

room and at the waterfall, Sam Patch fashioned skills, a reputation, and a sense of his own worth that had nothing to do with his family's history. He modeled himself after the most admirable men and the bravest boys he knew, and he forged an identity out of his own trained and practiced performances. Given what he had to work with, Sam Patch was beginning to make something of himself.

★ II ★

PATERSON

In his mid-twenties Sam Patch left Pawtucket and reappeared in Paterson, New Jersey—twelve miles west of New York City. We cannot know why he made the move, but Paterson was a good place for him: it was a bigger factory town than Pawtucket, and it sat beside a more famous waterfall.

Educated travelers knew Paterson as the site of Passaic Falls, one of the scenic wonders of North America. The young architect Benjamin Latrobe spent part of his honeymoon there in 1800, and suggested it as a good place for an American academy of landscape art. Passaic Falls, said Latrobe, “combine every thing in themselves and in the magic circle of which they are the Center, of which Nature forms her sublimest Landscapes, excepting the ocean.” Other cultivated visitors agreed that Passaic Falls provided a rare combination of the beautiful, the sublime, and the picturesque. The Passaic River widened and slowed above Paterson, then made an abrupt turn just at the brink and dropped seventy feet (second only to Niagara in the eastern United States) into a deep shaded pool. The falls, the dark and craggy rocks, the dangerous sheer cliffs on both banks, and the ancient forest that brooded over the scene were perfect expressions of natural power and primordial gloom. The view at the

falls was "grand and beautiful," "sublime—almost terrific," "frightful," "a terrible prospect," "a scene of singular grandeur and beauty." Those who wanted to escape from these sublimities into the more reassuring picturesque could turn their backs to the falls and precipice and peer through the trees onto shaped land: a broad plain of farms and country roads in the eighteenth century and, after 1815, the sprawl of Paterson along the lower Passaic River.¹

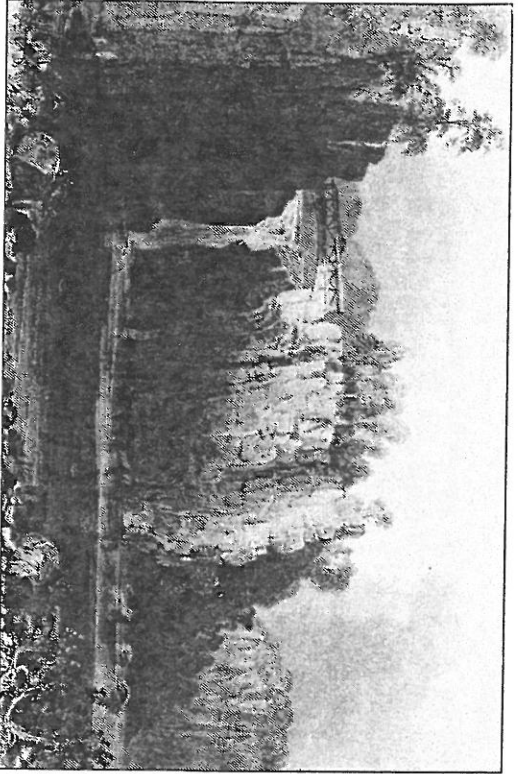
Paterson itself possessed a well-known history. It had been founded as the "National Manufacturing City" in 1792, with the active support of Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton, and with money from a joint-stock company called the Society for the Encouragement of Useful Manufactures (SUM). Pierre Charles L'Enfant, the French architect who had laid out the federal city of Washington, designed an ambitious and costly dam and millrace for the SUM. The project took two years to complete, and the first Paterson factory opened in 1794. The enterprise was premature: capital, skills, and markets for domestic manufactures were limited, and the Paterson factory closed its doors in 1796. The company leased a few millsites in the early years of the nineteenth century, and a few more during the War of 1812. Then the commercialization of inland farming after 1815 created an exploding domestic demand for textiles and other American-made goods. Factories, mills, and forges sprang up along L'Enfant's old Paterson raceways, sending a flood of finished goods to the nearby entrepôt of New York, and from there to markets all over the United States. By 1827 Hamilton's ghost town was a manufacturing city of six thousand, described by a New Jersey newspaper (one that no longer apologized for such things) as "this flourishing Manchester of America."²

Sam Patch was among the thousands of workers who moved into Paterson in the 1820s. He found work as a mule spinner and,

in September 1827, he performed a leap at Passaic Falls that got him into the newspapers for the first time. The jump was a challenge to the ambitions and pretensions of a Paterson entrepreneur. It was also, like all of Sam's performances, a grand and eccentric gesture thrown into contemporary conversations about nature and economic development, class and masculinity, and the proper uses of waterfalls.

A builder and sawmill owner named Timothy B. Crane had bought the forested north bank of Passaic Falls in August 1827. In September he turned it into a commercial pleasure garden, announcing that he would reshape the forest in the name of material and moral progress: "Although Nature has done more for this spot of earth, than perhaps any other of its size, to render it beautiful and interesting to the visitor, it is nevertheless susceptible of very great embellishments, from the hand of ART, and with that he improved the grounds with gravel walkways, imported bushes and trees, and a combined ice cream parlor and saloon. Crane called his establishment the Forest Garden. During the next few summers crowds went there for ice cream and conversation, and there were periodic circuses, Indian war dances, and displays of fireworks as well.³

The Forest Garden was an outdoor restaurant with facilities for putting on shows—a copy of Niblo's and the other summer gardens of New York City. But Crane and his supporters advertised it as something more: an artful refinement of raw nature that transformed a forbidding wilderness into an opportunity for aesthetic contemplation. The *Paterson Intelligencer* praised the Forest Garden as a retreat where "the refinements of taste and art [are] combined with the varied and romantic beauties of nature," and later congratulated Crane on his gardens and fireworks: "This rude spot, where the lonely visitor once heard nought but the wild roar of the noble Passaic . . . is now become the brilliant scene of science, added to the sublimity of nature." A satisfied customer agreed: "[Crane] has so far domesticated the



Passaic Falls and Clinton Bridge, by W. H. Bartlett (author's collection)

wilderness of nature, and blended with it the improvements of art, that the Passaic Falls is no longer a place for the melancholy retirement of the horror-stricken wanderer, who seeks solitude as the only food for his bewildered imagination, but is now become the delightful scene of social gaily and interesting contemplation." The editor gave this advice to tired clerks and workmen: cross the river and "greet the smiles of your friends amid the enchanting groves of the Forest Garden," "bid dull cares begone," "lounge at your pleasure under the illuminated Cedars of Lebanon," and, on the way home, "take a peep at the awful chasm below—listen for a moment to the tremendous roar of the troubled Passaic, [and] contrast the scene with your own quietude of mind." Social gaiety, sublimity, scenes of science, quietements of Paterson, New Jersey.⁴

Before receiving customers, Timothy Crane had to bridge the falls chasm that separated the Forest Garden from Paterson, and of all the improvements that he made, Crane was proudest of his

bridge. He designed the thing himself. It was made of wood and covered, and its substructure was sided to form an arch. The sides were open, with latticed railings, affording a full view of the falls and chasm. Crane called it Clinton Bridge, after Governor De Witt Clinton of New York. Few of his fellow citizens could have missed the reason why, for in the 1820s Clinton was a hero to developers everywhere. He had promoted and then presided over the construction of the Erie Canal. Completed in 1825, the Canal was a stupendous triumph of engineering that was opening the whole Great Lakes frontier to settlement and commerce. The Erie Canal stood as a magnificent icon of the triumph of American civilization over wilderness, and a lot of people were naming taverns, ferryboats, hotels, steam locomotives, and babies after De Witt Clinton. (In Portland, Maine, lived an improver named Neal Dow. In the 1820s Dow was at the threshold of activities that would make him one of the great nineteenth-century temperance reformers, and he was a man who loved progress: he owned a tannery that was as fully automated as such things could be, and his was among the first houses in Portland to have a bathroom with running water and a hot-air furnace. In 1825 Dow toured the recently completed Erie Canal, returned home, and named his horse Governor Clinton.)⁵

Through the late summer of 1827 Timothy Crane's workmen cleared land, planted bushes and trees, and assembled Clinton Bridge beside the falls. They finished at the end of September, and Crane announced that he would supervise his men as they pulled his bridge across the chasm and set it into place. He advertised his exhibition for the afternoon of Saturday, September 30. The factories would be closed. The whole town could come out and watch Clinton Bridge conquer Passaic Falls. It would be a big day for progress, and a bigger day for Timothy Crane.

Across the river in Paterson, twenty-eight-year-old Sam Patch watched Crane's improvements taking shape. Sam's life was not going well. For a time, he had operated a small Paterson can-

Space
1825

dlewick mill in partnership with a man named Martin Branigan, but the partnership dissolved in 1826. Like Sam's purported enterprise with Kennedy near Pawtucket, the agreement seems to have ended in acrimony: Branigan pointedly announced that "All persons are forbid giving any further credit to the above firm, without the consent of [Branigan.]" Branigan—like Kennedy—stayed in business, and Sam Patch went off looking for employment elsewhere. In 1827 he was working as a mule spinner in Paterson's Hamilton Mills. He was also a solitary drinker who repeatedly boxed the ears of children who worked under him. (The boy who recounts these stories also tells us that Patch suffered bouts of delirium tremens, suggesting that he had been drinking heavily for a very long time.)⁶

Sam Patch, in short, was an angry and not particularly admirable victim of the huge social process that was creating places like Pawtucket and Paterson and granting money and respect to people like Timothy Crane. As he watched Crane boss his gardeners and bridge builders, an unhappy constellation of class anger and rum-soaked resentment took shape in the mind of Sam Patch. Sam let it be known that he would spoil Crane's day.

That Saturday all of Paterson turned out to watch Timothy Crane pull his bridge over the chasm. Constables patrolled the crowd looking for Sam Patch. They had locked him into a basement for safekeeping, but someone had let him out.⁷

Tim Crane swaggered through the afternoon, tugging at his whiskers and shouting instructions to his men, always with an eye on the crowd. The bridge rested on log rollers on the northern bank. Cables stretched across the chasm, and ropes and tackles waited to edge the bridge over the precipice and along the cables and to set it into place on the substructure. At last the workmen took their stations and pulled at the ropes, and Clinton Bridge edged slowly across Crane's fairy-tale landscape, moved by sweating men and by what the *Paterson Intelligencer* called "the

exercise of a good deal of ingenuity and mechanical skill" on the part of Timothy Crane. As the bridge reached the cliff and began riding out over the cables, things went wrong: one of the log rollers slipped and dropped end over end into the pool below the falls, and the bridge lurched dangerously. Crane's men regained control and set it safely into place. Tim Crane looked up for applause, but the cheering was broken by shouts from the south bank. For there was Sam Patch, standing erect on a rock at the edge of the cliff. Sam spoke to the people near him. Then he stepped off.

It was a straight seventy-foot drop to the water below, and Sam took it in fine Pawtucket style. At the end he brought up his knees, then snapped them straight, drew his arms to his sides, and went into the water like an arrow. Tim Crane and his kidnapped audience stared into the chasm, certain that Sam was dead. But in a few seconds Sam shot to the surface. The crowd cheered wildly as Sam sported in the water, paddled over to Crane's log roller, took the trail rope between his teeth, and towed it slowly and triumphantly to shore.

Before he jumped, Sam Patch told the people on his side of the chasm that "Crane had done a great thing, and he meant to do another."⁸

▲ At its simplest, Sam's leap at Clinton Bridge was an act of vandalism: Timothy Crane was an enterprising, successful man, and Sam Patch was a sullen failure who risked his life to ruin Crane's celebration. We might label the jump an act of drunken resentment and leave it at that. So it may have been. But the crowd applauded Sam Patch's leap, and the leap survived in the folklore of Paterson as an admirable performance. Something, it seems, had prepared the people of Paterson to enjoy Sam's assault on the festivities of Timothy Crane.⁹

A look into the past and future of Passaic Falls reveals the reason why: the Forest Garden was built on land that had once been a public playground, and Crane's improvements and the ways he managed them and talked about them aroused the sustained fury of his neighbors. Sam's leap, it turns out, was no isolated event. It was the opening shot in a twelve-year war over the north bank of Passaic Falls—a war that ultimately drove Timothy Crane into bankruptcy and away from the falls.

Crane and his supporters insisted that the north bank had been a useless, forbidding wilderness before he built the Forest Garden, but the working people of Paterson knew better. For them, the north bank was a valued retreat from the city and a place to play. A family named Godwin ran a tavern there about half a mile above the falls. An English gentlewoman who visited in May 1827 pronounced it "quite a cockney place and crowded with Saturday and Sunday visitors." From Godwin's tavern, paths led through the forest toward the falls. The land along these paths was privately owned, but no proprietor had ever changed the landscape or excluded the public. The woods were dense, and the rock base was crossed by deep cracks which most people assumed were the work of ancient earthquakes. One of the ravines led all the way down to the river below the falls. Pleasure seekers drank at Godwin's tavern (tea and lemonade as well as alcohol), hiked through the woods, threw stones into the chasm and dropped them into the crevasses, carved their names on trees and rocks, fished at the base of the falls (there were legends of two-hundred-pound sturgeon), or found quiet places to sit and enjoy the summer air. The bravest boys dove and swam in the pools above the falls, and Sam Patch leaped from the cliffs into the river at least once before his famous jump in September 1827. The working people of Paterson valued the falls ground: it was a wild and beautiful spot that belonged to everyone and no one, unimproved private property that was open to free public

use. A boy who grew up in Paterson recalled that "the Falls have always been looked upon with pride by the citizens, and they expected it would always remain so. Some folks . . . even demanded that free access should be had by all."¹⁰

Crane took the north bank out of public hands and turned it into the Forest Garden, "a place of rational amusement." Crane's later advertisements invited "the poet and the painter" and the "man of leisure;" he hoped that refined out-of-towners would patronize his gardens, and he was particularly proud of a visit from the bishop of New York. He went out of his way to offer "the man of labor and industry a relaxation from the toils of his occupation." But he insisted that customers behave themselves, and he reserved the right to exclude those who did not. Welcome guests included "decent people," "ladies and gentlemen," "good society," those who were "respectable and orderly," and those who maintained "good order and decorum." He wanted customers who stayed on the walkways and out of the bushes, who conversed politely and never got drunk, and who contemplated trees without wanting to climb them.¹¹

Timothy Crane's transformation of the old pleasure ground, along with his talk about art, nature, and De Witt Clinton, would have caused trouble in any event. But he compounded his crimes by charging a toll at Clinton Bridge. The toll was only two pennies, but Crane insisted on it. An occasional genteel guest objected to Crane's bad manners at the tollbooth, and even Crane's friends thought his zealous toll taking was "ungentlemanly." In 1831 Crane bought space in a newspaper to justify the toll. He pleaded that he had risked everything he owned in his north-bank improvements, and could survive only if he turned a profit. Closely tied to this argument was the next one: the toll was his one means of keeping the place decent and safe. Crane knew what happened when just anyone crossed Clinton Bridge: "1st. If the bridge were thrown open, the Garden would be occupied

with a set of lazy, idle, rascally, drunken vagabonds. 2d. This would drive away all decent people. 3d. We should thereby lose all our income; and 4th. Our little ornaments and improvements would be defaced, ruined, and in fact, destroyed."¹²

Crane spoke from experience, for the Forest Garden had come under attack from the beginning. First, of course, was the opening-day leap of Sam Patch. Then, in his first season, Crane had to install spring guns to discourage "Night Poachers" who defaced his tollgate and entered the grounds to steal liquor. During business hours, drunken, foul-mouthed men insulted respectable customers and threw firecrackers at ladies' feet. Others cut down Crane's trees, broke his imported bushes, smashed his glassware, stole his lanterns, and hurled his tables and benches over the falls. Rowdiness and vandalism escalated into assaults on Crane and his family and employees. Crane's boys were kicked and beaten when they worked the tollgate; some attackers threatened to throw them into the river. The boys found trouble whenever they ran errands into town, and Crane himself could not walk safely in Paterson. At night, musket balls and doses of buckshot slammed into the walls and through the windows of buildings on the old pleasure ground. One of the worst of these attacks occurred on Christmas Night in 1828—a night when the lower orders traditionally settled scores with upper-class enemies.¹³

Throughout these assaults, Timothy Crane knew who his tormentors were. Some were well-dressed sports who might have passed as gentlemen. Others were men, Crane said, "from whom we might expect better things," who condoned the violence. But most were workmen, and Crane singled out the English weavers and spinners as the worst: "They come into my gardens, and cut down my young trees, and mutilate my seats and tables and bridge, and get drunk and curse and swear, and use indecent language," and scare off respectable women and men.¹⁴

The attack on the Forest Garden was an early round in the contest over recreational space in industrializing America, a contest that regularly pitted the noise and physicality of working-class recreations against the privatized, contemplative leisure pursuits of the middle class. In Paterson the contest took on a particularly personal and violent edge, for many of Crane's attackers were people who had been his friends. Timothy Crane had been in Paterson since 1812, and as an architect, builder, speculator, and sawmill owner, he had watched his fortune grow with the town. His work, his public services, and his membership in the Episcopal Church brought him into cooperation with Paterson's leading families. His joviality and love of talk won him entry into other circles as well: between 1815 and 1823 he was an elected chief of Paterson's volunteer fire companies, and he was widely known as a storyteller, a genial braggart, and a friend to traveling acrobats and circus riders. A boy from the mills recalled that people had liked Timothy Crane. A lot of them called him Uncle Tim.¹⁵

Crane seems to have retained the goodwill of the community until he bought the land next to the falls. His decision to turn it into a romantic retreat for ladies and gentlemen transformed his relations with Paterson. Crane's old associations—the fire companies, the sawmill and the construction sites, the storytelling groups—had been with a democracy of males that excluded women. The Forest Garden, on the other hand, catered to respectable women and their male escorts, and it pointedly excluded the working-class men who had made up much of Crane's old social world.

The reasons for Crane's decision must remain a mystery. But we should note that the purchase of the north bank was the second big event of 1827 for Crane. In February he had married Maria Ryerson, daughter of one of the old families of New York City. He was a fifty-four-year-old widower; she was twenty-four

and, by the time he bought his land in August, pregnant with their first child. Crane's marriage to this polished young woman, coupled with his withdrawal from the old male democracy and his new interest in exclusivity and romantic sentimentalism, suggests that he had determined to change his way of life. Timothy Crane was no longer one of the boys. He had become an inventor of American bourgeois culture.¹⁶

Viewed from the factories and poor streets of Paterson, Crane's Forest Garden was a vast provocation. It violated customary-use rights to the falls ground, and that alone would have started a fight. But Crane's personal transformation made it worse. Timothy Crane was breaking with the informal, democratic society of other men and redefining respectability and right behavior: The Forest Garden translated Paterson's familiar hierarchy of wealth into a new, undemocratic, and utterly unacceptable formula for the distribution of respect. That is when Paterson changed its mind about Timothy Crane. The people of Paterson may have admired Clinton Bridge. It was a straightforward conquest of nature and a fine feat of engineering. But at the end of the bridge there were tree stumps, gravel walkways, and orderly bushes and shrubs where their pleasure ground had been, and Uncle Tim was talking in strange new ways.

Crane's bridge raising in 1827 was a truly ambivalent celebration. Sam Patch resolved the ambivalence with a little speech about the democracy of worth and a spectacular reassertion of the freedom and physicality of the old north bank. Patch's leap was the first in a continuous series of assaults upon Timothy Crane. The Forest Garden never made money, and Crane's creditors began to seize the land within a year. He stayed on as manager, dodging rocks and demanding tolls all the way, until 1839. Then he abandoned his vandalized and neglected gardens and retired to a log cabin in a forested corner of the north bank, where he died in 1845. It was the end to a long and ugly war with the neighbors, a war that began the day Sam Patch sneaked past

the constables and joined the crowd that had come to see Timothy Crane conquer Passaic Falls.¹⁷

Months after the episode at Clinton Bridge, when he had begun to jump professionally, Sam Patch offered an explanation of his leaps. Crane and other friends of progress had been spreading rumors. Some said the jump at Clinton Bridge had been the act of a madman. Others insisted that Patch was merely drunk, and Timothy Crane himself concocted the best story of all: Sam Patch had leaped for love. Patch was enamored of a young woman, you see, and she had turned him down. He had leaped not to humiliate Timothy Crane but to kill himself. Patch countered with his own explanation. "It is no melancholy event," he insisted. "I am perfectly sober and in possession of my proper faculties, and [leaping waterfalls] is nothing more than an art which I have knowledge of and courage to perform"—"an art," he went on, "which I have practiced from my youth."¹⁸

Art. It was an important word in the vocabularies of Sam Patch and Timothy Crane, but it had different meanings for the two. Crane used "art" as a crucial component in what might be called the language of progress, a language that described and legitimized what he was doing at Passaic Falls. Patch's use of the word derived from plebeian-democratic sensibilities that called Timothy Crane and his works into serious question. We might look at the episode at Clinton Bridge as a confrontation between the art of Sam Patch and the art of Timothy Crane.¹⁹

When Sam Patch said that leaping waterfalls was an art, he tied his jumps to familiar notions of Anglo-American manhood. In Patch's world a man's art was his identity-defining skill. There was the shoemaker's art, the carpenter's art, the multiform arts of husbandry—the whole range of combined mental and manual performances by means of which trained men provided for the wants and needs of their communities. The word "art" affirmed

the intelligence, learning, and dexterity that went into building a house, making a shoe, or raising a field of wheat. It also affirmed the worth of men who performed those tasks. It was the combination of knowledge (not speculative imagination but mastery of a "system of rules," as Noah Webster called it, learned from childhood under the guidance of a father or master) and skilled hands that made ordinary work an art. And it was the possession of an art that made a man independent and useful and therefore the sovereign equal of any other man.²⁰

This understanding of "art" called up the yeoman-artisan republic and the ideals of manhood and individual worth that it sustained—ideals that Sam Patch and other workingmen had reformulated and extended into the industrial world of the nineteenth century. His "art" was tied to an ethos that his father had lost and that he had regained. Greenleaf Patch had been a landless farmer turned cottage shoemaker, and in his proudest days he may have claimed possession of an art. But skilled shoemakers knew better. Men like Greenleaf Patch performed clumsy work and sold it to merchants who then put it into world markets. His rented farm and his misshapen shoes were tied less to the neighborhood bases of occupational arts than to the wider commercial relationships that were dissolving them. Sam Patch's dimmest childhood memories were of his father's expulsion from even that dubious artisanship. And then there was Pawtucket and a childhood in the mills.

Yet by 1827 Sam Patch was himself master of an art. He had operated spinning machinery since childhood, and his elders on the job had recruited and trained him as one of the first American-born boss spinners. If he was anything like the other mule spinners, Sam talked and acted like a man who possessed an art: he was the master of a machine that his employers did not fully understand, he hired, managed, and disciplined his own helpers, and he demanded respect from lowlier workers and from the owners themselves. The mule spinners pioneered the

effort to reshape old standards of male autonomy and to establish them within factory walls.

Patch's leap at Clinton Bridge was—indirectly but unmistakably—tied to that effort. His leaping ability was a kind of occupational skill, invented and practiced by mill boys at mill-village waterfalls. Jumping at waterfalls was an art. Patch's feet-first, knees-bent position in the air and his practice of breathing in as he fell followed the system of rules governing that art that Pawtucket boys had developed over the years. Throughout his jumping career, Sam Patch never deviated from the formal Pawtucket style. (Each mill town, apparently, developed local variations. In 1885, when a man named Odium killed himself trying to leap from the Brooklyn Bridge, Sheriff McKee of Paterson said that as a boy in the 1850s he had known at least twenty young men who could have made the leap safely. Paterson boys, explained the sheriff, knew the secret: the jumper must keep his mouth shut and hold his breath.)²¹

No one recorded what Sam Patch wore when he jumped at Clinton Bridge or at his other leaps in Paterson. But he made his subsequent leaps in a close-fitting shirt and pants of white cotton. His garb was neat and highly visible, a good outfit for jumping waterfalls. It was also the parade uniform of the Paterson Association of Spinners.²²

Patch's membership in the mule spinner's world was hard-won and vital, and he repeatedly talked of his jumping abilities in ways that referred to it. His remarks at Clinton Bridge (Crane had done a great thing, and he meant to do another) called up a world in which things competently done established a democracy of respect among the doers. And when the following summer Patch jumped on the Fourth of July, he said that he wanted "merely . . . to show that some things can be done as well as others"—a sideways reference to the same republic of arts. By thus insisting that falls jumping was an art—a truly traditional art, one that required knowledge and years of practice—Sam Patch spoke

to the one world in which he could imagine his own worth, the world he carried with him when he confronted Timothy Crane at Clinton Bridge.²³

When Timothy Crane used the word "art" (and he used it often) he did not mean things like shoemaking, mule spinning, or leaping waterfalls. Crane and other improvers were shaping America's revolutionary republic into new landscapes, new social hierarchies, and new uses for key English words. In Crane's vocabulary "art" stood for all the works of humankind. In particular, it referred to the works of technology and entrepreneurial vision that were transforming nature and the social order in their generation. Art was the Erie Canal, a man-made river that turned a wilderness into new farms and towns. Art was water-powered factories and mills. It was bridges and roads and steamboats. It was the whole range of projects by which civilization was refining nature and putting it to human use, and it had little to do with the skills practiced by ordinary men.

Timothy Crane used "art" as a near-synonym for civilization, and he coupled it with its ancient opposite, "nature," in two ways. The first—represented by Clinton Bridge—reiterated understandings that had come to North America with the first settlers: art was opposed to hostile natural forces. Civilization, as Keith Thomas has reminded us, was "virtually synonymous with the conquest of nature." Crane, however, inflated this meaning of "art" and used it in newly aggressive and grandiose ways, for he and others had come to believe that civilization was winning its age-old war with wilderness. In the 1790s Crane's hero De Witt Clinton had predicted that "the hand of art will change the face of the universe. Mountains, deserts, and oceans will feel its mighty force. It will not then be debated whether the hills shall be prostrated, but whether the Alps and Andes shall be levelled; nor whether sterile fields shall be fertilized, but whether the deserts of Africa shall feel the power of cultivation." Such language was self-consciously prophetic then, but by the time Tim-

thy Crane built his bridge it seemed that Clinton's prophecy was coming true: art was conquering nature on a broad front and with unprecedented success; man's long-sought dominion over nature was being realized.²⁴

The Forest Garden represented a second, newer juxtaposition of nature and art. With the final triumph of civilization at hand, educated northerners were beginning a long, complex conversation about humankind's relation to the retreating natural world. They had always seen wilderness as primordial chaos, and many continued to do so. But others began to perceive a new divinity in nature—a benign order that could be counterposed to the transitory, selfish, ugly, and artificial aspects of their own increasingly civilized world. This revolution in perception was expressed in efforts to gain access to nature through art: landscape paintings, nature books, half-wild gardens, rural cemeteries and urban parks, and journeys to a Niagara Falls surrounded by stairways and new hotels. By the 1830s the northeastern United States was dotted with landscapes that domesticated wilderness just enough to rob it of its terrors and to reveal its moral lessons, combinations of art and nature that were supposed to educate, renew, and uplift citizens of the world that progress was making. The Forest Garden, which, as one of Crane's happy customers testified, "domesticated the wilderness of nature, and blended with it the improvements of art," was one of those landscapes.²⁵

The art of Timothy Crane's north bank had both utilitarian and spiritual connotations. It linked developmentalism and romanticism, material progress and spiritual improvement, prosperity and uplift. Simply put, it linked the material accomplishments and the spiritual possibilities of people like Timothy Crane. Other places in the Northeast juxtaposed those meanings as well. European visitors to Boston often traveled to nearby Mount Auburn Cemetery and the factory town of Lowell within a day or two of each other—possibly because their guides were rich Bostonians who had helped to build both places. Tourists on

the Erie Canal enjoyed that triumph of utilitarian art, knowing all the while that it carried them to the natural wonders of Niagara Falls. But seldom were the twin promises of utility and moral uplift linked so dramatically as at Passaic Falls. Clinton Bridge spanned the river with technological ease, then delivered visitors into the Forest Garden, a spiritualized landscape whose very name combined nature and art. Passing through a new factory town, over a noble bridge, and into the Forest Garden, Crane's customers witnessed triumphs of art and combinations of art and nature that represented big pieces of the material and moral agenda of an emerging entrepreneurial class. It was an agenda that left little room for Sam Patch and his idea of art.²⁶

The art of Timothy Crane and the art of Sam Patch were opposed in many ways. That opposition was clearest at the Forest Garden: Crane simply excluded workmen who did not "understand" the new falls ground, thus enforcing the new social and aesthetic boundaries that such places were helping to make. The art of Clinton Bridge, however, posed subtler and deeper threats, for it assumed forms of social organization that diminished the "arts" that working people practiced. In earlier centuries the struggle with nature was carried out by the occupational arts: people turned woodlands into farms, trees into furniture and houses, rocks into chimneys and fences, cattle into food and shoes. The progress of "art" was thus little more than the sum of what the occupational arts had made, and the arts of Timothy Crane and Sam Patch were parts of one conceptual scheme. The new language of progress, however, dissolved individual skills into a larger, more interdependent, and more abstract "art." A newsman who learned what Sam Patch did for a living, for instance, described him as "a mechanic connected with one of the factories in Paterson." This was not an insult. Most skilled workmen called themselves mechanics, had done so for a long time, and would continue to do so for at least a generation. In their usage, a mechanic was the possessor of an art. But in the language

of progress, mechanics were more often, like the newsman's Sam Patch, "connected" with the grander designs of art.²⁷

A friend of Crane's on the *Intelligencer* provided a set-piece example of how the language of progress dealt with Sam Patch and his fellow mechanics. In 1828 he described the millwrights of Paterson as "a useful class of mechanics which enables the manufacturer to render the natural elements so innately subservient to the comfort and prosperity of this town." He did not mean that millwrights had lost their arts or skills. Indeed, the mills of Paterson were among the most complex and demanding products of the millwrights' art in North America. The abilities of millwrights were not diminished but devalued—devalued because cognitive and manual responsibilities were no longer assigned to the same people, and because capital and entrepreneurial imagination were assuming primacy over ancient knowledge. Mill-building was losing status, and the balance of respect was shifting toward the "manufacturer" who thought up projects and financed them, who organized the various "classes of mechanics" in ways that turned unruly nature into "comfort and prosperity" for the whole town—all of it accomplished through a process and with results that people like Timothy Crane called art.²⁸

When Crane advertised in newspapers he seldom talked about himself in the first person. He was the "subscriber" or the "proprietor," and Clinton Bridge and the Forest Garden were made not by him but by "the hand of ART." (Sam Patch, remember, claimed his art for himself: *I have knowledge and courage to perform it; I have practiced it from my youth.*) Crane's disembodied "hand of ART" was an abstraction not only for his gardens and bridge but for the processes that such projects required. In order for art to conquer Passaic Falls, Crane had to imagine his bridge and gardens, buy the land, and exclude other users. Then he had to hire scores of laborers, carpenters, and gardeners and supervise them as they assembled the parts of his scheme. And

then (here is where "art" was put to new uses) he had to convince the people of Paterson that the project embodied not his own capital and aspirations but the Hand of Art. The project and the process of realizing it belonged not to him but to humankind. Everyone would profit from it, everyone could be proud of it.

The owners of mills and foundries along the millrace on the south bank shared Crane's sensibilities, and they planted flower gardens between the raceway and the lower Passaic River. The result was a striking vision of nature improved by art. At the head of town stood a majestic waterfall, spanned by Clinton Bridge and abutted by the Forest Garden. Across the river and below Crane's garden, a line of factories and flower beds sloped unevenly down to the tenements and little houses of Paterson—narrow, unpaved streets filled with pigs and dirty children, with émincé English factory hands, and with the wage-earning daughters and sons of American yeomen. A traveler walking through Paterson in 1832 counted "thirty cotton-mills [and] iron and brass foundries, in the upper part of it, with gardens so tastefully laid out, and the banks of the river kept so neat, and ornamented with weeping willows, as to compensate for the broken bridges and dirt of the lower part of town." It was a picture-book balance of art, nature, and early industrial squalor. It was what American romantic capitalism had made in Paterson, New Jersey.²⁹

Clinton Bridge was the linchpin in that landscape. And when Timothy Crane invited the neighbors to walk out of their part of the picture and into his, he wanted more than applause. He wanted factory hands and foundry workers to participate in meanings that he and other entrepreneurs and their friends were inventing. In oblique but profound ways, he wanted them to ratify their place within the language and landscape of progress.

Crane's spectacle almost worked. He drew a huge crowd, and when the bridge was in place most had to admit that Timothy Crane had done an impressive thing. But Sam Patch, with an anarchic leap and a mock rescue of a piece of failed engineering,

stole the day. In a split second the applause went from the art of Timothy Crane to the art of Sam Patch. It was what some people would call a silly gesture, existential rebellion at its most juvenile and dangerous. But Sam Patch lived in a world where "art" was a vehicle of self-expression within a system of recognized equalities and reciprocities, and he wanted to show Timothy Crane how an American man conquers a waterfall.

On July 4, 1828, Sam Patch leaped again at Passaic Falls. Later on the same day, Timothy Crane presented a display of fireworks at the Forest Garden. Crane's fireworks and Patch's leap were the first commercial entertainments ever advertised for Independence Day at Paterson: they were at it again.

Independence Day celebrations had been initiated by the political parties (the Jeffersonian Republicans in particular) of the early republic, and citizens had expressed Federalist and Jeffersonian versions of what America was about in speeches and parades. With the disappearance of the Federalists after 1815, the celebrations became nonpartisan and local, and something went out of them. Whole neighborhoods still turned out for the parades and nighttime fireworks, but most treated the Fourth as a festive day off from work, complete with theatrical performances, hunting parties, circuses, boat races, and complaints about drinking and gambling among the lower orders. The upper classes began to stay at home, or to spend the day in church, or to take exclusive pleasure trips.³⁰

In Paterson, Independence Day celebrations in the late 1820s were a part of what was happening in the mills, on the streets, and on the north bank of Passaic Falls: the republic of useful arts was confronting Progress and the new inequalities of a mill city. The *Paterson Intelligencer*, which began publication in 1826, reported its first July Fourth celebration that summer. Representatives of the mechanics' and spinners' associations joined with

"citizens" in a general committee of the day, which planned the festivities. The day began with a ringing of church bells, the playing of patriotic airs by the town band, and the firing of a cannon. But the centerpiece was the parade, led by a uniformed company of militia. The town band came second, followed by "Ladies" (almost certainly the wives and daughters of leading men) and female schoolteachers with their pupils, then men hoisting the cap of liberty and the American flag, then the town's civic leaders and clergy. Following the dignitaries came thirteen elderly citizens carrying the flags of the original thirteen states, accompanied by ten boys bearing banners of the newer states. Militia officers in uniform were followed by the associations of spinners, weavers, and other mechanics, marching trade by trade, carrying flags emblazoned with patriotic emblems and pictures of the tools and processes of their trades. The flags and the trade-by-trade marching order, along with the mechanics' participation in the planning of the day, sustained the tradition that the individual arts, in their making of shoes and houses and cotton cloth, fashioned the nation itself. (A citizen commented that the spinners were particularly striking in their white uniforms with green badges, and their blue banner with a spread eagle and depictions of the spinning process.) Male teachers and their pupils walked behind the mechanics and were followed by a final and inclusive contingent of "Citizens generally"—any white men, apparently, who wanted to march. A second company of militia brought up the rear.³¹

The parade began at ten o'clock in the morning and carried its pomp and noise through the streets. It ended at Brick Presbyterian Church, where the inclusiveness of the morning parade gave way to selective celebration. The town's leading men and women left the ranks and entered the church, where, according to one of them, "exercises suitable to the occasion were performed with a becoming sense of the sacred character of the place, and the honor due to the day." The minister offered a

prayer, a lawyer read the Declaration of Independence, and the Orator of the Day (another lawyer) spoke with (according to the first lawyer) "masterly eloquence, which, combined with the beauty of thought, the aptness of allusion, and the force of classic illustration scattered throughout the composition, rendered this Oration a mental feast not soon to be forgotten, by those who partook of it." After songs by the choir, the lawyers, factory owners, and their ladies filed out of the church and rejoined the democratic parade that had waited outside.

The procession marched to Munn's Passaic Hotel. The militia-men fired their muskets into the air and disbanded. The crowd dispersed into festivities that the newspaper ignored, the ladies went off to an entertainment of their own, and the leading men of Paterson gathered in the hotel dining room. (The newspaper reported that the dinner was open to "all who choose," but the cost was a dollar a plate—a day's labor for most Patersonians.) There were food and speeches, and toward the end the innkeeper brought in a pie. He opened the pie and a white pigeon flew out bearing a very bad poem entitled "The Herald of America's Prosperity." ("O'er fields and plains by Nature blest / On lightsome wing I came," and on and on.) Thirteen toasts were proposed, commemorative of the thirteen original states: to the Nation, the People, the Heroes of the Revolution, the Republicans of Greece and South America, the New Jersey School Fund. The thirteenth toast, as was customary, went up to "Our Fair Country Women."

In the evening the banqueters rejoined the rest of Paterson for a grand flight of rockets, staged and paid for by the general committee of the day. Later, citizens could read that the Fourth had gone off with "harmony and good order," and with "unanimity manifested by all classes." It was a fine Fourth of July of the 1820s—a parade and fireworks staged and enjoyed by the whole town, and a sermon, readings, high-minded music, and banquet for the town's leaders. The festivities demonstrated republican

hierarchy and celebrated the dignity and usefulness of white men—dignity that derived from daily work.

The festivities were similar in 1827: an inclusive, trade-based parade, a church service, an elite banquet, and a civic display of fireworks. The banquet ended with the usual toasts, but this year some of the toasts folded the language of the republic into the language of progress. There was a salute to American "Mechanical Genius" as manifested by the practical inventors Benjamin Franklin and Robert Fulton, and another to the American System of sheltering infant industries under protective tariffs—accompanied by the playing of "Yankee Doodle." Volunteer toasts saluted the rise of American manufactures and of Paterson in particular, while from outside came the sounds of another wedding of patriotism and progress: the engineer who was building the Morris Canal through Paterson (the canal linked the Pennsylvania coalfields with New York) set off thirteen explosions—"not only a loud but a profitable expression of patriotic feeling," according to a bemused Canadian visitor. The town leaders acted out their bipartisanship with dueling toasts to the Democrat Andrew Jackson and the National Republican Henry Clay, and there was a circumspect toast to "the Constitution" by Timothy Crane. But there were also toasts to Paterson's artisans and mechanics, phrased in the language of mutual usefulness and mutual respect: "In their industry and ingenuity the manufacturer has found . . . the best protection"; "may they be at all times united and free, and always maintain their integrity"; "the strong pillars upon which our prosperity rests. May they long maintain that respectable rank in society which they at present so deservedly occupy." Perhaps representatives of the workingmen's associations had again taken part in the planning and thus in the dinner (the planning session went unrecorded that year), or perhaps some among Paterson's elite in 1827 (at least at a civic and festive occasion, and toward the end of a lot of drinking) continued to fuse progress and the republic with respect for labor:³²

The Fourth of July went differently in 1828. First, Patersonians learned that there would be no public fireworks. Instead, Timothy Crane promised a grand pyrotechnic display at the Forest Garden, on the far side of his tollbooth, to be witnessed only by subscribed ticket holders. Citizens then read that "a large and respectable meeting of Young Men" had planned the civic celebration and selected its officers and other dignitaries. The "Young Men" (a common code for ambitious and well-connected young men) neglected to invite women—either "Ladies" or female teachers—or "Citizens generally" to join the parade, though they did include the mechanics and spinners. The marching workers were duly noted, but only in the language of progress. (The newspaper account noted the banner carried by millwrights, "on which is exhibited in beautiful perspective the various implements and the mode of their application, by which this useful class of mechanics enables the manufacturer to render the natural elements so immanently subservient to the comfort and prosperity of this town.") The banquet was not attended by mechanics, nor were toasts given to their usefulness and patriotism. The usual salutes to the republic and founding fathers went up, but this time they were linked principally to entrepreneurial progress: to "Roads and Canals—important links in the chain which binds our union" (accompanied by "Meeting of the Waters," a tune composed for the opening of the Erie Canal); to "Domestic Manufactures—The Only Hope for National Independence" ("Heigh ho! The Cotton Spinners"); to "Literature, Science, and the Arts—The alimnt of Freedom ("Ode on Science").³³

The day ended with Crane's fireworks, presented for an exclusive audience at the Forest Garden, "where the refinements of taste and art combined with the varied and romantic beauties of nature, to afford pleasure and satisfaction to the numerous company present."³⁴

Celebrations in this new and exclusive "spirit of rational free-

dom," so different from the civic inclusiveness of earlier years, would continue into the 1830s. But July 4, 1828, did include one performance that the Young Men had not planned. At four-thirty in the afternoon, as advertised, Sam Patch leaped from the south side of Clinton Bridge. The plain people of Paterson, absent as usual from the ceremonies at the church and hotel, had been excluded from the planning, denied the civic fireworks show, denied in the parade, and ignored by the toastmasters. They marched in battalions to the falls to see Sam Patch. A New Yorker gasped that "the giddy precipices around the chasm were covered with a promiscuous multitude of both sexes whose curiosity had brought them together to see this singular feat of lemmery." The local paper estimated the crowd at between three thousand and five thousand persons. (Paterson had six thousand residents.) They lined the cliffs, rank upon rank. At the appointed time Sam Patch stepped to the edge and stared down at the river. He took off his coat, vest, and shoes; perhaps he was wearing the spinner's uniform in which he had marched that morning. Some in the crowd pushed forward for a better view, nearly crowding those in front off the precipice. As the crowd re-gathered, Sam turned and delivered a short speech that few could hear and none recorded. Then he faced the precipice and leaped into the chasm. The *Intelligencer* granted that it was a "hazardous feat," "handsomely executed." Sam rose to the surface of the water as the crowd's anxious silence broke into wonder and a roar of applause.³⁵

Though most of Paterson witnessed Sam's leap on the Fourth of July, it is doubtful that the town's merchants and manufacturers were among them, for Sam had scheduled his leap at an hour at which they almost certainly were still at the banquet, offering toasts to progress, patriotism, and each other. A news story about this leap was the first to report the phrase that became Sam's motto: "Some things can be done as well as others."³⁶

Twelve days later Sam Patch announced that he would per-

form his "astounding leap" once more, on Monday, July 28. On the same day as Sam's announcement—Wednesday, July 16—twenty-two Paterson manufacturers made an announcement of their own:

Notice. The subscribers hereby give notice to their *workers* and others, that after Saturday, the 19th July, 1828, they will stop their Mills and Factories, at half past seven o'clock, in the morning, for breakfast, and at one o'clock P.M. for dinner.

This arrangement we consider will divide the day in a more equal manner than heretofore, and prove of advantage to the workers.

The announcement changed the dinner hour from noon to one o'clock, and it met with resistance. A friendly newspaper stated that the owners "had the good of the children in view," though the same editor had earlier averred that they changed the lunch hour "for their own convenience." It really made no difference: the manufacturers' decree was certain to start a fight.³⁷

In the mills, Sam Patch and the skilled Englishmen who were his peers read the proclamation and thought about it. It was only a small change in the routine of the working day, but a little reflection revealed what the bosses were trying to do. Signers of the decree owned all but two of the town's cotton mills and many of the foundries and factories. The new rule changed the lunch hour for nearly half of Paterson's manufacturing wage earners, and for many more than half of the job-holding children. In a mill town where most families depended on more than one breadwinner, and where workers went home for lunch, few wage-earning households would be unaffected. Put simply, twenty-two wealthy men had taken it upon themselves to complicate the domestic schedules of hundreds of Paterson families. Worse, they announced the new hour after a closed meeting and in language (they "hereby give notice") that assumed their right to dictate the conditions of work. The owners must have known

that the adult male spinners and weavers would resist this attack on their authority over themselves and the children who worked under them, particularly when it came in the form of an arbitrary assertion of power by a closed-door combination of employers.³⁸

The manufacturers posted their decree on Wednesday: the customary noon lunch hour would be in effect for the rest of the week, but when the mills reopened on Monday, lunchtime would be one o'clock.

Sam Patch was a boss mule spinner at the Hamilton Mills, and he must have been in the thick of the discussions that took place during the week. Many of the other boss spinners were veterans of the labor violence and repressed reform movements of industrial Lancashire. Described in newspapers as "Manchester *mobies*" subject to "the moral diseases of Europe" (the first of which, of course, was a propensity for rioting and labor radicalism), they were the terror of Timothy Crane and men like him. But in Sam Patch's world, they were the staunchest and most admirable of men. Sam was himself a twenty-one-year veteran of the mills, and three years earlier had witnessed and perhaps taken part in the Pawtucket walkout—the first textile strike in American history. While the spinners and weavers planned what they would do, Sam thought up a contribution of his own: he spread the word that on Saturday afternoon—after the factories had closed, and in the first hours of calm before what everyone knew would be a storm—he would again leap at Passaic Falls.³⁹

The mills and factories closed at noon on Saturday. Workers left their machines and workbenches knowing that peace was at an end. There would be a day and a half of eerie quiet, and on Monday there would be trouble. The people of Paterson began that day and a half with a walk to Passaic Falls. They streamed out of their workplaces and out of the houses and groshops in the lower neighborhoods, jostling and talking. Latecomers hurried past the last empty factory and around the embankment, and there stood the crowd waiting for Sam Patch. A New Yorker

estimated the crowd at six to ten thousand: the whole town. At the appointed time, Sam strode out of the audience and stepped onto his rock. A part of the crowd stood at his back, with the deserted town behind them. Clinton Bridge and the falls were at his right and the basin was at his feet, and everywhere Sam turned he met the eyes of workmates and neighbors. He straightened, gathered himself, and stepped off and dropped with perfect grace into the gulf. Some person or persons had wanted to ensure that this grand gesture would be made: Sam collected fifteen dollars for the leap.⁴⁰

(Again, we cannot know what Sam wore for this leap. But it is likely that he jumped, as he did in future leaps, in the white shirt and pants that were the parade uniform of the Paterson Association of Spinners. This uniform carried meanings—probably for Patch, certainly for the Englishmen who worked with him and witnessed his leap—that reached back to Manchester. After the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, workers in the textile towns of Lancashire, led again by the weavers and spinners, revived their demands for republican rights—in the faces of Britain's victorious aristocrats. The workers organized a great rally at St. Peter's Field, near Manchester, in 1819 to hear a speech advocating parliamentary reform. Soldiers who had been instructed to arrest the speaker charged into the crowd, killing several and injuring hundreds of others. Before the Massacre at Peterloo began, the cap of liberty [the symbol of international republicanism] was delivered to the podium by a group of women dressed in white with green trim. After the Massacre, Manchester spinners adopted white hats with green ribbons as a defiant and angry remembrance of the day. Hundreds of these men later migrated to the United States, and many of them found their way to Paterson over the next few years. The English spinners and their American compatriots marched in Paterson's July Fourth parades wearing suits of white cotton adorned with prominent green badges. The jumping attire of Sam Patch—the white uniform with the

green badge removed—might have meant more to Sam's audience than the newspapers evidently understood.⁴¹

On Monday the mill hands came to work on time and worked at their machines through the morning. When the clock struck noon they stopped. The spinners and weavers and the boys and girls who worked under them marched downstairs and out of doors. It was twelve o'clock. Time for lunch.

There are differing accounts of what happened next. An early report stated that the workers had gone out on strike on Monday afternoon and had become "very riotous and disorderly, and such as to keep the inhabitants of the place in continual apprehension." The same report announced (erroneously) that the militia was on its way from Newark. Another account had young strikers, encouraged by the incorrigible weavers and spinners, mobbing their opponents and threatening to throw them into the "ugly basin into which Mr. Patch jumps occasionally." The *Pater-son Intelligencer* downplayed the violence, but admitted that the walkout "was indeed conducted with some noise and show of outrage." The known facts are these: the workers rioted on Monday afternoon, two hundred men and many more children and women were out on strike, and only two mills remained in operation—the two that had not tried to change the dinner hour.⁴²

On Tuesday the weavers and mule spinners, joined by skilled journeymen from the smaller shops, held a meeting and issued two demands. First, they resolved to stay out on strike until the noon lunch hour was reinstated. Second, evidently enraged and emboldened by events, they demanded that the citywide workday be cut from eleven to ten hours. They would greet employers who agreed to the twelve o'clock lunch hour and the ten-hour day as "friends to their fellow citizens and to mankind in general." The others would not be friends at all. The mechanics would not work for them, and they would use "all legal means" to keep others from entering their degrading and dishonorable employment. The mechanics ended their meeting and went home.

Later that night, someone set fire to one of the struck mills. Another sneaked into the weaving room of the Phoenix Mills—one of the two that remained in operation—and cut the warps with a knife.⁴³

The owners stood adamant, and the strike continued through July. Not until early August did the papers announce that "the children have yielded their position and most of the mechanics returned quietly to work, to take their dinner at one o'clock. . . . The children are now perfectly docile and appear sorry for their misconduct." With the mills running and the power of the owners to set schedules at least temporarily acknowledged, the victorious manufacturers became kindhearted: by fiat (and not by the authority of riotous workmen) they restored the lunch hour to twelve o'clock. Their newfound benevolence, however, did not extend to the weavers and spinners who had led the strike. During the angry days of late July, the owners had sworn that they would never rehire the chief troublemakers, though they were, as an anti-strike editor conceded, "among the best workmen." They carried out their threat: a New Yorker who visited Paterson reported, "The ringleaders of the mechanics, among whom are some of the *Manchester Mobites*, have been discharged."⁴⁴

On August 6 Sam Patch jumped from a ship's mast into the Hudson River at Hoboken, cheered on by a crowd of New Yorkers who had gathered on a hotel lawn. Sam had not made his advertised leap at Passaic Falls on July 28. The leap on the Saturday before the strike was his last appearance in the records of Paterson. An editor claimed to have "learned that Mr. Patch has resolved to leap no more from the place he has chosen heretofore. Sam felt rather 'ugly' about it the last time."⁴⁵

■ The invitation to leap at Hoboken probably came from John Cox Stevens, whose father, Colonel John Stevens, had bought a confiscated loyalist estate with three miles of riverfront facing

New York Harbor in 1784. The estate occupied the one point at which a break in the New Jersey Palisades permitted easy boat traffic across the Hudson, and the Colonel laid out the village of Hoboken in 1804. Colonel Stevens was a wealthy tinkerer and an enthusiast for steamboats. He launched a primitive steam vessel at Hoboken in 1804 (three years before Robert Fulton's more successful venture), and five years later his sidewheeler *Phoenix* steamed from Hoboken to Philadelphia—the first steam vessel to venture into the ocean. Colonel Stevens wanted to establish a line between Albany and New York City and steam ferry service between Hoboken and New York, and he sued to break the monopoly held by Robert Fulton and Robert Livingston. The case went to the Supreme Court, whose decision in *Gibbons v. Ogden* struck down the monopoly in 1824. Colonel Stevens built the Hudson River Line to Albany and the ferry service to Manhattan, then began turning his attention to railroads.⁴⁶

While his father and brother worked at their transportation projects, John Cox Stevens developed the riverside property as a promenade and a place of entertainment. Beginning about 1820 he built a shaded pathway along the river, planted a spacious sloping lawn that he named Elysian Fields, and added a hotel patronized by the “best” people. An advertisement boasted that the improvements had turned Hoboken into “one of the most delightful places in the known world.” New York’s high society picnicked, strolled, and rode horses along Stevens’s well-groomed pathways. They praised Hoboken’s willow-lined promenades (“the finest walks conceivable”), its pleasant fusion of sociability and solitude, and its picturesque views of the river full of sailboats, with the city on the opposite shore, “glittering like a heap of toys in the sunny distance.” A gentleman poet was pleased: “Good taste and enterprise have done for Hoboken precisely what they ought to have done, without violating the propriety of nature.”⁴⁷

Visitors to Hoboken paid no admission. The Stevens family

owned the steam ferries that plied between Manhattan and their little resort, and made their money by encouraging New Yorkers to ride the boats. Steam ferry service began in 1822. By 1828 four large steamboats (complete with women’s lounges and fruit, candy, and liquor stores) left either shore on the half hour at a cost of 12.5 cents per passenger. Wealthy strollers and equestrians soon shared Hoboken with swarms of working- and middle-class Manhattanites who came to enjoy the boat ride, the fresh air and river breezes, the open spaces, and each other. As early as 1823 a Scots tourist found Hoboken filled with “tellers of every disposition and capacity”: “Here the gallant ogles his beloved, the aged his feeble spouse, the nurse and mother the tender offspring. Whilist [prostitutes], displaying their spangled forms, deduce many of the simple sons of Adam.” On Sundays (the one full day when most New Yorkers were off work) as many as twenty thousand visitors crowded the lawn and walkways. Most of the new visitors wore their Sunday best and behaved themselves. Some did not. The Scotsman’s prostitutes misbehaved, and so did the unknown persons who smashed an obelisk that marked the dueling ground on which Aaron Burr had killed Alexander Hamilton in 1804. The vandals carried off the pieces as relics. (Years later, a man walked into a low groggery in Manhattan carrying the fragment of the obelisk bearing the identifying inscription, and traded it for whiskey.) Rich Manhattanites knew that Hoboken was attracting a new and lower sort of people. Many of them stopped going there.⁴⁸

John Cox Stevens, on the other hand, encouraged his new clientele. Stevens was a jovial, fun-loving gentleman and the leading sportsman of New York. In 1823 he put up the northern bet (an astounding twenty thousand dollars) for the great horse race between Eclipse and the southern champion, Henry. In 1825 he bought the victorious Eclipse and advertised him at stud at Hoboken. Stevens was a rich man who moved comfortably in democratic crowds, and he staged a variety of shows and sporting

contests at Hoboken. He brought a circus to the lawn in 1823—complete with equestrians, balancing acts, comic sketches by a Mr. Shinotti, and songs by eight-year-old Miss Blanchard, sung while performing her “pleasing equilibriums” on the slack wire. After the circus, there was a horse race. The next year Stevens sponsored running races at Hoboken. He also established Fourth of July boat races and oratory contests, along with an occasional pigeon shoot. In 1829 he completed a stean railway and offered rides to visitors. Before long there was a merry-go-round, a ten-pin alley, wax figures, a shooting range, and a camera obscura. Stevens completed Hoboken’s transition from a retreat for the wealthy to a place for popular and gentlemanly recreation in 1834, when he opened the Beacon Course for horse racing. Twelve years later America’s first organized baseball game was played on Stevens’s Hoboken lawn.⁴⁹

On the morning of August 6, 1828, readers of the *New York Enquirer* learned that Mr. Stevens had taken another step in the wrong direction:

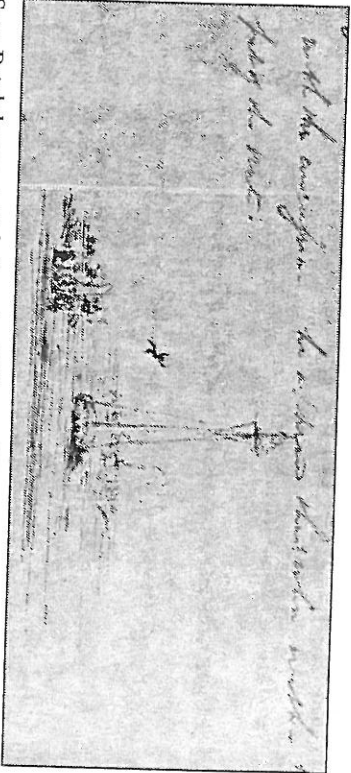
Hoboken—this day, 6th instant—Mr. Patch, whose wonderful and intrepid leaps from the Peake of Paterson Falls, to the abyss below (having been gracefully repeated), announces his intention of making a similar experiment for the gratification of the citizens of New York, THIS DAY, from an elevation of about 90 to 100 feet, now erecting within a few rods of the ferry-house. From the Hoboken shaded green, will be afforded a comfortable and delightful view of this eccentric novelty.

Some New Yorkers thought the jump was a bad idea: it was dangerous, and it would set a bad example for the gullible and unrefined. Two days earlier the editor of the *Enquirer* had written disapprovingly of Sam’s last leap at Paterson: “This is in bad taste, for although there is some tact and management in the feat, it is still unnecessarily sporting with human existence, and all such bravadoes should be discountenanced. Rational, scien-

tific, and even daring exploits for rational objects, may be encouraged, but what is there in a leap over a catract of 90 feet? Danger and desperation.” The *Enquirer* then likened Patch to a showman who shot himself dead before an appalled audience. The *New York Statesman* agreed: “If there be any philosophical principles upon which a leap of 100 feet is divested of the hazard usually attached to it, no objection to the attempt can be raised—though the circumstance would soon create ‘competition,’ and would, moreover, diminish the zest which the supposed danger (to our credit be it spoken!) presents to the spectators. But if there be actual peril in the undertaking, we recommend Patch to abandon it.” That controversy persisted for the remainder of Sam’s earthly and remembered life: popular interest in Sam’s “astomishing leaps” versus editorial concerns about the physical danger and public corruption that attended them.⁵⁰

Many wealthy New Yorkers stayed away from Patch’s exhibition at Hoboken. Among those who attended the show was the artist Walter M. Oddie. Oddie was a young man in 1828, and he was learning to enjoy the highs and some of the lows of New York City. His social rounds included visits with the wealthy, but he also made time for evenings at the Bowery Theater and the city’s pleasure gardens. On August 6, 1828, Oddie went horseback riding in the city. In the afternoon he ferried to Hoboken to view the leap of “the much talked of individual” Sam Patch. Oddie stood on the lawn near the ferry landing, surrounded by four or five hundred New Yorkers who had come to see the show. The sloop from which Sam would jump was anchored close to shore, directly in front of the lawn. A great crowd of boats surrounded the sloop, each of them filled with spectators. No one estimated the full size of the onshore and waterborne audience, but Oddie assures us that “a large concourse of gaping spectators” witnessed the leap. Near four o’clock Sam Patch climbed to a platform at the masthead and viewed the crowd in the boats and on the lawn. The surface of the river, less aerated and more unfor-
giving

than the pools below waterfalls, waited ninety dizzying feet below. Walter Oddie wrote that Sam "leaped off without hesitation. He did not descend as erectly as I anticipated but loosely, and before he had got halfway turned and fell on his back made the water roar and splash with confusion—he appeared thus when within 40 feet of the water," and here Oddie sketched the only surviving eyewitness picture of one of Sam's leaps:



Sam Patch leaps at Hoboken, by Walter Oddie (Walter M. Oddie diary, courtesy of the Winterthur Library; Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera)

Some feared that Sam had hurt himself, but he bobbed up with nothing worse than a bruise near one of his eyes.⁵¹

The leap at Hoboken was a turning point: it was there that Sam Patch left the factory towns and entered the new world of show business. His leaps at Pawtucket and Paterson had been local events, witnessed by workmates and neighbors who understood the art of falls jumping and knew the situations in which Sam's leaps were performed. At Hoboken (and at all of his subsequent leaps) Sam leaped for strangers who merely wanted to see a man jump from high places, and whose enjoyment of Sam's leaps had nothing to do with labor disputes, fights over local playgrounds, or the games of factory boys. Sam's new exhibitions and his new audiences (along with the widening public that read or heard about Sam's leaps in the newspapers and in barbershop

conversations) transformed Sam Patch into a primitive conqueror of nature, a solitary daredevil who performed "wonderful and intrepid leaps" for fame and money. After July 1828 Sam Patch was no longer a local working-class hero. He was on his way to being a showman and a celebrity.

It was probably not a smooth transition. After the leap at Hoboken, Sam Patch dropped out of sight. He did not return to Paterson. There is some evidence that he worked in a mill near Philadelphia. His one appearance during the next year was a little-noted Fourth of July leap at Little Falls, well above Paterson on the Passaic River. Beyond that, we know only that gentlemen in Buffalo, through friends in New York City, invited Sam to leap at Niagara Falls in October 1829. We know also that when Sam set out on his journey to Niagara, he was drunk nearly all the time.⁵²