

trends and the received wisdom of his peers, Beard set out to rectify our mistaken apprehension of Cooper's worth.'

John B. Hench

## JULIE CHASE FULLER

When Isaiah Thomas created the American Antiquarian Society in 1812, Worcester was a town of 2,500 residents. Thomas was one of those who helped launch more than a century of remarkable expansion. Worcester grew to a city of 200,000 before its population began to recede in the 1950s. Industry prospered. Colleges and cultural institutions were established. Eleven years after Thomas died in 1831, some of those he had known in the town joined with others to found the Worcester County Mechanics Association. It grew, and by 1855, its members started building a fine new lecture hall and auditorium. 'The Mechanics' Hall' was opened in 1857 on the Main Street site of the home of Daniel Waldo.

For seventy-five years, Mechanics Hall flourished. Then it fell on lean times. By the 1970s, it had been closed by fire inspectors and was deteriorating rapidly. The Worcester Heritage Society (now Preservation Worcester), recognizing that the Hall of the Worcester County Mechanics Association was one of Worcester's most significant buildings, in 1972 nominated Mechanics Hall for designation as a National Historic Place and commissioned and paid for a study that verified its importance as 'the finest hall, as distinct from theater, remaining in the United States from the pre-Civil War decade.'

Enter Julie Chase Fuller. At fifty-five, she was ready to start a second career. She was chosen from eighty-one applicants to become executive director of the Worcester County Mechanics Association in 1977. Community leaders then rallied in a fund drive led by Richard C. Steele, and Mrs. Fuller oversaw the complicated

job of restoring the hall, making it safe, and making it popular again.

When she began her position, nothing in the building worked. The ancient elevator, installed in 1893, went up to the third-floor hall well enough, but it took an hour and a half to descend. The boilers were shot. There was a primitive cooling system—involving the opening of huge windows in the ceiling—but it was inadequate for an air-conditioned age. When the wall of an adjoining building was torn down, the wall of Mechanics Hall threatened to topple with it. Floors were damaged from years of roller-skating. Plaster was chipped and crumbling. The oil portraits on the walls of the Great Hall were grimy. Julie Chase, with little more to go on than a very different career in radio broadcasting and her own Vermont stubbornness, stood in the ruins and declared: ‘We’ll make it work.’ She did. Slowly, the hall and the entire building were brought back to their 1857 glory—actually, the *appearance* of 1857 in a cocoon of late twentieth-century comfort, convenience, and safety.

But would it stand empty? That was Julie’s second challenge. She met it. The annual Worcester County Music Festival returned to the concert hall it had left thirty-five years earlier. The Mechanics’ Association found that its travel lectures were more appealing than ever in this glistening auditorium. Local businesses began holding annual meetings there. Concerts flourished. There were weddings, prayer breakfasts, and civic events of many kinds. The hall was busy seven days a week. The imagination and drive of Mrs. Fuller made the difference. She was on hand day and night, often seven days a week, to make sure that all went well.

Julie was elected a member of the American Antiquarian Society in April 1978, a year after she reopened the historic hall. She was deeply involved when the Society held its 175th birthday party in Mechanics Hall in 1987. She also served a term on the Society’s Education Committee. She retired as executive director of the Worcester County Mechanics Association in 1989, nine months before she died in Worcester on April 12, 1990.

Long before her Mechanics Hall days, Mrs. Fuller was well known in Worcester as a personality on radio station WTAG. Julie Chase was born in Chester, Vermont, worked her way through Syracuse University, graduating with honors, and entered the radio world through a Boston advertising agency and production work at WBZ. She came to Worcester at the end of World War II, began broadcasting at WTAG, and married Andrew C. Fuller, whom she had known at Syracuse. Andy Fuller soon joined her on the staff of WTAG.

For eleven years, Julie did a daily talk show — 2,700 broadcasts — with WTAG announcer Johnny Dowell. Then in 1958 she teamed with her husband on the air, and 'Julie 'n' Johnny' became 'Julie 'n' Andy.' When Andy transferred to the Worcester *Telegram and Gazette*, then the owners of WTAG, Julie continued broadcasting solo. She also served as community service director for the station and became involved in many campaigns for worthy causes. An achievement of which she was most proud was being elected national president of American Women in Radio and Television, an organization in which she was active for many years.

After more than three decades in broadcasting, Julie realized that her kind of radio was dead. She had entered the business in the era of huge staffs, locally written and produced dramas, studio orchestras, and other special touches. By the 1970s, radio across the country was moving into hard-edged talk shows, rapid-fire news broadcasts, and endless playing of records—soft or hard rock. Julie judged that it was a good time to move on. She found Mechanics Hall and Mechanics Hall found her. She had become a director of the Mechanics Association three years earlier in 1974.

Among other organizations, Julie served also as a director of the Worcester County Music Association, Central New England College, and the Salvation Army. She was for many years an effective director of Worcester County Institution for Savings, founded in 1828 by the Daniel Waldo whose home gave way for the building of Mechanics Hall. She received an honorary doctorate from Anna Maria College, the medal of honor from Worcester State College,

the bronze medal of the American Cancer Society, and many other honors.

Johnny Dowell, who worked so closely with her at WTAG, spoke eloquently of her incredible energy, her great organizational skills, and her brilliant mind, describing her with the Shakespearean phrase: 'Her voice was ever soft, gentle, and low.'

Those who worked with her for many years, as I did, can attest to all of that. Yet her voice was never so low that she was not heard. To the contrary, she was heard, and she had useful things to say. It is fair to say that she made the restored Mechanics Hall not simply a success but a triumph.

She is survived by her husband, Andy.

Robert Comey Achorn

#### MILTON WHEATON HAMILTON

Milton Wheaton Hamilton, historian, editor, and administrator, died on February 25, 1989, in Wappingers, New York, at the age of eighty-seven. When he was elected to membership in the American Antiquarian Society in October 1963, he was cheered by director Clifford K. Shipton's remark that members of AAS 'tend to be immortal.' 'Sometimes,' he told Shipton, 'I feel a little weak and realize my age!' Hamilton was to live nearly three more decades. While not achieving immortality, he left a historical book that, more than half a century after publication, remains highly useful in a field that stands at the center of the Society's interests. That book was *The Country Printer: New York State, 1785-1830*.

Hamilton was born July 8, 1901, in Fabius, New York, the son of William Levi and Annie Belle Wheaton Hamilton. He earned bachelor's (1924) and master's (1925) degrees from Syracuse University and a Ph.D. in history (1936) from Columbia University. His early historical work ranged widely. He wrote a bachelor's thesis at Syracuse on the Hayes-Tilden election of 1876, which

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