



The Barnard Bulletin

APRIL 2023

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A VERMONT WRITER

BY MARGARET EDWARDS

This column is an offering of The Danforth Library in Barnard and a chance to introduce Vermont writers who deserve wider renown.

Julia C. R. Dorr

1825 – 1913



Julia Caroline Ripley Dorr, c. 1847

For a variety of reasons, Julia Caroline Ripley was not a likely candidate for becoming a well-known Vermont writer. One reason was her having been born in Charleston, South Carolina, appearing in this world on February 13, 1825, to a mother from a plantation-owning family, the De Lacys of Haiti, who had fled the country after the successful slave revolt of 1791. Her mother's death when Julia was a mere 18 months old put her firmly into the care of her father, a Vermonter, descendant of distinguished New England forebears, with William Bradford of the Plymouth Colony among them.

William Young Ripley had been born in Middlebury but was inclined to live in New York City where he was running a business. When motherless Julia had turned three, he missed her company so much that he went to Vermont to fetch her, traveling with her back to New York and enrolling her in a small, fashionable boarding school on (very un-Bohemian) Bleecker Street. At the age of six, Julia was back in Vermont and given the run of her fa-

ther's large library, newly installed in a house he had had built four miles up the Otter River from Middlebury. The house had been constructed not for Julia, but for her new stepmother, a woman of culture and refinement. Even young as she was, Julia loved to spend hours in that library, not only to read, but also to write stories and poems.

The increasingly prominent and influential Mr. Ripley involved himself in the earliest marble quarrying in Rutland, Vermont (Ripley and Barnes Marble Works). He produced two sons, Edward and William, Jr., both of whom became Union Army generals in the Civil War. In 1868, their father, William, financed the building of the Rutland Opera House on Merchants Row. When this first structure burned down in 1875, he had it rebuilt.

Julia's education, unlike the education of her stepbrothers, was the hit-or-miss instruction that was usual at the time for well-bred young ladies: enrollment in a small boarding school in Plattsburg, New York, then some time spent in Middlebury at the Shurtliff homestead before her attendance at the town's Female Seminary. When she went on to spend a winter at a small academy in Rutland, Vermont, she was the only girl who recited Latin with boys preparing for college. But no college for her.

There was no doubt among her various instructors that young Julia was very bright and highly motivated to learn. Her writing from memory on a blackboard the long list of English kings from Julius Caesar to William IV without a mistake was a feat that became a local legend. It was mentioned in 1910 when she was awarded an honorary doctorate at Middlebury College. She accepted the degree in characteristic modesty as a tribute to all women of her generation.

Being exceptional and admired agreed with this distinctive female writer who was held in awe all her life by her associates and friends, as well as by a wide public; but any public display that singled her out appalled her. Unlike most published writers today, she never traveled to read from her work in public. She never sought to teach. With determination, she was always to lead the private, somewhat sequestered married life that suited her. She wished first to be a deferential wife, a devoted mother and a kind friend. All the while, her increasingly distinguished career as a writer of poetry and prose was an aspect of her life she downplayed.

When she was a child, little Miss Ripley often hid her efforts at writing. She was an avid reader and wrote with great industry, inspired by the lofty examples of the classics. But Julia Ripley at 22 was unpublished and unknown when, on February 22, 1847, she married a Vermont lawyer named Seneca M. Dorr (1820-1884), later Judge Dorr. As a politician, he would serve as President of the Vermont Senate from 1865-66. It was

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he who urged her to publish. Shortly after their marriage, he engineered her first publication by sending one of her poems, without her knowledge, to the *Union Magazine*. The next year, 1848, her first published short story, "Isabel Leslie," won a \$100 prize. She would go on to be published regularly in all the best American magazines.

At first, Mrs. Seneca Dorr published her work under pseudonyms, ever eager to avoid being noticed in public. A lady of her day was defined as a private, happily domesticated woman—saintly and virginal, the often-lauded Victorian "angel of the home." Julia Caroline Ripley Dorr would be a lady, first and foremost. Only later did she relax, allowing her real name to appear as the author of her many books.

The Dorr's first lived in a manor house in Ghent, New York, and over the course of their 37-year marriage, they would produce five children. After their third child was born in New York, they decided to move west. Before making the long trip, they paused to say goodbye in Rutland. And, big surprise, they stayed there for the rest of their lives. The home they built on the banks of Otter Creek was an impressive mansion with gardens, known as "The Maples."

There Julia Dorr wrote prolifically. She produced not just poems and stories, but several novels and even two volumes of marital advice. How she managed this while bringing up five children would be a mystery even after taking into account her hiring plenty of servants to help. After the death of her husband in 1884, she allowed herself to travel and write travelogues—a particularly good one is about Bermuda. She befriended many of the chief American writers of her day: Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Edmund Clarence Stedman, William Dean Howells, and Oliver Wendell Holmes. Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose memory at the end of his life often failed him, never forgot her or the view of gentle Vermont hills from her "piazza."

Julia Dorr was enamored of the all the arts and had been introduced to all the highest and best expressions of classic culture. She saw it as her duty to bring the joys of learning to her fellow citizens—and founded the Rutland Free Library in 1886, adding to its books her husband's formidable collection of political literature. (A statue of Julia Dorr stands in front of the Rutland Free Library today.) She also organized the ladies of her church, and with them she headed up projects and programs for social betterment.

An accomplished and well-published writer in several genres, and widely read, Julia Dorr after her death (at 87, on January 18, 1913) became chiefly known as a poet. Yet her poems have lasted only as an acknowledged part of American literary history, but in the wider world, they are obscure. Who outside of academia has heard of Julia Dorr? All her books are rare. And why? Why isn't she being read today along with her many illustrious

friends? Has she become ignored because she was a female poet? (Hardly likely, because feminist scholarship in the past fifty years up to now is avid to publicize women writers.) And as a writer who spent most of her life in Vermont, shouldn't she join the ranks of the state's most celebrated poets?

The reason for the decline of interest in the poems of Julia Dorr lies in what happened to poetry in 1855. That's the year a book of poems entitled *Leaves of Grass* was published. Its author, Walt Whitman, would become the early herald of free verse. Emerson was the famous writer, lecturer and literary critic who lamented how much of America's poetry seemed imitative, like English poetry warmed over. Where was the distinctive American voice willing to take on American subjects? Everyone else interested in American literature seemed to be saying Whitman's work was anathema, and not poetry at all, but Emerson was his defender.

One trouble with American poetry in the nineteenth century was indeed that it was indistinguishable from the poetry being produced in England. Take this one by Julia Dorr:

Looking Toward Spain

*I stand on a rocky headland
Far out in the deep blue main,
And only its tremulous splendor
Lies between me and Spain.*

*Behind me the pine-tree forest,
Singing the old refrain;
Before, the exulting billows
And the far dreamland of Spain,*

*On the red rocks dash the breakers;
Their spray is a blinding rain;
My hair is wet with the sea-foam,
But the wind blows straight from Spain.*

*Hark to the roar and the tumult
And the cries like a soul in pain!
But beyond is the calm and the silence,
And the beautiful land of Spain.*

*Afar, on the dim horizon,
I watch with a yearning vain
Yon fair ship gallantly sailing
Straight on to the ports of Spain.*

*And it's oh, for the splendid castles,
And the light on tower and fane,
And the mystical, magical glory
Of the marvelous realm of Spain!*

*Night falls on the rocky headland
As day and its splendors wane,
While o'er the dark waters the moonlight
Is building a bridge to Spain.*

*But I think with an infinite longing
Of the hopes that no longer reign,*

Cont. next page - Dorr

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*Of the dreams that are past fulfillment,
Unless on thy shores, O Spain!*

Imagine Mrs. Dorr in Rutland at her writing table. Why isn't she writing about the place where she's living? Indeed, a reader can thumb through most of Dorr's published work and not find any mention of Vermont. Some of the titles of poems published in the same book as "Looking Toward Spain" are these: "When Spenser Died," "Hubert de Burgh," "A Knight-Errant," "After the Magnificat," "In Manus Tuas, Domine!" An exception might be "The Death-Song of the Hemlock," but it is one fervent exhortation after another as the Hemlock tree, lamenting, declares he and his kind will last longer than the human beings who admired but felled him.

Julia Dorr seemed determined to beat the English poets at their own game, doing so by creating poetry of such superb technique about lofty subjects that speakers of the English language will hardly be able to tell it has been written by an American.

The language Dorr used in her poems was most often exhortatory, breathless, and dramatic—a mannered speech conventional in the poetry of her era. Her phrasings were far from anything colloquial or everyday, and were meant to be so. Hers is "heightened speech," the very definition of "poetical." These first lines collected at random from Dorr's poems make the point:

"O strong young runner in the race of life..."
"Together still, old comrade—thou and I!"
"Deep in the crowded Sepulchre of Kings..."
"Oh, why do you cry, little maid, little maid?"
"Dost thou remember how that one fair day..."
"Yea, we are mortal! We are but as moths..."
"A slender crescent in the opal west..."
"Like some great Merlin of an elder day..."
"Not alone the trembling stars..."
"The whole wide earth, O poet, is thy dower..."

To examine her language is to notice how very far it is from everyday American speech, with its grammatical convolutions ("we are but as moths") and its ornate, old-fashioned vocabulary ("thy dower").

By severe contrast, Walt Whitman was a poet determined to push aside such language, and the voice of the poet he creates, who is speaking the opening lines from his *Leaves of Grass* is the antithesis of what Dorr and her renowned associates—Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes, and Lowell—admired:

*I celebrate myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.*

*I loaf and invite my soul,
I lean and loaf at my ease...
observing a spear of summer grass.*

Here are lengths of line not determined by any metrical scheme. Here attention is paid to the rhythm of words, but not to rhymes, either forced or unforced. Whitman will make good use of repetition, and he sets himself the task of rooting his work in what is plain, unvarnished, and as common as...grass. There is nothing didactic in his book—no life's lessons drawn, no moral precepts praised, no intention to turn his readers' minds to higher thoughts and purposes. An almost religious ecstasy he aims to inspire, but not religious faith. His frank acknowledgement of human sexuality was the final kiss-off to his prim contemporaries.

Julia Dorr was 30 years old when Whitman's scandalously different poetry burst onto the American scene. Her work was never influenced by his. Certainly she was aware of it—*Leaves of Grass* was both a marvel and an abomination. Everyone of literary ambition read it, mostly damned and rarely praised it, and was put on notice by it that American poetry was going to change and astound.



Walt Whitman, circa 1855 Julia Caroline Ripley Dorr, 1900

There is a remarkable contrast in their self-presentation as poets. On the frontispiece of Whitman's first book, in an era of exquisite formal dress, of men in top hats and tailcoats, he is depicted in a loose, open shirt and a laborer's trousers, slouching and confident, even impudent. Julia C. R. Dorr, in a photograph appearing on the frontispiece of her book *Last Poems*, is every inch the lady—secure within a long tradition, patrician and refined.

American poetry would become the modern poetry that has anointed female poets of far more heft than Julia Dorr. Emily Dickinson, after her work was finally discovered and shared, would last well into our twenty-first century and be hailed as a modernist before her time. But Julia never saw the future. She was technically an expert, supremely adept at writing strictly formal, conven-

Dorr - Cont. from previous page

tional verse and very satisfied with topics familiar to Queen Victoria. Her mood was instinctive optimism. Even her poems of grief are serene. Among her favorite words was *splendor*. Her favorite form, until the end of her days, remained the sonnet:

The Oratory (a sonnet)

*In the high-vaulted temple of my heart
There is an oratory thine alone—
A sweet, hushed, sacred chantry all thine own.
There do I fly when I would be apart
To dream dear dreams, for there I know thou art,
Albeit I see thee not. There is thy throne;
There thou art crowned, and as at altar-stone
Fain would I kneel and let the day depart!
While this remains I cannot lose thee, dear.
Though countless centuries between us roll,
Though earth dissolves, and planets disappear,
And all the splendor of the starry scroll
Dies out of heaven, what room is there for fear?
Love still shall answer love, soul call to soul.*



Here are other samples of her work.

With A Wedding-Gift

*Long years ago, the legends say—
It may have been in far Cathay,
In Kurdistan, or Samarcand,
Agra, Tabriz, or Saraband,
Where palm-trees wave, and golden showers
Fall from the sweet acacia bowers—
Heir to the Worker's heritage,
From year to year, from youth to age,
In a low chamber's cloistered gloom
A weaver sat before his loom.*

*I know not if the tale be true;
As told to me, I tell to you.
Above his loom this pattern hung,
Designed by one who died unsung,
Unknown, unheralded, his fame
Not even the shadow of a name;
But day by day the weaver wrought
Embodying the creative thought,
Until his own dream grew more real
And perfect than the fair ideal.*

*So at our loom of life we weave
From sunlit morn to darkening eve.
We toss the shuttle to and fro, —
The varied colors come and go, —
A bright thread here, a shadow there,
Perchance strange tangles everywhere.
Yet fear not, faint not! He whose hand
Follows the Master's high command
Shall weave a web more perfect far
Than even the dreams of angels are!*

An Answer to a Valentine

*My true love sent me a valentine
All on a winter's day,
And suddenly the cold gray skies
Grew soft and warm as May!
The snowflakes changed to apple blooms,
A pink-white fluttering crowd,
And on the swaying maple boughs
The robins sang aloud.*

*For moaning wintry winds I heard
The music sweet and low
Of morning-glory trumpets
Through which the soft airs blow.
O love of mine, my Valentine!
This is no winter day—*

Cont. next page - Dorr

Dorr - Cont. from previous page

*For Love rules all the calendars,
And Love knows only May!*

When I Sleep

*When I sleep I do not know
Where my soul makes haste to go,
Through wide spaces faring forth,
To the South or to the North,
Faring East or faring West,
Or on what mysterious quest.*

*When I sleep my sealed eyes
Ope to marvels of surprise!
Buried hopes come back to me,
Long-lost loves again I see,
Present, past, and future seem
But as one, the while I dream.*

*When I sleep I wake again,
Wake to love and joy and pain;
Wake with quickened sense to share
Earth's beatitude of prayer;
Wake to know that night is done
And a new, glad day begun!*

The Danforth Library of Barnard regretfully must confess that it does not own any copies of books by Julia C. R. Dorr. Her books are out of print and rare. If you should find that among your books you happen to own one of hers, please consider donating such a book to the Danforth Library. We promise to give it a good home. Thank you.

**THANK YOU FROM THE
SILVER LAKE PROGRESSIVE CLUB**

The members of the Silver Lake Progressive Club (SLPC) wish to thank our wonderful community for supporting our 2023 annual scholarship fundraiser. And we thank those who provided homemade baked goods and coffee at this year's Town Meeting: Tess Campbell, Regi Carr, Barb Kelley, and the Abracadabra Coffee Company.

All graduating seniors have been sent an invitation to apply for the 2023 scholarship. Any senior who has been a resident of Barnard for at least one year is eligible to apply, including those who are home schooled or who attend private school. The application deadline is Monday April 3, 2023. Recipients are announced each year at Class Night. For more information, please contact Barb Kelley at 457-2719 or email her at bkelly321@gmail.com.

*Thank you!
The Members of the Silver Lake Progressive Club*

**AUSTRALIAN VOTE, RESULTS
TOWN MEETING MARCH 7, 2023**

<u>Moderator</u>		<u>School Director</u>	
Paul Doton	7	Carin Ewing Park	78
Blank	76	M. Dembinski	1
		Blank	4
<u>Proposed Budget</u>		<u>Treasurer Salary</u>	
For	64	For	68
Against	17	Against	8
Blank	2	Blank	7
<u>Clerk</u>		<u>Treasurer</u>	
Calista Brennan	18	Calista Brennan	17
D. Masterson	2	D. Masterson	1
Rayna Bishop	1	Patty Hasson	1
Diane Rainey	1	Blank	63
Blank	60	Spoiled	1
Spoiled	1		
<u>MS/HS Design Financing</u>		<u>MS/HS Heating System</u>	
For	58	For	67
Against	22	Against	13
Blank	3	Blank	3
<u>MS/HS KES Roof Financing</u>			
For	63		
Against	16	Total Ballots	
Blank	4	Cast In Barnard	83

LOCAL CRYPTOGRAM

A cryptogram is a code in which one letter is substituted for another. For example, the word "Church" could be written BWMSBW. The letter B would be the letter C and would be so throughout the entire message. In this message F = M. The solution is found by trial and error. The CRYPTOGRAM answer is on the last page.

"I KUFFUV FATSICD SJIS
QDUQWD FICD LJDV SYXAVB SU
EDTABV TUFDSJAVB
KUFQWDSWX GUUWQYUUG, AT
SU OVEDYDTSAFISD SJD
AVBDVOASX UG KUFQWDS
GUUWT."
-EUOBWIT IEIFT

THE PLANNING COMMISSION meets on the Monday prior to the first Wednesday of every month at 7 PM in the Town Office.

BARNARD CONSERVATION COMMISSION meets the second Monday of the month, 7:00pm, Town Hall.

BEES MEETINGS are held at 6:30pm on the 2nd Thursday of each month in the library at the school.

DANFORTH LIBRARY HOURS: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, 3:00 - 5:00 pm, Saturdays 10:00 am to Noon. ECFiber Wi-Fi. Contact us: phone: 802-234-9408. Email: charlesdanforthlibrary@gmail.com.

SELECTBOARD meets the first and third Wednesday of the month at the Town offices at 7:00pm.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR, Rob Ramrath, selectboard@barnardvt.us, 234-2911 x 2, Cell 603-762-5280. By phone at any time, in person by appointment.

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR, Rob Ramrath, zoning@barnardvt.us, 234-2911 x 2, Cell 603-762-5280. By phone at any time, in person by appointment.

TOWN CLERK office hours are Monday—Wednesday, 8:00am—3:30pm. Public access is restricted. Call 234-9211 for an appointment.

THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD meets the third Thursday of the month at 7:00pm at the Barnard Town Hall as necessary.

THE BARNARD ENERGY COMMITTEE meets on the 2nd Tuesday of the month, 7:00pm at the Town Hall

BARNARD GENERAL STORE, Monday-Saturday: 7am-7pm, Sundays: 8am-6pm.
<https://www.facebook.com/barnardgeneralstore>

BARNARD LISTSERV: to subscribe please send an email to: barnard-subscribe@lists.vitalcommunities.org

RECYCLING Click [here](#) for Hours and Regulations

THE BARNARD INN is running a "Feeding Neighbors & Sustaining Community" campaign. Purchase an e-Gift Card and in turn the chefs will feed neighbors. Whole chicken dinners (serves 4-6) and individual sized meals to help feed Vermonters in need. Thank you and please stay safe. E-Gift Cards are available at www.barnardinn.com.

ECFIBER Governing Board meets the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7pm via. Zoom. Contact the clerk of the District. secretary@ecfiber.net, for meeting information or visit <https://www.ecfiber.net/virtual-meetings/>

HISTORICAL SOCIETY Programs to be announced. Questions? Email: historicalbarnard1761@gmail.com

DELECTABLE MOUNTAIN QUILTERS (DMQ) meet the 1st Tuesday of every month at the Bethel Library from 1-3pm. Contact: Mary Croft 802-763-7074

HOME ENERGY UPGRADE

INFORMATION NOW AVAILABLE ON-LINE

The Energy Committee kicked off the Home Energy Upgrade campaign on March 1. If you missed that event, you read the handout on the energy page of the town website. Click [here](#) to view the PDF.

How do you take action? The first step is to schedule a home energy audit. An audit report will give you a roadmap of changes that will make your home more energy efficient.

You can use any auditor who is on the Efficiency Excellence Network; full details are in the handout. The Barnard Bonus offers a \$500 rebate to any resident on this cost.

Earthshare, an auditor with whom we've had a good experience, is now scheduling audits in June.

We anticipate that Efficiency Vermont's incentives will go up in mid-summer. In addition, the Barnard Bonus offers up to \$2,000 to middle income residents when you make upgrades recommended in the audit report.

All of these funds are available on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Now is a great time to act.

You can pick up a print copy of the handout at the Town Clerk's office (open M-W) or contact us and we'll mail one to you: BarnardBonus@icloud.com.

Thanks for your interest! — Barnard Energy Committee

GLAD RAGS SPRING SALE 2023

The Glad Rags Spring Sale will be held on Friday - Sunday, April 21 - 23 at the Masonic Lodge in Woodstock.

The hours are: Friday April 21 2 PM - 6 PM
Saturday April 22 9 AM - 1 PM
Sunday April 23 10 AM - 1 PM
(Everything is half-price on Sunday)

The Fall Sale will be held on Friday - Sunday, September 22 - 24

For more information visit <https://www.gladrags.org> or <https://www.facebook.com/groups/145529065206>

If you have questions about donations visit <https://www.gladrags.org/donate> or call Kitty at 802-457-2182

CRYPTOGRAM ANSWER

"A common mistake that people make when trying to design something completely foolproof, is to underestimate the ingenuity of complete fools."

- Douglas Adams