Consuming Trade in Mid-Eighteenth Century Albany

Sara C. Evenson

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Melanie Kiechle, Chair
Daniel B. Thorp
Danille Christensen

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Introduction
On the morning of June 13, 1749 Swedish botanist Peter Kalm stepped off the wooden yacht that had brought him north from New York City. After a brief three day journey he had reached the next stop in his travels: Albany. “Next to the town of New York,” he wrote, “…Albany is the principal town, or at least the most wealthy, in the province of New York.”1 On his trip up the unpredictable Hudson River, Kalm had encountered the sheer cliffs, forests, and rolling, fertile plains that characterized the Hudson Valley before it leveled out on the cultivated and carefully tended fields of Albany. Canoes, yachts, and bateaux had passed him along the way, shuttling travelers and commodities between Albany and New York City.2

Albany was just as busy as the Hudson River itself. Farmers planted peas, corn, and fruit trees in their fields and kept kitchen gardens for their families. Homes, built both in Dutch and English fashions, lined the broad streets and featured small benches on their front steps. In the evenings, entire families would sit on these benches to enjoy the company of their neighbors. Indeed, Kalm found this practice “…rather troublesome, as those who pass by are obliged to greet every body, unless they will shock the politeness of the inhabitants of this town.”3

Yet Kalm reported on an aspect of life in Albany that seemed to operate outside this realm of neighborly politeness: consumption. Indeed, where trade was concerned Kalm found

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2 Canoes, yachts, and bateaux are different types of vessels known to have sailed on the Hudson River at this time. Kalm goes into great detail describing these different vessels and their manner of construction. Yachts were larger vessels with lower cabins that frequently moved both travelers and goods along the river. Canoes were long, shallow vessels used in tandem with yachts to get goods and passengers closer to shore. Bateaux were used mainly for transporting trade items. Extensive discussion of these vessels can be found on pages 240-242 of Kalm’s *Travels Into North America*.
3 Kalm 258.
Albanians to be sparing and self-interested. “The avarice and selfishness of the inhabitants of Albany are very well known throughout all North America,” Kalm wrote, noting that the cost for food, lodging, and travel were multiple times that which he paid in other areas of North America on his same visit. Polite Albanians may have been, but disinterested in trade they were not.

It is easy to see Kalm’s experiences as a mere continuation of the early story of Beverwijck, for that is where the origins of Albany lie. From the earliest Dutch exploration of what would become New York in 1609 well into the nineteenth century, the Mohawk and Hudson River Valleys served as main thoroughfares through the middle colonies for both trade and travel. Near their confluence was the city that became Albany. In 1652, however, the Dutch founded Beverwijck, Albany’s predecessor, as a trading post. As European appetites and demand for furs grew, so too did this once-remote trading post--farmers, merchants, and families began to settle in Beverwijck, building homes and churches. By the middle of the eighteenth century, when Kalm visited Albany, trade had come to define this city in a transcendent way. It does not matter if the Dutch or the English governed this region; it does not matter if we call the city Beverwijck or Albany. What matters is this: trade sustained and identified the community that came to be the capital of New York State from its inception.

An analysis of mid-eighteenth century trading centers such as Albany reveals a distinct pattern different from that of earlier seventeenth century trading communities like Beverwijck--consumable items, either for human or animal use, comprised the majority of internal and external trade. Food and its trade dominated Albany concerns during the mid-eighteenth century.

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4 “Albanians” is an eighteenth century reference to residents of Albany.
5 Kalm 262-263.
6 For an enjoyable and detailed discussion of Beverwijck, I suggest reading Janny Venema’s Beverwijck: A Dutch Village on the American Frontier.
7 For the purposes of this project I will refer to the city as “Beverwijck” when referencing its pre-1664 form and “Albany” when discussing the city post-1664.
Due to the emphasis placed on it by Albanians, food and its trade became the culturally, socially, and economically homogenizing factor that began shaping the modern city. By the time Kalm stepped off his yacht onto the sandy shores of the Hudson River, an important cultural shift had taken place that differentiated it from its earlier periods. No longer did Albanians see themselves as a support community for a fur trading post that focused on pulling pelts from inland sources; rather, they were active consumers and used their experience as traders to participate in a global marketplace. By the time of Kalm’s visit, global trading networks had shifted leading to growth, cultural blending, and increasing access to commercial items in trading centers in the American colonies. Albany, a hinterland trading center, mirrored these changes and can act as a case study for many of the global transitions of the eighteenth century. Taken within the broader framework and understanding of the consumer revolution, it becomes clear that Albanian culture and society became crystallized around its food items and their trade, much as the coastal communities commonly studied.  

**Background**

Since the early 2000s, historians have come to understand that the seventeenth century community of Beverwijck, which later became Albany, was an established and complex entity. That is to say, there has been a change from earlier scholarship that considered this Dutch trading post to be a non-contributing, small frontier settlement on the fringes of Dutch colonial holdings. Scholars such as Donna Merwick, Janny Venema, Martha Dickinson Shattuck, and Charles

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8 Any discussion of foodways necessarily touches upon the gendered spaces of home and kitchen, as well as the active participation women had in everyday life. It is important to note that women were far more than passive observers of the world; they were deeply invested and involved in the production, trade, and consumption of food items within the world of Albany. Gender and female status are certainly dynamics at play within my topic. However, due to the length of this project gender involvement will not be a separate chapter unto itself. Rather, this work approaches consumption with an understanding of the gender roles in place and will be careful to address those as they arise in the scholarship.

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Gehring have shown that Beverwijck and early Albany possessed sophisticated social, cultural, and religious institutions characteristic of an established community. In order to demonstrate this, these scholars have relied on early analyses of the Dutch influence on the city. It is for this reason that the primary histories of Albany have heavily focused on its early Dutch establishment and have situated it intrinsically within the greater framework of the Dutch Hudson Valley.

Considered the authoritative history of Dutch Albany, Janny Venema’s *Beverwijck: A Dutch Village on the American Frontier* is an example of a work that positions Albany as a center of change within a socially and culturally Dutch region. In this beautifully written book that explores the daily life of city residents, Venema argues that the roots of a stable, trade-based city was emerging. Through an analysis of the social systems set in place by local churches, Venema is able to demonstrate that Beverwicjk was no backwater trading post. Indeed, by the 1664 British takeover of New Netherlands it was a thriving community-based and growing city. It is here that Venema leaves us—with a significant Dutch trade city with a developed identity, newly named Albany.

Yet the passing of a century had brought many changes to the city that Kalm visited with one exception: it existed for trade. In fact, Albanians’ appetites ensured the city’s survival as an important and relevant trading center during a period of shifting economic priorities, warfare, and cultural transitions. By the 1770s, Albany had transitioned from a remote (yet important)

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9 Each of these individuals has connections with the New Netherlands Institute, which focuses on early Dutch influence in New Netherland and is closely tied to the Dutch government. This is not a fault of their work, rather it creates an uneven distribution of scholarship that emphasizes Dutch Albany over any other Albany. While the Dutch influence is marked and an important characteristic, there is far more to Albany that needs to be discussed.  
10 Many scholars have made it their focus to study early Albany and Beverwijck. Janny Venema’s *Beverwijck* is a significant text on this topic and is indicative of the broader body of scholarship related to Beverwijck and early Albany. The work of Jaap Jacobs, Patricia Bonomi, and Charles Gehring additionally discuss the exploration, settlement, and development of the Hudson Valley with particular emphasis on seventeenth century Dutch influence and possession. Scholarship focusing on later periods tends to settle into the nineteenth century and explores the ecological and environmental importance of the Hudson Valley and surrounding areas. The Hudson River Valley Institute as well as Thomas Wermuth have published extensively on these topics.
supply station for furs and lumber to a competitive trading and consumptive site itself. The shifts and changes demonstrated in Albany are indicative of the shifts and changes that occurred in many trading cities during the eighteenth century—the consumer revolution had made it easier for more people to have access to imported goods; items, such as tea and sugar, that had formerly been considered luxuries found a place on increasingly diverse tables; and the cultural and socioeconomic stratification that had once been prevalent began to wane. Using Albany as a case study, applying the concept of the consumer revolution to its inhabitants provides insights into what Albanians considered important and highlights social trends. During the consumer revolution in the eighteenth century, Albany developed an Anglo-Dutch culture as a result of its focus on the trade of edible commodities. Because all Albany residents ate, all Albany residents were involved in trade. A cosmopolitan Albanian culture based on trade and consumption, rather than on European cultural influence, developed during the eighteenth century as a result.

The Albany that emerged between the 1740s and 1770s, as Venema notes, rooted its identity in its early form a trading site that bridged Dutch, French, Native American, and British political divides. Yet the city we encounter during this period was different from the earlier seventeenth century community. There was a level of social, cultural, and economic egalitarianism that emerged directly as a result of Albany’s hunger for trade. The basis of Albany’s trade was physical commodities, with both internal and external trade focused on edible items. Albanians were so focused on exporting grain for profit that they forced themselves to import supplemental food items rather than eat the grain they raised. These patterns of consumption indicate an active participation in British trading networks spanning cultural,
societal, and economic boundaries, proving that Albanians active consumers in a food-based marketplace.\textsuperscript{11}

According to historian T.H. Breen, “Within a few decades during the middle of the eighteenth century, imported goods transformed monochrome spaces into Technicolor.”\textsuperscript{12} Indeed, Breen’s argument in \textit{Marketplace of Revolution} is that consumption was the unifying factor behind pre-Revolutionary mobilization throughout the American colonies.\textsuperscript{13} If, as Breen argued, the physical world of colonial settlers changed into a vibrant and international place, and we have a fundamental understanding that consumables comprised the majority of Albany’s trade, it stands to follow that the very plates themselves and the foods upon them were subject to transformation. Though many scholars agree that the consumer revolution transformed the ways in which colonial Americans ate, few have considered food itself beyond its commodity status.

My project will follow the path of many other historians who have recently begun to include food studies more prominently in their work, using it as a subject that can help to provide evidence for their broader arguments. In \textit{The Marketplace of Revolution}, Breen uses tea as an example of an item that both polarized and unified American colonists in the pre-war years.\textsuperscript{14} His analysis supports his concept of a consumer revolution that changed how colonists viewed themselves and their place in the world during the mid-eighteenth century until independence.\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{11}] While earlier food scholarship focuses on the difficulty to maintain subsistence levels of nutrition, scholars agree that a successful food system was in place by the mid-eighteenth century which allowed for a transition from subsistence to non-essential consumption. This concept is explored in \textit{Cultural Foods} by Kittler and Sucher and in James McWilliams’ \textit{A Revolution in Eating}.
\item[\textsuperscript{12}] T.H. Breen, \textit{The Marketplace of Revolution} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), xi.
\item[\textsuperscript{13}] Breen, “Introduction.”
\item[\textsuperscript{14}] Breen, “Bonfires of Tea.”
\item[\textsuperscript{15}] Breen, “Introduction.”
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
However, tea is simply a vehicle for Breen. The tea itself is not of importance to him—it is a commodity that can be used to prove a point.16

Other supporters of the concept of a consumer revolution have looked at food in a similar way. Paul G. E. Clemens argues that this consumer revolution created new norms for consumption and connected settlers in the Middle Colonies to a broader Atlantic world through these new norms.17 His study charts the changes in patterns of consumption in the Middle Colonies from 1760 until 1820 and argues that rural hinterlands were able to maintain consumption (despite conflict) because of their proximity to major trading hubs like Philadelphia and New York City.18 Yet Albany succeeded as a trading center not because of its ties to New York City during this period, but due to its powerful ability to consume, and to financially support that consumption.

At the heart of my analysis is Albany’s consumption of food, and the centrality of food to trade. As food historian Michael LaCombe argued, food can act as both a “subject” and a “signifier” within a historical narrative.19 That is to say, studies of food provide a twofold opportunity for historical analysis. In one instance, food can act as an indicator of greater social, political, and cultural trends within a broad context as used in works by Breen and Clemens. In another light, though, food can be a subject in its own right and provide the topic for analysis,

16 Scholars who disagree with Breen’s argument include Michael Schudson’s whose article “Citizens, Consumers, and the Good Society” contends that consumption cannot be viewed as distinctly politicized or distinctly self-interested; as well as Frank Trentmann who explores the concept of consumer morality in a global context in “Before ‘fair trade’: empire, free trade, and the moral economies of food in the modern world. Many other early American scholars such as Bernard Bailyn and Jack P. Greene agree that consumption was a factor, but argue in their works that politics were the major factor at play.
18 Ibid., 577-579.
much as a chest might provide the foundation for a material culture analysis.\textsuperscript{20} James McWilliams offers a study with food as a subject in \textit{A Revolution in Eating} where he explores how an ongoing struggle to find food developed the identity of America and Americans.\textsuperscript{21} Studies like McWilliams’ approach food as a subject itself. Via this method of study, a recipe becomes an object with material influence, and can be deconstructed to understand how it was composed, the factors that influenced its creation, the impact it had on the society in which it was materially produced, as well as the very nature of the object itself. Approaching the foods consumed by Albanians and the recipes they used as subjects themselves is central to my analysis.

I emphasize the material importance of ephemeral items to promote the greater use of museum collections. Too often museum collections are overlooked because they are considered dull, or not worthy of a full exhibit. It is my goal to work under the assumption that every primary source has a contributing story to tell, and that it can be engaging if contextualized properly. I plan to use such a mode of analysis on the Van Rensselaer recipes as a way to learn more about how and why Albanians were consuming food, and what that means. For example, Maria Van Rensselaer’s collection of recipes includes directions “To make Mengo.” The recipe states: “To make Mengo take your Cumcumber & Green them then take the pits out & take Mustard Seed & Scrap’ t horse reddish & few Cloves & Mace & mix it together & tie it Close & boil your vinigar over it, cut 3 or 4 Onions in it the Mustard Seeds.”\textsuperscript{22} If I approach “To make Mengo” with material culture in mind, I can begin to dissect the different ingredients in use.

\textsuperscript{21} James McWilliams, \textit{A Revolution in Eating: How the Quest for Food Shaped America} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).
Cucumbers were a local ingredient that may have been grown in a garden or purchased at market, and would be a seasonal commodity. Imported cloves and mace were widely popular in recipes during the eighteenth century. Mustard was a common condiment of seemingly British influence and horseradish was rarely used in British cuisine during this period. Taken as a whole, though, I can begin to establish that Maria was developing a method for preserving seasonal cucumbers, and in the process was combining local and global commodities to create a dish. Kitchen production and food preparation of dishes like mangoes is evidence of cultural blending occurring in the very intimate space that was the kitchen.

Creating a sense of what daily life was like in a specific place during a specific time can be somewhat daunting for museum professionals with limited training as historians. However, there are many resources relating to mid-eighteenth century Albany that contribute to this project. The first body of evidence is the collected manuscript recipes of Maria and Arietta Van Rensselaer. This source material provides two important insights into Albany food culture: what was considered fashionable, and what was considered worthy of recording. The Van Rensselaer family possessed a large patroonship and were deeply involved in trade, politics, and general management of the greater Albany area. They represent a more elite, educated body of society who had ready access to both goods and literature. This collection of receipts began in 1768 and continued well into the nineteenth century, with contributions spanning generations as the book passed from mother to daughter. For this project, the contributions from Maria and Arietta are

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23 This spice blend can commonly be found in pickles and other dishes in cookbooks and recipes throughout the eighteenth century. See Eliza Smith’s *The Compleat Housewife*, Amelia Simmons’ *American Cookery*, or Hannah Glasse’s *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* for generic examples of this.

24 As in this case, where the author is a museum professional completing graduate studies in history.

25 Historic Cherry Hill holds the complete collection of Van Rensselaer receipts, and are currently engaged in a project to digitize this resource. For the purposes of this project, I focus on the receipts that can be attributed to Maria and her daughter, Arietta. As this manuscript is entirely written by hand, I relied on handwriting analysis to judge when a new contributor entered the document. The receipts considered for this project can safely be attributed to no later than the late 1780s, though I believe they are relevant to an earlier period of study. Much as the book
of greatest value as they fall within the time frame of my study. These Van Rensselaer ladies, as members of a prestigious family, were well educated, had access to a variety of trade goods, and managed their households. This manuscript, then, operates as an indicator of what these women considered important enough to record for posterity or for replication, as well as for what they might have considered serving to guests in their home. These receipts offer an intriguing blend of old world Dutch and fashionable English dishes, including an early reference to “cockjes.”

There are several references to “cokernut,” which indicates at least a passing familiarity with and access to the tropical fruit, as well as location-specific items such as “Albany Rusk.” The additional merit in this collection is the fact that it was a self-conscious collection of recipes from the time and place in question. They provide insights into what individuals were considering for their own table.

However, not all Albanians were Van Rensselaers, and in order to take this more broad population into consideration other sources are necessary. Because food was an everyday item, few wrote about it explicitly. Two exceptions are travel narratives and memoirs. While these sources are often criticized as biased and/or suffering from nostalgia, they do provide critical insights into Albany from the perspective of an outsider. For example, Peter Kalm’s travels include ample comment on agricultural and outright culinary habits of the individuals he encounters, as well as general comments on the population as a whole. Though not entirely objective, Kalm approached his travel journals as a documentary of North America with an eye to its natural history. Kalm may not have been privy to all the nuances of trade or consumption, itself was passed from mother to daughter, so too were recipes and culinary knowledge. For a more in-depth discussion of vernacular foodways, see Janet Theophano’s *Eat My Words.*

26 It is widely accepted that the first reference to “cookies” comes in Amelia Simmon’s 1796 *American Cookery,* so it is of interest to note this inclusion in what I would argue is a hybridized Anglo-Dutch community some 30 years earlier.

27 Van Rensselaer Receipt Book.
but he was perfectly poised to comment on its actual practice as he observed them. The Albany trading vessels heading down the Hudson to New York City loaded with wheat that he observed existed, though his grasp of their context was limited. With additional evidence and an understanding of the historical context, though, Kalm’s account provides a foundational account of mid-century Albany from an outsider’s perspective.

Of additional value is the memoir of Anne Macvicar Grant, who lived in Albany for a period of time during her youth during the 1760s. Though she visited Albany two decades later than Kalm, there are certain areas of continuity that can be traced through her writings. According to her memoirs, each family had an “…open portico at his door which was surrounded by seats, and ascended by a few steps.”\(^{28}\) She continued that “It was in these that each domestic group was seated in summer evenings to enjoy the balmy twilight, or serenely clear moonlight.”\(^ {29}\) Much as Kalm recounted, families and neighbors would sit on their stoops and socialize in the evenings. However laden with nostalgia her prose may be, it still offers an important perspective of Albany during my time of study. Her descriptions may lack in the grit and dirt that accompanied daily life in a growing city, but the foundation is there—and it is this foundation that is both corroborated and enhanced by Kalm’s account. Richard Smith recorded his 1769 voyage through Albany and the surrounding area in *A Tour of Four Great Rivers*, also provided insights into the trade, community, and culture of this city. Taken together, these three accounts begin to illustrate the physical, cultural, and consumer topography of Albany as well as the continuity of culture from the earlier mid-century on.

While these examples represent the source body for the bulk of my research, they cannot stand as evidence on their own. Without additional support from other primary sources, there


\(^{29}\) Ibid.
would be no support for my conclusions. To help determine the extent to which certain dishes or ingredients indicate cultural distinctness, I have relied on British and Dutch cookbooks that were sold in the Albany area during this period. These books outline the general prescriptive food norms of each respective culture, and were popular during my period of study. For example, Eliza Smith’s *The Compleat Housewife, or Accomplish’d Gentlewoman’s Companion* is an excellent example of a British cookbook with persisting popularity. This book was originally published in 1727, but continued to be one of the most popular cookbooks used in the American colonies for roughly fifty years. In fact, this was the first cookbook published in the American colonies, having been printed in Williamsburg, Virginia in 1747.30 The wide popularity of this book and its broad distribution ideally situate it to comment on the nature of British food literature during this period. Hannah Glasse’s cookbook *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* is another widely used cookbook in the American colonies. Published originally in 1747, this cookery book speaks perfectly to the time period under examination. British women in Britain authored both of these cookery books, but they had a broad audience among colonists in the Americas, and even included additions specifically for American audiences. The Dutch influence also continued, as can be seen in *De Verstandige Kock, or The Sensible Cook*. Though this work was originally published in 1667, it too was subsequently reprinted due to its vast popularity and, as part of the larger work *The Pleasurable Country Life*, can be directly traced to the Hudson Valley.31 Because the nature of cookbooks regularly included information that was subsequently passed on, as well as this direct tie to the Hudson Valley, it is likely that this Dutch cookbook had impacted the cooking sensibilities of Dutch and Dutch-American families in this

region. This work functions as a tool to understand what identified Dutch foodways, from favored ingredients and spice blends to methods of production. Though limited, these recipe books provide context and can be used as a gauge of cultural difference.

**Significance of Public History as Sites of Engagement**

This project explores the ways in which food analysis can be used as a technique for visitor engagement in public history settings. Utilizing the resources available to average museum professionals, this project demonstrates how primary research can be conducted, contextualized, and translated into a museum program. My overarching goal with this project is to demonstrate that participation by museum professionals in the scholarly conversation of history is essential to developing high-quality museum programs. The structure and products of this project mirror the research and development process as an example of how public historians can engage in academic scholarship. By having museum professionals engaging with academic sources and conducting scholarly research, a bridge between public and academic history is built. This bridge helps public historians to better contextualize their collections within a broader historical framework. It also allows public historians to use their skill set to lend a more accessible tone to academic history, resulting in engaging public programs.

Using connecting themes such as home life, work, or, in this study, food as a device to foster engagement between visitors and collections enables public history sites to increase their interpretive potential, utilize a greater portion of their collections, and position themselves as essential components of local, regional, and broader historical narratives. Museum professionals must balance practical considerations, such as the need to maintain or increase visitation, with their institutional goals and mission. In the process, they are challenged with the best ways to
interpret their collections both practically and theoretically. This project acknowledges that and works to embed historical themes and academic research within engaging museum programming.

Many smaller or local public history sites have recently faced funding and staffing shortages which directly impacts their interpretive and educational programming. As a result, many sites faced with these challenges turn to old social histories, esoteric family histories and stories, or a generalized and bowdlerized sense of history for their programmatic base. For example, the Mabee Farm Historic Site in Rotterdam Junction, New York, operates as a house museum under the direction of the Schenectady County Historical Society. This house museum interprets the history of the Mabee family, emphasizing the early Dutch roots of Jan Mabee and his endeavors. Johnson Hall State Historic Site, a site administered by the National Parks Service, interprets the importance of Sir William Johnson in the Mohawk Valley as a trader and ambassador to Native Americans. Both museums touch on the marginalized stories of Native Americans and slaves (which is completely necessary), provide a brief and generalized explanation of life during a specific period, and tell specific family stories. Yet, neither of these interpretive approaches acknowledge the context that these two families worked and lived within. Even worse, both sites and many others use food as an interpretive shock-and-awe device in order to elicit an emotional response from a visitor. Stating that the Mabees frequently ate *pap* out of a communal dish for their midday meal can evoke strong emotions from modern visitors who are used to individual eating vessels. This is perhaps not the best way to create meaningful

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33 As an intern and interpreter for Mabee Farm Historic Site during Summer 2009, I was trained on existing interpretive goals and protocol and have extensive notes on their tour content.
35 Notes taken by the author during a 2009 internship.
engagement between visitors and a museum’s collections. Rather than leaving with an understanding of the history, a visitor frequently leaves in awe or disgust. By approaching collections with an eye for thematic connections, interpretation and education can achieve two things: seemingly disparate sites can begin to come together to speak to the greater experience of colonists in New York; and visitors can develop a meaningful understanding of academic history as presented in an accessible manner.

The first step in developing this type of programming is to acknowledge that historical scholarship is necessary at public history sites. While museum studies programs are very useful at developing museum professionals who can cope with a wide array of administrative challenges, these same individuals are often not trained in how to conduct academic scholarship and consolidate this research into a public program. This has created an unnecessary gap between academic and public historians. I hope, with this project, to help to bridge that gap and to provide a model for ways in which seemingly bland primary sources can become engaging and active participatory learning experiences at public history sites.

The second step is to contextualize collections within a broader thematic scheme. Certainly the Van Rensselaer recipe collection at Historic Cherry Hill provide information about particular family, but what else can it do? What else can these recipes say to us? To determine this, we must decide on an interpretive lens. For my project, I will be using my research on food as an integral and defining aspect of Albany culture, and how its trade created Albanian culture within the context of a global marketplace. This will provide the theme.

Finally, the collections and theme need to be coupled in a way that is interesting and engaging for a variety of visiting public. This requires the development of public programming that spans the academic-public history gap while still being a fun learning experience for a third
grader. The program developed in association with this project will be research-based and engaging for public audiences. This program will demonstrate not only how historic research can be used in a public history setting, but how critical it is to creating quality programming.

**Conclusion**

The objective of this paper is to explore the intersection of trade, consumption, and culture in Albany between the years 1740 and 1770. It is clear that Albany is a valuable case study that charts the ways that food and consumption in port cities represented ongoing cultural amalgamation during the eighteenth centuries. Foods and foodways are used as the primary object of analysis because they constituted the majority of Albany’s import and exports. The first two chapters explore historical content while the final chapter maps out how this research can be used in a public history setting. The overall format of this paper reflects the process of research, contextualization, and translation needed to create a museum program that is rooted in historic scholarship. The final museum program may be found in Appendix B.
Chapter I: Understanding Albany

While New York City, Philadelphia, and Boston are commonly considered the most influential port cities of the eighteenth century, the vast and varied hinterlands they served also featured important sites for social, cultural, and economic exchange. During the eighteenth century, Albany was the second-largest city in New York and wielded significant economic power as a major commercial trading hub that connected the greater Atlantic World with Native America and inland settlers of European descent. Only New York City boasted a larger population or more robust economy in the province. Indeed, a large portion of the trade that exited New York City originated in or had passed through Albany.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the lucrative fur trade that had caused Dutch traders to settle at Fort Orange was pushing west along the Mohawk River Valley and beginning to wane. These western settlements funneled fur and pelts to Europe via Albany though at a significantly slower rate than during the seventeenth century. And yet, what had begun as a fur trading post did not slowly fade back into the landscape of New York. Instead, Albany developed a diverse economy that involved individuals from many cultural, societal, and economic backgrounds in the same way that coastal centers such as Boston, New York, and Philadelphia did. This blending of cultures developed in and around an Albany where individuals were active participants in commerce and a driving factor of the economy.36 While notable figures such as Sir William Johnson are well known for their involvement in this trade network, individuals from all economic levels participated in the Albany economy. Local tenant farmers

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36 While it may not seem surprising that Albany was a major trading site during the eighteenth century, this is historiographically underrepresented. In the majority of scholarship, Albany is considered to be an economic force during the peak of the Dutch West India Company fur trade monopoly, with subsequently declining influence. Albany is attributed political power during the mid-eighteenth century, and certainly historians have paid attention to the ways in which the persisting patroonship of Rensselaerswijck developed. But little attention has been given to Albany as an active trading center following the Consumer Revolution.
relied on Albany as a marketplace for their produce as well as a venue for selling their cash crops to distant markets; homeowners acted as ad hoc innkeepers, charging passing visitors for room and board; and merchants sold cane and maple sugars in the Albany marketplace. Albanians were active consumers in a global marketplace that revolved around the import and export of food items that served as both a medium of cultural exchange and as a method of payment for foods and services.

**Albany in Context**

“Next to the town of New York,” Peter Kalm wrote on June 13, 1749, “…Albany is the principal town, or at least the most wealthy, in the province of New York.” While the inhabitants, physical layout, and name of this city may have changed over the hundred years prior to Kalm’s arrival, its importance had not. New Netherland stretched across parts of modern Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Delaware, New Jersey, and New York, and the Dutch Republic and the Dutch West India Company valued New Netherland for its strategic location. The ample coastline was both productive and easily navigable, providing a multitude of ports where shops from the Dutch West India Company could dock and conduct business. The productive land and plentiful fishing along the coast and further inland provided stable areas for settlement. What proved most valuable about New Netherland, though, was its network of rivers that provided lifelines into its hinterland. Overland routes to the fur-rich interior were indirect and difficult to navigate. The Hudson River, though, provided an easily navigable and speedy alternative for travel from New York City north to Canada, and into the west via the Mohawk River. Although early incursions into North America led to contact and conflict with Native Americans, the

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37 Kalm 255.
Dutch West India Company viewed this as a lucrative opportunity. They established a sort of permanent fur trading post near the confluence of two rivers north of New York City and aimed to funnel much sought-after furs from the American interior through New Netherland to the rest of the Dutch empire. In 1624, their walled trading post of Fort Orange was officially completed not far from Cohoes Falls where the Mohawk River emptied into the Hudson River.  

The purpose of this northern outpost was to engage in and facilitate trade, and it was this purpose that led to the development of the city of Albany. Albany adapted to the changing markets of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and became an active commercial hub that connected the Atlantic World to the interior of New York. Though technically a part of New York City’s hinterland, Albany was itself an influential node within these trading networks. This unyielding emphasis on trade permeated life in Albany, leading to the development of a modern culture that resulted from an exchange between Dutch and British settlers, other local populations, and the global network of goods these individuals encountered in the Albany marketplace. All of these exchanges were predicated on the active and ubiquitous trade that frequently took the form of foodstuffs.

The original goal at Fort Orange was to export furs and other easily transported raw materials from New Netherland to a global marketplace, rather than to equip it as a city in its own right. In order to support this venture, two notable developments took place. First, the Dutch West India Company deeded a large swathe of land surrounding Fort Orange to Kiliaen Van Rensselaer in 1629. In doing so, the patroonship of Rensselaerswijk was established and Kiliaen promised to settle 50 families on the land within four years. In return, he would in perpetuity

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38 Venema 18; See Images 1 and 2 in Appendix A.
39 Despite the geographic proximity of these two states and their political ties dating back to William of Orange and beyond, the cultural exchange between them was negligible. The language, dress, and foodways of The Netherlands and England remained distinct from one another throughout the eighteenth century.
receive rents from these tenant farmers who would produce goods to support Fort Orange and also for export.\textsuperscript{40} Second, the small independent community of Beverwijck began to grow on the bank opposite Fort Orange. This affiliated settlement provided the domestic stability needed for Fort Orange’s trading to flourish, and inadvertently laid the roots for the development of the modern city of Albany.\textsuperscript{41}

In 1664 England took possession of New Netherland and Beverwijck ceased to exist, replaced instead by the chartered city of Albany, New York. Though the fur industry was waning, the population in Albany was increasing. By 1686, approximately 500 individuals lived in Albany, and by the time Kalm visited in 1749 the population had tripled to almost 1,500 individuals living within the city limits.\textsuperscript{42} This was not nearly as large as Philadelphia, New York City, or Boston; in 1760, Philadelphia housed around 23,750 inhabitants, New York City 18,000, and Boston had 15,631 residents. And yet, between 1750 and 1770 the population of New York province doubled, with a significant increase noted in both Albany and New York City.\textsuperscript{43} Attractive farming opportunities, easy access, and the ability to engage in a commercial hub continued to draw settlers to Albany and its environs well into the eighteenth century. Historian

\textsuperscript{40} Willem Frijhoff and Jaap Jacobs, “The Dutch, New Netherland, and Thereafter (1609-1780s), in \textit{Four Centuries of Dutch-American Relations} eds. Hans Krabbendam, Cornelis A. Van Minnen, Giles Scott-Smith (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2009), 39, 69. As a whole, this work extensively explores the cultural and political relationships between The Netherlands and the United States (and the colonies that became the United States) from the seventeenth century to present. It is important to note that the Dutch West India Company was invested in New Netherland as a commercial venture; their scheme to attract settlers to populate the lands, provide support for their trading sites, and to create a buffer between Native Americans revolved around granting extensive patroonships in their colonial possessions reaching from North America into the Caribbean. Following the cession of New Netherland to Britain, the Dongan Charter recognized the patroonship of Rensselaerswijck and extended the Van Rensselaer rights under British Law. This transition is explored on pages 150-151 of Krabbendam’s compiled work.

\textsuperscript{41} For an extensive exploration of early Beverwijck and the development of Albany prior to English control, see Beverwijck by Janny Venema. Additional scholarship relating to the Dutch origins of Albany can be found in Oliver Rink’s \textit{Holland on Hudson}, Tom Wermuth’s \textit{Rip Van Winkle’s Neighbors}, and Krabbendam’s edited work \textit{Four Centuries of Dutch-American Relations}.


Stefan Bielinski contends that Albany had radically shifted from its fur-trading roots by the turn of the eighteenth century; instead of the city withering as fur trading decreased, Albanians diversified their economy in a way that allowed the city to continue to grow as an economic center. In his estimation, a paradigm shift occurred. Albanians stopped focusing on the fur trade and instead focused on commercial, productive, and service-oriented activities that both created and sustained the growing population. This analysis suggests that de-emphasizing the fur trade allowed Albany to develop an economy that was rooted in individual involvement in daily commerce. The former model relied on a fortified trading site that existed for the sole purpose of moving furs from the interior to the Atlantic for export. This model also required a connected community to provide basic provisions. As the fur trade slowed, Albany was able to shift its identity and economy away from this earlier model and establish the city itself as an economic center rather than simply shrinking or dissolving. This new economic model relied not just on fur trade, but on everyone’s individual engagement with commerce throughout Albany and its surrounding area.

Each Albany resident engaged in this economy in some way: some explicitly through commercial enterprises, others as producers of goods, and still others by providing necessary services to the community. The city no longer existed to support a trading site; it had become a commercial center in its own right. Nearly every action Albanians made carried economic weight. Quotidian tasks became potential money-making ventures. The very foods Albanians consumed were a means of payment, and comprised the bulk of their import/export trade. Albanians typically kept kitchen gardens and perhaps had a few fruit trees even if they lived within the city confines and did not self-identify as farmers. This was typically accomplished in a

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back yard, though there were also instances where land was leased to create was could essentially be considered a community garden. “This afternoon,” Kalm wrote on June 15, 1749, “I went to see an island which lies in the middle of the river, about a mile below the town. This island is an English mile long, and not above a quarter of a mile broad.”45 As part of Rensselaerswijck, this island was leased to a tenant who farmed the land and paid his annual rent in a percentage of his crop yield. The tenant capitalized on the economic potential of his land, using it both as a commercial venture and a productive center—he himself collected rents for leasing garden plots, and grew his own crops to sell and pay his rent. Kalm recognized this economic savvy, noting that “The person who had taken this lease, again let some greater and some smaller lots of ground, to the inhabitants of Albany, for making kitchen-gardens of; and by that means reimbursed himself…” of a portion of the rents being paid for his land.46

An act as simple as farming one’s own plot of land or growing a kitchen garden to supplement your diet became an inherently commercialized venture in eighteenth century Albany. An Albanian who leased a garden plot on this island paid their rents in produce to their landlord, just as the tenant-cum-landlord in turn rendered his rents to the Van Rensselaer patroon in the form of produce. The patroonship system required that tenants pay their annual rents to the patroon either via specie or, more easily and typically, as produce from his land. Because of this, food items such as wheat and peas held economic value and acted as a medium of exchange in this credit-based barter economy. Since every Albanian was involved in either the production or consumption of food, economic engagement extended throughout socioeconomic strata rather than being reserved for traders or elite consumers.

45 Kalm, 250.
46 Kalm, 262.
The habit of turning seemingly banal activities into commercial enterprises extended beyond leasing a plot of land on which to grow a family’s food. Growing food items became a commercial venture, just as offering food and shelter to passing travelers also became an opportunity for profit. In his travels, Kalm noted that, despite a relatively low number of travelers through the city, he was “…obliged to pay for every thing twice, thrice, and four times as dear as in any part of North America which I have passed through.” He went on to report that Albanians had a reputation for “avarice and selfishness” that was “…well known throughout all North America,” and that they “…fixed exorbitant prices for their services,” or otherwise did not prioritize his business with them. “If I wanted their assistance,” he wrote, “I was obliged to pay them very well for it.” Individuals whom Bielinski would classify as participating in the service sector were clearly translating the rendering of their services into a commercial activity—for every service there was a demand and a corresponding price. As the economy and city grew as the century progressed, this deep involvement in commerce continued. In 1769, New Jersey resident Richard Smith passed through Albany on his way to the Otsego Patent where he was considering purchasing land. His path of travel was not unlike Kalm’s, and indeed he was aware of this as well as Kalm’s travel accounts. On May 10th, he and his travelling companions stayed at Cartwright’s Tavern in Albany, calling it “…a good Tavern, tho his [Cartwright the proprietor] charges were exorbitant.” Invoking the botanist, Smith continued to

47 Janny Venema discusses the establishment of Albany poorhouses extensively in her book Beverwijck, though she focuses on the ways in which Dutch culture influenced social activism.
48 Kalm, 263.
49 Ibid., 262-263.
50 Ibid., 263.
52 Ibid., 116.
pen that “…it is justly remarked by Kalm the Swedish Traveller in America that the Townsmen of Albany in general sustained the character of being close, mercenary, and avaricious.”

What these travelers classify as selfishness can more easily be seen as commercial enterprise when Bielinski’s tripartite economic model is applied. Albanians were simply engaging in commerce by identifying and targeting a ready market rather than taking advantage travelers out of selfishness; commerce was an accepted aspect of daily life in Albany. This culture continued west of Albany into the Mohawk Valley. Some miles away near Fonda, Smith rested with the Kincaid family who were also very much invested in the commercial market. Mrs. Kincaid tapped maple trees during the spring and boiled sap down into sugar, producing somewhere between 300 and 400 pounds of this per year. This vast quantity was certainly not only for home use. She was able to outright sell the maple sugar for around nine pennies per pound, or she could barter it for West Indian sugar at the rate of around three pounds of maple sugar for two pounds of imported sugar. Maple sugar was a regional resource that was processed into a commercial product. Though maple sugar serves an identical purpose as cane sugar, imported loaf sugar was much preferred over maple. Maple sugar can impart a distinctly maple flavor into foods and baked goods. It is also impossible to produce a white maple sugar, whereas white cane sugar was an option. Early settlers in this area had an unreliable connection to Atlantic trade networks and so were forced to adapt their cooking and eating habits to this regionally produced sweetener. However, as inland trade and consumptive demand grew, cane sugar became increasingly available. Using the import was important enough to Mrs. Kincaid

53 Ibid.
54 Ibid., 131. According to Cornell University’s Maple Research and Extension Program, the average sugar maple will produce sap with a 2% sugar content. It is important to note that Mrs. Kincaid is not producing maple syrup, but rather shelf-stable maple sugar. Anywhere from 40 to 43 gallons of sap are needed to produce one gallon of maple syrup, which contains a sugar content of around 66%. To proceed past this point and evaporate the syrup into pure maple sugar, the Kincaids would have needed to tap a significant number of trees.
55 Ibid.
that she was willing to lose one pound of her painstakingly produced maple sugar per every pound of cane sugar she obtained via barter. The cost was inconsequential to her, and well worth having cane sugar for kitchen use. The family as a whole, though not an official inn or tavern, also exchanged food and lodging for money as they did with Smith. Speaking of his time with the family, Smith noted that “…for our Money we were civilly and tolerably entertained.”

The culture of Albany, and that which seeped out into its surrounding hinterland, was so mired in commerce that everyday actions and interactions clearly became opportunities for business transactions.

The Albany of the mid-eighteenth century reflects the ideals of the consumer revolution that transformed the daily life of trade and consumption throughout the Atlantic World. Historian T.H. Breen rooted the foundations of American independence not in rhetoric or ideals, but rather in collective consumerism in his work *Marketplace of Revolution*. As a result of the new availability of goods such as cane sugar, the ways in which individuals were able to consume commercial products had changed. People of all economic statuses had access to goods that had once been restricted to elites. Tea, for example, was one such imported item that transformed from a status symbol to a shared taste and cultural experience available to all but the most destitute. Because nearly everyone valued tea, its consumption became a unifying social network that stretched across oceans and provinces. For Breen, discussing the 1770s and what became the schism between America and Britain, access to goods meant equity; in his analysis, the universality of consumption is what unified and mobilized the disparate cultures of British-Americans prior to the American War of Independence, and transcended socioeconomic boundaries to include a majority of individuals. Breen asserts that shared consumer experiences

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56 Ibid., 134.

Evenson 27
armed British-Americans with the “…cultural resources needed to develop a bold new form of political protest” via boycott, followed by outright rebellion.\textsuperscript{57} Albany did not rely on boycott, but rather upon their shared investment in trade and commerce—across genders, across economic lines, and across cultures—to create the hybridized culture that emerged in the city during the mid-eighteenth century. This culture, rooted in the fact that each Albany resident in some way or another engaged in the unifying commercial realm, created a culture of blended languages, architecture, and social customs indicative of transitional trading centers during the eighteenth century.

This emphasis on commercialization helped to create a hybridized culture commonly found in eighteenth century ports and trading centers like Albany. This culture was often understood through and communicated by the consumption of goods and commodities. Eighteenth century Albany differed from seventeenth century Fort Orange and Beverwijck because it was a standalone trading center that both imported and exported goods. Residents and those living nearby were able to cross cultural divisions to build Albany into an active trading hub that based its import/export trade on their own desires and interests. Albanians were willing to focus their productive efforts on lucrative exports, such as wheat and flour, that forced them to import food staples alongside global luxury foodstuffs such as cane sugar and tea.

Perhaps no historical actor embodies this concept better than Sir William Johnson. His entire existence in New York was founded on trade, and he physically embodied the ease of cultural exchange found in this city.\textsuperscript{58} Johnson forcefully inserted himself into the frontier west of Albany, building what would become a vast and influential trading network that connected the

\textsuperscript{57} Breen, xv.
\textsuperscript{58} Recently, Fintan O’Toole authored \textit{White Savage} in which he explored the ways in which Johnson’s Irish and Scottish ancestry particularly suited him for working with Native Americans, going so far as to refer to him as a “white savage.” Though somewhat contested, this work emphasizes how starkly non-traditional Johnson was.
Haudenosaunee and Mohawk Valley settlers to the broader globe. In doing so, he straddled both socioeconomic and cultural borders. Coming from somewhat humble beginnings, Johnson was able to consolidate his wealth into a sizeable estate with a stately home. While his visible wealth as well as role as landowner ensured that locals respected him, his political savvy resulted in his being issued a baronetcy following the French and Indian War. His dual identity as both a working and somewhat patrician man is indicative of successful Albany elites during the mid-eighteenth century. Like Johnson, the Schuylers, Livingstons, and Van Rensselaers participated in farming and military ventures in addition to remaining stately and stylish elites—their diversified economic ventures reflect the variety of commerce previously discussed. Yet Johnson was also culturally ambiguous, embracing a blend of disparate cultures at Johnson Hall, his home. Of Irish ancestry himself, Johnson first had a long-term relationship with a woman of Palatine German descent.\(^{59}\) Following her death, he began another long-term relationship with Haudenosaunee Molly Brant, the sister of war chief Joseph Brant.\(^{60}\) Johnson became so close with the Mohawk, in fact, as to be given a ceremonial name: Warraghiyagey, which roughly translates to English as an individual who undertakes “much business.”\(^{61}\) Honored and respected by the British Crown, the Haudenosaunee, his tenant farmers, and merchants networked across the Atlantic, Johnson leveraged these cross-cultural relationships to create a trading empire with Albany as its hub.

Johnson used Albany as his point of origin for trade, sending initially smaller ships on to New York City where they were consolidated onto larger vessels for faraway markets. Despite living in a backwater, Johnson was very much connected to a global trading network via Albany.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 169, 171, 173.
\(^{61}\) Ibid., 69.
and knew where to send his products to garner the most profits. While the goods that Johnson was shipping via Albany to New York City were quite basic—typically flour, peas, preserved pork, and butter—they were lucrative goods and were destined for locations far and wide. Edward Holland, one of Johnson’s associates in New York City, actually chided Johnson for his determination to sell to a particular market. On June 7, 1745 Holland wrote to Johnson remarking that he “…would not have you [Johnson] for the future send such a large Quantity together nor above Eight or Ten Ton at a time, fright being Scarce at Present.”

The quantity of goods in question was a quantity of flour in excess of ten tons, which made it somewhat difficult for Holland to ship, as Johnson had expressly named the market where he wanted his flour sold: the Dutch colony of Curacao. While wheat flour during King George’s War was selling for a premium in the Caribbean, the risk associated with shipping made it difficult to find a trading vessel to carry the goods. Holland advised Johnson that he could manage things quite well enough himself, and instead directed this load of flour to Jamaica where it fetched a price comparable to that in Curacao. All of Johnson’s trading activities physically centered on Albany, and were managed by his employees there. The very same shipment of flour that Holland eventually packed onto a boat bound for Jamaica was first processed by Pieter Van Alen and Robert Sanders in Albany. On May 27, 1745 they wrote to Johnson with the current purchasing price for wheat, common flour, super fine flour, and peas, also informing him that they “…will Begin to take in your flour This afternoon or tomorrow,” for the short trip downriver to New York City. The cost of shipping goods from Albany south to New York was marginal, ensuring a steady profit. Commerce flowed through Albany throughout most of the year even during some

63 Ibid., 36.
64 Ibid., 30.
of the coldest months. So long as ice didn’t fully form across the Hudson River, “…Sloops and Oyster Boats came up both in January & February” of 1769. The ability to ship goods nearly year-round increased profit margins and kept lines of communication easily open between Albany and New York, and the world beyond.

Johnson’s trading network was vast and regular, and he profited by connecting the New York hinterland and Native America to the broader Atlantic World. The blankets, rum, bolt cloth, and butter that he purchased were not intended for the people who produced the flour, peas, and pork that he used in exchange for them. Rather, Johnson sent these goods even further west to markets in Oswego to the British Garrison or to Native Americans in exchange for pelts and furs.

Life in Albany

Yet one did not need to be a well-known trader to participate in this economy; as the eighteenth century progressed, increasing numbers of individuals became invested in trade and as a livelihood and as consumers themselves. Farmers were actually commercial producers in disguise, just as families who housed travelers were unlikely publicans. Daily life in Albany was one of trade, in one way or another. The very built environment of the city reflected this reliance on trade alongside its multicultural identity. Anne MacVicar Grant spent much of her childhood in Albany during the 1760s, and characterized it as follows:

The city of Albany was stretched along the banks of the Hudson; one very wide and long street lay parallel to the river, the intermediate space between it and the shore being occupied by gardens. A small but steep hill rose above the centre of the town, on which stood a fort, intended (but very ill adapted) for the defense of the place, and of the neighboring country. From the foot of this hill, another street was built, sloping pretty rapidly down till it joined the one before mentioned that ran along the river. This street was still wider than the other; it was only paved on each side, the middle being occupied

65 Smith, 127.
by public edifices. These consisted of a market place, a guard house, a town hall, and the English and Dutch churches.\textsuperscript{66}

Albany’s population during the period of 1740 to 1770 was vivid blend of individuals who were from a variety of places. Typically, a majority of the Albany population is considered to be of Dutch extraction, their presence a function of the early Dutch roots of the city. These people were often referred to as “Walloons,” a term that referenced their Low Dutch roots. However, immigration and migration patterns changed as New Netherlands became the province of New York. The British government began stationing British soldiers at Fort Orange, and sending British officials to govern the city, leading to a growing population of Anglo settlers. For the purposes of this project, Anglo will refer to anyone of British heritage or origin. The population grew and diversified still further with the introduction of Palatine Germans in the 1710s, and with a sizeable population of enslaved Africans.\textsuperscript{67} Though official population statistics are difficult to find, scholars believe that one-third of Albany homes owned African slaves in 1790 with a total African population of 572 individuals.\textsuperscript{68} Finally, though typically not residents of Albany, Native Americans were also a regular presence in the city which they visited for business or other purposes. Richard Smith noted during his 1769 visit that “We saw some Indians here & found the Weather very warm and sultry,” his passing remark a demonstration of how commonplace it was to see Native Americans in this city.\textsuperscript{69}

\cite{66} Anne MacVicar Grant, \textit{Memoirs of an American Lady}, ed. James Grant Wilson, (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 20016), 75

\cite{67} Anne MacVicar Grant dedicates a chapter in her \textit{Memoirs of an American Lady} to the treatment of enslaved Africans in Albany. She characterizes the treatment as gentle, and presents the slaves as being more akin to family members than chattel property. Because of this, I have approached the remainder of her testimony with slight trepidation, viewing it as a biased and bowdlerized account of the reality of life. While this source does give incredible narrative insight into childhood experiences in Albany, I typically consider it only reliable when confirmed by other sources.

\cite{68} “Afro-Albanians,” Colonial Albany Social Project, July 9, 2014, http://exhibitions.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/afroalbanians.html. While scholarship on colonial Albany is ongoing, a project focusing on African-Americans during the eighteenth century would be a valuable resource and shed light on an often overlooked part of this city’s past.

\cite{69} Smith, 120.
diverse, and representative of the many peoples touched by the British Empire. The result of this diversity has been debated by historians for several decades. Michael Kammen argued in *Colonial New York* that Albany’s diversity was neo-modern, influencing the course of America and leading to the melting pot the nation became during the nineteenth century. Patricia Bonomi, however, has studied Albany extensively and believes that the factious politicking characteristic of this area resulted in a common thread between peoples, leading to the development of communities. Yet the city’s very design asserts that the common factor amongst this diversity was trade—the built environment of eighteenth century Albany both reflected the diversity of its inhabitants while joining them together through an active and central marketplace.

The prominent features of eighteenth century Albany for both visitors and residents were the Fort, the marketplace, and the Dutch and English churches. For such a small city, there were a number of social and community institutions prominent amongst the myriad typical shops and houses. Indeed, Richard Smith’s 1769 account of Albany noted that, “There are 4 Houses of Worship for different Denominations and a Public Library which we did not visit. Most of the Houses are built of Brick or faced with Brick.” Smith further commented that “In the Afternoon we viewed the Town which contains according to several Gentlemen residing here, about 500 Dwelling Houses besides Stores and Out Houses. The Streets are irregular and badly laid out, some paved others not, Two or Three are broad the rest narrow & not straight.” The two broad streets Smith observed were noted on Robert Yate’s 1770 map of Albany as State Street (running perpendicular to the Hudson River) and Market Street (running parallel to the river). Churches

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70 For additional details on this, see Patricia Bonomi’s work *A Factious People.*
71 See Images 3 and 4 in Appendix A
72 Again, Janny Venema’s dissertation *Beverwyck* dicusses the early foundations of many of these social institutions such as the almshouse in great detail.
73 Smith 116-119.
and social institutions stretched up State Street towards the garrison, while the city marketplace, shops, and homes densely populated Market Street.

The proliferation of many seemingly Dutch attributes speaks less to the influence that The Netherlands had on Albany than it does to the ways in which the city was evolving as the eighteenth century progressed. Albany was quickly leaving behind its roots as a Dutch fur-trading post, and becoming a city in its own right. The Dutch Reformed Church was located in a place of due prominence at the intersection of State and Market Streets, not far from the eastern end of the city marketplace. The Episcopal Church was located somewhat farther up State Street, more removed from the Hudson River and bustling marketplace. The records of the Dutch Reformed Church are extensive, and it truly served as the community base for centuries. In 1749, the year of Kalm’s visit to Albany, nearly 135 baptisms were recorded as occurring at this church; in 1769, the year Richard Smith passed through Albany, there were over 150 baptisms. While there were churches of other denominations present as well—notably the Episcopal Church, and later the Lutheran and Presbyterian Churches--these churches were frequently understaffed. In 1749 Peter Kalm observed that the English, or Episcopal, Church was seemingly closed: “There was no service at this church…because they had no minister,” he wrote. While one would assume this led to a spiritual famine for the Episcopal residents of Albany, Kalm asserted that “…all the people understood Dutch, the garrison excepted” so that they could easily attend the Dutch Reformed services. Richard Smith confirmed this around twenty years later, when he recounted the relative linguistic fluidity of Albanians who were typically bilingual in

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74 Kalm, 256.
76 Kalm, 256.
77 Ibid., 256.
both English and Dutch, although there were some who spoke only Dutch. The Dutch Reformed Church as well as Albany’s City Hall were both built in the Dutch Style, with a pyramidal roof and small steeples on top.

While one might see the prominence of Dutch culture in this architecture, it indicates less an emphasis on Dutch-ness than it does on the ways in which Albany was evolving as a cultural and commercial entity. A blending of cultures can be seen through these places of worship, the languages being spoken, and even the ways in which homes were built. These tangible cultural clues were intertwined and blended just as the Albany houses that nestled side by side were blended. Some of these homes and shops were built “…in the old way, with the gable-end towards the street,” made of brick and the roofs finished with imported Dutch tiles. Next door, though, a passerby in the street may have seen a home in a newer style, either entirely clad in wood siding or with a brick façade and wooden clapboards on the other, less visible, sides. Repeatedly, non-Dutch style buildings are referred to as being built in the “new style.” Rarely, if ever, are these homes called “English style,” or “Anglo style,” or anything that might make one consider them as anything but architecturally advanced buildings. Because of this, Dutch style architecture found in Albany begins to lose some of its distinctly cultural inheritance; in the absence of a binary, Dutch-ness and Anglo-ness are no longer at odds, but instead combine to create Albanian culture. There was no old Dutch Albany, and no new English Albany. Rather, there was simply Albany, a vibrant, transitional, and modern city where cultural blending was facilitated by consumption.

78 Smith, 119.
79 Kalm, 257.
80 Ibid., 257.
81 Both Kalm and Smith use this term to refer to homes built in a more Anglo manner.
The built environment of Albany, just as daily life for Albanians, was centered on commerce. It is clear that the city was planned to offer broad access to the Hudson River and to the many ports along its banks. The public marketplace was located on Market Street not far from the river so as to make access to and from easier for merchants moving product, as well as the shoppers who came from the city and nearby countryside. While the majority of Albany commerce and common residences were located near Market Street, farmers and residents from the surrounding area also commuted into the city frequently to transact their commerce. Richard Smith’s account notes that farmers from as far away as German Flats, nearly 60 miles to the west, frequently brought wheat to the marketplace in Schenectady then on to Albany in sleighs. Some of this grain may have been destined for New York City and distant markets, though a surprising quantity was intended for the Albany market itself. While Albany residents lived surrounded by fertile fields of grain and had gristmills readily available to them, “…flour and other grain [Albanians] purchased from farmers in the vicinity” who had brought these goods into the city marketplace. Albany residents, despite their common habit of keeping kitchen gardens, simply weren’t self-sustaining farmers. And indeed, farmers living in the area surrounding Albany were frequently not self-sufficient themselves. Residents of Albany and Schenectady relied on imported foodstuffs to feed themselves on a daily basis, being “…supplyed altogether with Beef and Pork from New England.” The majority of fields surrounding Albany, those rented by tenant farmers and those in use by city residents, were dedicated to the commercial growth of grains and peas. This was a direct result of the desire to sell flour in New York City via the Albany marketplace, and also via New York City to

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82 See Image 5 in Appendix A.
83 Smith, 132.
84 Grant, 77.
85 Smith, 126.
Caribbean markets. As of the mid-eighteenth century, a negligible amount of flour was being sold in British markets in Britain itself. However, this emphasis on commercial crops left city residents with a gap in their diet that kitchen gardens simply couldn’t fill.

To address this gap, the city began a nuanced import-export economy based upon the well-established trading networks that Albany had been cultivating for over a century. In addition to foodstuffs such as pork, beef, butter, and flour, common goods were imported as well. China and silver from British merchants were sold in Albany shops, and an entire shoe shop advertised New Jersey footwear. This commercial world was not, at least in Albany, governed by currency as a rule. While some commercial ventures relied on cash rendered for a service (such as taverns or inns that were serving a somewhat transient audience), trade in Albany was conducted via barter for the most part. Anne Grant remembered that “…all the necessaries of life, and some luxuries abounded, [though] money, as yet, was a scarce commodity.” In the absence of specie, trading became the only means of access for many Albany residents, underscoring the ways in which commerce drove daily life. White sugar, a West Indian luxury item, was commonplace in Albany on many tables, just as it was on that of Mrs. Kincaid. It was not extreme wealth that made this possible, but rather an undying attention to the ways in which an environment can be exploited for personal gain, and how that gain can be translated into a desired commodity.

Conclusion

87 Smith, 126.
88 Ibid., 120.
89 Grant, 90.
Rather than viewing Albany as a city that persisted as a culturally Dutch center, it is important to characterize Albany as a vibrant and transitional city. The cultural and economic changes that influenced the development of Albanian culture were felt by the many trading centers located along the mid-Atlantic coastline. Due to its distinct nature as a major hinterland trading center, Albany provides a case study for the hybridization, increased consumption, and economic diversification commonly seen during the eighteenth century. Trade and consumption permeated Albany culture and transcended social, cultural, and economic boundaries, leading to the evolution of a modern Albany that made a significant impact on global marketplaces. Though the cultural amalgamation seen in Albany is not unique, it is indicative of broader trends occurring throughout many port cities and trading centers throughout the mid-Atlantic colonies. Studying how this cultural amalgamation was manifested through Albany’s eating habits is particularly enlightening.

Food and food making was at once an intimate and public process. Preparing meals required trips to the marketplace and to local gardens where local, regional, and international ingredients were exchanged. These ingredients were brought into the home where they were ground, grated, and cooked into dishes that reflected the blending of cultures so evident in other aspects of trading-center cultures. The very foods Albanians prepared and ate served as witness to the cultural amalgamation that was occurring.
Chapter II: Food and Eating in Colonial Albany

Between the years of 1740 and 1770, a distinct culture based entirely around trade developed in Albany. The food habits practiced by Albanians show that Dutch and British cultures were blended, while an appetite for trade led to increased imports of both luxuries and daily food items into Albany. This combination led to the development of a hybridized and cosmopolitan Albanian food culture that modern food writers and public historians displace in favor of a narrative that often vilifies modern food trends and presents historic foodways as bucolic and wholesome. This chapter applies the methodologies of material culture studies as related to historical foods and recipes as a way to demonstrate that the foods Albanians were eating embodied and are representative of the development of this new culture.

Using foods as a way to consider history can be problematic due to the fact that its study is a fairly new development. Within the past decade major attempts have been made to codify food studies into an academic discipline, though this encompasses the entire range of food throughout time and areas of study. Students of food studies may focus on gastronomy, food science, or food history. Because this field is still determining its boundaries and best practices, it can be challenging to find one wholly applicable analytical methodology. Viewing foods and recipes through a lens of material culture analysis helps to orient these objects as important cultural indicators and provides a useful way of viewing them within a historical context. In doing so, it is clear that the cultural exchange that took place in Albany permeated life, from the blending of architecture to the very foods that Albanians ate.

Material Analysis of Food and Recipes
“Objects created in the past are the only historical occurrences that continue to exist in the present,” historian Jules David Prown once said when speaking of material culture. And indeed the surviving artifacts of colonial Albany speak eloquently to the daily life of individuals who lived there for those of us in the present who wish to learn more about historic people and places. The large malting bins on display at the New York State Museum are a visible reminder of the vast brewing industry that provided ale to Albany residents during the eighteenth century; one can almost envision the maltster slowly stirring the gallons of beer when standing in the dimly lit exhibition. Because of their physical form, the potential they have to be tangible historical objects captivates us. Their physicality can bridge hundreds of years because, at the end of the day, we are viewing a wooden tub that, should we be able to touch it, would give us a splinter just as a modern tub might. Material culture studies provides scholars the opportunity to explore an area that is uniquely human, and at times both silent and eloquent. While artifacts cannot speak in the literal way that a printed object can, a great multitude can be revealed when reading an object as material. The way in which an object was created, the people who created it, the way it was transported and sold, how it was consumed or utilized by its owners, and even the very material of which it is made all speak loudly about the society in which it existed. But this bridging potential is not, as Prown asserts, unique to only physical objects. The very same qualities can be found in food items, and in the ephemeral writings—recipes—that captured their essence at the time of their creation. A written recipe can become as tangible as the brewing tub, under the right circumstances, and can provide a crucial entry point into the daily lives of the past.

In 1768, Maria Van Rensselaer penned the following “Receipt for Yest” in a personal journal:
Take three pints of Water, about one Quart of Wheat which boil together. Strain it through a Coarse sive when Milk warm put therein one tea Cup full of good Yeast and [two?] spoon full of Molases. Bottle cork it well & [seal?] the cork well—in 24 hours it is fit for use and will keep long if closely sopped. 90

At first glance, this recipe seems at best a mundane recollection of a woman’s household management. After all, making yeast hardly seems an involved or captivating chore, and it doesn’t seem to say anything particularly interesting. The “good Yeast” Maria referenced may have referred to a dried yeast cake or a wet ball of starter kept from previous batches of bread-baking. However, it is equally possible that the “good Yeast” was barm, or the leavings of brewer’s yeast taken from one of Albany’s many breweries. The commercial nature of Albany’s brewing industry quite literally stepped into every single Albany home via the seemingly inconsequential route of bread.

Sophie Woodward, a social anthropologist, claims that “The study of material culture centers upon objects, their properties, and the materials that they are made of, and the ways in which these material facets are central to an understanding of culture and social relations.” 91 Woodward’s study of material culture then rests heavily on a direct interpretation of the objects themselves, including what they are made of, how they were constructed, and finally, almost as an afterthought, how these traits speak to the culture surrounding them. 92 However, not all scholars take this object-first approach. Prown defines material culture as “…the study through artifacts of the beliefs—values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions—of a particular community or

90 Van Rensseleraer Receipt Collection, 1.
92 Though not a strictly academic source, independent historians compiling and self-publishing as The 18th Century Material Culture Resource Center are clearly seen to be doing this. Their compilations of information on 18th century material culture contains no analysis or contextualization, offering the artifact simply as a standalone object to speak for itself. Their offerings can be found at: https://www.scribd.com/The18thCMCRC.
society at a given time." Prown’s emphasis on what artifacts can tell is indeed one of the prominent schools of thought within the field of material culture. Certain scholars believe that the focus of material culture is and should be learning about how objects speak to and about the society in which they were created and used. Ann Smart Martin, director of the Material Culture Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is another sociocultural historian in agreement with Prown, yet offers a slightly different interpretation. She claims that “The study of material culture is about the way people live their lives through, by, around, in spite of, in pursuit of, in denial of, and because of the material world.” For scholars like Martin, material culture is certainly connected with culture and society, yet it is also and perhaps more importantly connected to human consumption. It is this consumption and use that renders objects meaningful to scholars like Martin, rather than how the object was created.

And yet, the true power of material culture comes not when it is only used to dissect an object, but when it views an item as a whole composed of composite parts. To fully understand the potential offered by analyzing an object, one must appreciate it as both an artifact and as a sociocultural indicator. By doing so, the very nature of material culture studies demands an interdisciplinary approach not only concerning methodology, but also theory. The primary objective of material culture is, according to Prown, to study artifacts as “primary data,” so that “…they can be used actively as evidence rather than passively as illustrations.” Maria’s liquid yeast, under these circumstances, clearly holds meaning both through an understanding of its

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95 It is useful here to note that use can constitute active application such as might be seen with applied arts or tools, yet can also constitute the act of consuming food, looking at art, or other more abstract acts.
96 Prown, 1.
component parts of water, wheat, yeast, and molasses, and also as its final product: a natural leavening agent for bread.

Applying this methodology to Maria Van Rensselaer’s recipe proves that it is far more significant than a woman casually capturing of an idea with pen and paper. Rather, it is able to comment on the world in which it was both recorded and physically produced. The component ingredients of this recipe are the same as the wood and metal rings used to hold together the malting tubs. The water, wheat, yeast, and molasses have the same ability to inform modern scholars about the environment in which they were gathered together in a kitchen, and the society in which they were mixed together to create something greater than their separate parts. Through this analysis, it becomes clear that the daily bread made and consumed by Albanians made them both local and global consumers.

The water that Maria or her servants used to prepare yeast may have been gathered in clay jugs from the murky Hudson River, and left to sit in a cool root cellar to allow the sludge and grime to settle to the bottom as the relatively warm water cooled. Visiting the city in 1749, Peter Kalm noted that “…for tea, brewing, and washing,” Albany residents would “…commonly take the water of the river Hudson” despite these dubious qualities. Though it is also possible that the water used when preparing this recipe was pulled up from the depths of a cool, dark well. Almost every household in Albany had enough of a green space behind it to provide for a small garden and a well, ensuring a ready supply of cool water no matter the season. During Kalm’s summer visit, he was impressed with how cool and clear the well water in Albany was. However, it was here that the refreshing qualities of Kalm’s beverage ended—he found it to taste slightly

97 Kalm, 255
98 Ibid., 255.
99 Grant 76.
acidic, though not altogether unpleasant. What he found more troubling, though, were the “…abundance of little insects” he saw swimming in his cup. Botanist that he was, he classified them as “monoculi” and described them as “…very narrow, and of a pale colour. The head was blacker and thicker than other parts of the body, and about the size of a pin’s head.” Experimenting, Kalm attempted to kill off these critters by diluting a bowl of water one-fourth with rum. Much to his surprise, they simply continued to swim around his bowl seemingly unphased. The monoculi, in his opinion, were clearly indicative of danger in the waters; he reported feeling as if there were a swelling or something stuck in his throat the day following drinking this water, and was surprised when native Albanians reported no ill-effects. “I think this water is not very wholesome,” he wrote, adding that “Perhaps many diseases arise from waters of this kind….” What Kalm didn’t know was that the creatures he termed “monoculi” were actually a species of Cladocera, or water fleas, and completely harmless. Large or steady populations of Cladocera are actually used in modern science testing as an indication of a healthy natural water system, lacking in toxic pollutants. The water used as the basis for this recipe had an intricate path to the kitchen that, much like the component parts of a material object, is a signifier of the community in which it was gathered and used.

After gathering three pints of water, the recipe then calls for the addition of one quart of wheat. Here, the ambiguity of historic recipes becomes troublesome—how was this wheat produced and used in this recipe? “Wheat” may refer simply to dried wheat berries that have been threshed and separated from the chaff, though not yet milled into flour. Or, alternately, it

100 Kalm, 253.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid., 253-254
104 Ibid., 254
105 Ibid.
could possibly refer to milled wheat flour. In either form, procuring this ingredient required a bit more work than walking downhill to the Hudson River with a pitcher. Fields of wheat surrounded the city for both local use and for export, and “…the wheat flour from Albany is reckoned the best in all North America except that from Sopus or King’s Town….All the bread in Albany is made of wheat,” as opposed to rye or oat flour.  

While many homes in Albany had their own kitchen garden that grew “…several kinds of gourds, water-melons, and kidney-beans” for the tables of their keepers, along with “…asparagus, celery, [a] great variety of salads and sweet herbs, [and] cucumbers,” growing wheat was an altogether different type of farming.  

To successfully grow wheat required a sizeable plot of land, and the community field gardens that lined the banks of the Hudson just outside the city were used to grow Indian corn, potatoes, gourds, cabbages, and “other esculent roots” such a carrots, parsnips, turnips, or other edible root vegetables.  

Because of this, Albany residents relied on purchasing wheat products and flour at the city market, where tenant farmers on Rensselaerswick lands and those from even further west brought their produce to trade. What originally seemed like a simple act of combining water and wheat, when more closely analyzed, required a merging of both local and regional, that which was free and that which needed to be procured commercially.

“Consumerism, consumption, and materialism,” wrote Martin, “intersect and overlap in many ways; yet, all cluster around one key theme—the interaction of people, ideas, and material objects.”  

This idea was central to her argument that material culture could be used as a

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106 Ibid., 246
107 Kalm, 284; Grant, 71.
108 Grant, 71, 75. Grant is careful here to note that “Indian Corn” is being grown in these community fields. This term denotes maize, a crop being grown in the Americas prior to European contact. This differentiation is necessary because “corn” was a term broadly applied by Europeans to any type of grain crop, including wheat, barley, and oats. This, then, is less a comment on the particular variety of maize than it is a comment that maize is being grown in these areas.
framework to study consumerism, and likewise to her argument that consumerism requires an interdisciplinary approach.\textsuperscript{110} In her work, Martin defined consumerism as “…the cultural relationship between humans and consumer goods and services, including behaviors, institutions, and ideas.”\textsuperscript{111} Consumption could be seen as “…a process or means by which consumer goods and services move through the general economy.” Finally, materialism “…suggests a value system in which goods play a central role.”\textsuperscript{112} Within all of these themes, one finds people and their interactions with goods and other people within their society. The wheat, yeast, and molasses used in this recipe are examples of simple modes of consumption that reflect a broader interaction with society. Whether a family purchased bread from a local baker or produced it at home, it was made with these ingredients thereby tying it, and whomever ate it, to the consumer network in which it was created. Wheat and yeast were, to an extent, fairly local or regional ingredients. While wheat was a regional crop sold in Albany markets, yeast was a more local item. As of 1756, there were five breweries spread across the city—Bastian Fisher, Tunis Fisher, Valere Oldhood, Tobias Wrightman, and Lenard Ganseford were each proprietors of their own beer-producing ventures within the city proper.\textsuperscript{113} One of the most fundamental ingredients in brewing is barm, or ale yeast. As long as beer has been produced in Europe, local bakers have been taking their leavings to raise their bread, and this tradition followed European settlers to the Americas.\textsuperscript{114} Different yeasts from different breweries had different characteristics because of  

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 142.  
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 143.  
\textsuperscript{114} There are no references to what modern bakers consider sourdough starter breads in eighteenth century cookery books common to Britain or the American colonies. While it is plausible that wild yeasts were caught from the air when yeast was difficult to procure, yeast starters can be kept alive for years by simply feeding and separating them periodically. Because of this, natural or sourdough starters were somewhat unnecessary, allowing them to become culturally specific ways of producing bread.
the different types of beer being brewed and the environment in which they were made; barm from a brewery in London would produce a different result from barm from Tobias Wrightman’s brewery in Albany simply because of where and how they were produced. Procuring the starter yeast for Maria’s liquid yeast recipe, then, required engaging in commerce with the local brewer to procure this necessary commodity, leading to participation in an active regional community of consumption.

Yet the simple production of yeast for a family’s daily bread involved more than participating in regional commercial networks of consumption: it required active involvement in a global trading system. Maria’s final ingredient ensured that any bread produced in her household was rooted in a global economy. Molasses was only available from sugar-producing areas such as the Caribbean sugar colonies, and was imported to Albany via New York City. As a byproduct of the cane sugar-making process, molasses was a less-costly alternative to refined loaf sugar and was easily shipped in barrels or hogsheads. Maple sugar, considered a very reasonable alternative to cane sugar by the local population, was produced nearby in great abundance. A local family to the west of Albany who produced maple sugar as part-time venture finished the sugaring season with nearly 400 pounds of sugar for home use or trade.115 Both maple and cane sugar, along with honey, provide the same biological function when used in conjunction with yeast: fuel. With both local and regional alternatives available, Maria instead opted to encourage the use of West Indian molasses. As an individual component, molasses may have been favored partially due to its already being in a liquid state, therefore requiring a lower temperature to dissolve its sugars into the yeast liquid blend. Yet even this does not negate Maria’s preference for an imported sugar over a local alternative (honey, for example). This

115 Smith, 131.
choice situated Maria’s recipe for yeast within a globally connected consumer marketplace, along with any other recipe that relied on the yeast as an ingredient.

Consumerism, consumption, and materialism all constitute key components of the study of material culture in American history, as Martin established. At its most basic level, though, material culture studies the habits and patterns of consumption of any given society during any given time. Perhaps the most universal consumptive product, though, is one that is frequently overlooked in material culture studies—food. Food is a universal unit of consumption. Every individual must eat to survive, and therefore has an intimate relationship with food. An individual’s experiences with food can range from the most basic want that accompanies starvation, to an intricate constellation of memory and cultural identity tied to the preparation and eating of a particular dish.116 Because of food’s ubiquity and personal nature, it becomes an exceptional example of material culture and can become a strong cultural indicator. As seen in the example above, the analytical approach required, though, is somewhat different from that of typical material culture studies.

The obvious problem with these typical approaches when considering food as material culture is that there are very few remaining tangible food products for historians to analyze. Those that do remain are often decayed or desiccated to the point where their original materiality has been lost. Yet if you consider the culture and social implications surrounding food production and consumption, its materiality begins to resurface. Maria’s yeast recipe becomes more than just a quotidian attempt at preserving a useful idea, instead demonstrating the intricacies of a simple and often-overlooked ingredient. Woodward’s theory that the material and its environment of consumption are irrevocably bound becomes increasingly significant, just as

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116 For more on the role that food and cookery play in women’s lives and memory, see Eat my Words by Janet Theophano.
the wheat, starter yeast, and molasses in “To Make Yest” binds this recipe to local, regional, and
global social and trading networks. In this way, food has left a shadow of its tangible past in the
cookery books that describe how to prepare them, and in the firsthand accounts that detail
personal experiences with them.

Approaching historic foodways with a holistic material culture analysis that considers
both the object itself as an important agent as well as an indicator of broader social and cultural
trends allows us to truly begin to unpack the significance of food items in a historical setting. We
can, then, begin to understand the myriad implications that food consumption had on the daily
lives of historical actors and the ways in which food drove the course of history.

An 18th Century Diet

We live in a world of food, a world where the choice of what we eat at any given time
has been broadly advertised, will be socially and culturally critiqued, and will have an
environmental impact that has been weighed as duly as the poundage of the commodity we have
chewed and swallowed. In this modern world of eating we are constantly assaulted by new trends
or unfamiliar dishes to tempt us and expand our understanding of what it means to be consumers
in a global civilization. In recent years, chefs, farmers, and self-proclaimed foodies have
promoted a type of heritage cuisine that draws on our shared American past as a way to develop
a healthier, sustainable, and sustaining diet. Major modern trends such as whole foods, slow
foods, and locavore movements all embody this backwards-looking mentality, all promoting a
belief in the idea that our ancestors were consuming better food in a more wholesome way.

Bookstores are filled with manuals explaining how to grow heirloom seeds in your garden or
how to raise heritage breeds in your backyard. These modern food movements are all, chiefly, a
rejection of an industrialized food system that was established during the nineteenth century. This means, then, that the world we are looking back to is that of the eighteenth century.

This pre-industrial food system that is presented by modern food writers has also permeated through to public history events and institutions. Terms like “old fashioned,” “heirloom,” and “heritage” are used in both settings without context for what they mean, instead insinuating any period from early contact to the 1960s. In fact, one regionally well-known heirloom cookbook defines “heirloom” as having intangible characteristics deeply related to a modern individual’s sense of connection to the past. Yet this “past” is not identified as any particular time period; instead the authors state only that heirlooms are passed from generation-to-generation.¹¹⁷ This interpretation, then, relies on building a connection between modern individuals and a storied, potentially ahistorical past. That is to say, it hopes to build upon and bolster a narrative of modern connectedness to an undefined past rather than using the accepted guidelines of time and place as suggested by historians.

Food writers are not alone in this act. Public history institutions also use this terminology and approach when discussing food. In many ways, the world to which they hearken back never existed. The sense of nostalgia that permeates these interpretations has created an idealized historical world more characteristic of a Wallace Nutting painting than of an actual eighteenth century marketplace or kitchen. In place of spitting roasts and charred bones, food writers and public history sites present idyllic gardens and free-range chickens as a historical alternative, though this ignores the messy and laborious aspects of food production and consumption. While this is certainly due in part to Colonial Revival sentimentality, it has unfortunately continued into the present. Within the past year, there have been at least two historic dinners advertised and

served in the greater Albany area. Though not in Albany proper, both meals took place in geographic areas that were connected to Albany via active trading routes in the eighteenth century and very much indicate current views of food in history.

On November 15, 2015, the Nellis Tavern in St. Johnsville hosted a “1750’s Palatine Dinner” as a fundraiser. Its advertising invited participants to “…be a part of history” at a local restaurant where they would partake of a “Palatine meal” featuring “…cider braised PORK with GUMBIS, a dish prepared with stewed cabbage, sausage and apples!” as well as “…appetizer, dessert and beverage.”118 The Schoharie Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution hosted a similar dinner benefit on March 5, 2016. “A Winter Feast At Historic Lasell Hall” advertised “18th Century Period Dining, Gambols,” and a variety of other entertainments, and encouraged attendees “…to come in 18th Century Costumes.”119 At this event, participants were offered a choice of entrees: Cornwall Chicken, described as “…baked chicken with potatoes, parsnips and carrots cooked in cider and honey;” Palatine Sauerbraten, a “…spiced, braised, tender beef served with noodles;” or Yankee Vegetarian Cassoulet, “…root vegetables cooked until tender with rich white beans.”120 The advertisement continued that “All [would be] accompanied by an assortment of relishes, desserts, and wine, beer, hard cider, and nonalcoholic beverages.”121 Though in somewhat nontraditional settings, both of these dinners represent inaccurate food history as well as public history interpretations of historic foods and foodways as edible entertainment.

118 “1750’s Palatiner Dinner” flyer, author’s collection. See Image 7 in Appendix A The Nellis Tavern is an eighteenth century tavern building located on the Mohawk River and was part of a series of taverns, inns, and trading posts that connected the New York hinterland to Albany via land and river travel and trade.
119 “A Winter Feast at Historic Lasell Hall” flyer, author’s collection. See Image 8 in Appendix A.
120 Ibid.
121 Ibid.
The historian’s concern with both of these events is twofold, and very much interconnected: both menus and events as a whole rely heavily on a sense of nostalgia to promote the events, as well as to develop the menus themselves; they both also decontextualize the pasts that they are trying to interpret to their participants. Menu-wise, the Nellis Tavern committee chose a menu that is more firmly based in historical scholarship. Gumbis is traditionally a Pennsylvania Dutch dish, though it was known to the majority of Germanic individuals beginning in the Medieval period. While their menu focuses on the ethnic inheritance of the Nellis family by focusing on being a “Palatine” meal, this strips them and their contextual history of any cultural diversity that resulted from being tied into a global marketplace. In essence, this menu is broadly painting all individuals of Palatine ancestry as culturally identical, negating any vernacular trends that may have developed. The final effect is a nostalgic, quaint view of Germanic settlers eating pork and cabbage in much the same way as their centuries-removed ancestors did. William Johnson, just as the Nellises, lived amongst Palatines, Scots-Irish immigrants, Native Americans, and enslaved Africans, just to name a sliver of the population found in this area. This menu then likewise strips the Nellises of any cultural exchanges that may have taken place over the several decades their family lived in the Mohawk Valley. In doing so, it removes the family and the dishes being served from their historical context and disables them from commenting on broader historical trends such as commercialism, consumption, and aesthetic taste. In this case, the food items can be documented to a historical time and place,

though they are presented in a vacuum of sorts—the rich cultural context in which these dishes developed and would have been consumed is de-emphasized.

The greater Schoharie DAR at Lasell Hall opted to offer a more culturally diverse menu than Nellis Tavern. This menu identifies the historical context of eighteenth century New York in ways that Nellis Tavern did not, yet in doing so exchanges historic food items for dishes that only slightly nod towards what individuals may have eaten. “Palatine Sauerbraten” attempts to achieve the same goals as Nellis Tavern gumbis: to nod to German inheritance in this geographic area while evoking an image of culturally distinct immigrants. The practice of spicing and slowly braising meats in this tradition is centuries-old, giving this recipe firm grounding in historic practice as well as historic culture. One would similarly assume that the “Cornwall Chicken” on the menu would be a dish originating in Cornwall, England, balancing the Palatine sauerbraten with a dish of Anglo-inheritance. In theory this is achieved, yet upon closer inspection there are no references to “Cornwall Chicken” in eighteenth century cookery books, or any comparable dish under a different name. The committee designing this menu prioritized the name of this dish, applying an attractive name that evoked a sense of British charm, rather than using a dish whose component ingredients and method of preparation more representative of Anglo-American culture during the eighteenth century. The final option on this menu is somewhat confusing when considered from the position of a historian. It is clear that the Schoharie DAR hoped to be inclusive of modern diners with their offering of “Yankee Vegetarian Cassoulet,” while also indicating that American dishes developed alongside dishes of European cultural

123 When speaking to a committee member, I was told that the original recipe for this dish was called “Drunken Chicken” and directed to this recipe on Food.com: http://www.food.com/recipe/18th-century-drunken-english-somerset-cider-chicken-with-honey-238815. The anonymous author of this recipe claims it is an 18th century dish from Somerset, England, though provides no documentation for this dish or resources on where it was found. This dish is certainly not common to any published cookery books from this period, though it is possible it was found in a manuscript collection. However, it is similarly possible that this dish has a false provenance, named not for authentic 18th century roots but rather for a modern desire for idealized historic foods.

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inheritance. Yet the name of this modern dish doesn’t quite achieve that. There is nothing especially “Yankee” about this dish—it is not characteristic enough of New England colonies to make it a regional dish. This dish is neither particularly American in that sense, as all of the component ingredients and cooking methods were common throughout Europe during the eighteenth century. Instead, the term “Yankee” evokes an image of an American militiaman, creating an emotional tie to a purportedly shared American past. In this way, referring to this dish as “Yankee” becomes a rhetorical device used by the host institution to invoke an image of American patriotism that many of their diners could readily associate with. There is also no gastronomic or historic reason to call this dish a “cassoulet,” which is a term for a stewed dish, did not enter vocabulary until the nineteenth century.\(^{124}\) Both “stewed” and “ragout” are terms commonly found in cookery books from the eighteenth century, and imply the same cooking method as “cassoulet.” This dish is intended to provide for modern gastronomic needs while acknowledging the many cultures present in provincial New York. Much like the “Cornwall Chicken,” though, it better serves its modern gastronomic purpose than it does represent historic food items and cooking styles.

Underpinning both of these menus is a modern interpretation of food. The very form these meals took reflect modern sensibilities about the order in which foods should be eaten and how they should be served. Above, we see a distinctly modern format: appetizers, a plated main dish with related sides, and desserts. This was not the norm in either elite or common homes during the eighteenth century. Nellis Tavern’s meal was designed to be more typical of a common family living during the 1750s. In this case, the meal more rightly should have involved

bread and milk, cheese, and perhaps even shared this from a communal plate. The concept of separate courses for a family meal was uncommon at best. For a more elaborate meal such as the one served at Lassell Hall, multiple courses would have been common, though formatted differently than the DAR fundraiser. Formal meals during the eighteenth century relied on mixed courses of meats, sides, pies, and soups. Cookery book author and style-expert Hannah Glasse offered the following first course for a “modern” March supper in her 1747 edition of The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy: Soup, Sheeps Rumps, Almond Pudding, Fillet of Pork, Chine of Mutton and Stewed Celery, Stewed Carp or Tench, Lamb’s Head, Veal Collops, Beef Steak Pie, Calves Ears, Onion Soup. The second and third courses continue much the same, with a combination of savories, sweets, meats and sides being served side by side. There was no discrete appetizer course or dessert course as seen in the modern approximation served at Lassell Hall. By following a modern meal format, this meal presented itself as a connection to the past—it was approachable and accessible for modern diners. It created a generation-to-generation lineage that provided them with a tangible way to experience the past on their own terms.

What then is a historically rooted world of eating? The first step towards understanding what an American diet looked like is to peel away the layers of nostalgia that have been applied to the eating habits of early Americans and to apply a material culture analysis to the foods eaten and recipes recorded. The story that becomes evident is far more nuanced and meaningful than modern food writers would have us believe. There are three main issues that impacted pre-industrial food consumption that need to be kept in mind: seasonality and availability, shelf-life and preservation, and availability. Each of these had profound effects on what individual could

125 Kalm, 265.
consume, thereby impact their decisions about what and how to consume. That is to say, prior to discussing culture and aesthetics, one must first acknowledge the quotidian challenges surrounding food procurement.

Seasonality was one of the most significant concerns for eighteenth century American consumers. The seasons of production in their home kitchen gardens and larger-scale agricultural fields as well as the growing seasons and cycles of places abroad impacted what was available in the Albany marketplace. Albanians sowed their seeds in the spring, tended their crops during the summer, harvested in the fall, and slaughtered animals for meat as soon as the weather began to turn chilly. While many considered Albany to be temperate and the Hudson River frequently remained free from ice well into January, winter was not a viable growing season. Peach trees struggled to succeed in Albany due to the prolonged and cold winters.127 There were frequently frosts well into the summer months that sometimes blighted young buds and forced farmers to plant later in the spring.128 A yearly cycle of regional availability developed based on the climate, resulting in an Albanian diet that was partially dictated by what was available. The ability to preserve food items was essential as a way to supplement this seasonal diet. Cows typically calved in early spring, producing milk for their new offspring. Farmers in the region could then milk their cows until late fall when they were intentionally dried off, and bred to again begin the cycle.129 During this time frame, families would preserve the milk by making cheese, or by separating the cream to churn into butter. Both milk and cream underwent a different process that rendered them shelf-stable, unlike raw whole milk. Though Albanians did not have access to fresh milk year round, the cheese and butter they made during the spring and...

127 Kalm, 244.
summer months ensured that they had a regular supply of dairy products throughout the year. As much as consumption was predicated on seasonality, so too was home labor. The basic food system of colonial Americans revolved around this understanding of seasonality—you wintered your parsnips over in the ground to be eaten in the spring, so they were not available in July; fresh meat was most common in late fall during butchering season, so was a rare and special treat during the summer months. This cycle of seasons provided the foundational underpinning for any colonial American diet.

Since most food items were only available seasonally, shelf-life and preservability of food items also impacted consumption. Albanians typically grew vegetables that could easily be used either fresh or in a preserved state. Cabbages alongside root vegetables such as potatoes, carrots, and parsnips were commonly found in Albany’s kitchen gardens. These would have all kept very well for several months in the cool, dry cellars found beneath Albany homes without any special preparation. Longer-term storage required special care and preparation. Considerable sections of cookery books during the eighteenth century were dedicated to the many different ways to appropriately preserve any number of foods. Both drying and salting were common methods of preservation for meats and vegetables. Vinegar and salt were frequently combined to brine or pickle meats and vegetables for long-term storage as well. Fruits could essentially be pickled in a sugar-based syrup that would similarly provide long-term storage. All Albanians, despite their socioeconomic levels, were intimately acquainted with seasonal availability and the need to preserve seasonal produce. Maria Van Rensselaer included the following recipe for “Currant Jellies” in her collection: “…to 1 Pint juice take 1 td Sugar take your Current & put them in a large Earthen pot ti’d close on the to & put them in boiling Water

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130 Grant, 71, 75.
& then they will turn Juce soon Hang them in a kettle over the fire [manuscript faded and illegible] them twice to boil." 131 The process of soaking currants in sugar and boiling them repeatedly resulted in a very sugary jam or jelly that would not spoil. Though fresh currants were only available in the summer, preserving them in this way allowed them to be kept long through the cold fruitless winters.

Maria’s Currant Jellies would not have been possible without access to both currants and sugar. Both of these ingredients were readily available in Albany via regional and global trading patterns. Kalm’s accounts of the plentiful fruit trees and bushes surrounding Albany ensured a ready supply of apples, cherries, currants, and some peaches. 132 While it is possible that Maria’s garden had currant bushes, it is similarly likely that tenant farmers on the Rensselaerswijck estate offered currants for sale or as compensation for their rents. Local trading networks ensured that even those who didn’t grow their own currants had access to this fruit. Albany’s global connections to the West Indies ensured a large supply of sugar into its port. Though sugar is frequently considered a luxury item by modern scholars and public historians, it was available to Albanians in plenty. Individuals who kept frugal homes were known to use a great quantity of cane sugar even though cheaper maple sugar was available. 133 Albanians were able to “…[get] sugar home at an easy rate, in return for their exports to the West Indies,” viewing it not as a luxury but as a common item. 134 Regional and global trade items not only filled a portion of the Albanian plate, but rather were also part of its food infrastructure. The numerous boats that sailed north from New York City ensured a steady availability of these food items, solidifying a globalized, trade-based Albanian palate.

131 Van Rensselaer Receipt Book, 12.
132 Kalm, 243-245.
133 Grant, 49.
134 Ibid., 113.
Albany as a Transitional Cultural Center

The Albanian plate was rooted in seasonality, preservability, and availability of food items. The ways in which these universal constraints manifested themselves in the everyday eating habits of Albany demonstrates an emergence of a trade-based, hybridized culture that resulted from increased trade and commercialization in the interconnected trading centers of the mid-Atlantic. All individuals, regardless of their ethnic inheritance or socioeconomic level met in the marketplace and mingled among the products and produce that had traveled tens or thousands of miles to arrive there. It was here that the components of Albanian culture were both consolidated and distributed through consumption.

Albanian culture was a mix of British, Dutch, and Native American norms that blended together with an almost obsessive preoccupation with trade. Visitors to Albany noted this throughout the eighteenth century, and saw this new culture manifested through foodways. The dishes themselves and the ways in which individuals ate acted as cultural indicators, sometimes confusing observers. Though a botanist, Kalm noted the development of Albanian culture primarily through his recollections of food and food production. He sometimes observed a blending of Dutch and British cultures through foods being consumed, categorizing dishes as being characteristic of one culture or the other. Meats, he noted, were dressed and prepared “…very different from that of the English,” though he did not elaborate on what exactly this meant. Maria Van Rensselaer is, unfortunately, silent on the topic of meat preparation. Her recipes tend to be baked treats and confections rather than the best roasting methods for meats. Comparing recipes found in cookery books that were well-circulated in the American colonies helps to enunciate just what these differences may have been.
The Sensible Cook, a popular Dutch cookery book that was printed in multiple editions and was sold in the Hudson River Valley, suggests that roasted duck be dressed in a sauce made from onion, white wine, mutton broth, vinegar, pepper, cloves, and sugar, and was thickened using toasted white bread. Saffron, carrots, or beet could be added to give the sauce a pleasant color.\textsuperscript{135} The resulting sauce would have been a fragrantly spicy, almost sweet and sour accompaniment to the fatty roasted duck. The popular English cookery book The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy offers two different approaches to this dish. Rather than roasting the duck, boiling is suggested. The first sauce suggested is essentially an onion gravy—the onions boiled with the duck are chopped, thickened with butter and flour, and then made into a silky sauce through the addition of milk.\textsuperscript{136} If the cook was feeling adventurous, Glasse offers a secondary recipe for those who might like to “…make this sauce for a change.”\textsuperscript{137} In this recipe, onions again form the foundation, though it is boiled with freshly chopped parsley. Butter, lemon juice, pepper, salt, red wine, and gravy are then added to make a very “proper” sauce for ducks.\textsuperscript{138} Though this secondary recipe seems to be more similar to that found in The Sensible Cook, the resulting sauce is quite different. The lemon juice and red wine were used sparingly, with the recipe suggesting only “…a little juice of lemon” and “…two spoonfuls of red wine.”\textsuperscript{139} This would have certainly produced a rich gravy, though the flavor would have been far less acidic and spiced than the Dutch alternative. Kalm very likely encountered similar dishes, leading him to declare the meats “very different” from what he had come to expect from British cooks.

\textsuperscript{135} Peter G. Rose, ed., The Sensible Cook: Dutch Foodways in the Old and the New World (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1989), 58.
\textsuperscript{136} Glasse, 82.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid. In this sense, “gravy” refers to the stock in which the duck was boiled.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.
Dutch cultural influence can also be traced through the recipes that Maria Van Rensselaer recorded in her private manuscript. Not only did Maria include four separate recipes for *oley coeckjes*, she penned what is believed to be the first English-language recipe for this baked good that later came to be known as the cookie. Food historians agree that modern cookies in America are rooted in these early Dutch *oley cooks, cockjes, or oly cooks*. While this would at first appear to be a direct lineage of Dutch food inheritance, it is also evidence of the ways in which cultural blending occurred in Albany. What had once been a Dutch dish found a new identity in Maria’s translated recipe.

Maria’s recipe collection can in fact be seen to bridge Dutch and British culture while simultaneously echoing what Kalm and Grant observed as a distinctly Albanian culture. While Maria and her husband Phillip are more representative of the Albany elite than of the common individual, their joint ancestry is very typical of Albany. Maria was descended from individuals of both English and Dutch inheritance. She counted among her family both Sanders and Schuylers, individuals born in North America and those with strong ties to Europe. Phillip traced his lineage through the long-standing Van Rensselaer family and its founder, Kilaen, who established the longest-standing patroonship in North America. The multi-ethnic inheritance these two possessed is a representation of the Albany population during the mid-eighteenth century, and is demonstrated in the Van Rensselaer manuscript recipe collection alongside the development of dishes unique to Albany itself.¹⁴⁰ British food inheritance can be found in Maria’s inclusion of dishes such as Plumb Cake, Shrewsbury Cakes, and Wigs. Multiple variations of these baked goods are found throughout British cookery books, proving to be as

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¹⁴⁰ This manuscript was begun in 1768 by Maria, though was continued by her daughter Ariett. My analysis of these receipts and approximate dating has been done through handwriting analysis and subtle changes in paper, ink, and marginalia.
quintessentially British as the oley cockje is considered to be quintessentially Dutch. Maria’s recipes sit side by side comfortably, just as Kalm noted Dutch and English style homes stretching down Albany’s lanes. Rather than contradicting one another, this combination of cultures is precisely Albanian.

Albany’s food culture had become far more than simply vestiges of Dutch or English culture that were held onto by ethnic groups. The food habits of Albanians reflect a global palate that reflected the international consumer demands established by the Consumer Revolution. Though Albanians were perceived by outsiders as “sparing,” this was simply a manifestation of their incessant engagement in trade.141 While Albanians may have not eaten a large amount of meat, they had a varied and diverse table made up of local and international food items.142 The evening meal of tea was characterized as a “perfect regale” by a visitor in the late 1760s.143 In addition to the roasted poultry or game, there was also seasonal shellfish, fruit, and nuts found at this evening meal.144 “Tea,” according to visiting Anne Grant, was “accompanied by various sorts of cakes unknown to us, cold pastry, and great quantities of sweetmeats and preserved fruits of various kinds.”145 The sheer quantity of sweet treats and preserved fruits on everyday Albanian tables seemed rather fanciful to Grant who was struck by the astonishing “…quantity of these articles used in families, otherwise plain and frugal.”146 This was, however, a direct response to Albany’s function as both a major trading center and an agricultural base. As a major trading center, Albany residents had ready access to this commodity, as well as a great

141 Kalm, 266.
142 Kalm 266, Grant 113.
143 Grant, 113.
144 Ibid., 113-114.
145 Ibid., 113
146 Ibid.
quantity of fruits since the city was also an agricultural base.\textsuperscript{147} The prevalence of sugar on the everyday table was on the rise during the eighteenth century as a result of more regular and increased trade with sugar-producing centers in the Caribbean.\textsuperscript{148} The fruit, Grant explains, is found in “great abundance,” partially due to communal orchards and partially due to the convention of families planting fruit trees near their front steps and in their back garden. Rather the fertile bower early explorers had claimed the Americas to be, Albany proved to be excellent growing grounds for many types of apples, berries, and stonefruit throughout the eighteenth century. This, clearly, decorated the tables of Albanians on a regular basis. More interestingly though is the quantity of sugar needed and used to produce these confections and sweetmeats. Grant pointed out that Albanians were quite capable of “…getting sugar home at an easy rate, in return for their exports to the West Indies.”\textsuperscript{149}

In addition to plenty of cane sugar, Maria Van Rensselaer also relied on other international imports to populate her recipe collection. Four of her recipes focused on coconut in some capacity—\textit{Cokernut Tarts}, \textit{Cokernut Puding}, \textit{To Make Wite Cokernut Tarts}, and \textit{To Make Yellow Cokernut Tarts} are all found in her manuscript. Coconuts are native to areas of Central and South America, Asia, and Africa, but were an international trade commodity, dispersed throughout the world along many shipping routes. Their use was not restricted to one culture or another—rather, they became consumable symbols of an interconnected world, of the cosmopolitan sensibilities of this Albany family. Displaying a coconut tart on the table vocalized that not only were you connected to the elite family of a wealthy patroon, but that you were an active and willing participant in this hybridized culture. Because of this, one should not question

\textsuperscript{147} For a discussion on the many ways sugar influenced daily life during the eighteenth century, see Sidney Mintz’s 1985 book \textit{Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History}.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.
the depth to which Dutch roots run in Albany or the extent to which British possession altered
the original population, but rather acknowledge that, as global consumers, Albanians blended
these and other cultures on their plates.

For indeed this collection of recipes, and the Albanian table, was not simply an
amalgamation of mainstream Dutch or British items, as the example of coconut has shown. It
was also an area where Albany culture could develop. The same Albanians who were noted as
sparing and “peculiar” for their habit of scraping cheese rather than slicing it were also criticized
for their distinctive way of drinking tea: “They never put sugar into the cup, but take a small bit
of it into their mouths whilst they drink,” Kalm noted.\textsuperscript{150} While these habits may have been
peculiar to outsiders, they were the norm for Albanians who gathered at the table to share a meal
of Dutch, English, and Albanian dishes. This climate of cultural fluidity allowed for the
development of regional specialties. Maria Van Rensselaer included two tempting examples of
this in her manuscript—two regional adaptations of rusk. Rusk was, historically, a cake-like
bread that was frequently baked twice in order to dry it out.\textsuperscript{151} This process was both for taste,
much like Italian biscotti, but also for its ability to prevent the rusk from molding, thereby
lengthening its shelf life in a time before preservatives. Maria included receipts for \textit{Rusk Albany}
as well as \textit{N York Rusk}, both clearly regional interpretations of the common and familiar baked
item. Published cookery books from this period do not frequently include regional
differentiations for this dish. While somewhat later, Amelia Simmons includes six separate
entries for rusk in her 1796 cookbook \textit{American Cookery}, but does not attribute any to a
particular geographic area. Perhaps the type of barm produced by Alban brewers gave these

\textsuperscript{150} Kalm, 265.
\textsuperscript{151} Again, here can be seen a culinary adaptation to the cycle of the seasons that affects availability and a recognition
of the importance of an item’s shelf-life.

Evenson 64
rusks a unique flavor. Perhaps there is a nuance in forming the cake that Maria left out that marked them as regionally distinct. While the mystery of what specifically denotes these rusks as regional is as yet uncertain, it is evident that something indicated to eighteenth century Albanians that these two rusks were regional and important. They were a creation that they themselves had made and had a right to label, a contribution to their globalized plates.

Conclusion

Explorations of food are steeped in personal experiences. Historic foodways, though, provides an opportunity to view the daily lives of historic individuals in a new way. Because food is a universal constant, it is easy to view it as an heirloom simply passed through the years to the present. Through this process layers of emotional attachment and nostalgia cloud the actual historical story that food can tell. Approaching food with a clear methodology that focuses on exploring the original materiality and cultural implications of the food item helps to limit this. At the same time, it provides a theoretical underpinning for interpreting foodways as historical, rather than as anachronistic connections to a false past.

Food writers and public history institutions would have us believe that a varied plate full of imported food items is a modern trend. A case study of Albany’s eating habits prove this to be false, showing that this pre-industrial food system regularly incorporated imported food items. Albanians were so consumed by trade that nearly every food item they produced was seen as a potential profit margin. Farmers focused so extensively on producing crops for trade that they were frequently unable to support themselves solely based on their produce. Fish and shellfish from New York City were floated on ships to Albany just as pork and beef from New England were, sent to supplement the diet of Albanians who produced the fine wheat and peas that were traded in exchange. This focus on trade necessarily created a globalized Albanian plate, while
also providing the climate in which cultural amalgamation, so common to eighteenth century port cities, needed to develop.
Chapter III: Translating Research into Museum Programs

The future of museums as meaningful centers for historical exchange requires dedication to translating academic scholarship into engaging public programming. As museums continue to evolve in a modern world, keeping the mission of integrating scholarly history into every aspect of programming is essential to positive growth. Museums can provide a critical connection between the general public and scholarly history by welcoming visitors of all abilities and encouraging them to ask deeply rooted historical questions. This does not mean that historical content should be diluted to appear entertaining; history itself provides a fascinating narrative, it needs only to be told in an accessible and engaging way. Museum educators are perfectly poised to tell this engaging story. By encouraging visitors to think critically about the history they already know while exposing them to new historical concepts and narratives, museum educators become crucial moderators in the greater conversation about history.

Active Public History in a Museum Setting

Museums are an area of opportunity for active and meaningful engagement with history, as scholar Seth Bruggeman perceives. Museum educators interact with public audiences on a daily basis, complementing exhibit text and providing what frequently amounts to far more than supplemental information. In their roles as docents, interpreters, and tour guides, museum educators become a living embodiment of institutional goals and a mobile, interactive opportunity for exhibit engagement. In fact, many text-only exhibits must work harder to engage public audiences than exhibits featuring an interpreter or docent guide. An entire session of the

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152 A broad discussion of the roles of museums in modern public history can be found in Seth Bruggeman’s book *Born in the USA: Birth, Commemoration, and American Public Memory*. He explores the ways in which sites of historical significance are translated and transformed into public history sites and how public audiences engage with the presented content.
2015 Association of Living History Farms and Agricultural Museums annual meeting was dedicated to “Exhibits: Interpreter not Included.” This well-attended session focused on ways in which to create dynamic exhibit text that encouraged visitor engagement and interaction with the displays, while also fostering a welcoming environment that allowed for easy and practical wayfinding. These are roles that museum educators not only fill on a regular basis, but are expected to surpass.

Over the past decade, I have both observed museum educators in their roles, and participated in museums as a museum educator. I have also had the opportunity to study history and public history, and to work with academic public historians. These experiences have led me to two conclusions. First, there is a gap between many public historians in the academy and the public historians who work in museums. Secondly, history museums must rely on programs rooted in rigorous scholarship in order to fulfill their role as educational institutions.

In a museum education setting, programming is provided by a full time educator, a part time educator, or a volunteer. Frequently, the educator providing the program has little historical training themselves, and is instead operating under a set of guidelines that have been presented to them by administrative staff. For example, The Farmers’ Museum and Fenimore Art Museum in Cooperstown, New York, relied on this model. Their team of 15 part-time Museum Teachers hailed from all walks of life—retired schoolteachers, history and art enthusiasts, and individuals looking to supplement their income constituted this corps of educators. Over the several years I worked with these individuals, the most academically qualified possessed a Bachelor’s Degree in History, or had a Master’s Degree in Education and had taught secondary Social Studies. As a

\[153\] All information concerning the Education Department at The Farmers’ Museum and New York State Historical Association (administering entity of Fenimore Art Museum) comes from my time working in that department from 2005 until 2014.
whole, museums in the United States generally dedicate three quarters of their education budgets to K-12 programming, amounting to almost $2 billion dollars a year.154 “Yet museum people find themselves having to explain, over and over,” as Elizabeth Merritt, Founding Director of the Center for the Future of Museums at the American Alliance of Museums, said, “…that museums are fundamentally educational institutions.”155 As educational institutions, it is then necessary for museums to offer programs that are either vetted or delivered by historians. In this particular context, this means utilizing academic content produced by trained historians when developing programs, or providing continuing education in historical research methods for museum educators. Without continued dedication to ensuring academic rigor, programming can inadvertently proffer heritages rooted in heritage, rather than history.

Following the recession of 2008, the number of students visiting on school field trips to The Farmers’ Museum and Fenimore Art Museum began to steadily decline. Due to budgetary cutbacks in school systems, students were increasingly unlikely to be able to leave the classroom for fieldtrips. As teachers called to cancel their visits, it became clear that offsite field trips needed to be more than academically relevant—they needed to be rooted in scholarship that could fulfill curricular classroom needs. When New York State implemented the Common Core State Standards (CCS), connecting museum programs to mandated classroom standards became even more necessary to keep students coming to the museums. As a result, there was a massive overhaul of educational programming. New standards-based lesson plans were written and codified by supervising staff, educators were retrained on the new material, and it became truly possible for teachers to use a field trip to teach their mandated modules. Though originally a


155 Ibid.
cause for uncertainty, this upheaval and reorientation of museum programs taught me that rooting museum content in scholarship provided opportunities. If done well, academic history could be translated in a way that fosters active participation by public audiences in a museum setting.

I was not alone in my experiences or conclusions about public programming. The Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village experienced a similar situation. Following the 2008 economic downturn, these institutions partnered with local educators to create “paradigm-shifting” education programs that not only met CCS standards, but actively engaged with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and English Language Arts (ELA) standards with an overarching focus on creativity and innovation.\textsuperscript{156} By focusing on developing scholarly content and packaging it in an engaging way, the institutions that comprise The Henry Ford were able to not only bolster their visitation numbers, but become an important educational center. Their programming became indispensable to local teachers and teachers reached across the country via digital outreach.

Unfortunately, the majority of museums in Upstate New York do not have multimillion dollar operating budgets, or teams of people dedicated to completely revamping educational programs. Likewise, they don’t all have research librarians on their staff, or great resources like university databases within arm’s reach. In a nation where museums provide over 18 million hours per year of direct education to students, how, then can other institutions emulate the successes of the Henry Ford institutions?\textsuperscript{157} Rather than presenting public audiences with


\textsuperscript{157} Merritt, 9.
academic materials and academic questions, it is the role of museum educators to encourage visitors to ask those questions themselves in their own way and on their own terms. The youth program I designed promotes this by offering a variety of entry points to history. Food and eating, home life, farm and wildlife, and materiality are all utilized in this program as a way to prompt students to think deeply about history. As Museum 2.0 blogger and author of *The Participatory Museum* Nina Simon wrote, “…staff members need to be able to design experiences that invite ongoing audience participation sustainably” which, in her estimation, “means offering every visitor a legitimate way to contribute to the institution, share things of interest, connect with other people, and feel like an engaged and respected participant.” Smaller museums can, with a bit of collaboration with academic historians and reliance on historical scholarship, develop similarly meaningful programs that encourage visitors to ask scholarly questions, think critically about history, and begin to explore historical concepts more deeply.

Museum staff, then, become the key to successfully connecting visitors to the scholarly past. Yet museum professionals sometimes lack the rigorous academic training received by individuals who pursue history in a graduate setting such as exposure to historical research methods and analytical literature. Their skill set tends rather toward practical implementation of programs, exhibit design and collection management, and connecting their institution to broad audiences. While these skills are essential to a majority of museum positions, it ill-equiips these individuals for participation in an academically rigorous setting. Museum professionals who complete museum studies programs have only a foundational understanding of the historical context in which they are working and the historical climate in which they are trying to situate their institution. While some of this can be learned while working, the scholarly skills of a

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historian are more difficult to develop. Museum professionals, for example, frequently have a limited understanding of the historiographical significance of the content they are presenting or researching. Rather than turning to academic sources for inspiration as historians are trained to do, they reach for interpretive models and content guides produced by other museum professionals. This reliance on disparate best practices between disciplines can inadvertently lead to museum content that becomes disjointed from academic historical concepts.

Through active acknowledgment of disciplinary shortcomings, a desire for interdisciplinary training, and dedication to best practices of both History and Museum Studies, museum educators are poised to present this new accessible, academic public history to their visitors. At the 2015 Association of Living History, Farming, and Agricultural Museums annual meeting, Dr. James Horn, of Jamestown Rediscovery, stated that “History is fun, and we don’t need any superficial gimmicks” to convey it. And, indeed, we do not. History museums are fun not because they provide what has come to be known as edutainment, but rather because the fantastic narrative of history is fundamentally interesting. History provides extraordinary tales about life, society, and the ways in which nature and humans coexist. History provides an understanding of culture and how it can be manipulated to produce different outcomes. History, in many cases, is the soap opera saga that museum visitors wish to hear. Yet museums, through no fault of their own, often times are unable to provide this narrative simply because they don’t know how to access that information. Academic historians can, and do, understand how to access the historical narrative, yet are sometimes unable to cast compelling actors or convey emotion through their books or articles. History museums, then, are the site at which this joining of academic and practiced history must come together.

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Understanding this, I have developed three main goals for the remainder of this project. They are as follows:

1. To create a program that is engaging, enjoyable, and draw on scholarly source materials for its content.
2. Demonstrate how museum collections can be used to create public programs that speak to broad, important historical trends.
3. Utilize materials that are readily available in museum collections, or to an average museum educator.

With these goals in mind, it is my hope to show how museum educators can bridge academic and public history while creating an inviting setting for public engagement.

The How: Using Accessible Resources and Conducting Research

Museum professionals are spread thin. The industry as a whole has experienced difficulty particularly since the 2008 economic downturn, and has experienced a cut in both funding and visitation that has caused strain on budgets and staff. But producing academically-rooted museum education programs is not unattainable. In fact, it is not even prohibitively difficult to achieve even within our modern museum climate of doing more with less. Museum employees have a variety of fantastic resources available to them that make developing such programs possible and, I risk, downright enjoyable.

The primary resources that museum educators possess are their institutional collections, and their institutions themselves. Rather than needing to track down relevant research materials in distant archives, museum collections are readily accessible by a call to the curatorial team. Many institutions even possess a teaching collection that can be used for educational purposes in
ways that typical collection materials cannot.\textsuperscript{160} In addition to ready access to a relevant and rich archive of research materials, museum educators also possess a ready market for their research. Academic historians must seek out a venue for sharing their work, and typically find a much smaller audience. Seeking a publication outlet for articles or books, or providing institutional or outreach lectures results in additional work on behalf of the scholar and a fairly narrow audience. The museum educator, however, has a new audience and can speak with hundreds of individuals on any given day. These two built-in resources give museum educators an excellent foundation from which to begin.

Secondarily, yet importantly, museum educators have an additional and exceptional resource—other museums. Through multiple professional organizations and publications, museum educators have access to the expertise and collections of other institutions. They also have ready access to the collections and expertise of other museum professionals. It is not uncommon for museum professionals to visit other institutions to access collections or discuss ways to improve or supplement their offerings. An email or phone call to another institution can result in a treasure trove of research materials, or contact with a content area expert. Knowing where to look for these resources is the first step in any museum project rooted in academic scholarship.

As mentioned above, the museum educator’s home collection is a great resource. However, not all collections have the same inherent potential; that is to say, a manuscript collection necessarily has different potential than a collection that consists entirely of early

\textsuperscript{160} I became familiar with the power and extent of teaching collections while creating hands-on travelling programs for K-12 students at The Farmers’ Museum during the Winter of 2013. Not only did this institution have a vast and untapped teaching collection, there was also a previously unused budget line for acquiring additional teaching collection items. These artifacts were intended for the sole purpose of educational use—meaning students could literally touch history. While The Farmers’ Museum is somewhat atypical since it has a large staff and operating budget, a similar model can be (and has been) used at other institutions. For example, items that have been deaccessioned by the museum may in turn be accessioned into the teaching collection if suitable.
Native American baskets, for example. While both have their own programmatic strengths and potentials, they are simply different. Museum educators can, and should, look beyond their own walls to other local museum collections. These collections are easily found and readily accessible. When working on this project, I had no previous expertise in Dutch Albany apart from a brief summer internship at a Dutch homestead outside the city. I intentionally worked to identify and utilize collections that are readily accessible to museum professionals throughout the Albany region. Despite being somewhat unfamiliar with relevant museums in the Albany area, I was able to assemble a collection of archives with minimal effort. It certainly did not involve anything more than some basic internet searches and a few emails. Developing local resource archives means that research similar to mine in scope is accessible to a variety of diverse institutions.

Where to Find Resources in Albany

Museums and Archives. Perhaps the easiest way to find information is to simply ask. When I began wondering about where to find mid-eighteenth century records relating to food items, my first step was to reach out to curators, librarians, and local scholars. A quick email or telephone call introduced me and my project, and put me in touch with people who were experts in their field. While many places I contacted were unable to help, they usually offered me suggestions of alternate institutions to contact. Many contacts, however, were fruitful. In my research, I discovered the Van Rensselaer receipt collection at History Cherry Hill. This collection is unlike that held at any other local institution and vastly useful. A quick email to the curator had my appointment set up to read the documents. In the time I spent working at Historic Cherry Hill, I found that the institution is increasingly digitizing the collection to increase its
ease of access. Similarly, I relied on a variety of sources found in the collection of the Albany Institute of History and Art. While access here is a bit more restrictive since the archives are only open on Thursday afternoons, they are also willing to accommodate appointments on other weekdays. A few spare minutes and a quiet afternoon is all that is needed to access these documents. The library volunteers were eager to help me, often suggesting keyword search terms that I had not previously considered, or even pulling resources they thought might be helpful. I can easily say that the greatest difficulty I had in accessing a collection was trying to find parking in downtown Albany on a busy Thursday afternoon.

**Digital Archives.** Physical archives and museum collections did not comprise the entirety of my research. I also used *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, Peter Kalm’s *Travels Into North America*, and Richard Smith’s *A Tour of Four Great Rivers*. These sources were indispensable first-hand accounts of Albany and its environs during my period of study and provided excellent contextualization for my subjects. These sources were suggested to me by the scholars, curators, and librarians I contacted, or found in the citations of published monographs. Each of these accounts are readily available on Google Books completely free. Importantly, no expensive database subscription was needed to access these documents. While the Johnson Papers are held by the New York State Library, they have undergone significant damage and are only accessible to researchers with very specific needs. For my research purposes, and comparable research purposes in a museum setting, online versions perfectly served my needs. The only resource I used that was somewhat inaccessible was *Memoirs of an American Lady* by Anne MacVicar Grant. Indeed I hadn’t ever heard of this book until I mentioned my research interests to the archival volunteer at the Albany Institute of History and Art. After a quick internet search, I was able to purchase the book online from a used bookseller for under $20,
including shipping. As a graduate student on a tight budget, working remotely for the most part, these sources were easy to access; for a museum professional local to the area, they would be even more readily accessible and available to complement whatever institutional collections are available for program development.

Accessibility of research material, then, is not a barrier to scholarly research for museum professionals. By using actual collections at local museums and readily accessible online sources, my project demonstrates that anyone with appropriate training is capable of completing a similar project. Rather than needing to complete research in distant archives, or pay high fees for access to online databases, museum professionals can turn to their own and other local collections to create new programs that are engaging, educational, and historically accurate.

**The Critical Components: Contextualization and Historiography**

While primary sources are readily accessible to a museum educator, secondary source materials may prove more difficult to find. At first this may not seem like much of an issue—the majority of a historian’s research is focused on primary resources. However, just as it is critical that historians place that primary research within a greater historical conversation, museum educators must contextualize their offerings. Despite an undergraduate degree in History and several years of work in history museums under my belt, I lacked a thorough understanding of historiography until I completed my first semester of graduate school. In talking with museum professionals during my most recent internship, it became clear that they also lacked comprehension of the ways in which history as a field had developed, and therefore failed to critically evaluate secondary source material when creating exhibits and programming for their
institution. Creating a meaningful context for primary source research allows history to be both fun and meaningful.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines historiography two ways, one being “the writing of history,” the other being “the study of history writing.” And, indeed, that is what historiography is—a multifaceted approach to the ways in which history is being composed with a keen eye to how and why that is being done. Without attention to historiography, the historical narrative can become flat or distorted. For example, Crailo State Historic Site located in Rensselaer, New York, strives to “…tell the story of the early Dutch inhabitants of the upper Hudson Valley.” Yet until recently the overall institutional narrative did not address the hundreds of African slaves that lived in the Albany area. In summer 2016, Crailo will host a temporary exhibit discussing the Dutch slave trade during the seventeenth century. In doing so, Crailo is meeting the expectations of their audience by presenting colonial Dutch history, yet also placing it within a greater trans-Atlantic context. This will broaden visitors’ understanding of Crailo as a site, of the colonial Dutch settlers as a people, and of the ways in which Albany interacted with the world.

Engaging in the conversation about history rather than simply talking about historical content is what turns a rootless concept into a rigorous and respectable historical story. While the complexities of historiographical relationships can’t be directly worked into a museum program or exhibit on every occasion, it is essential that the museum educator has a thorough understanding of how and why these connections can be made. An educator with this background understanding is capable of leading their public audience through the intricacies of

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history by contextualizing their educational content within broader historic themes. In 2009, I led a boat tour of the Mohawk River near Schenectady, New York. At the time, I was unfamiliar with modern industrial history and the ways in which science and technology shaped Schenectady history. As we passed Charles Steinmetz’s home on the riverbank, all I had to say was “And that’s where Charles Steinmetz once lived.” I was unable to comment on how his scientific achievements transformed electrical power in the United States and the impact that had on industry, travel, and home life. I needed a historical context in which to place what I saw as simply a historic home. Had I been better trained or educated, I could have presented this context and encouraged visitors to think more deeply and to actively participate in audience-driven engagement.

Dedication to content and visitor engagement is the necessary foundation for successful museum programs. Actively participating as a museum educator in the learning process and the subject matter of history facilitates an environment where visiting public can likewise actively participate in museum content and historical scholarship. Rather than presenting these audiences with pre-determined historical fact for them to understand and retain, encouraging them to enter into the developmental process will create meaningful connections both to the institution and to history itself. How this bridge between content and context is made and communicated lies entirely in the hand of the educator or educational team.

**A Case Study and Examples: Foodways in 18th Century Albany**

The following case study was borne of my academic research and my continued investment in museum education. . In my research, I visited many archives where I was helped by incredible individuals. When I told them I was looking for sources concerning the mid-18th
century Albany area, there seemed to be a universal assumption that I wanted to explore the Dutch roots of the city, or something relating to persisting Dutch culture in Albany. And, indeed, I found information that would point to that. Merchant accounts through the 1770s noted that grains were being traded in *skipples*. In February of 1740, Philip Livingston requested that William Johnson send him “…50 or 100 skipple” of peas “…at a reasonable price.”¹⁶³ I saw skipples again in February of 1771, when Joseph DuPuy recorded selling one skipple of rye to Philipus Hornbeck.¹⁶⁴ Uncertain of what a skipple actually was, I headed to the Oxford English Dictionary where I found that it is an old Dutch measurement equivalent to about three pecks. Clearly, these four diverse individuals spanning a period of thirty years each understood and was comfortable using what appears to be a culturally specific unit of measure. And yet, visitor Peter Kalm recorded the distance between Hudson River Valley settlements in English Miles as he journeyed towards Albany in 1749. I was left to wonder just how Dutch, or just how *not* Dutch, Albany had become by the middle of the eighteenth century. I concluded that what I found was not symbolic of the persistence of Dutch-ness in the face of a changing city. What I found was the development of an Anglo-Dutch culture that met and mingled over Albany trade.

Skipples and miles were everyday units of measure communicated in Albany. The men who accounted for their goods did not need to define a skipple for themselves, or for the people around them. This was simply an everyday concept that was easily accepted by Albanians. I began to wonder how culture and society could be found in other such everyday objects, and turned my attention to foods. Measurements and food items were so commonplace that they can


act as valuable windows into daily life even if historical actors did not feel the need to comment on the ways in which they influenced daily life.

The world in which we live is, and the world in which historical actors lived was, a world of food in which each individual has a relationship with that food. From hunger to food ritual, each individual who has inhabited our planet has engaged in a relationship with food. Because of that, documenting foodways can provide a truly unique insight into the lives of individuals and into societies in general. In particular, it can provide historians with a crucial entry point into the daily lives of the past and an easy place to relate history to modern historical consumers. While many institutions involve foodways interpretation, it frequently falls outside the realm of historical scholarship. Simply presenting dishes removes them from their historical context and disables them from speaking to broader historical questions.

Historic foodways must be treated like any other form of material culture and careful consideration given to its interpretation. This means that public historians must first tell the story of the item in question—in this situation, a food item or prepared dish—to lay the appropriate foundation for further discussion. A historical context naturally follows this preliminary explanation, whether it is through person-to-person interpretation or exhibit panel text. It is this important context that relates the item back to important social, cultural, political, or economic trends and gives it significance. Once these two objectives have been achieved, the visitor has the tools necessary to begin questioning the object on their own, or to further inquire into the historical record. Through this process, the universal bond that we all have with food can be translated into a historical setting, bonding modern individuals to a potentially disparate past and connecting them to a detailed story in, hopefully, an engaging way. Commitment to both history
and placing that history in public hands is essential, and food history provides an ideal opportunity for just such an exchange.

Combining food as an area of opportunity that holds great potential for engaging and educational museum programming. In this chapter I began to couple my historiographical and contextual understanding of the resources I had, and began to design engaging museum programming based on materials I had already found: the two dinner menus offered by the Nellis Tavern and Lassell Hall. In an earlier chapter, I claimed that these menus were historically flawed and misrepresented history to the participating diners. Using the archival materials I found, I set about producing a public program for use at any Albany-area museum.

**Contextualization**

The first step in this project was fairly simple: create and explore bibliography of secondary works relating to mid-eighteenth century Albany. Albany is a very well-researched city, so this reading was easy to accomplish. Again, asking archivists, librarians, and curators what to read was very helpful as I worked to gain a general understanding of the time and place I was trying to study. My original interest in the mid-eighteenth century was piqued by T.H. Been’s *Marketplace of Revolution* and his argument that consumer goods united American colonists against the British crown. As I read, I kept his theory in mind and noted where I saw other scholars agreeing or disagreeing. Within a few months, I had created an archive of secondary materials and had developed an understanding of Albany. Many museum educators who have been working in the Albany area may already possess an understanding of Albany, though I would encourage them to continue reading new and different scholarship that is released. The narrative of history is constantly being reinterpreted, and it is important to be
aware of the historiographical shifts that happen as related to a specific subject in order to both keep interpretation fresh and also to be as historically inclusive as possible.

Since I wanted to study food, I also found secondary sources that discussed food production and food meaning. Many of these books were about different areas or time period, but they helped me to understand scholarly interpretation of historic foods.

Primary Research

With a contextual understanding developed, the second step was to mine my primary sources for references to food, trade, and consumption in Albany between the years of 1740 and 1770. This was sometimes difficult and frustrating. Because food was an everyday item, it was often not mentioned in historic documents. Not all of my archival research was fruitful. I spent hours reading over daybooks and ledgers of Albany traders or New York City merchants who traded with Albany. It was difficult to find daybooks and ledgers that fit into my window of time—I found a potentially useful daybook, but it documented the years 1730 to 1733. Some of these documents were written in Old Dutch, which meant I had to find help from a translator. Other documents were worn or illegible. In the end, I was able to collect a few relevant pieces of information from these sources that I hoped would be useful. Knowing that Peter Kalm recorded food habits that he observed in and around Albany, I turned my attention to travel narratives. Travelers’ accounts were particularly useful since their authors often noted food items that they found unique or particularly characteristic of Albany. After poring through three different travel journals from three different years, I was able to compile a sizeable list of references to food and perceptions of what foods meant in Albanian society. I also read through Sir William Johnson’s papers, again searching for references to food. Much of his correspondence was political, though
there are several mentions of foods as trade goods in these papers. I again made notes of these instances, and turned to my other source materials: published cookery books and the Van Rensselaer recipe collection.

Cookery books and manuscript recipes were very important both in my research, and also in the development of my program. The fact that they presented an ideal kitchen was exactly what made them useful to me. I was able to read through Dutch and British cookery books that were sold and/or published in the American colonies to see what the authors considered the cultural and fashionable norm. Noting these cultural distinctions, I was then able to compare Maria Van Rensselaer’s manuscript recipe collection against the published recipes. The published cookery books provided me with additional context for Maria’s recipes and helped me to distinguish cultural traits from recipe to recipe.

During this phase of the project, it was essential that I talk to other people about what I was finding, and what thoughts I was beginning to develop. As a graduate student, I shared my thoughts with my thesis adviser and faculty committee, as well as with fellow students. I bounced ideas off friends who work as historians, and friends who work in museums. I also decided to test my theories, and presented at two history conferences to see what a broader audience would think. While museum educators will not have a committee of historians overseeing their project, they have access to trained historians via the internet, conferences, and friendships. This feedback acted like a dry run for the program materials I was assembling, and showed me areas of opportunity and areas for improvement.

Program Logistics
In an effort to make this program as accessible for museum professionals as possible, I have intentionally designed this program to be as logistically simple as possible. Rather than designing lessons that required massive amounts of prep or materials, or a dedicated space, I opted instead for a program that can be easily implemented with minimal prep. Importantly, they can be conducted in a variety of museum spaces as needed or desired. Staff who will be delivering this program must be trained on the material first and foremost. This can be achieved by providing them with the lesson plans prepared for the program. After reading through this material, they should then shadow the primary educator for this program at least once, though ideally twice. It is essential at this point in the training that they lead the program with the primary educator or their supervisor present. This ensures that they have learned the appropriate content and are presenting it in an engaging yet thorough manner. This process will be the most labor- and time-intensive of the projects, though it cannot be overlooked. While different institutions have different approaches to staff training, I have found that this method is both easy to implement and provides solid training. The physical materials themselves are easily produced, and would require basic office equipment (computer, printer, laminator, etc.). They would require no more than 4 hours of production, and could be completed by an intern or volunteer. Scheduling the program would also be labor- and time-intensive, though it could easily be fit into whatever existing advertising and scheduling framework the host institution has in place. This is not intended to be a new, standalone program. Rather, it is intended to be used by institutions who already have educational and public programming in place.

Creating the Program
This research led to me conclude that the food-based trade in Albany helped to tell the larger story of the development of Albanian culture. The ways in which foods were consumed showed that a trade-based culture had emerged in the wake of the waning fur trade. Building an engaging museum program to communicate this idea would require placing primary sources in a greater historical context while keeping the content exciting and accessible.

The youth program I developed is based on Common Core Learning Standards while still being active, historically accurate, and—hopefully—enjoyable.165 Prior to developing this program, I established my overall goals: To help students develop an understanding of eighteenth century (pre-Revolution) Albany and New York State history within a broader global context. In the process, they will develop their reading, historical reasoning, and analytical skills through active lesson activities. This lesson will also create a meaningful relationship between the students and the historic communities in which they live and go to school. These goals directed every aspect of program development and helped me to develop an age-appropriate method for achieving them. My method for achieving these goals relies on a comparison of modern and historic foods, food consumption and trade, and recipe writing. By engaging students’ analytical skills and physical senses this lesson will create a meaningful connection between students and the past. Using visual and material culture analysis will offer a tangible representation of a period of history that fosters sensory engagement with the program and history itself.

This program begins by creating a sense of historical place for the students. Chronology can be a difficult concept for young students to understand, especially when using vague terms

165 Because the youth program I designed is meant to be used for class field trips for grades 4 through 8, I also read through the NYS Common Core Learning Standards, critical curricular shifts, desired learning outcomes, and grade-specific modules. This information helped me to know what skills school teachers valued and what specific learning outcomes they needed my programs to deliver. With all of this in mind, I chose to indicate on my lesson plan what learning standards my lesson plans covered for each grade level.
like “mid-eighteenth century.” Creating a sense of the present is the first step in understanding the past. The museum educator will start the program by creating a sense of time and space by asking the students what they ate for breakfast or lunch that day, who made the meal, and where the food came from. This helps to establish a modern food system that can later be compared and contrasted to historic food systems while also personally investing them in the story that is to come.

After this conversation establishes a modern food system, the museum educator will introduce the eighteenth century. Gauging the comprehension of the group they are working with, the museum educator can do this by saying that the time period we’re discussing was over 200 years ago; they may also say that the time period we’re discussing was prior to the American Revolution. However it is communicated, the museum educator must establish a sense of historic chronology: the time period in question came after early settlement, colonial Americans were well-established, the American Revolution had not yet happened, and the Industrial Revolution had not happened. With this chronology solidified, the student will be asked what they think eighteenth century Albanians ate.

As students begin to conceptualize what historic foods were, the museum educator will encourage their critical thinking skills by inquiring how we know what was being eaten in the past. This leads the conversation into primary source materials, helping students to explore the variety of primary sources that can help us learn about food in history. The museum educator then leads students through excerpts from primary documents, using student volunteers to help with the readings. Where possible, the students will read directly from copies of original sources to get a better visual understanding of historic documents. At this juncture, students may begin to naturally inquire about what they have heard/read. The museum educator should guide these
questions to explore the various food items referenced in the reading, asking similar questions as they did about modern food systems. Where these historic foods came from, who prepared them, and how they were prepared should all be explored.

With a discrete group of foods selected from the readings, the educator next guides the students through the steps of historical analysis. The students will have to evaluate where the ingredients for these foods came from and what that might mean for the people who consumed them. They will also need to consider the labor needed to prepare the dish and the impact that had on a household. Through these discussions students will unravel the local, regional, and global connections that Albanians had established through their food trade. Much of the discussion up to this point will be student-driven with the museum educator offering guidance when necessary to keep the program on track. As this section of the program comes to a close, though, the museum educator will need to control the dialogue. In doing so, they will explain the historical context for their preceding conversations and situate the foods discussed within a broader historical narrative.

Following this introductory exercise will be one or two activities that will allow students to explore history in a hands-on setting. I intentionally designed two activities to allow for a flexible schedule. If there is time, both activities can be accomplished. If not, the museum educator can choose the one activity best suited to their group’s educational needs. Both activities turn the students into the historian by asking them to analyze historical objects and place them within the context they just learned about. In Show and Tell, the students will have the opportunity to touch, smell, and see historical objects such as tea, sugar, paper advertisements, and other relevant visual and material culture. They will be asked to identify their object, where it came from, how it came to be in Albany, and what it might be used for. In
the process, students will be applying material analysis skills to these objects. The other activity, *Reading and Translating Recipes*, will ask students to quite literally read, translate, and transcribe one or more of Maria Van Rensselaer’s recipes. As a group, they will list the ingredients used in the dish, speculate on what the final dish might have been like, what cultural influences they can see in the recipe, and compare the dish to a modern equivalent. Each group will share their findings with the rest of the larger group at the end of the activity. As each group shares their findings, the museum educator should offer historical context for the dish, placing it within the broader narrative of Albanians as an evolving culture connected to a global trading network.

**Conclusion**

Museum education provides an incredible opportunity for public history institutions to bring academic history to a broad public audience. By utilizing and conducting academic historical research in the development of their public programs, museum educators can guarantee that the information they present is fact-based and accepted as part of the historical record. Museums face the challenge of translating these academic histories into engaging programs on a daily basis. To create programs that encourage active audience participation, museum educators must translate academic research into accessible terminology that personally connects to visitors and urges them to think deeply about history. This typically means that the museum educator must first provide a brief narrative history of an object or concept, and then present the visitor with a visible or tangible item that fits within the historical context just explained. Following this format encourages the visitor to analyze how the item fits within that historic context for
themselves. In doing so, they develop questions that explore deeply historical topics and are connected to academic, fact-based histories perhaps without even realizing it.
Appendix A

Image 1

1685 Visscher Map detailing New Netherland and its position within North America.

Enhanced detail on 1685 Visscher Map showing Fort Orange, nearby Beverwijck, and the confluence of the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers.
1794 DeWitt Map

This map displays the layout of Albany and shows how the original streets were laid out to provide ready access to the Hudson River and marketplace along Market Street.

This 1770 Yates Map clearly shows the prominence of Fort Orange, the Dutch Reformed Church, marketplace, and Hudson River in the city planning of Albany. The broad avenues that form the white L shape below formed the heart of the city and housed the majority of public centers such as churches and markets, as well as shops.

Again, this 1759 Brazier Map demonstrates the ways in which Albany’s built environment reflected the areas that held Albanian society together: the marketplace, Fort Orange, the Hudson River, and (chiefly) the Dutch Reformed Church.

1757-1759 “A Plan of the City of Albany” depicts the broad connective avenues between the Hudson River and the interior of the city as well as the man-made jetty extending into the river to provide safe docking for traveling ships.
A 1750s Palatine Dinner

You are invited to be a part of history at our Benefit Dinner for the NELLIS TAVERN.

1750's Palatine Dinner
Sunday, November 15th, 2015

TABLE at FORT PLAIN
70 Canal Street, Ft. Plain, NY

4:30 pm Cash Bar
5:30 pm Dinner

Tickets $35 per person (limited seating)

For TICKETS & INFO, Call Ray 518-842-6400 or The Table at Fort Plain

This Palatine meat will feature cider braised PORK with GUMBIS, a dish prepared with stewed cabbage, sausage and apples! Dinner also includes appetizer, dessert and beverage.
Image 8

A Winter Feast at Historic Lassell Hall
A Fundraiser for the Schoharie Chapter of the DAR to benefit Historic Lasell Hall

A Winter Feast
At Historic Lasell Hall

Saturday, March 5, 2016
(Snow date – Sunday, March 6)
6 PM to 10 PM
Historic Lasell Hall
268 Main St., Schoharie, NY
$50 per person, reservations required

18th Century Period Dining, Gambols (Entertainment)
Historic Characterizations, Silent Auction
Guests are invited to come in 18th Century Costumes

Menu
Your choice of one of the following entrees: Cornwall Chicken — baked chicken with potatoes, parsnips and carrots cooked in cider and honey; Palatine Sauerbraten — spiced, braised tender beef served with noodles; and Yankee Vegetarian Cassoulet — root vegetable cooked until tender with rich white beans. Accompanied by an assortment of relishes, desserts, and wine, beer, hard cider, and nonalcoholic beverages.

For more information and to purchase tickets, please call 518-868-5131. Please note: guests with reservations will be contacted in the event of bad weather.
The Order of a Modern Bill of Fare for March
Hannah Glasse, *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Course</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soup, Sheep's Rumps, Almond Pudding, Fillet of Pork, Chine of Mutton, Stewed Carp, Lamb's Head, and Stewed Celery, or Tench.</td>
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<td>Veal Colllops, Beef Steak, Calves' Ears, Pie, Onion Soup</td>
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<th>Second Course</th>
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<tr>
<td>A Poult larded and roasted, Asparagus, Blanmange, Prawns, Sagooed Sweetbreads, A Trifle, Fricassee of Rabbits, Crawfish, Cheesecakes, Fricassee of Mushrooms, Tame Pigeons roasted, rooms</td>
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<th>Third Course</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ox Palates shivered, Tarlets, Potted Larks, Stewed Pigeons, Cardoons, Jellies, Spanish Peas, Black Cabs, Potted Almond Cheese, Partridge, cakes, Cock's Combs</td>
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Appendix B

Eating History
Learn about what people ate in Albany in the 1700s, how they cooked, and what everyday life was like long ago!

Grades: Grades 4-8

Objective: Students will develop an understanding of eighteenth century Albany and New York State history within a broader global context. They will develop their reading, historical reasoning, and analytical skills through active lesson activities. This lesson will also create a meaningful relationship between students and the historic communities in which they live and go to school.

Method: This lesson engages both students’ minds and physical senses. Relying on comparison of modern and historic foods, food consumption, and recipe writing will create a meaningful connection between students and the past. Visual and Material Culture analysis will offer a tangible representation of a period in history, allowing for sensory engagement with the program and history itself.

Materials:
- Copies of journal references to food
- Copies of 18th century recipes
- Transcription of 18th century recipes
- Reproduction sugar cone, sugar nippers, maple sugar, loose leaf tea, tea strainer, tea tin, salt pork, flour, stalks of dried wheat and wheat berries, dried peas, pot or frying pan, butter churn, cup (tin, ceramic, china), image of mustard pot from AIHA, copy of 18th century newspaper advertisement, image of Dutch jambless fireplace, image of English style fireplace, historic image of kitchen in use.
- Pens/pencils
- Blank paper

Time:
- Preparation Time: 10-15 minutes
- Program Time: 45-60 minutes

Procedure:
1. Introductory Discussion: Food then and Now (5-10 minutes)

   1. Ask the group what they ate for breakfast. One at a time, have them tell everyone else what they did (or didn’t) eat. After half a dozen or so have shared, ask them where the
food came from. Likely answers will involve some iteration of “the store,” so be sure to prompt deeper answers. Where did the store get the food? All food comes from somewhere—meat comes from animals, fruits and vegetables are grown by farmers, bread is made out of wheat that is grown in fields. Now we know where the food comes from, but what area does it come from? Can you go to a local farmer and buy an orange, for example? No. Certain foods are produced in certain areas. Where did your breakfast come from? Give students the opportunity to work through this, and share with the group.

2. What do you think people in the 18th century ate? Do you know when the 18th century was? It was over 200 years ago during the 1700s. What might someone in our area have eaten for breakfast over 200 years ago?

   a. How can we figure out what people might have eaten? Letters, journals, archaeological evidence are all great ways. Peter Kalm was a Swedish botanist who traveled through New York during the 1740s. What’s a botanist? He studied plants and natural life as he traveled, and kept a very detailed journal. Ask for volunteers to help read what he had to say about breakfast in the Albany area.

   1. “…they breakfast either upon bread and butter, or bread and milk. They never put sugar into the cup, but take a small bit of it into their mouths while they drink. Along with the tea they eat bread and butter, with slices of hung beef. Coffee is not usual here; they breakfast generally about seven.”

   b. What does he say that people ate? What is that stuff? Here, go into an explanation of the different dishes that Kalm described. Would you like to eat that for breakfast? What do you think of that?

   c. Knowing that food has to come from somewhere, where do you think the foods we just heard about were coming from? There were no groceries stores at this point in time, and no refrigerator or freezer. Most of the things we heard about were grown locally. In the middle of the 1700s, Albany was really rich farmland that was known for producing great wheat. Albany wheat was shipped all the way to New York City, and was sold for a higher price than any of the other wheat that was sold. Almost everyone had a garden where they grew fruits and vegetables for their own family to eat. So, if someone wanted an orange, how would they go about getting it? Oranges are grown in tropical places, so getting one in Albany would have been a special treat. It would have come all the way to Albany on a ship, and would not have been very fresh—and you would have only been able to get it when oranges were in season!

2. Show and Tell: bring in objects, have them guess what they were and where they came from and how they were used

3. Show and Tell (15-30 minutes)

   1. For all students: The things that people ate were different during the eighteenth century, and sometimes the even looked different. Take a look at the items we have on

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the table, and pick one. It’s ok if you don’t know what it is. Take a few minutes to think about it and come up with an idea about what it might be.

a. After students have had some time to explore the objects, have them come to the front of the group one at a time to discuss their object. If they don’t know what it is, ask if anyone else has any ideas. Be sure to explain what each item is or what each image represents, and how it fits into the historical story we’ve been exploring.

4. Reading and Translating Recipes (5-30 minutes)
   1. **For older students**: Food isn’t always just eaten raw, straight from the garden though. Who helps to cook at home? What are some of your favorite foods to cook? How did you learn how to cook them? A lot of times, we learn from people who already know how to cook. Sometimes we use recipes to learn how to make something new or different. It was no different in the 18th century.
   2. Split the students up into groups of 4-6 each. Give them each a copy of an 18th century recipe, a blank sheet of paper, and a pen/pencil. Ask them to, as a group, figure out what the recipe is. Write down the ingredients, and where they think they came from.
   3. Ask the students to try to compare the dish to something modern, that they might eat.
   4. Each group will then present on their recipe to the rest of the group.
PRIMARY SOURCES

Cookbooks


Travel Narratives


Family Recipe Collections

Receipt Book, The Philip and Maria Van Rensselaer Collection, Historic Cherry Hill, Albany, NY.
Family and Commercial Trade Documents


Maps


SECONDARY SOURCES

Albany History


Atlantic and American History and Culture


---. The Intellectual Construction of America: Exceptionalism and Identity From 1492 to 1800.
Evenson 107


**Concepts of Identity**

Berkin, Carol. “‘We the People of the United States’: The Birth of an American Identity, September 1787.” *OAH Magazine* (July 2006): 53-56.


**Consumer Politics and Economic History**


---. “Creative Adaptations: People and Cultures.” In *Colonial British America: Essays in the New*


Cookbook Literature


Dutch Culture and Society in Colonial America


Food Culture and Food History


Boorstin, Daniel J. The Americans: The Democratic Experience. New York: Random House,


Tomasik, Timothy J. and Juliann M. Vitullo. *At the Table: Metaphorical and Material Cultures of Food in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepolis, 2007.


Wilson, C. Anne. *Food and Drink in Britain: From the Stone Age to the 19th Century*. Chicago:
Hudson Valley History and Greater New York


**Material Culture**


**Public History**


