

## *Two Transatlantic Passages:*

### *The Convoluted Path of “The Helmsman of Lake Erie” to Poughkeepsie; Or,*

#### *How to Hide (and Smuggle) a Manuscript*

By Norman Barry

With the discovery of the June 7, 1845, issue of *The Church of England Magazine*, thoughts invariably turn to a genteel country parson penning his anonymous John Maynard sketch from the comfort of his half-timbered Elizabethan parsonage, possibly nestled in Kent or Surrey. Yet, to paraphrase my introduction to the October 2018 discovery [1], the irksome question must be entertained as to who in Britain would possess not only the knowledge of both the *Erie* and the *Swallow* steamboat tragedies, but also possess both the maritime writing talent, the imaginative genius, and – a *sine qua non* – the distinctive thought patterns or mental disposition, to create a new “Hero of Lake Erie.” [2] Or, viewed from the American side, which American author possessed the *means* to achieve fast publication in England? And *why* would an American writer opt for anonymity and go to such great lengths to cover his tracks by depositing his sketch in a Church of England publication?

The most obvious link between the two disastrous shipwrecks is suggested by the very name of the sketch, “The Helmsman of Lake Erie.” Augustus Fuller, the wheelsman of the *Erie*, died the night of August 9, 1841. According to the testimony of Captain T. J. Titus of the *Erie* before the Coroner’s Inquest, Fuller remained at his post in the vain attempt to reach the saving shore:

“Am of the opinion that I was the last person who left the *Erie*, when I left her, I heard much confusion but saw no person; think Fuller *remained at the wheel and never left it until burned to death*; he was always a resolute man in obeying orders.”

—From the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, Thursday Evening, August 12, 1841.

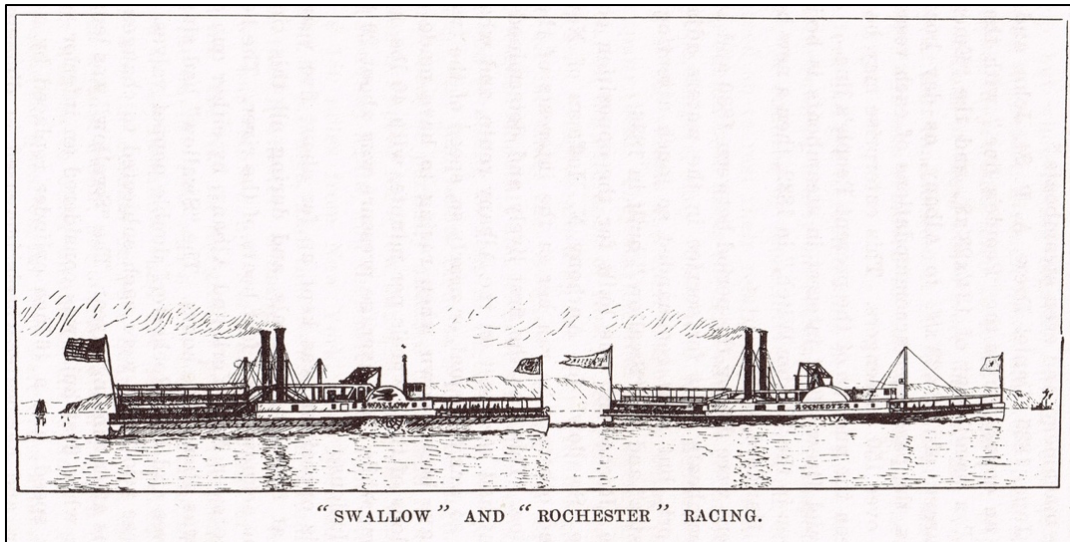
Although no documentation or testimony exists that Fuller *in fact* “remained at the wheel,” the seeds of the legend of John Maynard, a man willing to sacrifice his life for those of his fellow man, were given their historic origin. But what about the helmsman of the *Swallow*, William Burnett, on the dark and snowy night of April 7, 1845? He survived the tragedy only to be charged with negligence and manslaughter, the suspicion that the *Swallow*, one of the fastest steamers on the Hudson, had been engaged in a reckless race with the *Rochester*, always lurking in the background. On April 18, 1845, Burnett was indicted, Judge Samuel Nelson presiding. (Below: from *The Evening Post*, New York, Saturday, April 19, 1845).

**UNITED STATES CIRCUIT COURT.**  
**Before Judges Nelson and Betts.**  
**THE SWALLOW.**—Yesterday the grand jury came into court with an indictment for manslaughter against William Burnett, the pilot of the steamboat *Swallow*. He has not yet been arrested, but will probably surrender himself when he arrives in this city.

The reputation of the pilot of the *Swallow* was put on the line in Judge Nelson's Circuit Court. Appointed Associate United States Supreme Court Justice in February 1845, Judge Nelson of Cooperstown presided over the New York Circuit Court that tried William Burnett (*below*: "Appointment by the President," from *The Daily Richmond Enquirer*, Thursday, February 27, 1845). Nelson, who was the Chief Justice of the State of New York, was President John Tyler's only Supreme Court appointment, which was made only days before the end of Tyler's term of office (April 4, 1841 – March 4, 1845).

**APPOINTMENTS BY THE PRESIDENT,**  
*By and with the advice and consent of the Senate.*  
**Samuel Nelson, to be Associate Justice of the**  
**Supreme Court of the United States, vice Smith**  
**Thompson, dec.**

Although the *Swallow* had a history of racing against the *Rochester*, the charges levelled against Burnett were unfounded. Burnett was acquitted in Judge Nelson's U.S. Circuit Court one year and 6 days following the *Swallow* tragedy.



The *Rochester* overtaking the *Swallow* in John H. Morrison, *History of American Steam Navigation* (New York: Stephen Daye Press, 1958), p. 53.

**U. S. CIRCUIT COURT—Monday—Before Judge Nelson.**

*The Case of the Swallow*—The trial of William Burnett, pilot of the steamboat *Swallow*, on an indictment for manslaughter, was resumed by Ogden Hoffman summing up on the part of the defence. The learned gentleman was followed by the U. S. District Attorney. Judge Nelson charged on the law and the facts. The jury retired about half past 4 P. M., and after an hour's absence returned with a verdict of *not guilty*. Burnett was immediately discharged, and received the congratulations of his friends. The court then adjourned.

—*True Sun* (New York), Tuesday morning, April 14, 1846.

William Burnett of the *Swallow* was rehabilitated in 1846. “The Helmsman of Lake Erie” not only rehabilitates but even *sanctifies* the helmsman’s profession: “*He died the death of a Christian hero—I had almost said, of a martyr.*” The Fuller legend is resurrected to transcend reality—the pilot Augustus Fuller does not die in vain (and is afterwards sadly forgotten). Instead of hundreds, he is the only casualty. The attack on William Burnett by a sensationalist press is foiled. The reputation, not of two pilots, but of the profession in general, is defended and reinstated.

Apart from Nelson’s overriding role in maintaining the impartiality of the court in the case of the maligned pilot of the *Swallow*, it should be mentioned that Nelson also had personal experience regarding the *Erie* tragedy of 1841. A boy not yet 12 years of age named Levi Beebe, was escorted by Chief Justice Nelson to Buffalo and placed on the ill-fated *Erie*.<sup>[3]</sup> The boy was one of the few who survived and did so with great stamina and heroism, qualities in part attributed to his training at the Cooperstown Military Academy, which Paul, Cooper’s son, and Rensselaer, Nelson’s son, had also attended. Of interest is that Cooper purchased the school!

“Their [William H. Duff and Mrs. Duff] school in Cooperstown occupied Apple Hill, which Cooper purchased during Duff’s occupancy. The novelist interested himself in the institution partly because his son Paul studied there.”

—*Letters and Journals*, Vol. III, footnote 2, pp. 344-345.

Consequently, Judge Nelson may also be considered a justifiable link between the *Erie* and the *Swallow* tragedies and a valuable source of information on both events.

As Nelson was Cooper’s closest friend and neighbor in Cooperstown—Cooper’s eldest daughter Susan went so far as to describe Nelson as Cooper’s “constant companion”<sup>[4]</sup>—it is clear that America’s premier author was in a privileged position to weigh the possibilities of a short sketch uniting aspects of both the *Swallow* and *Erie* tragedies and amalgamating elements into a thrilling maritime tale of civil courage and self-sacrifice.

With a consideration of the time lines involved, linkage between the tragedies of the *Erie* on Lake Erie (August 9, 1841) and the *Swallow* on the Hudson River (April 7, 1845) has been ascertained in the person of Captain Abraham H. Squires of the *Swallow*, who, as Captain of the steamer *De Witt Clinton*<sup>[5]</sup> in 1841 on Lake Erie, was instrumental in rescuing many of the survivors of the *Erie* conflagration.<sup>[6]</sup> In other words, the *Swallow* tragedy provided the spark that directed the anonymous writer’s creative talent not merely to the Hudson River tragedy but also to the much earlier tragedy on Lake Erie. This linkage and fusion of the two tragedies serves to explain why no “Helmsman” sketches have been encountered before April 7, 1845.

An astute reader may, at this point, interject, and question who, apart from the present researcher, could possibly recall the name of the steamer *De Witt Clinton* during the *Erie* rescue operation. To Cooper, the name DeWitt Clinton meant something. Clinton, as governor of New York, had been responsible for the construction of the Erie Canal, completed in 1825. Cooper, who regarded Clinton as “almost a model statesman”<sup>[7]</sup> had personally campaigned for Clinton in the 1820 election<sup>[8]</sup>. In 1826, Cooper appealed to Governor DeWitt Clinton for a recommendation to a post as consul during his lengthy stay in Europe. Clinton obliged<sup>[9]</sup>. In May 1826, Cooper was invited to attend the Bread and Cheese Club. An annotation in Beard’s *The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper*<sup>[10]</sup> states: “The farewell banquet given Cooper by the Lunch on 29 May 1826 was the most impressive public tribute he was to receive during his life.” Needless to say, Governor Clinton was also present.

The rescue operations to save the *Swallow* failed. [11] A barge, prophetically named the *De Witt Clinton*, itself sank in the Hudson alongside the *Swallow*, which it was intended to raise. This jarring incident stands in glaring contradistinction to the more fortunate rescue efforts of the steamboat *De Witt Clinton* in 1841 and could easily rub an admirer of Governor DeWitt Clinton the wrong way. [12] To add insult to injury, consider the very description of the desolate condition of the barge *De Witt Clinton*:

“The *John Mason* was sent to Albany for a barge and brought down the worn out and miserably leaky *De Witt Clinton*. She was entirely unfit for this service (still acting under the commands of the company), and as a consequence, she now lies at the bottom in about five fathoms [=30 ft.] water, being the deepest portion of the channel.

....

“When the old *De Witt Clinton* was taken to Athens Dock, all the fire engines were employed to keep her from sinking. ....

“The *Swallow* sunk, and the *De Witt Clinton* struck on the rock and stove a hole in her bow and filled.” — *New York Herald*, May 5, 1845

The recent discovery of the *Church of England* issue of June 7, 1845, exactly two months after the sinking of the *Swallow*, fits neatly into the time frame. At least two weeks elapsed before the American press finally provided sufficient coverage of detailed incidents involving the survivors and the maligned pilot of the *Swallow* William Burnett, information necessary for the resurrection and transformation of a tale of heroism of Augustus Fuller [13], the wheelsman of the *Erie*. It would take another two weeks to expedite the sketch by steamer to England. Add an extra week to schedule publication in the weekly *Church of England Magazine*. Authorship on the American side would have occurred between the last week of April and the second week of May. At this juncture it should be pointed out that Cooper had just completed writing his first Littlepage novel, *Satanstoe*, in the first week of May 1845 [14], although he still had to check the second-volume proofs before sending them off to his English publisher Richard Bentley in London.

8 New Burlington street, June 7, 1845.

**MR BENTLEY WILL PUBLISH DURING  
THE PRESENT MONTH THE FOLLOWING NEW  
WORKS:—**

1.

**MEMOIRS OF THE PRETENDERS AND THEIR ADHERENTS.**  
By J. HENRAGE JESSE, Esq. Author of “Memoirs of the Court of England,” “George Selwyn and his Contemporaries,” &c. 2 vols. 8vo. With Portraits from Original Paintings, &c.

2.

**SATANSTOE; or, the Family of Little-Page.**  
By J. FENIMORE COOPER, Esq. Author of “The Pilot,” “The Red Rover,” “The Pathfinder,” &c. 3 vols. post 8vo. (On Monday next.)

Richard Bentley was Cooper’s exclusive publisher in London, England, from 1832-1850 [15]. It was Bentley’s encouragement that had led Cooper to continue his Leatherstocking novels with the Great Lakes as the setting for *The Pathfinder, or The Inland Sea* (1840) [16]. In the advertisement above (*The Examiner*, London, England, p. 308, c. 2, Saturday, June 7, 1845), the forthcoming publication of Cooper’s *Satanstoe* is announced on June 7, 1845, the very day on which “The Helmsman of Lake Erie” was published in *The Church of England Magazine*.



As announced, Cooper's *Satanstoe* was published by Bentley on Monday, June 10. In New York, *Satanstoe* was distributed by Burgess and Stringer eight days later on June 18. Cooper in his letter to Bentley of April 24, 1845, stated "I shall send the remainder of *Satanstoe* by steamer of the 16<sup>th</sup> May" [17]. Both the manuscripts to the second volume of *Satanstoe* and to "The Helmsman of Lake Erie" could conveniently have been carried by the same steamer.

As should be clear from the above, Cooper's publications were not limited to the United States. In fact, his best source of income was England, not the United States. As pointed out in Kay Seymour House's Historical Introduction to the SUNY edition of *Satanstoe*, "Small as the British sale of his books had come to be, they still earned Cooper more money than he got from the editions in the United States" (p. xxviii). In his letter to Charles Étienne Arthur Gayarré of Dec. 14, 1846, Cooper wrote:

"My clients, such as they are, are in Europe, and long have been, and there is no great use in going out of my way to endeavor to awaken a feeling in this country that has long gone out."

—*Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, p. 178. [18]

To get some idea of the complexities of Cooper's international literary business, consider the following process of publication of *The Prairie*, admittedly Cooper's more lucrative days, which he completed in Paris:

"From October 1826 through the last day of February 1827, installments of perfected Bossange proof sheets, or revises, were shipped to Carey and Lea in Philadelphia, to Colburn in London, to A. J. B. Defauconpret in Paris, the translator for Charles Gosselin, who paid Cooper 2000 francs for the rights to issue *La Prairie* as volumes XIX-XXI of the *Oeuvres Complètes*, and to a German translator in Zwickau. April and May 1827, then, saw five authorized editions of *The Prairie*—three in English, one in French, and one in German—which brought Cooper pounds, dollars, francs and marks."

—James P. Elliott, "Historical Introduction" to *The Prairie*, Cooper Edition, (SUNY, Albany, 1985), p. xvi.

James Fenimore Cooper refused to allow an authorized biography of his life and work. As a result, the man who created a literary fabric of legends through which Americans, even today, still see their country, has been screened from view. Only in the last few years have researchers been able to come to grips with the complexity and genius of the man, even though many documents have been lost. This paper has relied in part on the recent publication of Wayne Franklin's *James Fenimore Cooper: The Later Years*, in 2017. Franklin's *Early Years* was published in 2007 [19]. Franklin's two-volume biography represents an important scholarly step in coming to grips with Cooper, the legend-builder, the businessman, the speculator, the Episcopal churchgoer, the European traveler, the naval historian, the journalist and political analyst, by attempting to piece together a puzzle with many pieces still missing.

As Franklin points out: "The mid-1840's marked the peak of Cooper's productivity" [20]. Between June 1844 and July 1846, Cooper had crafted *five* (!) Hudson River novels: *Afloat and Ashore* and its sequel *Miles Wallingford* (both in 1844) and The Littlepage Trilogy of 1845-1846 (*Satanstoe*, *The Chainbearer* and *Redskins*). As if this were not enough, Cooper also completed his naval biographies in this time frame while taking an active interest in a court-

marital case in which he penned an “Elaborate Review.” [21]. He was literally overflowing with creativity and acumen.

Not only was Cooper’s imagination reworking experiences on the Hudson River in his novels, he knew the Hudson like the back of his hand. In an autobiographical note while comparing the virtues of the Hudson to the Rhine, Cooper makes this abundantly clear:

“I had been familiar with the Hudson River from childhood. The great thoroughfare of all who journey from the interior of the State toward the sea, necessarily had early made me acquainted with its windings, its promontories, its islands, its cities, and its villages. Even its hidden channels had been professionally examined, and time was when there did not stand an unknown seat on its banks, or a hamlet that had not been visited. Here, then, was the force of deep impressions to oppose to the influence of objects still visible.”

James Fenimore Cooper, *The Heidenmauer [=The Pagan’s Wall]; or, The Benedictines. A Legend of the Rhine* (1832), Introduction. Michigan Historical Reprint Series, (Hurd & Houghton, New York, 1868), p. viii-x.

Certainly, no other writer, whether in America or in Britain, knew more about the Hudson River and was *actively* engaged in producing Hudson River novels than was Cooper at the time of the *Swallow* tragedy.

One of Cooper’s earliest excursions into poetic writing was done as a young man for an itinerant minstrel. The “doggerel,” as his eldest daughter Susan labels it, consisted of “some thirty or forty stanzas, which have since been lost. The title, “Buffalo Burnt, or the Dreadful Conflagration” [22], referred to the British attack during the War of 1812 on Buffalo on December 30, 1814, the same war in which Washington, D.C., was razed to the ground. Composition was probably in the first months of 1815, in Cooper’s 23<sup>rd</sup> year. Although the War of 1812 (sometimes referred to as the Second War of Independence”) has long been forgotten in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it was as alive in the memory of Americans in Cooper’s day as the Vietnam War or “War on Terror” is for us today. If the verse has no other significance, it at the very least points to the port of Buffalo, the War of 1812, the strategic importance of Lake Erie in that conflict, and the devastation of an inferno, topics which awakened Cooper’s literary imagination from the very beginning of his amazing career as a writer.

“The Helmsman of Lake Erie” is more than an imaginative literary amalgamation of two tragic shipwrecks. Its core extends further back in American history to the Battle of Lake Erie in the year 1813. The sobriquet “Hero of Lake Erie” belonged in the year 1845 exclusively to Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry (1785-1819), whose American fleet, during the War of 1812 (an obvious misnomer), was the first in American naval history to defeat a British Royal Navy fleet attempting to gain control of the Great Lakes. That Perry’s maritime conquest could be in any way diminished by John Maynard’s heroic and self-sacrificing act of civil courage is a tantalizing question and a strong argument for an author’s anonymity. Consider the following comment prefaced to an issue of “The Helmsman:”

“We do not know who wrote the conjoined, nor where it first appeared; but we are sure the reader will agree with us that it is a most powerful narrative of a deed that should not be forgotten. In all the qualities of true glory, the “Helmsman of Lake Erie” stands far beyond the crowd of heroes who in blood-stained laurel, fill the niches of fame.”

*The Sun Weekly*, New York City, Oct. 11, 1845, p. 1

Or the final stanza in the ballad by Benjamin Brown French (1800-1870) [23]:

Build high a monument to him,  
Let not his humble name  
Perish, for he has nobly earned  
The richest mead of fame!  
Ye give *them* monuments who send  
Their millions to the grave!  
Then give JOHN MAYNARD one, who  
died  
A hundred lives to save!

*The Sun*, Baltimore, Maryland, Sept. 5, 1845, p. 1

In both the preface and the ballad, Maynard's act of civil courage is extolled to the detriment of acts of bravery in a military context.

Allegorical intent in "The Helmsman," injected to topple the militaristic Perry as "Hero of Lake Erie" and confirm a completely different sort of American hero—"JOHN MAYNARD one, who died /A hundred lives to save!"—would naturally arouse a hornet's nest of fury among the Perry faction. [24]

Cooper, in his capacity as naval historian, in the years following the 1839 publication of his definitive two-volume *History of the Navy of the United States of America*, became embroiled in a heated conflict between factions supporting Oliver Hazard Perry (Aug. 23, 1785 – Aug. 23, 1819), the "Hero of Lake Erie," and Jesse Duncan Elliott (July 14, 1782 – Dec. 10, 1845), Perry's second in command. Although initially praising Elliott for his conduct during the battle, Perry later claimed he had been "screening" Elliott, who allegedly had not provided sufficient support.

A "recasting" of the Battle of Lake Erie has been pointed out by Professor Steven Hartkorn in the climax of Cooper's *The Two Admirals* [25]:

"...second-in-command Admiral Richard Bluewater brings his ships into action in a late but timely matter to save his friend, the rash Admiral Gervaise Oakes, who has charged rashly into action against a French fleet without waiting for Bluewater, partly because he wishes to put his friend's divided loyalties to the test (Bluewater favors the cause of the Young Pretender, whom the French are aiding in an attempt to reclaim a kingdom in England that, arguably, is legitimately his.)"

—Hartkorn, Steven P, "James Fenimore Cooper, Professional Authorship, and the American Literary Market, 1838-1851." PhD. Diss., University of Tennessee, 2005, p.139.

The "new cast:" Sir Gervaise as Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry and Bluewater as Jesse Duncan Elliott, Perry's second in command. The charge of recklessness is levelled against the Commander, who is saved by Bluewater. That Cooper may well have regarded Perry's loss of the *Lawrence* as unforgivable, given James Lawrence's motto, "Never give up the ship" can easily be entertained. Cooper served as midshipman in the *Wasp* under James Lawrence. Both

he and Lawrence were Jerseymen born in Burlington. And both were on good terms personally. [26]

Perhaps the fact that Perry was obliged to quit the *Lawrence* and seek refuge in Elliott's *Niagara* before the engagement could be resumed had engendered the feeling that his victory was consequently tarnished, and a scapegoat (i.e., Elliott) was necessary. Integrating the two main players in the Battle of Lake Erie into the plot of *The Two Admirals* unveils Cooper's actual assessment of Perry. The charges: negligence and recklessness (which Cooper never dared to make public). It is a singular bit of good luck for Cooper that the obvious parallels with the Battle of Lake Erie were not spotted by the Perry faction. That Cooper could get away scot-free with *The Two Admirals* may have provided added incentive for the next recasting—only three years later: "The Helmsman of Lake Erie."

Cooper, on careful study of the records, did not fault Elliott in his *History of the U.S. Navy*, but felt him unjustly accused. Paradoxically, an historian's attempt at objectivity unleashed the wrath of the Perry family, Perry supporters, and a predominantly Whig press (hostile to any Jacksonian Democrat such as Cooper).

"As for the Lake Erie affair, it was an easy task to show the rascality employed against me, but cui bono? Few persons read my pamphlet [*The Battle of Lake Erie*, 1843], and I am still vituperated as the falsifier of history. The coarsest calumny that has been published against me, in connection with this affair has appeared since the explanations have been made. Unable to answer anything, it runs into abuse and accuses me of being *hired by Elliott!*"

*Letters and Journals*, vol. iv, #747 Letter to William Gilmore Simms, Jan. 5, 1844, pp. 437-438)

Although Cooper successfully defended his good name in court, the American press, then predominantly Whig, was quick to treat Cooper either disparagingly or – perhaps even worse – to ignore him and his works completely. With regard to the *Chainbearer*, for example, Cooper wrote:

"I can hear nothing of *Chainbearer*. The papers are mum, as usual, but I know it sells pretty well. They cannot put me down entirely, though they do me infinite harm. A precious set of dishonest knaves are they!"

—*Letters and Journals*, vol 5. #844 Letter to Mrs. Cooper, Nov. 30, 1845, p. 101. [27]

The degree of frustration pent up in Cooper is evident in his letter to James Kirke Paulding, (American author and Secretary of the Navy under Martin Van Buren) from May 19, 1846:



My last bargain with B & S. (=Burgess and Stringer) was a complicated one, including the use of plates of no less than three old books, besides the new one. The price paid was \$1500. The two preceding books, however, sold each an edition of 3500 for \$1050, the plates at my cost. I do not think the three last books will net me much more than \$500 a book. B & S. say they have not sold the first editions of *Satanstoe* and *Chainbearer*.

I make no doubt you can do much better, as the press is a solid phalanx against me, and I am unpopular with the country, generally – Indeed, were it not for the convenience of correcting proof sheets, I would not publish in this country at all. I have a work in contemplation, that will be secured here, to cut off the profits of pirates, but which I do not mean to publish in America, at all, any farther than may be necessary to secure the copy right. If they will not pay, they ought not to read.

If I were fifteen years younger, I would certainly go abroad, and never return. I can say with Woolsey, “if I had served my god with half the zeal I’ve served my country” it would have been better for me. You and I have committed the same error; have been American – whereas our cue was to be European, which would have given us success at home.  
—*Letters and Journals*, vol. v, pp. 131-132

That the press was a “solid phalanx” against Cooper was acutely felt the very day before the steamboat departure of May 16 to his British publisher. Not just William Burnett was in the firing line by an unsympathetic press. Cooper’s nephew Richard Cooper, in a libel suit brought before the New York Supreme Court against Greeley & McElrath of the *New-York Daily Tribune* was counsel for his uncle. [28] In his closing statement, Richard Cooper made the following remarks in defense of the right to defend oneself from libel:

“...he [=Richard Cooper] had always thought that no moral discredit attached to the bringing of a libel suit. And if the high privileges claimed for the press by defendant’s counsel (Seward) be conceded, that press which he says is so entirely beyond control, I suppose we shall soon hear revived in its favor the exploded doctrine of passive obedience and divine right, and that we must bow to the arbitrary dictates of their will. For it amounts to this to say that a party who is libeled, cannot bring a libel suit against the slanderer, without subjecting himself to a second attack of libel, which last is to be held up as perfectly justifiable.”

—“The Law of Libel in the State of New-York. In Supreme Court May 15,” *New-York Daily Tribune* (Editors Greeley & McElrath), May 19, 1845, p. 1

Indeed, many Americans, including some of the good citizens of Cooperstown, did not even regard Cooper as “American,” although his father was the founder of Cooperstown! Cooper, together with his wife, four daughters and son, had lived abroad in France, Switzerland, England and Italy for seven years and had travelled extensively in Germany. Even his diction was generally regarded as British [29]. (He reprimanded his son Paul when he started to drawl. [30].) The DeLancey family into which he married was also historically pro-British (and in some cases even Loyalist). Cooper, on the other hand, remained an advocate of Jacksonian democracy and was deeply distrustful of the British (and most monarchical Europeans apart from the democratic Swiss) due to their desire to see the fledgling American republic falter. Anne Charlotte, the elder sister of his wife, Susan DeLancey Cooper, was also British and had been located in England close to London since the 1790’s without any pressing desire to return to the United States [31]. It is also quite probable that had Cooper found sufficient means to extend his family’s lengthy European stay, he most certainly would have done so, particularly in his beloved Italy.

What can be said about Cooper's own personal experience on Lake Erie? In Cooper's final "forest romance," *The Oak Openings; or, The Bee-Hunter* (1848), we find an autobiographical annotation:

"iii. In crossing Lake Erie, within the last few months, the writer, in a run of twenty-four hours, counted no less than sixty-three vessels, met, overtaken, and seen. He remembers that water, in the first ten years of the present century, when a single sail was an object of interest and curiosity. The change must have been witnessed to be appreciated."

In the novel, Cooper goes on to predict the future of the Great Lakes:

"....those wild and inland seas of fresh water, which then were seldom plowed by a keel; which have since got to be familiar with the steamer, the propeller, brig, ship, and schooner; and which, ere the close of the present century, will, in all probability, be whitened, like the Mediterranean, with the canvas of the thousand craft that will be required for navigation of their borders."

—James Fenimore Cooper, *Oak Openings*, p. 118 (Ch. XI, Cambridge Scholars Publishing)

In 1834 after Cooper's return from Europe (1826-1833), and perhaps attempting to emulate his father as a land speculator, he unwisely invested some of his extra cash (\$6000) in frontier land in Michigan Territory. Although Cooper was never able to recover the total amount of his investment, he was in part compensated by more than a dozen lots in Kalamazoo in 1841. [32]. In late October 1844, he was awaiting word from Detroit regarding his investment gone sour and whether his presence in Michigan might be required [33]. On May 13, 1845, Cooper received both a letter with a draft from Detroit, apparently again involving his holdings in Michigan [34]. On July 4 he bemoaned "no news from Detroit," and on July 11, 1845, he wrote to his wife from his hotel at Heads, Philadelphia:

"I have heard from Detroit, enclosing (for) \$450 more, which make \$3650 *retirés du feu*" [=drawn from the fire].

—*Letters and Journals*, vol. v, #812 Letter to Mrs. Cooper, p. 45.

The flawed Michigan speculation, just as the battle with the press over the Battle of Lake Erie, were definitely on Cooper's mind in 1845, as was the sudden failing health of Commodore Elliott in the second half of that year. From 1847 to 1850, Cooper was obliged to travel to Michigan at least five times in futile attempts to retrieve his investment. The fruit of his initial stays in Michigan was the novel *The Oak Openings*, set in Michigan at the beginning of the War of 1812. Here, again, Cooper returns to America's inland freshwater seas. The setting with its focus on the clearing has been described as "the most consistently drawn Edenic landscape in all of Cooper's fiction" [35]. Although the initial setting is along the Kalamazoo River, the action towards the end of the narrative moves from Lake Michigan to Lake Huron and ultimately to Lake Erie, the home of the bee-hunter being none other than Erie, Pennsylvania, the point of departure of Perry's fleet [36] on setting out to confront the British in 1813. The tenor of *Oak Openings* is conspicuously religious. A missionary given the name "Pastor Amen" together with a corporal and Scalping Peter join the bee-hunter's party. Although Pastor Amen is not taken seriously due to his pet theory that the American Indian represents a lost tribe of Israel, his martyrdom at the hands of the savages creates a Christian role model in which through *love of God* man can attain the strength of character to face death praying for our enemies [37]. On observing how Pastor Amen died, Scalping Peter was transformed: The final

paragraph of *Oak Openings* begins with Peter's exhortation, "Stranger, love God," which recalls the roots of John Maynard's religion:

"He was known, from one end of lake Erie to the other, by the name of honest John Maynard; and the secret of his honesty to his neighbours was his love of God."

—"The Helmsman of Lake Erie," *The Church of England Magazine*  
(London, England), No. 32, June 7, 1845, p. 365.

That a failed land speculation would yield literary fruit in the form of *Oak Openings* borders on irony [38]. That all the acrimony and libel accruing from a naval historian's attempt to depict America's naval history objectively would lead to the creation of perhaps the most moving and fast-paced tale of civil courage in early American literature can only reflect upon the stature of the writer.

It should also be pointed out that Cooper in the mid-1840's was turning his literary attention to the lives of the common sailor before the mast. The purported "autobiography" of Cooper's friend from his merchant ship days, Ned Myers, which was "edited" by Cooper was published in November 1843 [39].

Clearly, the coordinates of Cooper's life and predilections point in one direction: "The Helmsman of Lake Erie."

Yet, why would Cooper have chosen to publish anonymously and, to hide his tracks, by opting for England as the first place of publication?

Granted it was a powerful, well-written, and compelling tale [40], but to Cooper's enemies it would have been proof that Cooper, the legend builder, was so prejudiced against Perry that he would actively attempt the demolition of the Perry legend by supplanting Perry with a new (and dare we say, purer?) "Hero of Lake Erie." Too good to destroy yet too hot to handle: anonymity was the only answer.

At the time "The Helmsman" was in the making, Cooper was also thinking of his eldest daughter Susan's beginning literary career. Susan's first novel, *Elinor Wyllys*, was to be launched anonymously in England under the auspices of his London publisher Richard Bentley. Cooper, who secured the copyright, provided his name as the editor of the novel. On May 4, 1845, he wrote the following line to his wife:

"Tell Sue I have read some of her sheets and sent on others that I have not read."

—*Letters and Journals*, #800. Letter to Mrs. Cooper, p. 25.

In his August 1845 Preface to *Elinor Wyllys* [41], Cooper wrote:

“It will be more honest to confess, at once, before the reader undertakes the first chapter, that the tale now before him is a first appearance in print – a first appearance, too, of one who, even now that the formidable step is taken, feels little disposed to envy the honors of authorship. .... If there are books which *must* be read, stupid or not, owing to the claim of a great name on the binding, the present story is not one of the number, and perhaps the perfect liberty enjoyed by the reader under such circumstances – to like or dislike, independent of critics to cut every leaf, or skip a dozen chapters at a time without fear of reproach – will incline him to an amiable mood.”

Was Cooper thinking only of his daughter’s novel, or were the thoughts in the preface in part also a reflection of his own situation with regard to “The Helmsman,” in which potential critics, not knowing his identity, would be muffled, and the sketch could be appreciated on the basis of its own merits?

In Cooper’s difficult allegory, *The Monikins* (1835), a clever way to avoid discovery of a manuscript which should indeed remain anonymous, was the ruse of transatlantic publication. The first-person narrator was to smuggle Viscount Householder’s controversial manuscript of *The Monikins* to America. Why?

[Viscount Householder:] “I have long hesitated about publishing the accompanying narrative, for in England there is a disposition to cavil at extraordinary facts, but the distance of America from my place of residence will completely save me from ridicule.”  
—*The Monikins*, “Introduction”

To “save oneself from ridicule,” why not reverse the passage by smuggling a manuscript from America to England?

The notion of a “ruse” was nothing new to Cooper. Already his very first novel, *Precaution* (1820), was touted as a “republished” British “import” to protect his identity while targeting Anglophile American readers—even though the novel’s anonymous publication in England was only to occur seven months later. As Cooper biographer Wayne Franklin puts it:

“Cooper probably enjoyed the deception involving making the book seem ‘English’ in order, as he put it, ‘to impose on the public,’ to trick his readers.”  
—Wayne Franklin, *James Fenimore Cooper: The Early Years*, p. 265.

Cooper succeeded in tricking not only the Americans into believing he was English, but even the English were duped. (Many readers even intuited a female author although, at the time, women—not men—dominated the novel writing market.)

“*Precaution* received only one American review; the three British journals that noticed the book were generally favorable, and none perceived that the writer was an American.  
—George Dekker and John P. McWilliams, Editors, *Fenimore Cooper, The Critical Heritage* (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 27

Not quite three years after publication of “The Helmsman” in *The Church of England Magazine* (located in London, England), Cooper, in a postscript, confessed to Bentley, his London publisher, where he hid his manuscripts. (It will be recalled that Bentley himself could easily have passed on the manuscript to the Anglican magazine.)

Bentley was worried that a competing publisher, Thomas Cantly Newby, in London, had somehow illicitly received as much manuscript to Cooper’s *Oak Openings* as he himself had. Would Bentley, and he alone, receive the remaining manuscript and copyright? [42]

To reassure Bentley, Cooper responded:

“A good deal of *Openings written*, several chapters, that is lying in my family bible, where I always keep my manuscript. Thieves never touch a bible.”  
—*Letters and Journals*, #941. To Richard Bentley, April 25, 1848,  
vol. v, p. 349.

As Wayne Franklin pointed out, “He had been using his family Bible as a sort of safe for manuscript” [43]. But where should he send the manuscript of “The Helmsman” where it would be kept in “a sort of safe,” in this case, an identity safe? Surely the bosom of the Church of England would do, i.e., *The Church of England Magazine* [44].

Cooper’s brother-in-law, the Right Honorable William Heathcote DeLancey (1797-1865), was the first bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Western New York. He resided in Geneva, New York, where he was active in his support of Hobart College. Cooper’s son Paul also attended Hobart [45].

“...John C. Spencer was the Clintonian candidate for New York’s vacant U.S. Senate seat. More recently, Cooper had dealings with Spencer through their mutual involvement in the Episcopal Church. When, in 1838, the novelist was working to secure the bishopric of the new diocese of Western New York, for his brother-in-law, Spencer lent his strong backing to DeLancey, who won. [46] Conceivably, Spencer’s dispatch of his youngest son to Geneva that fall was yet another mark of his support for the Western Diocese, its new leader, and its small college.”  
—Wayne Franklin, *James Fenimore Cooper, The Later Years*, p. 339.

Bishop DeLancey or Cooper’s London publisher Richard Bentley would have sufficed to open doors to the *Church of England Magazine*. His wife’s eldest sister, Anne Charlotte, living close to London, represents yet a third avenue. [47]

Cooper lies buried next to his wife Susan in the Christ Church cemetery in Cooperstown. Both the land for the Church and the cemetery were donated by the Cooper family [48]. Cooper played an active role in Episcopal matters even though he did not become a confirmed member of the Episcopal Church until only about six weeks before his death on September 14, 1851, one day before his 62<sup>nd</sup> birthday. The ceremony was performed by his brother-in-law. Although Cooper lived the life of an Episcopalian, he was well aware that religion is often something that divides rather than unites the souls of men [49]. His decision to receive confirmation shortly before his death had much to do with his Episcopalian family:



“...on July 27 [1851] he was confirmed as a member of a congregation he had long served as the son of sometime Quakers but the husband of a confirmed Episcopalian. These steps he must have taken in full recognition that his health probably would not get better. He was sorely taxed by the long church service at the end of July and had clearly endured it because his wife and daughters pressed him to enter the fold around whose edges he had long tarried. His eldest daughter said it well when she noted ‘how very happy we have been made by the vitally important steps my Father has taken during the last year.’”

—Wayne Franklin, *James Fenimore Cooper, Later Years*, p. 518. [50]

Perhaps the worst that could be said of Cooper by a hostile American press would be that Cooper had clandestinely taken the manuscript out of the country, depositing it in an ostensibly innocuous journal under the misleading rubric “Juvenile Reading [51],” and – here the coup d’état! – immediately afterwards rerouted the sketch to its target audience in the United States [52], well knowing that no one would ever discover the writer’s identity after so many clever turns. Then he could sit back and with mild amusement watch all the hostile papers print and reprint a sketch they never would have published, had they been aware of the author’s identity.

As mentioned earlier, Cooper, refused to allow an authorized biography after his death, no doubt due to real concerns that his family might be subjected to harassment. What did he have to hide? Could it have possibly been “The Helmsman of Lake Erie” awakening the fury of the press and the Perry faction? If so, there is supreme irony that one of the most powerful depictions of civil courage in a maritime setting, which has moved readers in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany to this very day, should constitute that one “dark spot” in his life. The circuitous route of “The Helmsman” represents the complexity, the genius and the very human side of America’s greatest legend builder. Is it an overstatement to regard the sketch as one of the most fascinating literary whodunits in the literature of the Early Republic?

December 1, 2018, Henderson, Nevada, U.S.A.,  
with additional documentation added at intervals. Most recent update: May 25, 2021, Bad  
Schussenried, Baden-Württemberg, Germany

## Notes:

- 1) Norman Barry, “Sensational Discovery: ‘The Helmsman of Lake Erie’ First Printed in Britain!” Cf. <http://johnmaynard.net/CofEDiscovery.pdf>
- 2) The *old* “Hero of Lake Erie” was Oliver Hazard Perry in the Battle of Lake Erie, Sept. 10, 1813. (Perry suffered a premature death due to yellow fever in 1819 at the age of 34.)
- 3) *Salem Gazette* (Salem, Mass.), Friday, August 26, 1841, From the *Cleveland Herald*, Aug. 24., “BURNING OF THE ERIE:” <https://johnmaynard.net/Eyew1.pdf>

and *New-Bedford Mercury* (New-Bedford, Mass.), Fri. Aug. 27, 1841 in N. Barry, "Two of the *Erie*'s Lost and Saved: James Fenimore Cooper's Personal Links with the 1841 *Erie* Tragedy," p. 3: [https://johnmaynard.net/LINKAGE\\_2.pdf](https://johnmaynard.net/LINKAGE_2.pdf)

4) Susan Fenimore Cooper, "Introductions to Novels by James Fenimore Cooper" in the Household Edition of the works of J. Fenimore Cooper (New York and Cambridge: Houghton, Mifflin and Co.), Introduction to *The Crater* (1847): <http://jfcoopersociety.org/susan/susan-crater.html>.

5) The question whether "de," the "nobility particle" [see *Wikipedia*], should be "DeWitt" or "De Witt" and, in Cooper's wife's maiden name, "DeLancey" or "De Lancey," is apparently not subject to a quick answer. To avoid the quandary, the 1841 coverage of the loss of the *Erie* simply referred to the steamboat *Clinton*. Otherwise, it would seem that the steamboat and the barge were generally referred to as the "*De Witt Clinton*." James Franklin Beard's *Letters and Journals* uses "De Lancey" whereas *Wikipedia* opts for "DeLancey." (Even "deLancey" has been found.)

6) a) Norman Barry, "A Reevaluation of the Impact of the Swallow on the Creation of 'The Helmsman of Lake Erie.' The Literary Transformation of Two Shipwrecks, One on Lake Erie and the Other on the Hudson River, together with a Time Frame for Smuggling a Manuscript to England:" <http://johnmaynard.net/Squires.pdf> and

b) The Genesis of the 1845 'Helmsman of Lake Erie' in a Nutshell:" <http://johnmaynard.net/Genesis.pdf>.

7) *The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper*, ed. James Franklin Beard, 6 vols., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960-1968. (Referred to in this paper as *Letters and Journals*), vol. 1, Annotation, p. 129.

8) *Letters and Journals*, vol. 1, #24 Letter to Peter Gansevoort, Scarsdale—April 19<sup>th</sup> 1820, pp. 39-41, and Rosaly Torna Kurth, *Susan Fenimore Cooper, New Perspectives on Her Works*, Universe Books, Bloomington, Indiana, 2016), p. 10: The assertion is made that Cooper at one time "was a personal assistant to Governor De Witt Clinton." Kurth's source is James H. Pickering, "Fenimore Cooper as Country Gentleman: A Glimpse of Cooper's Westchester Years." *New York History* 72 (July 1991), p. 308.

9) *Letters and Journals*, vol. 1, #77 Letter to DeWitt Clinton, pp. 129-130.

10) *Letters and Journals*, vol. 1, Annotation, p. 139.

11) The *Swallow*'s machinery was salvaged and some of her timber was used to build the "Swallow House" in the village of Valatie, New York:

<https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=56647>

12) That a ship could be much more than a mere piece of machinery was made clear in Cooper's *The Pilot*. The cockswain Long Tom Coffin's inseparable relationship to the *Ariel* and his willingness to go down with her, even though there was no apparent necessity, is a case in point. The notion that a ship, in and of itself, might function as a *character* in a novel had also been considered by Cooper: "a sea tale focused on ships that had 'no animal life about them'" and "devoid of human characters." The project

was abandoned—though not in its entirety—due to the reluctance of Cooper’s publishers.

See Wayne Franklin, *James Fenimore Cooper, The Later Years* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2017), p. 280. [Henceforth, *Later Years*.]

Also, James Fenimore Cooper, *The Two Admirals. A Tale* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1990). [Henceforth, *Two Admirals*.] Donald A Ringe, “Historical Introduction, pp. xvi-xvii:

“. . .he did not entirely abandon his unusual idea. Ships play a major role in *The Two Admirals*, especially in the second half, where the focus of attention is the battle between the British and French fleets. The English ships are given individual traits, sometimes resulting from their own characteristics—as being fast or weatherly—at other times deriving from the personalities of their commanders. . . .

“Though Cooper does not emphasize the point, the attentive reader is aware that the ships have been treated as something more than inanimate objects. They function very much like human characters.”

13) Mistakenly reported by the press as Luther Fuller, the young wheelsman of the *Erie* was Augustus Fuller. Cf. Norman Barry, “Why Luther?” Online: <http://johnmaynard.net/Fuller.pdf>

14) *Later Years*, p. 382: “Cooper then returned home [=Cooperstown] to finish writing the second volume [of *Satanstoe*], which he brought to Philadelphia and left with the stereotyper while he himself attended the May 8 [1845] wedding of Shubrick’s daughter Mary to Dr. George Clymer in Washington.” [Henceforth, Franklin, *Later Years*.]

15) *Letters and Journals*, vol. 2, p. 42:

“Richard Bentley (1794-1871), from a family of expert printers, had joined Henry Colburn’s firm about 1829. Like Colburn, he was an enterprising publisher. He cultivated literary men, including Charles Dickens, who edited Bentley’s *Miscellany* for a time, published much popular fiction, and augmented the *Standard Novel Series* to 127 volumes. Bentley was especially interested in American writers; and, after Colburn’s withdrawal from the house in 1832, Cooper had no other British publisher.”

—Quoted from DNB: Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, eds., *Dictionary of National Biography* (New York and New Haven: MacMillan and Company and Smith, Elder and Company, 1885-1912), 63 volumes.

16) Richard Delworth Rust, “Historical Introduction,” p. xv of James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Pathfinder, or the Inland Sea* (State University of New York Press, Albany). Sources cited: *Letters and Journals*, Vol. III, p. 370, ftn. 3, Bentley’s appeal; p. 393, Cooper’s positive response, dated 18 June 1839. See also Royal A. Gettmann, *A Victorian Publisher: A Study of the Bentley Papers* (Cambridge University Press, 1960), pp.102-103:

“The long association between Bentley and James Fenimore Cooper was altogether different from the short and troubled one with Dickens. It withstood what must have been a considerable strain [see footnote 17 for a prime example]—the dwindling value of Cooper’s copyrights from a peak price of £1300 in 1831 to the last and lowest price of £100 in 1850”  
— p. 102.

17) *Letters and Journals*, #795. Letter to Richard Bentley, vol. v, Otsego Hall, Cooperstown, April 24<sup>th</sup> 1845, p. 19. Indeed, although a break with Bentley did not come about, this letter makes it crystal clear that Cooper was obviously unhappy with financial arrangements with his British publisher in 1845 and no doubt would have changed publishers if he had found more favorable terms.

18) With regard to Cooper’s popularity in England, cf. *The Press* (Philadelphia), Jan. 20, 1859, p. 1, c. 5:

“It is very singular that, while in his own country, James Fenimore Cooper was the object of much hostile criticism, he was more popular in England, even than our friend Washington Irving; for while the popularity of Irving rested mainly on three works – the *Sketch-Book*, *Bracebridge Hall*, and *Knickerbocker’s History of New York* – Cooper attracted and enchained public attention by each successive work. We recollect with what anxiety a new novel by Cooper was expected in England, how eagerly it was devoured, how eulogistically it was criticized, how tenderly even its occasional anti-Anglican remarks were received. To this hour it is doubtful among novel-readers whether Cooper was more at home on land or sea. His Leather-Stocking series of fictions rivals his wonderful sea-stories. On the prairie, in the forests, on the lakes, and amid the hurricanes of the mighty oceans, Cooper is equally at home. Neither here, nor yet abroad, has he lost his popularity. In England his works have a great sale, for scarcely any bookshelf, even in a working-man’s humble home, but contains some of Cooper’s novels, side by side, with Scott’s. Here, where critics assailed them harshly, the public read him. The average sale of his novels has been 50,000 volumes per annum, each volume containing a complete work.”

19) Wayne Franklin, *James Fenimore Cooper: The Early Years*, Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 2007. [Henceforth, Franklin, *Early Years*.]

20) Franklin, *Later Years*, p. 385.

21) James Fenimore Cooper, *An Elaborate Review of Proceedings of the Naval Court Martial in the Case of Alexander Slidell Mackenzie*, 1844. Mackenzie had been a sharp critic of Cooper’s portrayal of the Battle of Lake Erie.

22) Susan Fenimore Cooper, *Pages and Pictures, from the Writings of James Fenimore Cooper with Notes by Susan Fenimore Cooper* (Castle Books, 1980: Reprinted with modification for the convenience of the reader, from the original 1865 edition, Secaucus, N.J., 07094), 1. Introduction, pp. 20-21.

23) Norman Barry, "The Road to Baltimore in the Lives of James Fenimore Cooper and Benjamin Brown French: An Investigation of the Place and Publication of a Lake Erie Sketch and Ballad". Cf. <http://johnmaynard.net/Baltimore.pdf>

24) Norman Barry, "The Battle of the Heroes: The Creation of a New Hero of Lake Erie. The Jackson – Elliott – Cooper Connection." Cf. <http://johnmaynard.net/MaynardJackson.pdf>

25) *Two Admirals*, Ch. XXVIII, pp. 402-405.

26) Franklin, *Early Years*, p. 123-125. Another aspect rarely considered is the way Cooper viewed ships, not merely as inanimate objects but as living beings endowed with personality and soul. See Donald A. Ringe's comment above in footnote 12. That the steamer in "The Helmsman of Lake Erie" was named the *Jersey* points to Cooper's own place of birth and the "filial piety" he felt for the Quaker state.

Cooper, in response to a letter informing him of his election to the New Jersey Historical Society wrote the following:

"Although I was taken from New Jersey an infant, some of my earliest schoolboy days were passed within her limits, and I have never lost the impression then made in her favor. . . .

"I shall not consider labor expended on behalf of New Jersey as time thrown away, but as a simple exhibition of *natural filial piety*." [=my emphasis]  
—*L&J*, Vol. V, p. 168, Letter 875. To William Adee  
Whitehead, Hall, Cooperstown, Sept. 18<sup>th</sup>, 1846.

27) Cooper's own statement ("the papers are mum") is corroborated in *Fenimore Cooper, The Critical Heritage*, ed. George Dekker and John P. McWilliams (Routledge & Kegan Paul: London and Boston, 1973), p. 22:

"Neither *Satanstoe* nor *The Chainbearer*, two of Cooper's finest works, seems to have been accorded even one literary notice."

A few positive American reviews were indeed forthcoming (see "Historical Introductions" in both the SUNY Cooper Editions of *Satanstoe* and the recently published Cooper Edition of *The Chainbearer*).

It should also be pointed out that reluctance to even comment on Cooper's works not only resulted from the feeling that Cooper was overly sensitive and consequently too prone to sue, but also that Cooper illicitly injected political views into his novels which, as works of the imagination, should not have been "tainted" with political considerations. An antiquated aesthetic prohibition involving the stuff that makes up a good novel (a hurdle Cooper never seems to have taken note of) would seem to have caused some reviewers to go "mum."

28) Franklin, *Later Years*, p. 648, fn. 77:



“Cooper sued Greeley late in 1841 for the anonymous report (written in fact by Weed) of the default verdict against Weed. This case resulted in a victory for the novelist in December 1842. A second two-count civil suit filed at that very time targeted other articles. Much delayed, the action was finally dropped by both men after they received split decisions in a May 1845 hearing.”

Even on the last day of 1846, it sounded like Greeley and McElrath were still licking their wounds [p. 1]:



— We must say they have an odd way of estimating damages at a Saratoga County Court, or else we have. We went there a few years ago, at the polite solicitation of J. Fenimore Cooper, had the pleasure of a trial, and were sentenced to pay \$200 and costs for expressing our decided opinion that Fenimore had behaved shabbily in a previous libel-trial against Thurlow Weed. So it seems that in Saratoga it is \$50 less expensive, beside costs, to knock down and drag out generally than it is to say you think a man in a public trial, brought on by himself, has pushed a casual advantage unhandsomely. We shall try to bear the distinction in mind, and, while carefully refraining from saying what we think of some Saratoga juries, if we should ever be inclined to get up a row and a miscellaneous knock-down at an Election, we will follow the Captain of the Empires' example and go up to Saratoga to start it.

29) To take only *Gleanings in Europe: The Rhine* (SUNY, 1986) as an example, references to Cooper passing as English occur repeatedly - pp. 89, 139, 196-197, 204 & 206.

30) *Letters and Journals*, vol. iv, #745 Letter to Paul Fenimore Cooper, Nov. 9, 1843, p. 426.

31) Franklin, *Later Years*, p. 3.

32) *Ibid*, p. 429.

33) *Letters and Journals*, #777 To the Committee of Arrangements of the New-York Historical Society, Oct. 31, 1844. vol. iv, p. 482.

34) *Ibid*, vol. v., #801 To Mrs. Cooper. p. 26.

35) H. Daniel Peck, *A World by Itself: The Pastoral Moment in Cooper's Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 50.

36) It should be pointed out that the base of Perry's fleet was Presque Isle, 4 miles from Erie, Pennsylvania:

"The port which the bee-hunter had in view was Presque Isle, now known as Erie, a harbor in Pennsylvania that has since been somewhat celebrated in consequence of its being the port out of which the American vessels sailed about a year later than the period of which we are writing, to fight the battle that gave them mastery of the lake."

– James Fenimore Cooper, *The Oak Openings*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Ch. 29, p. 325.

The ill-fated *Erie* was 8 miles off Silver Creek, New York, (roughly 60 miles from Erie, Pennsylvania) when she caught fire.

37) Cooper's second Littlepage novel, *The Chainbearer*, provides a moving clinical analysis of the amount of pain a dying Christian and non-Christian can sustain. Needless to say, the Christian is depicted as suffering less torment. Cf. Norman Barry, "'The Helmsman of Lake Erie' in Light of the Role Played by Religion in the Fictional Writing of James Fenimore Cooper – Or, The Secret Why the Good Man, When Dying, Does Not Groan." Cf. <http://johnmaynard.net/MARTYRSDEATH.pdf>

38) Wayne Franklin also comments on this aspect of irony: Franklin, *Later Years*, p. 441.

39) James Fenimore Cooper, *Ned Myers or, a Life before the Mast*, (AMS Press, Inc. New York), 2009. Hugh Egan, in his Historical Introduction, to the book, wrote:

"From 1808 to 1810, Cooper served as a midshipman in the U.S. Navy. To prepare himself for his naval career, Cooper spent a year as a common seaman before the mast from 1806 to 1807 in the merchant ship *Stirling* (or *Sterling*), under the command of Captain John Johnson of Wiscasset, Maine. It was during this voyage from New York to England that Cooper became close friends with the subject of this book, a thirteen-year-old cabin boy named Ned Myers."

There was, no doubt, a bit of literary rivalry between Cooper and Richard Henry Dana, Jr., whose *Two Years before the Mast* was published in 1840.

40) Although for today's reader, the distinction between fact and fiction is made with relative ease, it should be noted that the compelling tale of John Maynard was often regarded as based on fact. This, too, is a hallmark of Cooper. Even in *The Last of the Mohicans* (published Feb. 1826), Cooper's fictional characters were toasted nine years later as real people:

“If not literally real, they were compelling enough that individuals could be forgiven for mistaking them for real. At an 1835 meeting of the recently founded Improved Order of Red Men in Baltimore, toasts were thus made not only to a handful of specific Indian leaders but also to Uncas, Chingachgook, and Leather-Stocking – even to Magua.” — Franklin, *Later Years*, p. 268

41) Cooper penned a later preface dated Oct. 8, 1845, which, significantly, no longer contained his thoughts on anonymity. It should perhaps be pointed out that Susan’s first novel does not represent her first attempt at writing. On Sept. 23, 1843, Cooper wrote: “I have your manuscript, and shall sell all your tales together. This will be the best plan.” *Letters and Journals*, vol. iv, p. 411. P. 412, fn. 2: “Apparently these stories by Susan Fenimore Cooper were never published.” Rosaly Torna Kurth in her new biography *Susan Fenimore Cooper: New Perspectives on Her Works*, makes no mention of any earlier short stories. They would appear to be lost. Whether the unpublished tale of Natty Bumppo’s childhood in the Household Edition of Susan’s Introductions to Cooper’s Works was Susan’s or Cooper’s or a reconstruction of recollected conversations with Cooper remains a mystery. [See her 1876 Introduction to *The Deerslayer*, Household Edition (New York & Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1876, pp. xxiv-xxis, online in James Fenimore Cooper Society website.

42) *Letters and Journals*, vol v., p. 350, footnote 1, (Letter #941).

43) Franklin, *Later Years*, p. 387.

44) Cooper’s familiarity with the *Church of England Magazine* has been established through the *Protestant Churchman*, his diocesan New York City weekly, which generally offered a literary section (poetry, for example) in the first column of the first page. In Cooper’s letter of April 9, 1844, he related to his wife that he had met with Bishop Benjamin T. Onderdonk “on the subject of controlling the journal” and that the bishop had assured Cooper that an explanation of his position would be published in the *Protestant Churchman*. The bishop’s views were printed on April 13, 1844 (cf. *Letters and Journals*, vol. iv, p. 449 and p. 450,450, fn.6).

In the April 13, 1844, issue (p. 1, c. 1) a poetry section begins with the anonymous poem “The Exile,” which is attributed to the (London) *Church Magazine*, which can only be the *Church of England Magazine* published in London, England. Since Cooper had requested that the bishop make his views public in the journal, it is obvious that Cooper also read the issue in question.

From the (London) Church Magazine.  
**THE EXILE.**  
 I am torn from my home, from the land of my birth

In *Letters and Journals*, there are also two references to Cooper providing Letters to the Editor (vol. iv, pp. 419-424, Letter 744, to Samuel Seabury, for *The Churchman*, and vol. v, pp. 124-128, Letter 856, again to Samuel Seabury, for *The Churchman*, dated

Feb. 3, 1846. Apparently, the earlier Letter to the Editor, dated 7-21? October 1843, was lost. Its contents were taken from the *Protestant Churchman*.

# Protestant Churchman.

"BUILT UPON THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNER STONE."—Eph. ii. 20. . . . "EVANGELICAL TRUTH, APOSTOLIC ORDER."

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**VOL. I. NEW-YORK, SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 1844.**

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**THE PROTESTANT CHURCHMAN.**  
Conducted by several Clergymen and Laymen  
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From the (London) Church Magazine.  
**THE EXILE.**  
I am torn from my home, from the land of my birth,  
From all that I ever held sacred and dear;  
Separation enhances the rest of my life,  
And I think of them oft with a sigh and a tear.  
Yet deem not my spirit dotes fondly repine  
For joys, where the stamp of decay hath been set;  
But when memory restores me those all but mine,  
My heart loves to confess that they linger there yet.  
Though the spot I now tread is all barren and wild,

We prefer to show the effect of our Chris-  
tian nurture by other modes of action,—not by  
contentious disputations about this hallowed  
"right," or that "speculative opinion"—but by  
an orderly, decent, and Christian-like walk, in  
all things relating to the peace, prosperity, and  
unity of the Church of God,  
New York, March 25, 1844.

To the Right Rev. Benjamin T. Onderdonk, B. D.,  
BISHOP OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN  
THE DIocese OF NEW-YORK.  
We, the undersigned, Laymen of your Dio-  
cese, having noticed an Address to the Laity,  
which we deem erroneous in its sentiments, and  
ill-advised in its recommendations—in a word,  
(as it seems to us), to invite a partition contest, full  
of temptation under any circumstances—but in  
the Church of God to be above measure depre-  
cated; beg leave respectfully to offer you this ex-  
pression of our views upon the matter, to which  
that address refers, and of the reasons why we cannot  
conscientiously adopt the views of our brethren.  
The ground upon which their recommendation  
is based—is dissatisfaction at the action of the  
Bishop in relation to a protest offered at the close  
of the late Convention, against a portion of his  
annual address; forasmuch, as the Bishop then  
refused to receive the paper, so styled, or to  
allow any action upon it by the Convention.—  
We profess to copy either the portion of the Ad-  
dress objected to, or the protest, as both are in-  
finitely justified in all. But we earnestly desire to  
state a few brief considerations, controlling (as  
we suppose) the decision of this matter, and  
which we think it behooves us all, as Church-  
men, in the fear of God to bear in mind.  
1. The Protest was based upon the supposi-  
tion that the Bishop recommended "The  
Churchman" newspaper to the support of Epis-  
copalism. Now this he did not do, but only re-  
marked that it and other Journals which he  
named, had for years taught certain doctrines,  
which he (the Bishop) held to embody Catho-  
lic and evangelical truth.  
2. It asserts that the Bishop had commended  
the course" as well as "the sentiments" of  
that paper; which he did not do, notwithstanding  
it was well known to his official course.

**Communications.**

For the Protestant Churchman.  
**ADDRESS TO THE LAITY.**

Every true friend to our Church must ap-  
prove of the address "to the Laity," contained  
in the Protestant Churchman of Saturday, con-  
sidering as it does from gentlemen of the highest  
standing, and of known and tried principles—  
designed to awaken their brethren to a sense  
of the solemn responsibility that now rest upon  
them, and which alone ought to guide them in  
the approaching elections of Wardens and Visi-  
tation. I hope it will encourage them in the  
performance of their duty to the Church to read  
the following. I find it in "the Churchman"  
of April 20th, 1844, published at the New York  
Protestant Episcopal press.  
**Officers of the Press, Right Rev. BENJAMIN T.  
ONDERDONK, D. D., President; REV. JOSEPH M.  
WAINWRIGHT, D. D., 1st Vice-President.  
"DEUTY OF LAITY."—Does the duty of de-  
fending, illustrating, and explaining the truth  
rest upon the Clergy alone? Meads, Jaynes,  
Southey, Williford, (may I not add Mrs. Han-  
nah More?) thought not so. There are some  
minds more easily influenced on religious sub-  
jects, by a layman will say, than by the  
strongest arguments from a minister. Here  
there is something for laymen, as laymen, to do;  
something which it would seem by the ar-  
rangement of Providence, in the varied con-  
stitution of the human mind, was set apart for  
their action, at least for their co-operation. If  
a man have intelligence on any subject he will  
show it, his light cannot be hid, but without  
its rays on others. If every one cannot write,  
every one can converse, and there is hardly an  
individual who, in the ordinary intercourse of  
society, has not an opportunity, without for-  
wardness or parade, to communicate truth which  
he has settled in his own mind, and which may  
be of interest and benefit to others, and especial-  
ly to the cause of Christ, and his Church.  
I trust these admiring remarks will not be  
lost upon our lay brethren—never worthy to  
more seasonably.**

Right Rev. Bishop's connexion with that Dis-  
cussion unnecessary.  
The nearest visit addressed to one quarter  
was but another mode, and the most delicate  
one, of conveying advice nearer home. Did the  
Bishop order the mover of that resolution to  
take his seat and put a bridle on his lips?—  
Take this case in conjunction with another, on  
the face of the same record, the recommenda-  
tion made to the Bishop to cause Serjes pro-  
ceedings in a case of pre-contract, a resolution  
concerning which was entertained though re-  
jected by the Convention, and they will enable  
us to form a much more correct estimate of the  
tone of New-York Churchmanship in the days  
of old, than the language in which it is now at-  
tempted to depict it. The very end and substance  
of the chain advanced, in our day, may be com-  
pared in a single line.  
Sit idle, sit idle; sit idle, sit idle.  
LAW AND LIBERTY.

For the Protestant Churchman.  
**EXTRACT FROM MR. JAY'S WRITINGS.**  
(Copyright from his No.)

There are some who insist, that as God has  
commanded us to obey all laws which are  
made by those who have a right to enact them,  
therefore they are all of equal obligation so  
that a man incurs as much guilt by breaking  
the law which forbids the sale of oysters in  
June, as by violating that against murder. Our  
Saviour does not teach thus. The Sabbath, he  
says, was made for man, not man for the Sab-  
bath; it may therefore be broken if a higher  
duty require it, such as cleansing or lighting the  
temple, or killing beasts for sacrifice—or if it  
obscurely interfere with the offices of charity.  
He therefore healed on the Sabbath, and some-  
times intentionally ordered him whom he had  
healed, to carry his bed on that day.  
The Pharisees thought the scrupulous pay-  
ment of tithes, even of worthless herbs, of as  
much importance as justice and the love of God,  
and they were reprobated for it. There are con-  
sistencies in theology who think the form of a  
vestment, or the posture of a priest as weighty  
matters as his assent to the Articles of the  
Church, or the sanctity of a sacrament, or the  
Church authorize Presbyters to ordain one  
another! This is a point which the disputants  
always keep out of sight, for, as both Presby-  
terian and Episcopalian claim *jure divino*, they  
are both unwilling to meet the question. Bish-  
op White thought that, in cases of necessity, the  
question should be answered in the affirmative.  
I do not pretend to solve it, but to take such a  
step without the most urgent necessity, would  
I think, be the height of folly.  
The Bishop claims to be successor of the  
Apostles, and to have the same power over the  
Church. The Apostles, they say, created doc-  
trines of officers, and doubtless they might have  
created a dozen. Can Bishop Onderdonk cre-  
ate a new order in the ministry?  
Are we permitted to debate these questions?  
The right of private judgment is now denied.  
The Reformer calls on every one to judge  
for himself—to refer to the law and the testi-  
mony—to read the Scriptures diligently, like  
the Hebrews, and see whether these things were  
so or not. And it was by this means that the  
reformed Churches were established! Be so-  
soon as each reformed Church required as rigid  
a conformity to her own explications of Scrip-  
ture as the Romanists did to theirs, the re-  
formation ceased to spread. It was at first a call  
to liberty. But as soon as it offered nothing but  
choice of despotic masters, it ceased to be re-  
formative. If the layman must be in spiritual  
bondage, why should he prefer John Knox or  
Archbishop Laud, to the Pope? An hundred  
sects claim each to be the Catholic Church.  
How am I to know which has the best claim?  
Must I not look in the Scriptures for this pur-  
pose!—by no means, I am told, the Scriptures  
are authoritatively expounded by the Catholic;  
that is to say, by our own little Church, and  
all the rest of the Christian world are out of  
the Church. Well, may I not ask proof of this,  
and if proof is given, must I not judge as a juror  
would do of its credibility?  
But we are bound to receive the at-  
tention fathers as evidence of the true faith,  
and their works as supplementary to the New  
Testament, and of equal authority with it.  
There are many points on which these fathers  
are not agreed. Cyrrinus held baptism by  
immersion to be invalid. We do not see the

45) George L. Sixbey, "James Fenimore Cooper, Frontier Churchman," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 1966, p. 379. [Henceforth, Sixbey.]

46) See *Letters and Journals*, vol. III, pp. 339-340.

47) *Letters and Journals*, Vol. 1, p. 248, fn. 1, Letter # 126 to Marc Antoine Jullien, 24 February 1828:

"A few weeks earlier, Anne Charlotte De Lancey (1788-1852), Mrs. Cooper's oldest sister, had become the second wife of John Loudon McAdam (1756-1856), the aged builder of roads. Reared by an aunt and uncle, Judge and Mrs. Thomas Jones, in England, she was never in the United States. She was a Tory, like her foster parents."  
—*Story, The deLanceys*, 36, 38; DNB).

48) Sixbey, p. 376.

49) In *The American Democrat* (1838) under "On Religion," Cooper stated:

“The nation is sectarian, rather than Christian.

“Religion’s first lesson is humility; its fruit, charity. In the great and sublime ends of Providence, little things are lost, and least of all is he imbued with a right spirit who believes that insignificant observances, subtleties of doctrine, and minor distinctions, enter into the great essentials of the Christian character.”

Particularly in Cooper’s 1847 novel, *The Crater; or, Vulcan’s Peak: A Tale of the Pacific*, criticism of artificial subtleties in religious “sects,” with direct reference to the Episcopal Church, reflects Cooper’s own vision of the need for more tolerance in Christian churches in the hope of putting such differences aside:

*Mark Woolston, Governor of the South Pacific colony:* “...but Mr. Hornblower [=the Episcopal Priest] naturally wishes to make them [=the colonists] all churchmen [=Episcopalians].

*Bridget Woolston, Mark’s wife:* “It really seems to me, that he ought to be content with making them all Christians.”

—*The Crater*, Ch. 26, p. 407 (Putnam Edition).

50) Sixbey. That Cooper was baptized and confirmed only just before his death should in no way detract from his constant involvement in the Episcopal Church, his active representation of the church and his consideration of religion and the church in his writings. The final paragraph in Sixbey’s article (p. 385), states:

“After a life of activity in and for the church, Cooper was baptized in Christ Church, Cooperstown, on Ash Wednesday, 1851, and was confirmed there by Bishop DeLancey, his brother-in-law, on July 27, a little over a month before he was laid to rest in the churchyard he had helped construct years ago.”

51) That the 1845 sketch was placed under “Juvenile Reading” should not lead one to think that it had been altered so as not to harm the hearts and minds of tender youth or that the “original” is still lurking “out there.”





*Für die Jugend bearbeitet*

= *“Edited for Juvenile Readers”*

On the other hand, beginning in Germany in the very same year, Cooper’s Leatherstocking Tales were indeed being “adapted for young readers” (“Für die Jugend bearbeitet”). Here again, Cooper’s far-flung literary business was quite clearly international. Cf. Irmgard Egger (University of Vienna), “The Leatherstocking Tales as Adapted for German Juvenile Readers” (July 1984) in the website James Fenimore Cooper Society (<https://jccoopersociety.org> and *The James Fenimore Cooper Society JOURNAL* (Vol. XXX, No. 2 (Whole No, 84), Summer 2019, p. 60, fn. 3 (notes by Robert Becker).

52) *The Poughkeepsie Journal and Eagle* is the first place of publication in the United States. Date of publication: July 19, 1845. For an in-depth consideration of Poughkeepsie in connection with James Fenimore Cooper, cf. Norman Barry, “The Poughkeepsie Factor: The Link to James Fenimore Cooper?” Cf. <http://johnmaynard.net/Poughkeepsie.pdf> For Poughkeepsie translated as “safe harbor,” cf. p. 15 of the article.

**Hyssop, the, of Scripture (J. F. Royle, M.D., F.R.S.)—**  
 No. I., Dviii. 92.  
 II., Dxiv. 179.

**Intemperance (Canada Temperance Advocate), Dix. 109.**

**Jonah's Gourd (C. M. Burnett, esq.), Dxi. 142**

**JUVENILE READING—**

**Prasca Loupouloff, Dxvii. 219 ; Dxxviii. 233.**

**Erick's Grave, Dxx. 270.**

**Forget-me-not, Dxxiii. 310.**

**Helmsman, the, of Lake Erie, Dxxvii. 365.**

**Mummy-pits of**

**Nathan's Mission**

**Nellore, the Miss**

**Northernmost Ch**

**Newton Priory, C**

**Newton, rev. J.,**

**Oil upon the Wa**

**Dxxiv. 341.**

**Pantheon at Rom**

**British Empire**

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