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American Women
Prose Writers,
1820–1870

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Susan Fenimore Cooper

(17 April 1813 – 31 December 1894)

Susan Goodier
Cazenovia College

BOOKS: *Elinor Wyllys. A Tale*, anonymous, edited by James Fenimore Cooper (3 volumes, London: Bentley, 1845); republished as *Elinor Wyllys; or, The Young Folk of Longbridge. A Tale*, as Amabel Penfeather, edited by James Fenimore Cooper (2 volumes, Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1846); *Rural Hours. By a Lady* (New York: Putnam, 1850; anonymous, 2 volumes, London: Bentley, 1850); republished as *Journal of a Naturalist in the United States* (London: Bentley, 1855); enlarged as *Rural Hours* (New York: Putnam, 1868); *Vernon: A Letter to the Children of America. By the Author of "Rural Hours"* (New York: D. Appleton, 1859); *Admiral William Branford Shubrick. A Sketch*, anonymous (New York, 1877).
Editions: *Rural Hours*, 1887 edition, edited by David Jones (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1968); *Rural Hours*, 1850 edition, edited by Rochelle Johnson and Daniel Patterson (Athens & London: University of Georgia Press, 1998).

EDITOR: "A Dissolving View," in *The Home Book of the Picturesque: or, American Scenery, Art, and Literature* (New York: Putnam, 1852), pp. 79–94; also published as *Home Authors and Home Artists; or American Scenery, Art, and Literature* (New York: Leavitt & Allen, 1852);

Leonard Knapp, *Country Rambles in England, or Journal of a Naturalist*, edited, with an introduction, notes, and additions, by Cooper (Buffalo: Phinney, 1853); *Rhyme and Reason of Country Life; or, Selections from Fields Old and New*, edited, with a preface, introduction, and headnotes, by Cooper (New York: Putnam, 1854);

Pages and Pictures from the Writings of James Fenimore Cooper, edited, with a preface, introduction, and notes, by Cooper (New York: Townsend, 1861); republished as *The Cooper Gallery; or Pages and Pictures From the Writings of James Fenimore Cooper* (New York: Miller, 1865);

Appletons' Illustrated Almanac for 1870, edited, probably with contributions, by Cooper (New York: D. Appleton, 1869);

The Works of James Fenimore Cooper, Household Edition, 15 volumes, introductions by Cooper (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1876–1884);

"Mrs. Philip Schuyler: A Sketch," in *Worthy Women of Our First Century*, edited by Mrs. Owen J. Wister and Miss Agnes Irwin (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1877), pp. 71–111;

"The Wonderful Cookie: A True Story," in *Wide Awake Pleasure Book*, volume 8 (Boston: Lothrop, 1879), pp. 348–353; republished in *Wonder Stories of History* (Boston: Lothrop, 1886);

"The Thanksgiving Hospital" and "Orphan House of the Holy Savior," in *A Centennial Offering Being a Brief History of Cooperstown*, edited by Isaac N. Arnold (Cooperstown, N.Y.: Freeman's Journal Office, 1886);

James Grant Wilson and John Fiske, eds., *Appletons' Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, 7 volumes, includes contributions by Cooper (New York: D. Appleton, 1887–1900);

William West Skiles. *A Sketch of Missionary Life at Valle Crucis, in Western North Carolina. 1842–1862*, edited, with a biographical essay, by Cooper (New York: James Pott, 1890);

J. K. Bloomfield, *The Oneidas*, includes a portion of Ellen Goodnough's diary, edited by Cooper (New York: Alden, 1907);

"Small Family Memories (1883)," in *Correspondence of James Fenimore-Cooper*, 2 volumes, edited by his grandson James Fenimore Cooper (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922), I: 9–72.

Edition: *Pages and Pictures from the Writings of James Fenimore Cooper* (Secaucus, N.J.: Castle Books, 1980).

SELECTED PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS—

UNCOLLECTED: "The Lumley Autograph," *Graham's Magazine*, 38 (January 1851): 31–36; (February 1851): 97–101;

- "Sally Lewis and Her Lovers," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 18 (April 1859): 644-653;
- "Fragments from a Diary of James Fenimore Cooper," edited by Cooper, *Putnam's Magazine*, 1 (February 1868): 167-172;
- "Passages from a Diary by James Fenimore Cooper," edited by Cooper, *Putnam's Magazine*, 1 (June 1868): 730-737;
- "Bits," *Putnam's Magazine*, 2 (August 1868): 145-148;
- "The Battle of Plattsburgh Bay: An Unpublished Manuscript of J. Fenimore Cooper," edited by Cooper, *Putnam's Magazine*, 3 (January 1869): 49-59;
- "The Eclipse: From an Unpublished MS. of James Fenimore Cooper," edited by Cooper, *Putnam's Magazine*, 4 (September 1869): 352-359;
- "Village Improvement Societies," *Putnam's Magazine*, 4 (September 1869): 359-366;
- "The Magic Palace," *Putnam's Magazine*, 5 (February 1870): 160-162;
- "The Chanting Cherubs," *Putnam's Magazine*, 5 (February 1870): 241-242;
- "Insect-Life in Winter," *Putnam's Magazine*, 5 (April 1870): 424-427;
- "Madame Lafayette and Her Mother," *Putnam's Magazine*, 6 (August 1870): 202-213;
- "Female Suffrage: A Letter to the Christian Women of America," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 41 (August 1870): 438-446; (September 1870): 594-600;
- "Two of My Lady-Loves," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 45 (June 1872): 129-133;
- "Otsego Leaves I: Birds Then and Now," *Appletons' Journal*, 4 (June 1878): 528-531;
- "Otsego Leaves II: The Bird Mediaeval," *Appletons' Journal*, 5 (August 1878): 164-167;
- "Otsego Leaves III: The Bird Primeval," *Appletons' Journal*, 5 (September 1878): 273-277;
- "Otsego Leaves IV: A Road-Side Post-Office," *Appletons' Journal*, 5 (December 1878): 542-545;
- "The Hudson River and Its Early Names," *Magazine of American History*, 4 (June 1880): 401-418;
- "The Adventures of Cocquelicot. (A True History)," *St. Nicholas: An Illustrated Magazine for Young Folks*, 8 (October 1881): 942-946;
- "Mission to the Oneidas," *Living Church*, 8 (11 April 1885): 14-15; (18 April 1885): 26-27; (25 April 1885): 38-39; (20 February 1886): 709-710; (27 February 1886): 720-721; (6 March 1886): 736-737; (13 March 1886): 73; (20 March 1886): 768-769; (27 March 1886): 784; 9 (10 April 1886): 28; (24 April 1886): 60-61; (1 May 1886): 75-76; (15 May 1886): 107-108; (22 May 1886): 123-124; (29 May 1886): 139; (5 June 1886): 155;
- "A Glance Backward," *Atlantic Monthly*, 59 (February 1887): 199-206;
- "A Second Glance Backward," *Atlantic Monthly*, 60 (October 1887): 474-486;
- "Financial Condition of New York in 1833," edited by Cooper, *Magazine of American History*, 22 (October 1889): 328-330;
- "The Talent of Reading Wisely," *Ladies' Home Journal*, 9 (February 1892): 18;
- "A Lament for the Birds," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 87 (August 1893): 472-474;
- "An Outing on Otsego Lake," *Freeman's Journal*, 86 (12 April 1894): 3; (19 April 1894): 2;
- "The Cherry-Colored Purse. (A True Story)," *St. Nicholas: An Illustrated Magazine for Young Folks*, 22 (January 1895): 245-248.

Susan Fenimore Cooper was the first woman in the United States to publish a book of nature writing. Although she was not formally educated in botany, people interested in nature sought her expertise. Gifted and highly intelligent, she wrote prolifically in several genres for fifty years. Her first major work, *Rural Hours* (1850), was a popular success, and many journals accepted her work, but she was a pious and self-effacing woman whose desire to be known as an accomplished writer was limited by the bounds of her conservative views on a woman's role in society. Committed to the duties society expected of women of her social status, she firmly opposed any extension of women's rights. Although usually discussed in connection with her father, novelist James Fenimore Cooper, Susan Fenimore Cooper should be evaluated in light of her own literary and social contributions.

Because she wrote more about her father than she did about herself, it is difficult to construct a biography of Susan Fenimore Cooper. She included few details of her own life in the unfinished "Small Family Memories (1883)," a memoir covering the years up to 1828, which she wrote for her nieces and nephews. The second child of James Fenimore Cooper and Susan De Lancey Cooper, Susan Augusta Fenimore Cooper was born on 17 April 1813 at Heathcote Hill in Mamaroneck, Westchester County, New York, the home of her grandfather John Peter De Lancey. (A few months after Susan Cooper's birth, the eldest child, Elizabeth, died of food poisoning.) Susan Cooper descended on her mother's side from Etienne De Lancey, a French Huguenot. Susan Fenimore Cooper's great-grandfather James De Lancey had been a colonial lieutenant governor of New York, and her grandfather John Peter De Lancey had fought for the British during the Revolution and fled to England after the war but had returned to the United States in 1789 and become a staunch



Susan Fenimore Cooper's 1832 portrait of herself and her siblings: Caroline Martha, Susan, Paul Fenimore, Anne Charlotte, and Maria Frances (from James Franklin Beard, ed., The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper, volume 2, 1960)

American Federalist. Her paternal grandfather, William Cooper, of English Quaker ancestry, was a Federalist representative in Congress, the founder of Cooperstown, New York (1786), a judge, and the author of *A Guide in the Wilderness; or, The History of the First Settlements in the Western Counties of New York with Useful Instructions to Future Settlers* (1810).

In July 1813 the family moved to Cooperstown, New York. Two more daughters, Caroline (born 1815) and Anne (born 1817), were born to the Cooper family before autumn 1817, when they returned to Mamaroneck. That same year, in nearby Scarsdale, James Fenimore Cooper built Angevine, where he began his writing career. Susan Cooper remembered playing with her doll under a table in the parlor while listening to her father read portions of his first novel, *Precaution* (1820), to her mother.

Precaution was not successful, but James Fenimore Cooper's second novel, *The Spy* (1821), established him as a popular author, and in autumn 1822 he moved his family—which now included another daughter, Maria Frances (born 1819), and a son, Fenimore (born 1821)—to New York City, to be near his publisher. While the family lived there, Fenimore died in August 1823 of a fever. Another boy, Paul Fenimore, was born to the family in 1824, before they left New York. In 1883 Susan Cooper remembered two important events of

that period: the triumphant return visit to the United States of Marie Joseph, Marquis de LaFayette, in 1824–1825 and the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825.

In 1826 James Fenimore Cooper was appointed U.S. consul in Lyons, France, and the family lived abroad until 1833. As was customary practice at the time, Cooper never visited Lyons and hired a Frenchman to perform his duties there. The family's primary base was Paris, and they spent some two years in Italy, traveled to Switzerland during several summers, and visited Germany, England, and the Low Countries. While in Europe, the family visited various historic and cultural sites, and socialized with people such as the LaFayette family, Sir Walter Scott, the Princess Galitzin, and several artists, including Pierre-Jean David d'Angers and the American Horatio Greenough.

Susan Cooper was educated and "finished" according to the standards of the time. She and her sisters began their education at Angevine, where they were taught by their mother and father, and then attended a private school in New York. While in Europe they studied at a boarding school in Paris and were taught Italian, music, and drawing by private tutors in Italy. Cooper eventually acquired a thorough knowledge of American and European literature and history, the ability to use four languages, an understanding of zoology and botany, and skill in music and

dancing. She was a talented artist, as is apparent in her 1832 portraits of family members.

Returning from Europe in late 1833, the family lived for a time in New York City before permanently settling in Cooperstown in 1836. In 1834 James Fenimore Cooper purchased and began to refurbish Otsego Hall, the family home that had been sold after William Cooper's death. Initially finding it difficult to settle into the quiet rural life in Cooperstown, Susan Cooper was encouraged by her father to put some of her energy into her writing. Since 1832 she had assisted him as his literary secretary and continued to do so until his death. The two were extremely close, and she frequently accompanied him when he traveled. In a 25 December 1849 letter to William Bradford Shubrick, the father described his daughter as having the looks of someone twenty-one and having the "sobriety and good sense" of one who was a hundred. He cared deeply that her literary work sold, and made her his literary executor. After her father's death she defended his reputation, keeping a promise she had made to burn many of his papers so that a complete biography could never be written. She also wrote reverential memoirs and introductions for his novels, as well as editing excerpts from his diaries and some of his unpublished articles.

According to extant letters, James Fenimore Cooper may have had some influence on Susan Cooper's decision not to marry. She apparently did not lack suitors, and her father reported in a 2 January 1832 letter to Peter Augustus Jay that he had told his nearly nineteen-year-old daughter she would "get a better husband, by waiting three or four years." In 1832 a Dr. Smith seemed interested in Susan Cooper, but her mother made an effort to quell rumors of a connection. Her father commented in 1833 that a Frenchman requested Susan Cooper's hand, "but the thing would not do. We mean to continue Americans." Samuel F. B. Morse, a talented painter and the inventor of the telegraph who was some twenty years older than Susan Cooper, was a guest of the Coopers in 1834 and was also rumored to be a suitor. According to Ralph Birdsell, the local gossips said that James Fenimore Cooper "had no mind to yield so fair a prize to an impecunious painter, a widower, and already forty-three years old." When Susan Cooper was thirty-eight, her father still worried "that some fellow would be after her" (letter to Sarah Heyward Cruger, 18 January 1851).

Susan Cooper was a prolific author who wrote romantic fiction, ghost stories, nature studies, stories for children, biographical sketches, and articles on a variety of other subjects. In a 22 September 1843 letter to her, James Fenimore Cooper mentioned that he expected success in selling a collection of her stories, although the collection was apparently never published. She had

some success with a novel, *Elinor Wyllys* (1845), which was published in England anonymously and in the United States under the pseudonym Amabel Penfeather. Her father wrote the preface and edited the work and was originally thought to have written it. Yet, he wrote in his introduction that he had done little substantive editing, and the style and subject matter of the book bears little resemblance to any of his writings.

Elinor Wyllys is the story of a physically unattractive, but good, orphaned girl, who waits patiently at home while her betrothed spends two years in Europe. Her fiancé falls in love with Elinor's beautiful friend, breaks off his engagement to Elinor, and is then rejected by the friend. He eventually understands the error of his ways and marries Elinor. They and their children have a happy life. Patriotic, moral, and sentimental, the novel touts the advantages of simple country living in the United States, a theme that recurs in Cooper's subsequent works. The novel also includes subplots that suggest Cooper's diverse talents and interests. One subplot, about a sailor who claims to be a missing heir, is perhaps the first American fictional plot to include a detailed description of court and trial proceedings as well as a critique of judicial processes. Artistic and national issues are raised in another subplot, which involves a young American landscape painter, and the novel ends with an exciting maritime adventure that rivals those written by her father. According to Lucy B. Maddox, Cooper's writing often "revealed a self-conscious sense of her identity as the inheritor and guardian of her father's vision of America, in which the daughter is defined as crucially important to the future of the nation."

Susan Cooper's best-known book is *Rural Hours* (1850), a journal that follows the cycle of nature and village life over the course of a year in a rural New York community. She credited her grandfather De Lancey with inspiring *Rural Hours*, which again celebrates plain country living. When she was a child, he frequently took her for rides in his buggy, telling her the names of the trees, plants, birds, and animals. During 1848 and 1849 Cooper kept a journal of the turning seasons in rural New York. She also wrote to acquaintances to ask questions about plants, trees, animals, and customs. Her main purpose for writing the book was to show humankind's obligations to nature.

James Fenimore Cooper negotiated the contract for *Rural Hours* with George P. Putnam in December of 1849. After the first one thousand copies were sold, Susan Cooper was to receive 12½ percent of the profits. In a February 1850 letter to her, her father expressed his satisfaction with the proof sheets, praising the "purity of mind, the simplicity, elegance, and knowledge" in his daughter's work. By September he was



Otsego Hall as it appeared after James Fenimore Cooper refurbished it in 1835 (watercolor signed "c T e"; New York State Historical Society)

receiving congratulations from people who stopped him on the street to praise *Rural Hours*. William Cullen Bryant considered the book "the greatest of the season." During the nineteenth century *Rural Hours* went through nine editions, including two published in England and one abridgment. The 1851 edition is illustrated with colorplates of birds and plants native to Cooperstown and central New York State.

Divided into four sections corresponding to the seasons of the year, *Rural Hours* is further broken into days of the months. The abiding appeal of the book is based on the freshness of Cooper's observations of changes through the seasons. Cooper described the lives of birds, the growth and changes in plants, superstitions, village gardens, and spring cleaning. The book is also the result of careful research into works by other authors.

Having a strong moral belief in the need to preserve the environment, Cooper lamented the "weeds" that had been brought to America by the Europeans and were imperiling the existence of native plants. When presenting her concerns for the environment, Cooper tried to instill in her readers a sense of pride in the United States while developing what Rochelle Johnson and Daniel Patterson have called an "argument for a sustainable balance between human culture and its natural surroundings."

Cooper believed that the natural world existed for the pleasure and use of human beings. Though she was influenced by the prevailing view of her day that cultivation was the paramount use of the land, she

believed in preserving the landscape and using natural resources wisely. For Cooper, educating the public about the natural world was the key to preserving it. As Maddox has observed, the book offers "complex lessons which constantly return, implicitly, to the central issues of the daughter's location in the domesticated landscape of America and the voice she can use to speak from, and about, that place." The theme of the book is the need for society to co-exist with nature.

After the publication of *Rural Hours*, Cooper enjoyed some public distinction; professors of natural history wrote to her, and her autograph was requested. Two subsequent works appear not to have been published as books and have apparently been lost. In a December 1849 letter to Susan, her father mentioned having received from her an unidentified manuscript that was "already in Appleton's hands" and in a 26 May 1850 letter to his wife James Fenimore Cooper wrote that he had "not offered Susy's religious book to any one." He thought that it would sell better after the success of *Rural Hours*. *Memorial of James Fenimore Cooper* (1852) notes that Susan Fenimore Cooper had a book in press, *The Shield: A Narrative* (1852). There is correspondence concerning the book with publishers Richard Bentley in London and George P. Putnam in New York, and in a letter dated 6 August 1851 Susan Cooper wrote that the work relates to the habits and life of Native Americans before contact with Europeans. She hoped that its publication would boost sales of *Rural Hours* in England. The book is listed in Patrick K. Foley's *Amer-*

ican Authors, 1795–1895 (1897) as having been published. Some scholars, however, believe the book was never published. To date, neither the manuscript nor any printed copies of the work has been located.

One book-length work that has been rediscovered is "Missions to the Oneidas," a series of fifteen articles published in *The Living Church*, an Episcopal weekly newspaper, in 1885–1886. In his introduction to the fourth article, the editor of the paper wrote, "It is hoped that some publisher may think them worthy of being permanently preserved to our Church literature in book form."

In 1859 Cooper wrote *Mount Vernon: A Letter to the Children of America*, contributing to efforts of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association to purchase and restore the home of the first president. Cooper's pamphlet described George Washington's career and called on children to contribute their coins to the preservation efforts.

Even without another popular book to enhance its author's reputation, *Rural Hours* sold steadily. Acknowledged as an authority on nature writing, Cooper was frequently asked to write articles on the subject and to edit the nature writings of others. In "A Dissolving View," written for *The Home Book of the Picturesque* (1852), Cooper again expressed her belief that the "hand of man generally improves a landscape . . . unless there is some evident want of judgment, or good sense. . . ." The essay gracefully blends architectural history, a tribute to the power of man, a reverie on an American autumn, and a fanciful imagining of another place and time. Among the books she edited are *Country Rambles in England, or Journal of a Naturalist* (1853) by John Leonard Knapp and *The Rhyme and Reason of Country Life; or, Selections from Fields Old and New* (1854). Dedicated to William Cullen Bryant, the 1854 book is a collection of ancient and modern poems translated from a dozen different languages and categorized by themes relating to country life. Some scholars believe that Cooper also edited another anthology of nature writing, *Rural Rambles, or, Some Chapters on Flowers, Birds, and Insects* (1854).

Editing her father's work, a task for which Cooper was eminently qualified, occupied a great deal of her time. Through articles and introductions to his novels, she offered an informal personal history of her father. One such memoir was published in *Pages and Pictures from the Writings of James Fenimore Cooper*, which Susan Cooper edited in 1861. She also wrote introductions for the fifteen volumes of the Household Edition of her father's works, published by Houghton, Mifflin between 1876 and 1884.

Cooper edited *Appletons' Illustrated Almanac for 1870* (1869) and, according to one scholar, she may also have written most of the text. The detailed discussions

of seasonal activities, birds, flowers, and plants, written in a graceful style that resembles Cooper's, are strong indicators of her authorship. She also wrote a biographical sketch of Mrs. Philip Schuyler, the wife of a Revolutionary War general, for *Worthy Women of Our First Century* (1877), and Cooper is named as one of the chief contributors to *Appletons' Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (1887–1889), but it is impossible to determine what she wrote because none of the articles is signed. She also wrote a short biography of missionary William West Skiles for his account of his experiences as a missionary in western North Carolina in 1842–1862, a work she edited in 1890.

Cooper wrote fiction and nonfiction on an impressive range of subjects for popular magazines such as *Appletons' Journal*, *Graham's Magazine*, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, *Putnam's Magazine*, *Magazine of American History*, *St. Nicholas*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and *The Freeman's Journal*. The fashion of collecting autographs is the subject of "The Lumley Autograph," published in two parts in the January and February 1851 issue of *Graham's Magazine*. Using a masculine voice, Cooper satirized some people's obsessive behavior regarding their collections. The autograph of a poet, probably Thomas Otway (1652–1685), who starved to death, is discovered in a book, is lost, found again, then pasted into a trunk as a lining, and finally presented to a collector by a suitor for his daughter's hand in marriage. It later passes to the woman who coveted it most, is stolen by another woman, recovered, and then burned before the eyes of the narrator, the owner, the woman who stole it, and the boy whose responsibility it was to watch the owner's autograph album. There is a moral to this highly amusing, yet poignant, story—"In the present age of universal enlightenment, we don't trouble ourselves to make up our opinions—we take and give them, we beg, borrow, and steal them." Moreover, the story criticizes the social values of the idle rich, who can bandy about the last letter of a starving poet as though it is just another luxury item.

Cooper's first contribution to *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* was "Sally Lewis and her Lovers" (April 1859), the story of Benjamin Wright, who carved statues for Central Park in New York and the public gallery in Albany. Representing the differences between country living and city living, Sally's lovers each confront a ghost. The citified dandy is terrified by an apparition he sees at midnight, but when Ben, the hardworking country boy, also sees the "ghost" the following night, he discovers that it is only a statue. Ben not only convinces Sally to marry him but comes to realize that he has the artistic talent to create his own statues.

In the 1860s Cooper began contributing articles to *Putnam's Magazine*. "Bits" (August 1868) is a collection of trivial information on topics such as fashion, the omnibus, and the electric telegraph. "Village Improvement Societies" (September 1869) reveals Cooper's social consciousness, calling for improvements in areas such as hygiene, water quality, ventilation, roads and bridges, recreation facilities, and the protection of birds. During 1868 and 1869 she also edited extracts from her father's journals and one of his previously unpublished manuscripts for *Putnam's*.

In 1870 Cooper wrote several articles for *Putnam's*. "The Magic Palace" (February) describes a beautiful ice palace built in Russia in 1739 for the amusement of aristocrats. Though she expressed admiration for this ephemeral creation, Cooper the practical American added, "we are not told at what cost to the treasury this dream of a courtier became a reality. . . ." In "The Chanting Cherubs" (February) Cooper responded to Sophia Peabody Hawthorne's charge that Horatio Greenough had "plagiarized" his sculpture *The Chanting Cherubs* from two cherubs in a painting by Raphael. Cooper described how her father had commissioned Greenough to copy Raphael's work in 1828 and stated that when Greenough's sculpture was shown in the United States it was clearly identified as a copy. "Insect-Life in Winter" (April) discusses the tenacity of insects that live in cold climates. "Madame Lafayette and Her Mother" (August) is the horrifying tale of the mother, grandmother, and sister of General Lafayette's wife confronting execution by guillotine in 1794 with honor and courage.

Also in 1870 Cooper wrote a long article for *Harper's*. "Female Suffrage: A Letter to the Christian Women of America" (August and September 1870), makes Cooper's case for prohibiting women from voting. Elaborating on ideas she expressed in *Rural Hours*, she argued that because women were already the moral guardians of the nation, universal suffrage would do no more than what women had done already to improve the country. To Cooper, women were clearly subordinate and intellectually inferior to men, ideas for which she found a basis in Christianity, a religion that "raised" and "protects" women. The duty of women to the state must be different from those of men, she argued; besides, she added, "women could never be made to take a deep, a sincere, a discriminating, a lasting interest in the thousand political questions ever arising to be settled by the vote."

The themes of woman's proper place and the virtues of country living come together in "Two of My Lady-Loves," published in the June 1872 issue of *Harper's*. This story is written from the point of view of an elderly man who makes several visits to the home of

ELINOR WYLLYS;

OR, THE

YOUNG FOLK OF LONGBRIDGE.

A TALE.

BY

AMABEL PENFEATHER.

"Familiar matter of to-day;
Some natural sorrow, loss or pain,
That has been, and may be again."

WORDSWORTH

IN TWO VOLUMES,
VOL. I.

EDITED BY J. FENIMORE COOPER.

PHILADELPHIA:
CAREY AND HART.
1846.

Title page for the first American edition of Cooper's only novel, about a young woman whose fiancé falls in love with her best friend (Collection of Hugh C. MacDougall, James Fenimore Cooper Society)

a widow and her servant girl in the country. On one such occasion the servant's cousins—one who works in a factory and one who works in a dollar store—are also visiting, setting up a contrast between country and city living. The servant girl is left an inheritance by the widow, marries, and lives happily, while her city cousins have "gone to the bad."

Another of Cooper's contributions to *Harper's* (August 1876) was a brief biography of Rear Admiral William Branford Shubrick, which was also published as a pamphlet in 1877. Cooper remembered the admiral, who had been a close friend and "messmate" of her father, from his visits to her family during her child-



Cooper in the 1850s (photograph by W. G. Smith, Cooperstown)

hood. The reverential article is primarily a summary of Shubrick's naval career.

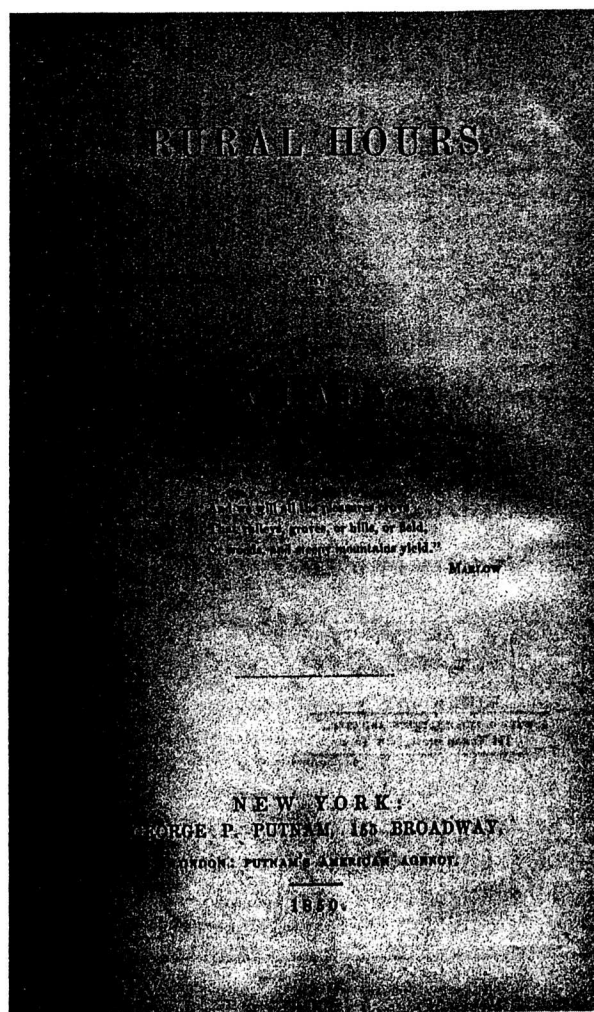
Among Cooper's nature writings is the four-part series "Otsego Leaves," published by *Appletons' Journal* in June, August, September, and December 1878. In the first of these articles, "Birds Then and Now," Cooper argued that the noticeable decline in the number of birds is caused by sportsmen overhunting fowl, not just as game but to supply ornaments for fashionable hats. She discusses the custom of using animal skulls for nesting birds in the second article, "The Bird Mediaeval." The third, "The Bird Primeval," tells how swallows used to nest in hollow trees but had begun to nest almost exclusively near humans. The fourth article, "A Road-Side Post-Office," deviates from the nature theme to tell the story of Bill, a man feared to be dead; Amanda, the woman he was supposed to marry; and a little postmistress, Bill's sister, who never stopped believing he would come home.

Cooper also wrote a few stories for children. "The Wonderful Cookie" was published in 1879 in *Wide Awake Pleasure*, an annual series of books for children. It is the story of Gretel, a little German goose girl whose poor village is visited by two kings. Preparations for the kings' lavish holiday celebrations take six months, during which Gretel and her mother work in a bakery that makes the largest cookie in the world. The story ends with Gretel tending a new flock of geese, the holiday a memory, and her life returning to the way it began. Written in a charming and chatty style, the story details a way of life far different from that of its nineteenth-century American readers.

In yet another vein, Cooper wrote "The Hudson River and Its Early Names," a scholarly article for the June 1880 issue of the *Magazine of American History*. A history of the twenty names by which the river has been called, the essay also discusses the discovery of the river and the meeting of Native Americans and Europeans, criticizing the introduction of "that fatal poison, treacherous bane of the red race . . . fire water." Describing the various trees, animals, birds, plants, and terrain of the river valley, Cooper remarked on the changes that occurred as European settlers brought new plants and animals to the region and employed new methods to farm the fertile soil.

In the 1880s Cooper also wrote two stories for the popular children's magazine *St. Nicholas*. In an 18 March 1880 letter to the editor, Mary Mapes Dodge, Cooper explained that "The Adventures of Cocqueli-cot" is "the true story of a pet cat of our family in my Father's time. He was really a remarkable animal, and his adventures were out of the common way. The narrative is entirely true—nothing imaginary." Published in the October 1881 issue of *St. Nicholas*, the story describes an angora cat that belonged to an American family living in France. Not above turning General LaFayette out of a chair, the cat traveled with the family from France across the Channel to England and eventually sailed with the family to America. Lost while the family was traveling from Albany to Lake Otsego, the cat was restored to its grateful family six weeks later. In a 4 February 1884 note to Dodge, Cooper described "The Cherry-Colored Purse. (A True Story)" as "a bit of real life in the way of woodcraft a sketch from nature taken from the window of my cottage home on the Susquehanna." Finally published in *St. Nicholas* in January 1895, after Cooper's death, the story is a pious and sentimental account of a little girl who happily gives a Christmas coin to a group of orphans.

In 1887 *The Atlantic Monthly* published two of Cooper's memoirs of her father, "A Glance Backward" (February) and "A Second Glance Backward" (October). They recount James Fenimore Cooper's career as



*Title page for Cooper's observations on the cycles of nature and village life in Upstate New York
(Collection of Hugh C. MacDougall, James Fenimore Cooper Society)*

writer, from the moment at Angevine when he declared that he could write as well as the author of the book he was reading, to his struggles to write and his novelistic successes. The articles cover the years the family spent in Europe, but Cooper kept the focus of her reminiscences on her father. He is also the main focus of the earlier "Small Family Memories (1883)" which was posthumously published in 1922, in the first volume of *Correspondence of James Fenimore-Cooper*, edited by her nephew James Fenimore Cooper.

Cooper returned to nature writing with "A Lament for the Birds," published in the August 1893 issue of *Harper's*. The article mourns the extinction of several species of birds native to the Lake Otsego region during the nineteenth century, including the white pelican, the swan, and the wild passenger pigeon. Even more common birds, such as the robin, bluebird,

and goldfinch, Cooper pointed out, had become scarcer in the forty years preceding the writing of the article.

Another late article is "An Outing on Otsego Lake," which appeared in the 12 and 19 April 1894 issues of *The Freeman's Journal*, a weekly published in Cooperstown. After discussing the visual appeal of the lake, the article focuses on the 11 November 1778 massacre in which two hundred Loyalists and five hundred Iroquois attacked and destroyed the village of Cherry Valley, killing fifty inhabitants and taking thirty to forty people prisoner. The second part of the article discusses the activities of Generals John Sullivan and James Clinton to quell the "Indian problem" (Native Americans fighting for the British), finally returning to the description of the lake she loved so well.

Cooper was a deeply religious woman and involved with the Sunday School and its charities. Her concern with humanitarian community projects began

Worcester, Mass.
Oct 15th

My dear M^{rs} Harris,

I hope you will be able
to attend the meeting of the Orphanage
Managers, to inaugurate the work. It takes
place next Saturday, at 4 P. M. at my
house. Hoping to see you
affectionately yours
Susan F. Cooper

Note, written in the 1880s, in which Cooper invites the wife of Judge Harris to attend a meeting about the Orphan House of the Holy Savior, which Cooper founded in 1873 (Collection of Hugh C. MacDougall, James Fenimore Cooper Society)

when she founded a school for poor children in a basement room within a year after the Coopers settled in Cooperstown. Soon afterward, she raised money to build The Charity House on South Fair Street in Cooperstown, where a few poor families could live for a nominal rent. In 1860 she organized the Christ Church Sewing School, enrolling about eighty girls.

Cooper used her fund-raising skills in 1865 when she wrote an appeal for help with the creation of the Thanksgiving Hospital. Writing as the secretary of the association, she was instrumental in establishing the hospital, which was incorporated in January 1868. She acted as one of five trustees elected to serve five years. Funded by annual subscriptions, some payments from patients, collections in local churches, and contributions from private individuals and the state, the hospital frequently made good use of Cooper's literary skills and her social contacts. After 1875, when a financial panic

temporarily closed the hospital, Cooper helped to set up a fund to help people in need of medical care.

By 1873 Cooper had founded the Orphan House of the Holy Savior, which began with housing for five children. By 1883 the institution had built a new house large enough to accommodate orphans from the whole county, eventually as many as one hundred boys and girls. Surviving poor drainage that caused an outbreak of diphtheria and a fire that necessitated repairs to the basement and the first floor, the orphanage seems to have been well supported by the people of the community. Several letters Cooper wrote to the children as their "mother" demonstrate her deep concern for the project. Even when she was no longer able to attend holiday functions at the orphanage, she wrote letters to the children offering advice and comfort.

Cooper also founded and was president of the Girls' Friendly Society of Christ Church in Cooperstown. Several