



National Park Service photo

Servants and sometimes farmhands would gather in the servant's dining room located in the cellar of President Van Buren's home.

Irish Immigrant Workers in Antebellum New York: The Experience of Domestic Servants at Van Buren's Lindenwald

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Domestic service presented a problem to nineteenth-century Anglo-Americans. Political ideology celebrated republican equality and independence; "servitude" and "slavery" were metaphors for the worst political perils. Domestic ideology glorified the home as an insular "haven in a heartless world," safe from the discord of public life. [1] Yet these ideals clashed with the wish for household servants, which introduced large numbers of Irish Catholic immigrants into northern homes, blurring the supposedly separate public and private "spheres" and causing that bane of nineteenth-century "true womanhood," the "servant problem." Domestic service has been a problem for historians, too, because the preponderance of documentary evidence about servants was written by the very Anglo-American employers for whom domestics symbolized the dissonance between cherished ideals and the real world of the nineteenth century.

Ralph Waldo Emerson speculated on the relationship between antebellum class-based political strife and the "servant problem" in 1840:

The case of the menaced & insulted monarch is not quite aloof from our own experience . . . For see this wide society in which we talk of [the interests of] laboring men [and yet] we allow ourselves to be served by them. We pay them money & then turn our backs on them . . . [T]his tree always bears one fruit. In every household the peace of the pair is poisoned by the malice, slyness, indolence, & alienation of domestics. In every knot of laborers or boys the rich man . . . does not feel himself among friends but . . . enemies[,] and at the polls he finds them arrayed in a mass in distinct opposition to him. Yet all these are but signs of an opposition of interest more deep which give[s] a certain insecurity &

terror to all his enjoyments[,] for he feels himself an insulted & hated noble. [2]

Emerson testified to the essential unease wealthy and middle-class antebellum northerners felt with the introduction of the human embodiment of the European identified class system into American democracy and into American homes.

Emerson's reference to the political independence of what he perceived as a hostile laboring class also registers an important change in the male workplace. The old order of commercial capitalism had been based on a less exploitative, even paternalistic, relationship between employer and employee in which employers were responsible for the moral and physical well-being of their employees, as well as for their apprenticeship in a trade. This gave way to new relationships characteristic of the industrial order, in which the responsibility of the employer for the welfare of the employee was diminished if not eliminated. To meet the needs of an increasingly competitive market, employers in the new manufactories asserted the freedom to fire employees at will and imposed a rigid "work discipline" on their workers. During the decade heralded by Emerson's observations) this change coincided with the massive influx of Irish immigrants, many of whom could vote as a result of the recent realization of white manhood suffrage. Soon the old Jeffersonian vision of a nation of independent rural republicans became more elusive than ever as America's own "dark satanic mills" drew hundreds of thousands of poor immigrants whose arrival transformed the north. [3]

Secondly, household service was a problem in domestic ideology because it was the reified Victorian home that was supposed to protect each middle-class family from the ravages of the turbulent public realm. Yet, as Fay Dudden explains, domestic service introduced into the "private sphere" the ethnic and class conflict that had rocked the political world. According to Emerson, it was this tension that inhibited the private "enjoyments" of the middle class. The transition from the traditional employment of "help," the familiar neighbor girls of essentially the same cultural background as their employers, to the hiring of Irish Catholic "domestics" was the equivalent of the change in the public male workplace. Women employers and employees now keenly experienced the divergence of interests outlined by Emerson. Dudden points out that "the home" of Victorian prescriptive literature was in reality highly permeable to the infusion of such values as "time discipline" from the public world of men. [4]

Nevertheless, as both the trades of men and the textile production of women (in which "help" was so often employed) gradually left the home to be taken over by factories, "the home" took on greater symbolic power as the culture's moral center, locus of women's special responsibility to offset the turmoil of the morally corrosive, highly competitive male world of business and politics. Middle-class women, now ensconced in "woman's sphere," were less engaged in productive labor and more engaged in the symbolic labor of elaborate calling and dining rituals, which are so deeply associated with Victorian life. Dudden suggests that the paid labor of poor women freed middle-class employers from the drudgery of housework to pursue education and participation in reform. Hence the meaning of Dudden's double-edged title *Serving Women*.

However, domestic service also made the middle-class "cult of domesticity" possible, for while "ladies" cultivated personal delicacy in ever more genteel domestic settings, immigrant and black women were assigned the back-breaking labor of maintaining stylish parlors and wardrobes, the props upon which the intricate iconography of the Victorian home was constructed. [5] Dudden argues that the change from "help" to "domestic" was rooted in such an "elaboration of employers' needs." [6] But the shift away from "help" and to "domestic") laborers introduced a

rough-and-tumble marketplace style of conflict into the home, sullyng the wished-for placidity of the "woman's sphere." Domestic service disrupted the ideal of "the home" even as servant labor made the lavish Victorian lifestyle possible.

Of course, because men could vote and women could not, the modernization of the male workplace translated into the unmuffled political excitement of the Jacksonian era. It was this climate of political experimentation that nurtured the rise of the brilliant and opportunistic Martin Van Buren (1782-1862), dubbed by detractors and boosters alike the "Little Magician," or the "Red Fox of Kinderhook." Historians have linked the decline in republican values in the workplace to the political ferment that spawned the second American party system, that is, to the rise of the Whigs in opposition to the Democrats, the latter the vehicle of Van Buren's ascent to power and the former the agent of his downfall. [7] The contours of the Jacksonian period have been the subject of a legion of books and articles and the source of rich debate. In summary, the era was characterized by increasing urbanization, growth in business and banking, westward expansion, technological advances (in particular in paper production and printing), and the "transportation revolution." Mass immigration and the expansion of the electorate provided the immediate catalyst for the development of the second two-party system, the amplification of egalitarian political rhetoric, and the dubious invention of the mass-media political campaign. [8] Van Buren's rise from obscurity to lead the New York political machine and to initiate the establishment of a two-party system, which he hoped would reorder politics and transcend the looming north-south split, was a classic example of the possibilities and limitations of the Jacksonian moment. [9] As Emerson noted, the problem of domestic service, of the so-called "stranger in the gates," resonated with conflicts that matched the mercurial nature of antebellum politics. Thus Martin Van Buren's political career was inextricably linked to the social changes well symbolized by his Irish domestic servants.

The mass immigration of the Irish, beginning in the 1820s and 1830s and reaching colossal proportions by the 1840s, was both a major source of political innovation and at the root of the domestic transformation described by Dudden. To put mass Irish immigration in local perspective, from 1830 to 1845 the Irish population of Albany rose from 8 percent to 40 percent. [10] In general, the Irish came to America because of limited economic opportunity in Ireland. By the years of the famine from 1845 to 1849, they were pushed from their homeland by sheer, unmitigated poverty. Hasia Diner has outlined the sequence of events leading to the Famine: the potato, brought to Europe as part of the "Columbian exchange," made it possible to produce enough food to feed a family on ever smaller parcels of land; parents then began to divide their land between a number of offspring, which encouraged early marriage and population growth; when a fungus invaded the virtual monoculture of potatoes, massive starvation ensued. Diner argues that the famine induced a return to less risky, traditional patterns of agriculture and land inheritance. Subsequently, parents granted the inheritance of land, and therefore the ability to marry) to eldest sons only. This meant that younger sons had to venture to the Cities for jobs, and that women had less of an opportunity to marry, encouraging them to emigrate as well. So while famine itself activated immediate emigration, it also supported long-term changes, reinforcing emigration as an economic strategy. [11]

The tendency toward delayed marriage or nonmarriage was one of the reasons that Irish women, by contrast with Italian and Eastern European women, became domestic servants. The Irish were the only immigrant group in which women migrants outnumbered men. Unlike the culture of

middle-class American women, Irish culture fostered female self-assertion and social independence. On the other hand, the social world of Irish men and women was based on firmly bounded "separate spheres." Therefore it was not a problem for single Irish women to migrate, delay marriage, and accept the relative isolation of jobs as live-in house servants. And though it was hard work with long hours, domestic service was alluring because it paid relatively well. Not only did Irish women need their wages to survive, they also frequently assisted relatives left behind in Ireland. One study indicates that Irish workers from New York City alone sent over twenty million dollars to their families back home in the decade following the famine. [12]

Meanwhile, in the world of American politics, Martin Van Buren's career had waxed and waned. Having steadily advanced from New York politics to the Senate, the vice-presidency, and, finally, the presidency in 1837, Van Buren was resoundingly defeated in his bid for a second term in 1840. His suppression of controversial issues (like the annexation of Texas) in hopes of maintaining the Union, and his Jeffersonian minimalism in response to both the Panic of 1837 and the boisterous campaign tactics of the Whigs, lost him reelection. [13] As his stormy political career ended, Van Buren came to terms with retirement to his Kinderhook estate, wearily vowing:

I will mature my plan for that life of quiet contentment for which I have so long looked in vain and the opportunity to enjoy that which has been so suddenly, and I cannot think but fortunately, thrust upon me. [14]

Some years before, then-President Van Buren had purchased a plain but commodious Federal-style brick house in Kinderhook, New York, that he renamed Lindenwald. Urged on by his fashion-conscious son, Smith Thompson Van Buren, the ex-president hired sought-after architect Richard Upjohn to renovate the house in 1849. An amazing metamorphosis resulted: the formerly stolid house now sported a rather imposing Italianate tower, copious Gothic Revival details, and a puzzle of a floor plan featuring numerous additional rooms and halls. This was the Lindenwald the house servants of this study knew, a Federal house in eclectic Victorian garb. It was the perfect analogy to the aging Van Buren, the Jeffersonian cum Jacksonian whose political career had risen and fallen in accordance with the vast cultural changes that swept the first half of America's nineteenth century.

At Lindenwald, Van Buren entered a new phase of life as a retired statesman and gentleman farmer. The home of the gregarious Van Buren, a widower with four sons, was regularly filled with visiting family and friends. However, documents describing his formal parlors and lavish dinners also imply the other side of the coin of Victorian life: that of the domestic servant. Recognition of the lives of house servants has the potential to historicize the romantic image of antebellum culture and politics to which house museums have so often subscribed.

The problem with which all students of nineteenth-century domestic service must grapple is the relative documentary obscurity of the house servant. First, almost all the written sources about domestic service were left by employers, because house servants lacked the leisure and, frequently, the literacy to write letters and diaries. Material culture resources are similarly biased. It was, after all, the material world of their employers that the servants were assigned to maintain and preserve. The work dresses and tools of the domestic rarely survived their periods of usefulness, while the Victoriana that stocks house museums was carefully tended and later collected by curators. Furthermore, detailed personal sources are limited generally because domestic service was the painful relationship to which Emerson bore witness, an episode in the

history of the home that was often shoved under the carpet, so to speak, both contemporaneously by domestics and employers themselves, and subsequently by museums. In addition, as Dudden points out:

The selectivity of memory has worked against domestic service not only because it was painful but also because it was part of female experience and its pains were considered private, disconnected, and undignified. [15]

Historians and curators must seek innovative methods to clear the smoke screen of domestic ideology, including class and ethnic prejudice, from the history of nineteenth-century households, in order to uncover the lives of domestics, as workers, as immigrants, and as women.

Bridget Clary, Margaret Kelly, and Hannah O'Connor -- this sampling of names reminds us that the Lindenwald domestics were real human beings. Insight into their lives at Lindenwald (in the 1850-62 period to which the house is restored) was gleaned by combining secondary sources on domestic service with primary sources on nineteenth-century housework, and applying them to the material culture and documentary sources at Lindenwald. Census records reveal a core household staff of four young Irish women at any given time, each census indicating a complete turnover. [16] This rate of turnover could be explained by a number of factors, including seasonal house closings and dismissals. And it was far from unusual for servants to quit jobs at which they were unhappy, having no contracts or other commitments to their employers and good prospects for other jobs. [17] Considering Lindenwald's rural location, servants may have experienced particularly keenly the isolation from the kitchen-stoop conviviality of urban neighborhoods, not to mention the lack of nearby Catholic services. [18]

The specific occupations of the female servants were not listed in census records but may be deduced by cross-referencing Van Buren's correspondence with an estimation of the work necessary to run a house like Lindenwald. Based on what historian Daniel Sutherland calls "the domestic hierarchy," the cook was probably the eldest worker or the worker whose residence in America was the longest (both qualities denoting more experience and skill). In earlier correspondence Van Buren referred to a waitress and a chambermaid in addition to the cook. [19] This leaves only one position undetermined, perhaps a parlormaid or a laundress. If the fourth position was a parlormaid, then one of the other servants had the considerable additional responsibility of the laundry.

A domestic's hours of work were long and somewhat irregular) depending upon the wishes of the employer. The lack of leisure had a generally negative impact on the health of servants. [20] Most servants worked from sunrise to sunset, at least ten hours a day, with a full day averaging eleven to twelve hours. In this period a full day off for servants was rare; generally servants had one evening or half-day off per week. Servants were always "on call," because houses like Lindenwald had extensive bell systems reaching even into servants' bedrooms. Domestics were ignored as some organized workers achieved legislation for shortened work hours, a measure Van Buren had supported. [21]

The physically demanding nature of nineteenth-century housework called for adequate nutrition. Whether a servant received it varied from household to household. Servants generally ate leftovers from the family meal, which might or might not be enough. [22] At Lindenwald, adjacent to the basement kitchen, there remains what has been identified as a servants' dining room, rather generously decorated with flowered wallpaper. More commonly servants ate,

worked, and snatched leisure moments in the busy kitchen.

When a servant's day was finally through, she retired to her quarters. Typically, servants' rooms were either in the attic or the basement, and they were furnished with family cast-offs -- a bed, perhaps a chair and a washstand, probably no carpets, curtains, or architectural decoration. These contrasts reinforced the social distance between employer and servant. Servants' rooms lacked the privacy enjoyed by employers; not only were they vulnerable to the intrusions of the call bell) they were often shared with other servants. [23] At Lindenwald, there are three adjoining servants' rooms on the attic floor. The midcentury alterations included dormers, which converted the low-ceilinged garret to livable rooms. The whitewashed plaster walls and pine floors are in dramatic contrast to family areas. Rows of pegs on the walls suggest the absence of chests of drawers and a meager wardrobe. Even with twentieth-century heating, the rooms are hot in summer and cold in winter. There are no fireplaces in these rooms, no furnace ducts, and no evidence of stoves.

Given the close living conditions, it is not surprising that conflict was endemic to domestic service. Van Buren rendered his perspective on one such clash at Lindenwald:

The two women I made swear eternal friendship got jealous of each other, the cook could no longer keep down the Devil that I saw in the corner of her eye when she first arrived . . . and I have sort of a Riot downstairs. Finding that soft words were of no effect I assumed toward them an aspect more sour and ferocious than you can imagine, suspended the cook and a very devout Irish chambermaid, who with all her piety is a devil of a bully . . . The female waiter has escaped unhurt . . . [24]

Referring to such an intra-household conflict as a "Riot" was a potent metaphor with significant political connotations, as antebellum New York had been plagued by Catholic/Protestant riots. [25]

America's social stratification was manifested within affluent nineteenth-century American homes by the layout of rooms, halls, and decorative effects. House design expressed the fundamental American uneasiness with the concept of domestic service through concerted attempts to minimize direct contact between the family and servants. Halls separating work areas from ("family" areas, servants' quarters tucked away in awkward places, back stairs and servants' entrances all comprised an effort to make servants and housework virtually invisible to the family. [26]

Lindenwald's architecture incorporates this nineteenth-century predilection. A basement door on the west side of the house probably served as the servants' entrance. The tower stairs, sharply circular, steep, and narrow, served as the back stairs and the only access to the servants' quarters, connecting them directly to the basement work areas. Popular nineteenth-century architectural oracle Andrew Jackson Downing claimed servants' stairs added "greatly to the comfort and privacy of even small villas." He was referring, of course, to the comfort and privacy of employers. In nineteenth-century architecture, the segregation of the family from housework took precedence over efficiency, thanks to that ubiquitous "Victorian labor-saving device," a large staff of servants. [27]

Lindenwald was also typical in the distancing of the kitchen and the servants' quarters from rooms inhabited by employers, a practice analogous, in fact, to tendencies in urban neighborhoods. Nineteenth-century architecture emphasized the importance of assuring adequate

space between dining rooms and kitchens, designed, in the language of architects, to "protect" the family from experiencing the sounds and smells of cooking. It was argued that servants' rooms ought to be "entirely separate" from "main" areas, and that servants should have access to these "main" areas only through "passages." [28] Lindenwald, fashionable home that it was, incorporates all of these standards to some extent. Thus, as Daniel Sutherland puts it, servants were "in the household but not of it." [29] They constituted a separate society within a society, inhabiting especially awkward and uncomfortable spaces while tending to the comfort of others, forced to recognize the glaring contrasts between two distinct lifestyles under one roof.

Some servants, however, rarely required access to "main" areas of the house. Cooks and scullions spent most of their time in the kitchen, which in the northeastern United States was frequently in the basement. Lindenwald's cooks labored countless hours in the basement kitchen, with its plastered stone walls and tiny windows. A sink and hand pump were located in the southwest corner of the room. On the north wall, a Gothic-style coal-burning Moses Pond Union cookstove, manufactured about 1850 in Boston, still stands near a brick bake oven. [30] Very little evidence exists to indicate precisely how the kitchen was furnished. If typical, it would have been a hot, crowded room, sooty and dirty by our standards, with cupboards, work tables, and perhaps a chair or two. [31]

The nineteenth-century kitchen required an enormous amount of care) and a Lindenwald this was probably the work of the cook, perhaps aided by the waitress Commercial cleaning products were virtually unknown at this time, the task accomplished instead by sand, salt, camphor, lye, vinegar, and various homemade mixtures of these. Advice manuals suggested two thorough cleanings per week, and daily sweeping and wiping. Sinks were scalded with lye, work surfaces rubbed with old cotton, windows rinsed, floors mopped, and tools cleaned. [32]

We know very little of actual daily menus at Lindenwald, though records of formal dinners, records of the garden at Lindenwald, and archaeological analysis of food storage areas indicate a diet including mutton, potatoes, and root vegetables in winter, and fresh fish and vegetables in summer. Lindenwald had a wine cellar, a pantry, a larder, and a root cellar. [33] By combining period recipes with knowledge of household technology, some understanding of the labor of Lindenwald's cooks can be gained. The rare descriptions of Van Buren formal dinners lend further insight:

The Dish before him contained a fine ham; then comes two side dishes of potatoes and peas; then an enormous one of fricasee: then potatoes and peas with a sprinkling of butter, cucumber, and then in front of John another supply of fricasee. Four bottles of champagne completed the carte for the first course. The second was pies, custard, jelly, of excellent make, and the third of fine-flavored seegars! [34]

At Lindenwald, family dining occurred in one of two places. Informal family dining was held in the "breakfast room" adjoining a stairway leading to the basement. Formal dinners were staged in the ornate center hall, featuring a table that could be extended to seat more than twenty people. A banquet of this magnitude would have presented considerable trouble to the servants, particularly the waitress, who would have been called upon to carry laden and precious trays from the basement kitchen, up a narrow set of stairs, and further on a circuitous route through rooms and halls.

The actual serving and eating of food was a complex, mannered ritual in the nineteenth century.

The availability of servants contributed to an increasingly elaborate and coded etiquette, the mastery of which created an ever larger rift between the department of employers and servants. [35] Emerson discovered this in 1841, when he invited his servants to regularly join the family at dinner. They surprised him by refusing; the cook explained that she was "never fit to come to table." [36]

When all of the dishes had been carried into the kitchen for washing, the parlormaid's work began. The parlormaid cleaned and ordered the main floor rooms: hallways, libraries, drawing rooms, and parlors. The work of the nineteenth-century parlormaid was similar to that of the cook in that technical innovations had not resulted in a reduction in the amount of work, because these improvements were accompanied by a concurrent rise in standards of cleanliness and display. [37] Household tasks multiplied as machine-made upholstery and ornate furnishings filled prosperous homes. Lindenwald's Brussels carpets, mohair upholstery, and carved furniture bespeak a life of unremitting dusting and sweeping for the parlormaid, as well as the changes in the industrial economy that made these goods available in remarkable abundance.

Upstairs, chambers were typically aired and dusted daily after the family went to breakfast. Chamberpots were emptied and cleaned. Advice books suggested that the servant be instructed to quietly smuggle the chamberpots downstairs, as the family had "sensitive feelings" to be considered. Next, fireplaces were cleaned and washbasins emptied. Beds were made; soap, towels, and candles were resupplied. A servant's last duty in the bedchambers was to supply them with warm water and fresh drinking water. [38]

Of all household tasks, none elicited more complaints than laundry, a chore redoubled by complicated and delicate Victorian clothing. If a household could afford to hire only one servant, it was someone to help with this hated chore. Lindenwald's 1850 addition contains what Upjohn called the "wash room." A lead-lined sink with a hand pump stood in the southwest corner of the room. Although there were advances in technology in this period (pumps, hand-cranked ringers, sinks with drains), washing machines had not come into general use. [39] Water was heated on the stove, and wash was done in tubs using a stick and a washboard. Nineteenth-century laundry equipment extant at Lindenwald includes two large wooden drying racks, washboilers, and an iron. An order for household tools for Lindenwald included sadirons and stands. Since no evidence of a stove exists in this room, wash was probably done on the stove in the adjacent kitchen.

The Lindenwald servants, after a long day of labor, had little time or opportunity for recreation. Though it was a lovely estate, young Irish women most certainly would have missed the communities of friends and family in urban areas. We know the Lindenwald servant did not stay for long, perhaps leaving for local mills and factories or, more likely, seeking supportive communities in nearby Albany or New York. When she left Lindenwald, under whatever circumstances and for whatever destination, traces of her hard life remained a cookstove, a washtub, a row of pegs in a garret room.

The prevailing popular image of a precious and charming Victorian past is built upon repression of the harsh lives of laboring women. In this sense we have based our collective memory on the nineteenth-century rhetorical constructs of egalitarian politics and the "cult of domesticity" rather than on historical reality, merely reflecting rather than interpreting the ideological dilemma of affluent Victorians. The case of the Lindenwald domestics reveals the impossibility of sifting politics from "the home," the private from the public, men's history from women's history.

Uncritical readings of biased material culture and documentary evidence has led to serious underestimations of the historical significance of the lives of domestics. We need to uncover these stories and demystify the ideology of "the home," our inheritance from the nineteenth century and beyond. If it could still be said that the lives of domestic servants were somehow insignificant to nineteenth-century cultural and political history, perhaps we should reflect upon the words of English house servant Hannah Cullwick: "I felt a bit hurt to be told i was too dirty, when my dirt was all got wi making things clean for them ." [40]

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1 The roots of this dimension of nineteenth-century American political ideology are described by Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), and Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), among others. The phrase "haven in a heartless world" is from Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

2 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, vol. 7., ed. A. W. Plumstead and Harrison Hayford (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1969), 343.

3 E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present* (December 1967): 56-97; Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977); Paul Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

4 Faye E. Dudden, *Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1983). In making this case, Dudden implicitly challenged the tendency of historians of nineteenth-century women to construct arguments based on the rhetoric of "separate spheres." Nancy Cott, for example, used Thompson's concept of "time discipline" to argue that industrialization caused male work life to differ markedly from that of women, creating separate, gendered cultures because women's work continued along traditional lines. Dudden's predecessors in the field of domestic service had by and large concurred, arguing that the "servant problem" was caused by an anachronistic "master-servant" relationship ill-suited to the modernizing world. Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Daniel E. Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants: Domestic Service in the United States from 1800 to 1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981).

5 Historians have argued that the ideology of middle-class feminine domesticity arose in part as a means by which middle-class women could distinguish themselves from the new class of working women. See Linda Kerber's discussion of the historiography of nineteenth-century domesticity in "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 75 (June 1988): 9-39.

6 Dudden, *Serving Women* , 107.

7 See Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium* , passim.

8 Lee Benson, *The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy: New York as a Test Case* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961); Glyndon Van Deusen, *The Jacksonian Era* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 1-25 and passim; Edward Pessen, *Jacksonian America: Society, Personality, and Politics* (Hornewood, 111.: Dorsey Press, 1978), 33-34, 55, passim; Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); William Nisbet Chambers, "The Election of 1840," in *History of American Presidential Elections* , vol. I, ed. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), 651, 647-49.

9 See James C. Curtis, *The Fox at Bay: Martin Van Buren and the Presidency* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1957); Robert Remini, *Martin Van Buren and the Making of the Democratic Party* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968); Richard P. McCormick, "Van Buren and the Uses of Politics," in *Six Presidents from the Empire State* , ed. Harry J. Sievers (Tarrytown, N.Y.: Sleepy Hollow Restorations, 1974), 30-32. For an exhaustive study of Van Buren's life and career, see John Niven, *Martin Van Buren: The Romantic Age of American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

10 Pessen, 35; William Rowley, "The Irish Aristocracy of Albany, 1798-1878," *New York History* 52 (July 1971): 275-304.

11 Hasia R. Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 1-29.

12 Diner, *Erin's Daughters* , 20-42, 90; Dudden, *Serving Women* , 65-66, 219-22; Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants* , 103-14; Carol Groneman, "Working-Class Immigrant Women in Mid-Nineteenth Century New York: The Irish Woman's Experience," *Journal of Urban History* 3 (1978): 260.

13 Curtis, *The Fox at Bay* , 63, 191-94; Robert Gray Gunderson, *The Log Cabin Campaign* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1957); Remini, *Martin Van Buren* , 125; Chambers, "The Election of 1840," 647; McCormick, "Van Buren and the Uses of Politics," 30-32; James C. Curtis, "In the Shadow of Old Hickory: The Political Travail of Martin Van Buren," *Journal of the Early Republic* 1 (Fall 1981): 249-67.

14 Martin Van Buren to James Wadsworth, 8 June 1844, National Park Service, Martin Van Buren National Historic Site, Kinderhook, N.Y.

15 Dudden, *Serving Women* , 2.

16 The following are names and ages of domestics from the 1850, 1855, and 1860 censuses, respectively: Sarah O'Connor, 46, Hannah O'Connor, 24, Catherine Jordan, 20, Catherine Link, 25; Sarah Hail, 42, Mary McEntire, 40, Margaret Kelly, 22, Ellen McDonough, 26; Bridget Clary, 35, May O'Brien, 26, Ann Gray, 35, Margaret Neeling, 26. Van Buren had other servants

aside from the standard household staff of four, principally when his sons' families were in residence, including an occasional governess and some native-born women whose occupations were unspecified. Columbia County, N.Y., Census Records, 1850, 1855, 1860. Columbia County Courthouse, Hudson, N.Y.

17 Dudden, *Serving Women* , 49-55; Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants* , 130-32.

18 Dudden found a dramatic contrast in the number of servants in rural versus urban areas of New York. For example, in 1855, for every four families in the cities of New York and Buffalo there was one servant, but there were only two servants in an entire population of twenty thousand in rural Warren County. Dudden, *Serving Women* , 73. In the 1850-62 period, there were only two Catholic churches in Kinderhook's Columbia County, where Lindenwald is located, both of which were probably too far for even the most devout servant to travel in her very limited "free time." St. Mary's in Hudson, about fifteen miles away on the post road, was established in 1847, and St. Patrick's in Chatham, organized in 1855, was about eight miles away. Franklin Ellis, *History of Columbia County* (1878; reprint, Chatham, N.Y.: Sachem Press, 1974), 118, 295.

19 Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants* , 88. Martin Van Buren to James K. Paulding, 4 January 1845, original at Morristown National Historical Park, Morristown, N.J., microfilm copy at Martin Van Buren National Historic Site, Kinderhook, N.Y.

20 Dudden, *Serving Women* , 194-96; Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants* , 99-102.

21 Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants*, 97-99. When president, Van Buren issued an executive order limiting workdays on federal projects to ten hours (without a reduction in pay). Arthur M Schlesinger, *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953), 265.

22 Dudden, *Serving Women* , 195-96; Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants* , 113-14.

23 Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants* , 114-17.

24 Martin Van Buren to James K. Paulding, 4 January 1845, original at Morristown National Historical Park, Morristown, N.J., microfilm copy at Martin Van Buren National Historic Site, Kinderhook, N.Y.

25 See Wilentz, *Chants Democratic* , 267.

26 Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants*, 30-34.

27 A. J. Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850; reprint, New York: Dover, 1969), 272; John Gloag, *Victorian Comfort A Social History of Design, 1830-1900* (Newton Abbot, England: David and Charles, 1973), 30

28 Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses*, 287, 331, 334, 360. See also Calvert Vaux, *Villas and Cottages* (1864; reprint, New York: Dover, 1970), 162, 344.

29 Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants* , 34.

30 By midcentury, cookstoves were produced nationwide. They were a technological improvement but they nonetheless demanded a great deal of care and tending. In an experiment at Boston's School of Housekeeping in the late nineteenth century, time spent on stove care was quantified. In a six-day period, it took twenty minutes to sift ashes, twenty-four minutes to lay fires, one hour and forty-eight minutes to tend fires, thirty minutes to empty ashes, fifteen

minutes to carry coal, and two hours and nine minutes to black the stove. Two hundred and ninety-two pounds of coal, twenty-seven pounds of ashes, and fourteen pounds of kindling were hauled. Susan Strasser, *Never Done: The History of American Housework* (New York: Pantheon, 1982), 36-41; Siegfried Gideon, *Mechanization Takes Command* (1948; reprint, New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), 527-29; Linda Campbell Franklin, *From Hearth to Cookstove* (Florence, Ala.: House of Collectables, 1975), 145; Dudden, *Serving Women* , 131.

31 Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants* , 114-15; Frances Parkes, *Domestic Duties* (New York: J. J. Harper, 1828), 128; "The Miseries of Mistresses," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (October 1856): 717-18.

32 Strasser, *Never Done* , 89; Parkes, *Domestic Duties* , 128; Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The American Woman's Home* (New York: J. B. Ford, 1869), 371-76.

33 Kathleen Fiero, *Lindenwald Historic Structures Report: Archeological Data Section* (National Park Service, 1983), 68, 171.

34 Smith Thompson Van Buren to Angelica Singleton Van Buren, 30 July 1837, *Presidential Papers Microfilm: Van Buren Papers* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1958).

35 See Kathryn Grover, ed., *Dining in America, 1850-1900* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987).

36 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson* , vol. 2, ed. Ralph L. Rush (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), 389

37 Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

38 Strasser, *Never Done* , 88; Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants* , 92; Parkes, *Domestic Duties* , 137; Pamela Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), 65.

39 Dudden, *Serving Women* , 142; Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command* , 565-66.

40 Hannah Cullwick in *Victorian Women: A Documentary Account of Women's Lives in Nineteenth-Century England, France, and the United States* , ed. Erna Olafson Hellerstein, Leslie Parker Hume, and Karen M. Offen (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1981), 351.