

“After the ceremony of the minister was over, the ceremony of the crowd began”

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“After the ceremony of the minister was over,  
the ceremony of the crowd began”:  
The Evolution of the Skimelton, a Rural New York  
Wedding Tradition

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*The Poughkeepsie Journal* published this notice in its “Weddings & Marriages” section on June 20, 1947:

Mr. and Mrs. Lorenzo Acker of Myers Corners, who were married last Saturday were given an old fashioned skimelton and party by neighbors and friends Wednesday night. The Couple were taken for a ride around the neighborhood and then through the streets of Wappingers after which all returned to the Acker home for the party. Games, music, and dancing were enjoyed followed by the refreshments.

“Old fashioned skimeltons” are largely forgotten today, but the social pages of newspapers up and down the Hudson River Valley once contained many announcements and accounts of them. But what, exactly, were they? From the newspaper reports, skimeltons were friendly surprise parties for newlyweds. Offered by neighbors and friends, they took place a few days after the wedding, often shortly after the couples returned from their honeymoons. Different and separate from a wedding reception or party, a skimelton was commonly held late at night—midnight or after—outside the newlyweds’ home. Neighbors might rouse the couple from their sleep by ringing bells, banging pots and pans, and blowing horns. Sometimes guns were fired. The ceremony might include hayrides, serenades, music, dancing and refreshments. Essentially, a skimelton was the way a village celebrated a new marriage and welcomed a new couple into the community.<sup>1</sup>

1. For representative accounts of twentieth century “skimeltons” see *Middletown Daily Herald* June 5, 1920; *Kingston Daily Freeman* September 1, 1927; *Poughkeepsie Journal*, July 12, 1947; *Catskill Mountain*

Nevertheless, this seemingly benign and festive twentieth-century bit of post-wedding revelry began as something much different and more explicitly threatening. Its origins lay in the nineteenth century, when skimeltons were employed not to celebrate, but to mock unpopular or incongruous marriages. As such, it was a charivari-type ritual aimed at those who violated the customs and norms of their communities. Although the word *charivari* is French, almost every European country had some sort of similar ritual of misrule that targeted, among others, abusive husbands, adulterers, and domineering wives. But one of the primary targets of the charivari was an unpopular marriage. People of the town or village, sometimes in costume or disguise, surrounded the home of the “offending couple,” banging pots and pans, blowing horns, and singing. Generally, these events were not punitive; a demand of a fine or treat was put forward by the charivari crowd in order to end the affair.<sup>2</sup>

In Europe, the charivari served many functions. On the one hand, the ritual was aimed primarily to control behavior that might not be illegal but was seen as a threat to the community’s social order. Depending upon the severity of the offense or the target, the charivari could range from a performance of “rough music” to a violent physical attack. But even if the goal of these rituals was to punish or censure, they were also carnivalesque events that included music, parades, street theater, and night-time revelry. Historians have observed that these activities and the festival-like atmosphere they created often helped to strengthen community bonds.<sup>3</sup> European immigrants brought their charivaris with them to North America and recreated the ritual throughout Canada, the Mississippi

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*News* December 23, 1955. For background on the ritual, see Julia Hull Winner, “A Skimelton” *New York Folklore Quarterly*, XX (June, 1964), 134–136; and also Alva L. Davis and Raven I. McDonald, “Shivaree: An Example of Cultural Diffusion,” *American Speech* Vol. 24, No. 4 (December 1949), 249–255.

2. There is a rich literature on the European charivari, starting with Violet Alford, “Rough Music or Charivari” *Folklore* 70 (1959), 505–518. See also Natalie Davis’s important work, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 106–117; Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Harper Collins, 1978), 180–200; Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 98–103. For many different types of European charivari rituals, such as *Katzenmusik* in Germany or *Scampanata* in Italy, among others, see Bryan Palmer, “Discordant Music: Charivaris and Whitecapping in Nineteenth Century North America,” *Labour/Le Travailleur* (1978), 14–17; and E.P. Thompson “Rough Music,” in his *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture* (New York: The New Press, 1993), 467–70.

3. Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, 98–99; Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Harper Collins, 1978), 180–200; Paul Gilje, “Republican Rioting” in William Pencak and Conrad E. Wright, eds., *Authority and Resistance in Early New York* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1988), 207–208. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, 97, 102.

Valley, and the American South, as well as the Great Plains and West. Although called “charivari” in Canada, the ritual went under a long list of names in various parts of the United States—shivaree, serenade, belling, horning, and tinpanning, among numerous other regional variations and inflections.<sup>4</sup>

The skimelton (also known as skimmington) was a form of charivari unique to the Mid-Atlantic region. It was performed in a limited geographic area centered in New York’s Hudson River Valley, and from there spreading into northeastern New Jersey and just over the New York border into northeastern Pennsylvania and southwestern Connecticut. Unlike European charivaris, which might target a whole range of misbehaviors, the targets of nineteenth-century skimeltons were first and foremost unpopular marriages: a widow or widower remarrying (or any remarriage, for that matter); a substantial age difference between bride and groom; someone marrying a partner from outside the village; or just an unpopular groom or bride.<sup>5</sup>

There were a variety of reasons why other members of the community might have problems with unions of these sorts. A marriage between older men and women would probably not produce children and might be viewed disparagingly as a result. In addition, some young men resented an

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4. Charivari was the term used in Canada, Louisiana, and other places settled by the French. The term “shivaree” (a linguistic variation on charivari) was used to describe similar occurrences in the western United States and parts of Canada, and also in western New York around the Great Lakes. In Canada, the pre-nineteenth century charivari generally targeted marriage miscreants, but by the 1830s, it was being used in political and labor struggles as well. See Allan Greer, “From Folklore to revolution: charivaris and the Lower Canadian rebellion of 1837,” *Social History* 15:1 (1990), 25–43, especially 26–27. See also Hull Winner, “A Skimeton,” 135; Davis and McDonald, “Shivaree” *American Speech*, 253–255; Mamie Meredith, “Belling the Bridal Couple in Pioneer Days,” *American Speech*, v.8, No.2 (April, 1933), 22–24; Miles Hanley, “Serenade in New England,” *American Speech*, v.8, No.2 (April, 1933), 24–26.

5. The term skimelton (or skimerton, skimmington) is peculiar to the Hudson Valley region and adjacent areas, stretching into northeastern New Jersey, northeastern Pennsylvania, and Fairfield County, Connecticut. See Hans Karuth, *A Word Geography of the Eastern United States*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1949), 18, 24, 78; and Miles Hanley, “Serenade in New England,” 24–26. The antecedent of the skimelton was an earlier ritual of community policing and public justice common in eighteenth-century America, called “riding skimmington.” Skimmingtons punished a wide range of offenses that challenged community norms or customs. Victims might be threatened with a “ride” on a rail, or some other such punishment. In some cases, they might actually undergo the punishment. See Alfred Young, “Tar and Feathers and the Ghost of Oliver Cromwell,” in his *Liberty Tree: Ordinary People and the American Revolution* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 150–53; Steven J. Stewart, “Skimmington in the Middle and New England Colonies,” in William Pencak, Mathew Dennis, and Simon Newman, eds., *Riot and Revelry in Early America* (State College, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 41–85; Thomas J. Humphrey, “The Anatomy of a Crowd: Making Mobs in Early America,” *Journal of Early American History* 5:1 (2015), 74–75.

older man marrying a younger woman, or a widower remarrying, because this might reduce the eligible marriage pool, making it harder for them to find a spouse and start a family. Others might simply be aiming their displeasure at someone they perceived to be an illegitimate groom or bride, or at a person who was simply unpopular in the town. Although skimeltons were by no means welcome by many newlyweds, they were often considered unavoidable.<sup>6</sup>

Some of the best descriptions of nineteenth-century skimeltons come from contemporary newspaper accounts. The *New York Spectator* described the practice in 1838 as consisting “of a serenade with all manner of unmelodious instruments, performed nightly before the residence of the victims, until the demands of the musicians are complied with.” In 1858, the *Rockland County Messenger* described the skimelton as a group of men “with music of kettles and pans” surrounding the “dwelling in which the solemn service of marriage is being conducted.” Elaborating on the “unmelodious instruments,” the *New York Sun* in 1881 reported on “the hammering of tin pans, blowing of horns, firing of charges of powder from anvils and guns, scraping of horse fiddles, and choruses of demonic yells.” As late as 1897, the *New York Tribune* observed the ritual similarly: “a party of villagers” offering “a reception tendered to the newly married couple, in which under the cover of night, the neighbors with pans and drums, and tinkling brass and sounding cymbal, and horse fiddlers and horns, assemble at the home,” creating an “infernal din.” After the “concert,” the bridegroom was expected to come to the front of the house and offer a humorous speech before sending off the “self-invited guests” with “Cigars, hard cider and cake.”<sup>7</sup>

A skimelton that took place in New Rochelle in 1857 targeted the marriage of seventy-year-old Alexander Banks and his new wife, who was many years his junior. Shortly after the couple retired to bed, they “were serenaded by a band of ‘rough music,’ two hundred strong.” After permitting the serenade to continue for some time, “the bridegroom made

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6. For similar occurrences in other parts of North America, please see Pauline Greenhill, *Make the Night Hideous: Four English-Canadian Charivaris, 1881–1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); Loretta T. Johnson “Charivari/Shivaree: A European Folk Ritual on the American Plains,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 20:3 (1990), 371–387; Davis and McDonald, “‘Shivaree’” *American Speech*, 253–255; Meredith, “Belling the Bridal Couple in Pioneer Days,” 22–24.

7. *New York Spectator*, April 7, 1838; *Rockland County Messenger*, January 28, 1858; *New York Sun*, January 8, 1881; *New York Tribune*, December 21, 1897; *Trenton Evening Times*, December 24, 1897.

his appearance and handed over \$10 to the Skimmertons, who took the amount, at the same time coolly informing the donor that if he thought that would satisfy them he was sadly mistaken; that it would be enough to buy powder with for the following night, when they would again pay him a visit, better prepared for action.” The next day, some of the gang travelled four miles to Mamaroneck and “dragged down an old cannon used for firing salutes on the Fourth of July and other glorification days.” They placed it in front of Mr. Banks’ residence “with an intimation of what he might expect.” “Under these circumstances, the bridegroom drew his check for \$30 more, and the second serenade with ‘rough music’ was indefinitely postponed.”<sup>8</sup>

Women substantially older than their grooms also might initiate a skimelton. When forty-year-old Sarah Vredenburg married Elmer Slagel, more than two decades her junior, a newspaper account of their 1878 nuptial in Mt. Pleasant featured the headline: “The Bride Older than her Mother-in-Law.” It led to a “skimmerton” where “fifty to one hundred men and boys surrounded the house, ringing bells and banging pots and pans demanding a treat.” Although the bride and groom appealed to the crowd to disperse, this only inspired the group to make more noise, so much so that “the couple sent down \$2 for a keg of beer, whereupon the serenaders drank to their health and dispersed.”<sup>9</sup>

Skimeltons might be small events involving just a few men making noise or very elaborate rituals that included several hundred revelers organized in a theatrical procession. In Putnam Valley, about fifty miles northeast of New York City, the “skimetonians” chose a “chairman” to lead them for the night. They then paraded to the home of a couple celebrating their wedding night, “blowing horns and conch shells” while carrying an “old cannon.” They had “their faces marked with burnt cork or paint” to elude recognition, but also probably to add to the masquerade aspect of this nocturnal event.<sup>10</sup>

Although the ritual varied from village to village, certain things were common to skimeltons wherever they took place. The crowd would go to the door and demand a fine or treat. Usually, after some “rough music,”

8. *Poughkeepsie Journal*, January 10, 1857; *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, January 12, 1857.

9. *Lowell Daily Citizen*, August 12, 1878.

10. Lucas Barger, *Life on a Rocky Farm: Rural Life near New York City in the Late Nineteenth Century*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2013), 133–135.

the fine was paid and the bride might even step onto the porch to take a “bow.” However, if the newlyweds resisted or ignored the revelers, there “will be a lot of damage done.” The “skimelton boys” in Putnam were known to knock out windows, tear down fences and destroy outbuildings.<sup>11</sup>

It is not insignificant that skimelton revelers felt they had the right to perform their ritual at a neighbor’s house and, further, had the authority to pass judgment on the appropriateness of the new marriage and even demand a fine if they judged it to be questionable. This is very much in the tradition of the European charivari and reveals the degree to which communities in nineteenth-century New York felt that they had some say in the creation of new households. Essentially, in communities where skimeltons occurred, both “acceptable” and “unacceptable” marriages were being judged: those that were perceived to be problematic warranted a skimelton, while those that presented no concerns did not.

Multiple examples from the nineteenth century reveal what might happen if the skimelton crowd felt it was not getting its expected treat or if the bride and groom were unwilling to go along with the event. At an 1884 occurrence in Marlborough, a crowd of men surrounded a home while the wedding was still in progress, blowing horns, banging pots and pans, throwing stones at the roof, and even firing shotguns at the house. The young age of the bride may have been the issue here since one of the crowd “admitted to using insulting language to the bride, who is very young.” “The house was riddled with buckshot, cannon were fired, a musket was pointed at the head of one of the home’s residents, and the road leading up to the house was filled up with heavy timber thrown there by the crowd to prevent escape.” The newspaper account makes clear that the people inside the home were terrified.<sup>12</sup>

A few years earlier, following the wedding of Elizabeth Ackert and Mr. Smith in Staatsburg, “a party of young men assembled outside the house and began what they termed ‘riding a skimmington’ beating upon pans, blowing horns, firing guns, etc.” The men climbed on the roof, looked in the windows, and threatened the wedding party. When some people in the

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11. *Catskill Mountain News*, June 30, 1944; *Life on a Rocky Farm*, 134–135.

12. *New York Times*, December 13, 1884; *Santa Cruz Centinel*, March 15, 1885.

house tried to lower a shade to block the men's view, one of the harassers fired through the window, hitting the bride's brother and blinding him.<sup>13</sup>

Although skimeltons generally targeted unusual marriages, some were in response to suspected sexual misbehavior or the suspicion of adultery or other illicit sexual relations outside of marriage. In the town of Greene in 1875, the neighbors of Elizabeth Tuttle, a widow, delivered a violent skimmington against her when she took in a male lodger—a “pitchfork agent.” The gang “surrounded the home in the dead of night” and “battered in the windows, smashed the door, and kept up a calathumpian racket with guns, horns, etc., until nearly daylight.”<sup>14</sup>

As one can imagine, the ritual was not without its critics. The *Dollar Newspaper* noted in 1849 that the skimmington with its “procession of rough music, as frying pans, bull's horns, marrow-bones, cleavers, &c! . . . should therefore neither be undertaken, nor allowed by any of their friends.” The paper called for the ritual “to become obsolete at once.” An 1857 skimmington in Westchester County was described in a newspaper account as nothing more than a “mode of extortion,” while *The Vineland Weekly* called skimeltons a “low, vulgar, and unmanly practice,” and that those who participated in them “disgrace themselves” with their “contemptible work.” This paper also called for their abolition. The *Port Jervis Evening Gazette* referred to the ritual as “One of the most disgraceful relics of the backwoods,” while the *New York Sun* described the skimelton as “semi-barbarian.”<sup>15</sup>

Other observers called for the ritual's abolition because it “tends directly to bring into disgrace” the institution of marriage. Early criticisms focused on its coarseness and uncivility, the unpleasantness of the “rough music,” and the events' threatening overtones. Other commentators described them as “unmanly” and wondered “why young men, middle-aged men, and boys, should deem it honorable to make night hideous with tin pans, tin horns, horse fiddles, goose quills &c., around the residence of a newly mar-

13. *Kingston Freeman*, December 27, 1873. In 1874 Ellenville, a violent skimelton ended with one of the rioters shooting the bride, seriously injuring her. See *The Lake Village Times*, July 4, 1874.

14. However, the widow sued the skimmington gang and collected \$3,600 in damages “from her riotous neighbors.” See *Montpelier Argus & Patriot*, February 21, 1877.

15. *The Dollar Newspaper* [Pennsylvania] November 28, 1849; the *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, January 12, 1857 described the 1857 Westchester skimmington; *The Vineland Weekly*, September 25, 1875; *Port Jervis Evening Gazette*, December 16, 1881; *New York Sun*, January 8, 1881. These criticisms were echoed in newspapers around the country criticizing charivaris in their towns and villages.



ried couple at such a time, is one of the things hard to find out.” The *New York Tribune* noted that those participating in skimeltons were “too ill bred to consider anything as intangible as the dignity and happiness of their unfortunate victims” and wondered further why a newly married couple who had just entered a “sacred” oath should “be regarded as fit subjects for annoyance and persecution at the hands of their friends and neighbors.”<sup>16</sup>

As the disorder and violence at skimeltons continued, public officials increasingly blamed the serenaders, even if they suffered the brunt of the violence. A newspaper account of a skimmington in Monticello used the death of a serenader, killed by a member of the wedding party, to warn others not to participate in such events in the future. By the early twentieth century, calls for the abolishment of skimeltons grew considerably, with *The Trenton Times* pointing out that they “differ from an ordinary riot only in degree,” they had “been abolished in civilized communities for many years, and they should be forbidden by law.”<sup>17</sup> *The Courier News* noted in 1913 that “Skimmertons, charivaris, and other forms of interfering with the peaceful journey of bridal parties are relics of a provincial age when cads knew no better form of amusement.”<sup>18</sup>

Charivaris or shivarees that took place in other regions of North America shared many similarities with the skimeltons in rural New York, and the reasons for holding them were much the same—a remarriage, an unusual marriage, or some community concern with the proposed bond. The evidence seems to indicate that, like their Hudson Valley counterparts, these rituals were mostly peaceful affairs, but usually a bit raucous.

Northeastern New Jersey, just over the border from the Hudson Valley, seems to have had a large number of skimmertons (the New Jersey spelling of the term) from the mid-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries. Towns like Livingston, North Branch, and South Plainfield recorded multiple skimmertons, which were described by one late-nineteenth-century observer as “a serenade that is the reverse of complimentary.” So common was the practice that one mid-century commentator stated that “after the ceremony of the minister was over, the ceremony of the crowd began.”

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16. *The Dollar Newspaper*, November 28, 1849; *Newark Daily Advertiser*, November 16, 1849; *Vineland Weekly*, September 25, 1875. *New York Tribune* July 11, 1909.

17. The Monticello, New York, skimmington is described in the *Trenton Evening Times*, December 24, 1897; *Trenton Times*, June 16, 1903.

18. *The Bridgewater Courier News* December 15, 1913.

Representative of these rituals was one in Springfield that took place when William Roll remarried after divorcing his first wife. It led to the neighborhood coming out “with tin-pans and shotguns.”<sup>19</sup>

Much like those in New York, a number of skimmertons involved violence. One in South Plainfield in 1894 lasted two days, with a large crowd camping out in a lot across the street from the newlyweds’ home. The revelers paraded an effigy of the groom around the neighborhood before tossing it into a large bonfire and breaking the couple’s windows with stones and destroying their front lawn. In North Branch, an enraged target of a skimmerton in 1894 threw acid at some of the crowd, igniting a riot. One man was shot in the face in Elizabeth in 1903 “when a clash occurred between a party of serenaders and the guests at the wedding,” and in 1911 a jury found a young bridegroom in Livingston guilty of “firing both barrels of a shotgun into the [skimmerton] crowd,” injuring several.<sup>20</sup>

In other parts of the country, charivaris, shivarees, and serenades continued through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Performances following a wedding in the Midwest, South, and Plains states were common. Unlike New York skimmertons, which tended to be single-evening affairs, examples abound in the Midwest of multi-night charivaris, much in the tradition of the European version. In Milwaukee, one continued for nineteen consecutive nights in 1904. The “mock serenaders” refused to stop until the recently remarried spouse “capitulated and treated them.” When octogenarian John Wiecke remarried only a few weeks after the death of his wife of forty years in 1884, a crowd of 500 people surrounded his Cleveland home. They made discordant music—sounding like “10,000 dogs with tin cans tied to their tails.” The leaders of the charivari promised to “congratulate the bride and groom with fish-horn serenades for the next seven weeks.”<sup>21</sup>



19. *The Centinel of Freedom*, January 26, 1858 described the “ceremony of the crowd,” while *The Courier News Bridgewater, New Jersey*, September 1, 1894 details the skimmerton aimed at William Roll and described the skimmerton as “reverse of complimentary.”

20. *The Daily Times, New Brunswick, New Jersey*, September 15, 1894; *New York Sun*, November 25, 1894; *New York Sun*, June 13, 1903; *Trenton Evening Times*, March 19, 1912; *The Enterprise (Montana)*, February 27, 1913.

21. The Milwaukee event is described in the *New York Tribune*, September 25, 1904, and the Cleveland ritual in the *New York Sun*, September 19, 1884. See also Johnson “Charivari/Shivaree: A European Folk Ritual on the American Plains,” 371–88.

In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, a noticeable evolution began to take place in both the targets and the performers of skimeltons. Increasingly, they became common at any wedding—those that raised community concerns and those that did not. At the same time, they become more social and celebratory events. One reason for this may be the growing emigration of young men and women from rural New York to the cities. The festive skimelton may reveal the community's attempt to celebrate a new family starting in their town. Still, "inappropriate" marriages that might yield no offspring continued to elicit a performance because of the threat they posed to the community's continuance. However, by the late nineteenth century, the skimelton had largely become an affirmative event, not a censorious one.<sup>22</sup>

Many of these "new" skimeltons were more along the lines of a community "barn-raising," for which the newly married couple even prepared refreshments for the expected arrival of noisy neighbors. Nevertheless, these more "mature" skimelton crowds were no less noisy or disruptive. At a skimelton in Sullivan County in 1897, male and female neighbors still turned up at night "with pans and drums, and tinkling brass and a tuning cymbal, and horse fiddles and horns." And much like skimeltonians from a generation earlier, they expected a treat of hard cider, beer, or money.<sup>23</sup>

On the surface, skimeltons targeting an "ordinary" marriage might not seem that different from those rituals aimed at "unusual" ones. However, the crowds were now composed of respectable men and women of the neighborhood, not rowdy young men who had been imbibing alcohol. At the same time, the threat of violence was less common and the atmosphere more festive. But much like the earlier skimeltons, these friendlier versions demonstrated that neighbors and other residents still maintained the privilege and custom of overseeing and regulating new marriages in their villages and "felt that they had the right to participate in the wedding," even if they were not invited.<sup>24</sup>

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22. Paula Greenhill has made these observations in her study of charivaris and other community marriage customs in Canada. See her *Make the Night Hideous: Four English-Canadian Charivaris, 1881–1940*, 25–27.

23. Hanley, "Serenade in New England," p. 25; Meredith, "Belling the Bridal Couple in Pioneer Days," 23–24; *Trenton Evening Times*, December 24, 1897.

24. Meredith, "Belling the Bridal Couple in Pioneer Days," 23–24.

Regardless of how festive these events might be, multiple examples reveal that many newly wedded couples resented—and some even resisted—being “skimmed,” whether the participants were neighbors celebrating the union or those judging and condemning it. And at some, violence still occurred. The celebration planned by the neighbors of Frederick Lee of Red Hook in 1907 was supposed to be friendly. Lee and his new bride, Anna Rogers, returned to his home following their wedding to find “all his neighbors turned out to welcome the couple in country style with what the wood folk call a ‘skimmington party’—a provincialism for charivari.” The revelers beat “tin pans and wash boilers,” clanged “cowbells and other music of the countryside was kept up for an hour,” in hopes of having the new bride come out for a “bow” and to enjoy the treat they were expecting: “cigars and the price of a keg of beer.” Instead, an angry Lee told the crowd that his wife would not appear on the porch and “that he wouldn’t be ‘skimmed.’” After Lee closed his door, the “crowd renewed the demonstrations” and hurled “jeers and insults.” Lee then reappeared on the porch and “discharged a shotgun loaded with birdshot” at the revelers, hitting several. None suffered serious injury.<sup>25</sup>

Although most skimeltions were conducted by neighbors against folks like themselves, occasionally they were directed at targets across social and class lines. A 1909 skimmington in Staatsburg seemed like dozens that had preceded it, with a torchlight procession of men and boys parading through the small village with musical instruments ranging “from a fish horn to a horse fiddle.” Once the “Staatsburg Boys” reached the Livingston-Mills estate, their target that evening, they paraded up the hill to the front of the mansion and began their cacophonous music. The customary night-time ritual was performed to acknowledge the recent wedding of Beatrice Mills, descendent of the Hudson Valley Livingstons, and the Earl of Granard, Sir Bernard Forbes, the new lord of the manor.<sup>26</sup>

This skimmington was a distinctly different affair, however. It is likely that many of the “Staatsburg Boys” who participated in it either were employed by, or tenants on, the Mills estate. Their participation had multiple meanings—a thinly veiled challenge to authority in addition to the normal serenading that accompanied a wedding. None of this was lost on

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25. The Red Hook skimmington is described in the *Tucson Citizen* April 20, 1907.

26. *New York Times*, December 14, 1908; *Boston Herald*, January 18, 1909.

the serenaders or, indeed, on the entire village. The contemporary account makes note of the level of concern people had about this event, pointing out how it was “eyed curiously by the villagers, who were much interested in the outcome of an old-fashioned American skimmington.” Probably no one expected violence, but this event was theater of a different type: a decades-old confrontation between the Hudson Valley’s landed elite on one side and their tenants and neighbors on the other.

This skimmington ended as well as one could hope—both the crowd and the lord played their parts. Before “the serenade had proceeded long,” Lord Granard came to the door and “handed the leader of the band a \$10 bill, with the polite request that the party leave the grounds.” The group of serenaders complied and went to the village tavern, “where toasts were drunk to his earlship and his lady.”<sup>27</sup>

According to the accounts of skimeltons that routinely appeared in Hudson Valley newspapers, by the early twentieth century these events had evolved into friendly events in which both men and women participated. They might be small celebrations, like the one in Rhinebeck, reported by the local newspaper in 1916, where Mr. and Mrs. Percy Tator “were given a skimelton Saturday evening” after returning from their honeymoon. Or they could be large, boisterous events. At one in Poughkeepsie in 1920, the newlyweds “were given a noisy reception”—the revelers had “horns, bells and other noise-makers, which they used to make all the noise possible.” Some turned into community-wide events. After a wedding at Garnerville in 1923, revelers “went to the groom’s home and carried him to a car and the parade started, consisting of tin pans, fifes, drums, sirens, and guns, which brought everyone out to their gates to see what created the joy.” The event ended with a large bonfire.<sup>28</sup>

How far the ritual had been transformed can be seen in a 1926 marriage in Delaware County. The performance started, as most did, with a large crowd of revelers surrounding the newlyweds’ home, blowing horns, banging pans, and making plenty of noise. However, this event took place in the afternoon, not late at night, and the crowd was composed not of crude men singing coarse songs, but of young women. The bride and groom who

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27. *Boston Herald*, January 18, 1909.

28. *The Rhinebeck Gazette* November 24, 1916; *Poughkeepsie Eagle-News*, September 18, 1920; *Rockland County Times*, August 4, 1923.

were the targets of this more playful skimelton came out of their home and led the parade “down Main street, the tin pan band making music as they journeyed,” to a local restaurant where the revelers were treated to ice cream. This performance was almost a mockery of the old nineteenth-century skimelton when crowd members routinely fired guns at a newlyweds’ home and demanded the groom pay a fine of alcohol or money.<sup>29</sup>

By the 1930s, some skimeltons had even become combined with wedding showers, and the revelers *brought* gifts instead of demanding them. Characteristic was one in Kingston whose beginning mirrored hundreds of previous skimeltons, with neighbors parading around the newlyweds’ home, serenading them with “old cow bells, automobile horns and pots and pans.” But the revelers were soon joined by the young couple, and a ritual that once intended to mock and condemn turned into a “shower with many useful and lovely gifts received by the bride.”<sup>30</sup>

Even as these performances became more of a celebratory party for a young couple, aspects of the old ritual endured in hill towns and back-country areas. In the Catskills, there was still an expectation that the couple would greet the skimeltonians and offer gifts. As late as the 1950s, “the crowd has been known to invade the bedroom and taken them from bed” if the newlyweds refused to acknowledge the revelers. After being brought outside, the couple was expected “to give cigars to the men and candy to the women.” If the couple had no treats to offer, the crowd would “carry the bridegroom to the store,” which would be opened so he could purchase treats for the revelers.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, by the 1950s, skimeltons were clearly on the decline, with fewer and fewer serenades being reported in local newspapers. A 1949 article in the *New York Herald Tribune* reported on the continuance of the ritual in the Catskills, but noted that it had more or less disappeared in other parts of the Hudson Valley.<sup>32</sup> By the 1970s, only a handful of skimeltons

29. *Stamford Mirror Recorder* June 2, 1926.

30. *Kingston Daily Freeman*, June 30, 1938.

31. “Skimeltons are a Part of Life in the Catskills,” *New York Herald Tribune*, June 5, 1949.

32. “Skimeltons are a Part of Life in the Catskills,” *New York Herald Tribune*, June 5, 1949. Even in the Catskills, though, a local commentator noted that by 1960 the “skimelton following the return from the honeymoon of a village couple or an elaborately prepared send-off, seems to be losing favor with the younger generation.” See Ethel Bussy, *History and Stories of Margaretville and the Surrounding Areas*, (Margaretville, NY: 1960), Chapter 12. Retrieved March 10, 2017, from [www.dcnhistory.org/books/margaretville-bussy.html](http://www.dcnhistory.org/books/margaretville-bussy.html).

were being reported in the region, mostly in the Catskills. A once popular and ubiquitous rural New York tradition celebrating weddings, new families, and the nature of community itself had come to a close.



Skimeltons served several different functions. They were festive and carnivalesque celebrations that, in the nineteenth century, provided a village's young men with an opportunity to drink, parade, and make "rough music." These rituals also served as a safety valve of sorts through their challenge—albeit one cloaked in celebration and frolic—to traditional and "official" authority. After all, the marriage that was "skimmed" for being "out of the ordinary" had just been sanctified by either a minister or justice of the peace and was considered legal by the laws of New York State. The celebratory mockery of the skimelton crowd would seem to be at odds with these official imprimaturs. Furthermore, the young men who composed the skimelton crowds and participated in the ritual took on the self-appointed responsibility to grant approval (or disapproval) on one of life's most important decisions: a marriage and the beginning of a new family and household.<sup>33</sup>

Historians and anthropologists have noted that the charivari, and by extension the skimelton, provided a dramatic performance for important changes and developments within the community. On the one hand, the community was acknowledging a rite of passage. A man and woman were moving into adulthood and becoming responsible, contributing members of the community. While early skimmingtons clearly represented disapproval of unpopular new marriages, by the latter part of the century the purpose of this noisy and chaotic ritual had altered and now generally defined a positive relationship between the existing community and the new household. Residents of the town or village were, in effect, "welcoming" the newly married couple, more or less granting the community's approval.

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33. In this way, the young men who composed skimelton crowds were like the French youth groups, abbeys, and "societies joyeuses," written about by Natalie Davis and others, that performed charivaris in the early modern period and who exerted jurisdiction and authority over a wide range of neighborhood behaviors. See Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, 104–108, 115; Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, 99–101.

Nevertheless, the community was demonstrating that they still maintained a role in judging the marriage and participating in its celebration.<sup>34</sup>

In the nineteenth century, even though skimeltons were intended to convey criticism of certain marriages deemed unusual or unpopular, there are no recorded examples of a community attempting to stop them. These marriages were not surprises—it is likely that neighbors knew for weeks or more that the wedding would take place—yet there were no attempts to forestall them. So, even as neighbors demonstrated apprehension about the new union and shared their concerns, they also were recognizing the new couple and household as part of their community, despite it being a relationship built on disapproval. By the early twentieth century, of course, although a skimelton might occasionally express concern about a new marriage, the ritual had become a positive affirmation by neighbors and the community.

Although the skimelton was a uniquely Hudson Valley ritual, most parts of North America had some variation of the European charivari, and the history of those events, as stated earlier, is similar. Loretta Johnson notes that in the early twentieth century, a shivaree in the Midwest was considered an “adjunct to a wedding,” and bellings, warmers, and hornings continued throughout rural areas of the U.S. well into the century. In addition, what had once been a condemnation of unpopular marriage unions became, over time, celebrations of the new household, as with skimeltons. However, it is also clear that the Hudson Valley region seems to have had an unusually large number of these occurrences and was recognized by contemporaries for this distinction.<sup>35</sup>

Although the form of the ritual varied from village to village, and even the meaning and purpose varied from one generation to the next as the skimelton changed from an act of condemnation and censure to communal approval and acceptance, the community continued to retain the belief that they had the privilege and the right to judge new marriages in their town and to either protest or celebrate them as they saw fit. While for some par-

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34. Johnson “Charivari/Shivaree: A European Folk Ritual on the American Plains,” 380; Hanley, “Serenade in New England,” 24–26; Meredith, “Belling the Bridal Couple in Pioneer Days,” 22–24.

35. Johnson “Charivari/Shivaree: A European Folk Ritual on the American Plains,” 372; Meredith, “Belling the Bridal Couple in Pioneer Days,” 22–24. On the large number of skimmingtons in New York and the Hudson Valley in particular, see, Palmer, “Discordant Music,” 22–23, and Pencak, “Introduction: A Historical Perspective,” 6–7. On the uniqueness of the skimelton to the Hudson Valley regions, see Karuth, *A Word Geography of the Eastern United States*, 18, 24.



ticipants the stylized ceremony was little more than fun and the opportunity to socialize and share camaraderie, it also served as an important form of defining community identity and expectations, as well as constructing a relationship between the existing community and its new members.

### APPENDIX 1:

#### Skimeltons in New York State, 1850 to 1975

The Appendix offers a review of 190 skimeltons in New York from the 1850s to early 1970s, drawn from a data set of 250 skimeltons or charivaris throughout North America that form the basis of this study.

#### DATE LOCATION DESCRIPTION/SOURCE

- 1857 New Rochelle. A crowd of 200 men—"skimertons"—made "rough music" after a wealthy gentleman of the village" more than 70 years old married a much younger woman. *Poughkeepsie Journal* January 10, 1857; *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, January 12, 1857.
- 1858 Rockland County. "Many of our readers recall such an occurrence at a wedding in the lower part of our village some years since when the cannon and the little engine with its dirty water figured so conspicuously." ". . . we felt then that if a load of shot had maimed any, who were engaged in that skimmington." *Rockland County Messenger*, January 28, 1858.
- 1859 Port Ewen (Ulster Co.). Eleven men who participated in "that peculiar kind of serenade known as a 'skimelton'" were "arrested for engaging in a riot." *Kingston Daily Chronicle*, November 4, 1859.
- 1869 Parksville (Sullivan Co.). Some young men surrounded the home of a man and women believed to be having an adulterous affair in order to give a 'skimelton.' The man inside, Mr. Overton fired a shotgun severely wounding one of the "young men." *Port Jervis Evening Gazette*, August 7, 1869.
- 1869 New Paltz. "Many of the people of this village hears a noise of horns, & c., in honor of a newly married couple. Isn't about time that this practice of 'skimalton' or 'charivari' making came to an end?" *New Paltz Independent* July 22, 1869.

- 1870 White Plains. “The young men of White Plains threw a “rousing skimmerton” for Martin Haufs, age 40, on the evening of his marriage to Wilhelmina Hayner, age 14. *New York Sun*, August 4, 1870.
- 1873 Staatsburgh. Member of wedding party shot and blinded during a “skimelton.” *Kingston Daily Freeman*, December 27, 1873.
- 1873 Kingston. James Ellworth and his wife returned from their “wedding tour” to a “rousing skimelton” given “by the boys” who were paid off by “some coin.” *Kingston Daily Freeman*, November 12, 1873.
- 1874 Pine Hill (Ulster County). Members of Skimelton party forced to pay restitution in the amount of \$800 to the husband and wife whose home they surrounded and engaged in a ritual “generally offensive to the neighborhood.” *Kingston Daily Freeman*, April 23, 1874.
- 1874 Ulster Park. The marriage of Fred Winfield to Annie Voorhees. After the wedding “about 50 small boys gave them a first class skimelton.” *Kingston Daily Freeman* January 10, 1874.
- 1874 Ellenville. Mr. Caspar Fisher “who lives on the mountain near Ellenville having taken a young wife was visited by what the local paper called a “skimmelton party.” “They kept up a lively din with tin horns and pans, shot guns, etc.” *Lake Village Times*, July 4, 1874.
- 1874 Sullivan Co. A “skimelton party boisterously informed the neighborhood last Monday” following the marriage of Annie Brown to Mr. Hauswirth. *Sullivan County Recorder*, December 10, 1874.
- 1874 Livingston Manor. The marriage of Benjamin Hardenburgh and Carrie E. Green, led to a skimelton outside the married couple’s home. *Joe Kimball Diary*, May 16, 1874 [http://livingstonmanor.net/JoelKimball/Joel\\_Kimball\\_Diary\\_May\\_1874.htm](http://livingstonmanor.net/JoelKimball/Joel_Kimball_Diary_May_1874.htm). Reviewed 1/19/18.
- 1875 Greene. Widow Elizabeth Tuttle’s home attacked by “skimmington party” in response to her taking in a male lodger. *Montpelier Argus & Patriot*, February 21, 1877.
- 1877 Rondout. “each member of that abomination, a skimelton party, was fined a dollar at Rondout.” *The Catskill Recorder*, August 3, 1877.
- 1878 Mt. Pleasant (Westchester). The marriage of Sarah Vredenburgh, age 40, and Elmer Slagel, 17, led to a “skimmenton” when “fifty to one

- hundred men and boys surrounded the house, ringing bells, blowing horns, and firing off guns and pistols.” The newspaper account makes note of the disparity in age (23 years) that triggered the event. *Lowell Daily Citizen*, August 12, 1878.
- 1879 Stevensville (Sullivan Co.). “A party of men and boys assembled . . . for the purpose of giving a man named Hugabone a skimmington.” *Sullivan County Record*, September 12, 1879.
- 1880 Sullivan County. “The young chaps of this village had the satisfaction of attending two ‘skimmingtons’ last Saturday night.” *Sullivan County Record*, October 29, 1880.
- 1881 Unionville (Sullivan Co.). “One of the most disgraceful relics of the backwoods, a skimelton, took place at Unionville a few nights ago on the occasion of the wedding of a widow.” *Port Jervis Evening Gazette*, December 16, 1881.
- 1882 Millbrook. The “skimelton fiends” “made night hideous with their discordant sounds, and their cannon they fired & broke many planes of glass.” *The Gilboa Monitor* (Schoharie County) May 18, 1882.
- 1883 Clintondale, Ulster County. “The young men of the village of Clintondale, Ulster County, gathered last evening to give a skimmerton to Frank Terhune and his young bride. They went to a blacksmith shop and obtained two anvils, which they loaded with powder and fired off. One of the anvils exploded, a piece weighing over eight pounds striking Samuel Coulter, aged twenty-one, who stood about twenty five feet away, killing him instantly. Another piece strike John Kline, breaking his leg. Several others were slightly injured by the flying pieces of iron.” (*Troy Times*, December 27, 1883; *New York Times* December 22, 1883).
- 1884 Marlborough. “The house was riddled with buckshot, cannon were fired, a musket was pointed at the head of one of the home’s residents, and the road leading up to the house was filled up with heavy timber thrown there by the crowd to prevent escape.” *New York Times* December 13, 1884; *Santa Cruz Centinel*, March 15 1885.
- 1884 Tarrytown (Westchester Co.) A skimmerton party was organized in Tarrytown to celebrate the marriage of George Storm. *New York Herald*, January 15, 1884.

- 1886 Monsey. The marriage of William Miller and Miss Binnie Barnes. "The young people in the neighborhood learned there was a groom and a bride there, and late in the evening they gave them an old time 'skimelton.'" *Albany Journal*, November 3, 1886.
- 1887 Ancram. "The event in Ancram last week was a wedding with a skimelton." *Columbia Republican*, September 29, 1887.
- 1888 Poughkeepsie. "A band of peace disturbers tendered Louis Kahler and bride a skimelton." "Happenings 25 Years Ago" / *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise*, June 10, 1913.
- 1888 South Kortright. "a skimelton party" was given to newly married Charles V. Spriggs and Miss Grace Meiner. *Delaware Gazette*, July 11, 1888.
- 1889 Poughkeepsie. John Ballard was seriously injured by a shotgun blast at a skimelton. *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, January 19, 1889.
- 1889 Kingston. "Something should be done in relation to skimeltons which are becoming altogether too frequent in the lower portion of town. The participants in these unseemly demonstrations are usually boys and girls." *Kingston Daily Freeman* June 19, 1889.
- 1890 Poughkeepsie. "The 'skimelton' at the hotel the other evening was a grand success in that line, as with the horse fiddles, horns, bells, etc., the noise was simply terrible." *Poughkeepsie Eagle-News*, January 14, 1890.
- 1890 Jeffersonville (Sullivan Co.). "A large crowd of boys armed with the usual variety of 'instruments' made the newly married couple a rousing skimmington." *Sullivan County Record*, June 27, 1890.
- 1892 Newburgh. A group of young men delivered a "skimelton" to a couple that had reunited after a separation. *Grand Rapids Herald*, February 9, 1892.
- 1892 Jeffersonville. "We had two 'skimeltons' here-one evening last week. One was in honor of Miss Cara Bury and her husband, Mr. Benjamin Hohmeyer, of Jersey City, and the other for the benefit of Miss Florence Edwards and her husband, Mr. Bailey, of Hancock." *Sullivan County Record*, July 1, 1892.

- 1893 East Hampton, LI. A skimmington party was arranged for Mr. Whitehead upon his return to this home with his bride. *New York Herald* June 25, 1893.
- 1893 Fishkill. Newlywed Walter J. Bogardus of Fishkill was “placed on a horse” led by two men. “A large Japanese parasol covered with mosquito netting was placed in his hands and he was escorted through the street while the crowd sang ‘Thus shall it be done, unto the man who people delight to honor.’ Mr. Bogardus bore the ordeal as gracefully as possible and waved his parasol in acknowledgement of the cheers he received.” *Delaware Gazette* July 19, 1893.
- 1894 Millbrook (Dutchess County). A skimelton was given to Mr. Morgan Vincent and his bride. *Millbrook Round Table*, February 3, 1894.
- 1894 White Plains. “village lads began a charivari in front of the bride’s home, and would not go away until repeated requests had been made by the expectant bride’s father.” *New York Tribune*, June 8, 1894.
- 1894 Jeffersonville (Sullivan Co.). “Charlie Wagner and his bride were given a rousing skimmington at the residence of his father in this place Friday night.” *Sullivan County Record*, August 3, 1894.
- 1894 Afton. Mrs. Florence Parker shot and killed a member of skimelton gang after they stoned her house following her marriage. *Middletown Daily Argus*, November 22, 1894.
- 1894 Greenport (Columbia Co.) “On last Tuesday night the inhabitants of Greenport were awakened by the resounding echoes of drums, horns, and the good old melodies of tin pans, which we learn, was an old fashioned skimelton . . .” *The Columbia Republican*, June 21, 1894.
- 1894 Malone. Albon Elliot “fired last night into a charivari party who had come to his home to serenade him” wounding three of the rioters. Elliot and several of the serenaders were arrested. *New York Tribune* June 9, 1894.
- 1895 Sullivan County. Frank Townshend was fined \$25.00 “for disturbing the peace at a skimmington given George Stephenson.” *Sullivan County Record*, March 8, 1895.

- 1895 Lynbrook, LI. “After the marriage of Irving Cozine and Edith C. Lane and their return to their home in the village they were treated to an old fashioned skimmerton.” “The boys assembled soon after the return of the happy couple and made night hideous with beating tin pans, firing guns and shouting and singing. They kept up the racket for an hour or more when the bridegroom came out and satisfied the boys in the usual way.” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* October 3, 1895.
- 1896 Southern Ulster Co. A skimmington had to be re-scheduled when the groom and bride changed the date of their wedding. *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise*, March 25, 1896.
- 1896 Bethel. George Miller and Miss Rosa Conklin of this place were united in marriage by the Rev. Mr. Hambly of Bethel on Sunday, May 24. Monday the night the boys gave George a skimmington.” *Sullivan County Record*, June 5, 1896.
- 1896 Poughkeepsie. “Michael Lenahan and his bride, formerly Mrs. Kuhner, were given a skimmington at their home on Wednesday night at their home on Market Street.” *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise*, July 23, 1896.
- 1896 Harlemville. “John B. Miller and his wife have returned from their wedding trip. The boys serenaded them with an old-fashioned skimmelton.” *Columbia Republican*, November 3, 1896.
- 1896 Poughkeepsie. A “variety of peace disturbers such as horns, drums, bells, cymbals, etc., etc. in the hands of young men” who “were tendering a skimmington serenade to their newly married member.” *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise*, December 29, 1896.
- 1897 Poughkeepsie. A “large party” delivered a skimmington to “George W. Davids and Bride” *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise*, February 18, 1897.
- 1897 Monticello (Sullivan Co.). A “skmmington” was offered a newly married couple in Monticello, “with pots and drums, and tinkling brass and tuning-cymbal, and horse fiddles and horns.” The father of the bride, Milo Racine, came out and fired a shotgun at the “ringleader” Wallace Stanton, seriously wounding him. *New York Tribune*, December 22, 1897.

- 1898 Jamaica, LI. Henry Rosencranz was fined \$20 by the Court of Special Sessions at Jamaica, Queens for his part in a “wedding skimmerton” with some fifty men. “A bonfire was lighted, guns fired, and considerable shouting was done.” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 1, 1898.
- 1899 Poughkeepsie. A skimmington was delivered to George Rademacher and his new bride. *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise*, June 10, 1899.
- 1899 Sullivan County. “A skimmington gang turned out last night and honored” newlyweds Henry Bohlen and Gertie Miller. *Sullivan County Record*, November 2, 1899.
- 1899 North Branch. “George Hunst and bride returned from their wedding trip on Sunday. The boys gave them a skimmington on Monday night.” *Sullivan County Record*, December 7, 1899.
- 1899 Centerville Station (Sullivan Co.). A skimmington was held for Miss Helen Conch and Benjamin Kniffen upon their marriage. *Sullivan County Record*, December 14, 1899.
- 1900 Callicoon Depot (Sullivan Co.). “J.L. Perry and wife returned from their wedding trip on train 7 Sunday night, and Monday night they were serenaded by the village band and he usual skimmington.” *Sullivan County Record*, May 3, 1900.
- 1900 West Bethel. Newlyweds Jesse L. Perry and his wife returned home following their ‘matrimonial trip’ where “some of the boys made a feeble attempt at a skimmington.” *Sullivan County Record*, May 10, 1900.
- 1901 Jeffersonville (Sullivan Co.). A skimmington was held at the Ranft-Brog wedding in early June. *Sullivan County Record*, June 13, 1901.
- 1901 Ravena. “Customary skimmington melodies” were offered Charles S. Tremper and Miss Grace Kinney” in honor of their marriage. *Ravena News*, September 21, 1901.
- 1903 Margaretville. “Patrick Mooney arrested, charged with exploding dynamite at a skimmington in Margaretville.” *Kingston Daily Freeman*, January 1, 1904.
- 1903 Wappinger Falls. “Mr. and Mrs. Whitney received a skimmington from the neighbors on the return from their wedding trip.” *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise*, February 26, 1903.

- 1904 Poughkeepsie. Skimmington promised to George Abrecrombie and his bride once they return home from their wedding trip. *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise*, August 10, 1904.
- 1906 Susquehanna Co. “booming of guns, the drumming of old tin pans, the ringing of cowbells, and the blowing of horns of a regular old-fashioned skimelton.” *Susquehanna County Transcript*, May 16, 2006/ “100 Years Ago Today” column, May 14, 1906.
- 1906 Poughkeepsie. Newlyweds Asa Bartlett and Eva Duncan eluded a group prepared to deliver a skimmington by sneaking out of town following their wedding. *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise*, November 23, 1906.
- 1907 Poughkeepsie. Harvey Traver and bride were “royally entertained” with a skimmington on their return from their wedding trip. *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise*, March 1, 1907.
- 1907 Red Hook. Frederick Lee “discharged a shotgun loaded with birdshot” on the “skimmington party” after refusing to be “skimmed.” *Tucson Citizen* April 20, 1907.
- 1908 West Park (Ulster Co.). Miss Rosie Demaron and Harvey Ostrander “were given a rousing skimmington by the young and the old people.” *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, March 10, 1908.
- 1908 Poughkeepsie. Mr. Kern and his bride were given “an old fashioned skimmington.” *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise*, September 3, 1908.
- 1908 Poughkeepsie. “Mr. and Mrs. Harry Olivet were given an old fashioned skimmington on their return from their wedding trip.” *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise*, September 15, 1908.
- 1908 Poughkeepsie. Henry McDonald and his bride received “an old fashioned skimmington” following their wedding. *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise*, October 17, 1908.
- 1908 Poughkeepsie. “Constable John Hennessy and his bride, Miss Anna Eisenhart, were given a rousing skimmington at East Poughkeepsie on Thanksgiving eve.” *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise*, November 27 1908.
- 1909 Staatsburg. The “Staatsburg Boys” provided “an old-fashioned American skimmington” at the Mills-Livingston Estate, celebrating the



- wedding of Beatrice Mills and the Earl of Granard, Sir Bernard Forbes. *Boston Herald*, January 18, 1909.
- 1911 Salt Point. Mr. and Mrs. William Marshall, who have just returned from their wedding trip, were given a skimmington Tuesday night by a number of their friends at their home in Salt Point. *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise*, October 6, 1911.
- 1911 Stanfordville (Dutchess County). A planned skimmington was called off when Mr. Clement turned out not to have married as had been rumored. *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise*, October 31, 1911.
- 1912 Poughkeepsie. Mr. and Mrs. Henry Golden were given a serenade or skimelton on Saturday evening when their friends learned they had been married for some time. *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, March 8, 1912.
- 1912 Margaretville (Delaware Co.). After their honeymoon, Mr. and Mrs. Ballard "returned home to get the customary 'skimelton' or serenade from friends." *The Oneonta Star* November 7, 1962.
- 1913 Poughkeepsie. A group of friends gave Mr. and Mrs. John Hill "a rousing skimmington and gave them a kitchen shower." *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, July 4, 1913.
- 1913 Hyde Park. Mr. and Mrs. A.R. Riley, who were married last week, were given a skimmington Monday evening at Hyde Park by a number of their friends. *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise*, July 30, 1913.
- 1913 Poughkeepsie. A group of "young people" came to "offer a skimelton" but found Mr. and Mrs. Rapelije, whom they sought, absent." *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise*, September 20, 1913.
- 1913 Port Jervis. A "skimmerton" was to have been given to Mr. and Mrs. Wood Monday night by their neighbors" but was called off because of his illness. It was postponed one week "when it was anticipated that the entire countryside will be present." *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, December 24, 1913.
- 1914 Poughkeepsie. John Mack and bride were tendered a skimmington in East Poughkeepsie. *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise*, October 30, 1914.
- 1916 Poughkeepsie. A skimmington was held to celebrate the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. William Hansen. *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, February 1, 1916.

- 1916 Highland (Ulster County). About fifty people delivered a skimmington to Mr. and Mrs. Arley Anderson. "Cake, coffee and cigars were passed out" to the crowd who were invited in the house. *Poughkeepsie Evening Enterprise*, March 3, 1916.
- 1916 Poughkeepsie. Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Schuchle "were given a skimelton by a number of their friends last evening." *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, June 13, 1916.
- 1916 Highland (Ulster Co.). "A skimmington was given Mr. and Mrs. John Parks Thursday evening by a large circle of their friends." *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, October 27, 1916.
- 1916 Rhinebeck. Mr. and Mrs. Percy Tator "were given a skimelton Saturday evening" following a wedding trip through Massachusetts and Connecticut. *The Rhinebeck Gazette* November 24, 1916.
- 1917 Poughkeepsie. Mr. and Mrs. Earl Tillson were given a skimelton by friends and neighbors. "The evening was pleasantly spent with music and games. A dainty buffet lunch was served." *Poughkeepsie Eagle-News*, October 6, 1917.
- 1920 Poughkeepsie. Mr. and Mrs. Adam Kosmider arrived in Poughkeepsie following their wedding, "they were given a noisy reception when a skimelton was held at the home of Mrs. Miller." "The guest at the party had horns, bells and other noise-makers, which they used to make all the noise possible. Later a reception was held and there was music and refreshments." *Poughkeepsie Eagle-News*, September 18, 1920.
- 1920 Ellenville. "A married couple returned to that unique settlement (Ellenville) the other night there were horns, tin pans, and everything to make noise in their honor and the din was continued until the groom set 'em up." *Middletown Daily Herald* June 5, 1920.
- 1922 Columbia County. Mr. and Mrs. Freeman Bose returned from their wedding trip Friday evening and were given a rousing skimelton that night. *The Columbia Republican*, July 25, 1922.
- 1922 Callicoon Center (Sullivan County). "The people of this village were aroused from peaceful slumber Saturday night by the sounds of an

- old fashioned skimelton, which was given to our old neighbor, Mrs. B Fuchs and Fred Knack." *Sullivan County Record*, November 23, 1922.
- 1923 Arkville. "A Skimmington of Royal Splendor" with "a crowd numbering into the hundreds" *Catskill Mountain News*, July 20, 1923.
- 1923 Garnersville (Rockland Co.). An early August wedding gave rise to "the largest skimelton ever given in Garnersville," which included a parade and a large number of participants. *Rockland County Times*, August 4, 1923.
- 1923 Manorton (Columbia Co.). Mr. and Mrs. Freeman Boice returned from their wedding trip Friday and were given a rousing skimelton that night. *The Columbia Republican*, July 22, 1923.
- 1924 Denver (Greene County). "the skimelton and dance held at the home of Mr. and Mars. Bruce Roberts (newlyweds)." *Catskill Mountain News*, December 12, 1924.
- 1926 Wurtemburg (Dutchess County). "About 50 friends of Mr. and Mrs, Joel Andrews gave them a rousing skimelton last Saturday evening." *Poughkeepsie Eagle-News*, Sept. 13, 1926.
- 1926 Stamford (Delaware Co.). Mrs. Ethel McGraw and Mr. Morris Howland "were given a regular old-fashioned skimmington by the younger set of girls and some others not so young." The newly united Mr. and Mrs. Howland then led the group "down Main Street, the tin pan band making music as they journeyed." *Stamford Mirror Recorder* June 2, 1926.
- 1927 Kingston. "Mr. and Mrs. Weidner have returned home after spending their honeymoon in the southern part of the state and they were given an old fashioned skimmerton by a large gathering of old time friends." *Kingston Daily Freeman* September 1, 1927.
- 1929 Denver (Greene County). Mr. and Mrs. Eber Cartright were "given an old-fashioned skimelton Friday night." *Catskill Mountain News*, June 28, 1929.
- 1929 Dunraven. Skimelton held on October 15 for Mr. and Mrs. Van Benschoten. *Catskill Mountain News*, October 18, 1929.

- 1929 Pleasant Plains (Poughkeepsie). “A skimelton given at the summer home of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Lane” to their son and his bride. “The entire community turned out with tin pans, whistles, and horns and vocal demonstrations.” A cannon “poured out a stunning report awakening all would be sleepers.” *Poughkeepsie Eagle-News*, September 13, 1929.
- 1933 Greenwood Lake. “In short, an old fashioned skimelton, a custom centuries old, but one that has never died out at Greenwood Lake,” was offered to newlyweds Frank Phillips and the former Anne Miller. *Greenwood Lake News-Letter*, June 16, 1933.
- 1933 Seager. “A real old-fashioned skimelton” was given to newlyweds Martha Todd and Glenford Vermilya *Catskill Mountain News*, May 26, 1933.
- 1933 Fleischmanns. Mr. and Mrs Barrett “were given an old-fashioned skimelton.” *Catskill Mountain News*, November 24, 1933.
- 1934 Hancock. Milton Smith and Mauriel Seales “were given an old-fashioned skimelton Friday night.” *Hancock Herald*, February 22, 1934.
- 1934 Margaretville. The Nusbaums “were given an old-fashioned skimelton” *Catskill Mountain News*, May 25, 1934.
- 1935 Pleasant Valley (Poughkeepsie). When Jack Cavo and Lois Masten returned from their honeymoon, the townsfolk gave them a “skimelton” which included a ride in a buckboard wagon and neighbors blowing horns and banging pots and pans. *Genealogy of Family of Henry T. Vanderburgh* [www.lakedunmorevt.com/vdb/8gen.doc](http://www.lakedunmorevt.com/vdb/8gen.doc) (retrieved 3/11/2017).
- 1935 New Paltz. “Mr. and Mrs. John Lasher, who were married recently, were given a skimmington on Friday evening at the home of his parents.” *Kingston Daily Freeman*, September 17, 1935.
- 1936 Margaretville. “Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Gormley have returned home from their wedding trip and were given a skimelton on Monday evening.” *Catskill Mountain News* July 17, 1936.
- 1937 Grand Gorge. Friends of Mr. and Mrs. Donald Davis gave them an old fashioned skimelton on Saturday night. *Catskill Mountain News*, January 8, 1937.

- 1937 Shandaken. "Forty-five friends and relatives surprised Mr. and Mrs. Richard Hummell with an old-fashioned 'skimelton' at their home in Shandaken on Monday evening." *Catskill Mountain News*, Oct. 15, 1937.
- 1937 Delhi. "Mr. and Mrs. Harrison Morse returned Friday from their honeymoon trip, and that evening were treated to the usual "skimelton." *Catskill Mountain News*, November 5, 1937.
- 1938 Fleischmanns. "Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Vause returned from their honeymoon last Saturday evening and on Monday evening were tendered an old-fashioned skimelton." *Catskill Mountain News*, May 6, 1938.
- 1938 Kingston. Mr. and Mrs. Lemuel Boice were given "an old fashioned 'skimmington' and all the old cowbells, automobile horns, and pots and pans were dragged out from underneath the cobwebs for the occasion." *Kingston Daily Freeman*, June 30, 1938.
- 1938 Shandaken. "Friends of Mr. and Mrs. Maifredo Rutulante gave them a skimelton Friday night at their home." *Catskill Mountain News*, December 2, 1938.
- 1939 Fleischmanns. Harold Mayes and Beatrice Quinn were married. "They were given an old-fashioned skimelton on Tuesday night." *Catskill Mountain News*, December 8, 1939.
- 1940 Arena. Francis Dietrich and Melissa Teed were married and "given an old-fashioned skimelton on Monday evening." *Catskill Mountain News*, February 2, 1940.
- 1940 Pleasant Valley (Poughkeepsie). "The event consisted of a team of horses pulling a hay wagon filled with the participants. The engaged couple were present. The riders banged pots and pans, blew horns, and generally made a lot of noise as the wagon drove through Pleasant Valley." (Jack Conklin, personal correspondence, May 30, 2016.)
- 1940 Margaretville. "About 35 friends and neighbors gathered at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Hammie George on September 23 to help them celebrate their 20th wedding anniversary" with a skimelton. *Catskill Mountain News*, October 4, 1940.
- 1941 Palenville. "The town folks gave a skimelton to Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Molliaman on Saturday evening." *Greene County Examiner-Recorder* February 27, 1941.

- 1941 Delaware County. Three recently married couples, the Christians, Rosas, and Grays “were given a good old-fashioned skimelton.” *Catskill Mountain News*, March 21, 1941.
- 1942 “A skimelton was given to Mr. and Mrs. John Eckert Sunday night.” *Catskill Mountain News*, September 11, 1942.
- 1942 Dry Brook Corners. Arthur Kelly and Desiree Todd “were given a rousing skimelton by their many friends.” *Catskill Mountain News*, September 25, 1942.
- 1942 Bethel. “Upon their return from Niagara Falls and other points Mr. and Mrs. Komencheck will make their home in Bethel. A skimelton was given the couple Saturday night.” *Sullivan County Record*, October 1, 1942.
- 1944 Andes. Five recently married couples—thr Drews, Joslins, Ackerly, Shebestas, and Currys—were serenaded by thirty “skimelton makers.” “Rumor has it that all the folks “came out,” were liberal with refreshments. They will now be allowed to continue happy wedded life without the interference of their neighbors.” *Catskill Mountain News*, June 30, 1944.
- 1944 Roxbury. “Sixty five friends and neighbors” gave a newlywed couple “a rousing skimelton.” *Catskill Mountain News*, November 3, 1944.
- 1945 Kelly Corners. “Mr. and Mrs. Conine were given a real old-fashioned skmelton Monday evening by the townspeople who wished them many happy years together.” *Catskill Mountain News*, April 13, 1945.
- 1945 Dry Brook Corners. “Late in the evening 14 carloads of people came to give them a rousing skimelton.” *Catskill Mountain News*, May 11, 1945.
- 1945 Greene County. “An old-fashioned skimelton was given Mr. and Mrs. Lloydrick Butler and Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Dibble Thursday night.” *Catskill Mountain News*, June 29, 1945.
- 1945 Bellvale (Orange Co.). “The young people of Bellvale gave Mr. and Mrs. Frank DeGraw an old fashioned skimelton . . .” *Warwick Valley Dispatch*, December 21, 2005/ “Sixty Years Ago” section: December 21, 1945.

- 1945 Greene County. Mr. and Mrs. Larry Fitzgerald “were given a skimelton Saturday night at her parents’ home.” *Catskill Mountain News*, December 21, 1945.
- 1946 Halcottville. “Several from Halcottville attended a skimelton in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Ellsworth Stahl. *Catskill Mountain News* January 18, 1946.
- 1946 Birch Ridge. A skimmington was given last Thursday night at Sim’s hotel for Mr. and Mrs. Elroy Krum of Birch Ridge, who were married May 8. *Sullivan County Record*, July 18, 1946.
- 1946 Red Hook. Mr. and Mrs. Sommers “were given an old fashioned country skimmington party at their home.” More than 60 attended and refreshments were serve to the guests. *Poughkeepsie Journal*, November 1, 1946.
- 1946 New Paltz. “Mr. and Mrs. George Bogert were given a rousing skimmington following the return from their wedding trip last week” *Kingston Daily Freeman* August 28, 1946.
- 1946 Andes. Two skimeltons were held in Andes: Mr. and Mrs. Howard Bresch and Mr. and Mrs. James Andrews. *Catskill Mountain News* September 13, 1946.
- 1947 Andes. “An old-fashioned skimelton was given Mr. and Mrs. Russell Dowdie.” *Catskill Mountain News* January 3, 1947.
- 1947 Halcottville. Couple given a skimelton and Sanford home. *Catskill Mountain News* February 14, 1947.
- 1947 Pine Hill. Two skimeltons in Pine Hill: Mr. and Mrs. Al Greene and Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Nussbaum. *Catskill Mountain News* April 18, 1947.
- 1947 Wappingers Falls. Mr. and Mrs. Lorenzo Acker of Myers Corners, who were married last Saturday, were given an old fashioned skimelton and party by neighbors and friends Wednesday night. *Poughkeepsie Journal*, June 20, 1947.
- 1947 Poughkeepsie. for Mr. and Mrs. Albert Husted, whose “skimmington” included a “hayride which ended at the Stone Chimney inn. Approximately 200 enjoyed a program of dancing, after which refreshments were served.” *Poughkeepsie Journal*, July 12, 1947.

- 1947 Margaretville. "There were complaints to the authorities yesterday because of the firing of shotguns at the Barkman skimelton. *Catskill Mountain News* December 19, 1947.
- 1948 Union Grove. Mr. and Mrs. Orrin Dimmick were given a rousing skimelton at Mrs. Dimmicks home Sunday evening." *Catskill Mountain News* April 30, 1948.
- 1948 Greene County. "An old-time skimelton was given Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Conklin." *Catskill Mountain News*, May 14, 1948.
- 1948 Halcott Center. "Friends and neighbors of Mr. and Mrs. Elwin Morse gave them a rousing old-fashion skimelton on Tuesday night." *Catskill Mountain News*, May 21, 1948.
- 1948 Big Indian. Twenty neighbors, "well assorted as to age and sex, offered Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Santiago a slimelton. *Catskill Mountain News*, October 22, 1948.
- 1949 Phoenicia. "After a skimelton with the usual shotguns and noisemakers," the newlyweds went on a marital trip." *Catskill Mountain News*, July 8, 1949.
- 1949 Phoenicia. "The friends and neighbors of the Malloys appeared around 10 pm Saturday for an old-fashioned skimelton to greet the newlyweds." *Catskill Mountain News* August 12, 1949.
- 1950 Halcott Center. Mr. and Mrs. Morse were welcomed home from their honeymoon with a "rousing skimelton." *Catskill Mountain News*, Jan. 13, 1950.
- 1950 Halcott Center. A crowd "gathered at the home of Mr. and Mrs Scudder for an old-fashioned skimelton." *Catskill Mountain News*, Feb. 10, 1950.
- 1950 Chichester. "Several people from here attended the large skimelton." *Catskill Mountain News*, March 31, 1950.
- 1950 Greene County. On October 4, Mr. and Mrs. Leo Mestyaneck were given a rousing skimelton by the young folks of the neighborhood. *Catskill Mountain News*, Oct. 27, 1950.
- 1951 Delaware County. "A skimelton was given Mr. and Mrs. James Loyh late Saturday night. *Catskill Mountain News*, August 24, 1951.



- 1951 Delaware County. "Sixteen teen-agers surprised Mr. and Mrs. Leighton Enderlin with a skimelton on Wednesday evening to celebrate their 17th wedding anniversary. Mr. and Mrs. Enderlin were each presented with a gift, and punch and cookies were serve. The group sang songs." *Catskill Mountain News* September 7, 1951.
- 1951 Halcott Center. "Friends of Mr and Mrs. Bob Johnson gave them a skimelton Friday night. This seems to be a way of saying "good luck" to the newlyweds. *Catskill Mountain News*, October 5, 1951.
- 1952 New Kingston. "The valley boys, with some outside help, gave the newly weds an old-fashioned skimelton with a truck ride and supper out of town." *Catskill Mountain News*, April 18, 1952.
- 1952 Alaban. "A skimelton was held last Tuesday evening for Mr. and Mrs. Shovsende." *Catskill Mountain News*, May 16, 1952.
- 1952 Greene County. "A large number of relatives and friends gave the newlyweds (the Quicks) an old fashioned skimelton." *Catskill Mountain News*, July 18, 1952.
- 1954 Fleischmanns. 20 friends and neighbors gave Mr. and Mrs. Blish a "rousing old-fashioned skimelton." *Catskill Mountain News*, June 4, 1954.
- 1955 Andes. Mr. and Mrs. Howell returned from their honeymoon and "were given a skimelton." *Catskill Mountain News*, June 10, 1955.
- 1955 Halcott Center (Greene Co. Catskills). Mr. and Mrs Herman Walder returned from their honeymoon and "given a hearty 'welcome home' by an old fashioned skimelton on Saturday night." *Catskill Mountain News* December 23, 1955.
- 1956 Delaware County. "Gardiners Given Skimelton." *Catskill Mountain News* November 16, 1956.
- 1957 Bushensville. After their return from a wedding trip, the neighbors of Findlay Gossoo and Lara Ferlini "gave them an old-fashioned skimelton." *Kingston Daily Freeman*, June 14, 1957.
- 1957 Andes. "A skimelton was given by friends" to the newlyweds, Mr. and Mrs. John Jackson." *Catskill Mountain News*, June 10, 1957.

- 1957 Dry Brook. Mr. and Mrs. Orrin Todd were given an a skimelton. *Catskill Mountain News*, June 10, 1957.
- 1957 Pleasant Valley (Catskills). "A number of friends gave Mr. and Mrs. Archie Bacon and Mr. and Mrs. Scott Mayer a skimelton about 2:30 Saturday morning." *Catskill Mountain News* September 27, 1957.
- 1958 New Kingston. "Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Faulkner were the recipients Saturday evening of a skimelton." *Catskill Mountain News*, May 23, 1958.
- 1958 Fleischmanns. A "3 am skimelton" was delivered to the Archibalds. *Catskill Mountain News*, May 23, 1958.
- 1958 Vega. 25 friends and neighbors delivered Mr. and Mrs. Banks a skimelton. *Catskill Mountain News*, July 25, 1958.
- 1959 Bedell. A group of friends and neighbors delivered a skimelton to Mr. and Mrs. Miller. *Catskill Mountain News*, Oct. 16, 1959.
- 1959 Franklin. "Guns were fired; bells rang; horns blown; pans hammered" at a skimelton. It was described as "an age-old custom in Franklin to welcome brides and grooms in this way, rousing them from sleep in a noisy fanfare." *The Oneonta Star* September 24, 1959.
- 1959 Roxbury. Mr and Mrs Charles Cohn "were given a skimelton with 30 present." *The Oneonta Star* October 23, 1959.
- 1960 Chichester. "An old fashioned skimelton was given to Mr. and Mrs. Sigurd Niekamp at their home on Friday night." *Catskill Mountain News* April 1, 1960.
- 1960 Phoenicia. The Coss newlyweds "were the recipients of an old-fashioned skimelton." *Catskill Mountain News*, June 24, 1960.
- 1960 Prattsville. "Mr. and Mars. Larry Blakeslee were given a delayed 'skimelton' by their young friends." *Catskill Mountain News* August 12, 1960.
- 1960 Fleischmanns. Friends and neighbors gave the bride and bride-groom a skimelton. *Catskill Mountain News*, Sept. 30, 1960.
- 1960 Denver-Vega. "Skimelton given Mr. and Mrs. Todd," *Catskill Mountain News*, Nov. 25, 1960.

- 1963 Grahamsville (Sullivan County). “Best wishes to Mr. and Mrs. Morris Furman who were given a skimelton on Saturday evening. About 40 relatives and friends joined in. (Sept. 18, 1963/ 25 years ago column). *Ye Olde Tri Valley Townsman*, September 13, 2013.
- 1970 Andes. “Twenty-seven relatives and friends gave Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Woodin a skimelton on Thursday evening.” *Catskill Mountain News* May 28, 1970.
- 1970 Vega (Delaware Co.). Mr. and Mrs. Gary Sherwood were “Victims of Skimelton” given at the home of his parents. *Catskill Mountain News* October 29, 1970.
- 1973 Vega (Delaware Co.). Mr. and Mrs. Jack McKenna “were surprised by a skimelton given by 15 neighbors. *Catskill Mountain News* July 12, 1973.
- 1973 Vega. Newlyweds Mr. and Mrs. Dominick Paternoster “were surprised by 18 friends and neighbors with a skimelton.” *Catskill Mountain News* July 26, 1973.