

# SIMSBURY

## Genealogical and Historical Research Library

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### The Simsbury Free Library

#### The Original Trustees: Part 5

*When the Board of Trustees for the Simsbury Free Library met for the first time on August 24, 1874, their first act was to elect Amos F. Eno president of the board in absentia. Five days later the board accepted Mr. Eno's written resignation from the post. He never held any other office nor is there any record of his ever attending a meeting, but he remained a member the board until his death forty-one years later.<sup>1</sup>*

#### **Amos F. Eno (1836-1915)**

Amos F. Eno was the first of Amos Richards Eno and Lucy Jane Phelps Eno's nine children. At the time of his birth in 1836, his father was twenty-five and this mother, eighteen.<sup>2</sup> Growing up he would witness his father's remarkable rise in the New York City business world, from part owner of a dry goods store to multi-millionaire real estate investor.

He, himself, was part owner of a New York business that sold silks and dress goods: Eno, Van Buren & Valentine. The company did a great deal of its business with countries in South America and with states in the South. During the presidential campaign of 1860, he was faced with the prospect of losing the lucrative Southern market if the North and South went to war. Eno, then 29 years old, supported the splinter Constitutional Union Party which strove to preserve the union.<sup>3</sup> However, Eno was a member of the Seventh Regiment of the New York National Guard, which responded promptly to President Lincoln's call for troops after hostilities broke out in April 1861.

According to the Seventh Regiment's records, Mr. Eno "entered the United States service, July 28, 1862, as Aide-de-Camp on staff of John S. Phelps, Military Governor of Arkansas. November 10, 1862, [he] was appointed and commissioned Adjutant-General of Arkansas, with rank of Colonel."<sup>4</sup> Military Governor John Smith Phelps was Mr. Eno's mother's older brother. At the start of the Civil War Mr. Phelps had resigned his office as a representative from Missouri to the U.S. Congress. He then raised a regiment and fought in the Battle of Pea Ridge before being named to his Arkansas post.<sup>5</sup>

The post of Military Governor of Arkansas was abolished a year after Mr. Eno arrived there. He volunteered as an aide to General Peter Osterhaus during General Ulysses S. Grant's Vicksburg Campaign and took part in the battles of Champion's Hill and Big Black River Bridge. He also was in charge of raising three Arkansas regiments of white troops.<sup>6</sup>

After the war's end he no doubt shared in the jubilation of victory as it was celebrated in New York, especially at his father's popular white marble Fifth Avenue Hotel. At the hotel in November 1865, General Grant was given a gala reception attended by a host of civilian and military dignitaries. The *New York Times* reported that the guest list included seventy generals, five admirals, senators, clergymen, academics and more.<sup>7</sup>

Mr. Eno's business had failed during the war when his Southern clients ceased to deal with him and to pay outstanding bills. He had to declare bankruptcy and settle with his creditors as best he could. The bankruptcy proceedings nullified his obligation to repay his debts, but his own strict conscience did not. When he became successful again, some thirty-five years later, he sent checks to all whom he had owed money when his business went under. This amounted to more than \$500,000 with four percent interest.<sup>8</sup> Always a very private man, he was annoyed when this fact became public.<sup>9</sup>

When the corrupt "Boss" Tweed controlled New York City's government, Mr. Eno and his father became active in groups advocating reform. In 1870 he served on a committee of Fifth Avenue residents who opposed repaving the avenue with wood, a move that the *New York Times* called a "swindle."<sup>10</sup> But in 1874 he supported Tammany Hall when it charged a United States Commissioner with "arbitrary, partisan, and improper conduct as a judicial officer" during an election.<sup>11</sup> An amendment to the New York constitution occupied his time in 1877. At least one of the meetings of influential men like Elbridge Gerry, Theodore Roosevelt and Cornelius Vanderbilt who supported the amendment was held in the Fifth Avenue Hotel. They proposed that every municipality have a Board of Finance, an advisory board with veto power, and that only property owners and renters be eligible to elect the members of the board.<sup>12</sup>

In 1882 he and his father helped form The Land Transfer Reform Association of the City of New York with the idea that "if real estate could be transferred as easily and quickly as personal property the transactions in real estate would more than double, while property itself would increase in value."<sup>13</sup> Real estate investing was the business in which the two Eno men excelled.

The 1880s brought the Eno family two misfortunes. The first was the death of the mother of the family, Lucy Jane Phelps Eno, on November 14, 1882. The second ordeal began in 1884 when a scandal broke around Amos F. Eno's brother John C. Eno, who as president of the Second National Bank, sustained great losses in the stock market while improperly using the bank's funds. The bank's losses were covered by his father, who suffered greatly from the shock of his son's folly and from many years of uncertainty before the matter was settled.

Amos F. Eno's parents used the old Phelps home in Simsbury as their summer place, but by the mid-1880s he had begun to summer in Saratoga Springs, New York.<sup>14</sup> The social whirl and especially the racetracks appealed to him. He was reputed to be an excellent judge of racehorses.<sup>15</sup> Mr. Eno eventually owned a house in Saratoga Springs, which he called "The Gables" and which he kept the rest of his life.

Back in New York City, along with opera impresario Oscar Hammerstein I, the Astors and the Goelets, he became embroiled in a controversy over planting trees in Long Acre. The Department of Public Works opposed planting trees and the citizens thought trees would be more appealing than the pervading asphalt.<sup>16</sup> The name of Long Acre Square was changed in 1904 to Times Square.



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Late in 1897 Mr. Eno bought himself a fine old four-story house on the southwest corner of Fifth Avenue and Tenth Street.<sup>17</sup> It was across the street from the Episcopal Church of the Ascension, where he was a member, and two blocks north of Washington Square. Before long he began to plant trees and to buy nearby properties to discourage the encroachment of business and high rise buildings, and when the Washington Square Association was formed in 1907 he became a member.<sup>18</sup> It was to this house that his father came to live toward the end of his life. Amos Richards Eno died in his son's home on February 21, 1898.

The father's estate was valued at over \$20 million, or more than \$468 million in today's dollars. He left his oldest son more than \$1.25 million, including the summer estate in Simsbury. Mr. Eno made a private arrangement with his sister, Antoinette Eno Wood, so that she would have life use of the house in Simsbury. He also owned a 303 acre timber lot in town that burned in May 1899 when a spark from the locomotive of a Central New England train caused a fire. He sued the railroad for damages. A Simsbury grand list valued his holding in town at \$77,190.<sup>19</sup> Now and then he would be drawn to town on family matters, as in 1903 when he served as an honorary pallbearer during the funeral of his aunt, Mary Eno Humphrey.<sup>20</sup>

From the time he bought his house at 32 Fifth Avenue until his death, both his business and social activities regularly were reported in the newspapers. He bought numerous parcels of real estate and rarely sold or became involved in construction projects. However, in 1903 and 1908 he commissioned the prominent architect C.P.H. Gilbert to design new facades for his buildings at 13-15 South William Street and 57 Stone Street, the first one being the building that housed his own real estate office. The *Guide to New York City Landmarks* says, "Gilbert's picturesque neo-Dutch Renaissance design, with its stepped gables and strapwork detail, is a nostalgic reminder of the area's colonial heritage."<sup>21</sup>

Mr. Eno enjoyed going to the opera, attending and giving dances and dinner parties and hosting the Neighborhood Amusement Club. Members of this club met in each others homes and enjoyed a variety of entertainments. On one occasion Mr. Eno chose to have music and vaudeville for his neighbors.<sup>22</sup> Mr. Eno also belonged to the Society of War Veterans of the Seventh Regiment, National Guard of New York and the Downtown Association and held memberships in the Century Club, Union League, Manhattan Club, Turf and Field Club, Lamb's Club and the Jekyll Island Club.

Mr. Eno's reputation as a philanthropist was well established. Back in 1867 the annual report for the Demilt Dispensary, which provided health care for the poor on New York's East Side, listed him as one of its managers and as serving on the real estate and visiting committees. Both he and his father had become life members of this charitable institution by 1875.<sup>23</sup> A few days after Mr. Eno's death, an article about him in the Sunday magazine in the *New York Times* said that he had given away millions of dollars during his lifetime, but abhorred being asked for donations. It gave several examples of his balking when asked, including this one:

At one time there was a certain society formed by the women members of a church he had attended. Mr. Eno evidenced an interest in this society and instead of watchfully waiting, one of the women chiefly interested approached Mr. Eno and solicited a contribution. He reached in his desk and drew forth a check which it appears he had made out only that day and which he intended mailing immediately, exhibited it to the woman and tore it up in her presence, declaring at the same time that he would never contribute to the society. Nor did he.<sup>24</sup>

Toward the end of his life Mr. Eno began to give gifts of property and cash to the General

Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen of the City of New York. Along with a bequest in his will, his total donations to this organization for the educational and cultural betterment of workingmen approached \$2 million. The Society today recognizes him as one of its two major donors, the other being Andrew Carnegie.<sup>25</sup>

Mr. Eno's life ended in his Fifth Avenue home on October 21, 1915, but his story and his connection with the Simsbury Free Library continued. Shortly after his death it was widely reported that he had left an estate valued at \$8 million.<sup>26</sup> About \$7,754,000 of his estate was left in designated amounts to relatives, friends, servants and educational and cultural organizations. Columbia University was to receive the residual of about \$300,000. After his estate had been more thoroughly appraised, however, the true value was estimated to be more than \$12.5 million. That meant that the Columbia University, would receive a residual of more than \$5 million, far more than any other beneficiary.

Mr. Eno's relatives went to court to have the 1915 will declared invalid and a will that he signed in 1914 probated. The earlier will left the relatives a much larger share of his estate and did not mention Columbia at all. To invalidate the 1915 will they needed to prove some legal flaw; for example, that Mr. Eno had been mentally incompetent when he signed the will or that he had been improperly influenced by someone.<sup>27</sup>

About 300 witnesses testified during the sensational ten-week courtroom battle. They included relatives, longtime friends and business associates, his doctor and his household staff. Mr. Eno's former valet was granted leave by the French government to come from the trenches during the Verdun offensive to testify. Expert witnesses were called by both sides in the protracted trial, as well as mere acquaintances like cab drivers. After only four hours of deliberation the jury declared the 1915 will invalid.

Columbia University appealed the jury's verdict and it was set aside by the Appellate Division of the New York Supreme Court, which ordered a second trial. The second trial commenced in 1922 on January 3 and ended February 17. After ten hours of deliberation the jury found that Mr. Eno was mentally incapacitated when he signed the 1915 will.<sup>28</sup> Ten days latter the judge who heard the case set aside the verdict, setting off an "epistolary bombardment" from the jurymen, who were indignant at being overruled.<sup>29</sup> Columbia University prepared to go to court again, but by this time the total cost of the two trials had exceeded \$1 million, making it the most costly contest of a will in the history of the city.<sup>30</sup> On the eve of the third trial, the two sides agreed on a settlement.

After all parties to the estate agreed in 1922 to a private, out-of-court settlement, accountings and distributions followed. Many people in Simsbury had been dismayed that Mr. Eno had not bequeathed anything to the institutions in town usually favored by the Eno family, most notably the Simsbury Free Library.<sup>31</sup> So the letter that the library's trustees received in May 1924 must have come as a welcome surprise.

In his 1915 will Eno had set aside \$25,000 for his funeral expenses and the erection of a tomb. At the time of his death his funeral was held at his home at 32 Fifth Avenue at 10:00 a.m., after which a special train took mourners to an afternoon burial service in Simsbury Cemetery. Mr. Eno, who had never married, was interred in the Eno mausoleum with his parents, an infant brother and two younger sisters.<sup>32</sup> During the settlement of the estate seven years later it apparently was decided not to build a separate tomb for Mr. Eno. That left a remainder of \$23,875.05 in the funeral fund that reverted to Columbia University.



Some person or persons contacted the university on behalf of the Simsbury Free Library. There are many likely candidates. Among them was William Phelps Eno, an internationally renowned expert in the field of traffic regulation and his only remaining brother, who had filled the vacancy on the library board caused by his death. His only remaining sister, Antoinette Eno Wood, had just built an addition to the library building. His nephew Henry Lane Eno, a research associate in psychology at Princeton University, had earned an LL.D. degree at Columbia. His nephew Gifford Pinchot, a frequent visitor in Simsbury, had, shortly after the close of the second trial, been elected governor of Pennsylvania.

Whoever it was who influenced the university officials, they sent the library trustees a letter stating that the library would receive a check for the amount of the remainder. It said, "The Trustees of Columbia University having been advised of Mr. Eno's great interest in the Simsbury Free Library during his lifetime, desire to donate this sum for the purpose of a permanent fund to be known as the Amos F. Eno Endowment Fund, the income of which is to be used for the care and maintenance of the Library."<sup>33</sup>

by Mary Jane Springman

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#### Notes

1. *Original Minute Book of Trustees' Meetings of Simsbury Free Library*, (photocopy), 5, 7, *passim*.
2. The Phelps genealogy published in 1899 by Oliver Seymour Phelps and Andrew T. Servin and the Eno genealogy published in 1973 by Douglas C. Richardson give New York City as his birthplace. His obituary in the *New York Times* (October 22, 1915, p. 11) and the *Hartford Courant* (October 22, 1915, p. 12) give his birthplace as Simsbury. The *Farmington Valley Herald* (October 29, 1915, p. 3) gives no birthplace.
3. *New York Times*, September 18, 1860, 1, 3.
4. *History of the Seventh Regiment, National Guard, State of New York, During the War of the Rebellion....* by William Swinton (Fields, Osgood, & Co.: New York and Boston, 1870), 471.
5. John Smith Phelps was elected governor of Missouri in 1876.
6. Swinton, 471. Fred C. Ainsworth, and Joseph W. Kirkley, *The War of the Rebellion, A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series 3, vol. 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1899), 474. "The Seventh Regiment: A Brief History of Its Services," *New York Times*, October 5, 1874, 4. This article shows Amos F. Eno among those with the rank of captain. However, he was generally referred to as Colonel Eno.
7. *New York Times*, Nov. 19, 1865, p. 1.
8. *Hartford Courant*, Nov. 30, 1915; 1.
9. Obituary of Amos F. Eno, *New York Times*, Oct. 22, 1915. 11.
10. *New York Times*, March 26, 1870; 2.
11. *New York Times*, July 21, 1874; 2; September 9, 1874; 2.
12. *New York Times*, Oct. 23, 1877; 1.
13. *New York Times*, June 1, 1882; 2.
14. *New York Times*, August 15, 1884, 4; August 15, 1885, 3.
15. *New York Times*, June 29, 1916, 11.
16. *New York Times*, August 13, 1897, 15, 10; August 15, 1897, 11.
17. *New York Times*, December 2, 1897, 10.
18. Gerald McFarland, *Inside Greenwich Village: A New York City Neighborhood, 1898-1918* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001, 2005), 105.
19. *Hartford Courant*, January 19, 1916, 22.
20. *Hartford Courant*, November 19, 1903, 3.

## SGHRL Member Publishes A Valuable Genealogical Resource A Guide to Simsbury Residents in the 1930 U.S. Census

Jean Perreault spent three years compiling data about the 3624 Simsbury men, women and children enumerated in the 1930 U.S. Census. Along the way she encountered some obstacles. First, she discovered that seventeen names had been partially obscured when the original census was microfilmed prior to its destruction, so she researched until she found all but one of the missing names. Also, while reviewing census information from the popular Ancestry and Heritage Quest on-line indices, she found frequent discrepancies, both major and minor, in either first or last names. Ultimately she corrected over a thousand names.

Those challenges behind her, Mrs. Perreault searched numerous sources for more information about each person. She pored over vital records, military and church records, obituaries, cemetery inscriptions, the social security death index, city directories, annual reports and more. Finally, she compiled all she had discovered in her new 469-page book. It is an invaluable source of personal and family history for anyone researching townspeople in Simsbury in 1930.

### Footprints Across Connecticut From Simsbury 1930 Census

by Jean E. Perreault

For sale at SGHRL for \$31.95, plus \$1.92 CT sales tax

21. Andrew Dolkart and Matthew A. Postal, *Guide to New York City Landmarks*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2003), 7.

22. *New York Times*, April 11, 1901, 9.

23. The Demilt Dispensary of the City of New-York annual reports for 1867-1875 published by George F. Nesbitt & Co. of New York, NY, *passim*.

24. *New York Times*, November 7, 1915, SM14.

25. *New York Times*, November 7, 1915, SM15; Lily Koppel, "Bringing to Light the History of the Laborers Who Built New York City," *New York Times* November 8, 2006 at [www.nytimes.com/2006/09/08/nyregion/08trades.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/08/nyregion/08trades.html).

26. *New York Times*, October 29, 1915, 9; *Hartford Courant*, October 29, 1915, 16.

27. *New York Times*, November 30, 7.

28. *New York Times*, July 20, 1916, 1.

29. *New York Times*, April 15, 1923, 1.

30. *New York Times*, March 14, 1922, 10.

31. *Hartford Courant*, October 31, 1915, 1; January 2, 1916, 4. This article referred to Simsbury as the town of Mr. Eno's birth.

32. Joyce A. Cahill, comp., *Simsbury Cemetery Gravestone Inscriptions, Simsbury Connecticut, 1688-2000; Volume I: The Old Section* (Simsbury: Simsbury Free Library, 2000) 98. The dates engraved on Amos F. Eno's tomb reveals that he was seventy-nine at the time of his death and that is the age that has become accepted. The obituaries published just after his death said he was eighty-one or in his eighty-second year.

33. Letter to A. T. Pattison, Esq., President, The Simsbury Free Library, Simsbury, Conn. from Frederick A. Goetze, Treasurer, Columbia University, May 6, 1924, in *Original Minute Book...* 108.

### Amos F. Eno: Benefactor of the New York Public Library

The collection of historical artifacts of 17th- to 19th-century New York that Amos F. Eno assembled during his life was hailed as one of the finest outside the New York Historical Society. Shortly after his death, one expert listed among its treasures the second earliest engraved view of New Amsterdam, a scene inserted at the foot of the large 1655 Visscher map.<sup>1</sup> In Mr. Eno's 1915 will he left the New York Public Library his entire collection, which included 336 volumes, eighty-four pamphlets, 192 framed prints, 138 unframed prints, maps, photographs and more, plus \$50,000. The bequest was honored in the 1922 settlement, except that the monetary amount apparently was reduced to \$40,000.<sup>2</sup>

The library mounted an exhibit of selected items from the Eno Collection in May 1925. Also that year, Frank Weitenkampf, Chief of Art and Prints Division, compiled the volume *The Eno Collection of New York City Views*. (To see eight of these prints, go to [www.nypl.org/digital](http://www.nypl.org/digital).)

The library's white marble building on Fifth Avenue was opened in 1911, so Mr. Eno certainly saw the column in Astor Hall on which his name would be chiseled. Today you can see it by mounting the steps between the guardian lions and entering through the revolving doors. "Amos F. Eno" is the nineteenth name on the column to your left and it is in the company of the such names as Astor, Lenox, Tilden, Carnegie and other major benefactors of the library.<sup>3</sup>

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1. *New York Times*, October 30, 1915, 8. Robert Fridenberg, a print dealer, is quoted.

2. *Report of the New York Public Library for 1921-1925* (New York: The Library, 1916-1949), 14., 17, 44.

3. During his life Mr. Eno also gave many prints to the historical society in Saratoga Springs, see the *New York Times*, January, 13, 1922, 32.

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### Amos F. Eno: A Literary Postscript

The courtroom battles over Amos F. Eno's estate have been the subject of many articles published both in scholarly journals and the popular press. No one wrote in a more engaging manner than Arthur Cheney Train of Perkins & Train, who represented Mr. Eno's nephew Henry Lane Eno. He gave the opening statement in the 1916 court case.

Attorney Train was a graduate of Harvard University and Harvard University Law School. He became an assistant district attorney in New York in 1901 and almost simultaneously began his writing career. He wrote everything from advertising copy to vaudeville, but was most prolific as a fiction writer. He was with the district attorney's office for fourteen years before going into private practice in 1915, just before he began the Eno estate trial. He left the field of law in 1922 and in his light-hearted memoir *My Day In Court*, he attributed his departure in part to the length and tedium of the Eno case. "I felt life was too short for that sort of thing," he wrote.<sup>1</sup>

In 1919 Mr. Train created his most popular character, wily old lawyer Ephraim Tutt. Lawyer Tutt starred in more than eighty short stories, most of them published in *The Saturday Evening Post*. The story that appeared in the September 10, 1927, issue is based on the Eno court case. It tells of an attempt by relatives to overturn on grounds of testamentary incapacity the will of Commodore Enoch Lithgow, who had left the bulk of his estate to cultural institutions and a shelter for homeless cats. The story, "When Tutt Meets Tutt," also was published in a short story collection of the same name.

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1. Arthur Cheney Train, *My Day In Court* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1939) 338. Francis M. Nevins, "Mr. Tutt's Jurisprudential Journey" *Legal Studies Forum*, vol. 9, no. 1 (1995) found at <http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu>.

### **Irene Welden Honored SGHRL With A Bequest**

Irene Welden, a longtime SGHRL supporter who died last December at the age of 103, remembered the library in her will. We have received five cartons of documents, photographs and artifacts which are very welcome additions to our archives. Librarian Allison Krug has completed cataloging the material, so it is now available to our patrons. Miss Welden collected information on all the branches of her family, some of whom were founders of Hartford. She also kept items that are invaluable records of Simsbury's history. Moreover, the library received a generous non-restricted monetary bequest from Miss Welden's estate

### **Save The Date: May 10, 2008**

Jean Nudd, Archivist for the National Archives and Records Administration in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, will speak at the library on May 10. She was unable because of illness to give her program at the library last spring. Please see the winter newsletter for more information.

### **Shopping For The Holidays?**

Come to the library to see the many fine books for sale. The two most recently published are the cookbook by Simsbury's Abigail Phelps Chapter, DAR, *Then and Now: 1907-2007, The Daughters Cook*, and Jean Perreault's reference book *Footprints Across Connecticut From Simsbury 1930 Census*.

### **New Full-Color Brochure For The Simsbury Free Library / SGHRL**

While you're in the library, pick up a new brochure to give to family members and friends who are interested in genealogy or the library's history. President of the Board of Trustees Jim Flynn is responsible for this handsome new publication.

**FIRST CLASS**

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