

[see addition]

DRAFT #2: (after laura conversation at noon)

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
THE KATE MULLANY HOUSE
TROY, NEW YORK
JULY 15, 1998**

[Acknowledgments: Congressman Mike McNulty; Mayor Mark Pattison; Josephine Sano, Albany Central Labor Council; Gov. Pataki; descendant of Mullany; citizens and friends;]

When a newspaper claimed that there weren't enough women in New York City with the ability to be labor organizers -- Kate Mullany said defiantly: "you show me the women, I'll turn them into organizers." And she did. It's a pleasure to be here to celebrate the life of this courageous woman -- who helped change the course of America's history so many years ago.

Over the past three days -- I've traveled up the East Coast -- visiting the monuments and sites and artifacts that tell America's story, and urging communities to come together to preserve these irreplaceable symbols of our legacy, and pass them on to future generations. I've walked around the headquarters of George Washington; stood at the foot of the Francis Scott Key monument in Baltimore; and explored a community whose historic houses are serving as the foundation for the rebirth of a neighborhood.

But this site -- the home of Kate Mullany -- tells a story that the vast majority of our nation's historic sites neglect to tell -- the life and achievements of America's women.

This week, women from across the country are gathering a few miles from here at Seneca Falls -- to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the first women's rights convention. It's an extraordinary opportunity for women of all ages, and races, and backgrounds to tell their own stories -- and reflect on the extraordinary contributions of those who came before us.

Nowhere do those voices of the past come so alive as here -- in this house, and in this city of Troy. We imagine Harriet Tubman -- known as the "Moses" of her people -- using her wiles to help fugitive slave (Charles Nalle) escape from slavery in this home. We see Emma Willard -- who founded the nation's first girls school here -- as she discovered she didn't have the textbooks she needed. And writing them herself. We follow the accomplishments of one of her graduates -- Olivia Slocum Sage -- as she establishes the Russell Sage College for Women -- using the money from her late rich husband -- who didn't even like women.

We watch with amusement as another woman of Troy -- housewife Hannah Lord Montague -- invents the detachable collar. Like so many women, she'd become frustrated at having to wash her husband's entire shirts when only the collars were dirty. [Some things never change.] And we applaud the tale of Regional Friehofer -- who established a bakery in Troy because he saw so many working women racing out of their homes every morning to work -- not having the time to bake their own bread.

The lives of so many of these woman revolved around the resident of this house. Imagine the courage it took for Kate Mullany -- only 19 years of age -- to organize 200 women garment workers -- and form the first real all women's union in the nation. Most of the women -- like Kate -- were the sole support of their ailing mothers, or younger siblings. Yet they still dared to go out on strike.

This house also helps chronicle the triumphs and failures of America's early labor movement. It's difficult to comprehend the working conditions these women workers were forced to endure back then: standing on their feet for 11 to 14 hours a day -- bending over washtubs and ironing tables in oppressive, 100 degree heat -- all for about \$2-3 a week.

Yet that first strike -- demanding among other things a 25% increase in wages -- was successful. And eventually women began to earn up to \$14 a week -- which while small, was almost on par with what men were making. An astonishing achievement. The fact that Kate was able to buy this house with the money from that raise reminds us of the stability and benefits that came with better jobs -- and better conditions at work. These women also found strength in reaching out to the broader community -- and joining other unions for the common good.

Some of what we learn from Kate Mullany and the women of Troy -- is that the voices of those women still speak to the concerns of today's working women -- and have continued to inspire women in the labor movement down through the years. The women of Troy fought for equal pay for equal work -- as we still do. They fought for better working conditions in the workplace -- as we still do. They fought for respect -- at work and at home. As we still do. And they struggled to find the time to bake their own bread -- and balance the demands of work and family -- as we still do.

We've made progress over the past century that Kate Mullany and her friends could never have imagined. Yet she envisioned a future that many of us still dream about -- "that when, from choice or necessity, women are compelled to earn their own living, it will not be a reproach, but an honor."

Augusta Lewis -- president of the women's typographical Union -- wrote in 1869 about the Troy Collar Laundry Union as a model for working women through the ages. "Others will be encouraged by their success; and be stimulated by their example ... to elevate their own condition." Ms. Lewis recognized the enduring qualities of these women -- their courage to reach out to others; their simple demand to be treated fairly and with respect; their sense of a broader community -- that have inspired all Americans to tackle the next problem -- and move ahead. These are not just history lessons to read and put back on the shelf. When we study and learn from those who came before us -- we find we can face the future with a little more confidence -- and with a renewed sense of hope.

Kate Mullany is truly one of America's most precious treasures. And it gives me great pleasure today to help unveil this plaque commemorating her home as a National Historic Landmark -- knowing that it will help to keep her stories and those of all of these women alive for the next generation to learn from, and yes, be inspired.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF SPEECHWRITING

Fax: (202)456-5709
Phone: (202)456-2777

TO: LAURA SCHILLER / ELLEN LOVELL

Fax: _____ Phone: _____

FROM: Christy

Comments: First draft Muller
Done Please call when
you can

Date: _____

Number of pages (including cover): _____

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THE KATE MULLANY HOUSE
TROY, NEW YORK
JULY 15, 1998**

[Acknowledgments: Congressman Mike McNulty; Mayor Mark Pattison; Josephine Sano, Albany Central Labor council; Gov. Pataki; descendant of Mullany; citizens and friends;]

When a newspaper claimed that there weren't enough women in New York City with the ability to be labor organizers -- Kate Mullany said defiantly: "you show me the women, I'll turn them into organizers." It's a pleasure to be here at the home of such a courageous and determined woman -- a woman who helped change the course of America's history so many years ago.

Over the past three days -- I've traveled up the East Coast -- visiting the monuments and sites and artifacts that tell America's story, and urging communities to think about how they can preserve these irreplaceable symbols of our legacy, and pass them on to future generations. I've walked around the headquarters of George Washington; and stood at the foot of the Francis Scott Key monument in Baltimore; and explored a community whose historic houses are serving as the foundation for the rebirth of a neighborhood. Here, at the home of Kate Mullany -- we see another side of the historic preservation movement -- a site that reflects the lives of ordinary, every day people.

This house is unique in another way. It tells a story that the vast majority of historic sites in America neglect to tell -- the life and achievements of women.

This week, women from across the country are gathering a few miles from here -- at Seneca Falls -- to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the first women's rights convention. It's an extraordinary opportunity for women from every region of the country -- of all ages, and races, and backgrounds -- to celebrate the progress that's been made -- but also to move forward to meet the promises that remain unfulfilled. But perhaps most importantly, it's an opportunity to tell their stories. Because for too long, women's voices have not been heard. Their stories gone untold.

Here in Troy, the stories of America's women are all around us. Harriet Tubman -- known as the "Moses" of her people -- used this site to help fugitive slave (Charles Nalle) to escape from slavery. When Emma Willard founded the first girls school here -- she couldn't find all the textbooks she needed. So she wrote some herself. One of her graduates -- Olivia Slocum Sage -- established the Russell Sage College for Women -- with the money from her late rich husband -- who didn't even like women. Another Troy woman -- housewife Hannah Lord Montague -- invented the detachable collar. She'd become extremely frustrated at having to wash her husband's entire shirts when only the collars were dirty. Some things never change. I like the story of Regional Friehofer -- who established a bakery in Troy because he saw so many working women racing out of their homes every morning to go to work -- not having the time to bake their own bread.

The lives of so many of these woman revolved around the resident of this house. Imagine the courage it took for Kate Mullaney -- only 19 years of age -- to organize 200 women garment workers -- and form the first real all women's union in the nation. Most of the women -- like Kate -- were the sole support of their ailing mothers, or their younger sisters and brothers. Think of the bravery it took to go out on strike -- when so many depended upon you.

This house also helps chronicle the triumphs and failures of the labor movement in America. It's difficult for me to comprehend the working conditions that these women workers had to endure so many years ago: standing on their feet for 11 to 14 hours a day -- bending over washtubs and ironing tables in oppressive heat -- and making about \$2-3 a week.

Yet that first strike -- demanding among other things a 25% increase in wages -- was as successful as it was bold. And eventually, thanks to Kate's tireless leadership -- women were earning up to \$14 a week -- which while small, was almost on par with what men were making. An astonishing achievement. The fact that she was able to buy this house with the money from that raise reminds us of the stability and upward mobility that came with better jobs -- and better conditions at work. These women also found strength and comfort in each other -- and in joining forces with other unions for the common good.

Some of what we learn from Kate Mullaney and the women of Troy -- is that the voices of those women over 130 years ago still speak to the concerns of today's working women everywhere. The women of Troy fought for equal pay for equal work -- as we still do. They fought for better working conditions in the workplace -- as we still do. They fought for respect -- at work and at home. As we still do. And they struggled to find the time to bake their own bread -- and balance the demands of work and family -- as we still do.

Augusta Lewis -- president of the women's typographical Union -- wrote in 1869 about the Troy Collar Laundry Union as national model of working women uniting for a common cause. "Others will be encouraged by their success; and be stimulated by their example ... to elevate their own condition." 130 years ago, Ms. Lewis recognized and appreciated the enduring qualities of these women -- their courage to reach out to others; their determination to be treated fairly and equally; their sense of community -- that have always inspired us as a people to tackle the next problem -- and move ahead. These are not just history lessons to read and put back on the shelf. When we study and learn from the past -- we find we can face the challenges before us with a little more confidence -- and with a renewed sense of hope.

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*Grandson &
wife grand*

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**VISIT OF THE FIRST LADY
TO
THE KATE MULLANY HOUSE
TROY, NEW YORK
WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 1998**

EVENT: Plaque Presentation Ceremony

DATE: Wednesday, July 15, 1998

TIME: 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM

LOCATION: The Kate Mullany House
350 8TH Street
Troy, New York

ATTENDEES: Approximately 700 ticketed guests

PARTICIPANTS: The First Lady
Congressman Mike McNulty
Mayor Mark Pattison
Josephine Sano, Albany Central Labor Council
Mullany descendent, TBD
Governor Pataki or representative, TBD
~~State Senator Joe Bruno (R, Troy), TBD~~
Kate Mullany actress, TBD

PRESS: Open

REMARKS: Speaking Program

SCENARIO:

The First Lady will arrive at the Kate Mullany House and be greeted by Congressman Mike McNulty, Mayor Mark Pattison, Josephine Sano and a Kate Mullany descendent. The First Lady and the greeting party will then proceed backstage and join other program participants and await introduction onto the stage according to the speaking program.

Upon conclusion of the program, The First Lady will be presented with an original Troy collar and then be invited to unveil a plaque commemorating the designation of the Kate Mullany House as a National Historic Landmark.

The First Lady will exit the stage (ropeline optional) and depart.

7/9/98

Liz:

Could you please fax the list of speakers for the Troy event to Billy Mann at 202-456-6244?
Thanks.

Lisa McCann
WH Millennium Council

TROY EVENT SPEAKERS

Invocation - Father Flanagan
Minister _____

Remarks - Troy Mayor
Mark Pattison

Congressman
Mike McNulty

Josephine Sano,
Albany Central Labor
Council

Governor Pataki - TBD

Mullany descendant - TBD

The First Lady

TROY, NY: Kate Mullaney House

Description Blue painted brick duplex with three apartments in each. Currently private residences.

Historical Significance Kate Mullaney House has recently been made a National Historic Landmark which is still to receive plaque.

Site is also part of an area National Parks Service Labor History Theme Study (NHL by theme). Mullaney was an early president of first long-lasting (8 years, non-strike specific) all-female union (Collar Laundry Union) which managed to achieve almost parity with men's wages. She was also the first female officer of a national union. Her house was bought with money from 25% wage increase after successful strike.

Incidentally, the detachable men's collar was invented by another Troy woman, Hannah Lord Montague, when she got tired of laundering her husband's shirts when only the collar needed cleaning.

Other Troy women's history tidbits. Regional Friehofer's bakery was established in Troy when Mr. Friehofer noted the Kate Mullaney's of Troy going off to work and thought it would be a good place for a bakery because women didn't have time to make bread. Also, Troy is home of Emma Willard School for girls which was first school to teach girls subjects such as math and geography. Jane Fonda is a graduate. When Emma Willard School moved buildings its original buildings were taken over by newly established Russell Sage College named for a rich industrialist who didn't like women and wasn't the least bit charitable to widows and orphans. His widow took his money and established a college for women and named it after him.

Troy is also the home of the national icon "Uncle Sam." In the early 1800s, Sam Wilson, a meatpacker and Army beef contractor in War of 1812, had a meat stamp that said "U.S. Beef" which was jokingly interpreted as "Uncle Sam's Beef." Thus the character of Uncle Sam was born. There is an aluminum statue of Uncle Sam in Troy.

There may well be a WPA mural "Rip Van Wrinkle" "Legends of the Hudson" by Waldo Pierce in Troy.

Preservation Needs House site is a private residence but giving of plaque and recognition of the historical significance would be the focus.

Budget/Funding Sources/Local Involvement U.S. Rep McNulty has requested a visit and Sen. Moynihan who has a particular interest in historic preservation has long urged NY folks to focus on "the Irish mill worker."

Contact Rachel Bliven, 518-673-1045, RB H 518-283-6353 and RiverSpark

KATE MULLANY HOUSE

350 8th St., Troy, NY

Description

Blue painted brick duplex with three apartments in each. Currently private residences. Site will receive its plaque as a National Historic Landmark (NHL).

History and Significance

Kate Mullany was born around 1841 in England of Irish parents who brought their family to the United States around 1850. She worked as one of 3,700 women launderers, starchers, and ironers in the industry which supplied most of America's detachable collars and cuffs. Workers were paid \$2.00 a week for 14 hours work per day in oppressive heat. When new machinery was introduced which increased production but worsened working conditions, Kate Mullany organized the Collar Laundry Union in 1864 which became the first long-lasting (five years, non-strike specific) all-female union. 200 workers went on strike with Mullany and the laundry owners met their 25 cent increase demand. Her wage increase helped her family buy the house. This is the only surviving structure associated Mullany.

Mullany was also the first female officer elected to a national union (2nd Vice President of the National Labor Union) though she was unable to serve because another officer was from New York and the union could not have two officers from the same state. Instead she was appointed special assistant secretary to coordinate national working women's associations.

The Collar Laundry Union was successful in large part because the workers were highly specialized. They ironed and shaped the collar into its final form. This required strength and speed to get the collar just right when the starch was at the best stage in the process for shaping and holding. In 1866, the Collar Laundry Union also supported striking male iron molders with a sizable \$1,000. donation.

During a later strike in 1869 during which the employers united in opposition, the Collar Laundry Union formed the Cooperative Collar and Cuff factory with Mullany as president. Several months later the union dissolved and most ironers returned to work though Susan B. Anthony visited Mullany in February, 1870 where Mullany and several colleagues were still trying to make a go of the cooperative. In a later speech, Anthony sympathized with their effort to establish the fact that "women can be employers." Anthony and Mullany disagreed over the reasons for the failure of the 1869 strike: Anthony attributing it to the "girls" disenfranchised lack of power and the uneven level of ridicule heaped on the female strikers versus male unionists in other strikes, while Mullany attributed the ridicule to the bribing of editors. While Anthony identified first and foremost as a woman and battled for the ballot, Mullany self-identified as a worker and battled for "bread."

Troy is referred to as "the collar city" for its production of collars. The detachable men's collar was invented by another Troy woman, Hannah Lord Montagu, when she got tired of laundering her husband's shirts when only the collar needed cleaning. The first commercial laundry was established in Troy in the 1820's.

The Emma Willard School, founded as the Troy Female Seminary, is also in Troy. The school was founded by Emma Hart Willard in Troy, New York, in 1821. It was the first American educational institution to provide young women with an education comparable to that of college-educated young men. At the time of the seminary's founding, women were barred from colleges. Although academies for girls existed, their curricula were limited to such "female arts" as conversational French and embroidery.

The outline for the school was presented by Willard to the New York legislature in her "Plan for Improving Female Education." This document proposed a course of study that would provide girls with a broad-based and rigorous education. The legislature did not respond and some members ridiculed her ideas as against God's will but Governor DeWitt Clinton invited Willard to open a school in New York state. The city of Troy raised \$4,000 in taxes to begin construction of the school envisioned by Willard.

The seminary's first class consisted of 90 girls from across the United States who enrolled in mathematics, science, history, foreign language, and literature courses. Willard herself not only served as an instructor but even wrote some of the school's textbooks. Troy Female Seminary soon gained a reputation as an outstanding institution. It proved to those who were skeptical, that women were just as capable as men of comprehending difficult subjects. Jane Fonda is a graduate.

Though the worlds of Kate Mullany and Emma Willard rarely overlapped, the detachable men's collar industry began in the homes of financially comfortable women who wished to earn extra "pin" money before becoming the major industry in which Mullany worked.

One graduate of Emma Willard, Olivia Slocum Sage (1828-1918), continued the strong story of women's education in Troy by establishing the Russell Sage College of the Practical Arts in 1916 named for her late husband. She was an avid advocate for preparing women for the world of work and wrote in the college's first catalog that, "The greatest vocation of all is life and the ultimate employer is society." The practical arts consisted of secretarial science, home economics, and the industrial arts (interior design).

Olivia Slocum Sage also established the Russell Sage Foundation in 1907 which supported social work and documented working conditions and worked to improve those conditions.

The regional Friehofer's bakery was established in Troy when Mr. Friehofer noted

the many female laborers going off to work and thought it would be a good place for a bakery because women did not have time to make bread.

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Preservation Needs

Designation of the site as an NHL will make it one of the 5 percent of NHLs dedicated to a woman and highlight the growing awareness that sites associated with women have much to contribute to the telling of our nation's story. The site is also part of a proposed National Parks Service Labor History Theme Study (NHL by theme). Congressman Michael McNulty currently has legislation before Congress to make the house a National Historic Site (H.R.2849 "Hudson and Mohawk Rivers National Historical Park Act").

Only 3% of National Register properties are designated as NHLs. The NHL program was set out in the Historic Sites Act of 1935 Sec. 2(b) to "make a survey of historic and archeological sites, buildings, and objects for the purpose of determining which possess exceptional value as commemorating or illustrating the history of the United States."

Resources

Local labor supporters hope to commemorate Mullany's contribution to labor at her gravesite. Troy is one of six neighboring communities in RiverSpark which is one of 14 state designated urban cultural parks within New York State. Friends of RiverSpark is based in Cohoes, NY.

Contact

Rachel Bliven, Historian, 518-673-1045

- NY Sun, Sept 15, 1868, praises Kate Mullaney.
- In 1868 when bricklayers in the state of NY went on strike, the workers of Troy, including women workers, supported them. The NY Sun described a “monster demonstration of working men in the city of Troy” with “10 Unions parading the streets in a torchlight procession. . . . Not less than 7,000 people assembled, among whom were many ladies.” The Sun continued, “we had the pleasure of an interview of Ms. Kate Mullaney, President of the Collar Laundry Union. And we were greatly surprised to find a lady at the head of an association of females who so thoroughly understood the workings of the labor movement.”
- The article also mentioned that Mullaney’s Collar Union had over 500 members.

- Here is Kate Mullaney’s full quote about training female labor organizers, which I provided part of in the Carole Turbin notes. It comes from a newspaper account.
- “In alluding to the difficulties we had to contend with in the city of NY to organize female unions not being able to convince women that they were capable and competent to fill the positions of presidents and secretaries (it being conceded by them that gentlemen should fill those positions) she replied that there were numbers of ladies connected with the laundry union who were just as competent as any gentleman, and if we did not have any ladies in NY who were competent, if we succeeded in organizing female unions, she would send some from Troy and pay their expenses until such time as they were able to educate some of are own. Before the union was organized the wages were from \$5 to \$8 per week. They are now from \$11 to \$25 per week.” That was almost on par with men’s wages.

*** SEE ATTACHED QUOTES FROM CAROL TURBIN’S BOOK**

- 1) Susan B. Anthony praises Mullaney’s union
- 2) Mullaney and Anthony discuss challenges faced by working women (why a women’s union lost a conflict men could have won).

* Also see attached letter from NY Sun which graphically describes the conditions under which the women collar workers labored, mentions the accomplishments of the union, and concludes with a hopeful note about women workers and the future.

Working Women of Collar City

*Gender, Class, and Community
in Troy, New York, 1864-86*

CAROLE TURBIN

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS
Urbana and Chicago

working women's first aim was "to get fairly paid for their work. . . . After the association is formed, if a majority desires it, I believe in the girls getting together and discussing politics. But I think other things need attention now."²³ Lewis and other compositors supported woman suffrage in principle, but as working women it was not their first priority.

Several incidents occurring shortly before the 1869 NLU meeting suggest that despite Mullaney's absence from the 1868 convention, her conflicts with Anthony were deeper than Lewis's, and she had little or no interest in suffrage, not even as a secondary goal. In July 1869, when Mullaney and Esther Keegan solicited contributions to their strike fund from the city's prosperous trade unions, Mullaney also visited the Working Women's Association. Since Anthony was on a speaking tour, she was absent from the meeting, whose membership by this time was entirely middle class. In a period when trade unionists frowned on all but the most worthy strikes, and strike funds were burdened by requests for donations, almost every union in the city responded generously.²⁴ In contrast, the Working Women's Association's reaction was at best lukewarm.

Mullaney's comments suggest that she was keenly aware of the social gap between herself and the members and was unwilling to pretend to those she addressed that there was a basis for common interests. Accompanied by Augusta Lewis and Alexander Troup, Mullaney observed that she came before them to request contributions because she "understood that they were an association of working-women." But, she continued, "as she looked around them: she could tell that they were not the working-women whom she had been accustomed to see. She had to work all day in the shop, and this she did not think, judging from their appearance, that they did."²⁵ Lewis's letter to the NLU about the outcome of the meeting agreed with Mullaney's perceptions. She said that "Although the society comprises many wealthy ladies, they raised \$30 for the Laundresses of Troy. . . . As a society, either the want of knowledge or the want of sense . . . renders them as a workingwoman's association, very inefficient."²⁶ Identifying with the labor movement, Mullaney would have voted with Lewis and other delegates who vociferously objected to seating Stanton.

Mullaney's motivations for visiting the association were probably mixed. Her primary goal was instrumental, to solicit contributions from women whom she believed were in a position to help the laundresses' union to win their strike. Yet she visited the organization because she had reason to believe that they sympathized with the cause

of working women and shared some of the interests of trade unionists. Although divisions between Mullaney and suffragists were deeper than those between suffragists and women compositors, as a trade unionist Mullaney shared middle-class reformers' belief that wage earners could escape the wage system by becoming small entrepreneurs. Less than a year later, Anthony described her approval of the laundresses' goal of achieving independence from employers. In February 1870, when she had to spend a few hours in Troy waiting for a train, Anthony visited the Collar Laundry Union's cooperative collar factory and laundry. She reported that she met Kate Mullaney and several other young Irish women, most likely Ann Tellers, the union's secretary, Sarah McQuillan, treasurer, and Esther Keegan. They worked in "an upper room of a large building" and were dressed in "the simplest calico." Although they earned "barely enough to cover their rent . . . they were trying to establish the fact, that women can be employers." In a speech at Cooper Institute she described her heartfelt sympathy for this working-women's venture. "I have not had my heart stirred for long years with the terrible fact of the struggle that women have to get a place and position beside men in business, as by the story and efforts of these three girls."²⁷

Despite Mullaney's recognition of class differences, she kept in touch with suffragists who agreed with trade unionists that like men, women wage earners could escape wage slavery by transforming themselves into small entrepreneurs who were not dependent on wages for their livelihood. In April of the same year Mullaney optimistically wrote to *The Revolution* that the "girls" hope "to proceed on a purely business basis, by doing the work . . . themselves." They plan to "buy up all the stock and hold it for their own benefit." Already they had "made good progress toward securing . . . needed capital, \$10,000." For Mullaney and the other women who managed the cooperative, becoming employers was consistent with their commitment to trade unionism.²⁸ Since Mullaney identified primarily as a worker rather than as a woman, the interests Mullaney shared with suffragists were related less to what they had in common as women, than to trade unionists' and some suffragists' shared concerns about wage earners.

Anthony's description of her visit to the collar laundresses' cooperative reveals that this shared concern was also the basis for their differences. The principle guiding Anthony's beliefs was that working women's disadvantages stemmed from the status they shared with all women. In a speech in the 1870s, Anthony described the Collar Laundry Union as the best-organized women's union she knew, and

Susan B. Anthony praises Mullaney's Union

compared her view of reasons for the failure of the union's 1869 strike with Mullaney's explanation. When she visited the cooperative collar factory she asked the "bright young Irish girl" who was president of the union, "Do you not think if you had been 500 carpenters or 500 masons, you would have succeeded?" Mullaney agreed with Anthony's suggestion that if they were men, they would have won the conflict. Replying "Certainly," Mullaney described the strike of two hundred bricklayers who "gained every point with their employers" the previous year. Continuing to question Mullaney, Anthony asked, "What could have made the difference? Their 200 were but a fraction of that trade, while your 500 absolutely controlled yours." Mullaney's answer revealed that she was not thinking of differences related to gender, but differences in collar laundresses' and bricklayers' circumstances as workers facing employers and their middle-class allies. She replied that "It was because the editors ridiculed and denounced us." Yet she was also aware that employers treated them as women who, ideally, should be supported by a male provider. Mullaney added that their employers said that since our wages were "better than those of any other working women, except teachers, . . . if we weren't satisfied, we had better go and get married." When Anthony asked why the newspapers ridiculed the collar laundresses, but not the bricklayers, after several moments of careful thought Mullaney replied that "It must have been because our employers bribed the editors."²⁹ For Mullaney, the strike failed not primarily because of the laundresses' vulnerability as women, but because of employers' strategy of controlling the press.

Anthony's analysis of Mullaney's answer emphasizes suffragists' belief that the ballot was the best means for working women to improve their condition. Pointing out that this young woman never thought to compare her union with the bricklayers, Anthony not only condescendingly implied that Mullaney did not think but also that she did not see that they lost the strike because of their disadvantaged position as women. She argued that in the case of the bricklayers' strike "no editor, either Democrat or Republican" would have accepted a bribe because of men's influence as voters. Any editor "would have known that if he denounced or ridiculed those men, not only they but all the Trades' union men of the city at the next election would vote solidly against the nominees advocated by that editor." She continued, "If those collar laundry women had been voters, they would have held, in that little city of Troy, the 'balance of political power.'" She concluded, "My friends, the condition of those collar laundry women but represents the utter helplessness of disenfranchisement."³⁰

In contrast to the typesetters and to collar workers' indirect rejection of the cause Anthony represented, delegates from the Massachusetts' Daughters and Knights of St. Crispin endorsed Anthony's claim to represent working women. Women shoe workers were represented by Martha Wallbridge, the self-supporting Stoneham shoe stitcher who succeeded Anthony as chair of the NLU's committee on female labor. Recognizing that some male delegates represented reform organizations whose members were not wage earners, Wallbridge pointed out that if Anthony's "claims were" rejected because they "were not sufficiently valid," then there should "be an investigation into the equally invalid claims of male delegates . . . some of whom she knew were not fully qualified." Her solid support from male trade unionists included Walsh whose fears about women's employment did not prevent him from voting in favor of the committee on female labor's resolution. He contrasted Anthony with Wallbridge, whom he described as a "bona fide working woman." Massachusetts' Crispin Samuel P. Cummings seconded Wallbridge's endorsement of Anthony as representative.³¹

Crispin support of Anthony was significant because the circumstances that discredited Anthony as working-women's ally represented a turning point in Anthony's relationship not only with Lewis and women typographers, whom she helped to organize, but also with the nation's labor movement. Although class differences divided suffragists and the women Wallbridge represented, they shared some aspects of Anthony's position. As chair of the NLU's committee on female labor in 1869, Wallbridge advocated equal pay for equal work and the opening of "all avenues of labor" to all women equally.³² This argument probably reflected Wallbridge's employment in an industry in which some skilled jobs were available to women. As a self-supporting woman who understood the benefits of skilled work's good wages and relative security, she had a stake in taking a strong position on women's entry into skilled jobs. Having no direct experience with Anthony's rejection of the interests of women unionists, Wallbridge was more likely than Lewis to be sympathetic to Anthony's goal of increasing opportunities for self-supporting and providing women to enter skilled trades.

Women Crispins were by no means united on suffrage. In January 1872, DOSC members in Lynn heard two different lectures on two consecutive weeks, which took different positions. Mrs. Willard, the prosuffragist second vice president of the NLU, lectured first. Emma Lane, the wife of a Crispin, the DOSC's first national leader, and a well-known New England labor reformer, lectured second. At first,

clusions indicate that for these women at this time and place, class interests were more important than interests shared with women of other social groups.

Documents

Linen and Collar and Cuff Manufacture and the Workingwomen's Union, 1873

When all these sewing processes are at last complete, the collars—and so of other articles, for we are following the fortunes of the collar as a representative of the rest—are transferred to the laundry, where a second series of eleven processes is gone through with, besides the mere transfer.* These are as follows: (1) Washing in suds, to remove the manufacturer's "dressing" from the goods; (2) bleaching, by means of hyperchloride of soda; (3) application of dilute sulphuric acid, to complete the bleaching process; (4) washing in suds, to remove the acid; (5) boiling; (6) rubbing and rinsing; (7) bluing and rolling; (8) starching with thin starch; (9) starching with thick starch; (10) drying; (11) ironing.

These operations are greatly facilitated by the arrangement of fitting up of the different rooms, and by various devices for economizing labor and power. Thus a peculiar formation of the stove for heating irons keeps forty of them hot all the time, with a small average consumption of coal; the order of the tubs used is such as to make the progress of the goods easy through the successive processes, etc. The starch used is not of wheat, but of corn, which is found to be equally efficient, cheaper, and much less disagreeable to the fingers of the operatives. This is a pretty important consideration, for it is found to make the difference between sore fingers and healthy ones,—that is, work or idleness,—besides pain, which is sometimes no small item, as the very agonizing inflammation called felon has occasionally been somewhat frequent among those who work in the starching rooms.

This firm, on the contrary, is well satisfied with that sort of success which is the only really desirable one in business—honest gains from enterprise, industry, and fair dealing. Steady kindness, and at the same time as much strictness as is necessary, keep them popular with their hands, of whom they employ

New York Sun, February 9, 1870; *The Revolution*, February 24, 1870; New York World, March 11, 1870; Nancy Schrom Dye, "Creating a Feminist Alliance: Sisterhood and Class Conflict in the New York Women's Trade Union League, 1902-1914," *Feminist Studies*, 2, No. 2 and 3 (1975), 24-38.

* Reprinted from Horace Greeley et al., *Great Industries of the United States*, J. B.

from five hundred to eight afforded to their operative. Some of those in the establishment more; and it has repeatedly reason, have returned and their new employers nor did of things does not however years ago, a so-called "Work at once went to work to re- fication for the step, since within a few months. A th- facturers, though not orga- to the performances, the N- ground. The demand of if the ill-advised strikers wen- rates, and the Union was

[Note: The firm of George B. Cluett, Brother & Co., later became a national producer of men's shirts, The Arrow Company, a division of Cluett, Peabody, and Co., Inc.]



A "Spicy" Letter from a Workingwoman, 1869

It was my pleasure a few weeks since to visit a real workingwomen's association, the Collar Laundry Union of Troy, New York.* I use the word real to designate it from imaginary workingwomen's associations who theorize, while this organization has proved "that those who would be free themselves must strike the blow!"

For many years past the collar laundries of Troy have employed several hundred women to wash, starch, and iron collars brought fresh from the manufacturer, preparatory to their sale in stores. Summer and winter from dawn to dark sometimes "till midnight, their work was to stand over the washtub, over the ironing table, with furnaces on either side, the thermometer averaging 100° for wages averaging from \$2 to \$3 a week each. Many of those thus employed had aged parents, younger brothers and sisters, and some had their own children, besides themselves, depending on this pittance for an existence. A representation of their necessities and individual appeal for an increase of salary received the usual answer to such demands—"That if dissatisfied there were plenty of women who would be glad to get work at any price." At last that bugbear of capitalists was resorted to, and they formed a trade union, whereby through their own

* Reprinted from the New York Sun, July 5, 1869. Although the letter is not signed, biographical details provide strong evidence that the writer was Augusta Lewis, president of the Women's Typographical Union No. 1 of New York City (organized

Call if you have any more questions on this! KB.
 BILLY MANN
 Room 102
 White House
 for # 202-456-6244

JUL-13-98 MON 18:52 RACHEL D. BLIMEN

exertions and their faithfulness to their organization they have increased their wages to \$8 to \$14 per week by working on an average from twelve to fourteen hours per day. Meantime their employers' profits are \$85 per day. The laundresses' organization is at present in difficulty not of their own seeking. (The cause of the trouble was stated in Tuesday's *Sun*.) The employers are very willing to pay less for small collars, but refuse to pay the increase for large collars. Some [employers] say they will pay the scale provided the Union, which has increased their wages, is dissolved. It will then be in their power to decrease the wages, and the women, justly regarding the union as the mother of their success, refuse the terms. Having been educated as to the knowledge of their true interests by organization, they now desire to take a step higher and form a co-operative laundry, thus becoming their own employers, a form of organized labor to which even the most fastidious cannot object. I am not a resident of Troy, nor a worker or member of the Laundry Union, but I am a workingwoman who has had to work very hard for a very small sum, and my sympathies are ever with those who struggle in poverty to earn an honorable living. It is the duty and interest of every workingman and woman to extend a helping hand to those women of the Collar Laundry Union of Troy. . . . Fathers and mothers whose daughters are sheltered and protected by home and wealth, remember the workingwomen. It is uncertain how long you or your protecting care and wealth will be spared. Neither your daughters nor you know but they might yet have to earn their own living. At eight years of age the writer of this lived in Brooklyn Heights, and attended one of the most aristocratic schools in the City of Churches; a servant carried her books to schools, but at the age of seventeen she carried her lunch to work, and stood behind the counter of a Broadway store from eight in the morning 'til eight in the evening for \$2 a week, and was asked by the forewoman: "Why not dress more stylishly; well-dressed saleswomen commanded better custom, and gave an air of dignity to the store." With such remuneration and such remarks, who dare deny that prostitution is at a premium. Yes, and will be until women are paid a living price for their labor. Let those who contribute to Magdalen Societies to reclaim the fallen do that which will prevent the necessity for such institutions, and wherever they see women striving to better their condition give them substantial aid.

Others will be encouraged by their success, and be stimulated by their example to seek to elevate their own condition, as the female cap makers of this city are now doing.

Whatever the evils of society are, let us not contribute to them by refusing to do the good that lies in our power at the present moment. In thus elevating one class of workingwomen, the good results will be felt by every other, and in future let us hope that when, from choice or necessity, women are compelled to earn their own living, it will not be a reproach but an honor to be, as I am.

- A Working Woman -

9 *Chinese Immigrant Women in Nineteenth-Century California*

Lucie Cheng Hirata



Chinese woman. Courtesy of United Press International.

Moll Mullaney

VEONA'S NOTES

Women of America: A History

- Collar Laundry Union of Troy: at least 400 members at peak, lasted almost 6 years
- Many of the working women were sole supporter of their family; 1865: Kate Mullaney was supporting herself as well as her mother, Bridget, age 55, and two younger sisters.
- working conditions involved strenuous labor: laundresses stood on their feet almost all of their 11 to 14 hours of labor: in the summer, it was so hot that they had to "forgo their work for 2 or 3 weeks at a time from sheer inability to perform it"; worked from dawn till dark, sometimes till midnight
- increased wages from \$2-\$3 a week to \$8-\$14 a week (average of 12-14 hours a day)
- * - Kate Mullaney was aware that it was important for working women to organize independently from men: offered to send laundry union members from Troy to NY City to help NY City working women: help them organize, speak up at meetings and take up leadership roles
- success of laundresses due to fact that they organized themselves primarily as workers rather than women
- belief "that those who would be free themselves must strike the blow"

"women helping women"

Century of Struggle

- 1866 union was able to donate \$1,000 to Iron Molders Union: as a result, 1869 Mullaney chosen to be assistant secretary for the National Labor Union

Kate Mullaney Anecdotes

* Source: I spoke with Carole Turbin, author of *Working Women of Collar City: Gender, Class, and Community in Troy, New York, 1864-86*. She plans on attending the HRC event.

- Paraphrase of anecdote: When a newspaper article claimed that there weren't enough women in New York City with the ability to be labor organizers, Mullaney responded, you show me the women, I'll turn them into organizers. . . And she likely did. She spoke to a group of working women, the Working Women's Association, with Susan B. Anthony and she offered to send Troy organizers to New York to train that city's women.

- When Mullaney addressed the WWA, she made clear the class difference between working women and suffragettes. Nevertheless, she did not reject the cause of women's suffrage, and in fact identified with Anthony as a woman.

----> Turbin's account:

Kate Mullaney's statements about the reluctance of working women to organize in other cities emphasizes her beliefs that as trade unionists, Troy's collar laundresses were men's equals. The writer of the article on Mullaney that appeared during the bricklayers' strike suggested that the organization of New York City's working women lagged behind Troy's because women were not confident of their own abilities to be "presidents and secretaries" of unions. In defense of her sisters, Mullaney responded that "there are numbers of ladies connected with the laundry union who were just as competent as any gentlemen." Realizing that this was not the case for other women, she offered to send laundry union members to NYC to help women organize. If "ladies from NY were not competent," she would "send some from Troy and pay their expenses until such time as they were able to educate some of their own." (P. 125)

- Susan B. Anthony visited the union cooperative Mullaney helped found and later offered high praise of these working women.

----> Turbin's account:

In February 1870, when she had to spend a few hours in Troy waiting for a train, Susan B. Anthony visited the Collar Laundry Union's cooperative collar factory and laundry. She reported that she met Kate Mullaney and several other young Irish women ... They worked in "an upper room of a large building" and were dressed in "the simplest calico." Although they earned "barely enough to cover their rent... they were trying to establish the fact, that women can be employers." In a speech at Cooper Institute (NYC) Anthony described her heart-felt sympathy for this working-women's venture. "I have not had my heart stirred for long years with the terrible fact of the struggle that women have to get a place and position beside men in business, as by the story and efforts of these three girls." (P. 143)

- A later women's union in Troy named itself after Joan of Arc. Turbin explains why Joan of Arc was an appropriate symbol, and we might be able to make a similar remark. E.g., "Over a century ago, the women of Troy took as their symbol Joan of Arc, a woman of humble origins..."

----> Turbin's account:

[Note: This paragraph concerns the Joan of Arc Assembly of the Knights of Labor, a local organization of a national labor organization, whose members were largely women collar workers. Organized in the 1880s, the local played a major role in the collar women's strike of

1886. Kate Mullaney herself is not mentioned in this strike, but more recent research suggests that she was still active in Troy's labor community.]

Joan of Arc was an appropriate patron for the organization of Troy's Irish collar women. First and foremost, Joan of Arc was a woman exceptionally powerful in worldly affairs and in favor with God. She was of humble origins and knew all the skills of women of her day. Although, in worldly terms, she was a woman in a subordinate position to men, she acted with courage and conviction in the secular world, and she was not afraid to confront men of the highest authority. Joan of Arc conflicted with leaders of state, dressed in men's clothes, and led armies of men. In the end, she clashed with representatives of the church who approved of the acts that condemned her. Moreover, her cause was not only justice but nationalism. Joan of Arc's story echoed most Irish immigrant's nationalist sentiments, especially their hostility toward England's aggressive military strategies. Just as the Irish sought to end England's domination of Ireland, Joan of Arc led French armies in order to prevent the English from capturing the French throne. The Irish ironers and starchers who chose Joan of Arc as the patron of their organization, affirmed their own piety, and called on the power that Joan of Arc represented. They hoped to benefit from her protection and her help achieving their worldly goals as working women. (p. 173)

- In the 1870s an organization of men workers told an organization of women's workers, the Working Women's Protective Organization, that working women should not bother with trying to get the vote because they shouldn't have it. The working women responded, we will bother because we should have it.

- This is a paraphrase. Also, it is not clear that the working women of Troy ever took concrete steps in support of women's suffrage.

- The WPO was the equivalent of a state-wide labor organization which included representatives of local unions, including Kate Mullaney and other working women from Troy.

- In 1886, a group of Troy working women showed their feistiness, sarcasm, and humor when a reporter pestered them for an interview. Not wanting to discuss their cause with the press, they responded, "We're all in love with our boss. There's your interview."

Troy, NY: Kate Mullany (or Mullaney) House

* We don't have a definitive spelling. Both ways are used in different sources, with Mullaney appearing more often in today's newspapers and Mullany being used on National Historic Landmark application information.

The House and the Event

- The house continues to be a private residence with three apartments just as it was in Mullany's time. Though recently designated a National Historic Landmark, the house has yet to receive a plaque. Since, as a private residence, this landmark does not need the sort of restoration effort necessary at many other stops, the focus of the event will be giving the plaque and recognizing the historical significance of the Kate Mullany House.

Kate Mullany

Born in Ireland around 1845, Kate Mullany immigrated to Troy, NY with her parents sometime before 1850. As a teenager, Mullany went to work in the laundry industry to bring more income into the house. (It is believed her mother was too old to hold a job and her father had moved out, perhaps to find a job elsewhere--whatever the case, he died in 1864).

Mullany worked in a new area of the laundry industry, washing collars. This area developed when a Troy housewife, Hannah Lord Montague, invented the detachable collar after being frustrated that she had to wash her husband's entire shirts when only the collars were dirty.

At the age of 19, Mullaney organized 200 women and formed the Collar Laundry Union, the first long-lasting* all-women union in the nation. (*In the 1840s women factory workers in Lowell and elsewhere had organized themselves in individual factories to protest specific conditions. However, when the issues were resolved, the unions dissolved). She served as president of the union and lobbied for higher wages, shorter hours, and better working conditions, as workers were often scalded by laundry machines. In February 1864, the union went on strike, demanding a 25% increase in wages. Less than a week later, their demands were met. Shortly after the wage increase, Mullany purchased the house that has now been made a landmark, presumably using her new wages. Over the next five years Mullany's continued lobbying increased women's wages to near parity with men's wages in Troy.

Calling Mullany "one of the smartest and most energetic women in America," William H. Sylvis, president of the National Labor Union, appointed Mullany second vice president of the organization in 1868. However, because the first VP was also from NY, Mullany had to be assigned another position, and she was made assistant secretary. This made her the first female officer of a national union.

In 1869, there was renewed tension and another strike failed to resolve the issues. Hence, Mullany and her colleagues started their own cooperative laundry to compete with their bosses. Susan B. Anthony visited the cooperative in 1870 and noted: "Although they earned barely enough to cover their rent, they were trying to establish the fact that women can be employers." She added: "I have not had my heart [so] stirred for long years with the terrible fact of the struggle that women have to get a place and position beside men in business, as by the story and efforts of these three girls." (The other women likely being any or all of the following: Ann Tellers, formerly the union's secretary; Sarah McQuillan, former treasurer; and Esther Keegan, former vice president and the most prominent of the these three). Later that year Mullany wrote

a letter to Anthony's newspaper, "The Revolution."

The union was dissolved in 1869, and the cooperative struggled along until 1870, possibly 1872. Kate Mullany spent the rest of her life (with a few exceptions) in the same house. She died in 1906 and was buried in a family plot, with no individual gravestone, at St. Peter's Cemetery, not far from her house.

Significance of Kate Mullany

- This shows another side of the historic preservation movement, highlighting a site that reflects the lives of everyday Americans.
- The site highlights both women's history and labor history. In fact, Mullany seems to have identified more as a laborer than as a woman, and her agenda differed greatly from that of suffragists like Susan B. Anthony--although they did find common ground as noted above.

The Emma Willard School

Troy is also home to the Emma Willard School. Originally named the Troy Female Seminary, the school was founded in 1821 by Emma Willard. Willard founded her first school in Middlebury, VT in 1814, moved on to Waterford, NY in 1819, and set down in Troy in 1821 where the city raised \$4,000 in taxes to support her new school.

The Troy Female Seminary was the first school in the nation to provide young women with an education comparable to that of college-educated young men--which was significant because at this point women were barred from colleges. While other girls academies limited their curricula to "female arts" like conversational French and embroidery, Willard's school taught mathematics, science, history, foreign languages, and literature courses. The school stood as evidence against those who were skeptical that women were as capable as men of comprehending advanced and difficult subjects. The seminary's first class enrolled 90 girls from across the country, and throughout the years the school has graduated such luminaries as Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1832) and Jane Fonda.

In 1895 the school adopted its current name and built 3 new buildings. In 1910, with the aid of a gift from alumna Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage, the school moved to its current location and the old buildings were later occupied by Russell Sage College.

Other Troy History

- See the Millennium notes on Uncle Sam and a WPA mural.

TROY, NY: Kate Mullaney House

Description Blue painted brick duplex with three apartments in each. Currently private residences.

Historical Significance Kate Mullaney House has recently been made a National Historic Landmark which is still to receive plaque.

Site is also part of an area National Parks Service Labor History Theme Study (NHL by theme). Mullaney was an early president of first long-lasting (8 years, non-strike specific) all-female union (Collar Laundry Union) which managed to achieve almost parity with men's wages. She was also the first female officer of a national union. Her house was bought with money from 25% wage increase after successful strike.

Incidentally, the detachable men's collar was invented by another Troy woman, Hannah Lord Montague, when she got tired of laundering her husband's shirts when only the collar needed cleaning.

Other Troy women's history tidbits. Regional Friehofer's bakery was established in Troy when Mr. Friehofer noted the Kate Mullaney's of Troy going off to work and thought it would be a good place for a bakery because women didn't have time to make bread. Also, Troy is home of Emma Willard School for girls which was first school to teach girls subjects such as math and geography. Jane Fonda is a graduate. When Emma Willard School moved buildings its original buildings were taken over by newly established Russell Sage College named for a rich industrialist who didn't like women and wasn't the least bit charitable to widows and orphans. His widow took his money and established a college for women and named it after him.

Troy is also the home of the national icon "Uncle Sam." In the early 1800s, Sam Wilson, a meatpacker and Army beef contractor in War of 1812, had a meat stamp that said "U.S. Beef" which was jokingly interpreted as "Uncle Sam's Beef." Thus the character of Uncle Sam was born. There is an aluminum statue of Uncle Sam in Troy.

There may well be a WPA mural "Rip Van Wrinkle" "Legends of the Hudson" by Waldo Pierce in Troy.

Preservation Needs House site is a private residence but giving of plaque and recognition of the historical significance would be the focus.

Budget/Funding Sources/Local Involvement U.S. Rep McNulty has requested a visit and Sen. Moynihan who has a particular interest in historic preservation has long urged NY folks to focus on "the Irish mill worker."

Contact Rachel Bliven, 518-673-1045, RB H 518-283-6353 and RiverSpark

Working Women of Collar City

*Gender, Class, and Community
in Troy, New York, 1864–86*

CAROLE TURBIN

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS
Urbana and Chicago

interrupted a speech by Mrs. Daniels, a suffragist, who briefly mentioned the ballot. Walsh "sprang upon the platform" and said to the chairman, "I think we did not come here to discuss politics. I don't want my wife to become a politician." When the association's president and voices from the floor asked Walsh to leave, he "disappeared from the platform," and Mrs. Daniels continued her address. Antisuffrage views of Walsh and others contrast with delegates like Sylvie, for whom distinctions between women's and men's interests and the interests of the laboring and manufacturing classes were less sharp. This suggests that antisuffrage delegates' objections to granting women the basis for independent political action was related to a form of class consciousness that excluded perceptions of shared rights.¹⁸

Anthony's response emphasized her rejection of trade union principles, conveyed her goal of providing women with skilled work, and pointed out the contradictions in Walsh's argument that women should be supported by men. Walsh "seems to think that all women should be married. But, unfortunately, you men do not do your duty. All women are not or can not be married." Most must "go out to the world and support themselves" as soon as they "come of age. . . . What a contradiction that gives to the theory of some men that all women are supported by some man." She argued that women whom she urged to take striking typesetters' jobs "had no fathers, brothers, or husbands to support them." These women were either "on the streets looking in vain for work or working at 25 or 30 cents per day"; they "had nothing before them but starvation or prostitution. . . . What are we to do?" she continued. "Shall we let these women starve in garrets, or do worse, when the selfishness of employers in the printing or other business seems to open the way to them to honorable independence? How can I say to them, go down to destruction rather than interfere with the interests of certain men? I would like to ask the typographical union how many girls they have . . . educated thoroughly in the art of printing, or how many printing offices in New York have done so?"¹⁹ On one level, Anthony was correct to associate unions with male interests and to advocate opening skilled trades to women. Despite official support, male trade unionists allied with women only under certain circumstances and objected to women entering male occupations. But just as Walsh missed Anthony's point about women's need for employment, Anthony missed the argument of Lewis's and other women trade unionists' that self-supporting working women could best be helped through unity with other wage earners—male and female.

Women trade unionists were divided over the issue of Anthony's eligibility. Augusta Lewis explicitly rejected Anthony's claim to represent working women at the congress. Although absent from the congress, Lewis sent a letter describing irreconcilable class divisions within the Working Women's Association and argued that the organization no longer represented working women. The letter said that at first the association included "over one hundred workingwomen, but as there was nothing practical done to ameliorate their condition, they gradually withdrew." When "wealthy women" who were present asked working women rather than "wealthy officers" to resign in order to preserve a quorum, Lewis and another typesetter, Susie Johns, decided to accept the suggestion that they resign as officers. A postscript suggested a great deal in a few words about Anthony's determination to be a delegate despite open conflicts with women typographers. Lewis wrote that she "sent word" to Anthony that she "would, in all probability not be received [as a delegate]." She added: "She will go, however."²⁰ Lewis's letter to the *Sun* compared the Collar Laundry Union to the Working Women's Association. "It was my pleasure a few weeks since to visit a real workingwomen's association, the Collar Laundry Union of Troy, New York. . . . I use the word 'real' to distinguish it from imaginary workingwomen's associations which theorize, while this organization has proved 'that those who would be free themselves must strike the blow.'"²¹

Although Lewis supported Mullaney's view of Anthony and the Working Women's Association, her relationship to the suffrage cause was different than Mullaney's. Unlike Mullaney, Lewis participated in debates about the relevance of the ballot for working women. At the association's first meetings, women compositors differed on the extent to which woman suffrage should be a goal of the organization. In a discussion over the association's name, women compositors disagreed with Stanton's argument that the organization should be called the Workingwoman's Suffrage Association. Stanton maintained that the "shortest way to obtain justice for workingwomen is to get the ballot for them." Women say that they want bread, not the ballot, but the "right to earn bread is so mixed up with the right to vote, that it is impossible to earn the one fairly without the other."²² Lewis argued against including the term suffrage in the organization's name on practical grounds, as well as on principle. Lewis could ally with suffragists because she believed it to be "right that women should have the ballot." But working women would be discouraged from joining if suffrage appeared in the title because they associated the term with "short hair, bloomers, and other vagaries." She concluded that

working women's first aim was "to get fairly paid for their work. . . . After the association is formed, if a majority desires it, I believe in the girls getting together and discussing politics. But I think other things need attention now."²³ Lewis and other compositors supported woman suffrage in principle, but as working women it was not their first priority.

Several incidents occurring shortly before the 1869 NLU meeting suggest that despite Mullaney's absence from the 1868 convention, her conflicts with Anthony were deeper than Lewis's, and she had little or no interest in suffrage, not even as a secondary goal. In July 1869, when Mullaney and Esther Keegan solicited contributions to their strike fund from the city's prosperous trade unions, Mullaney also visited the Working Women's Association. Since Anthony was on a speaking tour, she was absent from the meeting, whose membership by this time was entirely middle class. In a period when trade unionists frowned on all but the most worthy strikes, and strike funds were burdened by requests for donations, almost every union in the city responded generously.²⁴ In contrast, the Working Women's Association's reaction was at best lukewarm.

Mullaney's comments suggest that she was keenly aware of the social gap between herself and the members and was unwilling to pretend to those she addressed that there was a basis for common interests. Accompanied by Augusta Lewis and Alexander Troup, Mullaney observed that she came before them to request contributions because she "understood that they were an association of working-women." But, she continued, "as she looked around them: she could tell that they were not the working-women whom she had been accustomed to see. She had to work all day in the shop, and this she did not think, judging from their appearance, that they did."²⁵ Lewis's letter to the NLU about the outcome of the meeting agreed with Mullaney's perceptions. She said that "Although the society comprises many wealthy ladies, they raised \$30 for the Laundresses of Troy. . . . As a society, either the want of knowledge or the want of sense . . . renders them as a workingwoman's association, very inefficient."²⁶ Identifying with the labor movement, Mullaney would have voted with Lewis and other delegates who vociferously objected to seating Stanton.

Mullaney's motivations for visiting the association were probably mixed. Her primary goal was instrumental, to solicit contributions from women whom she believed were in a position to help the laundresses' union to win their strike. Yet she visited the organization because she had reason to believe that they sympathized with the cause

of working women and shared some of the interests of trade unionists. Although divisions between Mullaney and suffragists were deeper than those between suffragists and women compositors, as a trade unionist Mullaney shared middle-class reformers' belief that wage earners could escape the wage system by becoming small entrepreneurs. Less than a year later, Anthony described her approval of the laundresses' goal of achieving independence from employers. In February 1870, when she had to spend a few hours in Troy waiting for a train, Anthony visited the Collar Laundry Union's cooperative collar factory and laundry. She reported that she met Kate Mullaney and several other young Irish women, most likely Ann Tellers, the union's secretary, Sarah McQuillan, treasurer, and Esther Keegan. They worked in "an upper room of a large building" and were dressed in "the simplest calico." Although they earned "barely enough to cover their rent . . . they were trying to establish the fact, that women can be employers." In a speech at Cooper Institute she described her heartfelt sympathy for this working-women's venture. "I have not had my heart stirred for long years with the terrible fact of the struggle that women have to get a place and position beside men in business, as by the story and efforts of these three girls."²⁷

Despite Mullaney's recognition of class differences, she kept in touch with suffragists who agreed with trade unionists that like men, women wage earners could escape wage slavery by transforming themselves into small entrepreneurs who were not dependent on wages for their livelihood. In April of the same year Mullaney optimistically wrote to *The Revolution* that the "girls" hope "to proceed on a purely business basis, by doing the work . . . themselves." They plan to "buy up all the stock and hold it for their own benefit." Already they had "made good progress toward securing . . . needed capital, \$10,000." For Mullaney and the other women who managed the cooperative, becoming employers was consistent with their commitment to trade unionism.²⁸ Since Mullaney identified primarily as a worker rather than as a woman, the interests Mullaney shared with suffragists were related less to what they had in common as women, than to trade unionists' and some suffragists' shared concerns about wage earners.

Anthony's description of her visit to the collar laundresses' cooperative reveals that this shared concern was also the basis for their differences. The principle guiding Anthony's beliefs was that working women's disadvantages stemmed from the status they shared with all women. In a speech in the 1870s, Anthony described the Collar Laundry Union as the best-organized women's union she knew, and

compared her view of reasons for the failure of the union's 1869 strike with Mullaney's explanation. When she visited the cooperative collar factory she asked the "bright young Irish girl" who was president of the union, "Do you not think if you had been 500 carpenters or 500 masons, you would have succeeded?" Mullaney agreed with Anthony's suggestion that if they were men, they would have won the conflict. Replying "Certainly," Mullaney described the strike of two hundred bricklayers who "gained every point with their employers" the previous year. Continuing to question Mullaney, Anthony asked, "What could have made the difference? Their 200 were but a fraction of that trade, while your 500 absolutely controlled yours." Mullaney's answer revealed that she was not thinking of differences related to gender, but differences in collar laundresses' and bricklayers' circumstances as workers facing employers and their middle-class allies. She replied that "It was because the editors ridiculed and denounced us." Yet she was also aware that employers treated them as women who, ideally, should be supported by a male provider. Mullaney added that their employers said that since our wages were "better than those of any other working women, except teachers, . . . if we weren't satisfied, we had better go and get married." When Anthony asked why the newspapers ridiculed the collar laundresses, but not the bricklayers, after several moments of careful thought Mullaney replied that "It must have been because our employers bribed the editors."²⁹ For Mullaney, the strike failed not primarily because of the laundresses' vulnerability as women, but because of employers' strategy of controlling the press.

Anthony's analysis of Mullaney's answer emphasizes suffragists' belief that the ballot was the best means for working women to improve their condition. Pointing out that this young woman never thought to compare her union with the bricklayers, Anthony not only condescendingly implied that Mullaney did not think but also that she did not see that they lost the strike because of their disadvantaged position as women. She argued that in the case of the bricklayers' strike "no editor, either Democrat or Republican" would have accepted a bribe because of men's influence as voters. Any editor "would have known that if he denounced or ridiculed those men, not only they but all the Trades' union men of the city at the next election would vote solidly against the nominees advocated by that editor." She continued, "If those collar laundry women had been voters, they would have held, in that little city of Troy, the 'balance of political power.'" She concluded, "My friends, the condition of those collar laundry women but represents the utter helplessness of disenfranchisement."³⁰

In contrast to the typesetters and to collar workers' indirect rejection of the cause Anthony represented, delegates from the Massachusetts' Daughters and Knights of St. Crispin endorsed Anthony's claim to represent working women. Women shoe workers were represented by Martha Wallbridge, the self-supporting Stoneham shoe stitcher who succeeded Anthony as chair of the NLU's committee on female labor. Recognizing that some male delegates represented reform organizations whose members were not wage earners, Wallbridge pointed out that if Anthony's "claims were" rejected because they "were not sufficiently valid," then there should "be an investigation into the equally invalid claims of male delegates . . . some of whom she knew were not fully qualified." Her solid support from male trade unionists included Walsh whose fears about women's employment did not prevent him from voting in favor of the committee on female labor's resolution. He contrasted Anthony with Wallbridge, whom he described as a "bona fide working woman." Massachusetts's Crispin Samuel P. Cummings seconded Wallbridge's endorsement of Anthony as representative.³¹

Crispin support of Anthony was significant because the circumstances that discredited Anthony as working-women's ally represented a turning point in Anthony's relationship not only with Lewis and women typographers, whom she helped to organize, but also with the nation's labor movement. Although class differences divided suffragists and the women Wallbridge represented, they shared some aspects of Anthony's position. As chair of the NLU's committee on female labor in 1869, Wallbridge advocated equal pay for equal work and the opening of "all avenues of labor" to all women equally.³² This argument probably reflected Wallbridge's employment in an industry in which some skilled jobs were available to women. As a self-supporting woman who understood the benefits of skilled work's good wages and relative security, she had a stake in taking a strong position on women's entry into skilled jobs. Having no direct experience with Anthony's rejection of the interests of women unionists, Wallbridge was more likely than Lewis to be sympathetic to Anthony's goal of increasing opportunities for self-supporting and providing women to enter skilled trades.

Women Crispins were by no means united on suffrage. In January 1872, DOSC members in Lynn heard two different lectures on two consecutive weeks, which took different positions. Mrs. Willard, the prosuffragist second vice president of the NLU, lectured first. Emma Lane, the wife of a Crispin, the DOSC's first national leader, and a well-known New England labor reformer, lectured second. At first,

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The Times Union (Albany, NY)

January 19, 1998, Monday, ONE STAR EDITION

SECTION: CAPITAL REGION, Pg. B1

LENGTH: 1000 words

HEADLINE: Labor leader's home honored

BYLINE: TIM O'BRIEN; Staff writer Troy A young Irish immigrant, daughter of a widowed mother, Kate Mullaney had to work to support herself and her siblings for 12 to 14 hours a day, doing the sweaty work of a 19th-century Collar City laundress.

HIGHLIGHT:

Kate Mullaney's house is headed for national historic designation

BODY:

But it wasn't the starch she put into the shirts that secured her place in history; it was the starch in her character that led her to become the leader of the first all-women union in the nation -- and the first woman elected to office in a national union.

Today, the modest three-story brick home at 350 Eighth St. where Mullaney lived is heading for designation as a National Historic Landmark. The action recently received approval from a nominating committee and, after minor revisions, will head for the desk of U.S. Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt for approval.

Mullaney's home was nominated after a study of national labor history aimed at honoring working Americans.

"There are very few National Historic Landmark sites that are for working people," said Rachel B. Bliven, a historian who prepared the application for the Mullaney home. "Kate Mullaney is very important as a working woman of the 19th century. She's also important as a labor organizer."

As a young teenager in the mid-1800s, it's believed Mullaney went to work at one of the many laundry factories in Troy because her mother was too old to hold a job. About that time a new spinoff line of laundry industry work was emerging with creation of the detachable collar, invented by Hannah Lord Montague, a Troy housewife fed up with washing her husband's shirts.

At the age of 19, Mullaney organized 200 women and became the first president of the Collar Laundry Union, soon recognized as "the only bona fide female union in the country."

At issue were low wages, long working hours and working conditions related to the new starching machine, which cut prices for starching in half, but also often scalded its operators.

In February 1864, the collar workers went on strike, demanding a 25 percent increase in wages. The strike lasted less than a week, and the workers won.

The Times Union, January 19, 1998

During the next five years, Mullaney continued to lead the union, getting wages increased to \$ 10 to \$ 12 a week. Meanwhile, other non-unionized women were earning only \$ 7 while men received \$ 13.50.

In 1868, William H. Sylvis, president of the National Labor Union, appointed Mullaney assistant secretary of that organization.

'We now have a recognized officer from the female side of the house -- one of the smartest and most energetic women in America,' Sylvis said in his closing convention address. '... From the great work which she has already done, I think it not unlikely that we may in the future have delegates representing 300,000 working women.'

By 1869, collar manufacturers had joined forces to try to drive the union out of existence. To counter the move, Mullaney and her colleagues started their own cooperative laundry, but local manufacturers prevented out-of-town collar makers from supplying them with work.

Mullaney then went even further and launched a small collar and cuff factory of her own.

Visiting the cooperative, suffragist Susan B. Anthony once described Mullaney as 'a bright Irish girl' working 'in an upper room of a large building and dressed in the simplest calico.'

'Although they earned barely enough to cover their rent, they were trying to establish the fact that women can be employers,' Anthony wrote.

Though the collar union eventually dissolved, the movement among collar workers was rekindled in 1886. Mullaney, however, did not take part this time around, and her life after that was largely out of the public eye.

She died in 1906 and is buried in a family plot -- with no individual gravestone -- at St. Peter's Cemetery, not far from her longtime home.

Paul F. Cole, secretary-treasurer of the New York State AFL-CIO, said there is a growing effort to find historic sites that reflect everyday Americans' lives.

'There has been an increasing interest in social history, the history of ordinary Americans,' added Cole, a former member of the National Parks Service Advisory Board. 'Kate Mullaney is very important because she was one of the very first, if not the first, woman to head a union of any size or importance. She's important from a labor union standpoint and from a women's movement standpoint.'

Mullaney's home, located just off Hoosick Street, is in a neighborhood where the buildings are largely unchanged from the last century. The house has three apartments within it just as it did back when Mullaney's family rented some of them to generate extra income.

Mary Lou McGuirk has owned the property for 25 years.

'I think it's great she's finally getting some recognition,' said McGuirk, who learned of her property's historic past only recently as the application

The Times Union, January 19, 1998

for landmark status was being prepared. "I had no idea at all. This is all brand new to us. I think it's pretty nice. I'm hoping there will be some grants because the house does need some work."

Harry Butowsky, a senior historian with the National Park Service, worked on the application. Late last year, the home's nomination was approved by the service's Advisory Board, though it recommended a more detailed bibliography be completed before submission to Babbitt for approval.

"It's a recognition that the site is important in the history of America," Butowsky said. "Kate Mullaney is an early example of a woman labor leader. She is a person of importance in the history of the United States. I was glad to get some recognition for Kate Mullaney, a poor Irish working girl."

The Hudson Mohawk Industrial Gateway hopes to use the site's designation to help put together an exhibition on worker life and organization in the 19th century.

Linda Tremblay, director of the Hudson Mohawk Urban Cultural Park Commission, said it is possible the National Park Service could offer to buy the house.

Once approved, Butowsky said the house would be eligible for a brass plaque denoting its place in history. It would be a small marker to honor the life and efforts of a young immigrant who helped change her corner of the world.

GRAPHIC: PAUL D. KNISKERN SR., TIMES UNION 19TH-CENTURY Troy labor leader Kate Mullaney's home, 350 Eighth St., is behind the doorway on the right.

LOAD-DATE: January 20, 1998

3RD STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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The Times Union (Albany, NY)

April 3, 1998, Friday, ONE STAR EDITION

SECTION: CAPITAL REGION, Pg. B5

LENGTH: 102 words

HEADLINE: Activist's home becomes landmark

BYLINE: TIM O'BRIEN; Staff writer

BODY:

Troy A home where the founder of the nation's first all-woman union lived has been designated a national landmark.

The modest three-story brick house at 350 Eighth St., one-time home to Collar City laundress Kate Mullaney, is now on the Register of Historic Places, U.S. Rep. Michael McNulty announced Thursday.

In the mid-1800s, Mullaney, 19, an Irish immigrant, organized 200 women and became the first president of the Collar Laundry Union, soon recognized as "the only bona fide female union in the country."

She is buried in St. Peter's Cemetery, near her former home, in a family plot.

LOAD-DATE: April 6, 1998

2ND STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1997 The Hearst Corporation
The Times Union (Albany, NY)

November 7, 1997, Friday, ONE STAR EDITION

SECTION: CAPITAL REGION, Pg. B7

LENGTH: 151 words

HEADLINE: Union founder's home eyed as landmark

BODY:

Troy A Troy home where the founder of the first all-female union lived is nearing designation as a national historic landmark.

The Kate Mullany House at 350 Eighth St. was recommended for the status at the meeting Wednesday of the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Historical Review Committee.

Mullany led a union of workers who made the detachable collars that gave Troy its Collar City nickname. Her leadership won wages of up to \$ 10 to \$ 12 a week while other women were earning only \$ 7 and men \$ 13.50. Mullany's family built the Eighth Street home in 1869.

The historic designation is a project of the Hudson-Mohawk Urban Cultural Park Commission. U.S. Rep. Michael McNulty sponsored legislation for the site to be studied.

Mullany was elected in 1869 to become second vice president of the National Labor Congress, where she helped coordinate national working women's associations.

LOAD-DATE: November 10, 1997

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CENTURY of STRUGGLE

*The Woman's Rights Movement
in the United States*

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souls, and in 1878 it went out of existence; the national union thereafter adopted the policy of chartering no further women's locals but of admitting women to membership on the same basis as men, which corresponded to the practice of the Cigarmakers Union.

Such a policy had pronounced disadvantages. Women remained a minority, and an unwelcome one, in whatever trades and organizations they were admitted to. They had no opportunity to develop their own leaders, or to focus attention on their particular problems, as Miss Lewis had been able to do by virtue of her position as a convention delegate and union official.

There was no solution possible yet for the problem. Attempts by the women to organize among themselves always resulted in failure, even though they sometimes received sporadic assistance from men's unions. The repeated efforts to form unions made by women capmakers, collar and laundry workers, tailoresses, textile operatives, shoebinders and stitchers, umbrella sewers and salesladies, through the Civil War and down to 1873, are evidence not so much of optimism as of the desperation of their plight.¹⁶

The women's union which became best known throughout the labor movement during its brief history was that of the collar makers and laundry workers of Troy, New York, just across the Hudson River from Albany, and the home of Emma Willard's famous seminary. It is unlikely that any of the collar workers enjoyed the benefits of this institution, although the making of separate collars for men's shirts was first carried on in the homes of respectably comfortable ladies who wished to earn some pin money. But the making and laundering of collars became a major industry in Troy. Mrs. Hannah Lord Montagu grew weary of washing and ironing a whole shirt every day because the neck band had become soiled, and made the first detachable collars, and her husband Orlando, a retired Methodist minister, built a profitable business out of his wife's idea.¹⁷

We first learn of the conditions under which women worked in the laundries from a resolution proposed by one of the early unions: long hours were spent in temperatures near one hundred degrees "while the implements with which they work are throwing out an equal amount of heat with increasing intensity."¹⁸ In 1863 they banded together, went on strike, and won a wage increase. Three years later their organization was sufficiently substantial to donate the phenomenal sum of \$1,000 to aid the locked-out and

striking Iron Molders Union, a gesture which neither the union nor its leader, William Sylvis, forgot. In 1868 they won further increases in pay, and their leader, Kate Mullaney, was chosen by Sylvis as assistant secretary of the National Labor Union.

Beyond this fact, and that she was known to Susan Anthony and other outstanding women of the day, we know nothing of what must have been a dynamic and indomitable woman beside the bare facts of the rise of the Laundryworkers Union and its eventual defeat. In the spring of 1869 the collar ironers demanded a raise of one-half, one, one-and-a-half, and two cents per dozen pieces "according to the size of the article"; when their demand was refused they went out on strike again, and the starchers, although making no wage demands themselves, went out with their sister unionists, to the number of 430 in all. The *Troy Whig*, usually liberal in tone and in its support of unions, termed it an "unfortunate and ill-timed strike," but support flowed in from a long list of unions in printing, the building trades, iron work, shoe-making, etc., the individual sums ranging from \$25 to \$250; in one week alone \$558 was received.¹⁹

A mass meeting on the steps of the town court house was addressed by prominent union men; plans were announced for a cooperative laundry which hoped to take the patronage of working people away from the established firms. A picnic held on July 19 was highly successful — the conservative *Troy Times* called it "a monstrous affair" and the *Whig* reported that the streets of neighboring villages were deserted because everyone had gone to the picnic;²⁰ it netted the strikers \$1,200.

Yet on July 23 another large meeting which was to have been addressed by Richard Trelvellick, a national labor leader, was canceled without explanation. Just one week later on July 31 a meeting of the union voted not merely for its members to return to work, but to dissolve the organization.

The most logical explanation for the debacle lies in the sudden death of William Sylvis after a brief illness, which threw the entire labor movement into near panic, and diverted further aid from the collar workers. The employers were not slow to press their unexpected advantage. On July 30, the day before the union meeting, the *Troy Times* ran four prominently displayed advertisements of a new *paper collar*, developed "for the accommodation of the growing demand among our citizens for this celebrated

goods," a threat to the jobs of the laundry workers. The employers also met to confer on a common policy of re-employing the "old hands," many of whom were offered positions in a large new plant.²¹ These onslaughts, coupled with the demoralization resulting from Sylvie's death, had the desired results. The union vanished overnight, and the cooperative laundry it had launched lasted only a few weeks longer.

Another brief chapter in the organization of women workers was written in Lynn, Massachusetts, long the center of the shoe industry. Like Troy, Lynn had not yet been reached by recent waves of immigrant labor; the women who stitched shoe tops, which they had previously done in their own homes but did now in factories, were largely of Irish-Scotch and English extraction but Americans for several generations. Out of their discontent over low pay and long hours developed a short-lived but unique trade union which spread to other growing centers of shoe manufacturing, and became a national organization — the Daughters of St. Crispin, patterned on the union of men shoe workers, the Knights of St. Crispin, and occasionally aided by it.

Like all these earlier women's organizations (with the exception of the Lowell textile operatives) they left no records, and what is known of their history is scattered in the labor press of the period. The founding convention was held on July 28, 1869 (just at the time the Troy collar workers union collapsed), and two Lynn women — Miss Carrie Wilson and Miss Abbie Jacques — were elected president and secretary, respectively. Within a few months the organization had grown to twenty-four lodges, fourteen in Massachusetts, the others scattered in Maine, New York, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, and California.²²

Annual conventions were held until 1872, and two officers were present as delegates at the 1870 convention of the National Labor Union. That year the Daughters of St. Crispin passed a resolution demanding "the same rate of compensation for equal skill displayed, or the same hours of toil, as is paid other laborers in the same branches of business; and we regard a denial of this right by anyone as a usurpation and a fraud." Then, perhaps feeling that such strong language might cost them the support of opponents of equal rights for women, they added a conciliatory note:

"Resolved, that we assure our fellow-citizens that we only desire to so elevate and improve our condition as to better fit us for the discharge of those high social and moral duties which devolve upon every true woman."²³

In 1872 the shoe manufacturers of Lynn attempted to cut wages and compel every worker to sign a pledge that she would give two weeks' notice before leaving her position, or else forfeit five dollars of her pay. A meeting of nine hundred women voted unanimously not to comply with such a demand and adopted a set of resolutions which deserve quotation in full:

We, the Workingwomen, in convention assembled, do accept the following resolutions, as an earnest expression of our sentiments;

Whereas, we have long been sensible of the need of protecting our rights and privileges as free-born women, and are determined to defend them and our interests as workingwomen, to the fullest extent of our ability; therefore, be it

Resolved, That we, the workingwomen of Lynn, known as Upper Fitters and Finishers of Boots and Shoes, do enter a most solemn protest against any reduction of wages, on any pretext whatever; and that we will not submit to any rules that do not equally affect our employers.

Resolved, that we feel grateful to the shoemakers of Lynn for their interest and determination to stand by us in our time of need.

Resolved, that we, the free women of Lynn, will submit to no rule or set of rules that tend to degrade and enslave us.

Resolved, That we will accept no terms whatever, either with regard to a reduction of prices, notices to quit, or forfeiture of wages. That while we utterly ignore the spirit of selfishness and illiberality which prompted the late action of our would-be oppressors, we will not hesitate to resist, in a proper manner, the unjust encroachments upon our rights.

Resolved, that a copy of these resolutions be given to every one of the committee, to be by them presented to each girl in every shop, and her signature thereon obtained; and should anyone of the employees of the shop be reduced in her wages, or ill-treated, we will desist from our work until she has obtained her rights.

Resolved, that a copy of the above be inserted in the Lynn papers, and a large surplus number be provided for distribution among the girls.²⁴

Obviously, these women knew how to handle themselves: what to expect in the way of reprisals, how to protect themselves through

Industrial Society (Cleveland, 1910-1911), IX, 72-73. In addition to Andrews and Bliss, and Commons, the only historian to concern himself with working women and their problems on the job and in the labor movement has been Philip S. Foner, in his three-volume *History of the Labor Movement of the United States*. His first volume covers the period between the Colonial era and 1881, when the American Federation of Labor was founded (New York, 1947); see ch. xviii, pp. 204-213, 382-388, and *passim*. See also, the bibliography, *Women in American Labor History, 1825-1935*, by Martha Jane Soltow, Carolyn Forché, and Murray Masre (East Lansing, Mich., 1972).

3. Commons, *Documentary History*, p. 138. See also Israel Kugler, "The Woman's Rights Movement and the National Labor Union, 1866-1872," in *Labor History*, 2: 91-100 (Winter 1961). Perhaps no other aspect of the early woman's rights movement, with the exception of the Seneca Falls convention, has received more consideration than the presence of Mrs. Stanton, Miss Anthony, and several other women as delegates at the National Labor Union convention in 1868. Actually this event had less significance than the organizing of women workers done by Augusta Lewis and Kate Mullaney.

4. Speech by Moses Beach at Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Working Women's Protective Union held in 1888, reprinted in *Report of the Working Women's Protective Union, 1863-1894* (New York, 1894), p. 8.

5. *The Revolution*, vol. 2, no. 12, p. 181 (September 21, 1868).

6. *Ibid.*, p. 196.

7. G. A. Stevens, *New York Typographical Union No. 6: A Study of a Modern Trade Union and Its Predecessors* (Albany, 1913), p. 434n.

8. *The Revolution*, vol. 2, no. 15, p. 231 (October 15, 1868).

9. *Ibid.*

10. Quoted in Stevens, *New York Typographical Union No. 6*, p. 434.

11. Far more notice has been paid to the appointment of Kate Mullaney, leader of the Troy Collar and Laundry Workers union, as assistant secretary of the National Labor Union in 1868. However, there is no evidence that she ever carried out any duties in connection with this office.

12. President's Report, 19th Convention, International Typographers Union (1871), p. 12.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Quoted in Stevens, *New York Typographical Union No. 6*, p. 437.

15. Mrs. Troup wrote for the paper, supported woman suffrage, and became a well-known community figure; a New Haven junior high school bears her name. See article in *NAW*.

16. Andrews and Bliss, *History of Women in Trade Unions*, p. 91.

17. Abbott, *Women in Industry*, p. 236. The story of Hannah Montagu has been told in fictional form by Samuel Hopkins Adams in *Sunrise to Sunset* (New York, 1950).

18. From resolution quoted in *Troy Daily Whig*, June 19, 1869.

19. *Troy Daily Whig*, July 10, 1869, and August 5, 1869.

20. *Troy Times and Daily Whig*, July 20, 1869.

21. *Troy Times*, August 2, 1869.

22. Andrews and Bliss, *History of Women in Trade Unions*, pp. 108-110.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

24. Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, *Third Annual Report*, pp. 434-436.

CHAPTER X

The Emergence of a Suffrage Movement

1. Chilton Williamson, *American Suffrage — From Property to Democracy: 1760-1860* (Princeton, N.J., 1960).

2. *The Revolution*, vol. III (February 11, 1869), p. 88.

3. Quoted in *Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, IV, 43.

4. *HWS*, II, 391-392; 384.

5. Letters of William Lloyd Garrison II to his father, May 13, 1867, and June 3, 1867, SSC.

6. *HWS*, II, 235.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 242.

8. Stanton, *Eighty Years and More*, pp. 248-249.

9. Catt and Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics*, p. 107.

10. Male white residents of the District of Columbia voted until 1874, when the territorial government of the District was abolished.

11. *Congressional Globe*, 39 Cong., 2 Sess., Part I, p. 56.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 84. The House vote, on a similar measure on January 28, 1867, was 49 in favor to 74 opposed, with 68 abstaining. *Congressional Globe*, 39 Cong., 2 Sess., Part II, p. 806.

14. *HWS*, II, 324-325, 333. Additional bills to enact woman suffrage in Territories (western lands not yet admitted to statehood, in this case Utah) and in the District were proposed by Representative Julian and Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts.

15. Just who was to certify suffrage groups as "legitimate" was never explicitly stated, but it was understood that the final decision rested with a Massachusetts group consisting of Mrs. Stone, Mr. Blackwell, Mrs. Howe, and Thomas Wentworth Higginson. The views of the opposing groups were set out in an interesting exchange of letters between Henry Blackwell (December 16, 1869) and Martha Coffin Wright (January 1, 1870), both in the SSC. Elinor Hays, in her biography of Lucy Stone, first called attention to another revealing document, by Hannah Tracy Cutler (*Morning Star*, p. 207); the original is in the Blackwell papers, LC. See also Robert Riegel, "The Split in the Feminist Movement," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, vol. 49, no. 3 (December 1962).

16. *Congressional Globe*, 41 Cong., 3 Sess., Part I, pp. 218, 272; also in *HWS*, II, 443-448.

17. For the most balanced evaluation of Victoria Woodhull's impact on the woman's movement see the article in *NAW*.

CHAPTER XI

First Victories in the West

1. Georgia Willis Read, "Women and Children on the California-Oregon Trail in the Gold Rush," *Missouri Historical Review*, 39: 1-23 (October 1944).

2. *Diary of Mary Richardson Walker*, June 10-December 21, 1838, ed.

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Women of America
A History

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8 *And We Are Nothing but Women: Irish Working Women in Troy*

Carole Turbin



Woman Ironing by Edgar Degas. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon.

You know what a union is . . . you know full well the value of cooperation; we have been out of money six weeks and but two of our number have given in. I fancy but there are few men's organizations that can show such a record, and we are nothing but women.

Esther Keegan, Vice President of the Collar Laundry Union of Troy, New York, to the Workingmen's Union of New York City, July 2, 1869. (New York World, July 3, 1869).

A REMARKABLY SUCCESSFUL WOMEN'S TRADE UNION

It has often been observed that women's labor activity in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century was sporadic, short-lived, and unsuccessful. As dependents whose proper sphere was fireside and nursery, working women's role in the labor force was incompatible with the conditions necessary for permanent trade union organization. Women did not devote time and money to union activity because they did not regard themselves as permanent members of the work force. Moreover, they were occupied with household duties after their hours of wage labor and were too shy and retiring to participate in organizations that required speaking in public and assuming leadership. Also, since women were the most unskilled, low-paid workers of the day, they lacked the leverage to bargain with employers and the resources to weather hard times and strikes. Finally, some women workers faced hostility from working men because men believed that women competed for their jobs and reduced their wages to the low level of women's earnings. As helpless, degraded workers on the lowest levels of the working class, most women wage earners did not engage in labor activity to protect their interests as workers.¹

The Collar Laundry Union of Troy, New York, does not fit this characterization. Other working women periodically went on strike and some organized small unions that lasted as long as a year. But the laundresses' union was larger and more permanent than many men's locals during these decades. This women's union consisted of at least 400 members at its peak and existed for almost 6 years (from February 1864 to September 1869). Other women workers improved wages and working conditions from time to time. But the laundresses raised their wages to a level almost equal to the average earnings of working men. Also, they

¹ John B. Andrews and W. P. D. Bliss, *History of Women in Trade Unions*, Arno Press, New York, 1974 (reprint of 1911 edition), pp. 17-18, 45-49, 140-145; Theresa Wolfson, *The Woman Worker and the Trade Unions*, International Publishers, New York, 1926, pp. 90-97, 157-158; Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, Atheneum, New York, 1970, Chap. 9, especially p. 137.

accumulated a fund large enough to provide security during strikes, illness, or death in the family. Further, the laundresses did not face hostility from male workers, but formed a close alliance with the male-led labor movement. Male unionists considered the Collar Laundry Union the only "bona fide" female union in the country."² In light of the obstacles to labor organization that women faced, why was the Collar Laundry Union so successful?

THE INGREDIENTS OF SUCCESSFUL TRADE UNION ACTIVITY

The women who organized the Collar Laundry Union were not transient workers who had little reason to attempt to improve their condition as workers. Like other working women in the nation, the Troy laundresses as a group were permanent members of the industrial work force. Although individual women may not have remained in the labor force all their working days, women were essential to industrial production, and by the mid-nineteenth century they were a substantial percentage of the industrial labor force. Labor historian David Montgomery points out that by 1870 one-quarter of the wage earners in nonagricultural occupations were female. Of these, 70 percent were domestic servants. But of the remaining 30 percent, most were industrial workers. Over four-fifths of women industrial workers were employed in some branch of apparel making, including hoopskirt making and parasol and umbrella sewing. The remaining one-fifth were schoolteachers, clerks in stores, or worked in numerous other industrial occupations employing women, such as paper box making, cigar making, and printing.³

Troy's laundresses were an important part of that city's permanent industrial work force. They were not domestic servants or washerwomen who did personal laundry, as the term laundress suggests, but industrial workers who ironed newly manufactured detachable collars in commercial laundries. Employing about 600 women, Troy's approximately 14 laundries performed one step in the production of detachable collars for the city's prosperous shirt, collar, and cuff industry. In keeping with the increasing division of labor of the day, the laundering process was divided into separate steps—washing, starching, and ironing—and individual

² For basic facts about these unions, see: Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, pp. 131–141; and Andrews and Bliss, *Women in Trade Unions*, pp. 105–110. The following essay is based primarily on fuller information found in newspapers published in Troy and New York City, the labor press, Susan B. Anthony's *The Revolution* (New York, 1868–1872), and proceedings of meetings of the National Labor Union and the New York State Workingmen's Assembly. This quote is from the *Workingman's Advocate*, June 26, 1869.

³ David Montgomery, *Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical Republicans, 1862–1873*, Vintage Books, New York, 1967, p. 33.

workers specialized in only one operation. And in keeping with craft unionism, each group of workers formed separate organizations, although sometimes they engaged in labor activity together. Also in keeping with craft unionism, the women who formed the union were the most skilled workers in the shops—the ironers. In Troy the union was often referred to as the Collar Ironers' Union.

Troy's shirt, collar, and cuff industry was not a minor local industry in a backwater town. Troy was an important industrial center with two major industries—shirt, collar, and cuff manufacturing and the iron industry. These industries' products, as well as textiles and other goods produced in surrounding Albany and Cohoes, were shipped all over the United States via the Hudson River and the Erie Canal, which connected the East to the Midwest through the Great Lakes. The relatively small-scale collar laundries were interdependent with Troy's shirt, collar, and cuff factories, which produced most of the detachable collars and cuffs sold in the nation. The 15 factories employed a total of 3,128 women. Although it was a local industry, it was seventh in capital investment of all the 23 apparel industries in the state, including New York City's already vast clothing industry. Today Troy is still nicknamed "Collar City."⁴

Many members of the Collar Laundry Union were not permanent workers. Working men and women agreed with other Americans that ideally women should remain at home in their proper sphere and husbands should earn enough to support their families. Thus, in Troy as in other communities, less than 1 percent of the women in the labor force were wives living with their husbands.⁵ Another much larger group (about 17 percent of the Troy laundresses in 1865) were widows with small children. But by far the largest group of working women in the nation were young single women who lived with their families. Some of these women may not have been willing to devote time and money to trade union activity because they did not regard themselves as permanent

⁴ Daniel Walkowitz, "Statistics and the Writing of Working Class Culture: A Statistical Portrait of the Iron Workers in Troy, New York, 1860–1880," *Labor History*, 15 (Summer 1974), 416–460; *New York State Census*, 1865, p. 478.

⁵ All percentages for age, birthplace, occupation of male relatives, and marital status are based on the manuscript censuses for Troy in 1865 and 1870. The census is an extremely imprecise tool for studying working women in this period. Many employed women do not appear in the census and enumerators often omitted households or invented families. But a comparison of data indicates that we can make some rough estimates. For example, in 1865 the proportion of widows to single women is about the same for laundresses as it is for most employed women (13 percent for collar stitchers, 20 percent for other sewing women, and 20 percent for other female industrial workers). Similarly, in 1870 there is a dramatic rise in the number of widows among the laundresses (44 percent) as well as among other employed women (34 percent for collar stitchers). The consistency of this rise suggests that it roughly reflects the marital status of the female work force.

workers. Young single women who anticipated marrying and raising children probably regarded their employment as temporary. Even widows dependent entirely on their own earnings probably hoped to remarry and leave the work force. Yet the collar laundresses did seek to improve their condition through trade union activity. To understand this, we must look more closely at the significance of women's temporary role in the work force.

The fact that Troy's laundresses worked only temporarily did not mean that their occupation was a fleeting moment in their lives, not worth improving through trade unionism. These working women were not laboring to buy themselves luxuries; many were the sole supporter of their family. Augusta Lewis, President of the Woman's Typographical Union No. 1 of New York City, observed that many of the laundresses "had aged parents, younger brothers and sisters, and some had their own children besides themselves depending on their wages." In 1865 Kate Mullaney, the laundresses' president, was supporting herself as well as her mother, Bridget, age 55, and two younger sisters.⁸ Many others had to work even when the male head of household was employed. A study by the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1872 shows that the yearly expenses of a family of four amounted to about \$776.86. But during these years the average yearly income of wage earners was only \$611.00. The report concluded that even when the head of the family worked steadily, had only two children, and did not indulge in luxuries such as Christmas presents, toothbrushes, and toys for the children, the average working man's family could not keep out of debt without the income of other family members. Clearly, working-class women's proper role included the role of provider.

For women like Troy's laundresses, some form of employment was a familiar experience in every stage of life. In many working-class families, daughters joined the work force as soon as they reached a suitable age, often entering the same occupation as their older sisters or other female relatives. Those who married in their early twenties probably did not work for more than five to seven years. But women who did not marry remained in the work force much longer. Because most working-class women were employed at one time or another, and because at any given time some female family members were working for wages, working-class women were constantly reminded of the necessity of earning a decent living. Although they may not have been permanent workers as individuals, they had good reason to protect their rights as workers.

The collar laundresses' position in the work force and the community was worth defending. Like many industrial workers during this period, the collar laundry women were largely of Irish background. In

⁸ The description of Mullaney and her family and the following discussion of work patterns are drawn from the manuscript census for Troy in 1865 and 1870.

fact, over three-quarters of the laundresses were of Irish descent. In contrast, only one-half of other female industrial workers, and about 30 percent of sewing women were Irish-born or the children of Irish immigrants. Only domestic servants were more overwhelmingly of Irish background than collar laundresses.

Mid-nineteenth-century immigration patterns in the United States partially explain the overwhelming proportion of Irish women employed in the laundries. Many Irish immigrants found their way to Troy because the Hudson River provided convenient transportation from New York City, and Troy's industries promised employment. By 1865 Irish immigrants constituted almost one-quarter of Troy's population; the American-born children of these residents makes the proportion even higher. Since most of these people were working class, probably more than one-half of Troy's working class was of Irish descent.⁷

This is not to say that Troy's laundresses came from the city's poorest families. Irish workers did labor in the most menial occupations, such as day labor and domestic service, but many Irish families achieved a much higher status through employment in Troy's iron industry. This industry included several large iron and steel works and many smaller foundries that produced stoves, ranges, bells, wheels, and other iron products. Some skilled occupations like pattern-makers in the foundries and nailers and spikers in Burden's nail factory, employed largely workers of American background. But men of Irish descent constituted the largest number of workers in each of the three largest skilled branches of the iron foundries—molders, puddlers, and heaters and rollers. Since most of these men arrived in America with few industrial skills, they experienced considerable upward mobility through the iron industry.⁹

Troy's laundresses were part of a well-organized labor movement led by these highly skilled, largely Irish iron molders. In the 1860s and 1870s the most well-organized workers were highly skilled, well-paid men of American background. But in Troy the most well-organized workers were skilled iron workers, chiefly stove and range molders. From about 1860 to the 1880s the Troy Iron Molders' Union No. 2 was one of the most influential locals in the International Iron Molders' Union, and this national union was in turn one of the three or four most powerful national trade unions. In Troy the molders helped organize strikes, meetings, and trade union picnics that contributed to other workers' labor activity or celebrated working-class solidarity.⁹ The *Troy Press* viewed one picnic as a symbol of this unity: "Capital, with her high head, proud mein and plethoric purse, is at Saratoga or Newport. Labor, with her

⁷ Montgomery, *Beyond Equality*, pp. 35-40; Walkowitz, "Statistics," p. 422; *New York State Census*, pp. 11-12, 151-152.

⁸ Walkowitz, "Statistics," pp. 435-444.

⁹ Walkowitz, "Statistics," pp. 426-428.

brawny arms, independent spirit and moderate share of greenbacks is at Winnie's Grove. Hurrah for Winnie's!"

What was the collar laundresses' status in this working-class community? Although many laundresses came from the families of unskilled workers, an even larger group came from families on the highest levels of the working class. For example, in 1865 about 30 percent of the laundresses' male relatives were unskilled workers like laborers or porters, but only about 11 percent of sewing women's male relatives were unskilled. Also, about half (52 percent) of laundresses' male relatives were skilled workers like carpenters, blacksmiths, or molders. This figure is about the same for other Troy working women—for example, 59 percent for sewing women's male relatives. The laundresses' status was consistent with both the low status of Irish workers in general and the relatively high status of many Irish families in Troy.

The characteristics of the laundresses' occupation itself fit in with their mixed status in Troy's working class. In general, work in commercial laundries carried less status than other industrial occupations like needlework. Although laundering was probably not any more fatiguing and health-impairing than sewing and factory work, working conditions involved strenuous physical labor. Esther Keegan reported that laundresses stood on their feet almost all of their 11 to 14 hours of labor in shops as small as 16 feet square. Temperatures reached the "nineties" in the winter, and in the summer it was so hot that laundresses often had to "forgo their work for two or three weeks at a time from sheer inability to perform it." Ironers were required to continually lift hot heavy irons, and starchers' fingers became sore from constant immersion in starchy water. Keegan asserted that because of these conditions, laundresses frequently contracted consumption: "None but the strongest could stand it."

Laundering was also less ladylike than other women's occupations. While women from prosperous families may have done their own fine needlework, they rarely did their own laundry. People invariably compared laundry work to taking in washing, which was one of the most menial, poorly paid women's occupations. Thus, although laundry work was an industrial occupation, it was less genteel and respectable than dress-making, millinery, or even routine hand-stitching. Women of American background who had more options for employment probably preferred the more ladylike occupations of sewing or light industrial work.

Collar laundering was, however, more prestigious than domestic service. Working-class women considered the work of cooks, chambermaids, and housekeepers degrading because it involved serving or cleaning up after others and did not provide the independence of a wage. Women who needed servants bemoaned the fact that most Americans "would rather want bread than serve to gain it."¹⁰ Therefore, while laundry

¹⁰ Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants, 1790-1880*, Atheneum, New York, 1972, p. 61.

work was not a prestigious occupation for women of American background who could get other work, it was a good occupation for Irish women who wished to rise above employment in service occupations.

Unlike taking in washing and domestic service, laundering offered the independence of a wage and regular employment. Also, thanks to the union, laundresses' earnings were comparatively high. In 1872 the average earnings of working women amounted to \$299.00 per year, or \$1.16 per day, \$6.96 per week, a figure close to the average earnings of working men (\$13.44 per week). Collar laundering combined the disadvantages of unladylike labor with the advantages of industrial work. It attracted women from lower levels of the working class who were able to get better employment than domestic service, and those from higher levels who were willing to endure hard physical labor for high wages.

Of the several laundering steps, collar ironing was the most prestigious. It was not a skilled trade, since it involved a task familiar to many women and did not require knowledge of many complicated processes. Nevertheless, handling the heavy hot irons required physical strength, endurance, and a skill that could only be acquired through two to four weeks of intensive training. According to employers, good ironers were not easy to come by, and the ironing skill was worth more than that of starchers and washers. In the small world of commercial laundries, ironers were the aristocracy of labor.¹¹

The collar laundresses' organizational structure and level of skill helped them to defend their right to earn a living in the occupation in which they were trained. The ironers organized by the work they did in their shop as well as by sex. This organizational structure was typical of craft unionism; workers who did different kinds of labor in one industry almost always organized separately. But it was also useful for women to organize separately because women who organized into men's locals were at a disadvantage. They faced male workers' antagonisms more directly and were more reluctant to speak up at meetings and take leadership roles. The few women who did belong to men's locals, like women cigar makers, were less effective unionists because their interests were submerged and isolated.¹² Working women like the laundresses who formed separate organizations could develop their own leaders and adopt strategies and tactics tailored to their particular work situation.

Kate Mullaney was aware that it was important for working women to organize independently from men. A reporter who interviewed Mullaney in September 1868 argued that the organization of New York City's working women lagged because women were not confident of their own abilities to be "presidents and secretaries" of trade unions. In defense of

¹¹ Norman Ware, *The Industrial Worker, 1840-1860*, Quadrangle Books, Chicago, 1961, pp. xviii-xxi; Montgomery, *Beyond Equality*, pp. 140-148.

¹² Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, p. 137.

her sisters, Mullaney responded that "there are numbers of ladies connected with the laundry union who were just as competent as any gentlemen." Probably because she realized that some women were at first reluctant to speak up at meetings or take leadership roles, she offered to send laundry union members to New York City to help women organize. If "ladies from New York" were not "competent," she would "send some from Troy and pay their expenses until such time as they were able to educate some of their own." According to Mullaney, New York's working women could overcome these difficulties with the help of other women workers rather than male trade unionists. Clearly, the laundresses' strategies were shaped partly by their status as women.

The ironers also used their position as semiskilled workers in strategies that contributed to their union's success. In this period, skilled workers were the most well organized partly because their skill was a valuable commodity that they could withhold from employers.¹³ An incident that occurred early in September 1868 indicates that employers could not maintain a profitable level of production with inexperienced hands. Having given in to wage increases since 1864, the laundry proprietors tried to undermine the union by persuading nonunion ironers in the city's largest laundry to train new hands to replace workers in union shops. It would not have been necessary for the owners to use this tactic to weaken the union if they could have simply fired the union ironers and replaced them with new hands. Mullaney reported that the employers' tactics failed because the nonunion ironers, "seeing what the result would finally be, for their own protection, joined the union in a body." The owners' need for experienced labor enabled the ironers to strengthen their union even further. The laundry proprietors could not maintain full production levels during a strike even while scab workers were being trained. As employers themselves admitted, it took "some time to teach the newcomers the business." Even with a few weeks of training, the inexperienced workers' skill was not equal to the dexterity and speed of the striking ironers.

This tactic of withholding labor was successful partly because laundry proprietors were relatively vulnerable to employees' concerted action. As operators of a small-scale service industry, the laundry owners had fewer resources than the collar manufacturers with which to weather reduced production during strikes. Even more important, the laundry owners' position in the business community enabled them to pass on any increased labor costs to the collar manufacturers. The manufacturers had to absorb these costs. Despite the manufacturers' extensive resources and markets, they were dependent on the laundries' services to prepare their products for sale. The ironers' three-month strike in 1869 demonstrates

the importance of these factors in the union's success. In previous strikes the laundresses had conflicted only with the laundry proprietors, but in 1869 they faced a more formidable foe. That year the laundry proprietors combined with the much more powerful collar manufacturers. More than any other factor, the manufacturers' resources and strategies determined the strikes' outcome—the demise of the Collar Laundry Union.

The strike officially began on May 29, and on June 1 the manufacturers met publicly to plan their resistance. Their strategies were carried out on two fronts. They pressured the proprietors into holding out indefinitely by refusing to send new collars and cuffs to any laundry employing union ironers, and they helped the laundry owners obtain a new work force by helping them recruit and train new hands. Also, the manufacturers attempted to undermine directly the union's efforts to weather the strike. They tried to create a negative image of the union through the local press, which they virtually controlled. They prevented the few collar manufacturers in other cities from patronizing the union's cooperative laundry even though it claimed it could provide the same services for 25 percent less. Under these circumstances, the collar ironers' tactics were much less useful.

The collar manufacturers and laundry owners combined to prevent future wage increases. They aimed to do this not simply by opposing the present increase, but by finally eliminating the union. One indication that this was their motivation is the substantial evidence that the conflict was actually initiated by the laundry owners.¹⁴ The ironers had demanded and received a wage increase in July 1868, and the starchers received an increase in March 1869. The third conflict began when the laundry owners demanded that the ironers equalize wages paid for work on different-size collars within each shop. When the ironers complied by decreasing rates for some work and increasing rates for other work, there was a general increase of about 1½ cents per dozen collars. Although the proprietors had demanded the equalization, they refused to pay the increase.

The manufacturers claimed through the local press that this increase was the issue of the strike. They maintained that the ironers already received extraordinarily high wages for only ten hours of light labor per day, and that women foolish enough to be influenced by "outside busy-bodies" deserved to lose their jobs. Troy's collar factories, they argued, were already being undersold by the few collar manufacturers in other cities. If the ironers continued their unreasonable demands, Troy's collar industry would be destroyed and thousands of residents would suffer. The *Troy Daily Whig* asked, will "this new collar-a" prevail?

Although Troy's press was not as biased as the strikers claimed, it

¹³ Montgomery, *Beyond Equality*, pp. 140–148.

¹⁴ There is some evidence that the collar manufacturers were behind the initiation of the strike, but there is not enough data to confirm the role they played at this stage.

did suppress an essential fact that was revealed in New York City's newspapers: Once the ironers went on strike for the increase, some employers offered to rehire them at slightly higher wages on the condition that they give up their union. Kate Mullaney told the Workingmen's Union of New York City on July 2, 1869, that the laundry union's employers "do not care for the money." They were willing to pay the increased wages, but they insisted that the ironers "must give up" their union. Esther Keegan maintained that the ironers would make "every concession," but "it would never do to give up" their union. "We are determined not to yield." From a trade unionist's point of view, the strike was a lockout in which employers would not rehire union members unless they gave up their union. Like the iron molders' Great Lockout of 1866, the issue of the ironers' strike was "union or no union."

Partly because the combination of employers was so formidable, the ironers also chose another strategy for obtaining their rights: They formed a producers' cooperative, essentially a joint stock company financed through selling shares. In the late 1860s many prominent trade unionists believed that strikes could eliminate only the worst effects of wage slavery. They argued that producers' cooperatives enabled workers to escape wage slavery permanently by transforming themselves into small businessmen.¹⁵ Iron molders were among the most enthusiastic advocates of cooperation, and their iron foundries in Troy were among the most successful cooperative enterprises in the nation. Following the example of molders and others, the collar ironers laid plans for a cooperative laundry in early June. In July, when it was apparent that local manufacturers prevented out-of-town manufacturers from supplying the cooperative with newly made collars, the union expanded the project to include a cooperative collar-and-cuff manufactory. As Mullaney wrote in a letter to Susan B. Anthony which appeared in *The Revolution* in April 1870, the "girls" hoped "to proceed on a purely business basis, by doing the work . . . themselves." They hoped eventually to "buy up all the stock and hold it for their own benefit." If the project had succeeded, the laundresses would have transformed themselves into small businesswomen who were not dependent on wages for survival.

Despite the ironers' determination and the trade union movement's generous support, the union was dissolved in early September 1869, and the cooperative was disbanded in 1870. The cooperative was doomed largely because of problems inherent in this form of producers' cooperative, and partly because it could not compete with Troy's powerful collar manufacturers. But the project's failure was probably also due to the fact that the ironers were women. No matter how efficient the ironers' enterprise was, and no matter how much expertise and financial aid male

trade unionists contributed, prospective buyers were not likely to take women seriously as manufacturers.

The demise of the union and the cooperative does not mean that the laundresses were helpless women or degraded workers who had no bargaining power. They successfully resisted employers' appropriation of an unfair share of the profits their labor produced for a much longer period than most male workers did in these decades. They could do this for the same reasons that working men were able to improve wages and working conditions—by making the most of their employers' need for trained labor, and by taking advantage of the owners' vulnerability and their position in the business community. The ironers lost this leverage only when the proprietors increased their strength by combining with the manufacturers. The ironers' leverage was decreased even further a few years later when collar manufacturers found a more effective way to avoid absorbing laundry owners' increased labor costs: By the late 1870s the manufacturers incorporated the laundries into the collar manufactories. The collar ironers were "nothing but women" who faced more disadvantages than male workers. But like other relatively successful women and men unionists, they faced their employers primarily as workers.

The laundresses withstood employers' efforts to break their union for several months because their alliance with other workers—male trade unionists—made their strategies and tactics more effective. Male unionists cooperated with the ironers despite the fact that the antagonism between men and women workers were as deep as other hostilities dividing American wage earners. Just as working men were threatened by unskilled "green hands," especially if they were black or Chinese, they were also threatened by women workers. Working men not only believed that women took men's jobs and reduced their earnings, but they also thought that women wage earners were out of their natural sphere.¹⁶ Because of these beliefs, sometimes male workers were not willing to provide women wage earners with the aid that unskilled or semiskilled workers urgently needed to organize effectively. Yet they did aid the laundresses.

How firm was this alliance between collar laundresses and male trade unionists? The ironers' relationship with the male-led trade union movement began with their friendship with Troy's iron molders. This relationship in turn began with the laundresses' first efforts to organize, lasted until at least 1870, and continued into the 1880s, if not longer. Esther Keegan reported that the molders' union introduced the laundresses to the principles of trade unionism in February 1864. During the period of economic difficulties just after the beginning of the Civil War, their "weeks' wages could only buy a pair of shoes." They "asked higher wages," but "were not listened to." But when they organized into a union

¹⁵ Montgomery, *Beyond Equality*, pp. 154–155, 227–229.

¹⁶ Montgomery, *Beyond Equality*, p. 147.

on the advice of the molders, they "got the advance they asked for." By 1869 almost all shops were organized and the union included about 430 members.

In the ensuing years the laundresses showed their appreciation and the molders reciprocated. At the first molders' picnic on July 18, 1864, about 4,000 people watched the presentation of a blue silk banner to Henry Rockefeller, the Troy molders' president. The banner pictured on one side a furnace in full blast with men "pouring off" the molten metal and on the other side a figure of justice below an eagle. Ribbons on one side of the banner bore the inscription: "Presented by the Collar Laundry Union of Troy to the Iron Molders' Association." Two years later, in April 1866, the laundresses donated the enormous sum of 1,000 dollars to the molders during their Great Lockout. In return, in September 1868, William Sylvis, President of the National Labor Union and the IMIU, appointed Kate Mullaney Assistant Secretary of the NLU. Remembering the laundresses' loyalty, the molders were the ironers' staunchest supporters during their 1869 strike. Dugald Campbell wrote, "The laundry girls have stood by the moulders in their hour of adversity and they to a man will do the same to them." In gratitude, the laundresses dedicated a poem to Campbell which began:

*See Labor's Champion, so nobly contending,
Who fights for the down-trodden toilers the while;
Whose life's wholly spent their condition amending,
Despite every slanderer that would him revile.*

Trade unionists in New York City and elsewhere also stood by the ironers in 1869. In early July Kate Mullaney and Esther Keegan visited New York City in order to solicit contributions for their cooperative and strike fund from the city's prosperous unions. Almost every union in the city responded with generous amounts of cash. By September, contributions totaled 4,510 dollars.

Ironically, the least generous organization was the Workingwomen's Association of New York, which was organized by Susan B. Anthony in September 1868. Although working women were active in the association in the first weeks, by July 1869 the members were all prosperous middle-class women. Most of these middle-class women were more concerned with working women's difficulties than other suffragists. According to a report in the *New York World* on July 3, Mullaney observed that she came before them to request contributions because she "understood that they were an association of working-women." But "as she looked around them" she could tell that "they were not the working-women whom she had been accustomed to see. She had to work all day in the shop, and this she did not think, judging from their appearance, that they did." Augusta

Lewis, who accompanied Mullaney, later wrote: "Although the society comprises many wealthy ladies, they raised \$30 for the laundresses of Troy. As a society, either the want of knowledge, or the want of sense, renders them, as a workingwomen's association very inefficient." Elsewhere, Lewis wrote that compared to the Workingwomen's Association, the laundresses' union was a "real workingwomen's association." Suffragists made immeasurable contributions to improving women's condition, but women trade unionists considered male trade unionists to be firmer allies than suffragists were.

The state's trade unions generously aided the ironers in part because the strike was one of the few that was officially endorsed by the New York State Workingmen's Assembly. Trade unionists resented "begging expeditions" that visited New York, because contributing to strikes depleted their treasuries and weakened their ability to resist their own employers. In response to this problem William Jessup, President of the New York State Workingmen's Assembly, instituted a policy of investigating conflicts when strikers requested aid in order to determine whether they were worthy of contributions. If he deemed them worthy, Jessup issued an official circular explaining the strike's cause. The ironers' 1869 strike was one of only two conflicts that year endorsed in this manner. Significantly, the other worthy strike was the New York City Bricklayers' strike for the eight-hour day. Troy's iron molders, Troy's labor movement, and New York State's trade unions were the ironers' loyal allies.

Since most working men were threatened by women workers, why did male unionists rally behind the laundresses' union? A New York State Bureau of Labor Statistics Report of 1886 suggests that the iron molders and laundresses were allied because the laundry women were an important source of income for molders' families. The census manuscript adds some support to this argument. While 14 percent of the laundresses' male relatives were molders in 1865, molders constituted only 8 percent of collar sewers' male relatives, and 5 percent of sewing women's male relatives. Although 14 percent does not represent very many individuals, slightly more laundry women than other working women were related to molders. These family ties may have reduced antagonisms between male and female workers in collar laundries and iron foundries. Shared ethnic identity may have augmented these ties. Living in the same neighborhoods and participating in Irish political and nationalist organizations, Troy's Irish working-class community was particularly close-knit.¹⁷ Troy's laundresses and molders probably had more ethnic and family ties than other female and male workers.

But family ties and shared ethnic identity cannot provide a full explanation for this alliance. If the alliance was based entirely on these

¹⁷ Walkowitz, "Statistics," pp. 433-435.

ties, then the ironers' union would have to be viewed as an isolated example that depended on the external aid of relatives or membership in an ethnic community. The union's strength, commitment to trade unionism, and firm alliance with male trade unionists could not have been based on external aid alone, but must have also depended on the ironers' own efforts as wage earners. Also, family ties and ethnic identity cannot explain why workers organize, because these ties do not necessarily lead to a commitment to trade unionism. In order to organize successfully the laundresses also had to develop a commitment to trade unionism through their own experiences in bargaining with employers. In order to form firm alliances with other workers the laundresses had to have common interests as wage earners who were attempting to counter the power of capital. These common interests also explain the laundresses' alliance with the national trade union movement.

It was possible for some male workers to ally with women on the basis of shared interests as wage earners and for others to be hostile to working women because working men's situation as men and as trade unionists was inconsistent. As American workers, male unionists were threatened by women working for wages. However, working men also recognized that women worked because they had to, that women workers had a right to protect themselves from employers, and that working women, like men, could obtain this protection only through trade unionism.

But working men's fear of women's competition was so strong that working men could cooperate with women wage earners only under circumstances that mitigated this threat to their livelihood. Three kinds of circumstances seemed necessary for this cooperation: With few exceptions, male and female wage earners cooperated only when male workers believed that women were not directly competing with men; this kind of cooperation occurred when working women were not helpless but proved the unionists' adage that "those who would be free must themselves strike the first blow"; most important, working men cooperated with women workers when they derived some direct benefit from working women's labor activity.

Most male-female cooperation in the 1860s and 1870s occurred between men and women who labored in different branches of the same industry. For example, members of the Daughters of St. Crispin stitched shoes in the same shops as male Crispins. In these situations male and female wage earners were not competitors, because they did work strictly reserved for either sex. Their cooperation strengthened the bargaining position of both sexes, since their efforts were aimed at the same employers.

In Troy and other communities cooperation also occurred between women and men who were employed in entirely different industries with different employers. In this case, women's unions were beneficial to men in another equally important way: They made substantial contributions

to the solidarity of the working-class community. Troy's trade union movement was a major center of labor activity partly because iron molders and other skilled workers not only protected their own interests, but also helped draw other less-skilled workers into the local trade union movement. The molders helped establish Troy's Trades' Assembly in 1864 and organized huge picnics and demonstrations that mobilized thousands of workers in Troy and neighboring communities. Not only did they help the collar ironers organize, but they also aided others who were less likely to organize on their own, such as day laborers, tailoresses, and dress-makers. Unlike needlewomen in other communities, these Troy sewing women were continuously organized for at least a year.¹⁸ Workers of different backgrounds, levels of skill, and stages of organization could depend on each other for support.

The ironers' independence and commitment to trade unionism made them particularly deserving of support. William Sylvis noted that "the Troy girls" worked hard, "doing what they could in a practical way to work out their own salvation. They have acted upon the old saying, 'Who would be free themselves must strike the blow.'" Having experienced labor activity on their own, the ironers developed a deep commitment to trade union principles. As Esther Keegan put it, the ironers militantly resisted employers' efforts to break up the union because they were "not willing to go back to that state of slavery in which" they "were six years ago." The union was the "mother of their success," and their success in turn was the mother of their firm commitment to trade unionism.

The ironers and other female trade unionists in Troy not only received aid but also made their own contributions to the unity of labor against capital. The dressmakers' and milliners' unions contributed to the bookkeepers' strike for a wage increase in 1864. The ironers not only supported the molders in 1866, but donated the large sum of 500 dollars to the New York City Bricklayers' strike in 1868. As a Troy molder put it, "The ironers . . . have always been noted for their liberality in assisting other trade unions on strike."

The laundresses also contributed to the solidarity of the national trade union movement. Their contribution to the molders' lockout was a donation not to a local conflict, but to Sylvis's strategy to counter a national association of manufacturers formed to weaken the IMIU. Similarly, the bricklayers' strike was part of the strategy of the state's eight-hour movement to enforce an eight-hour law recently passed by the state legislature. Like their allies, the laundresses protected not only themselves and their neighbors, but also the working-class movement as a whole.

The ironers' 1869 strike and their cooperative were major contributions to this movement. William Jessup described the strike as an attempt

¹⁸ Walkowitz, "Statistics," pp. 426-428.

by "the employers and manufacturers to destroy the union by starving its members into subjection to accept the employers' terms." Like the molders' and bricklayers' conflicts, the ironers' strike was not a maneuver for temporary advantages, but a struggle for the American workers' right to organize. The Troy printers' resolution summed up the trade unionists' view:

It is the duty of all trades' organizations to resist such attempts upon trade union principles. . . . We must sustain and uphold the right of those who labor to consult together and determine upon the rate at which their labor shall be sold for the enrichment of capital.

Moreover, the laundresses were also taking the "higher step" of cooperation. Jessup's circular asking the state's trade unions to contribute to the ironers argued that:

The Collar Laundry Union does not ask you to contribute to support them in idleness while they are on strike. They desire to enter into co-operation by organizing manufactories of their own on the cooperative principle. The object is feasible. . . . Let us all contribute with a willing heart and an open hand.

Despite the fact that the strike failed and the cooperative foundered, the ironers' leaders continued to be committed to trade unionism, and male trade unionists continued to stand by them. As valuable members of the trade union movement, the ironers continued to be deserving of support. Sharing the interests of wage earners who sought to protect themselves through trade unionism, the collar ironers were "bona fide" trade unionists.

WOMEN TRADE UNIONISTS' SELF-PERCEPTION

The women who formed the Collar Laundry Union overcame formidable obstacles to trade union organization. Women who overcame these barriers must have been forceful individuals who developed the abilities to articulate clearly their conclusions and to plan strategies and tactics to achieve their goals. But the laundresses' success was not due to the fact that some were exceptional individuals. They were successful because they shared more characteristics that enabled workers in general to form permanent unions than did other female industrial workers. The laundresses were successful for the same reasons that male trade unionists were.

The factors contributing to the laundresses' success reveal that they organized primarily as workers rather than women. Coming from the same level of the working class as many male unionists, their organization

reflected the characteristics of their occupation and their employers, divisions between workers based on level of skill, nationality, religion, and sex, and characteristics of the labor movement in their community. They came to the same conclusions about the relationship between labor and capital, adopted the same strategies and tactics, and formed the same alliances as male unionists.

Other characteristics of women's unions in the 1860s and 1870s in the United States support the conclusion that the laundresses organized primarily as workers rather than women. The collar laundry women were part of a female trade union movement within the national labor movement. New York City's newspapers reported on March 11, 1870, that representatives of the seven women's unions in the state, including the laundry union, met in the city's Cooper Institute to organize the Workingwomen's State Labor Union (WSLU) of New York. The formation of the WSLU is significant because it tells us that the laundresses' union was not unique, but was one of many women's unions in the region during these years. The laundresses were not isolated but were in close touch with other women unionists. These women developed the same forms of organization, ideologies, strategies, and tactics as male unionists.

An important conclusion about women trade unionists' consciousness of themselves as workers and as women emerges from this examination of male and female trade unions. Esther Keegan's address to the Workingmen's Union indicates that Keegan, like other women unionists, viewed herself primarily as a wage earner who was also a working-class woman—that is, Keegan recognized that the laundresses were "nothing but women" whose dependent status shaped their ability to organize as successfully as men. But this status was in turn fundamentally shaped by the disadvantages they shared with working-class men who were also dependent on wages for their livelihood. Thus, to the extent that women trade unionists organized as women, they identified with other working-class women, not with women of other social classes. Conscious of their identity as wage earners, they did not identify with women's rights advocates who would probably never have to work for wages. Women trade unionists like Troy's laundresses organized as women within their own social class.

This conclusion is not meant to argue that working women in the mid-nineteenth century did not identify with issues relevant to women of all levels of society. Women unionists did not agree with suffragists that "the ballot, in the World of work is [woman's] only shield and protection." But they did firmly believe that in principle women should have the ballot. Further, this conclusion is not meant to argue that all working women in all times and places will always identify primarily with working-class men rather than with women of other social groups.¹⁸ These con-

¹⁸ *The Revolution*, January 15, 1868 (quote); *New York World*, September 18, 1868;

clusions indicate that for these women at this time and place, class interests were more important than interests shared with women of other social groups.

Documents

Linen and Collar and Cuff Manufacture and the Workingwomen's Union, 1873

When all these sewing processes are at last complete, the collars—and so of other articles, for we are following the fortunes of the collar as a representative of the rest—are transferred to the laundry, where a second series of eleven processes is gone through with, besides the mere transfer.* These are as follows: (1) Washing in suds, to remove the manufacturer's "dressing" from the goods; (2) bleaching, by means of hyperchloride of soda; (3) application of dilute sulphuric acid, to complete the bleaching process; (4) washing in suds, to remove the acid; (5) boiling; (6) rubbing and rinsing; (7) bluing and rolling; (8) starching with thin starch; (9) starching with thick starch; (10) drying; (11) ironing.

These operations are greatly facilitated by the arrangement of fitting up of the different rooms, and by various devices for economizing labor and power. Thus a peculiar formation of the stove for heating irons keeps forty of them hot all the time, with a small average consumption of coal; the order of the tubs used is such as to make the progress of the goods easy through the successive processes, etc. The starch used is not of wheat, but of corn, which is found to be equally efficient, cheaper, and much less disagreeable to the fingers of the operatives. This is a pretty important consideration, for it is found to make the difference between sore fingers and healthy ones,—that is, work or idleness,—besides pain, which is sometimes no small item, as the very agonizing inflammation called felon has occasionally been somewhat frequent among those who work in the starching rooms.

This firm, on the contrary, is well satisfied with that sort of success which is the only really desirable one in business—honest gains from enterprise, industry, and fair dealing. Steady kindness, and at the same time as much strictness as is necessary, keep them popular with their hands, of whom they employ

New York Sun, February 9, 1870; *The Revolution*, February 24, 1870; *New York World*, March 11, 1870; Nancy Schrom Dye, "Creating a Feminist Alliance: Sisterhood and Class Conflict in the New York Women's Trade Union League, 1902-1914," *Feminist Studies*, 2, No. 2 and 3 (1975), 24-38.

* Reprinted from Horace Greeley et al., *Great Industries of the United States*, J. B.

from five hundred to eight hundred. This treatment, and the pleasant quarters afforded to their operatives, secure the important advantage of steady help. Some of those in the establishment have been with the firm for twelve years or more; and it has repeatedly happened that those who left, for one or another reason, have returned and asked to be employed again, having found neither their new employers nor their new quarters as comfortable. This amicable state of things does not however, prevent a strenuous adherence to their rights. A few years ago, a so-called "Workingwomen's Union" was set up among the hands, and at once went to work to raise wages. Apparently there was a measure of justification for the step, since the required advance was granted, as was another within a few months. A third, however, met with a prompt refusal; the manufacturers, though not organizing into any formal body, agreed to put a stop to the performances, the Messrs. Cluett being among the very first in taking this ground. The demand of the "Union" was peremptorily refused, work stopped, the ill-advised strikers were let alone until they returned to work at previous rates, and the Union was exterminated, as no member of it would be employed. [Note: The firm of George B. Cluett, Brother & Co., later became a national producer of men's shirts, The Arrow Company, a division of Cluett, Peabody, and Co., Inc.]



A "Spicy" Letter from a Workingwoman, 1869

It was my pleasure a few weeks since to visit a real workingwomen's association, the Collar Laundry Union of Troy, New York.* I use the word real to designate it from imaginary workingwomen's associations who theorize, while this organization has proved "that those who would be free themselves must strike the blow!"

For many years past the collar laundries of Troy have employed several hundred women to wash, starch, and iron collars brought fresh from the manufacturer, preparatory to their sales in stores. Summer and winter from dawn to dark sometimes "till midnight, their work was to stand over the washtub, over the ironing table, with furnaces on either side, the thermometer averaging 100° for wages averaging from \$2 to \$3 a week each. Many of those thus employed had aged parents, younger brothers and sisters, and some had their own children, besides themselves, depending on this pittance for an existence. A representation of their necessities and individual appeal for an increase of salary received the usual answer to such demands—"That if dissatisfied there were plenty of women who would be glad to get work at any price." At last that bugbear of capitalists was resorted to, and they formed a trade union, whereby through their own

* Reprinted from the *New York Sun*, July 5, 1869. Although the letter is not signed, biographical details provide strong evidence that the writer was Augusta Lewis, president of the Women's Typographical Union No. 1 of New York City (organized from October 1868 to 1874).

exertions and their faithfulness to their organization they have increased their wages to \$8 to \$14 per week by working on an average from twelve to fourteen hours per day. Meantime their employers' profits are \$85 per day. The laundresses' organization is at present in difficulty not of their own seeking. (The cause of the trouble was stated in Tuesday's *Sun*.) The employers are very willing to pay less for small collars, but refuse to pay the increase for large collars. Some [employers] say they will pay the scale provided the Union, which has increased their wages, is dissolved. It will then be in their power to decrease the wages, and the women, justly regarding the union as the mother of their success, refuse the terms. Having been educated as to the knowledge of their true interests by organization, they now desire to take a step higher and form a co-operative laundry, thus becoming their own employers, a form of organized labor to which even the most fastidious cannot object. I am not a resident of Troy, nor a worker or member of the Laundry Union, but I am a workingwoman who has had to work very hard for a very small sum, and my sympathies are ever with those who struggle in poverty to earn an honorable living. It is the duty and interest of every workingman and woman to extend a helping hand to those women of the Collar Laundry Union of Troy. . . . Fathers and mothers whose daughters are sheltered and protected by home and wealth, remember the workingwomen. It is uncertain how long you or your protecting care and wealth will be spared. Neither your daughters nor you know but they might yet have to earn their own living. At eight years of age the writer of this lived in Brooklyn Heights, and attended one of the most aristocratic schools in the City of Churches; a servant carried her books to schools, but at the age of seventeen she carried her lunch to work, and stood behind the counter of a Broadway store from eight in the morning 'til eight in the evening for \$2 a week, and was asked by the forewoman: "Why not dress more stylishly; well-dressed saleswomen commanded better custom, and gave an air of dignity to the store." With such remuneration and such remarks, who dare deny that prostitution is at a premium. Yes, and will be until women are paid a living price for their labor. Let those who contribute to Magdalen Societies to reclaim the fallen do that which will prevent the necessity for such institutions, and wherever they see women striving to better their condition give them substantial aid.

Others will be encouraged by their success, and be stimulated by their example to seek to elevate their own condition, as the female cap makers of this city are now doing.

Whatever the evils of society are, let us not contribute to them by refusing to do the good that lies in our power at the present moment. In thus elevating one class of workingwomen, the good results will be felt by every other, and in future let us hope that when, from choice or necessity, women are compelled to earn their own living, it will not be a reproach but an honor to be, as I am.

9 *Chinese Immigrant Women in Nineteenth-Century California*

Lucie Cheng Hirata



Chinese woman. Courtesy of United Press International.



WOMEN

IN AMERICAN HISTORY

by Encyclopædia Britannica



Early America
1600-1820

The Nineteenth Century
1820-1880

At the Crossroads
1880-1920

Modern America
1920-the Present

- ☐ Articles
- ☐ Media Gallery
- ☐ In Her Own Words
- ☐ Britannica Classics
- ☐ Weekly Quiz
- ☐ Ask the Experts
- ☐ Women's History on the Web
- ☐ Recommended Reading
- ☐ Study Guide
- ☐ Britannica Online

Troy Female Seminary

(1821), institution

Now known by the name of its founder, the Troy Female Seminary was founded by Emma Hart Willard in Troy, New York, in 1821. It was the first American educational institution to provide young women with an education comparable to that of college-educated young men. At the time of the seminary's founding, women were barred from colleges. Although academies for girls existed, their curricula were limited to such "female arts" as conversational French and embroidery.

The outline for the school was presented by Willard to the New York legislature in her "Plan for Improving Female Education." This document proposed a course of study that would provide girls with a broad-based and rigorous education. Her idea was favorably received, and the city of Troy raised \$4,000 in taxes to begin construction of the school envisioned by Willard.

The seminary's first class consisted of 90 girls from across the United States who enrolled in mathematics, science, history, foreign language, and literature courses. Willard herself not only served as an instructor but even wrote some of the school's textbooks. Troy Female Seminary soon gained a reputation as an outstanding institution. It proved to those who were skeptical that women were just as capable as men of comprehending difficult subjects.

In memory of its founder, the seminary changed its name to the Emma Willard School in 1895. Since 1910, when the school moved to a new location in Troy, the school has erected additional buildings. It has continued in its mission of providing high-quality education to young women.

*Living it was
school actually founded in Middlebury,
Vermont in 1814. moved to Troy in 1821*

*i
see p 4*



From the
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Modern America
1920-the Present

Articles

Media Gallery

In Her Own Words

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Weekly Quiz

Ask the Experts

Women's History
on the Web

Recommended
Reading

Study Guide

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Willard, Emma Hart

(1787-1870), educator

In Her Own Words

Born in Berlin, Connecticut, on February 23, 1787, Emma Hart was the next-to-last of 17 children; her younger sister was Almira Hart (Lincoln Phelps). Encouraged by her father, she early began to acquire an education beyond the ordinary. In 1802 she enrolled in the Berlin Academy, her first school, where her progress was so rapid that by 1804 she was teaching in it and in 1806 she had charge of it for a term. In 1807 she taught briefly in an academy in Westfield, Massachusetts, and then became principal of a girls' academy in Middlebury, Vermont, where in 1809 she married John Willard, a physician 28 years her senior. From her husband's nephew, a student at Middlebury College who lived in the Willards' home, Emma first inferred the vast difference in the educational opportunities open to men and to women. She studied her nephew's textbooks and mastered such subjects as geometry and philosophy.

In 1814 Willard opened the Middlebury Female Seminary in her home and over the next few years demonstrated that women could teach and girls learn classical and scientific subjects commonly thought suited only to men. Her success prompted her to write *An Address to the Public; Particularly to the Members of the Legislature of New-York, Proposing a Plan for Improving Female Education* in 1819. The pamphlet was warmly received by such readers as Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. The legislature addressed failed to respond--several members ridiculed Willard's outline of a course of academic studies for girls as contrary to God's will--but Governor DeWitt Clinton invited Willard to open a school in New York state.

In 1819 Willard moved to Waterford, New York, and opened a school. In 1821 she moved on to Troy, New York, where the town council had raised money to build a girls' school. The Troy Female Seminary opened in September 1821 and began its long history as one of the most influential schools in America. It was a pioneer in the teaching of science, mathematics, and social studies to girls, antedating Mary Lyon's Mount Holyoke Seminary by 16 years and the first public high schools for girls (in Boston and New York City) by 5. The school attracted students from families of wealth and position and by 1831 had an enrollment of over 300, more than 100 of whom were boarding students. Willard published several textbooks, including *History of the United States, or Republic of America* (1828) and *A System of Universal History in Perspective* (1835). She also published a volume of verse, *The Fulfilment of a Promise* (1831). Of her poems only "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep" is remembered.

Willard remained head of the Troy Female Seminary until 1838, by which time hundreds of graduates, many of them teachers and all of them shaped by her philosophy, had fanned out across the country. Willard's later years were filled with travel, lecturing, and writing. Among her later books are *A Treatise on the Motive Powers Which Produce the Circulation of the Blood* (1846), *Guide to the Temple of Time; and Universal History for Schools* (1849), *Last Leaves of American History* (1849), *Astronography; or Astronomical Geography* (1854), and *Morals for the Young* (1857). Willard died in Troy, New York, on April 15, 1870. The Troy Female Seminary was renamed the Emma Willard School in 1895.

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EMMA WILLARD SCHOOL

Facts



Founded: 1814 in Middlebury, Vermont, by pioneer educator Emma Hart Willard, and moved to Troy in 1821. Madame Willard's early curriculum included mathematics and physical science, subjects previously closed to female students of the day.

The School celebrates its 184th year in 1998.

Head of School: Robin Robertson; B.A., University of Pennsylvania, M.A. and Ph.D., Harvard University.

Reputation: Emma Willard is among the oldest independent schools for the higher education of young women in the United States. A college-preparatory boarding and day school for girls in grades 9-12 and the post-graduate year, Emma Willard boasts a rigorous academic program enhanced by visual and performing arts, independent study in the community, and a full complement of interscholastic sports.

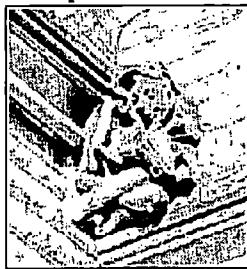
Research & Curricular Innovation: Emma Willard School remains committed to expanding current knowledge about the developmental needs and experiences of adolescent girls and young children, to inform teaching practice, and to share with others. A major longitudinal study of female adolescence, known as the Dodge Study, was conducted on the Emma Willard campus from 1981-1985 by Dr. Carol Gilligan and a team of researchers from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. *Making Connections: The Relational Worlds of Adolescent Girls at Emma Willard School*, a collection of provocative essays based on the Dodge Study, was published by the School in 1989 and is now in its second printing with Harvard University Press.



Students: For the 1997-98 school year, Emma Willard enrolled 275 students (167 boarding/108 day). Students attended from 26 states and 16 foreign countries. The student-to-faculty ratio is 8:1.

Faculty/Staff: More than 160 employees work at the School, including 44 full-and part-time instructors at the high school. There are seven endowed instructorships.

Campus: The School's 92-acre campus features excellent examples of Tudor Gothic Collegiate architecture adorned with more than 90 carved gargoyles. The administration building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The architecturally-innovative Hunter Science Center opened for the start of the 1996-97 school year, and the Helen S. Cheel Aquatics Center opens in May 1998. The campus also includes a gymnasium, chapel, art and music building, three dormitories, a 400-meter track, eight tennis courts, faculty houses, and plant and maintenance facilities.



Technology. Students have access to more than 60 Pentium PCs and 50 PowerMac computers, which are located in the library, computer labs, and classrooms around campus. A total of 324 student, faculty, and administrative computers are connected to the School's sophisticated networks, and dormitory rooms are wired for Internet and School network access by individual student computers. A four-person Information Technology Services office provides technical assistance to students, and the School's curriculum includes a computer science requirement.

Library: The William Moore Dietel Library houses 34,000 volumes, 112 periodicals, numerous CD-ROMS, and Internet access to major databases around the world.



Academic Program: The School offers more than 145 secondary courses in nine divisions. An EW student is required to complete four years of English/literature, three years of mathematics, three years of history, two years of laboratory science (including biology and chemistry), two years of visual and performing arts, and three years of foreign language. She must also be computer literate.

Athletic Program: Emma Willard sports 17 varsity and junior varsity teams and two club-level teams, including crew.

Tuition & Financial Aid: Tuition and costs at the high school are \$22,900 for boarding students and \$13,300 for day students. In 1997-98, Emma Willard awarded \$1.2 million in financial assistance to 47% of the student body.

Alumnae: Distinguished in business, law, medicine, science, education, the arts, and in service to their communities, Emma Willard's 5,600 alumnae share a 184-year tradition of excellence in women's education. Together with parents of alumnae, current parents, and friends, alumnae provide more than \$1 million in annual support to the School, in addition to countless hours of volunteer service.

EMMA WILLARD SCHOOL

History



1832 ELIZABETH CADY
STANTON Graduates.

1787 Emma Hart born in Berlin, Connecticut.

1814 Emma Willard opens her first school in Middlebury, Vermont.

1818 Mrs. Willard presents "Plan for Improving Female Education" to New York Governor Dewitt Clinton and the New York State Legislature.

1819 School moves to Waterford, New York.

1821 City of Troy grants Mrs. Willard \$4,000 to establish Troy Female Seminary in the heart of the city (at current site of Russell Sage College).

1870 Emma Hart Willard dies.

1872 Due to changing economic conditions in Troy following the Civil War and a shift in attitude toward women's education, the School becomes a day school.

1892 Emma Willard Association incorporated by alumnae to honor her name and promote the cause of higher education among women. First meeting held in conjunction with the Chicago World's Fair.

1895 Seminary's name changed to Emma Willard School. Three new buildings (1892-95, now part of Russell Sage College) replace original one. Boarding component reopened.

1910 With the aid of a major gift from alumna Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage, Class of 1847, the School moves to its location on Pawling Avenue atop Mount Ida.



1915 First *Revels* performance.

1937 Weaver Hall (science) opens.

1961 *Emma Willard Plan of Education* published to outline the Correlated Curriculum.

1966 Tangeman faculty apartments completed.

1967 Dietel Library and Snell Music Building built.

1969 Elective curriculum introduced. Faculty duplexes built.

1971 Maguire Art Building added to library/music complex.

1972 The Children's School established in former Cluett mansion.



1977 Charles S. Mott Gymnasium completed.

1981-84 The Dodge Study conducted at Emma Willard by Dr. Carol Gilligan, Dr. Nona Lyons, and associates from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

1987 Emma Hart Willard's 200th birthday.

1989 175th anniversary of Emma Willard School. *Making Connections: The Relational Worlds of Adolescent Girls at Emma Willard School*, a collection of essays based on the Dodge Study, published by the School.

1996 Hunter Science Center opens.

1997 *Curiosity and Confidence: Girls Claiming Science* national science symposium commemorates Hunter Science Center dedication. Story about symposium televised on CNN.

1998 Helen S. Cheel Aquatics Center, housing a six-lane competition-size pool, exercise and strength/conditioning rooms, and state-of-the-art fitness equipment.

■ EWS Facts

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a gift of God! But I did not speak. Samuel reproved him and told him all about it. He sat down very sorrowful. I then told him, "I had a promise, the day thee wrote my letter to sister Diges, that if I was faithful I would see the day when I can write." . . . So I tried, took my Bible daily and praying and read until I could read anywhere. The first chapter that I read I never could know it after that day. I only knowed it was in James, but what chapter I never can tell.

Oh how thankful I feel for this unspeakable gift of Almighty God to me! Oh may I make a good use of it all the days of my life!

To Improve Female Education

Emma Hart Willard (1787–1870) had a thirst for knowledge and a "visionary" longing to make women's education equal to men's. After growing up in Connecticut, she established her first school in Vermont after her marriage. She also became an organizer willing to lobby New York politicians in 1818 to ask for public funding for her school. No one seems to have impugned her femininity for doing so, perhaps because she was teaching daughters of some of the "best families." Although the legislators turned down her request, Willard's plan of study was praised by presidents and intellectuals. A predecessor of Mary Lyon, who founded Mount Holyoke in 1837, and of Catharine Beecher, who established Hartford Seminary in 1823, Emma Willard emphasized that educated women would be better mothers and more useful persons. She also insisted that women were capable of studying mathematics, science, and philosophy. The academy she founded in Troy, New York, in 1821 was attended by the suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton and many other influential nineteenth-century women. Willard's textbooks were widely used, and many of her graduates became teachers throughout the country.

From Emma Hart Willard, in Henry Barnard, ed., *Educational Biographies, Memoirs of Teachers, Educators, and Promoters and Benefactors of Education, Literature, and Science, Part I: Teachers and Educators*, 2d ed. (New York: F. C. Brownell, 1861), pp. 133–37.



When I began my boarding school in Middlebury, in 1814, my leading motive was to relieve my husband from financial difficulties. I had also the further object of keeping a better school than those about me; but it was not until a year or two after, that I formed the design of effecting an important change in education, by the introduction of a grade of schools for women, higher than any heretofore known. My neighborhood to Middlebury College, made me bitterly feel the disparity in educational facilities between the two sexes; and I hoped that if the

matter was once set before the men as legislators, they would be ready to correct the error. The idea that such a thing might possibly be effected by my means, seemed so presumptuous that I hesitated to entertain it, and for a short time concealed it even from my husband, although I knew that he sympathized in my general views. I began to write (because I could thus best arrange my ideas) "an address to the _____ Legislature, proposing a plan for improving Female Education." It was not till two years after that I filled up the blank. No one knew of my writing it, except my husband, until a year after it was completed, (1816), for I knew that I should be regarded as visionary, almost to insanity, should I utter the expectations which I secretly entertained in connection with it. But it was not merely on the strength of my arguments that I relied. I determined to inform myself, and increase my personal influence and fame as a teacher; calculating that in this way I might be sought for in other places, where influential men would carry my project before some legislature, for the sake of obtaining a good school.

My exertions meanwhile, became unremitted and intense. My school grew to seventy pupils. I spent from ten to twelve hours a day in teaching, and on extraordinary occasions, as preparing for examination, fifteen; besides, always having under investigation some one new subject which, as I studied, I simultaneously taught to a class of my ablest pupils. Hence every new term some new study was introduced; and in all their studies, my pupils were very thoroughly trained. In classing my school for the term of study, which was then about three months, I gave to each her course, (being careful not to give too much) with the certain expectation, that she must be examined on it at the close of the term. Then I was wont to consider that my first duty as a teacher, required of me that I should labor to make my pupils by explanation and illustration *understand* their subject, and get them warmed into it, by making them see its beauties and its advantages. During this first part of the process, I talked much more than the pupils were required to do, keeping their attention awake by frequent questions, requiring short answers from the whole class,—for it was ever my maxim, if attention fails, the teacher fails. Then in the *second* stage of my teaching, I made each scholar recite, in order that she might *remember*—paying special attention to the meaning of words, and to discern whether the subject was indeed understood without mistake. Then the *third* process was to make the pupil capable of *communicating*. And doing this in a right manner, was to prepare her for examination. At this time I personally examined all my classes.

This thorough teaching added rapidly to my reputation. Another important feature of a system, thus requiring careful drill and correct enunciation, was manifested by the examinations. The pupils there acquired character and confidence. Scholars thus instructed were soon capable of teaching; and here were now forming my future teachers; and some were soon capable of aiding me in arranging the new studies, which I was constantly engaged in introducing.

274 Here I began a series of improvements in geography—separating and first teaching what could be learned from maps—then treating the various subjects of population, extent, length of rivers, &c., by comparing country with country, river with river, and city with city,—making out with the assistance of my pupils, those tables which afterwards appeared in Woodbridge and Willard's Geographies. Here also began improvements in educational history. Moral Philosophy came next, with Paley for the author, and Miss Hemingway for the first scholar; and then the Philosophy of the Mind—Locke the author, and the first scholars, Eliza Henshaw, Katharine Battey, and Minerva Shipherd.

The professors of the college attended my examinations; although I was by the President advised, that it would not be becoming in me, not be a safe precedent, if I should attend theirs. So, as I had no teacher in learning my new studies, I had no model in teaching, or examining them. But I had full faith in the clear conclusions of my own mind. I knew that nothing could be truer than truth; and hence I fearlessly brought to examination, before the learned, the classes, to which had been taught the studies I had just acquired.

I soon began to have invitations to go from Middlebury. Gov. VanNess, wishing me to go to Burlington, I opened my views to him. The college buildings were then nearly vacant, and some steps were taken towards using them for a Female Seminary, of which I was to be Principal, but the negotiations failed. In the spring of 1818, I had five pupils from Waterford, of the best families. On looking over the map of the United States, to see where would be the best geographical location for the projected institution, I had fixed my mind on the State of New York, and thought, that the best place would be somewhere in the vicinity of the head of navigation on the Hudson. Hence, the coming of the Waterford pupils I regarded as an important event. I presented my views to Gen. Van Schornhoven, the father (by adoption,) of one of my pupils,—who was interested, and proposed to show my manuscript to the Hon. J. Cramer, of Waterford, and to De Witt Clinton, then Governor of New York; and if they approved it, then the "Plan" might go before the legislature with some chance of success. Thereupon I copied the manuscript with due regard to manner and chirography; having already rewritten it some seven times, and thrown out about three quarters of what it first contained—then sent it to Gov. Clinton with the following letter:

To his Excellency, De Witt Clinton,—

Sir,—Mr. Southwick will present to you a manuscript, containing a plan for improving the education of females, by instituting public seminaries for their use. Its authoress has presumed to offer it to your Excellency, because she believed you would consider the subject as worthy of your attention. . . .

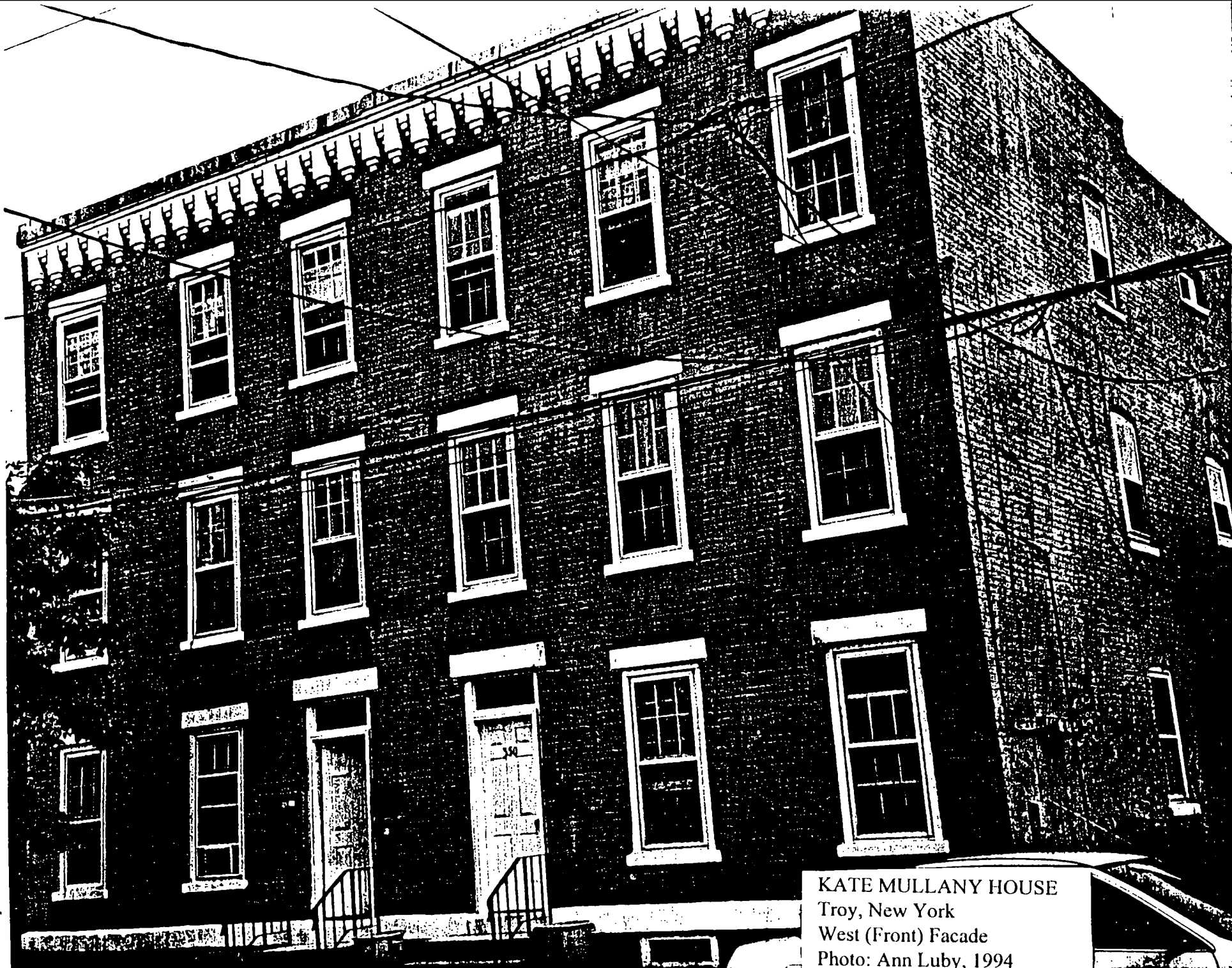
Possibly your Excellency may consider this plan as better deserving your attention, to know that its authoress is not a visionary enthusiast, who has speculated in solitude without practical knowledge of her subject. For ten years she has been intimately conversant with female schools, and nearly all of that time she has herself been a preceptress. Nor has she written for the sake of writing, but merely to communicate a plan of which she fully believes that it is practicable; that, if realized, it would form a new and happy era in the history of her sex, and if of her sex, why not of her country, and of mankind? . . .

Your Obedient Servant, Emma Willard
Middlebury, Vt., February 5, 1818.

275 This treatise is in reality the foundation of the Troy seminary. It will not be thought surprising that I awaited with intense feeling Gov. Clinton's reply. It came before I expected it, expressing his accordance with my views in his happiest manner. His message to the legislature soon followed, in which, referring to my "Plan," (though not by its title or author's name,) he recommended legislative action in behalf of a cause heretofore wholly neglected. The Waterford gentlemen had made Gov. Clinton's opinion their guiding light. They were to present my "Plan" to the legislature; and advised that Dr. Willard and myself should spend a few weeks in Albany during the session, which we did. The Governor and many of his friends called on us; and I read my manuscript several times by special request to different influential members; and once to a considerable assemblage. The affair would have gone off by acclamation, could immediate action have been had. As it was, an act was passed incorporating the institution at Waterford; and another, to give to female academies a share of the literature fund. This law, the first whose sole object was to improve female education, is in force, and is the same by which female academies in the state now receive public money.

By Awakening Their Consciences

In 1839 the first normal school for teacher training was established in Massachusetts, and the movement for "common" grammar schools free to all comers began in earnest. Its purpose was to Americanize and Christianize (Protestant-style) the expanding populace, continuing the work of the many Sunday or Sabbath schools that zealous women had been establishing in new communities in the wake of the Second Great Awakening. Children were taught to read, write, and cipher—and to say their prayers and mind their morals. Women like



KATE MULLANY HOUSE
Troy, New York
West (Front) Facade
Photo: Ann Luby, 1994

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

KATE MULLANY HOUSE

Page 1

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

DRAFT

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: **MULLANY, KATE, HOUSE**

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 350 8th Street

Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Troy

Vicinity: N/A

State: NY

County: Rensselaer

Code: 083

Zip Code: 12180

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X

Public-Local:

Public-State:

Public-Federal:

Category of Property

Building(s): X

District:

Site:

Structure:

Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

1

Noncontributing

 buildings

 sites

 structures

 objects

0 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 0

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

KATE MULLANY HOUSE**Page 2**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official_____
Date_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official_____
Date_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau**5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
 Determined eligible for the National Register
 Determined not eligible for the National Register
 Removed from the National Register
 Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper_____
Date of Action

KATE MULLANY HOUSE**Page 3**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Domestic

Sub: Multiple Dwelling

Current: Domestic

Sub: Multiple Dwelling

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Italianate

MATERIALS:

Foundation: Brick

Walls: Brick

Roof: Asphalt

Other:

KATE MULLANY HOUSE

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 4

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Kate Mullany House¹ is the southern half (#350) of a three-story brick double row house, both sides of which are identical, located at 350-352 Eighth Street, Troy, Rensselaer County, New York. Except for the Quik Lube garage and the heavily traveled Hoosick Street immediately to the south, the neighborhood of the Mullany House retains much of the working class character of the 1860s and 1870s when Kate Mullany lived and worked there. The neighborhood is largely comprised of modest residences in brick and frame, with a mixture of single family and multiple unit dwellings. The Mullany House and its twin are among the most substantial domestic structures in the area.

The most distinguished feature of the double house is its ornate brick cornice, with alternating long and short dentilation forming a brick tasseled fringe along the roofline. The tassel-like brickwork is painted white, while the house is painted a deep slate blue. The front of the house has rectangularly shaped windows; three six-over-six windows on each of the second and third stories and two six-over-six windows on the first floor. All of the windows on the front of the house have stone lintels and stone sills and are framed with white wood trim. The front entrance is a simple six-paneled white door, topped by a plain transom light and stone lintel. Three concrete steps and an iron banister form the exterior entrance. The south side of the house has two full size segmental-arched six-over-six windows on the first floor, one full size segmental-arched six-over-six window and one three-quarter size arched six-over-six window on the second floor, and one full size arched one-over-one window and one one-quarter size arched single window on the third floor. All windows on the south side of the house have stone sills and partly concealed lintels, which appear to be made of wood.

The Mullany House and its twin have always been three-unit apartment buildings, with one family unit per floor. On the rear of the house, the second and third story units have partially enclosed wood balconies, each with a rear entrance and a single-hung sash window. The first floor unit has a partially enclosed porch and rear door. The rear of the Mullany side of the building has one rectangularly shaped one-over-one window at the third story level, an arched six-over-six window at the second story, and an arched one-over-one window at the first floor. All of the rear windows have thin stone sills, with only the windows at the first and second stories having lintels, which appear to be made of wood. The interior of the building retains its original configuration and staircase, although most of the interior woodwork and finishes, deteriorated over time, were replaced in renovations in the early 1960s. The top floor units are the largest ones.

Each side of the double house has a private back yard, enclosed by an unpainted wood picket fence.

¹There is much variation in the spelling of the family surname. Kate's official death certificate, her mother's will, and Surrogate Court records use the spelling of "Mullaney", as have all of the historians of her life in their published research to date. State and federal census records of the family, as well as city directory listings, church records, cemetery records, and most of the obituaries in local newspapers, however, omit the "e". Based on this recently documented evidence, we have chosen to use the spelling of Mullany throughout this nomination.

KATE MULLANY HOUSE

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 5

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: X Statewide: Locally:

Applicable National

Register Criteria:

A X B X C D

Criteria Considerations

(Exceptions):

A B C D E F G

NHL Criteria: 1, 2

NHL Theme(s):

V: Developing the American Economy
5. labor organizations and protests

Areas of Significance:

Social History
Other: Labor History

Period(s) of Significance: 1869

Significant Dates: 1869

Significant Person(s): Mullany, Kate

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder:

Unknown

NHL Comparative Categories:

XXXI: Social and Humanitarian Movements
H. Labor Organization

KATE MULLANY HOUSE

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 6

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.**SUMMARY**

The Kate Mullany House, located at 350 Eighth Street, Troy, New York, is nationally significant as the residence of one of America's leading female labor leaders, the young Irish immigrant laundry worker who organized and led the all-female Collar Laundry Union in Troy, New York, in the 1860s. Her Collar Laundry Union was recognized by male unionists of the time as the only bona fide female union in the country for its success in bargaining with laundry owners for worker objectives, as well as its active support of other working unions and labor activity. Organized in February 1864, the Collar Laundry Union was officially the first continuously organized women's trade union in the nation. The 500-member union enabled its members to maintain wages higher than those of most working women (and near wage parity with working men) of the time, and it accumulated a treasury larger than that of many men's locals. Their generosity to other striking unions and benefits to their own were nationally noted, as was a militancy unmatched by most male trade unionists.

Mullany achieved national recognition in 1868 when the National Labor Union convention commended her indefatigable efforts on behalf of female laborers and elected her second vice-president of the NLU. That action had to be annulled since the first vice-president was also from New York State, but the NLU president, William H. Sylvis, then appointed Mullany special assistant secretary to coordinate national efforts to form workingwomen's associations. This appointment was a significant milestone in the history of working women by making her the first female appointment to a national labor union office.

Like many working women in the nineteenth century, Mullany was a major source of her family's income. In the 1860s, she seems to have been the primary wage earner in a household that included a widowed mother and four siblings. The land on which 850 Eighth Street stands was purchased by Bridget Mullany, Kate's mother, in 1864, only six months after Kate Mullany and her fellow laundry workers organized the Collar Laundry Union and successfully struck for a 25% wage increase. The house, designed as an income-producing property, was completed and the family in residence by 1869, when the union once again went on a decisive strike against Troy's laundry owners. The collar manufacturers held firm and this strike eventually failed, but not before Kate Mullany and the laundry union had formed their own laundry cooperative and a cooperative to manufacture collars and cuffs.

The emergence of Mullany as a national leader in the labor movement came at a time when suffragists, such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, were becoming well established in the movement to gain the right to vote for women. While Mullany seems to have been more interested in women as workers with the right to be represented equally with men in the labor movement where they fought for shared worker issues, the leading suffragists focused on women bettering their lot by obtaining equal rights through the ballot. These differences provide a good historical perspective on the views of women at the time.

KATE MULLANY HOUSE**Page 7**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

The acquisition of land and home ownership were primary goals for many immigrants, particularly the Irish, who also brought to this country a strong tradition of organized labor. The Kate Mullany House is emblematic of the stability and upward mobility made possible for workers by union activity, both the reward and the goal of all their actions.

The various known residences that Mullany occupied prior to this one and the Union Laundry Cooperative, located at the Union House block on Broadway Avenue in Troy, are no longer standing. Although the laundry facilities of the Union Cooperative continued under various laundry proprietors after the Union's downfall, the entire block was leveled and replaced by a parking garage in 1942. A careful review of the historical materials that are available turned up no particular laundry (with the exception of the Union Cooperative) linked to Kate Mullany. Because of the destruction of other relevant structures, 350 8th St. is the most appropriate choice for nomination.

HISTORY*Born 1845*

Kate Mullany and her family immigrated to America from Ireland sometime before 1850, the year when Irish-born Kate turned 5 and her younger sister Ellen was born in New York State. The family first appeared in the Troy, New York city directory of 1852-53 with the listing of Dominick Mullony, laborer, then living at 61 North Third Street. In subsequent directories the surname was listed as "Mullany". The family moved frequently from 1852-1868 but remained in the same central Troy neighborhood near to their church, St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church. In 1860 the family household consisted of the mother Bridget, 55, who peddled dry goods, Mary, 21, a seamstress, Catherine, 19, who "works out", and Bridget, 15, then still in school. Their father Dominick was still listed in the local directory at their address, but he was not living with the family. It is possible that as an unskilled laborer, he had moved elsewhere to find employment. He died sometime in 1864. A listing for Bridget Mullany, a widow, first appears in 1865 at 34 North 3rd Street. (The family is variously listed as living at 34 N. 1st, 34 N. 2nd, and 34 N. 3rd Streets in the years between 1861-1868.) (None of these buildings still stand.)

In September 1864, Bridget Mullany purchased the two lots on which the double rowhouse 350-352 Eighth Street stands, and by 1869 the family had moved into the top apartment of 350. A small cottage at 356 Eighth Street was purchased in 1874. The double rowhouse was designed to be income-producing, with a rental unit on each floor and the family living in the larger top floor unit at 350 Eighth. At Bridget Mullany's death in 1876, she willed the three houses to each of her three daughters. Catherine Agnes Mullany was given the premises and "the rents profits and income arising from the three story brick dwelling house and lot 25 by 100 ft No 350 on the east side of Eighth St Troy N.Y. during her lifetime." The U.S. Census of 1870 records six families in the double rowhouse at 350-352 Eighth Street. Kate Mullany, then 25 years old and a laundry worker, lived with her widowed mother Bridget, and an older sister Mary.¹ Members of the Mullany family were recorded as living

¹The Federal Census of 1870 included three younger Mullanys in the household: Ellen, Alice and Frank, then ages 20, 16, and 10. These three are not listed, however, in any other census records of the Mullany households, nor in family wills or burial plots, and their exact relationships to Kate are still unknown. It is possible they were

KATE MULLANY HOUSE

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

there at various times until at least 1910, when Mary Mullany died at that address. The house at 350 8th Street continued to be Kate's residence off and on until her death in 1906.²

Catherine Mullany Fogarty, by then a widow, was described in court records at the time of her death as "an aged woman engaged in no business" who "for a number of years past had lived upon her rents arising from said real property." The property was apparently mortgaged circa 1897-98 when the city sued for back taxes and assessments on the property. [Rensselaer County Deeds, 1897, 263/419 and 263/423.] The house is the only remaining structure associated with Kate Mullany during her period of leadership in the labor movement. ✓

The admission of women into existing trade unions in the early 1860s was extremely limited. Of the thirty national trade unions existing at the time, only two, the printers and the cigar makers, were open to women.³ Yet women made up one-quarter of the nonfarm labor force. In Lowell and elsewhere, women workers had successfully organized themselves in the 1840s to protest working conditions and win concessions from management, but these unions were often issue-specific, within a single factory, and only lasted as long as necessary to resolve the particular issue under debate. The Collar Laundry Union organized by Kate Mullany in 1864 was no different in its origins, but it continued to fight for union principles and actively supported labor causes beyond its own membership throughout the half-decade of its existence.

The Collar Laundry Union came into being in February 1864 largely as a result of Kate Mullany bringing together about two hundred of the collar laundry workers in Troy to protest low wages and the introduction of starching machines that were scalding hot to handle and cut prices for starching almost in half.⁴ Laundry work had traditionally been one of the lowest-paying occupations for women. In the early 1860s Troy's laundry workers earned from two to three dollars a week, working twelve-to fourteen-hour days over washtubs and ironing tables in oppressive heat.⁵ The Collar Laundry Union included washers, starchers and ironers, but was made up principally of ironers, the most highly skilled in the hierarchy of laundry workers. To understand the significance of the Collar Laundry Union, it is necessary to understand the pivotal role of their work in the overall process of manufacturing and marketing collars and cuffs. ✓

The detachable shirt collar was first invented in Troy by Hannah Lord Montague, wife of Orlando Montague, a prosperous merchant and manufacturer of women's fine shoes. Tired of laundering her husband's shirts when only the collar needed cleaning, Mrs. Montague cut the

cousins or perhaps just boarders mistakenly listed as family by the census taker.

²Troy (New York) *Record*, August 18, 1906. At some point Kate Mullany had married John Fogarty and her obituary was listed under "Fogarty."

³Susan Esterbrook Kennedy, *If All We Did Was to Weep at Home: A History of White Working-Class Women in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), p. 5, 81.

⁴Philip S. Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement from Colonial Times to the Eve of World War I* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), p. 124. Carole Turbin, *Working Women of Collar City: Gender, Class, and Community in Troy, New York, 1864-1866* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), pp. 112-13.

⁵Kennedy, *If All We Did Was to Weep at Home*, p. 80.

KATE MULLANY HOUSE**Page 9**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

collars off and attached tapes to either end so that they could be washed, starched and ironed separately from the shirt. While Mrs. Montague was the first to create the detachable collar, it was the Reverend Ebenezer Brown, a retired Methodist minister and owner of a small dry goods store in Troy, who first made and sold the detachable collar in 1829. By 1834, Orlando Montague and his partner Austin Granger, had set up a business to manufacture detachable collars, as had Lyman Bennett. Other manufacturers soon followed. The nation's first commercial laundry was established in Troy in the 1830s to wash, starch, and iron products for local collar manufacturing firms.⁶

By the mid-nineteenth century, starched white shirts, collars, and cuffs had become the mainstay of the wardrobes of men from middle-class families involved in commercial occupations where personal appearance was an important ingredient in meeting the public. Thus the term "white collar worker" came into popular use. Detachable collars also created stylish variations for men and women to adapt a single shirt to the needs of different social occasions. The demand for these items increased to such an extent that by the 1860s Troy had become the producer of almost all of the nation's detachable collars and cuffs. Troy's shirt, collar, and cuff industry was seventh in capital investment of New York State's already vast clothing industry. The collar industry in Troy in the 1860s employed 3,700 women, almost half of Troy's female industrial workers, and was the single largest employer of women.⁷ Thousands more women throughout the city and surrounding countryside worked in their own homes, hand-stitching and turning collars delivered daily on the "collar express." Fifteen collar manufacturers employed female machine operators in factories ranging in size from 25-550 employees, while the fourteen collar laundries operating in Troy at the same time employed only about six hundred women who worked in small shops in groups of 10-20.

Laundering was an essential part of the manufacturing process for shirts, blouses, and detachable collars and cuffs. This was especially true of collars and cuffs, easily soiled in manufacturing by the many processes done by hand, as well as by travel back and forth from home sewers. Washing, starching, and ironing these items after they were manufactured and before they were distributed were just as important as making them. The laundering process was quite involved: washing with soap; bleaching with chloride of soda; adding dilute of sulfuric acid to further bleach the collars; and again washing in suds; boiling; rubbing and rinsing; bluing and rolling; starching (with thin starch to be followed by a thick starch); drying; and finally ironing.⁸ There was a great deal of interdependence among the laundry workers. Starchers, for example, could not properly starch the garment unless it had been thoroughly cleaned and ironers depended on starchers to apply the correct kind of starch as well as the right amount. Ironing was the most skilled process, requiring a knowledge of techniques, materials, and a combination of physical strength, endurance and manual dexterity.⁹ An 1865 description of Troy laundry work vividly depicts the women standing

⁶Turbin, *Working Women of Collar City*, pp. 19-21.

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 21, 28, 43.

⁸Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, p. 1213.

⁹Turbin, *Working Women of Collar City*, pp. 45, 51.

KATE MULLANY HOUSE**Page 10**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

"over the washtub and over the ironing table with furnaces on either side, the thermometer averaging 100 degrees, for wages averaging \$2.00 and \$3.00 a week," for twelve to fourteen hour days.

Since ironing was the last stage in the manufacturing/laundrying process before the goods were inspected, stamped with a style name, and packed in boxes by the dozen for shipping, the work of the ironers was regarded as the most crucial to producing a good product and the ironers were in a strategic position to control the availability of the finished product. Much of how the finished product looked when it reached the market depended upon the skill of the ironers, who had to use the appropriate amount of heat and pressure to produce and apply finishing touches to determine the final shape and style of the garment.¹⁰ Laundry owners recognized the importance of the ironers by the wages they paid the respective laundry workers: washers earned the least, starchers earned somewhat more, and the ironers were paid wages which were considerably higher than that received by factory workers and public laundry workers.¹¹ Of all of the laundry workers, the ironers were in the best position to bargain with the laundry owners when labor issues arose.

When the Collar Laundry Union was formed in Troy, it was the ironers who took the initiative for they were predominant in the membership. The first demonstration of the strength of the new union came with a strike by all of the laundry workers against the city's fourteen commercial laundry establishments during late February 1864, at the busiest season for the industry. While the introduction of a new starching machine was one item of contention, the principal demand was for a twenty-five percent increase in wages. Up to this time, laundry work had been among the lowest paid jobs. One of the officers of the new union, Esther Keegan, reflecting on pre-union days, commented that when the Civil War broke out a week's wages could only buy a pair of shoes, and when the workers asked for higher wages, they were not listened to. Things changed with the union, however. When they struck in 1864 for a twenty-five percent increase, the laundry owners capitulated, giving the laundresses what they wanted in less than a week after they left their shops.¹²

The Collar Laundry Union credited Troy's Iron Molders' Union No. 2 with providing the inspiration for them to form a union and to strike for better wages. By the 1860s the iron and collar industries dominated the local economy. Troy's iron industry was a nationally important producer of both iron and iron products and employed approximately 2,000 men, a considerable proportion (17%) of the city's working class men. Collar laundering and iron work offered particularly attractive opportunities to Troy's Irish immigrants as relatively new, expanding industries with open access to employment and advancement. Iron molding, like commercial laundering, combined difficult physical labor at high temperatures, dangerously heavy implements, and potentially harmful substances with the advantages of relatively steady, well-paying industrial work making important, highly visible products. Iron molders and

¹⁰*Ibid*, p. 28.

¹¹*Ibid*, p. 52.

¹²*Ibid*, pp. 107-09.

KATE MULLANY HOUSE**Page 11**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

laundry ironers held the most highly skilled positions within their field, both requiring long apprenticeships to learn the skills, endurance, and manual dexterity required. In Troy, most of the collar laundresses and iron molders were Irish immigrants. Their expertise was reflected in their earnings and their high status within the Irish working class community. The Iron Molders' Union No. 2 was the center of Troy's active labor movement in the 1860s. Founded on May 1, 1858, the local was the second to join the Iron Molder's International Union and Trojans were among the most prominent trade unionists in that major national union. The IMIU helped shape the strategies and policies of other unions, as well as the National Labor Union, the first national labor organization which met annually from 1868 to 1875. Early in February 1864, the Trojan molders successfully struck foundry owners for a 15% pay increase. Their example was emulated by Trojan laundry workers later that same month.

The Collar Laundry Union showed its appreciation to the molders at a picnic celebrating working class unity on July 18, 1864. Four thousand working people witnessed the Collar Laundry Union's presentation of an elaborately embroidered full-color banner with a picture of the interior of a furnace in full blast on one side and a picture of "Justice" surmounted by an eagle on the other side, along with ribbons bearing the inscription: "Presented by the Collar Laundry Union of Troy, to the Iron Molders' Association." Decorated with symbols of the common goals and values that the two unions held, the banner and its presentation were public statements of the Collar Laundry Union's legitimate and prominent place in Troy's well-organized labor movement, and its close alliance, based on mutual respect and reciprocity, with the city's most prominent male trade union.¹³

The strong alliance with the Iron Molders Union would become even stronger over the next few years, especially in April 1866, when the Collar Laundry Union donated the amazing amount of \$1,000 to the molders after they had been locked out by the iron founders of Troy as a result of a labor dispute. By this time, the Collar Union had succeeded in raising their own wages to \$8 to \$14 per week, although they still worked 12-14 hour days. The contribution by the Collar Laundry Union received favorable attention in the press and brought them recognition from the Troy Trades' Assembly, who invited them to become affiliated and added a section of books relating to women to its Labor Free Library and Reading Room.¹⁴ The lockout of the iron molders escalated into Troy's largest and most protracted labor dispute, with national attention. William H. Sylvis, the Philadelphia iron molder who transformed the Iron Molders' International Union into the largest and most effective trade union of the period after he became president in 1863, rallied national union support for the Trojan iron molders.¹⁵ Sylvis was long acquainted with Troy. He had spoken at the "great picnic of the Troy Trades' Assembly to raise money for the library and reading room" in August 1864, crediting working women with the success of that library and reading room. He went on to say that he "hoped thereby to convince the 'old fogies' in other cities to begin

¹³*Ibid*, p. 1.

¹⁴Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, p. 124.

¹⁵*Ibid*, p. 124.

KATE MULLANY HOUSE**Page 12**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

making common cause with working women."¹⁶ A special friend of Kate Mullany, Sylvis was one of the earliest supporters of women's trade unions.

Sylvis had the opportunity to further the cause of working women when he called a congress of national labor leaders to meet in Baltimore on August 26, 1866. The National Labor Union grew out of this meeting, part of Sylvis' dream to have a nationwide association that would represent all workers, including women.¹⁷ At the National Labor Union congress in New York City in September 1868, Sylvis was chosen president. With Sylvis at its head, "this new organization for the first time created a national labor leadership" for he was the "first truly national labor leader in the United States." As president of the Iron Molders' International Union, Sylvis had traveled the country urging iron molders to organize, and in doing so had "made himself a true spokesman for labor, and his words commanded attention and respect." So highly regarded was he that the *New York Sun's* account of his selection as NLU president noted that his name was as "familiar as a household word."¹⁸

Knowing the high esteem in which Sylvis was held, the action that the members of the National Labor Union took in September 1868, electing Kate Mullany to a position of leadership, makes her selection that much more important. She was initially elected to be second vice president, but that action had to be annulled because the first vice president was from New York and it was not considered appropriate to have two vice presidents from the same state. Delegates to the congress praised Mullany for "having shown great business ability in organizing and rendering prosperous the establishment of which she is head," and for the Collar Laundry Union's recent contribution of \$500 to sustain the New York City bricklayers' strike.¹⁹

Sylvis instead appointed Mullany assistant secretary, responsible for corresponding with working women and coordinating national efforts to form working women's associations. In his closing remarks, Sylvis told his colleagues: "We now have a recognized officer from the female side of the house—one of the smartest and most energetic women in America; and from the great work which she has already done, I think it not unlikely that we may in the future have delegates representing 300,000 working women." Women delegates attending the congress were impressed on two counts: first, that they were allowed to attend as delegates, and second, because the appointment of Mullany to organize working women proved that "the recognition of woman [was] to be future policy of the National Labor Congress."²⁰ Mullany's

¹⁶*Ibid*, p. 126, Turbin, *Working Women of Collar City*, p. 112.

¹⁷Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, p. 125; Paul S. Boyer, et. al. *The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People* (Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1990), pp. 629-30.

¹⁸Foster Rhea Dulles and Melvyn Dubofsky, *Labor in America: A History* (Arlington Heights, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 4th edition, 1984), pp. 95-100.

¹⁹Turbin, *Working Women of Collar City*, p. 113.

²⁰Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, p. 134.

KATE MULLANY HOUSE**Page 13**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

appointment was a milestone in the history of working women; "she was the first female appointment to a national labor union office."²¹

The selection of Kate Mullany to an important position within the National Labor Union reflected Sylvis' opinion about the presence of women in the labor market. Women were in the industrial life to stay, he said, and "if the wage standards of the mechanics were to be defended, all women workers ... had to be organized into unions and their wage standards equalized with those of men." He argued that if labor were to achieve its goals, it was necessary for working women to be included: "How can we hope to reach the social elevation for which we all aim without making women the companion of our advancement?"

Commitment on the part of the National Labor Union to work toward achieving those goals was demonstrated by the report of the Committee on Female Labor which was adopted by the 1868 National Labor Congress. That report urged the extension of eight-hour demands to women workers, equal pay for equal work, and trade unions for working women. It also encouraged women "to learn trades, engage in business, join our labor unions, or form protective unions of their own." In adopting this report, the National Labor Union became "the first labor federation in world history to vote for equal pay for equal work."²² It was obvious that Sylvis saw in Kate Mullany someone who could do much to advance the goals of the National Labor Union and working women in America.

Mullany used her Collar Laundry Union to financially assist other unions, such as the Iron Molders' Union in Troy and the Bricklayers' Union in New York City, and to help in the organization of women. The union was able to do this because it had accumulated a treasury larger than that of most men's locals. At the time of the bricklayers' strike in September 1868, Mullany praised the "ladies connected with the laundry union who were just as competent as gentlemen." When a reporter from the New York Sun interviewed Kate Mullany in September 1868, he suggested that the organization of working women in New York City lagged because women weren't capable of being officers in trade union. Mullany defended women's leadership abilities, responding that "there are numbers of ladies connected with the laundry union who were just as competent as any gentlemen." She then offered to send Trojan women to New York and to pay their expenses in training local women as trade unionists.²³ It was this sort of response that led to the national recognition of Mullany's unionizing abilities, and her subsequent election as National Labor Union vice-president.

As already noted, male unionists cited the Collar Laundry Union as an example of self-sufficiency that should be used as a model for other women in organizing. Alexander

²¹Charles P. Neill, *Women and Child Wage-Earners in the United States*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1911), vol. 10; *History of Women in Trade Unions*, by W.D.P. Bliss and John B. Andrews, 107. as cited in Page Putnam Miller et. al., "Draft, National Historic Landmark Nomination, Mullaney, Kate, House," Section 8, p. 3.

²²Turbin, *Working Women of Collar City*, p. 113; Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, p. 133; Kennedy, *If All We Did Was to Weep at Home*, p. 85.

²³Turbin in Carol Ruth Berkin and Mary Beth Norton, *Women of America: A History*, (New York, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979), pp. 210.

KATE MULLANY HOUSE**Page 14**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Troup of New York City's typographers recommended that the women compositors organize, using as an example "the great power of the Troy Collar Union When they strike they compel the manufacturers to accede to them." On October 8, 1868, less than two weeks from the time Troup made this suggestion, the Women's Typographical Union No. 1 was formed under the leadership of Augusta Lewis.²⁴ Particularly impressive was the fact that by the beginning of 1866 the Collar Laundry Union had succeeded in increasing their wages from \$2-3 a week to \$8-12 or occasionally to fourteen dollars a week, an amount that was higher than most working women and almost on parity with some men's wages.²⁵ By the time of Mullany's selection as an officer in the National Labor Union, the Collar Laundry Union had grown to over five hundred members.

Until 1869 Mullany and her union were successful in getting the laundry operators to meet their demands, especially for wage increases, because of the strategic position the ironers held in the laundering process. As the last people to work on the garments before they were prepared for marketing, ironers were able to apply coercive tactics like withholding their labor. Since the individual laundry owners ran relatively small operations without a lot of capital to sustain them if they were not producing for the manufacturers, they gave in to the laundresses' demands by raising the price they charged the manufacturers. It was different in 1869, however. When the Collar Laundry Union went on strike on May 28, asking for higher wages, proprietors refused the union's demand. This time, the collar manufacturers took the initiative, forming an association to further their business interests and combining with the laundry proprietors to kill the union. The manufacturers insisted that laundry owners unite with them against the union rather than dealing with employees' demands in the usual way by asking manufacturers to absorb increases. The manufacturers pressured laundry owners into holding out indefinitely against the union by refusing to send new collars and cuffs to any laundry employing union ironers. Collar manufacturers also helped laundry owners obtain a new non-union workforce by helping to recruit and train new workers.²⁶

All parties to the dispute continued to hold out despite hardships because the stakes were high. For workers it was a test of their union's ability to survive; for the manufacturers and laundry owners it was a question of living with reduced production. The ironers were determined not to return to work without their union's protection. As union official Esther Keegan addressed the New York State Workingmen's Assembly in July 1869: "Since the union protected their rights as workers for six years, they were 'not willing to go back into that state of slavery in which they were six years ago.'" Assuming that the working men shared with laundresses an understanding of trade unionism, Keegan told her listeners: "You know what a union is; you know full well the value of cooperation." Expressing pride in her union's determination and unity, Keegan eloquently continued: "We have been out of money six weeks and but two of our number have given in.... I fancy but there are few men's organizations that can show such a record, and we are nothing but women." Their unity was the "mother of success" and the

²⁴Kennedy, *If All We Did Was to Weep at Home*, p. 86.

²⁵Turbin, *Working Women of Collar City*, p. 114.

²⁶*Ibid*, p. 158.

KATE MULLANY HOUSE**Page 15**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Collar Laundry Union's success was the "mother of their commitment to trade unionism." Keegan's reference to the laundresses as "nothing but women" suggests that "collar laundresses considered themselves to be not only freeborn women with equal rights but also working-class women who were subordinate" yet men's equals as trade unionists. While "identifying themselves squarely within the labor movement, collar laundresses were concerned with women's issues that were directly related to working-class families' daily life and economic goals, not with rights or identities shared by all women."²⁷

Clearly, the objectives of suffragists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony and those of women trade unionists, particularly Kate Mullany and Esther Keegan, were not the same. This was made plain to Mullany during a visit she made with Keegan in July 1869 to the Working Women's Association, founded by Stanton and Anthony. Mullany and Keegan visited the New York City office of the association hoping to secure badly needed funds to support the strike, but as Mullany observed, "they were not the working-women whom she had been accustomed to see. She had to work all day in the shop, and this she did not think, judging from their appearance, they did." The association responded in a lukewarm manner with a thirty dollar donation to the laundresses of Troy. The level of the association's contribution suggested to Mullany that the interests of Stanton's and Anthony's Working Women's Association were much more with women gaining the right to vote than with advancing the cause of working women.²⁸

While the Working Women's Association's contribution to the Collar Laundry Union's strike fund was less than expected, almost every union in New York City responded generously.²⁹ Back in Troy there was also widespread support. Most noteworthy was the contribution of the molders, who resolved only a few days after the strike began: "We will to a man support our fellow workingwomen who are now struggling for their just dues and independence. Our hand is in theirs and the purse in it." The molders agreed to open Molders' Hall to the ironers' meetings and to donate \$500 per week to the ironers "as long as the strike shall last." In late July there was a picnic, at which five to six thousand people donated \$1,200 to assist the ironers. At the picnic, local labor leader Dugald Campbell read a letter from William Sylvis in which the president of the National Labor Union praised "the Troy Girls for working hard, doing what they could in a practical way to work out their own salvation." Continuing his praise, Sylvis noted, "They have acted out the old saying, 'Who would be free must themselves strike the [first] blow.'"³⁰ A few days after this letter of support was read, Sylvis died after a short and sudden illness. The labor movement had lost a great leader and the National Labor Union never recovered from his death. Kate Mullany and the Collar Laundry Union had also lost a great friend, and never at a more inopportune time. In the ensuing tailspin in NLU headquarters, union financial aid was temporarily suspended.

²⁷Ibid, pp. 124-127.

²⁸Ibid. pp. 142-43.

²⁹Turbin, *Working Women of Collar City*, p.162.

³⁰Ibid, p. 162.

KATE MULLANY HOUSE**Page 16**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Although contributions continued to come in (\$4,510 had been received by September 1869) Kate Mullany and her fellow officers decided to have the union establish its own cooperative laundry. This proved unsuccessful when local manufacturers prevented out-of-town collar makers from supplying the cooperative with newly made collars. The next entrepreneurial endeavor was to start a cooperative collar and cuff factory of their own. Establishing such a cooperative was proposed by Mullany as a means of allowing wage earners to escape the wage system by becoming small entrepreneurs.³¹ Also, it was very much in keeping with the trade unionists' belief that a cooperative allowed its operators to benefit directly from their own labor, thereby eventually eliminating the wage system, considered to be at the core of workers' difficulties.³²

Plans for the cooperative were announced by union vice president Keegan in her July 3 presentation to the New York Workingmen's Assembly: "We are determined as the last resort to buy the materials and manufacture for ourselves, and put the union label upon our work; and we look confidently to you that you will not buy a collar or a shirt that does not have the union brand on it." Keegan was confident that "every Union man" would buy their "work, and also every fair man in the country."³³ Keegan's presentation won for the union the unqualified support of William Jessup, the assembly's president, whose job was to investigate conflicts to determine those worthy of contributions. During 1868-69, only two conflicts in New York State qualified: the ironers' strike and the New York City bricklayers' strike. The assembly's support included the issuance of a circular explaining the cause of the strike and asking for broader support: "Workingmen, will you stand idly by and see this without lending a hand to their support? This is the first time in the annals of our history that you have been appealed to for aid and support in behalf of a female labor organization." Jessup explained that the ironers' strike was an effort for them to maintain their right to protect themselves from employers and manufacturers who were trying to destroy the union by starving its members into subjection to accept the employers' terms. He went on to point out that the Collar Laundry Union shared trade unionists' goal of avoiding coercive strategies like strikes in favor of producers' cooperatives. The collar laundresses were taking the "higher step" of attaining self-sufficiency by establishing a producers' cooperative. "The object is feasible," he said, so "let us all contribute with a willing heart and an open hand."³⁴

The cooperative collar and cuff factory was formed with Kate Mullany as president and Dugald Campbell, one of the founders of the iron molders' cooperative of Troy and one of the most ardent supporters of the laundresses, as the first agent. He encouraged prospective investors to purchase shares of stock and located retailers who would market the cooperative's product. Things looked promising for the cooperative when "the merchant prince of New

³¹Ibid., p. 143.

³²Ibid., p. 163.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 121-22.

KATE MULLANY HOUSE**Page 17**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

York, A.T. Stewart," agreed "to take all the goods manufactured by the laundry girls' cooperative and place them immediately on the market."³⁵

Despite the ironers' strong determination to save their union and the generous support of the labor movement, the manufacturers and laundry owners eventually won the battle. The union was dissolved in early September 1869 and, with the exception of the leaders who were refused employment, ironers went back to work at the old wages.³⁶ The cooperative collar factory and laundry continued in existence, however, until at least the spring of 1870, and possibly until 1872.³⁷

Susan B. Anthony had the opportunity to see the cooperative in operation during a visit in February 1870 with Kate Mullany and three of her associates (most likely Ann Tellers, formerly the union's secretary, Sarah McQuillan, former treasurer, and Esther Keegan, former vice president.) This appears to have been Mullany's first meeting with Anthony, since Anthony was away on a speaking engagement when Mullany and Keegan had visited the Workingwomen's Association in New York in the summer of 1869. Although Mullany and Anthony disagreed on matters pertaining to the suffragist movement as they related to working women's rights, Anthony expressed considerable appreciation for the work Mullany and her associates had done while the union was active, calling the union the best organized women's union she had known. She was equally complimentary of what Mullany was trying to do with the cooperative. Describing Mullany as a "bright young Irish girl," Anthony reported on her visit to Troy in a speech at Cooper Institute in New York City. Mullany and "several other young Irish women," were working in "an upper room of a large building," and were dressed in "the simplest calico." Although they earned "barely enough to cover their rent...they were trying to establish the fact, that women can be employers." Anthony expressed deep sympathy for "this working-women's venture." "I have not had my heart [so] stirred for long years with the terrible fact of the struggle that women have to get a place and position beside men in business, as by the story and efforts of these three girls." On questioning, Mullany attributed the failure of the strike not to the laundresses' gender but to their inability as workers to control the middle class press, which allied itself with the employers. Anthony concluded nevertheless that "If those collar laundry women had been voters, they would have held, in that little city of Troy, the 'balance of political power'.... The condition of those collar laundry women but represents the utter helplessness of disenfranchisement."³⁸

In considering how Mullany related to suffragists such as Anthony, one needs to keep in mind that Mullany identified primarily as a worker rather than a woman, and the interests she shared with suffragists "were related less to what they had in common as women, than to trade

³⁵Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, p. 156.

³⁶Turbin, *Working Women of Collar City*, p. 163.

³⁷Miller, "Draft National Historic Landmark Nomination Kate Mullaney House, Section 8, p. 4.

³⁸Turbin, *Working Women of Collar City*, pp. 143-144.

KATE MULLANY HOUSE**Page 18**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

unionists' and some suffragists' shared concerns about wage earners.³⁹ Mullany kept in touch with suffragists who agreed with trade unionists that "women wage earners could escape wage slavery by transforming themselves into small entrepreneurs who were not dependent on wages for their livelihood." She wrote to Anthony's publication, *The Revolution*, in April 1870, to report on the cooperative factory, saying that the "girls" hoped "to proceed on a purely business basis, by doing the work...themselves," and that they planned to "buy up all the stock." The "girls," she reported, had made good progress in securing the needed capital, \$10,000. Additional support for the cooperative was given by the newly formed Workingwomen's State Labor Union of New York, who commended "our working girls of Troy" and pledged to do all they could to help "both in subscribing for stock in their enterprise and advocating the sale of their goods, which we believe to be the best and cheapest manufactured."

That same month, *The Workingman's Advocate* reported that Alexander Troup of the typographers' union in New York City, had gone "to Troy to reside" to "devote himself to the interests of the women's cooperative." Since this represented a major change for Troup, it is believed that he and Mullany fully expected the cooperative to continue for some time. The 1870 city directory for Troy lists the cooperative as "Union Co-operative Collar Manuf., Union House block, Broadway." (The building no longer stands.) The directory also lists Alexander Troup as superintendent and Kate Mullany as a cooperative collar manufacturer. No further listings of the factory exist in directories, and the exact date of the closing of the cooperative is not known.⁴⁰ It, like the National Labor Union, certainly did not survive the national panic of 1873 and probably closed before then.

Little definitive information is known about Kate Mullany's life after 1870, the only time she is mentioned in the city directories with that name. Because she was a union officer, she had long been thought to have been "blackballed" by local laundries and unable to obtain employment after 1872. Interestingly, the New York State census of 1875 does seem to indicate that Kate was still in Troy working as a laundress in that year, but by 1880 she was no longer living with her sisters.⁴¹

Kate Mullany married John Fogarty sometime after 1882 and seems to have remained in the Troy area. In 1903 Catherine (Kate) Fogarty moved back to 350 Eighth Street to live with her sister Mary Mullaney. Catharine Fogarty "widow of John" first appears in Troy directories in 1903 and is listed annually at 350 8th street until her death is noted in 1906. Catherine Mullany Fogarty died at 350 8th Street at the age of 65, on August 17, 1906. Interestingly, the property at 350-352 Eighth Street is noted in deed records in 1897 as being last taxed or assessed to Mary

³⁹*Ibid*, p. 143.

⁴⁰*Ibid*, pp. 164, 170.

⁴¹A Mullany daughter of Kate's age and occupation is listed by a census enumerator as "Bridget", while the true sister Bridget, by then married to John McMahon, is also listed in a separate household at the same address. Bridget McMahon's married name was rewritten by the enumerator over his first entry of "Bridget Mullany". (New York State Census, 1875, 10th Ward, p.1.)

KATE MULLANY HOUSE**Page 19**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

E. Mullany and "Catherine A. Mullany," a full name for a formal document that could have been shortened among family to "Kate."

Although Kate Mullany and members of the Collar Laundry Union had to dissolve the union after their unsuccessful three months strike in the summer of 1869, the militant spirit that characterized the union of the 1860s was not totally extinguished. Union organization all over America declined significantly during the economic depressions of the 1870s, but increased again in the following decade. In the spring of 1886 the collar laundresses of Troy, some of them veterans of the earlier Collar Laundry Union, formed the four-thousand member Joan of Arc Assembly of the Knights of Labor. It was the largest of Troy's thirty-eight Knights of Labor locals, and the largest assembly of women knights in the nation.⁴² Troy's collar laundresses were again a significant part of the national labor movement. Their long but ultimately unsuccessful strike in 1886 was closely tied with the story of the influence and decline of the national Knights of Labor movement, as were later affiliations and activities by collar women of Troy in AFL-affiliated locals.

A last nationally-publicized strike was organized by Trojan collar starchers in 1905 with the support of the local Central Labor Federation and Iron Worker's Union, the Women's Trade Union League of New York City, Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor, and the International Shirt, Waist, and Laundry Workers Union. The ten-month strike was a failure, however, in the face of a united Collar Manufacturers Association, the opposition of the local press, and the lack of support from other collar workers. By 1906 labor unions had ceased to exist in the largely female work force of the collar industry.

Research has yet to confirm, but it seems quite possible that Kate Mullany continued to be active in organizing local women workers throughout her lifetime. Her death certificate lists her occupation as that of starcher, and one of the most prominent floral tributes at her funeral in 1906 was sent by members of Starchers Union No. 2.⁴³ In addition, at least two of the leaders of that starchers' strike, Rose Byron and Katie Fitzgerald, lived less than one block away on Ninth Street.

As the leader and organizer of Troy's first successful "bonafide" women's union, Kate Mullany was directly responsible for this strong tradition of women's union activity. Augusta Lewis, president of the Women's Typographical Union No. 1, travelled with Mullany on her fundraising trip to New York City in the summer of 1869. Biographical information strongly suggests that she was the author of a widely reprinted article in the New York Sun, July 5, 1869, by "A Working Woman." In that article she called the Troy Collar Laundry Union "a real working women's association", which acted to free itself rather than theorized. She pointed to the union as a national example of working women uniting for a common cause. "Others will be encouraged by their success, and be stimulated by their example to see to elevate their own

⁴²Turbin, *Working Women of Collar City*, p. 3; Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, p. 207.

⁴³*Troy Record*, August 21, 1906, p. 8; *Troy (New York) Times*, August 20, 1906.

KATE MULLANY HOUSE**Page 20**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

condition, as the female cap makers of this city are now doing. ... In thus elevating one class of workingwomen, the good results will be felt by every other...."⁴⁴

Her recognition on a national level for the accomplishments of the Troy Collar Laundry Union, as well as the position she held in her own right as the National Labor Union's first female assistant secretary, mark Kate Mullany as one of early American labor history's most important women. Her home at 350 Eighth Street, Troy, New York, the only surviving structure associated with her life and the physical embodiment of the true meaning of union activities, is truly deserving of National Historic Landmark status.

⁴⁴Turbin in Berkin/Norton, *Women of America: A History*, pp. 221-222.

KATE MULLANY HOUSE**Page 21**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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Turbin, Carole. *Working Women of Collar City: Gender, Class, and Community in Troy, New York, 1864-1886*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992.

Walkowitz, Daniel J. *Worker City, Company Town: Iron and Cotton-Worker Protest in Troy and Cohoes, New York 1855-84*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1978.

KATE MULLANY HOUSE**Page 22**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ Previously Listed in the National Register.
- ☐ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- ☐ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
- ☐ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
- ☐ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other (Specify Repository):

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: Less than one acre.

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	607900	4732560

Verbal Boundary Description:

The nominated property comprises the southern half of lot 30 in block 5, section 101.23, in the City of Troy, Rensselaer County, New York.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the southern half of lot 30 in block 5, section 101.23, that was historically used off and on by labor leader, Kate Mullany, her mother, three sisters, and one brother from 1869 until at least 1910. This is the only extant residence of this nationally significant labor leader and her place of residence during her period of nationally significant leadership in the labor movement.

KATE MULLANY HOUSE

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 23

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

II. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Page Putnam Miller (Director), Jill S. Mesirow, and Andrew Laas,
National Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History (Original 1992 Draft)
John W. Bond, Historical Consultant (Revised 1995)
Rachel Bliven, Historian (Revised 1997)

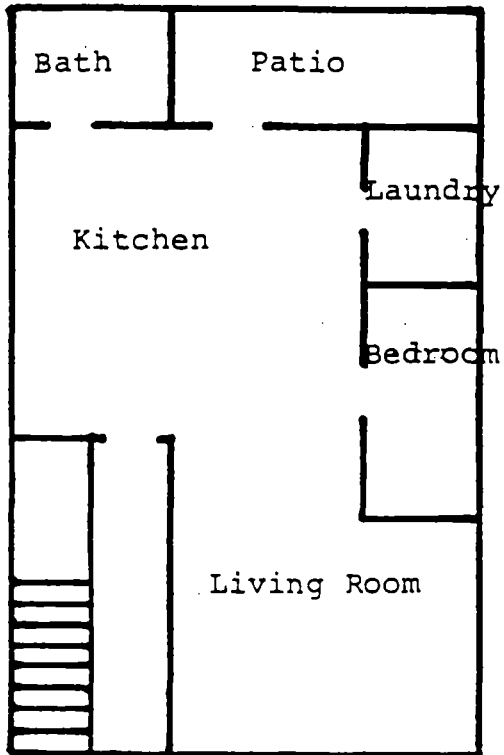
Telephone: 202-544-2422 (Page Putnam Miller)
609-424-4653 (John Bond)
518-283-6353 (Rachel Bliven)

Date: September 4, 1997 (Revised)

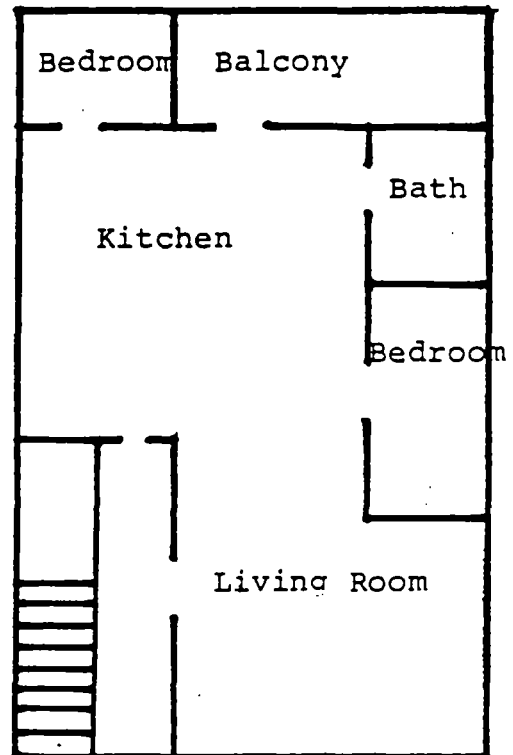
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY

September 4, 1997

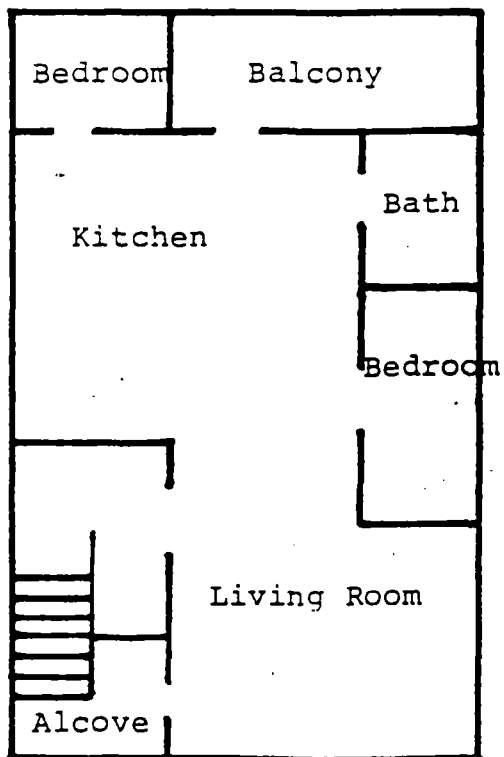
KATE MULLANY HOUSE
Troy, NY



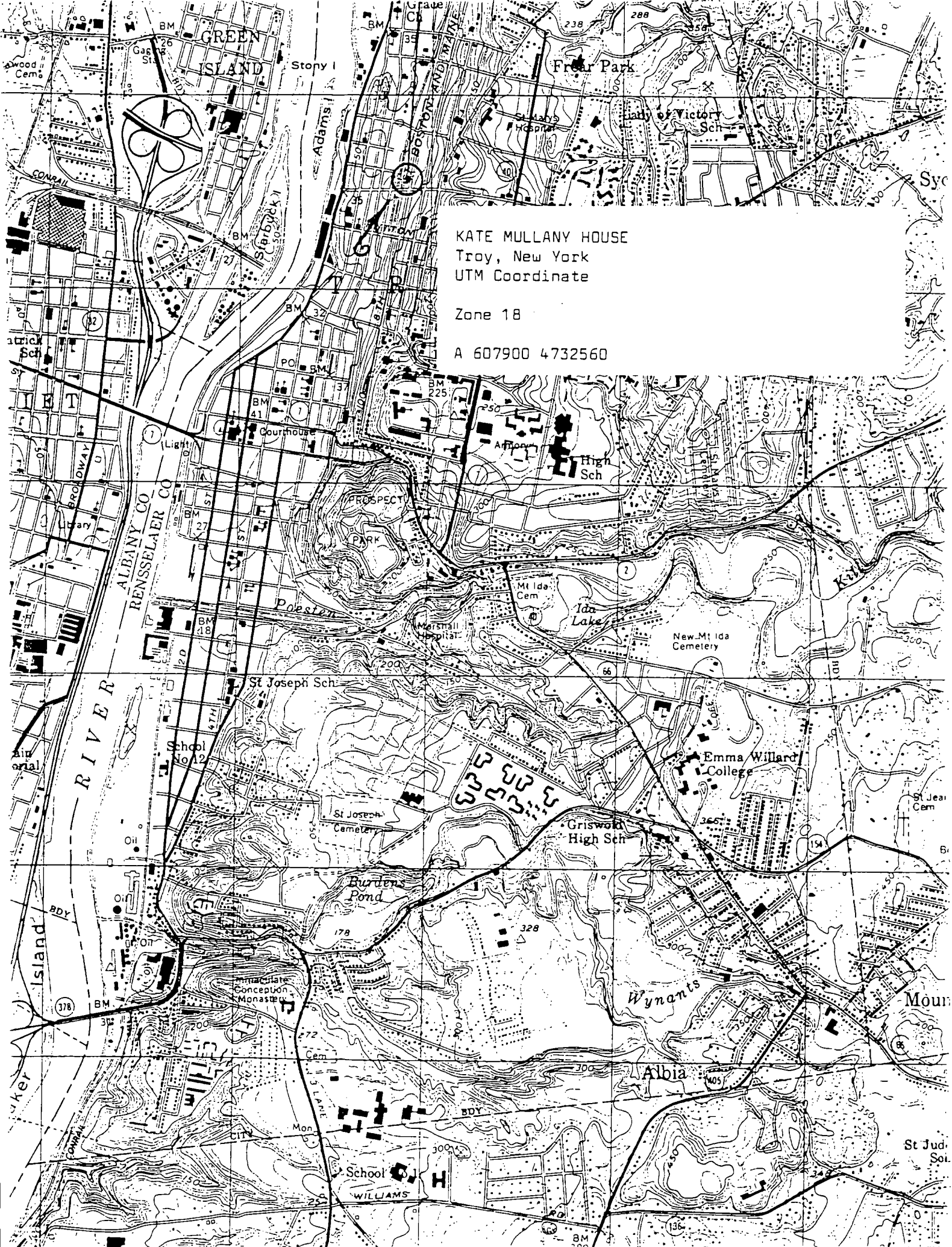
First Floor



Second Floor



Third Floor



KATE MULLANY HOUSE
Troy, New York
UTM Coordinate

Zone 18

A 607900 4732560