausted most of the soil resources by the 1820s.
Farms were abandoned and then turned into grazing land for a booming Merino wool industry,
which bubbled and then burst by 1850.\textsuperscript{29} With poor crop performance and no financial prospects in
sheep, many hill farms and pastures were simply abandoned. At the same time, the rich soils of the
plains and western states were attractive to Vermonters accustomed to the difficult growing
conditions in New England. Better railroads and legislation such as the 1862 Homestead Act made it
easier for families to resettle outside the Northeast, spurred on by a national sentiment of manifest
destiny.

The Civil War was especially hard on Vermonters, as nearly a tenth of its total population,
around thirty thousand men, enlisted for the Union cause. Compared to all other northern states,
Vermont suffered the highest percentage of soldier deaths in proportion to its population.\textsuperscript{30} The loss
of life and, in a practical sense, of the rural workforce and spirit weighed heavily on the state’s
cultural memory for the next half century. As Dona Brown and Stephen Nissenbaum soberly
observed, “New England . . . emerged from the Civil War a troubled and transformed region.”\textsuperscript{31} The

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 140.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 147.
\textsuperscript{30} Paul A. Eschholz, “The Land of a Thousand Hills: Literary Images of the Vermont Landscape,
National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press,
1999), 2.
Vermont mountains of the late nineteenth century were thus empty of the forests that had been clear-cut to make way for farms, and devoid of the people who had tended them. Abandoned landscapes thus came to represent not only the death and destruction of war, but the metaphorical death of Vermont’s antebellum rural lifestyle. Many who did not perish in the war or head West went to the burgeoning East Coast cities, where industrialization was turning New England into the “most highly urbanized region of the United States.”

Land abandonment became a blight on the state’s idealized heritage and part of the new image and character of the Vermont landscape. As Blake Harrison has observed, “New England’s ‘abandoned-farm problem’” precipitated what many in Vermont perceived as a “crisis of identity,” as out-migration not only left behind a decaying landscape of crumbling barns and overgrown farmland, but also a population of what many in the state’s white, Anglo-American, Protestant majority felt were lesser citizens. As the Anglo-Yankee children left for the cities and the Western frontier, the remaining industries employed newly arrived European immigrants and French Canadians. Like many New Englanders of the nineteenth century, some Vermonters were xenophobic and bigoted against ethnic immigrants.

At first the state believed that the solution to their farm abandonment problem was to attract farmers back to cheap land. Yet the pull of the city was particularly strong in the 1890s at a time when the Jeffersonian ideal of the American farmer had lost much of its staying power in the national imagination. Instead, some Vermonters felt that the solution was to entice out-of-state visitors to make summer homes out of these forlorn places and aid in the rehabilitation of the landscape. This mission became something of a moral imperative for state legislators, who in 1891

---

32 Ibid.
tasked the Vermont Board of Agriculture with marketing abandoned farmland to outsiders, making Vermont the first state in the country to use taxpayer funds to attract tourism.33

Twenty years into this tourism campaign, some Vermonters felt that abandoned farms were still a problem and that there was room for further improvement. Middlebury College president John M. Thomas implored the class of 1913 graduates to forsake the call of the cities and concentrate on the important work that remained to be done in the rural hill towns of Vermont.34 He especially preached moral uplift through the improvement of schools, noting that only by raising the standard of education in rural towns would Vermont’s native children be encouraged to stay on their farms. Implicit in his graphic imagery of social decay is the notion that negligence in education will lead to Vermont’s rural areas being populated with perverse, backwards, un-Christian men, who do not tend their land with care and are too ignorant to leave the farm. The crisis of land abandonment engaged the rhetoric of the Puritan ideal, which found moral fortitude in the tidy and productive fields of well-educated farmers. It also piqued concerns about social degeneracy that played on xenophobic notions of race, religion, and nationality, concerns that lurked in the background of discussions about Vermont culture and society in the ensuing decades.

Fisher’s 1924 Men and Mountains Essay

To what extent Ruggles was aware of Vermont’s land abandonment “crisis of identity” when he arrived in the state in 1921 remains unclear. Deserted farms were not unique to Vermont—poet David McCord once wrote that “in every New England mind there is an abandoned farm”—

---

although they were acutely singled out in Vermont as representative of greater social issues.\textsuperscript{35} Still, within a few years of his arrival Ruggles had absorbed much of the rhetoric concerning this condition in his adopted state, evidenced by his description of the “Lilacs” movement of *Men and Mountains* in his September 1924 letter to Schoen.

It was around this time that Dorothy Canfield Fisher accepted Ruggles’s request to compose a program note for *Men and Mountains*. She was already an important shaper of Vermont identity through her popular writing: her 1915 collection of short stories *Hillsboro People* is set in the fictional Vermont town of Hillsboro (based in part on Arlington), and her 1917 novel *Understood Betsy*, about a girl sent to live with relatives in Vermont and, after finding them odd at first, eventually embraces their rural lifestyle, was widely read. Ruggles may have been prompted to ask Fisher for this favor after she wrote the introduction to Kent’s illustrated journal of his 1919 journey to Alaska, published in 1920 as *Wilderness: A Journey of Quiet Adventure in Alaska*.\textsuperscript{36}

For her concert program note, Fisher composed an eight hundred-word essay starting from Ruggles’s idea about “desolation, abandoned farms, cellar holes, etc.” in “Lilacs,” making this a central theme. The entire essay was never publicly printed, a decision made by Louise Varèse, wife of composer and ICG co-founder Edgard Varèse.\textsuperscript{37} Charged with compiling the program notes, Varèse likely made cuts based on space considerations. One of Fisher’s descriptions of Ruggles as a “pure blooded, Cape-cod, seven-generation New Englander” did find its way into the program, which


\textsuperscript{37}Ziffrin, *Carl Ruggles*, 93.
notably cites Ruggles’s ancestral heritage rather than his adopted home state. In addition to this short phrase, only the small portion of Fisher’s essay dealing with land abandonment and “Lilacs” made its way into the program with some minor changes to the content:

“Lilacs,” wistful, frail, tenuously complicated . . . tells of the ebbing away of humanity from the scenes of its old conquests, of sagging roof-trees, of rotting farmhouses, of the soft-footed advance of the forest back over the land which man had wrested into his own hands, of dust on deserted hearth-stones, of “brush in the pastures,” that New England phrase which to any Yankee brings up the whole picture.\(^{38}\)

Critics were quick to propagate Fisher’s imagery rife with provincialism and a focus on abandoned New England landscapes, many of them quoting Fisher in part or in toto.\(^{39}\) Most reviewers went even further than Fisher in romanticizing the rural quality in Ruggles’s music, often contrasted with the urban and cosmopolitan. Ruggles’s Vermont, and by extension Ruggles’s musical personality itself, was described as an untamed, rugged wilderness, and became a crutch for reviewers to explain the brash dissonance and bombastic dynamics especially present in the first movement of Men and Mountains, titled “Men” (ex. 4.1).\(^{40}\) This movement opens with a unison G in the upper registers of the winds and strings played forte, which is interrupted half a beat later by a chord comprising A♭–A–B♭–B–C in the brass and piano, followed by a descent from the opening G to F♯.

\(^{38}\) Program Notes, first concert of the fourth season of the International Composers Guild, 7 December 1924, Aeolian Hall, New York City. In MSS 26, Box 9/3.

\(^{39}\) For example, in addition to those mentioned in this paragraph and the following ones, W. J. Henderson called the entire work “symbolic of deserted New England farms with lilacs yet blooming in the gardens” in his New York Sun review, 8 December 1924.

\(^{40}\) Men and Mountains in its original version was scored for chamber orchestra in 1924, which Cowell published in vol. 1, no. 1 of his quarterly magazine New Music in 1927. Ruggles later expanded the score for full orchestra in 1936 with no change to musical content, and then revised the score in 1941, adding additional percussion and composing significant new parts to both “Men” and “Marching Mountains.” Unless otherwise noted, the musical examples and references are from the 1927 publication of the 1924 version, which is what Fisher would have known in her original essay.
The purity of the initial unison is immediately shattered by a chromatic cluster. In the 1941 revision of *Men and Mountains*, Ruggles intensified this moment, adding a cymbal crash and timpani roll to the clashing dissonance of the first-measure chord, marking the opening G fortissimo and the chromatic cluster sffz. But even in the original 1924 version, Ruggles called for a dramatic percussive moment: a cymbal crash in measure two accompanying a tritone ascent in the strings and winds.

Example 4.1: Carl Ruggles, “Men,” mvt. I of *Men and Mountains*, mm. 1–2, orchestral reduction. The unison G in the strings and winds contrasts with the chromatic cluster A♭–A–B♭–B–C in the brass and piano. A cymbal crash in m. 2 accompanies a melodic leap of a tritone from E in the low strings and brass to B♭ in the upper strings and winds.

The *Musical Courier* linked the intense dissonance and jarring polyphony of *Men and Mountains* specifically to an unbridled mountain landscape, calling Ruggles “this Wild Highlander from
Vermont.” Writing for the *New York Times*, Olin Downes described the “wild shriek” of the brass, noting the aggressiveness of the composer who “leaps upon the listener with a yell.”

Lawrence Gilman penned the most commendatory review of the *Men and Mountains* premiere, imbuing the spirit of Fisher’s imagery with exaggerated romanticism. For instance, he noted how Ruggles’s music reflects the “wild, gigantic, tortured symbols” and “riotous and untrammeled excursions” of its epigrammatic William Blake quotation, finding a similar experience of the sublime in these two artists. Gilman wrote that Ruggles’s “discourse” is “torrential,” with “a touch of the apocalyptic,” elevating the composer to a Zarathustra-like status. He cemented the notion of “Lilacs” as a miniature New England tone poem, calling the movement “a translation into tones of that picture which evidently haunted this dweller among New England hills.” This way of referring to Ruggles also fetishizes his rurality. Far from the bucolic reality of Ruggles’s valley home, Gilman’s characterization recalls the mountain man imagery of a Jack London novel or Rockwell Kent’s *Wilderness*, both immensely popular in the early 1920s.

A little more than a year later, while reviewing Ruggles’s new work *Portals*, Gilman admitted that he preferred the “more astringent manner” of *Men and Mountains*: “there was a sternness and a severity, a tonic harshness, that was peculiarly personal to the music of Ruggles. Is he, perhaps, forgetting New England and her hills and rocks?” Gilman linked not only Ruggles’s music to the landscape, but specifically its “sternness,” “severity,” and “tonic harshness,” elements for which he finds analogies in rocky New England mountains.

---

The other laudatory review of the premiere came from Paul Rosenfeld, who had established himself as a champion of the New York modern music scene and an opponent of musical philistinism. He built on the strong tone of nostalgia undergirding Fisher’s description of “Lilacs” in his review for *The Dial*, writing: “it is not inexplicable that we should have felt through the pleading, hesitating, yearning tones of the strings the curious American nostalgia and smothered passion, or received the entire movement as a cry for life.” Rosenfeld absorbed Fisher’s rhetoric of nostalgia for an imagined rural purity, the cry for life whose passion is smothered, presumably, by the modern city.

What critics and readers did not know is that Fisher had intended to evoke not only decaying farmhouses and encroaching forests in “Lilacs,” but to use the three movements of *Men and Mountains* as an allegory for Vermont’s history, creating a narrative program of Vermont’s Anglo-American settlement history. The first movement, “Men,” represents the initial eighteenth-century wave of pioneering and settlement, played out in the conflict of Man versus Nature. “Lilacs,” as revealed in the program note excerpt, addresses the height of farm abandonment in the mid-nineteenth century. The final movement, “Marching Mountains,” tells of the twentieth-century rehabilitation of deserted farmhouses and the repopulation of Vermont.

Fisher calls the “rhapsodic proclamation of the horns” that opens the “Men” movement “shoutingly American,” linking this “outcry” to the “exuberant self-assertion and self-confidence

---

45 Carol J. Oja notes Rosenfeld’s immense impact in American music historiography by noting that “[his] perspective not only affected how these young American composers saw themselves but it also has conditioned most writing about their music in subsequent decades.” Carol J. Oja, *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 363.


47 All quotations from and references to Fisher’s essay in the following section are taken from the original typescript in MSS 26, Box 15/30. The entire Fisher typescript is reprinted as Appendix B.
which has always burst from the American pioneer in answer to the challenge of Nature, of The Land.” Both Nature and The Land are capitalized, which, as Neil Smith observes, derives from a nineteenth-century practice that essentialized the difference between Anglo-American civilization and the hostile wilderness of nature, thus “legitimizing the attack on nature.” Indeed, the character of the relationship between humans and landscape appears in Fisher’s description of unsettled land as “unconquered.”

“New unconquered land” and “the heart of the pioneer,” she writes, are two “cymbals” which “have made one of the mighty voices of America.” The cymbal/symbol homonym further solidifies the connection between the opening of “Men” and the pioneer (see ex. 4.1). She draws on the powerful American image of the frontier, and her vocabulary centers on loud expressions reflecting both the dynamics of the music and the power dynamics between humanity and nature.

As Fisher’s focus turns from “Men” to “Lilacs,” she notes that the second movement speaks “a language as deeply American” as the first. “Lilacs” is scored for strings only and begins with a hushed chord of D–D♭–F–B♭, marking a strong contrast to the sonically intense opening of “Men.” Rather than a dense chromatic cluster, in “Lilacs” Ruggles writes a triad with both a major and minor third in order to dissonate the sonority. Additionally, the texture obscures Ruggles’s polyphonic compositional procedure with its mostly homophonic presentation of chords. Fisher and Ruggles may have felt that this tamer, more Romantic sound could be interpreted as traditionally European in nature. Therefore, Fisher felt the need to emphasize that “Lilacs” is just as American as “Men,”

49 Charles Seeger used the word “dissonate” throughout his writings on counterpoint, referring to the process of adding dissonant pitches to otherwise consonant environments in order to undermine diatonicism and establish dissonance as a musical foundation. See, for example, Charles Seeger, “On Dissonant Counterpoint,” Modern Music 7, no. 4 (June–July 1930): 25–31.
perhaps because it does not have the same brash, audaciously modern sound. For his part, Ruggles may have felt that naming the movement after Whitman served a similar purpose in distancing his work from European sources.

Fisher points the narrative in a more specifically local direction in her section on “Lilacs,” exalting the sturdy Yankee “folk-architecture” with its “beautiful old Colonial houses of New England.” The pioneer, who in “Men” belonged to a more general American ideology of manifest destiny, is revealed to be the settler of Northern New England. “Lilacs,” Fisher writes, “represents the fine-flowering, too-perfect art which blooms and ripens as the curve of its civilization reaches the apex and begins to droop into decay.” She implies hubris in humanity’s quest for the “too-perfect art” of cultivating the landscape, crafting and contorting the terrain to the needs of civilization. Of the houses with their “reticent vernacular,” those quintessentially New England objects, she concedes that “the civilization which has produced them has run its course.” She adds a new layer of meaning to the Man/Nature dialectic by reframing it as settlement/abandonment, or the advance and then decline of civilization. The next section then contains the excerpt reprinted in the program note at the premiere of *Men and Mountains*, and thus the only portion of Fisher’s essay—other than her opening statement calling Ruggles a “seven-generation New Englander”—that would ever be reproduced in subsequent programs and articles.

While Vermont’s history of land abandonment figures prominently in Fisher’s program for “Lilacs,” the association with Whitman’s “When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom’d,” further colors the music and text with nostalgia and melancholy for things lost. For both Whitman and Fisher, lilac bushes represent a cherished image of home life. Jan Albers notes that lilacs were one of the more popular front yard shrubs, and that lilacs often mark the former location of an abandoned
farmhouse, along with a “cellar hole and stone fences,” images which Fisher also incorporates. In Whitman, the lilac is perhaps more metaphorical, but for Fisher, the lilac is a very real reminder of those farms, homes, and people who once populated the Vermont hillsides. She continues optimistically, reminding us that the aroma of those lilac bushes are “rich with human association,” and she notes their permanence, how they are “still blooming beside sunken cellar-holes, beside the forgotten homes of men long since dead.” Even with all the “ruinous sadness” of abandonment, there remains some hope for humanity, as if the power of memory in the scent of those lilacs could resurrect this dying New England civilization.

Just as Fisher’s discussion of “Lilacs” speaks of an abandoned landscape, Ruggles’s music similarly suggests an abandoned soundscape. Compared to the outer movements, which are saturated with many timbres and loud dynamics, “Lilacs” sounds emptier with its hushed initial presentation of homophonic writing and reduced performance forces. Like rural Vermont, a once-crowded sonic landscape has been abandoned, audible in the stark contrast between the movements. Ruggles ends the B section of this ABA’ movement with a slow, surging build towards a dense chord, which he reprises at the end of the movement, suggesting perhaps the “forest’s rising tide” (ex. 4.2).

---

Example 4.2: Ruggles, “Lilacs,” mvt. II of Men and Mountains, mm 18–20, end of the B section. All seven parts surge to an eight-note chord saturated with chromaticism, A♭–D–F–C–E–A♮–B–E♭ or (01235689), while accented entrances are staggered on each beat during m. 19.

“Marching Mountains” is the final chapter of Fisher’s Vermont history embedded within the essay. It is her present-day Vermont in which a young generation of New Englanders, “eager, hopeful, young, reaching up like the new young souls within those bodies,” recreates the idealized Vermont civilization, resurrecting its “industrial prosperity.” Here, Fisher returns to the well-trod New England myth of hard work as moral uplift. “Marching Mountains” is the triumph of those “full-blooded and strong” Vermonters, “exulting noisily at the sight of mightiness, as only those human beings can rejoice who feel mightiness rise up within them to greet it in life.”

Because the printed version of Fisher’s essay was truncated, the grand arc of her narrative loses some of its potency, and it is never revealed that while “Lilacs” “is the elegy over the death of a part of America,” this “inevitable death” is “an enriching element in a tremendous whole.” Fisher intended for the final movement to represent a vital American essence, “something too deep in
[Americans’] hearts for them ever to express.” The music, and the imagery, is “nothing seen or heard from the carven windows of the European ivory tower,” echoing Ruggles’s nativist conviction that American art aspires to the Emersonian ideal completely divorced from old world influence.\(^5\)

“Marching Mountains” again bears the mark of humanity, now perched on “a hard-won mountain-top.” It is the “harsh . . . voice of America,” “full-blooded and strong,” articulating the power dynamics of the “Men” movement again.

This hidden program provides a human counterpart to the powerful nature narrative in the “Lilacs” movement. Whereas writers interpreted the outer movements of the work as reflective of a sublime wilderness, Fisher had intended “Men” to be a story of pioneering, an expression of Whitmanesque manifest destiny, while “Marching Mountains” is the triumphant return of the present-day pioneer, restoring Vermont’s soils and population to its former greatness. \textit{Men and Mountains} is not an American \textit{M}a\textit{vlast}; it is not a musical equivalent to the romanticized craggy peaks of nineteenth-century Hudson River School painters such as Asher B. Durand or Jerome Thompson (fig. 4.5), or nostalgia for the pastoral. Rather, the piece evokes a place that is defined by its human element or lack thereof. This is closer to Casey’s conception of place, in which a location becomes meaningful only through human experience.

Fisher’s program is mirrored by a motivic connection between the three movements of *Men and Mountains* (ex. 4.3). In “Men,” Ruggles highlights the importance of the major second as a melodic interval, as it opens the unison melody that immediately follows the dense chromatic cluster of measure one, and then begins the following brass melody (a descending major second from A♭) in measure four. “Lilacs” then opens with three of the four voices dropping a major second. Whereas in
“Men” the upward intervallic motion reflects the “exuberant self-assertion and self-confidence” of the “shoutingly American” music, in “Lilacs” it becomes an elegiac sighing motive.\(^52\)

Example 4.3: Ruggles, opening measures of all three movements of *Men and Mountains*, principal melodic voice only. The movements are linked by a common melodic motive of a major second, while the first four melodic notes of the principal voice in each movement belong to the set class (0124). Ruggles and Cowell (who published the score in 1927) use half brackets to indicate the principal voice as it switches between instruments in the same manner as Second Viennese School composers.

Ruggles then makes an explicit connection between the second and third movements, as he begins “Marching Mountains” with the opening of “Lilacs” transposed up a semitone, using the same opening rhythmic gesture of a half note moving to a quarter note. Yet here the funereal tone of “Lilacs” is undercut by the return of the first movement’s brash, strident timbre and dynamics, the “harsh voice” of America in Fisher’s essay. She explicitly ties this motivic connection to her narrative, writing that “the inevitable death of parts [of America in ‘Lilacs’] is seen only as an enriching element

\(^52\) As was his custom, Ruggles often avoided exact sequences, changing a pitch in order to preserve a sense of intervallic non-repetition. In the opening four measures of “Lilacs,” the initial falling major second becomes a falling minor second in its next iteration, then again a major second, and then again a minor second following the principal voice. Stephen Slottow notes how the first four melodic notes of the principal voice in all three movements derive from the set class (0124), further solidifying the motivic continuity. Stephen P. Slottow, *A Vast Simplicity: The Music of Carl Ruggles* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2009), 66.
in a tremendous whole, with the leaping up on the first chords of ‘Marching Mountains.’” Ruggles takes those abandoned landscapes of the second movement and fills them in order to enrich his final, triumphant movement. The semitone transformation from “Lilacs” to “Marching Mountains” suggests the uplifting aspect of the program as civilization returns to Vermont.

Ruggles clearly felt a deep connection between this piece and his local Vermont landscape. Many of the melodies in *Men and Mountains* unfold in large waves, moving upwards through pitch space, cresting, and then sometimes coming back down. Although this is a general feature of Ruggles’s melodic writing, in this piece it suggests a mimetic representation of mountains cited by many critics and listeners. It is especially audible in “Marching Mountains,” where the lumbering and forceful march (especially with the obstinate drum part added in a later revision) suggests an anthropomorphic transmogrification of the mountains into an army. Like Kent’s woodcut for *Men and Angels*, the image of marching mountains suggests the straight line of successive peaks that defines Arlington and the Battenkill Valley landscape. Ruggles may have wanted to commemorate the striking view following the Battenkill River northward that he enjoyed from the backyard of his new home while writing *Men and Mountains* (see fig. 4.6). In fact he suggested this very link, telling his biographer “they really do look like marching mountains up there [in Arlington].”

---

53 Ziﬀrin, *Carl Ruggles*, 93.
Whitman, MacDowell, and Rural Masculinity

*Men and Mountains* served Fisher well for its ability to articulate this narrative of land abandonment intertwined with Vermont history and character. But why was Fisher's implacement of Vermont landscape and identity into Ruggles's music useful for him, and for his own agenda of self-image promotion? This question is especially pertinent because Ruggles spent so much professional and personal time in New York, Florida, and otherwise outside of Vermont, yet embraced the idea of being a “Vermont composer.” One possible answer is that Fisher's writing infused Ruggles's music with a rural masculinity, distancing him from his own charged critique of the previous musical generation that stemmed from a fear of emasculation. In particular, Fisher's writing helped Ruggles navigate aspects of “Lilacs” that coded both feminine and masculine, intertwining gendered associations with American musical domesticity, extra-musical associations, nostalgia, and landscape.

Although he never wrote any articles on the subject of American music history, Ruggles
discounted many of the American composers who preceded him, claiming that only he and his
generation possessed the traits required to write authentically American music. A series of lectures
delivered to the Whitney Studio Club in New York during the spring of 1922 conveyed many of his
feelings. These opinions also reappear in letters throughout his lifetime. Ruggles reserved his most
severe and lengthiest criticism for Edward MacDowell, who was still widely heralded as the greatest
American composer. Ruggles began his first Whitney Club lecture, titled “The Present Situation in
American Music,” by deriding what he called MacDowell’s musical novelties: “pretty little pieces like
the ‘Wild Rose’ etc.” He called descriptions of MacDowell’s American musical spirit “bunk,” and
continued: “His Americanism resided in his titles only.” He insulted MacDowell’s “driving, cheap
sentimentalism,” and then concluded: “it is all a reflection of the black-walnut marble top period,
Venus de Melos [sic] with a clock in her belly. Tiddies, the gilding of everything from false teeth to
coal hods. Now think of Walt Whitman coming clean out of that mess.”

In these and other statements on MacDowell, two connected grievances emerge: a fear of the
feminization of American culture and a distaste for the genteel tradition. Like Charles Ives, whom
Ruggles befriended in the 1930s, Ruggles felt that American culture, especially musical culture, was
emasculated by the “gilding of everything.” His accusation of sentimentalism in MacDowell is, in
part, a gendered critique. Ann Douglas writes that anxiety about femininity and sentimentalism,

54 Ruggles was not alone in this agenda. Many of the younger composers of the 1920s set themselves
apart from earlier generations of American composers. Aaron Copland, for example, admitted that in
the 1920s he gave up looking for “musical ancestors . . . because we became convinced that there
were none—that we had none” (Howard Pollack, Aaron Copland: The Life and Work of an Uncommon
55 These lecture notes are preserved in MSS 26, Box 18/18. All quotations are from this source and
reflect Ruggles’s orthographic conventions including underlining. Henry Cowell was present for at
least the first lecture and played some of his own music as an example of, as Ruggles put it,
something “being done [in America] that has originality and guts.”
such as Ruggles’s critique of MacDowell, was an important element of fin-de-siècle aesthetic culture across the arts. For example, a key factor in the increasing public and critical appeal of Winslow Homer’s paintings was a rejection of feminine gentility in favor of celebrating virility. As Priscilla Paton argues, Homer’s representation of manliness and individuality in his depictions of man’s encounter with rugged landscapes, suggesting “an unmediated bond with the earth,” was central to his eventual iconic status. She further notes that in much American visual art of the late nineteenth century, images suggesting virility “redeemed the nation’s strength from the vitiating femininity of genteel beaux art culture.” Just as critics found a renewed sense of American individuality and masculinity in Homer’s artwork, Ruggles intended a similar effect with his music. And like Homer, who as one critic determined “never becomes pretty, but ever remains direct,” the emotional directness of Ruggles’s music is applauded despite its bracing dissonance.

Ruggles saw MacDowell’s representations of nature as part of a culture of feminine sentimentalism that flourished in the nineteenth century and was still prevalent through the gilded age. MacDowell’s music presented nature as domesticated and packaged, a place to escape from the growing ills of urban society, rather than as an imposing wilderness. This American Arcadian myth that exalted a simple, solitary, and peaceful existence among pastoral landscapes was prevalent throughout much of the literature and poetry from the first half of the twentieth century. Andrea Rebek recounts an 1833 article in Harper’s in which the author describes the highest peaks of the

---

58 Ibid.
60 Schmitt, *Arcadian Myth*. This American Arcadian myth is explored in detail in chapter 5.
Green Mountains as “pastoral” rather than “awesome, grand, and sublime.”

Rather than seeing the mountains’ lack of jagged, wild grandeur as a negative, Vermont marketed the gentle, rolling hills of the Green Mountains as a positive, indicating a desire to entice the urban dweller yearning for a peaceful Arcadian retreat. Well into the twentieth century, the Vermont Bureau of Publicity touted the benefits of “the quiet of the country,” emphasizing that the beauty of Vermont was the “restful seclusion” and slowed pace of life. Newspapers, magazines such as Harper’s and Atlantic Monthly, and popular novels promised urban Americans a view of nature within the comfort of their modernized lives. Similar to the writing and painting in this tradition, the titles, imagery, and pensive melancholy of MacDowell pieces such as “To a Wild Rose” or “From a Log Cabin” cultivated the appeal of an idealized and, in some ways, artificial country escape for a growing urban middle class in the late nineteenth century.

Male modern music commentators from Ruggles’s era often used rhetoric that gendered the music of the previous generation female, especially lighter piano works such as MacDowell’s most popular pieces. This characterization may have drawn on the nineteenth-century popular image of the piano girl. For instance, critic Paul Rosenfeld corroborated Ruggles’s opinion when he called

---

62 Ibid.: 21. By the late nineteenth century, the aura of grandeur that had been reserved for sites such as Niagara Falls or New Hampshire’s Presidential Range earlier in the century had been directed to the more dramatic landscape features of the American West, such as the Rockies, the Grand Canyon, or geothermal features such as Old Faithful in Yellowstone. For more on the comparison of Vermont to the terrain of New Hampshire’s White Mountains, see also Slayton, “Playground of the Universe,” 10.
63 Summer Homes in Vermont (Montpelier: Vermont Bureau of Publicity, 1923; 1920), 3.
64 Peter J. Schmitt specifically cites these two pieces as ones that “seemed perfectly programmed for urban audiences.” Schmitt, Arcadian Myth, 15.
MacDowell “maidenly” and “nothing if not a daughter of the American Revolution."⁶⁶ And T. Carl Whitmer perpetuated the stereotyped legacy of gilded age American compositions in a *Musical Quarterly* article from January 1918, in which he decried America’s “large output of ladylike works tied with baby ribbon.”⁶⁷ Ruggles countered these prejudices in part by mostly avoiding a romanticized style and relying on a contrapuntal, rather than chordal, compositional gestalt. Certainly the “plangently” loud opening sonority of “Men” (see ex. 4.1) or the *maestoso* march of the mountains in the third movement (fig. 4.7) all suggest a bold, majestic expression of nature that is at odds with the Arcadian pastoral of MacDowell’s music. Ruggles’s contempt for novelties and musical clichés might also be a reaction to the generation of gilded age composers that included not only MacDowell but also Charles Wakefield Cadman and Arthur Farwell, who relied on musical Americanisms such as Native American or African American idioms and whose nativism took their cues from Dvořák’s well known exhortations.

Aware of this perceived feminine aura surrounding American music, Ruggles may have found Fisher’s Vermont program especially attractive because rural American landscapes carried a long history of masculine tropes in music, art, and literature. Denise Von Glahn notes that in the nineteenth century “the earth could be gendered female,” but “America, the nation-place, was decidedly male.”⁶⁸ Von Glahn interprets nineteenth-century symphonic works inspired by the natural phenomena of America, most notably Niagara Falls, as part of an uncoordinated “national project that gendered the United States, via its rugged, muscular, natural phenomena and the pioneer spirit

---

it required, male.\textsuperscript{69} Fisher’s rhetoric helped to inscribe self-reliance, ruggedness, and manliness into American musical identity, with her language of self-assertion in “Men” and the “full-blooded and strong” bodies of “Marching Mountains.” She was explicit about the masculine character of Vermont in an article from 1922, writing that Vermon ters see the state “as a tall, powerful man, with . . . rough out-door clothes, a sinewy ax-man’s hand and arm.”\textsuperscript{70}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Christmas card from Carl Ruggles to Rockwell Kent, 1924, featuring the march from “Marching Mountains” (m. 7). In MSS 26, Box 3/61, Irving S. Gilmore Music Library of Yale University.}
\end{figure}


The MacDowellian view of the rural was similar to the Romantic notion held by creative types such as Mahler and Thoreau; they all found artistic inspiration by being alone in nature (chapter 5 explores this in greater detail). Yet this imagined country life did not mean living off the land or romanticizing the lifestyle of the American farmer, since “nostalgia for an agrarian past played no part” in the Arcadian myth. In contrast, Fisher’s view of nature in “Marching Mountains” is one that is full of the industrious energy of farm or dairy work and village life. She was one of a number of Vermont authors in the early twentieth century who occasionally shunned the romanticized pastoral vision of the state for one more rooted in the agrarian realism of everyday life. Her rhetoric in the “Marching Mountains” section of her essay celebrates the manly toil of the farmer rather than the idyllic scents and subtle sounds of wildflowers or forests, even though women were engaged in the physical labor of Vermont farm life.

Many of Ruggles’s peers in modern music also interpreted his use of dissonance as an affirmation of masculinity. Fellow ultra-moderns such as Dane Rudhyar, Charles Seeger, and Edgard Varèse found not only a quality of the sublime in Ruggles’s dissonance, but also a repository of masculinity and virility. Varèse even once called Ruggles’s music “virile-spiritual.” Charles Ives also used Ruggles’s music in his battle against a perceived feminized culture of not only American critics and composers, but listeners. In a well known anecdote, Ives berated an audience member who hissed at a January 1931 performance of *Men and Mountains*, standing up in the concert hall and yelling “you god damn sissy . . . when you hear strong masculine music like this, get up and use your

---


ears like a man!” When Ruggles had to be hospitalized in 1938, Ives wrote him a letter where he imagined conducting *Men and Mountains* at Ruggles’s funeral using a variety of baseball metaphors (baseball, unlike music, was a “proper” boys’ activity), and the orchestra “would finally learn how to play music for ‘men—not lily boys!’” Musicologist Catherine Parsons Smith has even suggested that ultra-modern procedures in the 1920s were part of a “sexual linguistics” that “served to distance [men] from women and to exclude women,” and “any appearance of effeminacy, however superficial or fleeting, was perceived as a sign of weakness rather than as a source of enhanced expressiveness for male authors and composers.”

However, “Lilacs” *did* use a Romantic, chordal style and was often noted for its intense emotional expressivity. Ruggles therefore used another strategy for countering what he perceived to be emasculation in American music: borrowing the title of “Lilacs” from Walt Whitman. Ruggles revered Whitman, calling him “that great American poet.” As previously noted, Ruggles’s use of Whitman lent “Lilacs” an American association that distanced the music from European models. However, when Ruggles expressed incredulity that Whitman’s poetry occupied the same cultural era as MacDowell’s music in his Whitney Club lecture, it becomes clear that Ruggles saw Whitman as a foil to the effeminizing tendencies of genteel culture in America, a way out of the emasculated quagmire of American musical history. Ruggles was not alone in this sentiment; T. Carl Whitmer

---

74 Charles E. Ives, *Memos*, ed. John Kirkpatrick (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), 141n1. Nicolas Slonimsky later doubted whether Ives actually made this outburst. Yet as Stephen Budiansky notes, even if Ives did not express this opinion publicly, it was a sentiment he clearly held since he related the incident to a biographer. See Stephen Budiansky, *Mad Music: Charles Ives, The Nostalgic Rebel* (Lebanon, NH: ForeEdge, 2014), 211.

75 Charles Ives to Carl Ruggles, 9 May 1938, MSS 26, Box 3/53.


77 Ziffrin, *Carl Ruggles*, 87.
also suggested that the American composer should look to Whitman for textual sources, and that doing so would “dispel any charges of ‘effeminacy.’”\textsuperscript{78} Accordingly, of Ruggles’s nine completed works during his lifetime, three contain a reference to Whitman in either text or title.

In using Whitman to bolster masculinity in American music, Ruggles and others ignored tangled and problematic sexual codes and references. It is unlikely that Ruggles knew of Walt Whitman’s homosexuality. Like many readers of his time, Ruggles probably interpreted Whitman’s sensual and homoerotic language as a passionate expression of transcendentalist brotherhood and universalism. Therefore this sensual language could also be full of manly strength. Furthermore, Ruggles aligned himself with a faction of American composers who were homophobic, citing sexuality in their derisions of music by Copland, Thomson, Blitzstein, and other gay composers.\textsuperscript{79} Had he known of Whitman’s sexuality, Ruggles may not have been such an enthusiastic supporter.

Additionally, all three Whitman poems that Ruggles referenced in his music hail from the later part of the poet’s career, when Whitman “grew increasingly silent on the subject of sex” and made the “transition from poet of the body to poet of the soul.”\textsuperscript{80} This conveniently allowed Ruggles to embrace Whitman without having to critically engage with the poet’s more sensual writings. This might also explain why Ruggles was able to finish a setting of “A Clear Midnight,” with its themes of universalism and spirituality, for his 1923 vocal set \textit{Vox Clamans in Deserto}, yet he abandoned an


\textsuperscript{79} Carol J. Oja cites a letter from Varèse to Ruggles in which the former lashes out against Copland and others with specific reference to their homosexuality. Varèse would likely not have sent such a vitriolic and homophobic letter had he not believed Ruggles to be sympathetic. Oja, \textit{Making Music Modern}, 125–126, 223–225.

attempted setting of “As If a Phantom Caress’d Me,” a poem that seems to express Whitman’s closeted identity and vulnerability with lines such as “and those appear that are hateful to me, and mock me.”

Fisher absorbed many of Whitman’s poetic themes in her “Lilacs” essay, and in doing so helped to fortify elements of masculinity in Men and Mountains. Much of this emerges as rhetoric of man’s power over nature. Although Fisher never frames nature explicitly as female, nature was commonly characterized as nurturing and feminine throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. She does call “Lilacs” “wistful” and “frail,” ascribing traditionally feminine qualities to the movement most explicitly associated with the abandoned Vermont landscape.

For both Whitman and Fisher, humanity—specifically male—is ultimately more powerful than death and land abandonment. Whitman spends much of “When lilacs . . . ” focused on themes of solitude and abandonment, specifically related to the act of mourning, but towards the end humanity re-enters the poem, as a bird sings “loud human song” (103). Like Whitman’s thrush, whose song brings back the voice of man and “the voice of [his] spirit” (134), Fisher’s “Marching Mountains” narrative returns men to the Vermont landscape, corresponding to the brass outburst that aggressively transfigures the sighing opening melodic motive of “Lilacs” (see ex. 4.2). Brass, traditionally signifying not only the military but religious hierarchy, counteracts the “soft-footed advance of the forest back over the land,” a conflict foreshadowed by Fisher’s statements about the “Men” movement where the opening brass proclamation is “in answer to the challenge of Nature, of

The Land.” The implicitly male military is the victor, and while it is the mountains that march, Fisher makes it clear that man has triumphed in the final movement.

Fisher also embraced Whitman’s spirit of manifest destiny in her frequent use of the pioneer as a symbol of Vermont idealism. In doing so, she incorporated not only the associated violence of westward expansion, some of which she infuses into her own language, but also the myth of masculine control over the wilderness. This discourse also filtered down to the reception of Men and Mountains, as critics often constructed an analogy between Ruggles as a musical pioneer and as a geographic pioneer. For example, in the Musical Advance, Walter V. Anderson notes that Ruggles “sings of untraversed regions,” a rather Whitmanesque turn of phrase. Ruggles became the Man of the “Men” movement who, in his metaphorical conquering of uncharted musical idioms, is “shoutingly American.” Although Fisher’s story of “Men” incorporates domestication of the land, its prior wilderness remains an implicit attribute. Ruggles’s use of Whitman also taps into a nineteenth-century conception of landscape and the frontier before Frederick Jackson Turner declared it closed. Thus, Men and Mountains recalls rural spaces and their dominating natural phenomena, represented as an untamed Vermont landscape far from the tranquil pastoral. Meanwhile, Fisher’s historical narrative of Men and Mountains recalls Whitman’s historical time period and its concern with “geographic upheavals in an age of westward expansion.”

Nostalgic yearning is part of the elegiac tone of Fisher’s “Lilacs” passage, yet what Fisher or Ruggles longs for is unclear. Musically, “Lilacs” might be understood as a nostalgic backwards glance,

82 For more on manifest destiny as a gendered enterprise, see Amy S. Greenberg, Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
83 W. V. A. [Walter V. Anderson], Musical Advance 12, no. 6 (January 1925).
another rationale for the all-strings timbre and more homophonic texture that signify late Romantic music. However, we may further interpret the movement as nostalgia for a conception of both rural and masculine that no longer existed in Ruggles’s time. In perhaps the most outrageous example of the piece’s association with nineteenth-century rural masculinity, Ruggles owned a cover for his oversize score of *Men and Mountains* crafted from lacquered animal hair, or something intended to resemble that organic material (fig. 4.8). Its provenance is unknown, but with its nod to Native American craftwork in the use of animal hair and cross-stitching, it is clearly meant to convey a ruggedness associated with frontier life, a relic constructed to resemble the Daniel Boone folk-hero era. Fittingly, Ruggles had given the performance direction “heroic” to an early sketch of “Men.”

Although sections of Fisher’s essay are set throughout Vermont’s history, she speaks from the perspective of the early twentieth century. She and Ruggles therefore confront the aftermath of the rapid expansion of the frontier and the loss of the wild that is present in some of the passages in Whitman’s poem. Ruggles’s music became part of a discourse that privileged an idealized ecological past in the face of an emasculated modern present, an example of which may be found in Henry David Thoreau’s journal when the author wrote of “a maimed and imperfect nature that I am conversant with,” and then lamented, “I cannot but feel as if I lived in a tamed, and, as it were, emasculated country.” The shift from the vibrant wilderness of “Men” to the lifeless abandonment of “Lilacs” is part of what William Cronon describes as “a loss of wildness and virility that was

85 This sketch is for the third movement of *Men and Angels*, which Ruggles later turned into the opening movement of *Men and Mountains*. MSS 26, Box 24.
ultimately spiritual in its import.” Yet “Lilacs” simultaneously counters that changed landscape with its nostalgic yearning for rugged, rural masculinity.

Figure 4.8: Cover for Ruggles’s *Men and Mountains*, 60cm x 40cm, unidentified media, with hand stitched ties and mismatched patches. In MSS 26, Box 24.

---

Ruggles as a Typical Vermonter

One other way that Fisher was able to essentialize the rural in her characterization of Ruggles is what geographer Blake Harrison calls Vermont typicality. Rather than concentrating on the pastoral country landscape, Harrison argues that Vermonters marketed a “culturally conditioned image of typicality in rural Vermont” to tourists. By this he means the perceived identity of a typical Vermonter—including traits such as stability, ruggedness, self-reliant individualism, and honesty—that provided an attraction to the city-weary summer visitor, despite the fact that many in the state did not neatly conform to this monolithic archetype. Promoters believed that the abandoned landscape contained the essence of this cultural image, and strategically framed the run-down properties not as indicators of a civilization in decline, but as signifiers of a once-vibrant rural life that summer visitors might reproduce.

Fisher wrote both publicly and privately about Ruggles at least four times aside from her Men and Mountains program note essay. In these other writings, she highlighted Ruggles’s identity as a typical Vermonter, changing her narrative about him from a focus on pioneering and wilderness to a focus on the attributes of his rural character and its differentiation from the urban. The dialectic of city and country therefore becomes a much stronger guiding framework, where the urban is explicitly othered and, in some ways, disparaged. Meanwhile, the persona she painted of Ruggles—an everyday resident who embraced the quaint, local customs of a rural mountain town—fit her mold of the typical Vermonter that highlighted the state’s exceptional, unique quality.

During this time in the 1920s and 30s, the division between rural and urban was especially vivid in the minds of many Vermont residents, often discussed in debates about tourism and

88 Harrison, “‘Typical’ Vermonter,” 479.
infrastructure. The main road running through Arlington to its northern neighbor, Manchester (which had long been a tourist attraction), could no longer handle the mass of automobile traffic, and would be further strained when the road was incorporated into the new U.S. highway system in 1926 as U.S. Route 7, one of only two U.S. highways to run from the Massachusetts border to Canada through the state. The issue of improving this thoroughfare thrust the question about how Vermont should accommodate and react to summer tourists into focus, and the debate often reflected local social and political concerns and dynamics. Proponents argued that tourists would bring revenue to local economies and would increase Vermont's viability as a destination. Opponents voiced concerns about how tourists congested and polluted the roads with their cars, did not care about local communities, and might threaten local traditions and standards of morality. Often residents were conflicted in their opinions, as represented by a series of *Manchester Journal* illustrations in the summer of 1925 (fig. 4.9).

Generally speaking, Fisher enthusiastically supported Vermont tourism, yet she often simultaneously highlighted the differences between the urban visitors and the rural locals, noting how each group found the other peculiar. This kind of rhetoric served to cast urban visitors as a foreign Other, and ascribe an exceptionalism to Vermonters. Nevertheless, Fisher’s approach concentrates on the human character of rural life. This places it in opposition with composers such as Mahler and MacDowell, or writers such as Thoreau, for whom the idea of rural was framed as an escapist, solitary endeavor, a place to go to be alone and find harmony with nature.
An example of Fisher’s othering of the urban is an article published August 14, 1924, in the regional Bennington Banner newspaper, in which Fisher praised the Ruggleses for organizing a yearly community oratorio performance. Fisher describes a woman “with a New York accent” who drives

[Dorothy Canfield Fisher, “Town Chorus in Arlington Has Been Organized,” Bennington Banner, 14 August 1924.]

Figure 4.9: Cartoons from the Manchester Journal, illustrator unknown. “Summer Arrives,” 18 June 1925; “June Bugs,” 25 June 1925; “Summer Follies,” 6 August 1925; “See You All Thanksgiving Day,” 27 August 1925.
by the Town Hall where Carl and Charlotte are rehearsing the town choir in a performance of Mendelssohn’s *Psalm 95*. The New York woman inquires “who are those people, singing, in there?,” to which Fisher replies it is all local residents. Incredulous, the New Yorker states “there must be a German settlement around here. No country-bred Americans ever sing that sort of music or sing that way.” Fisher, biting her lip, assures her that it is “all Vermonters in the chorus as far as I know.”

Fisher’s anecdote about the tourist demarcates the urban and rural divide along cultural lines, specifically the access to and performance of music from the European classical tradition. Significantly, it was a performance of a choral work by Mendelssohn, whose music was inextricably tied to ideas about high culture and morality in late nineteenth-century America. By participating in this quintessential nineteenth-century urban musical practice, the rural Vermonters are portrayed as transcending their socio-geographic borders. Exceptionalism is implied not only by the ability to engage in this urban musical activity but by the seeming incongruity between that musical skill and rural geography and vocation. This disparity was a frequent literary device in Fisher’s writing and storytelling. She liked to tell of her grandfather, an autodidactic farmer and later preacher who read from his pocket copy of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* while his oxen cooled off. Fisher is often quick to remind her readers that, despite her homespun, rural stories populated with simple people, literacy

---


and culture were prominent aspects of rural Vermont life. In this regard “culture” is implicitly associated with otherwise urban artistic or social activities.

In other writings, Fisher further established a Vermont identity for Ruggles that emphasized the urban-rural divide. For a New York performance of *Portals* in 1929 by the Conductorless Symphony Orchestra, Ruggles again enlisted Fisher to write a program note. Previously, both Henry Cowell and Dane Rudhyar had written about *Portals* for articles and program notes throughout the late 1920s. Instead of reusing these, Ruggles opted for Fisher’s folksier tone in 1929, in which the regionalist aspects of his music came to the forefront. The fact that he specifically chose this framing rather than one from a fellow composer indicates that perhaps he did not want to be considered a technician, or perhaps he wanted to appeal more to an ideology of the local rather than the cosmic universalism that composer friends like Rudhyar highlighted. Regardless, in the program note Fisher presents her agenda from the outset, claiming Ruggles for a regional identity in the opening sentence: “Carl Ruggles’ background has been thoroughly New England.”

Fisher describes Ruggles’s ancient New England legacy, and cites a family history full of “sea captains, ship builders and puritanical Yankee landmen.” Tongue-in-cheek, she continues, “a fine

---

92 For example, in “Two Lovely, Silly Girls of Long Ago,” Fisher notes that social historians attach an “association of near-illiteracy, primitive narrowness of outlook, and ignorance of ordinary good manners” to a variety of “rustic” activities described as “folk-ways,” but that these careless characterizations run contrary to the actual intelligence of rural Vermonters. This story appears in Dorothy Canfield Fisher, *Memories of Arlington, Vermont* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1957), 101.

93 Dorothy Canfield Fisher, program notes for concert by the Conductorless Symphony Orchestra, 26 October 1929, Carnegie Hall, New York. In MSS 26, Box 9/4.

94 This sentence is full of a variety of myths that Ruggles perpetuated throughout his life. In fact his family only moved into their East Marion house in 1859, and his family did not include sea captains or ship builders. The “puritanical Yankee landsman” is likely Ruggles’s grandfather who tyrannically domineered over his family, and was in fact a farmer on the East Marion property. See Marilyn J. Ziffrin, “Interesting Lies and Curious Truths About Carl Ruggles,” *College Music Symposium* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1979): 7–18.
family to rear a modernistic composer.” Fisher posits New England conservatism as part of Ruggles’s
history to further accentuate his radical compositional style. In this she echoes her own Vermont
background with its blend of Yankee free thinking and Puritan humility.95 Progressivism in the face
of a reactionary society formed part of Fisher’s notion of what it meant to be a Vermonter. She
scoffed at the notion that Vermont was Puritanical, instead arguing that the original Vermont Yankee
was a “life-loving, rough-and-ready, dancing and joking and danger-enjoying young rebel.”96

As was the case in 1924, Fisher composed a lengthy essay about Ruggles that far exceeded the
program’s space, and so portions of it were excerpted, re-arranged, and partially rewritten to fit the
program. Her essay begins by connecting Ruggles to a much more well known New England nativist
artist: “Carl Ruggles . . . is as much New England as the poetry of Robert Frost.”97 She then
reproduces what she identifies as a direct quote from Ruggles: “[Portals] was written here in Vermont,
in the background to which I seem naturally to belong.” The comment reaffirms Ruggles’s strong
identification with his adopted state, and his desire to be seen as a rural composer. Yet it also
connects his music, not just his biography, specifically to the landscape and identity of Vermont.
Fisher notes that “[Ruggles’s] keynote is originality and a complete and fearless independence.” This
idea of independence strongly connects to the American revolutionary spirit and the self-reliance of
Emerson, two themes that articulate Ruggles’s New England identity, as well as the pioneering and
progressive essence that Fisher saw in Vermonters.

95 In a letter to Pearl S. Buck, Fisher remembered the “complete lack of harmony” between her
parents stemming from the discord between her mother’s free-spiritedness and her father’s more
buttoned-up demeanor. Dorothy Canfield Fisher to Pearl S. Buck, 22 June 1943, in Mark J.
Madigan, ed., Keeping Fires Night and Day: Selected Letters of Dorothy Canfield Fisher (Columbia:
University of Missouri Press, 1993), 220.
96 Fisher, Memories of Arlington, Vermont, 100.
97 All quotations from Fisher’s essay in the following section are taken from the original typescript in
MSS 26, Box 15/30. Hereafter DCF 1929.
In 1932, Fisher authored a pamphlet titled *Vermont Summer Homes* for the Vermont Bureau of Publicity, a document that bears significantly on another article she wrote about Ruggles from the same year. *Vermont Summer Homes*—or “an open letter” as she called it—was a plea specifically addressed to artists, writers, and educators, or as she writes “those who earn their living by a professionally trained use of their brains.”

Fisher makes a variety of statements that reinforce an “us/them” mentality regarding locals and visitors, such as “it seems to us that Vermont just by being Vermont has something liked and needed by people of your sort, and that people of your sort just by being yourselves have something that Vermont likes and needs.” In other places, she uses the traits that Harrison describes as Vermont typicality as a specific draw for urbanites, noting that “[Vermont] has always been conscious, like you, of having good mental and moral qualities in its make-up,” and “old New England traditions make us look up to character and cultivation and education, and proud that we do.” As a Depression-era document, it is worth noting that Fisher’s ideal audience is financially aligned with Vermonters since “life has forcibly taught both the value of other things in life than cash.” Fisher’s plea to professors and artists is rooted in the idea that both scholarly thinking and art are hard work, and that Vermont farmers welcome culture because they appreciate and know labor. In some ways, this connects to Middlebury president Thomas’s entreaty twenty years earlier that graduates not take their education to the cities, but rather stay rural because Vermont appreciates thought as work.

In the same year Fisher published an article in a regional newspaper that both celebrated Ruggles’s recent successes, which by this point included the premiere of his largest-scale composition

---

98 Dorothy Canfield, *Vermont Summer Homes* (Montpelier: Vermont Bureau of Publicity, 1932), unpaginated. The pamphlet was reissued in 1934, 1937, 1941, and included as an article in *Vermont Life* in 1949. Interestingly, Fisher used her maiden name for this publication, indicating that she grouped it with her works of fiction.
Sun-Treader, and served as Vermont publicity to inform both residents and visitors of this unknown genius in their midst. In it she frames Ruggles as a Vermonter who is educated, proud of his traditions, humble, and stable; in short, he embodies the sort of resident Fisher idealizes in Vermont Summer Homes. Yet he is also part of the cultivated world of art and music, like the educated urban class to which she addressed her open letter. She begins by asking, rhetorically, “how many Vermonters know that from a small town in Bennington County music is streaming out that is being played by the best orchestras of Europe?” Her question is not only intended to lend a legitimacy to Ruggles’s music, as a European performance carried tremendous cachet in the classical music world, but to again spotlight the urban-rural divide between Ruggles’s music and the European cities with the “best orchestras.”

Yet the majority of this article is devoted to Ruggles’s Arlington life and his identity as an everyday, regular denizen of southern Vermont. Fisher writes that “all Mr. Ruggles’ creative work is done in Arlington,” which she specifies is in “an all-the-year-round house, too, for both Mr. and Mrs. Ruggles are real Vermonters.” Here Fisher stretches the truth, since as she knew well, the house was ill equipped for winter living and the family had previously spent their winters elsewhere. During the winter of 1931–32, when Fisher wrote this piece, the Ruggleses were in fact living in their schoolhouse, but they couldn’t afford to heat the place properly and were frequently in poor health.

---

99 This newspaper clipping is in the Carl Ruggles file of the Russell Vermontiana Collection, Martha Canfield Library, Arlington, VT. Unfortunately, the clipping is undated and no publication is indicated. Based on information about performances in the article, it likely dates from March 1932, and because of the local flavor and references in Fisher’s writing, it is likely from a Vermont newspaper. Fisher makes mention of the premiere of Sun-Treader on February 25 of that year, which was 1932, and writes about a concert of March 5 in the past tense and a concert of March 22 in the future tense, suggesting a mid-March composition. A typescript of this article is in the Dorothy Canfield Collection, Special Collections, University of Vermont Library, carton 18, folder 1. Hereafter cited as DCF 1932.
because of the cold. A few years later, they would give up trying to heat the house entirely, and spent every remaining winter out of state.

Still, Fisher wanted to cast Ruggles as part of a typical Vermont identity, an identity that potential summer home buyers might emulate. As in her earlier *Banner* article, the assertion that the Ruggleses are “real Vermonters” rests on their year-round residency, implying that Vermonter authenticity resides, in part, in the hardness, dedication, and constancy required to endure a northern New England winter. She elaborates by saying they are “Yankees among Yankees, attending Town Meeting, tremendously interested in the local baseball team, public-spirited, interested in all the projects for the betterment of the life of the community.” Referencing Town Meeting further aligns Ruggles with the ideals of the average Vermonter, since this localized form of government is enshrined as one of Vermont’s most cherished attributes and traditions. In closing, she again reminds readers of the separation between rural and urban by noting how Ruggles “fit[s] in to the town life so naturally and unpretentiously that it is hard for Arlington people to realize that the man whom they all know and like . . . is an internationally famous musician.” His status as an artist does not preclude him access to rural Vermont identity, because the work of musicians (and writers such as Fisher or illustrators such as Kent) is flattened to the same level as manual labor in her vision of Arlington society.

Comparing these two newspaper articles and the *Portals* program note to the *Men and Mountains* essay, it is clear that Fisher had two different Vermonts in mind when she wrote about Ruggles. One, as represented in the *Men and Mountains* essay, constructed Vermont as a place of rugged, wild mountains and frontier rurality, a place associated with Whitmanesque virility that worked against emasculated and genteel trends in music. The other was the mundane, lived-in
Vermont, populated by those who espoused what Harrison construes as “Vermont typicality”: everyday, rural, agrarian people who were highly educated and cultured beyond their stereotypical appearance. One potential reason for this shift is that tourism was becoming more of a viable industry in Arlington and across Southern Vermont, and so perhaps Fisher made her Ruggles projects apposite to her various tourism efforts. Indeed, from the late 1920s onward Vermont frequently touted the quaint eccentricities of its inhabitants as part of its charm, using folksy depictions of local color and adopting the slogan “VERMONT is a way of LIFE” for the state’s tourism magazine started in 1946, *Vermont Life* (fig. 4.10). Regardless, it is clear that Fisher believed casting Ruggles as a rural Vermont composer, deeply tied to New England heritage and traditions, gave him a claim to a seemingly more authentic American identity.

100 In addition to *Vermont Summer Homes*, Fisher wrote a community play called *Tourists Accommodated* as well as a number of other short articles and pamphlets for various newspapers, magazine, and state and federal offices.
Figure 4.10: Illustration by Norman Rockwell, commonly called “The Horseshoe Forging Contest,” back cover of Vermont Life 1, no. 4 (Summer 1947). The phrase “Vermont is a Way of Life” appears on the back cover of each issue in volume one. The illustration originally appeared as part of a story in the Saturday Evening Post from November 2, 1940, and depicts actual places and people around Arlington: the location is Moon’s Blacksmith Shop in South Shaftsbury and local resident Harvey McKee is the man facing the viewer. Back cover of Summer 1947 issue of Vermont Life magazine reproduced with permission from Vermont Life.

“New England Americans”

As Joseph Conforti observes, a notion of regional superiority and uniqueness was present in New England as far back as the settling of the region in the seventeenth century. With the separation between urban and rural growing ideologically larger during the late nineteenth century, the New England village came to represent an older, lost America, increasingly portrayed in literature and art of the time “as a national repository of everything industrial society was leaving behind.”

This imagined rural New England therefore symbolized an obsolete national geography, not merely a local or regional one. Frequently the farming village was understood not only as a location of the quaint, idyllic, pastoral life, but also as a counterpart to the modernized and industrialized city, thus acting as part of a dialogic construction of place rather than an isolated view of the rural. Ruggles therefore embraced Fisher’s regionalist description of his music and biography because the idea of New England exceptionalism provided a kind of American legitimacy. Indeed, it was this sentiment that led Henry Cowell to write boastfully of Ruggles that “he is the one American composer of genuine Yankee lineage,” a quotation that Fisher reproduced in her Portals essay.

Fisher weaved this notion of regional exceptionalism throughout her characterizations of

---


105 DCF 1929. Cowell was not a Yankee; he was born in San Francisco and his father was an Irish immigrant. His statement demonstrates how powerfully Yankee exceptionalism impacted American identity. Yet it is unclear when exactly Cowell wrote this phrase since one presumes Ives would be another American composer of “genuine Yankee lineage.” Cowell may have written it in reference to Ruggles when *Portals* premiered in 1925. Cowell and Ives began a professional correspondence in 1927 when Ives became Cowell’s patron for *New Music Quarterly*. Cowell’s omission of Ives as a “genuine Yankee” also raises the possibility that Fisher misquoted Cowell here.
Ruggles. In 1930 she recommended both Carl and Charlotte Ruggles to President Robert Leigh for jobs at the nearby and soon-to-be-opened Bennington College, stating that “what is most unusual in their really unique equipment for this sort of work is that they are both New England Americans, with the instinctive understanding of American character which a foreigner no matter how gifted can never have.” Here she argues that New Englanders have a more direct, “instinctive” access to authentic American experiences than do either Europeans—who Fisher supposed might be considered for the academic post—or other Americans.

In other writings, Fisher grounds Ruggles’s Americanness in his old New England heritage. This was a trait common to earlier New England historians, such as Jedidiah Morse and Timothy Dwight, who in their influential eighteenth-century geography books identified New England values and culture as either explicitly or implicitly more American than the rest of the country. When Louise Varèse included Fisher’s description of Ruggles as “this pure-blooded Cape-Cod seven-generation New Englander” in the program note for the premiere of *Men and Mountains*, it essentialized New England and its “purity” as part of Ruggles’s compositional identity from the start. The excerpt of Fisher’s essay printed in the ICG program also omits a parenthetical phrase included in her original typescript, noted below in italics: “‘Lilacs,’ wistful, frail, tenuously complicated (but always with that implacable sincerity of its racial speech) tells of the ebbing away of humanity from the scenes of its old conquests.” This omitted phrase is perhaps one of the most curious in Fisher’s essay, raising the question of what she meant by “racial speech.” She may, as she does at a later point in the essay, mean to invoke the American race, or perhaps she refers to the just-mentioned New England

106 Dorothy Canfield Fisher to Robert Devore Leigh, 14 November 1930. In MSS 26, Box 2/34.
107 The topic of geographical history as written by these eighteenth-century New Englanders is covered extensively in Conforti, *Imagining New England*, 79–122.
civilization, to which the description “implacable sincerity” seems apt. Fisher again emphasized New England exceptionalism by implying that “Lilacs,” a movement programmatically tied to nineteenth-century Vermont, tells a story with that “implacable sincerity” that belongs only to its racial vernacular—Vermonter, New Englander, American.

However, this particular New England American identity also carried certain assumptions about race, religion, class, and privilege that Ruggles would have found attractive. Fisher locates Ruggles locally (Cape Cod or Vermont), regionally (New England), and nationally (American), but implicit in all is a certain ethnic makeup. Ruggles, she seems to be saying, is quintessentially American: white, Protestant, male, and of “pure-blooded” Yankee stock. This was a worldview sympathetic with Ruggles’s prejudices. He was well known as a bawdy storyteller with frequent off-color jokes, but his speech often ventured into racism, homophobia, misogyny, and anti-Semitism. To cite merely two instances, in a 1933 letter to Henry Cowell, Ruggles referred to “that filthy bunch of Juilliard Jews,” and Lou Harrison distanced himself personally from Ruggles following a 1949 lunch in which Ruggles publicly shouted racist and anti-Semitic slurs in New York City. 108 Moreover, Ruggles consciously framed his bigotry as part of his New England identity. Ruth Crawford recounted an argument where Ruggles admitted: “By god, I’ll never lose my New England prejudices. I’m proud of ‘em. I’m proud of being narrow, see.” 109

Because the majority of Vermont was of Anglo-American Yankee heritage, Fisher’s privileging of Vermont identity implicitly privileges that ethnic identity and many of the associations that come

with it. When Vermont initially decided to market its run-down farms to outsiders, some residents were concerned about what kinds of people would purchase these farms, revealing a variety of social, ethnic, economic, and religious prejudices. Anti-Semitism, in particular, was pervasive throughout the state, as some residents actively sought to dissuade Jews from purchasing abandoned land and thus becoming Vermonters themselves.¹¹⁰

Even more unsettling was the Vermont Eugenics Survey, an institution that existed from 1925 until 1936 and, especially in its initial stages, sought to identify, and even potentially sterilize, the hereditary lines of Vermont families that begat social degeneracy, namely those with Native American or French Canadian heritage.¹¹¹ The survey’s findings lent a pseudoscientific legitimacy to racial stereotypes that privileged Anglo-American Yankees, yet prejudice based on eugenic theory was a natural outgrowth of widely held fears around the state and beyond. Many authors, even Vermont native and U. S. President Calvin Coolidge, believed that New England was in social decline because of a dilution of the white, Yankee genetic makeup of the region.¹¹² Fisher publicly and privately supported equal rights based on race, gender, and nationality (she was especially active in support of immigrant child refugees), but paradoxically seems to have internalized “the eugenic undertones of the state’s tourist industry,” especially in her writings from the 1910s, 20s, and 30s.¹¹³ Despite her frequent claims to progressivism and humanitarianism as core traits of many Vermonters, certain

¹¹² Writings by President Coolidge, Wallace Nutting, Daniel Chauncey Brewer, Daniel J. Kevles, and David Starr Jordan are summarized by Julia C. Ehrhardt, Writers of Conviction: The Personal Politics of Zona Gale, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Rose Wilder Lane, and Josephine Herbst (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 75–76.
¹¹³ Ibid., 56.
prejudices and xenophobia remained that were, as chapter 2 demonstrates, common throughout New England. Ruggles, too, likely felt that his identity as a Vermont composer gave him a stronger claim to American nationalism in music than many other contemporary composers, especially the gay and/or Jewish composers whom he privately derided in letters.

In many ways, Fisher’s desire to frame Ruggles’s New England identity as part of a much wider Americanist agenda echoes a similar, contemporaneous ploy by Arthur Farwell with regard to Roy Harris.¹¹⁴ Like Ruggles, Harris was cast as a composer of rural America—specifically Oklahoma and the regional imagination of the American Southwest—despite spending much of his life elsewhere. Both Ruggles and Harris, aided by Fisher and Farwell respectively, wanted to speak artistically for the entire country in their own regional musical vernacular; Farwell wrote of Harris’s melodic sources in “the broad horizon, the long undulations or the craggy lines of mountain contours” in the West, just as Fisher wrote of how Ruggles’s music reflected his “love for and interest in the mountains and meadows among which men live.”¹¹⁵ Farwell and Fisher each framed their respective composers’ provincial rurality as a foil to European and other potentially corrupting urban influences, suggesting that their particular kind of rurality, namely agrarian and frontier, was the source of their Americanism.

Beth E. Levy notes that that the American West was a “mainstay of American exceptionalism,” much of which derived from the West’s association with “two of this country’s most powerful national myths: . . . self-sufficient agricultural enterprise and America as the triumphant


¹¹⁵ Farwell, “Roy Harris,” 25; DCF 1929.
realization of westward expansion and Manifest Destiny.”

This mythologizing also applied, to a lesser degree, to Vermont, as the state cast itself as “The West of New England” in tourism brochures from the 1930s (fig. 4.11). The agricultural pioneer of the West thus became a model also associated with Vermont identity, and certainly one that Ruggles and Fisher could use to forward New England exceptionalism. At the same time, ideologies of manifest destiny were historically predicated on the idea of a racially homogenous nation, one that was mirrored by the ethnic makeup of Vermont and provided another source for the state’s exceptionalism.

Like Fisher, Farwell and others emphasized Harris’s ethnic heritage and its essentially regional quality as part of his exclusive claim to Americanness. John Tasker Howard called Harris “the white hope of the nationalists, for this raw-boned Oklahoman has the Southwest in his blood,” neatly conflating race with landscape and identity. Farwell writes that Harris is “from old Anglo-Saxon stock, with Scotch and Irish ingredients,” as a way of connecting the composer with the oldest past of America, unknowingly echoing Fisher’s descriptions of Ruggles’s old Yankee heritage with the same intention of proving his bona fide Americanness. New England and the West were regional landscapes and social orders that coded masculine, white, Protestant, and Anglo-American, a hegemonic demographic to which both Ruggles and Harris belonged. Both men certainly believed that their personal ethnic makeup, tied inextricably to specific American geographies, allowed them a greater appeal to authenticity of American musical expression.

---

116 Levy, Frontier Figures, 228.
Figure 4.11: “Come to Vermont—The West of New England,” undated tourism brochure. This slogan was frequently included as part of the “Unspoiled Vermont” tourism campaign of the 1930s. Courtesy Vermont Historical Society.
Universal Appeal

Fisher’s characterization of Ruggles, especially in its later manifestation of typicality and the mundanity of rural life, stands apart from many of the descriptions of his music by contemporary critics, composers, and friends. This other concept, what Drew Massey calls the “infinite” Ruggles, relies on a kind of mystical universalism, not bound to any specific time or place. Massey describes how John Kirkpatrick, Dane Rudhyar, and others “sought to place Ruggles apart from fellow American modernists by endowing him with unique access to great eternal truths.”119 The “infinite” Ruggles has provided a useful critical lens for recent scholarship on the composer and his music, such as Carol Oja’s tracing of the influence of theosophy in Ruggles’s idea of ecstatic dissonance or Deniz Ertan’s connection of Ruggles with Whitman’s individuality and universalism.120

Writers used the “infinite” Ruggles myth in part to explain what they perceived as a universal, everyman appeal for Ruggles’s music beyond the isolated ultra-modern enclave. For instance, commenting on a performance of Angels at a New Music Society concert in San Francisco, Redfern Mason admitted “you feel the pulsating heart of real man in it.”121 Others tied this appeal to the timeless breadth of the composer, such as Nicolas Slonimsky who wrote that “Ruggles is scaling heights, plumbing depths, proclaiming polysyllabical millenia.”122 However, Fisher connects this universal appeal to Ruggles’s Vermont identity, related to her portrayal of the typical Vermonter’s ability to conflate the rural and agrarian with the sophisticated, intellectual, and modern.

120 Oja, Making Music Modern, chap. 7; Ertan, “Ruggles, Whitman, and Their Landscapes.”
122 Nicolas Slonimsky, “Relevant Notes,” program of concert on 10 January 1931, Chamber Orchestra of Boston, Town Hall, New York City. In MSS 26, Box 9/5.
Early in her friendship with Ruggles, Fisher wrote him a letter in which she relayed an encounter with a local Arlingtonian named John Conway. She had asked Conway about hearing Ruggles compose at the piano, to which Conway replied that he “got a lot out of it.” Pressed to elaborate on what he “got out of it,” Conway continued:

Feelings! Lots of feelings. It made me feel the way fireworks on a Fourth of July evening do, when it’s real dark. I’d hear him start rocketing up, — up, up — and I’d cringe, ready to have it burst with a bang into all the stars! But no, not yet. That one didn’t go off. He wasn’t ready yet, and then another one would rush up, faster and faster and the gooseflesh would be out all over you, waiting for it to go off. But no — not yet. And by Golly, when he finally did let one explode, the roof went off into the air, and you with it!123

Fisher was showing Ruggles how his music could affect and be appreciated by the regular folk of their rural mountain town. Her appeal to emotionality was perhaps also calculated to set Ruggles apart from trends in modern music, especially in Europe and particularly Stravinsky. Composer Dane Rudhyar made this explicit in an unpublished essay written in 1926 about Portals, noting that “mysticism and vibrant emotions” stirred Ruggles to compose Portals, while “real mysticism and emotions are no longer favorites among European or Europeanized composers.”124 Regardless of this connection, the feelings elicited from John Conway may have impacted Fisher’s later writing on Ruggles. In the first sentence of her 1924 Men and Mountains essay, she writes that “we ordinary American music-lovers” will profit from realizing that “Carl Ruggles is the great American composer.” Later she again cites “ordinary American music-lovers,” emphasizing that they will recognize Ruggles as “a composer of their own race, of their own kin,” playing on the perceived cultural and ethnic homogeneity of New England for his “universal” (read: white, Anglo-American)

123 Dorothy Canfield Fisher to Carl Ruggles, 6 November 1922, MSS 26, 2/34.
appeal. Finally, she bookends her essay with a statement conflating this everyman appeal with an
indescribable emotionality: “Strong and sensitive American music-lovers (if they are given a chance
to listen to it in peace) can only rejoice to hear the outpouring of something too deep in their hearts
for them ever to express. Life . . . . . . . . . . America . . . . . . our race . . . . . . all seen from a
great height, as one sees, from a hard-won mountain-top, all the other mountains marching mightily
away to the horizon.” In some ways, this reflects the sentiment laid out by Massey, that Ruggles
touches on a kind of cosmic nerve that is enduring and timeless.\textsuperscript{125}

Digging deeper, this is yet another way that Fisher, perhaps inadvertently, imbued Ruggles’s
music with certain characteristics ostensibly typical of Vermonters. Just as she noted the ability of
everyday rural listeners to transcend the boundaries of high art culture, she often observed how
people of a high social or artistic position took part in the mundane activities and lifestyles of rural
people. In a story about the first Vermont governor, Thomas Chittenden, Fisher tells how a fancy
young out-of-stater asked an old farmer where the governor’s house was, whereupon the farmer took
the young man to his own farmhouse and said “I’m Governor Chittenden. What can I do for
you?”\textsuperscript{126} Fisher characterized Ruggles as an ordinary Arlington resident who happened to be a great
modern composer, interested in town affairs and baseball and knowing all the children’s names.
Likewise she wrote of Robert Frost, who lived in nearby South Shaftsbury starting in 1920, as a
neighborly farmer looking for a stray cow and engaging in conversation unlike that of most literary
types.\textsuperscript{127} Fisher’s Arlington smoothes the disparity between intellectual or artistic work and agrarian
farm labor.

\textsuperscript{125} Massey, “Imagining the Infinite,” 585.
\textsuperscript{126} “An Eighteenth Century Gallup Poll,” in Fisher, \textit{Memories of Arlington, Vermont}, 44.
\textsuperscript{127} Dorothy Canfield Fisher, “A Neighbor of Mine,” \textit{Dorothy Canfield Fisher Newsletter} 4, no. 1
(December 1996): 10–12.
Especially in her *Men and Mountains* essay, Fisher articulated a version of the “infinite” Ruggles that is bound to a New England expression of place rather than a placeless universalism. Even those who helped spread the myth of the “infinite” Ruggles acknowledged the marked divide between Ruggles’s rural identity and the mostly urban listeners who heard his music, especially when their words were paired with a performance of *Men and Mountains*. In his review of the 1924 premiere, Walter V. Anderson of the *Musical Advance* noted that Ruggles “took his rural self to town to hear the performance of his new work.” The divide between city and country is strongly marked in this brief comment; Ruggles, Anderson implies, is clearly of the latter. Similarly, in a program note for a 1931 performance of *Men and Mountains*, Slonimsky called Ruggles “a rugged New Englander, who makes his home in Arlington, Vermont, and occasionally descends upon the civilized centers of the Eastern coast-line, and even meets professional musicians and writers on music.” Here descent not only denotes the elevation between Vermont and a city such as New York, but also connotes a philosophical or ideological descent, perhaps from a rural mysticism into an urban profanity. For Slonimsky, Ruggles’s closeness to nature, and his outsider status from professional musicians, were some of the circumstances that gave him access to universal, timeless truths, perpetuating Romantic myths about genius and the power of nature as artistic muse.

Fisher’s *Men and Mountains* essay helped establish these myths of Ruggles as the pioneering rural composer, a Whitmanesque mystic, who writes music that is vividly evocative of American landscapes and the American spirit. The seed she planted was nurtured by countless critics and writers for subsequent performances and generations, often distorted into exaggerations and

---

128 W. V. A. [Walter V. Anderson], *Musical Advance* 12, no. 6 (January 1925).
129 Nicolas Slonimsky, “Relevant Notes,” program of concert on 3 March 1931, Chamber Orchestra of Boston, Smith College, Northampton, MA. In MSS 26, Box 9/5
falsehoods. She was especially proud of a 1931 program for a concert in Havana, Cuba, which stated that Ruggles was born in Arlington; a mistake that, as she confided to Ruggles, she had no desire to correct.\textsuperscript{130} Lawrence Gilman's program notes for the 1936 performance of \textit{Men and Mountains} by the New York Philharmonic connected Ruggles and his music to the manifest destiny spirit of pioneering, his musical explorations likened to geographical ones.\textsuperscript{131} As the years wore on, descriptions of Ruggles and his music took on an ever more mythological tone, expanding on the theme of New England as a region with direct access to the earliest American history. Especially pertinent in this connection is the idea that Ruggles's individualism, rebelliousness, and rejection of the musical status quo could be traced from the revolutionary spirit of late eighteenth-century New England.\textsuperscript{132}

The “infinite” Ruggles myth certainly remains an important element of his historiography, repeated often not only in recent scholarship but also in popular materials such as the program notes for Michael Tilson Thomas's “American Mavericks” festival with the San Francisco Symphony in 2000, which featured performances of \textit{Sun-Treader}.\textsuperscript{133} Yet the “infinite” Carl Ruggles is only one of many versions of the composer. Fisher reclaimed Ruggles as a local composer, imbued with notions of masculinity, pioneering, and rurality that derived from his geographic identity in New England and specifically Vermont. At the same time, her construction of the Vermont Ruggles provides us with another way to understand and hear this composer’s music outside the concept of the “infinite.”

\textsuperscript{130} Dorothy Canfield Fisher to Carl and Charlotte Ruggles, March 1931, MSS 26, 2/34.
\textsuperscript{131} Lawrence Gilman, program notes for concert of the New York Philharmonic, cond. Hans Lange, 19-20 March 1936, in MSS 26, Box 9/6.
\textsuperscript{132} This connection was also popular in depictions of Ives during the bicentennial celebration of 1976, see fig. 3.5.
\textsuperscript{133} Susan Key and Larry Rothe, eds., \textit{American Mavericks} (Berkeley: San Francisco Symphony; University of California Press, 2001), 22–25.
While Ertan interprets Ruggles’s affinity for Whitman as pertaining to the “infinite,” I contend that Ruggles and Fisher also used Whitman to bring Ruggles back to a more local expression of place, tied into the historical narrative of pioneering in Vermont.\footnote{Ertan, “Ruggles, Whitman, and Their Landscapes,” 243–46.} His appeal may in fact result from his ability to transcend the city-country divide, to be both local and universal, to aspire to the highest artistic and aesthetic standards but still be loved by regular folks who just know something good when they hear it. Robert Frost could have been describing the relationship between Ruggles and Fisher in his comment that “everything that ever happened or occurred to her converged as into a napkin ring and came out wide on the other side of it Vermontly.”\footnote{Joan G. Schroeter, “DCF and Robert Frost,” \textit{Dorothy Canfield Fisher Newsletter} 4, no. 1 (December 1996): 7.}
Chapter 5

The MacDowell Colony and the Myth of Rural Solitude

How great are the advantages of solitude!—How sublime is the silence of nature’s ever-active energies! There is something in the very name of wilderness, which charms the ear, and soothes the spirit of man. There is religion in it.
—Estwick Evans

The mountain-land of New England . . . is prehistoric in the fullest sense. No human being knows the whole past of those wooded and rocky slopes, of those dark green valleys, of those deep crystals of lakes. We people them in fancy with the Indian tribes, but beyond that fancy is blind even to conjecture. But they are beautiful. . . .
—Mary E. Wilkins Freeman

Strolling the grounds of the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire, on a sunny, not-too-hot August afternoon in 2014, it was difficult for me not to be enchanted by the lazy quietude of the place, even though it was full of hundreds of people. It was Medal Day, the one time each year that the Colony is open to the public, allowing anyone to explore the cabin studios and meet the artists who, free of charge, live in them for a month or two at a time. Only a mile from quaint downtown Peterborough, and only an hour and a half from Boston, the estate sprawls out from stately Colony Hall into a large meadow and then meanders down a number of dirt roads

---

1 Estwick Evans, A Pedestrious Tour of Four Thousand Miles, Through the Western States and Territories, During the Winter and Spring of 1818 (Concord, NH: Joseph C. Spear, 1819), 102. Quoted in Roderick Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind, 3rd edition (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), 44.

through thick New England forests (see fig. 5.1). Studios seem to appear suddenly in the middle of the woods, in fairytale fashion, with artists inside showing off their projects to curious visitors.

![Image](image_url)

Figure 5.1: MacDowell Colony, Peterborough, New Hampshire, August 2014. Left: the dirt road leading from Colony Hall to the studios. Right: the Veltin studio, where Thornton Wilder wrote *Our Town*. Photographs copyright 2014, Jacob A. Cohen.

I stopped into the Veltin studio, famous as the place where Thornton Wilder wrote *Our Town*. The colonist staying there was a writer from Los Angeles, working on a novel, her second. I asked her how she liked the atmosphere at the Colony, and she admitted that it was a little daunting, especially at first. She told me that for the first few days, she simply had to adjust to the pace of life at the Colony. With nothing to steal her attention from her work, she was overwhelmed by the magnitude of her isolation, and found it difficult to unplug from twenty-first century life and technology. I gestured to her iPhone on the desk, implying that she wasn't entirely unplugged from email and social media. She smiled and replied “but there’s no cell coverage here.”

This desire to isolate oneself from modern urban society in order to foster creativity was one of the guiding forces that led composer Edward MacDowell and his wife Marian to build a small log cabin deep in the woods on their summer property in Peterborough. The MacDowells fell in love
with the small town in the southwestern corner of New Hampshire and purchased an old farmhouse named “Hillcrest” in 1896. The cabin in the woods followed three years later. Edward’s “Peterborough idea,” to open up their property to artists who might benefit from the same working conditions that had been so fruitful for him, led to the establishment of the MacDowell Colony in 1907.³

In addition to providing artists with the opportunity for solitude, part of the Colony’s founding mission was the intermingling of artists working in disparate fields. MacDowell believed that “the various arts are all manifestations of the same impulse and therefore closely related.”⁴ His conviction that composers should naturally “know something of painting through actual acquaintance with men engaged in painting” and “get some understanding of literary expression through actual acquaintance with writers” also suggests that MacDowell felt musicians might enhance their own expressiveness by being part of a wider community of artists, including painters, writers, photographers, and architects.⁵ In the piano miniatures from the last decade of his career, such as the Woodland Sketches, op. 51, Fireside Tales, op. 61, or New England Idyls, op. 62, MacDowell drew on his passion for poetry and drawing to create what critic Lawrence Gilman called “pianistic ‘nature-studies’” that capture his experiences of Peterborough.⁶

MacDowell deified Peterborough as a quiet respite from the hectic pace of city life. Isolated from society, he was able to achieve the solitude that spurred his creative output. He romanticized

⁵ Ibid.
the forest as a primeval wilderness, and idealized the old civilizations, both Native Americans and antebellum settlers, that were no longer there. His perception and experience of Peterborough guided the formation and development of the Colony after his death, and became part of the ethos of the institution. Indeed, throughout the Colony’s more than one hundred years, fellows have remarked on the permanence of these sentiments, the liberating “sense of place that the physical setting of MacDowell imposes upon” a colonist. However, the Peterborough that MacDowell experienced and represented in his music was a constructed and contrived rural place, one that differs in many aspects from the actual lived reality of Peterborough, New Hampshire.

This chapter examines how the MacDowell Colony—including both Edward and Marian MacDowell as well as the Memorial Association established to help manage the Colony after Edward’s death—constructed an image and mythology of rural solitude conducive to artistic creativity. This narrative was nurtured and perpetuated by the MacDowells in both of their writings, as well as in Edward’s music. His aesthetic of solitude was characterized by self-reflection, the sublime, and a rapturous communing with nature. The roots of this myth are part of a rich tradition in New England thinking that stretches back centuries and includes Thoreau’s transcendentalism and the paintings of the Hudson River School, while also incorporating elements of German Romanticism.

MacDowell’s experience of Peterborough can also be understood in light of two related impulses in early twentieth-century thinking. The first is the American Arcadian myth, articulated by cultural historian Peter J. Schmitt, in which nature and wilderness were shaped and packaged to

appeal to urban residents.\textsuperscript{8} This ideal, presented in popular writing from the turn of the century, treated the rural countryside as a retreat from the city and a playground for an educated middle class. The second was a movement of regional rural reform promoted by the New England socioeconomic elite that sought to remake the image of rural New England. These well-educated and well-heeled Peterborough residents promoted tourism based on art and nature, as well as a distorted view of the failures of earlier generations, to combat what they perceived as social decline.

Both these ways of thinking contributed to a construction of place that was intentional and contrived, as Marian MacDowell and the MacDowell Memorial Association elevated Edward’s experience of Peterborough to mythological status. Yet this did not reflect the diversity of experiences in Peterborough. MacDowell romanticized the hardships of past generations, as in his fascination with landscapes that were abandoned in the mid-nineteenth century or the Native Americans that used to lived in the area, while downplaying aspects of the town’s historical reality. With his dream of having artists from disparate artistic fields working alongside one another, MacDowell created an environment cloistered away from both urban settings as well as from Peterborough town itself. The colonists’ shared solitude created its own imagined rural community and the Colony took on the qualities of an Arcadian idyll, a place set apart from its surrounding populations and landscapes.

“The Advantages of Solitude”

In considering how the MacDowells implaced isolated solitude as a core element of the Colony, it is first necessary to parse out the meanings of these two related but ultimately different terms, isolation and solitude. As used in this chapter, isolation is primarily a physical and spatial

condition, one that is “not in itself an emotional state.” The verb “to isolate” means to “place or set apart or alone,” and thus the term isolation has at its roots the act of physical separation or detachment. This is reinforced by its etymological development from the Latin *insulatus*, meaning “made into an island.” To be isolated is also therefore, to a degree, to be protected, insulated against the outside world on a metaphorical island of one’s own making. Isolation also carries a clinical meaning, begun in the late nineteenth century, of separating a person from their normal environment or context, suggesting that the act of isolation involves being in a place that is outside mundane human experience.

Isolation does not necessarily include the emotional condition of loneliness, as loneliness often implies a longing or melancholy. On the contrary, in the case of MacDowell his isolated places were longed for, and while isolated in his cabin or another work space, he did not want to be anywhere else. Marian MacDowell wrote of how Edward needed to be isolated in order to work, stating that anytime they moved, she set about finding him a room of his own in which to compose. Isolation was not a uniquely rural quality, as it was possible for MacDowell to sequester himself in virtually any type of environment. When living in cities, he often had a separate place in which to compose. The main element of this desire was to be free of other human contact, even from his own wife, rather than a sense of immersion in nature or a desire for a solitary existence.

---

Solitude refers less to the physical condition of being separated from other people and more to an emotional condition. Still, solitude (from the Latin solus meaning “alone”) and isolation often share a common trait of being apart, physically or otherwise, from other humans. In his survey of the history of solitude in Western thought, philosopher Philip Koch observes that social disengagement is the core attribute that unites many of the varying accounts and descriptions of solitude, noting that even when other people are physically present, one can experience solitude if one's mind is disengaged from human company. In that sense, solitude does not require isolation.

Yet social disengagement is certainly not the only metric by which to measure solitude. Koch’s characterization is largely anecdotal, in that it is extrapolated from descriptions of solitude by writers from Plato onward. It is not, in and of itself, rigorously theoretical. Jay Hansford C. Vest, a forest ecologist and philosopher, argues that while the etymology of solitude can be understood as a near synonym of isolation (solus), it can also be understood as “soul-mood,” a “meditative and contemplative” solitude consisting of four themes that each impart “wilderness associations in defining solitude.” Vest believes that interpreting solitude as “soul-mood” gives it a positive valuation. He therefore provides a theoretical grounding for Koch’s observation that solitude is an affective, rather than spatial, condition. It is fundamentally a way of knowing the world, a condition in which we interact with “Being Itself.”

---

14 Koch, Solitude, 15.
15 Jay Hansford C. Vest, “The Philosophical Significance of Wilderness Solitude,” Environmental Ethics 9 (Winter 1987): 312. Vest traces this etymology by noting that solus is “not itself a prime word” (306), and that it is composed of sol + us. Sol is Latin for “sun,” but as it evolved through European languages it led to “soul.” The suffix tudo “implies abstraction as characterized by mental process,” which Vest infers as “mood.” Therefore, he theorizes “soul-mood” as an alternative etymology for “solitude” whose juxtaposition with solus becomes the crux of his argument for a different way of conceiving wilderness solitude.
16 Ibid., 315.
Vest’s explication is geared toward a philosophy of wilderness solitude, although it can apply to any kind of solitude. He concludes that solitude is not predicated upon isolation (although solitude can occur as a result of isolation) but instead involves four themes: solitude as Interior, as Sublime, as Sole, and as rapture. The Sublime and Sole themes are aesthetic valuations: solitude allows us to experience nature as sublime, but also to focus on that which is rare, unique, or beautiful (Sole) in nature. Through solitude we enter into a sympathetic being-with-nature in which we experience wilderness and perceive it as either sublime or uniquely beautiful. The notion of “solitude as Interior” derives from the dual meaning of interior as both a spatial interior (for example being in the interior of a desert, forest, or body of water, rather than on the edge and therefore closer to civilization) as well as a reflexive look inside ourselves. Knowing the land in its wildness means going beyond its peripheries, and thus “we are compelled to go to the Interior (wilderness) to find the soulful interior (self).” Finally, solitude can lead to a rapturous transcendence of ego or a cognition of total Being that is associated with a peak religious experience. Vest notes that religion can be defined as a solitude in which one becomes closer to the divine, and therefore solitude “realizes the numinious experience.” His theory of wilderness solitude is particularly useful because MacDowell’s log cabin effects a perception of wilderness in its forested setting with views of Mount Monadnock, isolated away from his living quarters, as will be explored below.

Since solitude is a way of thinking or, as Vest would argue, a way of knowing the world, it also has the ability to implace, to create a place of solitude. Edward S. Casey argues that to know the world sensuously is to be in place, and the reflexive knowledge of the self and heightened awareness

17 These capitalizations reflect Vest’s usage on pp. 312–14.  
18 Ibid., 321.  
19 Ibid., 312.  
20 Ibid., 314.
of Being that solitude can create provides an opportunity to constitute that place. He writes that it is through the sense perceptions of the body and our mental processing of those perceptions that our bodies have an “implacing power,”\textsuperscript{21} because “the perceiver’s body is not a mere mechanism for registering sensations but an active participant in the scene of perception.”\textsuperscript{22} Solitude, therefore, leads to a heightened awareness of the body, which in turn implaces that body within the world. For instance, Thoreau articulates this connection of solitude, body, and place in the opening sentences of his chapter titled “Solitude” from \textit{Walden}: “This is a delicious evening, when the whole body is one sense, and imbibes delight through every pore. I go and come with a strange liberty in Nature, a part of herself.”\textsuperscript{23} Koch relays similar expressions of the tendency of solitude to suggest a “realm or world . . . where time and space are experienced very differently than in society,” noting how solitude has the ability to mark a place as somehow othered.\textsuperscript{24} In fact as early as the late sixteenth century, solitude has been used particularly with reference to places.\textsuperscript{25} Historically, the term describes a place that is unfrequented, remote, or that enjoys a stillness of life.

The phrase “sense of place,” which is used somewhat casually in everyday speech, takes on a more literal meaning in the context of Casey’s theory of an embodied knowledge of place. He argues that place is the product of an embodied perception of space and time, constructed out of the lived experiences of an individual, not a simple location or “site.” MacDowell’s sense of place is therefore

\textsuperscript{21} Edward S. Casey, \textit{The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 215.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 213. Casey follows this train of thought from Immanuel Kant through Alfred North Whitehead, Edmund Husserl, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty to show that we have access to the world “primarily through our lived body” (229).
\textsuperscript{24} Koch, \textit{Solitude}, 21.
based on his sense perceptions of Peterborough: being in his log cabin, walking through the woods, visiting abandoned buildings, and seeing vistas of Mount Monadnock. His sense of place is largely governed by solitude because so much of his embodied experience of Peterborough involved being alone in nature.

**New England Wilderness**

The isolation of the log cabin allowed MacDowell to focus his energies while immersed in the natural world around him and provided ideal working conditions, but solitude provided the inspiration for his creative output. Although MacDowell embraced the myth of New England solitude as a spur to artistic creativity, he certainly did not invent it. Being alone in nature as a catalyst for self-expression or self-awareness was a long standing trope in New England literature, poetry, and art. As early as the 1720s, poets such as Jane Turell, Rev. John Adams, and others embraced an aesthetic that celebrated a solitary experience of the religious sublime in nature.26 Inspired by works such as John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and Sir Richard Blackmore’s *Creation; a Philosophic Poem*, these eighteenth-century New England writers developed a regionally distinct poetic style that fit within their Puritan religious doctrine. This coincided with a transatlantic shift in attitudes toward wilderness, as writers such as John Ray in his *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of the Creation* (1691) promulgated the notion that natural wilderness was evidence of the divine.27 It was Blackmore’s *Creation* that taught New England writers to look for wonderment in the

---

everyday workings of the natural world and environment, as opposed to an earlier notion that only
natural aberrations or extraordinary occurrences were evidence of the sublime.\textsuperscript{28}

The role of the city in the construction of American nature is essential, since as Roderick
Nash states, “appreciation of wilderness began in the cities.”\textsuperscript{29} As an example, the pastoral lyric poem
\textit{Philosophic Solitude: or, the Choice of a Rural Life} (1747), by the American writer William Livingston,
juxtaposes the author’s vision of an isolated, rural sublime with “the frivolous pleasures practiced by
what he called the New York City ‘Beau-Monde.’”\textsuperscript{30} Although little remembered today, Livingston’s
poem remained popular well into the nineteenth century, demonstrating the continuing appeal of
rural solitude as an ideal archetype within American culture.

In the nineteenth century, the artists of the Hudson River School went to rural New England
and painted scenes of nature that highlighted the solitude one felt in the wilderness. Often, they
accomplished this by depicting scenes of wilderness with only one or two people in them, dwarfed
by the grandeur of mountains, emphasizing Vest’s solitude ("soul-mood") of the sublime. Thomas
Cole, one of the key figures of this artistic movement, came to the White Mountains of New
Hampshire and captured this sense well. For example, in his \textit{Home in the Woods} from 1847 (fig. 5.2),
Cole depicts a man arriving home from a fishing trip to his family’s log cabin in the New Hampshire
woods. The man is a tiny figure, and while his cabin provides a focal point towards the lower right of
the canvas where his family awaits him, the main elements of the painting are the woods, lake, and
mountain peak. Nearly half the painting is given to clouds and sky, punctuated by the tallest forest
trees. The sense of the smallness of humans within the wilderness of the landscape is profound,

\textsuperscript{29} Nash, \textit{Wilderness and the American Mind}, 44.
\textsuperscript{30} Rob Wilson, “William Livingston’s ‘Philosophic Solitude’ and the Ideology of the Natural
emphasizing an aesthetic of nature that approaches the Sublime based first, perhaps, in the aesthetics of the infinite rather than deism.\textsuperscript{31}

Figure 5.2: Thomas Cole, \textit{Home in the Woods}, 1847. Oil on canvas, 52.5 x 74.5 in. Courtesy of Reynolda House Museum of American Art.

Yet the Cole painting represents what may be termed a cloistered isolation that leads to wilderness solitude. The man is not disengaged from social contact; in fact, he and his wife appear to be waving at each other as she greets his return. In all likelihood, the man was even more isolated before he returned home, when we was out by himself fishing. We see here one way that solitude, especially one that occurs in rural natural settings, differs from solitary isolation.

As Nash argues, painters like Cole recognized American wilderness “as a cultural and moral resource and a basis for national self-esteem,” a hook on which to hang their national identity.\(^{32}\) If Europeans criticized American culture because it had no deep, national history, Americans countered that their cultural basis could be this very state of wilderness. Writers such as James Fenimore Cooper also joined in this nationalistic wilderness project, as did a few classical composers. As Denise Von Glahn has shown, mid-nineteenth-century composers wrote programmatic orchestral works that reflected America’s unique wilderness features.\(^{33}\) Just as in the visual arts, Niagara Falls was a fruitful source of musical inspiration because of its sublime power, resulting in pieces like William Henry Fry’s *Niagara Symphony* composed in the early 1850s, although no evidence survives to suggest that wilderness solitude was a condition of Fry’s compositional process.

Hudson River School painters helped effect a fascination with New England wilderness and pastoral scenes, but Henry David Thoreau cemented the relationship between New England literary culture and rural isolation and solitude. *Walden* became part of New England’s cultural identity, and solitude is a central theme in that book, serving as the title of the fifth chapter. Thoreau attempts to purify and exalt his solitude at *Walden*, writing that “for the most part it is as solitary where I live as on the prairies. It is as much Asia or Africa as New England.”\(^{34}\) Of course he had much closer neighbors than many in the American prairies, or for that matter in the rural Asia or Africa he imagined. He also had frequent visitors, and admitted that he could smell the pipe “of a traveller along the highway sixty rods off.” Still, the romantic imagination of solitude was more important than the reality of Thoreau’s isolation. For Thoreau, it was solitude that allowed him a heightened

\(^{34}\) Thoreau, *Walden*, 91.
awareness of his natural surroundings, that allowed him to be “suddenly sensible of such sweet and beneficent society in Nature.”\textsuperscript{35} At the same time, a hard definition of solitude remains elusive in Thoreau. He rhetorically asks “what sort of space is that which separates a man from his fellows and makes him solitary?,” yet provides no answer, only an intentionally vague suggestion that we should live near “the perennial source of our life, whence in all our experience we have found that to issue.”\textsuperscript{36}

In these traditions going back at least to the early eighteenth century, artists both explored themes depicting solitude and praised the working conditions and creativity that solitude offered. After the Civil War, representations of New England nature and wilderness shifted from an experience of the sublime to what Roger B. Stein terms “the scenic rural.”\textsuperscript{37} In this trope, the aesthetic shifts to the viewing experience, rather than the object viewed, so that the subjective position is no longer the solitary journeyer in the wilderness, but instead the tourists who consume wilderness via the comforts of modern life. Examples include Winslow Homer’s depiction of a party of well-dressed horseback travelers riding up Mount Washington, where the focus is on the horses and their riders while the mountain peak remains completely obscured by clouds.\textsuperscript{38} Part of the reason for this shift was practical: better transportation and access throughout the region made it easier for city residents to experience rural New England as tourists, and the artwork reflected this change. It was during this postwar era that an American “Arcadian myth” began to emerge in literature and popular writing. This mythology, which will be explored below, cultivated the appeal of an idealized

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 92.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 93.
\textsuperscript{38} This image was unfortunately unable to be reproduced in this text, but it may be viewed at \url{http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/75957}. 

256
and, in many ways, contrived country life for a growing urban middle class in the late nineteenth century.

MacDowell and the Colony

Born in 1860 in New York City, Edward MacDowell was part of this urban middle-class demographic. Raised in Manhattan, MacDowell traveled to Europe in 1876 and returned to the United States in 1888, residing first in Boston and then New York City before his premature death in 1908, which biographer E. Douglas Bomberger believes was a result of unintentional and undiagnosed bromide poisoning.\textsuperscript{39} MacDowell was a voracious reader, and his years spent living in Germany fostered a deep appreciation for that culture’s rich fascination with natural sites in general and the forest in particular. He read the works of German Romantic writers such as Goethe, Schiller, and Heine during his train commute between his home in Frankfurt and his various jobs throughout the Rhine-Main region.\textsuperscript{40} His time in Germany, especially his last residency in the spa resort town of Wiesbaden, was tied to places strongly associated with natural sites, and his feelings for nature were deepened by his love of literature and poetry. In addition to his immersion in a Romantic tradition

\textsuperscript{39} On bromide poisoning (bromism) as the probable cause of MacDowell’s demise, see E. Douglas Bomberger, \textit{MacDowell} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 275–82. At the time of MacDowell’s death, it was believed that overwork and lingering stress resulting from a very public feud with his former employer, Columbia University, had caused his degenerative mental condition. In later years, Marian MacDowell emphasized a 1904 traffic accident as the event that exacerbated Edward’s illness, possibly to avoid speculation that he had died of syphilis, a notion that was strongly hinted at by critic James Huneker in 1906. Following Huneker, Arnold T. Schwab did argue the case that MacDowell was syphilitic because his death certificate listed “Paresis (dementia paralytica)” as the cause of death, commonly associated with the disease; see Arnold T. Schwab, “Edward MacDowell’s Mysterious Malady,” \textit{Musical Quarterly} 89, no. 1 (2006): 136–51. However, Bomberger (281) notes that bromide poisoning was mistaken for paresis during this time, citing contemporary medical literature. He ultimately concludes: “The circumstantial evidence could hardly be stronger” that MacDowell died of bromism (282).

\textsuperscript{40} Bomberger, \textit{MacDowell}, 59.
that prized being alone in the wilderness, MacDowell’s desire for solitude came from his introverted personality. Critic Lawrence Gilman noted in his early biographical profile that MacDowell “needed to isolate himself as much as possible,” as MacDowell was chronically shy throughout his life.\footnote{Gilman, \textit{Edward MacDowell: A Study}, 69.} Indeed, in many recollections of MacDowell, even close friends and associates described his acute social anxiety.

As Bomberger notes, from an early age MacDowell had always lived in cities and taken summer vacations in the country, a practice begun during his childhood in Manhattan and continuing through his years in Europe and eventual return to the United States.\footnote{Bomberger, \textit{MacDowell}, 198.} After settling in Boston, the MacDowells tried out a number of different New England summer retreats, but ultimately decided to make a permanent summer home in Peterborough, New Hampshire, where they had spent three summers in the early 1890s. Marian purchased Hillcrest in 1896 along with the adjacent farmland and forest. Irving Lowens writes that part of the reason she was so eager to get a place of their own was that she wanted to provide Edward with “a sanctuary, a refuge from the pressing concerns of the outside world, a place where he could be free from the constant demands on his time and the incessant racket of the big city, a place where he could compose.”\footnote{Irving Lowens, “Music: The Peterborough Principle,” \textit{Washington Sunday Star}, 11 July 1971.} Much of what Lowens writes about here is a desire for isolation, but his description of Hillcrest as “a sanctuary” implies the spiritual being-with-nature that characterizes Vest’s concept of solitude as a rapturous “soul-mood.” In 1897, they added a music room onto the end of the house so that MacDowell could have isolation for work, but he wanted even more separation.\footnote{Bomberger, \textit{MacDowell}, 199.} Prior to the summer of 1899, Marian

---

\footnote{41 Gilman, \textit{Edward MacDowell: A Study}, 69.}
\footnote{42 Bomberger, \textit{MacDowell}, 198.}
\footnote{44 Bomberger, \textit{MacDowell}, 199.}
surprised Edward by having a log cabin built in their woods a short walk from Hillcrest (fig. 5.3). It was in this cabin that MacDowell was able to finally achieve the solitude he desired.

Figure 5.3: MacDowell’s log cabin during the first decade of its existence. In MacDowell Memorial Association, *Peterborough Memorial Pageant* ([Peterborough, NH]: 1910). Courtesy of New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, NH.

During his slow decline toward death, MacDowell began to obsess over the legacy of his property, and according to Marian, it was around the fall of 1905 when he expressed his wish that
Hillcrest and his log cabin might become an artists’ retreat. At the time, MacDowell had two main goals that he hoped the Colony might accomplish, which on the surface appear paradoxical. The first was that the Colony would provide a place where artists working in different fields could learn from each other, the second was that it would provide a place where artists could enjoy the same sense of isolated solitude that MacDowell had.

Despite his need for isolated work spaces, MacDowell did not believe that artists should live a purely hermetic existence. He felt strongly that composers should engage with other creative arts and artists (he wrote his own poetry, dabbled in painting, and was an avid photographer), and that one’s art benefited from exposure to and cross-pollination with other arts. This belief guided MacDowell’s initial direction of the music department at Columbia University. In an essay in the Columbia University Bulletin during his first year on the faculty, he stated “I am firmly convinced that one art can learn more from another in a year than in a decade of delving into hidden causes and abstruse technic.” This stance would contribute to the eventual rift with the University administration that led to his 1904 resignation.

45 The MacDowell Club of New York was established to help support MacDowell financially when his illness prevented him from earning an income. MacDowell was mostly incapacitated by his disease starting in the summer of 1905. In the minutes of their 29 October 1905 meeting, the Colony was already being discussed. See Robin Rausch, “The MacDowells and their Legacy,” in A Place for the Arts: The MacDowell Colony, 1907–2007, ed. Carter Wiseman 50–132 (Peterborough, NH: The MacDowell Colony, 2006).


47 MacDowell’s advocacy for a unified Department of Fine Arts that included music, sculpture, painting, and comparative literature was turned down by the new Columbia president, Nicholas Murray Butler, in 1902. Butler believed that practical instruction in the arts should be administered by specialized schools and conservatories. MacDowell misunderstood Butler’s initial openness to his idea as an endorsement, and his poor navigation of administrative politics further exacerbated tensions between the two men. See Bomberger, MacDowell, chap. 18, especially 242–245, and 257–266.
MacDowell’s desire to make this condition an essential element of the Colony also has its roots in the American Academy in Rome (AAR), which Marian has cited as the primary model for the MacDowell Colony. Edward had supported one of the founders of the AAR, his friend the architect Charles Follen McKim, in a campaign to begin a Rome music prize, and in turn McKim got MacDowell appointed to the AAR’s Board of Trustees in 1905. In one of his last periods of lucid productivity, MacDowell dictated a memo to the Board of Trustees of the AAR that included the following statement: “For years it has been my dream that the Arts of Architecture, Painting, Sculpture and Music should come into such close contact that each and all should gain from this mutual companionship.” With no prospect of the AAR adopting a music fellowship, and with his dementia beginning to set in, he became singularly focused on establishing such a program on his own soil. Even before Edward died, Marian MacDowell gifted the entire Peterborough property to the MacDowell Memorial Association, formed from two New York musical societies with close ties to the composer. In her deed of gift, she made explicit Edward’s vision of an interdisciplinary institution:

It is expressly and especially desired, that this home of Edward MacDowell shall be a center of interest to artists working in varied fields, who, being there brought into contact, may learn to fully appreciate the fundamental unity of the separated arts. That in it the individual artist may gain a sympathetic attitude towards the work of artists in fields other than that in which such artist tries to embody the beautiful, by

49 Judith Tick, “The Classicist Origins of the Rome Prize in Musical Composition, 1890–1920,” in Music and Musical Composition at the American Academy in Rome, ed. Martin Brody (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2014), 137. MacDowell and McKim were ultimately successful only after their deaths: the first music fellow was appointed at the AAR after World War I.
50 Ibid., 140.
recognizing that each art has a special function just so far as it has gained a special medium of expression.\textsuperscript{51}  

Although the officially stated mission of the Colony was based on the atmosphere of collegiality at the AAR, it is also clear that the sense of place MacDowell experienced in his cabin in the woods was an equally important force in the design of the Colony. Marian recalled that creating a place where artists could experience isolated rural solitude was also one of Edward's final wishes: “The year before [Edward] died he told me he wished other artists could have the convenience and solitude he enjoyed here.”\textsuperscript{52} In another recollection, she described how MacDowell's experience in the log cabin was the direct influence that led to the decision to construct studios set apart from one another: “We had thought of not more than four or five people finding in our home approximately the same conditions as MacDowell had had, a comfortable living place and an isolated workshop; that the log cabin should be used and four small buildings would be scattered all over the place.”\textsuperscript{53}

Solitude was not merely a condition that led to productivity for MacDowell, it was also an affective state that led to artistic creativity. In her analysis of the autobiographies of three hundred creative thinkers from the last few centuries, social worker Edith Cobb concluded that these geniuses return to memories of childhood solitude “in order to renew the power and impulse to create at its very source,” in which they “experience both a sense of discontinuity, an awareness of [one's] own unique separateness and identity, and also a continuity, a renewal of relationship with nature as process.”\textsuperscript{54} In Cobb's observations, the disengagement of solitude simultaneously leads to a realization  

\textsuperscript{53}McDermott, “House of Dreams Untold,” 11.  
of the self and an embodiment within nature, consistent with Vest’s philosophy of wilderness solitude. This resultant awareness of the artist’s connection to nature through an embodied experience is a hallmark of their creative impetus.

In addition to solitude, MacDowell’s proximity to and immersion in nature was equally important for his compositional process and as a form of recreation and play. In an interview given in 1896, MacDowell revealed that he did not work out pieces beforehand, but rather relied mostly on inspiration in the moment to compose. Rural settings often provided MacDowell with that inspiration, and as Koch observes, solitude can allow a person to have a more powerful and meaningful connection to nature. Koch writes that in solitude, “one becomes an unfocused center, flowing easily out to the horizon, an alert clarity around which all objects dance,” again echoing Vest’s description of the themes of Interior and rapture in a construction of wilderness solitude.

**Peterborough, New Hampshire: “A Good Town to Live In”**

MacDowell did indeed draw on his Peterborough surroundings as inspiration during his last productive years. However, the Peterborough he experienced was not that of a hardy, agrarian New Englander raised during the economically unstable post-Civil War years, but instead that of a middle-class urban visitor who came to the town for leisure and escape from the city. And he was hardly alone in seeking an idyllic respite from the burdens of the city around the turn of the twentieth century. Peter J. Schmitt’s description of this trend as part of an American Arcadian myth provides an extremely useful lens through which to understand MacDowell’s sense of place in Peterborough. This myth is built upon an urban desire to “value nature’s spiritual impact above its

---

economic importance.” 57 For Schmitt, American Arcadia had a wide variety of manifestations, including landscape architecture, scouting organizations, stereoscopic photography, birdwatching, camping, children’s books, and especially literature and popular magazine articles that promoted a back-to-nature philosophy. Above all, it did not fit into neat binaries of city/country or factory/farm that twentieth-century historians used to characterize the agrarian progressive movement at the turn of the century. 58 Schmitt’s definition treats city/country as a dialectic rather than a dichotomy. The city is necessary for this particular construction of rurality, as the Arcadian impulse was not a “social nostalgia” for agrarianism, but rather, it treated country life “in a way, it seemed, that only ‘city people’ could.” 59

MacDowell’s sense of place was part of his own personal Arcadian fantasy, with a farm and woods that afforded him isolation to work in solitude. Yet his experience of Peterborough was not unique, since hundreds of writers throughout the country urged weary urban Americans to retreat to the countryside. Many of these writers were inspired by progressive-era reform movements, based on middle-class intellectual values, that saw the increasing grime and noise of the city as potentially harmful to American physical, moral, and social ideals. These reformers, discussed in chapter 2 in relation to turn-of-the-century Boston, wanted to fix the horrific conditions for the growing urban immigrant population, but at the same time fled to the suburbs and countryside as the city’s demographics became less representative of an America they recognized. Although Peterborough certainly had a rural character, it was also the terminal stop on two lines of the Boston and Maine Railroad, and was easily accessible to New York and all the major cities of New England. It was

57 Schmitt, Arcadian Myth, xvii.
59 Schmitt, Arcadian Myth, xvi.
therefore a perfect place for a middle-class urbanite such as MacDowell, who needed to remain 
connected to the city while seeking rural solitude.

In using the term “Arcadian,” Schmitt references the classical Arcadian myth of Renaissance 
Europe that idealized pastoral imagery and characters such as shepherds and nymphs, and engaged in 
a discourse on the nature of love and desire. Giuseppe Gerbino writes that the classical myth 
involved “the social bond forged through the sharing of poetry and music under the sign of a 
fictional Arcadian setting,” and that the Arcadian life as portrayed in sixteenth-century poetry, 
drama, and music is a “socially shared experience.”60 Schmitt’s American Arcadia diverges from the 
classical myth in that he acknowledges solitude as a possible element of this mythology. Being alone 
in the wilderness was a frequent theme of early twentieth-century popular writing. Yet both Schmitt 
and Gerbino are concerned with the ways that these myths treat the urban-rural divide, view the 
countryside as an artificial place of escape, and provide what Gerbino calls a “symbolic space within 
which to play oneself” and engage in a construction of identity for urban elites.61 Part of the reason 
that solitude can be part of an American Arcadia (although it does not have to be) is because as 
previously noted, wilderness was “a major force in shaping American character.”62 Writers who 
promoted retreating to nature, even if only for the weekend or for the summer, did so as part of a 
way to articulate a national identity that involved a complex of back-to-nature impulses at the turn 
of the century.

However, there is one aspect of the MacDowell Colony that did conform to the classical 
Arcadian myth. Like MacDowell, the colonists work in isolation during the day. But in the evenings,

---

60 Giuseppe Gerbino, *Music and the Myth of Arcadia in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge 
University Press, 2009), 5.
61 Ibid.
the colonists gather for dinner and discussion. Sometimes writers read from works in progress, or composers play pieces they have finished, and artists talk about their projects and aesthetic issues that have arisen. In this sense, the Colony resembles what Gerbino describes as the “social bond forged through the sharing of poetry and music under the sign of a fictional Arcadian setting.” Returning to Cole’s image of the *Home in the Woods* (fig. 5.2), the same kind of cloistered solitude exists at the MacDowell Colony. Like the family Cole depicts, the colonists are isolated in the wilderness, although the Colony’s isolation is more contrived than the backcountry setting of Cole’s painting. Yet their isolation leads to a shared solitude, one that places the Colony apart from its surroundings.

As the word “myth” suggests, in both the classical and the early-twentieth century Arcadian imaginations the pastoral is a fiction, a place that is constructed to serve some purpose for the urban myth creators. As such, there is a Peterborough history behind the Arcadian myth that bears little resemblance to MacDowell’s experiential sense of place. The MacDowells were, in fact, part of a larger effort by Peterborough’s socioeconomic and educated elite—which included local politician and one-time governor Robert P. Bass, Boston architect Benjamin Franklin W. Russell, and land developer Mary L. C. Schofield—to transform the image and the landscapes of the town according to their own sense of refined aesthetic taste and what they perceived as regional rural reform. Geographer Scott C. Roper has documented this effort extensively, identifying five main solutions that the town’s elite proposed in order to rehabilitate what they perceived as the area’s “economic, social, and moral decline.” One of these was to use art and nature to increase tourism spending, since “activities that promoted personal contact with so-called ‘wilderness’ were among New

---

63 Gerbino, *Music and the Myth of Arcadia in Renaissance Italy*, 5.
England’s most popular elite attractions.” Roper’s use of scare quotes for “wilderness” hints at the fact that this was a perceived or contrived natural wild consistent with the Arcadian presentation of the rural to the urban. Another solution was to promote New England as a place that “resembled the history-laden and progressive countries of western and southern Europe. With this perspective, New England’s decline could be redefined as part of a culture-rich, interesting, and valued tradition.”

Like the MacDowells, Peterborough’s rich and educated class were generally not from the region originally and spent much of their year living in cities such as New York, Boston, or Chicago. Yet their political and financial capital gave them power to shape the town according to an image of New England greatness that was, in many ways, an invented tradition. Very often, this perception of New England was unfamiliar and, sometimes, oppositional to the New England experienced by less influential populations, including immigrants, long-time residents and the older generation, those with less education, and those with less money.

The history of New Hampshire settlement tells a story of prosperity and decline similar to much of rural New England. Founded in 1737, Peterborough was particularly well positioned at the juncture of the Nubanusit and Contoocook Rivers to harness water power for manufacturing sites. In many southern New Hampshire towns it was mills and manufacturing rather than agriculture that dominated the early economy, but Peterborough also had productive farms. The wool boom arrived in the early nineteenth century and almost all the farms in the area were converted to pasture. By the 1840s nearly all of New Hampshire south of the White Mountains was deforested for sheep

---

65 Ibid., 16.
66 Ibid., 15.
grazing. Peterborough became a center of the region’s textile economy; in 1849, five companies produced over 1.6 million yards of cotton or woolen textiles in their factories. And just as in Vermont, the opening of railroads, the expansion of the country out west, and a variety of other social, economic, and geographic factors led to a bust in the wool industry. Pastures were abandoned, factories closed, and the forest began to slowly reclaim the land. The Civil War, and the resultant urban industrial boom during the reconstruction years, led to even further mass out-migration.

When the MacDowells visited Peterborough in the summer of 1890, their friend Mary Morison, whose family had a home there, called the town “‘a simple quiet little place in lovely country’ that had not been invaded by ‘the summer people.’” New Hampshire had long been a destination for tourism, especially the majestic White Mountains further north in the state, but the “summer people” Morison referred to were likely urbanites who, in the final decades of the century, began buying up old abandoned farmhouses and converting them into summer residences. As discussed in chapter 4, many of the same concerns about abandoned farmland as a symbol of “moral and social decay” among Vermont residents plagued New Hampshire residents, too.

By 1889, Peterborough elites were already thinking about tourism as a way to boost local economies and repopulate abandoned lands. An editorial in the local newspaper that year stated that with “a little well directed effort, [Peterborough] might be made to attract a very much larger number of summer residents than it now accommodates,” corroborating Morison’s account that the

---

town had not yet been overrun by tourists. The article further clarified that Peterborough benefits from having “more natural attractions for city people than the average of New Hampshire towns,” suggesting that early marketing efforts specifically targeted urban residents and promoted the town as a rural escape. The main attraction being referred to here is likely Mount Monadnock, which at 3,165 feet is the tallest mountain in the region, but remains accessible enough that inexperienced hikers and pleasure seekers can reach its summit easily. It was celebrated in the poetry and writings of both Thoreau and Emerson, making it one of the most well-known natural sites in the area.

Thus, Peterborough was already in the process of becoming a rural retreat for urban Americans when the MacDowells first arrived in 1890. In the years that followed, the town pursued this goal even more aggressively. In 1905, two years before the Colony’s first summer, Peterborough’s local government created a Board of Trade to promote the town for potential residents, businesses, and industry. A booklet released by the agency that year summarized not only how the town saw itself but how it was marketed to outsiders. It called Peterborough “a town of summer homes,” citing this as one of the town’s “distinguishing features.” This framing was, no doubt, a result of the influence of Peterborough’s educated elite, who saw tourism as the path forward and wanted to attract other wealthy and educated families to town. Central among the photographs of summer homes accompanying this text is Hillcrest, listed as “residence of Prof. Edward MacDowell,” clearly intended to draw on the name recognition of America’s most famous composer at the time (see fig. 5.4). The Peterborough elite likely hoped MacDowell’s presence would bolster the town’s legitimacy.

---

74 Peterborough, New Hampshire (Peterborough, NH: Board of Trade of Peterborough, 1905), 16. New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, NH.
as an artistic center, while potential summer home buyers from genteel Boston and New York families might jump at the possibility of hobnobbing with a cultural icon.

Figure 5.4: View of Hillcrest (middle) as a featured summer home, in *Peterborough, New Hampshire* (Peterborough, NH: Board of Trade of Peterborough, 1905), 17. Courtesy of New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, NH.

In 1926 a new Board of Trade pamphlet, titled “Peterborough New Hampshire: A Good Town to Live in,” gave a sense of how much the town had worked to reform its image as a tourist destination and place for summer homes as a result of efforts by Peterborough’s educated elite. The introduction frames Peterborough as a town caught between city and country: it has all the conveniences of modern life but with the spirit of a Colonial pioneer outpost; it is conveniently

---

75 Peterborough Board of Trade, *Peterborough New Hampshire: A Good Town to Live In* (Peterborough NH: Board of Trade, 1926). Archives of the Peterborough Town Library. All quotations in this section are found on p. 8 of this pamphlet.
accessible from large cities but free of the crowds, pollution, and “chaotic din of metropolitan life”; it is “large enough to bear the signs that are indicative of progress, yet not so large as to lose its individuality as a village.” By this point, the Board of Trade was also touting the presence of the Colony and the artistic climate it generated as a tourist attraction, calling Peterborough “a Mecca for advocates of the fine arts” and declaring that because of places like the Colony, “the town has achieved a mark in the world of art, literature and music.”

Many of these aspects seem perfectly calculated to appeal to the Arcadian mythology and draw heavily on what geographer Martyn J. Bowden calls the “invented traditions and academic conventions in geographical thought about New England,” including the romanticization of Colonial society.76 As will be explored below, the MacDowell Colony—that is, the artists who worked there and recounted their experiences, the MacDowell Memorial Association, and Marian herself—helped cultivate this image of Peterborough as a place where both artistic greatness and a sense of wilderness were present. This image was calibrated to appeal to the city-weary, educated, middle- to upper-class person who wanted to be inspired by wilderness solitude but still get to work on time Monday morning.

“A House of Dreams Untold”

Based on both Marian’s recollections of Edward’s summer activities and impressions, as well as the titles and affects of certain pieces drawn from the Woodland Sketches and New England Idyls, there appear to be two main aspects that governed MacDowell’s sense of place at Peterborough: the

wilderness solitude of the deep woods, and the romantic nostalgia of abandoned landscapes. MacDowell enjoyed his Arcadian idyll for less than a decade before his mental degeneration took hold and he stopped composing. With the establishment of the Colony in 1907, and following Edward’s death in January 1908, Marian used her late husband’s perception of place as a guiding factor for the kind of atmosphere that should be cultivated.

Wilderness solitude did not exist in Peterborough a priori, so MacDowell had to actively create it. Marian’s description of the log cabin gives a sense for Edward’s daily routine:

Here he found the perfection of working conditions for which he had longed, often unconsciously. He had his piano, a table, a couple of chairs, a veranda facing Mt. Monadnock, and a great fireplace . . . There was a wide gap through the trees, allowing a splendid view, yet save for this gap it was completely surrounded by superb hemlock and pine trees two or three hundred years old—a bit of virgin forest—and there was a deep spring just outside the cabin. There morning after morning MacDowell used to go—nearly always to work, but of course there came days when work seemed impossible. Then it meant long tramps through the woods which he loved so dearly.77

In order to allow him to work straight through the day, she would bring a lunch basket to his porch and silently leave it there without disturbing him, a tradition that continues at the Colony to this day. Many of his impressions of Peterborough were governed by his self-imposed solitude in the forest. His experience of composing in the cabin can be seen in the titles of movements from his New England Idyls, op. 62 (1902), such as “In Deep Woods,” “To an Old White Pine,” and “From a Log Cabin,” a collection that Bomberger calls the closest MacDowell ever came to an “autobiographical account, laying bare . . . his impressions of the adopted home where he spent his happiest summers.”78 Interestingly, despite the obvious spiritual importance of Mount Monadnock for

78 Bomberger, MacDowell, 248.
MacDowell, none of the piano miniature titles from his Peterborough era reference mountains. Each movement from New England Idyls is preceded by a brief epigraphic poem penned by MacDowell, which further enriches the sense of place he wanted to project in the music. In “From a Log Cabin,” he conveyed the mystical, rapturous qualities of his forested solitude: “A house of dreams untold / It looks out over the whispering tree-tops / And faces the setting sun.” His choice to set words in a manner closer to a haiku further accentuates the mystical aura of the cabin, since nearly all the other poems are written in the more typical Romantic meter (and some with rhyme schemes) of a Whittier or Wordsworth poem.

The music for “From a Log Cabin” also reflects the pensive, dream-like sense of place of MacDowell’s cabin. The signature gesture of the melody, a rising fourth in eighth notes followed by a quarter-note repetition of the higher pitch, recalls the main figure of “To a Wild Rose,” which was already MacDowell’s most famous piece by 1902 (ex. 5.1). MacDowell transforms the gentle, quaint A major figure in “To a Wild Rose” into a much slower, brooding F minor figure in “From a Log Cabin.” “To a Wild Rose”—written as part of the Woodland Sketches, op. 51, which was the first composition produced at Hillcrest in 1896—is representative of MacDowell’s early sense of place in Peterborough. Working exclusively out of his home before the log cabin was built, MacDowell captured the simple, delicate beauty of a wildflower in his garden with music expressing a domestic sentimentality that borders on the saccharine, despite its late-Romantic harmonic palette with non-chord tones and extended harmonies.80

80 Bomberger, MacDowell, 201.
Example 5.1: Two excerpts of piano music by Edward MacDowell. Left: “To a Wild Rose” from *Woodland Sketches*, op. 51, mm. 1–4. Right: “From a Log Cabin” from *New England Idyls*, op. 62, mm. 1–4. The gesture of a rising fourth (in “To a Wild Rose,” MacDowell uses both major thirds and perfect fourths as his rising interval) in eighth notes followed by a repeated pitch quarter note is common to both works, as well as simple chordal accompaniment in the left hand.

In “From a Log Cabin,” composed after MacDowell had already spent two summers working in the isolated forest setting, his musical observations of nature are more deliberate and less fanciful. The music also seems to represent certain ephemeral and infinite qualities of nature, aspects that Vest aligns with wilderness solitude. For instance, in the A section MacDowell uses less regular phrase lengths compared to the clear periodic phrasing and repetition of “To a Wild Rose.” He sprinkles measures of 3/4 frequently throughout the A section without changing the time signature, instead indicating both common time and 3/4 time signatures at the outset. This metric disorientation gives the work a rhapsodical, fantasy-like quality, as does the B section where, despite metric regularity, cascading arpeggios are played *pianissimo* with the direction “tenderly, dreamily.” Although drawing on the same melodic gesture, his picture of nature in “From a Log Cabin” is more introspective and emotionally complex than the delicate wildflower of six years earlier.

A number of publications and other materials from the first decade of the Colony’s existence helped to further implace solitude as part of the Colony’s identity. These documents frequently
highlight the isolated solitude that artists enjoyed while working in their studios, which by 1913 included eleven studios that were either completed or in construction (today there are thirty-two).\textsuperscript{81} In a pamphlet produced by the MacDowell Memorial Association reporting on the Colony’s first ten summers and its financial prospects, isolation and solitude repeatedly appear as the raison d’être of the MacDowell aesthetic. The booklet contains a “Purpose” section that touts isolation as the main geographic quality of the studios: “Each is planned to suit its own particular site. They vary in size, in architecture, and in material. They have but one thing in common, namely, isolation.”\textsuperscript{82} The “Purpose” section also includes a grand artistic pronouncement that the greatest American art “thrives best in quiet and solitude,” a statement that, given the fundraising nature of this booklet, argues for the continued financial support of the Colony specifically because it is a place of solitude.

Yet it is important to remember that the isolation of these studios was intentional, and was not a natural result of simply being at the Colony or in Peterborough. Roper notes that all of the original studios were modeled on the geographic qualities of MacDowell’s log cabin, placed deep within a pine grove and/or providing mountain vistas.\textsuperscript{83} Schmitt writes that urban Americans “made the cabin in the woods a new symbol of weekend freedom,” going so far as to recreate their look and feel on their suburban estates or in their dens, and therefore even the studios and the cabin can be understood as part of the Arcadian mythology.\textsuperscript{84} Mount Monadnock, which had acquired a spiritual import in the transcendentalist writings of Thoreau and Emerson, was central to the image of Peterborough promoted by the town’s elite. An editorial in the \textit{Peterborough Transcript} from 1916 cautioned tourists: “above all, do not lose the view of the famous Monadnock,” when visiting the

\textsuperscript{81} Falconer-Salkeld, \textit{MacDowell Colony}, 41. \\
\textsuperscript{82} Association Pamphlet, 1916. \\
\textsuperscript{83} Roper, “Elite Perceptions,” 50. \\
\textsuperscript{84} Schmitt, \textit{Arcadian Myth}, 168.
community, indicating its centrality to the constructed place of Peterborough. Gazing at the mountain, which MacDowell did from his cabin porch, became a part of the narrative of his rapturous solitude. It remains so to this day, with mention of the view incorporated into the text of the historical marker that stands at the entrance to his gravesite (see fig. 5.5).

A historical pageant held in 1910 in memory of the late composer conveyed the centrality of rural solitude as part of the Colony’s mission to a much wider public. The critically successful event was crucially important both in marketing the Colony’s image and in spreading its renown, attracting attendees from all over the country and Europe, including many of the big names in Boston society. As such, many individuals central to the cultivation of an artistic discourse in America, including patrons, critics, and institutional directors, were exposed to the mythology of MacDowell’s “cabin in the woods.” The booklet accompanying the 1910 pageant was particularly effective in promoting this narrative, stressing the essentiality of MacDowell’s rural isolation to his creative mind: “His surroundings were a source of endless inspiration, and he realized keenly how much this isolated quiet meant in his own development; and equally keenly, how much such environment might mean to others less fortunate.” Further solidifying the connection between the solitude of the log cabin and the Colony’s image, the pageant was titled “The House of Dreams,” and the opening tableau was set to the music of “In Deep Woods” and “From a Log Cabin.”

---

85 Peterborough Transcript, 3 February 1916; cited in ibid.
87 MacDowell Memorial Association, Peterborough Memorial Pageant ([Peterborough, NH]: 1910), 30. Hereafter “pageant program.”
photograph of the cabin, as well as the wooded pathway leading there, was included in the pageant program to stress its isolation, along with MacDowell’s “From a Log Cabin” epigraph (fig. 5.6).

Figure 5.5: Historical marker for the MacDowell Graves, Peterborough, New Hampshire. The view of Monadnock no longer exists, as the forest has grown in. The state designated the graves as a historical site in 2007 to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the MacDowell Colony. Photograph copyright 2014, Rose Chaffee-Cohen.
"A house of Dreams untold
That looks out over the whispering treetops
And faces the setting sun"

Figure 5.6: Images in Colony Pageant program showing MacDowell’s cabin and the path leading there. MacDowell Memorial Association, Peterborough Memorial Pageant, ([Peterborough, NH]: 1910), 12.
Just as important in the construction of this myth was the suffocating effect of the city. The pageant booklet describes how “in his University experience, [MacDowell] often met students struggling with the material problem of life,” and that these struggles were because “the mind suffered from a lack of those stimulating conditions which are so necessary for any form of imaginative work.” It was clear that the reason those University students lacked “stimulating conditions” was because they lived and worked in New York City, and so a dichotomy of city versus country also became part of the MacDowell myth. Even MacDowell’s death, which was generally understood to be a result of the stress and overwork resulting from his Columbia imbroglio, only fueled the myth that a creative person needed rural solitude.

Over twenty years after the Colony’s founding, when it had become a well-known and well-respected institution, Marian MacDowell still affirmed the essentiality of the rural creativity myth to the Colony’s identity. Her history of the Colony’s founding, published in *Musical Quarterly* in 1932 as “MacDowell’s ‘Peterborough Idea,’” touts the Colony’s “six hundred acres affording precious isolation” and then contrasts this with the cramped, crowded quarters of the American Academy in Rome. Again, the dichotomy of city and country is emphasized, with the positive valuation falling on the Colony: “The lost and harassed artist may eventually learn that opportunities for the development of his own art are to be found in some other place than the overcrowded centers like New York.”

MacDowell certainly revered the cabin for its solitude, a sentiment echoed in the pageant but also in the writings and recollections of early colonists. One of the most famous writers to stay at the

---

88 Ibid.
89 MacDowell, “Peterborough Idea,” 35.
90 Ibid., 38.
Colony during its first few decades was the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Edwin Arlington Robinson, who was in residence at the Colony every summer from 1911 until his death in 1935. Initially skeptical of the idea of an artists’ colony, Robinson was soon won over by the MacDowell mythology of solitude, recounting to a friend, “MacDowell knew what he was about. Unfortunately it is absolutely necessary to be here in order to understand what it means. One summer of it in one of the isolated studios, with an open wood fire, would undo you for life.”

While this mythology may have had its genesis in MacDowell’s experience of Peterborough and the sense of place he cultivated while working in his cabin and walking through the woods, it is important to remember that these concepts were not foreign in American culture at the time. They were fully part of the Arcadian myth that was perpetuated in newspapers, lifestyle magazines, tourism brochures, and other popular mass media. With the arrival of the automobile, the Arcadian lifestyle became even more accessible to middle-class Americans. In this sense, MacDowell’s experience not only contributed to a construction of place for Peterborough, it also constituted a construction of turn-of-the-century American place. His regional identity was part of a larger national identity that increasingly located rural New England as a vestige of an imagined nineteenth-century “real” America. Just as Ives’s Old Danbury, discussed in chapter 3, was an obsolete geography that countered many of his anxieties about modern American culture, MacDowell’s rural Peterborough was one town in which America’s invented traditions about New England could be implaced.

---

Abandoned Farms and Primeval Forest

In addition to solitude, the other main aspect of MacDowell’s sense of place in Peterborough was his fascination with land abandonment. In her 1932 article describing the genesis of the Colony, Marian MacDowell wrote about her late husband’s preoccupation with New England history, incorporating many of the same narratives about land settlement and abandonment as did Dorothy Canfield Fisher in her descriptions of Vermont history noted in chapter 4. Peterborough’s charm, wrote MacDowell, was rooted in the “hilltops, once covered with farms wrested from the wilderness by those who first settled this country.”92 Marian wrote of Edward’s fascination with the lost history of old New England, the same “lost” civilization of Ruggles’s “Lilacs”:

To follow on one of the old mountain roads a narrow, yellow ribbon of tansy which stretched sometimes for half a mile to end in an old cellar hole almost concealed by huge lilac bushes and cinnamon roses, was to MacDowell as breathlessly interesting and exciting as the tracing of the events connected with the old castle, for both represented bits out of the life of a country.93

The “old castle” is the ancient villa that made up part of the American Academy in Rome.

MacDowell implies that just as Roman ruins are part of Italian national identity, so too are the abandoned farms of New England part of American national identity; they are both evidence of great old societies.

Just as with forested solitude, MacDowell represented the abandonment of Peterborough in his music, and therefore many of the pieces that most reflect MacDowell’s experience of the town are permeated with a melancholic nostalgia. In many of the late piano miniatures, MacDowell combined rich, chromatically saturated harmonies with deceptively simple but emotional melodies meant to

93 Ibid., 35–36.
capture the past greatness of the area. Titles evoke abandoned sites as well: “At an Old Trysting-Place,” “A Deserted Farm,” “An Old Garden,” “From Puritan Days.” Bomberger argues that even MacDowell’s Indianist works from these sets, which include “Indian Idyl” from *New England Idyls* and “From an Indian Lodge” from *Woodland Sketches*, were inspired by his fascination with once-great but now disappeared cultures and the sites they left behind, rather than by any appeal to Americanist tendencies common to other Indianist works of the time.⁹⁴

It is tempting to interpret many of the MacDowell compositions mentioned in this chapter as part of a nationalistic effort in American music following the model of Dvořák. Certainly, this movement preoccupied many of MacDowell’s American colleagues from the turn of the century, including composers such as Arthur Farwell, Henry F. Gilbert, and Ellsworth Phelps, who all wrote pieces that were inspired by American places or Native American themes. Yet MacDowell was insistent that neither his works on Indian themes, nor his pieces inspired by the forests and abandoned places of Peterborough, should be considered “American music,” or that such a thing existed per se. MacDowell did not want to be a part of directed efforts in the 1890s to create an Americanist movement in music, and he was notoriously opposed to all-American concert programming.⁹⁵ In his view, unless American composers were treated on the same footing as

---

Europeans, they would always be considered novelties, and compositions would only be considered “good for an American” rather than just “good.”

However, MacDowell wrote a large amount of music that evokes specific American landscapes, or that adapts Native American melodies. Kara Anne Gardner accounts for the disparity between his stated aversion to Americanisms and his actual output by framing MacDowell’s music from this era as part of an antimodernist trend in turn-of-the-century American thought, in which the idealization of natural settings and Native Americans “allowed MacDowell and his listeners to take refuge from the modern world that had begun to trouble them.” This reverence for primitive and rural nature while abhorring urban environments fits perfectly with both the Arcadian myth and with the invented traditions perpetuated by Peterborough’s educated elite. In other words, although he disavowed musical Americanism, MacDowell still implaced a regional identity in his music. His evocation of wilderness in music unwittingly fits into the long New England tradition that regarded wilderness as part of an American national identity, even if his intention was never to write nationalistic music. Likewise, his evocation of Puritan or Colonial heritage in pieces such as “From Puritan Days” from the *New England Idyls*, or “AD 1620” from another of his late piano sets, *Sea Pieces*, op. 55, is rooted in the invented tradition that glorifies eighteenth-century cultures (and their

---

96 Critic James G. Huneker told conductor Theodore Thomas that he judged MacDowell’s Second Piano Concerto “very good for an ‘American,’” to which Thomas replied “or for a German either.” Huneker relayed this information to MacDowell in an 1889 letter shortly after the work’s premiere, and the offhanded comment shaped MacDowell’s feelings about the value of being singled out as an American composer. Bomberger, *MacDowell*, 139–40.

seventeenth-century Pilgrim “forebears”) in order to provide Peterborough with a legendary, reverential historical past.

MacDowell regarded abandonment with a mixture of melancholy, wonderment, and affection, rather than as a marker of cultural decline or the failure of agriculture and manufacturing. There is no evidence to suggest that his feeling for abandoned sites constituted a “crisis” of identity as it did for the educated elite, or for local and state officials and residents.\(^8\) Still, his outlook is consistent with the viewpoint of Peterborough’s educated elite as described by Roper, who sought to frame abandoned landscapes not as evidence of decline but as evidence of “New England’s maturity and age. Thus, cellar holes and second-growth forest indicated the passing of generations rather than agricultural decline.”\(^9\) In this sense, MacDowell pieces such as “A Deserted Farm” served a similar artistic purpose as poetry by Robert Frost, or writing by Dorothy Canfield Fisher. At the same time, MacDowell could only have Hillcrest, his cabin, or his forest because they had been previously abandoned. Thus, his ability to enjoy isolated solitude was a direct result of earlier generations that had failed to remain solvent in a changing economic and agricultural landscape.

Linked closely to solitude, romanticizing the forest had also been a part of the Colony’s identity since its founding. The 1916 Association pamphlet explains that while the log cabin was only a five-minute walk from Hillcrest, it was “buried . . . in the woods” and therefore “it had all the


natural quiet and the deep pervading solitude of a primeval forest.” The forested setting of the Colony was also an integral component of the pageant, as it was performed in the Colony’s natural amphitheater, with a commanding view of Mount Monadnock behind the performers, mimicking the experience of MacDowell’s cabin (fig. 5.7). A review of the Pageant in *Art and Progress*, the official magazine of the American Federation of Arts, described the woods as “almost primeval.”

The lure of the “primitive” forest was especially appealing for men at the turn of the century, who viewed Victorian experiences of nature such as bird watching, wildflower gardens, or carriage rides in the country as potentially effeminate. In this way, the Arcadian-inclined man could find spiritual enrichment in the woods that affirmed his masculinity. After all, the image of the rugged man living the “strenuous life” was championed by none other than President Theodore Roosevelt during the first decade of the twentieth century, and was perfectly attuned to the notion of a forest as primeval. MacDowell may have even felt that his depictions of place in *New England Idyls*, which include both “In Deep Woods” and “From a Log Cabin,” countered the more domesticated place-based works inspired by wildflowers and meadows in his *Woodland Sketches*. Indeed, later generations would cite pieces like “To a Wild Rose” as evidence of the emasculation of American music.

---

100 Association Pamphlet, 1916.
102 This includes Carl Ruggles, who, as noted in chapter 4, called out MacDowell and specifically “To a Wild Rose” for its “drveling, cheap sentimentalism.”
This characterization of the forest as somehow primitive or virgin ignores much of the historical reality of the area. As noted above, Peterborough was almost entirely deforested by the early part of the nineteenth century, first by the original settlers who used the wood to build and power the town and then farmed the land, and then even more extensively during the sheep craze that began in the 1810s. Marian MacDowell’s claim in 1950 that the log cabin was surrounded by “virgin forest” of two and three hundred-year-old pines is also highly suspect, since the only known old growth forest with trees of that age in southern New Hampshire was thirty miles west of Peterborough in what was eventually designated Pisgah State Park. Idealizing the forest for its
mystical, sublime qualities also neglects its importance in the timber industry and erases the
manufacturing history of the town that regarded these trees as a practical source of capital. Logging
had long been an important element of the Peterborough region’s economy, as each successive
industrial wave was fueled by the area’s forests, which then regenerated during the ensuing bust
decades. During the years of economic and agricultural decline that followed the Civil War,
logging was in fact one of the only ways some towns could sustain themselves.

Furthermore, this narrative about primitive forests was one of the main New England
“invented traditions.” Bowden observes that early New England elites, consisting of academics,
clergy, and Boston’s mercantile leaders, created certain mythologies about the landscape that suited
their socioeconomic and philosophical ideals. The recasting of Peterborough’s forests as an
impenetrable, primeval wilderness thus has its roots in the general tradition that “maintains that New
England was deserted and wild at the time of encounter.” Nineteenth-century writers and poets
glorified this notion further, based on both the Colonial sense that the land was wild and unoccupied
(when in fact it was maintained by Native Americans), as well as influence from German romantic
writers who wrote of the supernatural forest. It is no wonder, then, that Mary Freeman wrote about
the “mountain-land of New England” as “prehistoric” in a 1912 lifestyle magazine.

In the planning and building of subsequent studios, both Marian MacDowell and the
Memorial Association were interested in creating a perception or illusion of wilderness based on
MacDowell’s cabin, which itself was a place where the composer actively cultivated solitude. Isolation

---

103 Richard Ober, “Is There a Monadnock Land Ethic?,” in Where the Mountain Stands Alone: Stories
of Place in the Monadnock Region, ed. Howard Mansfield (Hanover, NH: University Press of New
104 Bowden, “Invented Tradition and Academic Convention,” 188.
and solitude in the woods connote this sense of wilderness, based on the New England myth that
deifies the primeval forest. Importantly, this transforms Peterborough, which is actually one of the
largest towns in the Monadnock area second only to the industrial city of Keene, into a wilderness
place, a place that its year-round residents would not recognize as such.

Peterborough—“Our Town”

From the beginning of the Colony both the isolation of the working conditions and the
resulting solitude were celebrated as essential qualities of the place, and by extension, of
Peterborough, New Hampshire, itself. Peterborough is nearly always mentioned in conjunction with
public statements about the Colony, resulting in a telescoping of place where everything said about
the Colony would seem to be implaced in Peterborough too. From a purely geo-spatial viewpoint,
the Colony is situated within the boundaries of Peterborough, but this is to treat place merely as site,
as Casey might argue. Peterborough’s educated elite welcomed this amalgamation of place with the
Colony, as they correctly believed it would help change the image of the town. In effect,
Peterborough was changing how it projected its character and identity out into the world by
intentionally downplaying or distorting certain aspects of its socioeconomic history.

The 1910 pageant helped play a role in conflating the two places, Peterborough and the
Colony. Using lyrics written by Hermann Hagedorn and directed by George Pierce Baker, both of
whom were Harvard professors and thus further linked to the New England elite, the pageant told
the history of Peterborough using a combination of pantomime and music. Although many
historical realities were included in this narrative—Native American life, the arrival of the first
settlers, immigrant workers in the textile mills, farm abandonment, and the losses incurred from the
Civil War—they were all presented via MacDowell’s music. Therefore the sense of place projected is at least partially filtered through MacDowell’s experience of that place and its history. As was the case elsewhere throughout New England, “local history and culture were a crucial part of the tourist industry, but they were also ultimately at the service of that industry.” The pageant program even acknowledged that MacDowell’s music undermined the verisimilitude of the stories being told, noting the anachronism of using contemporary music to tell historical stories. Yet its centrality to the entire drama was such that it could not be sacrificed for the sake of historical accuracy, and so the program noted that “suggestion rather than realism is the basis of the pageant.” The final scenes of the pageant concerned the arrival of the artistic muses to Peterborough, and a finale that glorifies the “spirit of the master” speaking from his cabin to the tune of “To a Wild Rose.” Edward MacDowell, and by extension the Colony that bears his name, are given the same ontological importance as the other major events of Peterborough history represented in the pageant. Putting MacDowell’s cultural accomplishment—or more accurately, the realization of Edward’s idea by Marian—as the endpoint of this historical narrative implied the importance and essential nature of the Colony to the identity of Peterborough, at least from the viewpoint of the cultural community of outsiders that was now annually gathering in the town.

The pageant was meant to garner attention and visitors to the Colony, and indeed the Colony became a tourist attraction after 1910. Annual festivals presented music and drama throughout the 1910s, and the pageant was reprised in 1919 as part of the National Federation of Musical Clubs convention, an event that Marian MacDowell helped bring to town. MacDowell knew that she would need to sustain public interest in the Colony, especially among the rich

107 Pageant program, 4.
cognoscenti of Boston, New York, and Chicago, for it to remain financially stable. She toured every off-season for the next few decades playing concerts of her late husband’s music, helping to establish MacDowell clubs, fundraising, and spreading the gospel of the Colony and its myth of rural solitude.

In the drama of the pageant, and the mythologizing of the MacDowell legacy by Marian, Edward MacDowell becomes a sort of visionary hero who single-handedly re-imagined Peterborough as a place where isolated solitude reigned. However, it was Marian MacDowell and the Memorial Association who elevated Edward to this status. They are as much, if not more a part of the construction of place in Peterborough as Edward himself. MacDowell becomes a part of the cultural landscape of Peterborough through the writings of the Association and the oral tradition of the Colony. Indeed, "MacDowell’s Peterborough" becomes another obsolete geography. As if to stress the point further, the views of Monadnock that he enjoyed from both his cabin porch and from the boulder that eventually became his gravestone no longer exist (fig. 5.5), consigned to a nostalgic place and time in the town's history.

Not every Peterborough resident was in agreement that the town should become synonymous with the Colony. A columnist for the Peterborough Transcript, Louise Nickerson, made a number of observations about the marked difference between visitors and locals that often revolved around issues of capital and class. In one story, she writes about the women who would cook the St. Patrick's Day public dinner who “had, at one time or another, cooked for the wealthy summer people in the area.” In contrast to the rural New England comfort foods served at common events such as the town meeting, these St. Patrick's Day dishes were “originally prepared with a certain sophistication to which the summer people had accustomed themselves through travels abroad.”

The implication is that the wealthy summer residents, having more worldly and cosmopolitan exposure, were accustomed to a higher epicurean standard than Peterborough locals. Nickerson also mentions how the town grocery store would stock “more exotic, sophisticated foods, from Boston’s famous S. S. Pierce Co.,” to accommodate the “arrival of the ‘summer people.’”

Nickerson also comments on how the colonists might be viewed as outsiders. In writing about the arrival of a movie house in town during the 1920s, Nickerson mentions that “even the MacDowell Colonists eventually started coming out to see the movies, once they realized that they were of high artistic value.” This remark suggests not only the separation between the locals and the colonists, but also the perceived gap in sophistication between them, notwithstanding what she later describes as the “warm rapport between townspeople and colonists.”

Mentioning the “famous” Boston high-end supplier helps construct the geographic parameters of this refined taste. It delineates the typically urban summer people as belonging to a different place than the year-round residents. As mentioned in chapter 2, geographies that reflect social structures can be constructed by aesthetics of taste and cultural consumption, following the writing of Bourdieu. Nickerson’s comments about food, as well as her observation that colonists would only be interested in movies if they met their own presumably high aesthetic standards, suggest theimplacement of two different geographies in Peterborough: one for the members of the educated elite whose aesthetic values align with the colonists, and one for everyone else. Her comments also demonstrate the degree to which these two places were already merging by the Colony’s second decade.

---

109 Ibid., 11.
110 Ibid., 31.
Other residents actively resisted the changes imposed by the educated elite. Roper describes how the “progressive” aims of the group known as the Old Phoenix Mill Associates were judged with “suspicion rather than with gratitude” by the average Peterborough resident.¹¹² The eighteen original Phoenix Associates hailed from old Yankee families, had Ivy League pedigrees, paid nearly twenty-five percent of Peterborough’s property taxes, and wanted to shape the town according to their perceived higher aesthetic standards.¹¹³ Many of them only lived in Peterborough during the summer, and their members included a number of trustees of the MacDowell Memorial Association. Their main civic goal was to convert the Phoenix mill into a new high school, following their belief that a strong educational foundation would help Peterborough avoid the supposed moral decline of other rural New Hampshire towns. However, some long-time residents felt that the best use for closed textile factories was for them to be put to industrial use again. Others were adamant that Peterborough should not abandon its agricultural roots and should try to attract farmers back to purchase abandoned farms.

Ultimately the mill was demolished because the Associates did not want to see it return to industrial use, as they felt it would negatively affect the appearance of the surrounding buildings which they had built in a Colonial revival architectural style. The Phoenix associates were interested in literally changing the landscape of downtown Peterborough, bringing it into a style that reflected the sense of place of the Colony. Roper details how nearly all the members of the Phoenix Associates group donated shrubbery, trees, and flowers to downtown Peterborough to aid in its beautification,

¹¹³ Ibid., 43.
aligning the town’s landscape aesthetic with their vision of Peterborough as a peaceful touristic retreat rather than a formerly powerful manufacturing center.\footnote{114}{Ibid., 38.}

However, as the town’s focus shifted to tourism, some Peterborough residents did eventually come to regard the Colony as a point of pride, especially since it was the primary engine of the local economy. As Peterborough has become more and more intertwined with the Colony, the town has assumed an aura of artistic creativity and excellence that has largely shaped its modern identity. This is an invention derived from the Colony, as Peterborough did not have any cultural precedents that would portend its future status as an American artistic center. Town historian George Abbot Morison claims that there was no center of social activity in town in 1820, and by the 1830s, dancing was the only amusement available to residents.\footnote{115}{Morison, \textit{History of Peterborough New Hampshire}, 663. As examined in chapter 3, dancing with music provided by a lone fiddler was the only musical entertainment in many rural New England towns.} In a move that was likely the product of boom-year optimism, Peterborough built a theater called the “opera house” in 1861, but unable to sustain a calendar of performances, the building soon became the city hall and police headquarters.

Today there is public artwork throughout downtown Peterborough (many of it made by sculptor colonists), art galleries, and other markers of gentrified “artsy” areas such as a variety of artisan foodmakers and restaurants. Although some industrial areas exist on the outskirts of town, the downtown area resembles the “communal, small-town Yankee world undisturbed by the advance of [industry]” that turn-of-the-century Colonial revival aesthetics celebrated.\footnote{116}{Joseph A. Conforti, \textit{Imagining New England: Explorations of Regional Identity From the Pilgrims to the Mid-Twentieth Century} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 203.} In particular, Peterborough has embraced its status as the inspiration for the fictional Grover’s Corners in Thornton Wilder’s \textit{Our Town}, written while he was a colonist in 1937 (see fig. 5.8). A Board of Trade

\begin{flushright}
\textit{\textcopyright 2013 University of Virginia Press. All rights reserved.}
\end{flushright}
pamphlet from 1948 was titled “Our Town Peterborough . . . in the Monadnock Region of Southern New Hampshire,” and continually refers to Peterborough as “our town” rather than by its proper name.117 Booklets from 1954 and 1974 have similar titles, and the 1983 pamphlet, issued by the renamed Chamber of Commerce, includes an essay titled “Peterborough—‘Our Town.’”118 This aspect of place provides a particularly apt metaphor, in that Peterborough gradually began to assume, or at the very least embrace, the identity of a fictional town as its own. In some ways, MacDowell’s Peterborough was always a fictional place, seen through his eyes, or Thornton Wilder’s pen, or the music and artwork of other colonists throughout the years. For all of them, and perhaps thousands more visitors, Peterborough is a place defined by its relationship with the Colony, and by its representation of a particular experience of place formed by a city dweller over a hundred years ago.

Figure 5.8: Our Town Inn, a bed and breakfast in downtown Peterborough, NH, one of many local businesses to have embraced the association with Thornton Wilder’s Our Town. Photograph copyright 2014, Jacob A. Cohen.

117 Peterborough Board of Trade, Our Town Peterborough . . . in the Monadnock Region of Southern New Hampshire (Peterborough, NH: Peterborough Board of Trade, 1948).
118 These booklets are all in the archives at the Peterborough Town Library, Peterborough, NH.
Conclusion

After a first brief visit made two or three summers before . . . a lover of Dunnet Landing returned to find the unchanged shores of the pointed firs, the same quaintness of the village with its elaborate conventionalities; all that mixture of remoteness and childish certainty of being the centre of civilization of which her affectionate dreams had told.
—Sarah Orne Jewett, *The Country of the Pointed Firs*¹

The fictional Maine coastal town of Dunnet Landing, the setting of Sarah Orne Jewett’s novel *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, constitutes an image of the small New England village that, more and more toward the turn of the twentieth century, became representative of the entire region. Immensely popular in her day, Jewett and other writers of regional literature from her generation helped to reify many of the myths, narratives, and constructions of place that, as we have seen, characterized New England in the late nineteenth century. Her stories are populated with Yankee archetypes: hard-working, self-reliant, and fiercely intelligent white men of faith with simple ways of living that belied deeper complexities. Jewett’s Captain Littlepage, the elderly sea captain with “the refinement of look and air of command which are the heritage of the old ecclesiastical families of New England,” recites quotations from *Paradise Lost* and sings the praises of Milton just as Dorothy Canfield Fisher’s farmer grandfather did.²

Archetypes remain fixed and constant in order to exist at all. The New England that Jewett conveyed was stuck in the place and time of a nostalgic post-war America, and a similar impulse to

---

² Ibid., 23.
stop time and present New England places as they were can be found in the examples of the previous four chapters. Elite Bostonians sought to maintain the city’s midcentury cultural and ethnic hegemony, even while Chadwick quietly challenged the status quo. Ives wanted to freeze the Danbury of his imagination and preserve it into his present day music. Ruggles and Fisher promoted an image of the Vermonter, whether it was as a brawny pioneer or a simple agrarian Yankee, that was popularized in the late nineteenth century to entice summer visitors. And the MacDowell Colony cultivated the ideal of an untouched, wild solitude among the New Hampshire hills, more like the place where Thoreau had camped out and picked wild blueberries rather than the industrial town Peterborough had been in the nineteenth century. In her novel *Deephaven*, Jewett’s description of the eponymous fictional town is an apt metaphor for the work done by these cultural products—whether musical, literary, visual, theatrical, or otherwise—to preserve New England archetypes: “it seemed as if all the clocks in Deephaven, and all the people with them, had stopped years ago, and the people had been doing over and over what they had been busy about during the last week of their unambitious progress.”

However, if we accept that place is a construction based on social conditions, cultural activity, and the perceptions of those whose bodies occupy and dwell within a space, then we must acknowledge that place is a dynamic and ever-changing construct. It is a geography with fluid and evolving boundaries and parameters that reflects social and cultural variations as well as the myriad perceptive experiences of many different kinds of people. Place resists the notion of typicality because its characteristics are always in flux.

As we have seen throughout this study, when aspects of an iconic New England place emerge

---

they tend to only reflect the normative experience of a particular slice of civilization. More often than not, these archetypes are attached to Yankee identity in ways that attempt to perpetuate class, wealth, educational, and ethnic exceptionalism. Identity, linked inextricably to place, is equally resistant to fixity, although as I have argued this did not prevent Yankee elites from trying to latch their regional identity onto obsolete geographies and narrow constructions of place. Since place is always a result of dynamic social and cultural constructions, so too is a place-based identity, a regional New England identity. As Stuart Hall argues, this “discursive approach sees identification as a construction, a process never completed—always ‘in process.’” Identification, as the process of these discourses in articulating identity, “is in the end conditional, lodged in contingency.”

All the examples in this dissertation show how composers, audiences, critics, and elite tastemakers grappled with the contingency of their regional identity in a time of changing geographies. In this sense there is also an element of displacement that occurs in each chapter. As places evolved, obsolete geographies seemed to rupture, especially to those for whom old places constituted a stable, self-affirming sense of cultural and geographic identity. Chadwick embraced the fluctuating place of Boston in his music while those who objected to his “Irish” tinge were anxious about the loss of their sense of place for a city whose boundaries were no longer recognizable and comfortable. Ives, Ruggles, and MacDowell all used their music (or in the case of MacDowell, his musical institution) to attempt to preserve and glorify an older, idealized, and nostalgic sense of place in the face of shifting landscapes. It is no surprise that Casey reserves a discussion of nostalgia for his chapter titled “Displacement.”

---

For Chadwick, his Symphony no. 2 was a way of processing the changing demographics of Boston at a crucial juncture in the city’s history, when previous class and ethnic hegemonies, related to political power, were breaking down and re-arranging themselves along geographic lines. For Ives, Washington's Birthday was a way to musically re-inhabit a forgotten and mythologized New England town. Yet by contrasting his imagined past with his realistic present, both time periods and places came into clearer focus for the composer. His grievances with modern urbanity can only be fully realized when set against nostalgic rurality. For Ruggles, Men and Mountains was a way to articulate an image of a resurgent rural Vermont after years of perceived social decline, at a crucial juncture in the state’s attempt to rehabilitate its image. His embrace of a Vermont identity, of a Vermont implacement for his music, also served him well for its ability to imbue his music with traits of a typical rural Vermonter. But those traits themselves were tied to regional myths about education, class, and ethnicity. Still, Ruggles saw the rural as an idea that could exist in the present, whereas for Ives, the rural was in some ways lost to the past. For MacDowell, the establishment of an artists’ colony modeled on his own experience of “wilderness” in Peterborough allowed him to glorify and perpetuate this transcendentalist image of rural New England for future generations of artists. In doing so, he and his wife steered Peterborough toward an identity based on the Colony’s construction of place just as the town was debating the merits of embracing its industrial past. In all these cases, music helped to construct places that were in some ways fictive precisely at moments of social and geographical tension.

Because identity and place are amorphous and always responding to the social and cultural activities of New Englanders, there remains work to be done exploring how music in the cultivated tradition has reflected and articulated place beyond the years under examination in this dissertation.
While the turn of the twentieth century certainly provides a particularly rich locus of study because of the pronounced demographic, geographic, and technological changes that occurred during this era, the scope of this inquiry is by no means limited to this era. Questions of how New England composers and musicians engaged with the “invented traditions and academic conventions” about the region might extend back to the psalmody of William Billings or the reform-minded hymns of Lowell Mason. Especially for Mason, the issue of how elite taste reinforced Yankee ethnocentrism is pertinent. The academic tendency of Bostonian composers and how that compositional approach related to implaced genres and access to education might be examined alongside composers such as John Knowles Paine, Edward Burlingame Hill, or Walter Piston. Relationships between gender, place, and ethnicity would certainly emerge in a study of Amy Beach’s music, while the problems of New England xenophobia seen throughout this dissertation are equally present in the figure of Daniel Gregory Mason. Although not himself a New Englander, William Schuman’s New England Triptych, composed at another moment of cultural tension in the first decade of the Cold War, returned to the image of a small New England village as a symbol for American identity in the face of new global geopolitics. Indeed, right up to the present, composers are re-engaging with myths, narratives, and fictions about New England identity and using their socially- and culturally-mediated experiences to imagine and construct New England places.

---

Apthorp reviewed the premiere performance of Chadwick’s Second Symphony by the BSO on December 11, 1886, in Boston Music Hall. His review was published the following Monday, December 13, in the *Boston Evening Transcript*, the paper for which Apthorp served as music editor from 1881 through 1903. Nearly the entire second half of the review is given to a discussion of Chadwick’s piece, while the first half is devoted to the other works on the program: Mozart’s Overture to *The Magic Flute*, Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto in E minor (op. 64), and Otto Floersheim’s Symphonic Poem *Consolation*, op. 21. The following is transcribed from the article preserved in the Brown Collection of the Boston Public Library.

Mr. Chadwick’s new symphony is a work so unexpected in character that one hardly knows exactly how to take it nor what to say of it. Mr. Chadwick has already amply shown that he has genuine talent of no common order, and this symphony gives proof of it quite as well as any of his previous works. He has decided melodic invention, and is a good harmonist; he has, too, that which further work and study may develop into a very considerable technique in composition. More than all, he has real charm and brilliancy; what he writes is alive, and sounds spontaneous. In this last symphony of his there is much that is fascinating—the Scherzo, with which the public is already familiar, is a gem in its way, and the slow movement shows decided originality. And yet there is that in the general character and animus of the symphony which baffles all attempts at comparing it with known models of any school. We, for one, cannot remember any music of this character being written in the symphonic form. One feels like saying, with Friar Lawrence, “Art though a symphony? Thy form cries out, thou art.” The general lack of true seriousness in the music; the light, almost operatic, character of the thematic material; the constant changes of rhythm; the frequent solo passages—not merely incidental phrases for this or that instrument, but often full-fledged solos of considerable length—all contribute to make the work fall short of what may be called symphonic
dignity. Of the stoutness of the construction and the quality of the workmanship one cannot judge after an single hearing. The work is brilliant, often very fascinating, but it stands fitful, capricious, and, if we may be pardoned for saying so, even frivolous. In the matter of orchestration Mr. Chadwick here falls somewhat short of the standard of some of his previous work, of the “Thalia” overture, for instance. As we have said, the composition shows genuine talent, but it seems as if the composer had not yet sufficiently drilled his powers to cope with so severe a task as a symphony. The orchestra played well under Mr. Chadwick’s bâton. This is the first time that a composer has been allowed to conduct his own work at the symphony concerts.
This is Fisher’s full, unpublished essay, written in the fall of 1924, from which a small portion about the “Lilacs” movement was excerpted for the premiere of *Men and Mountains* on December 7 of that year. This version is transcribed from a typescript in MSS 26, The Carl Ruggles Papers in the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library of Yale University, box 15, folder 30. It is here reproduced with all typographic conventions maintained (other than some light editing to conform to style guides). Any significant changes of content from earlier drafts are noted.

It is the conviction of many competent judges that Carl Ruggles is the great American composer, and the sooner we ordinary American music-lovers know it, the better for us. We have only to listen open-mindedly to his music to feel this, and if we do not make haste to listen to him and to recognize him, we shall be left behind (as we so often are) by keen-witted Europeans, with their eager welcome for an authentic, new human voice in the arts.

The music of this American, this old-American composer, this pure-blooded Cape-Cod seven-generation New Englander, is so new, has such a vivid personal accent, causes such excitement among professional critics, is so heatedly praised and blamed, that ordinary American music-lovers (never very aggressive people at the best), can hardly hear it for the musical noise that is made about it! If they could, they would recognize with joy and take to themselves a composer of their own race, of their own kin, who does for them what every artist should do for his own people, make articulate what lies deep and silent in their hearts. What orthodox musicians call “impossible dissonances” they would recognize as the vigorous utterance of a man who speaks out in his own way, with the surprising, penetrating reality of accent of a man who is saying something of his own, and not repeating forms set by other people.

In the movement entitled “Men” in Ruggles’ Symphonic Composition entitled “Men and
Mountains,” the rhapsodic proclamation of the horns which begins it, is shoutingly American. It is the very outcry of exuberant self-assertion and self-confidence which has always burst from the American pioneer in answer to the challenge of Nature, of The Land. The Land, new unconquered land, and the heart of the pioneer, those are the two cymbals\(^1\) which emitting together, have made one of the mighty voices of America. Shaken and vibrating, we hear them clashing splendidly in “Men.” “Lilacs” talks another language, but a language as deeply American. It represents the fine-flowering, too-perfect art which blossoms blooms and ripens as the curve of its civilization reaches the apex and begins to droop into decay.

The New England civilization has said rare things in its own reticent vernacular. Nowhere in the world is there a folk-architecture more exquisite than the beautiful old Colonial houses of New England, designed for the most part by the very carpenters who built them. But the civilization which has produced them has run its course. “Lilacs,” wistful, frail, tenuously complicated, (but always with that implacable sincerity of its racial speech) tells of the ebbing away of humanity from the scenes of its old conquests, of sagging roof-trees, of empty and rotting farm-houses, of the soft-footed advance of the forest back over the land which man had wrested into his own hands, of dust on deserted hearth-stones, of “brush in the pastures,” that New England phrase which to any Yankee brings up the whole picture. And yet, in Ruggles’ music all this ruinous sadness is shot through with the green strength of the forest’s rising tide and perfumed by the aroma (rich with human association) of old lilac-bushes, still faithfully blooming beside sunken cellar-holes, beside the forgotten homes of men long since dead.

“Lilacs” is the elegy over the death of a part of America. But the inevitable death of parts is

\(^{1}\) Although Fisher misspells “symbol,” it is possible that she intended to do so in order to take advantage of the homonym with “cymbal.” See p. 198 for a parsing of this passage.
seen only as an enriching element in a tremendous whole, with the leaping up on the first chords of “Marching Mountains.” Orthodox musicians over fifty and unorthodox ones under twenty-five may wrangle as they will over the structure of this work. Strong and sensitive American music-lovers (if they are given a chance to listen to it in peace) can only rejoice to hear the outpouring of something too deep in their hearts for them ever to express. Life.....the world......America....our race....all seen\(^2\) from a great height, as one sees, from a hard-won mountain-top, all the other mountains marching mightily away to the horizon.

Nothing seen or heard from the carven windows of the European ivory tower, this. This is the voice of America, for whom a wind-swept mountain-top is none too spacious a standing place. A harsh voice it is, harsh as the clamor made by our industrial prosperity, full-blooded and strong like the great bodies which are nourished by that prosperity, eager, hopeful, young, reaching up like the new young souls within those bodies. Above all, exulting noisily at the sight of mightiness, as only those human beings can rejoice who feel mightiness rise up within them to greet it in life.

[ Signed] Dorothy Canfield Fisher

\(^2\) Earlier draft: “seem.”
Bibliography

ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Allen A. Brown Collection, Arts Department, Boston Public Library
American Broadsides and Ephemera (online)
Boston Symphony Orchestra Archives
Collection 1.2: George W. Chadwick, New England Conservatory Archives, Boston, MA
Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, CT
Dorothy Canfield Collection, Special Collections, University of Vermont Library, Burlington, VT
Harvard Musical Association, Boston, MA
Historic New England, Boston, MA
Library of Congress, Music Division, Charles and Ruth Crawford Seeger Collection
Library of Congress, Music Division, Edward and Marian MacDowell Collection
The MacDowell Colony Library and Archives, Peterborough, NH
Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA
MSS 26, The Carl Ruggles Papers in the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library of Yale University
New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, NH
New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Music Division
Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library
Peterborough [NH] Town Library Archives
Russell Vermontiana Collection, Martha Canfield Library, Arlington, VT.
Vermont Historical Society, Barre, VT

NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER PRIMARY SOURCES

The Albion
American Art Journal
Boston Courier
Boston Daily Advertiser
Boston Daily Globe
Boston Evening Transcript
Boston Gazette and Saturday Evening Gazette
Boston Herald
Boston Journal, Boston Home Journal, Boston
Morning Journal, and Boston Evening Journal
The Boston Musical Year Book and Musical Year in the United States
Boston Post
Boston Traveller and Boston Evening Traveller
Hartford Courant
Manchester Journal [VT]
Musical Advance
Musical Courier

The Musical and Dramatic World
The Musical Visitor
New Haven Register
New Music
New York Herald Tribune
New York Musical Courier
New York Sun
New York Times
New York Tribune
Peterborough Transcript
The Philadelphia Press
Report on Population of the United States at the Eleventh Census (1890)
Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census (1880)
Vermont Life
Yankee Magazine

305


Dick, Harris B. How to Lead the German. New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, 1895.


Evans, Estwick. A Pedestrious Tour of Four Thousand Miles, Through the Western States and Territories, During the Winter and Spring of 1818. Concord, NH: Joseph C. Spear, 1819.


Marquand, John P. *The Late George Apley, a Novel in the Form of a Memoir*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1937.


Peterborough Board of Trade, Our Town Peterborough . . . in the Monadnock Region of Southern New Hampshire. Peterborough, NH: Peterborough Board of Trade, 1948.


Ruggles, Carl. *Men and Mountains.* In *New Music* 1, no. 1 (October 1927).


The Boston Club Book for 1888, Containing a Full List of Members and Addresses of All Boston Clubs of any Social or Political Prominence. Boston: Edward E. Clark, 1888.


Wilson, Marguerite. Dancing: A Complete Guide to all Dances, with a Full List of Calls, the Music for each Figure, Etiquette of the Dances, and One Hundred Figures for the German. Philadelphia: Penn Publishing Company, 1899: 1905.


