

TIS The Independent Scholar

A peer-reviewed interdisciplinary journal

www.ncis.org

ISSN 2381-2400

Volume 8 (forthcoming 2021)



Editorial Board

Shelby Shapiro, Ph.D. (General Editor)	tis@ncis.org
Amanda Haste, Ph.D. (Humanities Editor)	amanda.haste@ncis.org
Joan Cunningham Ph.D. (STEM Editor)	jcunningham@ncis.org
Tula Connell, Ph.D.	tulaconnell@ncis.org
Annie Rehill, Ph.D.	annie.rehill@ncis.org
Laurence Schiller, Ph.D.	lds307@northwestern.edu
Patricia Silver, Ph.D.	patricia.silver@ncis.org
Tim R. Woolley, Ph.D.	t.r.woolley.00@cantab.net

OPEN  ACCESS



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

EDITORIAL BOARD

Tula Connell (Ph.D. American History; M.A. European History) is an historian of the United States focusing on 20th century labor and social movements, and author of *Conservative Counterrevolution: Challenging Liberalism in 1950s Milwaukee* (University of Illinois Press, 2016), in the series, "The Working Class in American History". Connell is a writer, editor and media professional with more than 20 years' experience in labor communications. She serves on the board of the Labor and Working Class History Association, where she co-chairs the Committee on Independent Scholars.

Joan Cunningham (Ph.D. Public Health: Epidemiology) is a cancer epidemiologist, recently retired from the Medical University of South Carolina. She holds an MSc (Biology: aquatic eco-embryology) from the University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada and Ph.D. (Public Health: epidemiology) from the University of Texas School of Public Health (Houston). Her work focuses on racial disparities in breast cancer, and non-pharmacological mitigation of cancer treatment side effects. She also gives invited lectures on cancer epidemiology to the graduate program at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, Texas.

Amanda Haste (Ph.D. Musicology; Dip.Trans.IoLET) is a British musicologist and academic translator whose research interests include identity construction through music and language. She is a member of the Chartered Institute of Linguists and teaches courses in Translation and in English for Specific Purposes at Aix-Marseille University, France. Her research has been published in leading journals and books by major editors, and she co-authored *Constructing Identity in an Age of Globalization* (Paris: Ex Modio, 2015); and her awards include the Louise Dyer Award for research into British music, and the Elizabeth Eisenstein Essay Prize (2018).

Annie Rehill (Ph.D. Modern French Studies, MFA) specializes in the literature and history of Francophone Canada, focusing on intercultural expressions and implications. Most recently she has studied Métis literature and art. Previous work in ecocriticism centered on representations of the Canadian *coureur de bois* figure, and on Francophone Caribbean writings. Her publications include "Le Travail dans la nature canadienne: L'Équilibre (et le déséquilibre) humain tel qu'il est représenté par Louis Goulet et Joseph-Charles Taché" (2018); "An Ecocritical Reading of Joseph-Charles Taché's *Forestiers et voyageurs*" (2018); *Backwoodsmen As Ecocritical Motif in French Canadian Literature* (2016); and "Inscriptions of Nature from Guadeloupe, Haiti, and Martinique" (2015).

Laurence Dana Schiller (Ph.D. History) is a retired Adjunct Professor from Northwestern University, from which he holds a Ph.D. in African History, and was also the Head Fencing Coach there for 38 seasons. He has authored several papers on East African history, including "Female Royals of the Lake Kingdoms of East Africa: An Examination of Their Power and Status" but is now primarily engaged in writing on the American Civil War. He has produced works on cavalry tactics including the Blue Gray Education Society monograph, *Of Sabres and Carbines: The Emergence of the Federal Dragoon*.

Shelby Shapiro (Ph.D. American Studies), the General Editor of *The Independent Scholar*, served for many years as the English-language editor of *Tsum punkt/To the Point*, the magazine of Yiddish of Greater Washington, as well as for its predecessor publication. He is currently Associate Editor of *Records of the State of Connecticut*. His Ph.D. dissertation dealt with acculturation and American Jewish women in the Yiddish press; he is a Yiddish-English translator, and his research interests include Jazz and Blues (having presented jazz radio programs for nine years), the labor movement, the First World War, and immigrant anarchism.

Patricia Silver (Ph.D. Anthropology) is a sociocultural anthropologist whose research has centered on the Puerto Rican diaspora in the U.S. states. Her publications have appeared in *American Ethnologist*, *CENTRO Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies*, *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, *Op. Cit.: Revista del Centro de Investigaciones Históricas*, *Southern Cultures*, *Memory Studies*, and *Latino Studies*. Her book, *Sunbelt Diaspora: Race, Class, and Latino Politics in Puerto Rican Orlando* was published in 2020.

Tim Woolley (Ph.D. Theology) is a British Methodist minister and adjunct lecturer at Cliff College, tutor for the Methodist E-Academy and the Oxford University Department of Continuing Education, and research associate of Wesley House, Cambridge. He researches 19C British Methodism, the Holiness Movement, Revivalism and Nonconformity and has co-written *Mission Shaped Intra* (2nd ed.) for Fresh Expressions of Church and *Talking of God and Worship: Leading and Preaching* for The Methodist Church in Britain.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

All members of NCIS and their affiliated Partner Group organizations are cordially invited to submit manuscripts to *The Independent Scholar* (TIS). We welcome submissions in the form of traditional essays as well as creative or artistic material on any topic that will appeal to our members. Your manuscript may be presented in the TIS house style and should be referenced according to APA style. It should conform to the academic standards demanded by NCIS and will be subjected to a robust peer review process. Please consult the [submission guidelines](#) before submitting material, but if you have any queries don't hesitate to contact the relevant member of the TIS Editorial Board. Manuscripts and queries should be sent to the General Editor at tis@ncis.org.

If you have a book you would like reviewed, or you would like to offer to review a book, please email the Book Review Editor on reviews@ncis.org. As a guide to length and content, you can download previous reviews from <https://www.ncis.org/book-reviewsthe-independent-scholar-tis>.

About NCIS

The National Coalition of Independent Scholars is a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation (est. 1989) which supports independent scholars worldwide and provides them with a valuable scholarly community.

NCIS represents independent scholars from every continent and in many disciplines in STEM and the Humanities. Its members include unaffiliated scholars, adjunct and part-time faculty, emeritus professors, graduate students, researchers, artists and curators. The benefits of membership are many, but the great benefit of joining NCIS is affiliation with an internationally recognized intellectual society.

Today, NCIS is an international organization whose members hail from many countries and pursue diverse fields of study in a variety of disciplines. This is the population NCIS proudly serves.

Member Benefits

NCIS MEMBERSHIP offers opportunities for travel and research grants, member discounts and academic support.

FREE MEMBER RESOURCES include your own member profile page, an NCIS.org email address, and NCIS letters of introduction.

ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITIES & RESOURCES include publication in and/or peer reviewing for *The Independent Scholar*, book reviewing (or having your own academic book reviewed), free webinars and access to resources on academic skills such as presenting conference papers, chairing conference sessions, and publishing your work.

GRANT AWARDS for which members may apply include NCIS Conference Support Grants and NCIS Research Grants (six awards per year) and the annual Elizabeth Eisenstein Essay Prize. External grant awards can also be administered by NCIS thanks to our 501(c)3 status. More information on all these can be found at www.ncis.org/grants.

MEMBER DISCOUNTS are offered for JSTOR Journal Access and Nota Bene referencing software, and also on Professional Writing and Translation Services from NCIS members.

NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES include discussion groups on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, collegial support services, regional and online member gatherings, and international NCIS Conferences at major academic institutions.

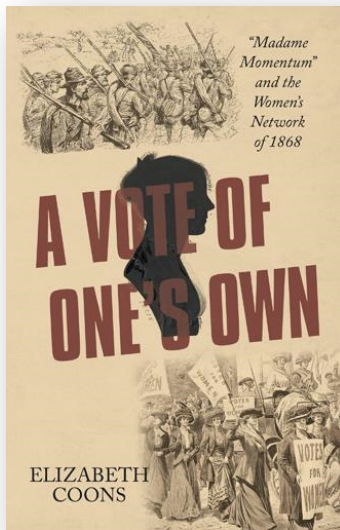
Find us, follow us, friend us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [H-Scholar](#) and [Academia](#).

www.ncis.org

Disclaimer Although the articles presented in *The Independent Scholar* have been subjected to a robust peer review process to ensure scholarly integrity, the views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the TIS editorial board or of NCIS.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)



A Vote of One's Own: "Madame Momentum" and the Women's Network of 1868

Elizabeth Coons

Bloomington: iUniverse, 2019.

68pp. inc. Notes and Bibliography.

Softcover \$10.99

ISBN : 9781532089435

E-Book \$3.99

ISBN : 9781532089428

<https://www.iuniverse.com/en/bookstore/bookdetails/798599-a-vote-of-ones-own>

Review by Shelby Shapiro. First published online 3 February 2021 and will appear in Volume 8 of *The Independent Scholar*.

In *A Vote of One's Own: "Madame Momentum" and the Women's Network of 1868*, Elizabeth Coons examines an unknown chapter in the life of Caroline Seymour Severance (1820-1914), an abolitionist, suffragist, kindergarten advocate, and reformer, best known for her role in founding women's clubs.

In addition to an Introduction and Conclusion, Coons divides her monograph into 6 chapters: Early Life; Marriage and Escape; Boston: Idea and Reality; The New England Woman's Club; Emersonian Self-Reliance; and The Traveling Lecturers Return. Coons points out that Severance's career as a suffragist was well-documented and described in a biography by Virginia Elwood-Ackers.¹ Coons aims to fill in particular holes left in Elwood-Ackers' work: specifically the establishment of the New England Woman's Club (NEWC); her leadership approach; popularizing the self-reliance ideas of Ralph Waldo Emerson among women; her love affair with Boston, "and how she used

that experience to model a type of feminism that shared some of the philosophic ambitions that characterized transcendentalism." (xviii).

Caroline Severance personified American geographic mobility an aspect of national life. Born in Canandaigua, New York, she studied in schools in nearby towns: Harmony House in Owasco, New York, and then the Geneva Female Academy in Auburn, New York. Both schools afforded young Caroline distance from a very oppressive home atmosphere. As oppressive as that environment was, her guardian (her late father's brother) held enlightened views as to what young women should be taught. In both institutions she was encouraged to think on her own. As a sixteen-year-old graduate, she was able to become a teacher at a boarding school near Pittsburgh. Moving back to New York, she departed for Cleveland after marrying Theodoric "T.C." Severance. They lived there from 1840 to 1855.

¹Virginia Elwood-Ackers, *Caroline Severance* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2010).



The Severances then moved to the city of her dreams, Boston, in 1855. In 1875, the Severances made their last move, to Los Angeles. It is important to remember that in 1820, Canandigua was just becoming more than a village; in 1840, Cleveland was still a frontier town; and in 1855, Los Angeles had only been incorporated for a mere five years. She died there in 1914, at the age of 95.

Elizabeth Coons traces Severance's trajectory of beliefs and movements, that is, the multiple motors that moved "Madame Momentum." Although her mother and father were Episcopalian, once he died, his brother's rigid Presbyterian outlook ruled - swinging on a gate as a little girl represented her entrance to eternal hellfire (pp. 3-4). Marriage liberated her; though both husband and wife had a short flirtation with the Second Great Awakening and its vision of an imminent End of Days, their religious outlook broadened to embrace Unitarianism. In Cleveland they began mixing with transcendentalists, suffragists and abolitionists through the medium of traveling lecturers. This provided the inspiration for what she achieved fame: the establishment of women's clubs. She also became active in the movement to provide kindergartens, a German innovation.

The New England Women's Club (NEWC) came to fruition in 1868, just a few short years after the massive dislocations of the Civil War. The context for its formation lay in the struggle within suffragist ranks over whether formerly enslaved men should get the vote before, or at the same time, as women. Where Severance stood on this issue is not explained. The club format represented an attempt to get past this issue and others of controversy without taking a firm stand either way. Severance thus insisted on the word "club," as opposed to "mission," "league," or other words which would have tied members to a particular stance. Severance sought to create a space where women could expand their minds, speak freely, and exercise leadership, in a setting of coequals. It was also a means by which differences could be finessed. Here women could discuss, debate and, if necessary, decide, without husbandly supervision, even though some husbands (such as TC) did participate, albeit as spectators.

Though Coons does not mention it, Severance's achievement is somewhat analogous to the creation of the "public sphere" (for men) outlined by Jurgen Habermas in establishing clubs and coffeehouses where men might meet and discuss the issues of the day. This public sphere - like Severance's women's clubs, became sites of learning, listening and leading, theoretically without regard to the varied social standings of its members.²

The greatest weakness in this monograph lies in centering Severance's actions on Ralph Waldo Emerson. While Emerson was among the speakers at the NEWC, and that Severance had read much of his work, Coons does not prove that reading his work or hearing him speak - along with others - led to the formation of the NEWC. However, she does demonstrate how others may have well laid that groundwork: the teachers at her elementary school, Harmony House, and later Elizabeth Stryker Ricord's Geneva Female Academy, institutions which provided a much broader education to young women than that usually offered; her acceptance and later rejection of Second Great Awakening doctrines; her husband's encouragement and support; the theology of her minister of eighteen years, the non-conformist Unitarian Theodore Parker. Of particular importance was Dr. Marie Zarkewska (1829-1902), a Polish physician who could not practice as a doctor in the United States, so worked as a midwife.

Severance's attraction to Boston, as place and concept, bears a striking resemblance to the attraction of artists to Paris, and Jazz musicians to places such as New Orleans, Chicago, Kansas City and New York. Boston served as a center of education and the intellect, a Mecca for the enlightened. The Severances remained in Boston for about twenty years; the NEWC remained on the scene until at least 1970, the end-date of its record collection at Harvard University.

The greatest strength of this work lies in its awakening a desire to learn more about Severance and the milieu in which she lived, worked, led and inspired. Her post-Boston activities represented both continuity and rupture. She founded - three times - a women's club in Los Angeles, the last version of which, the Friday Morning Club, succeeded.³ Establishing kindergartens

² Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 1989, trans. of 1962 German original).

³ Diana Tittle, "Significant Others: The Defining Domestic Life of Caroline Seymour Severance," *California History* Volume 88:1, 2010, p. 45.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

in Los Angeles represented a lasting contribution, as did the establishment of a Unitarian church.⁴

Yet though Severance and her husband had started out as Abolitionists, that did not equate to a belief in social equality. The 1902 gathering of the General Federation of Women's Clubs decided, at their Los Angeles meeting, that it was up to states to determine which clubs could become member organizations, thus explicitly providing cover to keep African-American women's clubs out.⁵ The General Federation thus employed the "logic" enshrined in the US Supreme Court's decision in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* – "separate but equal" – to the world of women's clubs: a stance wholly in line with Progressivism (note that segregation of hitherto integrated Federal work forces occurred under the reign of the "Progressive" President Woodrow Wilson). In justifying her action (Severance's daughter had denounced her for her failing to defend women of color), Severance "[...] cited Booker T. Washington and the bishops of the colored church in claiming that a discussion of social equality could only hurt the problem of political equality."⁶ Severance's actions took place in the context of a failed attempt by Spanish-Mexican club women to participate.

The saga of Caroline Severance took many twists and turns; this monograph provides an entrance into some of her many worlds. Elizabeth Coons has helped rescue a "foremother" from near oblivion.

Shelby Shapiro is an Independent Scholar who obtained his Ph.D. in American Studies with a dissertation on the Yiddish press and how various publications of differing political and religious viewpoints sought to construct different identities for Jewish immigrant women. He has written about Jazz, Anarchism, and the labour movement, and presently is Associate Editor of Records of the State of Connecticut.

⁴Jensen, "After Slavery," p. 182.

⁵ Jensen, "After Slavery," p. 182; Wallis, Joan M., "Keeping Alive the Old Tradition: Spanish-Mexican Club Women in Southern California, 1880-1940," *Southern California Quarterly* Volume 91: 2, Summer 2009, p. 138.

⁶ Jensen, "After Slavery," p. 182.